

The Influence of Social, Economic and Cultural Factors on the Level of Religiosity of Youths with an average age of 25 to 29 (A Case Study in Ilam)

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the impacts of social, economic and cultural factors on the level of religiosity of youths in city of Ilam in 2013-2014 (solar years of 92-93). In this research, subjects were 438 youths with an average age of 25 to 29 whom were selected by random cluster sampling. Variables measured in this study include: the degree of religiosity, age, social status, housing conditions, educational level, monthly income, father and mother's jobs, the way individuals spend their time at their leisure, , the type of communication (including TV, satellite, Internet, listening to the radio (foreign and domestic). In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics method was used while for analyzing the hypotheses test, inferential statistics including (ANOVA - Linear and Non-linear Regression, T- test, Pearson, Spearman test and Path analysis were used. The results obtained from the descriptive data indicated that the degree of religiosity among youths is in a moderate status. To elucidate the reasons of youth's tendency for religiosity, the present research shows these facts: a) cultural factors and the literacy rate played the most significant role in the degree of religiosity of youths. b) Fathers' job was the second significant variable that had a positive effect on the degree of religiosity. c) After examining both female and male respondents, the research showed that the degree of religiosity amongst the girls was greater than the boys. D) It also showed that the more was the age of respondents, the less was the degree of religiosity amongst them. The most important conclusion reached from the influence of effective variables on the degree of religiosity of youths was that: The amount of income had the greatest impact on the reduction of religiosity and two factors including father's monthly income and father's occupational status had indirect impact on the degree of religiosity of youths.

Keywords: Religiosity, Religion, Youths, Social factors, Economic factors, Cultural factors.

Introduction

Religion is one of the oldest and most important institutions and all societies throughout history have had their own religion. With the industrialization of societies, the emergence of secular ideology, religion, and religious beliefs have formed only a specific domain along with earthly concepts.

It is said that religiosity in contemporary Iranian society and among young people is faced with changes in thinking and practice. Sociology scholars have examined some of these changes and stated that the differences in religiosity dimensions are visible. The presence of this situation shows that although religious beliefs and sentiments among young people are durable, but on the

other hand the acceptance and execution of all aspects of religiosity dimensions among the youth is questionable. Another variation is a combination of religion among young people.

According to Nickpay (2006:55) new combined religiosity is one kind of religiosity among the young contemporary Iranian society on which the principles of Shiites, some principles of Buddhism and some of psychological theories have been based, combined and used in religious deeds. Variations on the issue of youths' religiosity shows that religiosity like many other issues has been changed from a complete form of flexibility and certainty into a selective and personal one.

Statement of the problem

Today, the various phenomena of socio - economic and cultural changes have created different changes in youths' religiosity and thus religious scholars are obliged to explore factors affecting youths' religious values on the one side, and provide a mechanism to overcome it on the other side. Theoretical analyses indicate that religiosity is one of the social variables which is undergoing a massive transformation in transitional societies. (Durkheim, 2002; Berger and Luckmann, 1967)

For the first time, Peter Berger (1996) follows these changes in the major institutions of modernity: (Economy - Industry – Government, etc ...) and according to him (1996), the university which is responsible for developing science and technology in society, is one of the bearers of modernity. In Iranian society, religiosity cannot be considered as an exception anymore.

Today, youths on the one hand are influenced by the religious culture of their community which is supported by their families and local communities, and on the other hand are influenced by educational institutions, mass media (internal and external), and the structural elements of the modern world and the young generation have been suffering from some specific economic and social problems caused by specific instabilities before and after the war [The imposed war between Iraq and Iran lasting from September 1980 to August 1988]. (Serajzadeh, 1998: 195)

Therefore, given that in today's society, youths' look to religion has fundamentally changed over the previous generation, the young generation is seeking for a new position and identity in this society which spontaneously is in conflict with the mentality and approaches of both the previous generation and adults. However, the definition and interpretation of religion and its elements differs between researchers, sociologists and scholars because each of the specific definitions have been given according to each of the specific views expressed in any groups.

From this specific viewpoint, religion as a social institution is considered like other phenomena and social institutions. Thus, doing scientific research in order to identify this issue realistically is of great importance. Present study sought to understand and answer this significant question that what are the impacts of social, economic, and cultural factors on youths' religiosity?

The importance of research

As mentioned, religion as a social institution possessing personal and social attributes supports social values and rules and embodies the power of community and human and guarantees stability, continuity and cohesion of society. Religion creates the values and shapes the norms. It also gives ethical holiness to constant values, and gives life meaning to human beings and is an effective guide for the conduct and happiness of human beings in this world and the hereafter. It gives sense of harmony and consensus to society and consolidates it. It prohibits antisocial and suggests ways for the rehabilitation of violators (Tanhaei , 2011).

Visual assessment and religious values whose difficulty level has been increase by the presence of diverse religions and values, is one of challenging and favorite issues for the scholars of religion and religious values.

The importance of research in the domain of religion and social values is that our society is in a transitional phase to industrial phase and suffers from a kind of conflict and this fact has contributed to the formation of individual's value systems specially for the young. Failure to produce religious symbols generated based upon updated conditions leads to a weakened perception of religious symbols which play an important role in conveying religious meanings and eventually may result in severing their links with the meaning system and a multiplicity of meanings (Mirsendsi, 2004: 156).

Since youths are the leaders of Iran's future society, studying their mentality and attitudes in different areas in terms of religiosity and religious orientation can draw a perspective of the future society. With regard to the importance of religion in our country on the one hand, and cultural invasion by foreign countries on the other hand and also with regard to the above, it is necessary to investigate the influence of social, economic and cultural factors on the degree of religiosity of youths.

In general, the scientific study of religion and religiosity and also the scientific study of influencing factors are necessary to be discussed in different levels:

- Religion in our society is sustainable and effective at different levels and it is also contributing to shaping the actions of individuals.

- Religion is the basis of institutions (politics, education, family, etc.) and also acts as the basis for policy and planning.

- Religiosity embodies religion and it has to be addressed for what exists in reality.

Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence of social, economic and cultural factors on the degree of religiosity of youths through a theoretical basis and using the methods and research tools.

Research Hypotheses

In this section, hypotheses (for each subject) will be discussed according to the theoretical framework and the theories that were mentioned

A) Social Dimension

- There is a significant relationship between gender and degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between age and degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between the social status of individuals and the degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between housing status of people and degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between educational level and degree of religiosity.

B) Economic dimension

- There is a significant correlation between the amount of an individual or family's monthly income and the degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between parental occupation and level of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between mother's occupation and degree of religiosity.

C) Cultural dimension

- There is a significant relationship between people's free time and degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between the type of communication tools (including T.V, satellite, internet, listening to the radio (foreign and domestic), and the degree of religiosity.

- There is a significant relationship between going to the cinema and watching TV and religiosity.

Statistical population

The statistical population of the study consisted of youths with an average age of 29-25 in Ilam (a border city in western Iran) with a total population of 221/14. According to the Kukaran formula, the obtained results of 438 people of which 52/1% were females and 47/9 % were males, the highest percentage of young respondents were 25 year-old youths with 27/2 % and the least were 27-year-old respondents with a frequency of 14/6 %.

The study was carried out during the second semester of the academic year and summer, 2013-2014 (1392-1393).

Sample size and sampling method

The sample size is affected by various factors such as population size, variation (ANOVA) trait in the population, the degree of precision (confidence level), sampling etc. that can be different. Kukaran sampling formula has been used in related research to estimate the sample size. The probable normal accuracy has been estimated at 5%. After various estimates and fit it with a sample size, the probable accuracy was estimated to be 5% in the final phase.

The sample size formula is:

The required information to determine the sample size of this study is as follows:

$$n=221/14: \text{total population of youths in Ilam (29-25)} \quad n = \frac{Nt^2p(1-p)}{Nd^2 + t^2p(1-p)}$$

d=5%: probable normal accuracy

t=16/1%: number of normally distributed variables

p=5/0: probability of the trait in the population

$$(1-P)=5/0\%: \text{Probable lack of the trait in the population} \quad n = \frac{Nt^2p(1-p)}{Nd^2 + t^2p(1-p)}$$

Sampling method: After estimating the sample size, the random sampling method was used for selection of the sample units.

Type and method of research

In this study, according to the subject and the research facilities, the most appropriate way to do the research is the survey method which has been considered as the most suitable method for gathering information.

With regard to the method of research, data collection method is a combination of field and library methods that first collect data and information by questionnaire, and then the final questionnaire includes both questions on demographic characteristics (age, sex, marital status, educational level, etc. and other questions to measure religiousness (adherence of faith, ethics and religious rites).

Validity and reliability

Validity: Factor analysis method was used for measuring the validity of religiosity index. This method is a powerful and inevitable tool for measuring the validity. (Kerlinjer, 2003: 149). The first step for factor analysis is correlation of variances for factor analysis. Correlation of variances will be better for factor analysis if the correlation is greater. Sampling adequacy test and Bartlett test showed that variances are correlated for factor analysis:

(KMO = 0890) and (Sig = 0/000, X² = 3250/9: Bartlett Test)

The proportionality between variances

In the second stage, in order to extract factors, analysis model of principal components was used. This model is used when the aim is to summarize the variables (not individuals) and to gain a few factors for purposes of prediction (Kalantari, 2003: 289). Consequently, the variables were loaded on two factors. The interpretation of these two factors is very difficult and ambiguous.

The third stage of the factor analysis involves rotation of axes to the new position so that it can help us interpret factor much better (Kim and Mueller, 1978: 139). Kim et al. (1978) believe that when the data to be loaded on more than one rotation matrix, it makes the factors easier to be interpreted (175). Thompson et al. (2002) also believed that if someone wants to interpret the *factor matrices* adequately, it is necessary to rotate them. Therefore the factor matrices were rotated, 25 degree based on Varimax rotation method. Once more variables were loaded on two factors and the variables which were relevant to two factors confirmed the true classification of dimensions of religiosity (Belief factors and Religious practices factors).

Reliability

Reliability of religiosity index and two factors including commitment to religious beliefs and dedication to religious practices were evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha. The following table shows the reliability of the statistics. As it can be seen, reliability of all three is at a very good level. Since the *Cronbach's coefficient alpha* is 87%, it indicates that the inter-correlations between alternatives are large and questions have adequate reliability.

Table 1: Alpha coefficient of research factors

Alpha coefficient	Number	Row
0/84	32	1
0/60	9	2
Total alpha	0/87	

Deductive analysis of data

According to the following table which has used the Pearson test to examine the relationships, we came to this conclusion that age and social status has no impact on religiosity, but family income and individual income affect individual's level of religiosity.

Table 2: The relationships between social status, family or individual income and religiosity

Result	Significance level	Coefficient of determination	
Hypothesis is rejected	.345	-.045	Age
Hypothesis is rejected	.064	-.089	Individual's social status
Hypothesis is confirmed	.028	-.121	Family monthly income
Hypothesis is rejected	.005	-.236	Individual monthly income

The survey was conducted using t-tests to examine the relationships between housing status, gender, and the degree of religiosity and finally it came to this conclusion that there is no significant relationships between housing status and religiosity but there is a significant relationship between

gender and religiosity, and also after analysis of the average difference it reached to this conclusion that the level of religiosity is higher for girls than boys.

Based on the research results which used ANOVA test to examine the relationships between educational level, father - mother's job, the way individuals spend their time at their leisure, using different communication tools such as radio etc. with the level of religiosity, we came to these conclusions that there is statistically significant relationships between the level of education, the way individuals spend their time at their leisure, using radio- the type of communication tool- and the degree of religiosity; however, there is no significant relationships between father - mother's job and the level of religiosity.

Conclusions

To understand the degree of religiosity of youths as the only dependent variable of the research, we confine ourselves to descriptive results and data suggest that the level of religiosity of youths is moderate. But the important point to note here is that religiosity index is not a simple one. In this study, "spiritual dimensions" have been considered as index and beliefs and practices which were shown by descriptive results. Among the sample population, Religious beliefs are more visible than religious practices; in other words, the numbers of people who are ideologically religious are more than those who are bound to do religious practices. It can be concluded that religion is not a double-standard in the way that it can be concluded who is religious and who is not. And religiosity among the young population is moderate.

So as Berger (1966) asserts religion still plays a significant role in both private and personal domains and it can not be said that secularism has happened or is happening. Berger (1966) believes that the world we now live in is a world full of religious feelings and it is due to the uncertainty of human life is unbearable for them. (26)

But this case is different from those cases possessing a social dimension. Berger (1966) believes there is a kind of secularism in modern society, and believes that in today's society, social secularism has happened while we are still far from individual secularism.

In short, this study entitled "The influence of social, economic and cultural factors on the level of religiosity of youths with an average age of 25 to 29 (a case study in Ilam)" come to the following results:

Factors such as family income and individual income are inversely related to the degree of religiosity. Factors such as age, social status, housing status, father and mother's occupation don't contribute to the level of youths' religiosity while factors such individual's educational levels, individuals' free time, listening to foreign radio and the type of communication devices contribute to individual's level of religiosity and the results also showed that the level of religiosity is higher for girls than boys.

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Appendix A

A. In this section, please answer the following questions about the characteristics of yourself and your family:

1. Age: Year:
2. Education:
Undergraduate Diploma Graduate diploma Bachelor of arts (BA) Master of arts (MA) and higher
3. Marital status: Single Married
4. Gender: Male Female
5. If you are working in non-academic jobs, please write your job:
6. If yes to question 5, please write the level of your earnings in Toman:
7. Your father's level of education:
Illiterate Primary school *Junior high school* high school Diploma Academic
8. Your mother's level of education:
Illiterate Primary school *Junior high school* high school Diploma Academic
9. Your father's job:
10. Your mother's occupation:
Housewife Working
11. The way of living:
Rent house Private house
12. What is the average monthly income of your household (write in Toman):

Appendix B

B. Please answer the following questions:

13. I know God exists and I have no doubt about it.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
14. If somebody believes in God and trust God, he/she will have inner peace.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
15. My belief is that the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and I am proud of it.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
16. Obedience to the innocent Imams is just like obedience to God.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
17. In my view, this world of oppression and tyranny will be filled with justice and equity when Imam Mahdi comes.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree

18. The Quran is the word of God and what it says is completely true.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
19. How much do you believe in this statement: man vows to problems if the problem is solved?
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
20. I believe in Imamat, as one of the undeniable principles of Islam.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
21. How much do you agree with this statement: fasting will result in health?
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
22. I do not believe in life after death.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
23. How much do you believe in this statement: finally, pious and righteous people go to heaven?
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
24. I believe going to Hajj is a religious and divine duty.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
25. I think the final consequence for sinners and criminals is going in Hell.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
26. I believe in miracles.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
27. I am confident that the Quran is a divine miracle.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
28. The Holy Quran was sent down for the guidance of mankind.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
29. Which of the following corresponds to pray more?
I always say my prayers regularly I oftentimes say my prayers I sometimes say my prayers
I often say my prayers
30. From time to time, I usually go to the mosque for saying Jamaat prayers.
Every day Several times a week In special occasions Rarely
31. How often do you participate in Friday prayer (Ṣalāt al-jum`ah)?
Every Friday At least once a month Several times a year Rarely Never
32. Promoting the culture of praying leads to the freshness and vitality of society.
I completely agree I agree I doubt I disagree I completely disagree
33. How much do you agree with this statement: *Eid al-Ghadeer* is one of the largest religious ceremonies of Muslims throughout the world?
Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely
34. How much do you try to perform Jamaat pray (Salat al-Jamaat) in your the local Mosque or university?
Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely
35. I am committed to religious ceremonies (Eids, Muharram rituals, Ghadr nights).
Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely
36. How much do you agree with the following statement: Some people obviously do not believe in God, but believe that there is a superior force of humanity?
Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely
37. I believe in saying my prayers and keeping religious vows.
Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely
38. I believe that doing the good and forbidding the evil reduce moral and social disorders.
Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely
39. I believe in heaven as an eternal place of real believers.

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

40. If the Hajj is performed correctly, Muslims' correlation increases.

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

41. I believe in the *Islamic* obligation of the *payment* of *Khums and Zakat*.

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

42. My family is religious.

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

43. How much do you agree with this statement: life has no meaning without religion?

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

44. How often do you go to the movies a month?

45. Once a week Once every two weeks Once a month once every two months Never

46. How much do you agree with the following statement: the fluctuating status of the good in our country can affect the level of religiosity in our society?

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

47. Do you watch T.V?

Yes No

If yes, which of the following programs look better?

Meetings and political programs Film series Scientific and cultural Programs Social programs sporting events religious programs

48. If you have installed satellite at your home, how much do you watch its programs?

Every night twice or three times a week once a week Never

49. In your opinion, how much leisure time can influence people's religiosity?

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

50. In your opinion, unethical foreign radio broadcasts can contribute to the level of religiosity?

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely

51. How much do you agree with the following statement: If leisure time is coupled with cultural programs, it will affect the degree of religiosity?

Average Much Very much Rarely Very rarely