

Exploring the relationship between religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction among undergraduates

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction among undergraduate students at the University of Lagos. The research aims to examine how intrinsic religious orientation and internal locus of control contribute to students' overall life satisfaction, with particular attention to sex and age differences. A total of 400 undergraduate students were surveyed using standardised instruments: Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale, Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction, with intrinsic religious orientation accounting for 7.7% of the variance in life satisfaction. Similarly, a significant positive relationship was found between internal locus of control and life satisfaction, although internal locus of control accounted for a smaller 2.7% variance. An independent samples t-test showed that female students scored higher on life satisfaction and intrinsic religious orientation, while male students scored higher on internal locus of control. A one-way ANOVA indicated significant age differences in intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction, but not in internal locus of control. The study's results align with existing literature, suggesting that intrinsic religious orientation and internal locus of control are significant predictors of life satisfaction among undergraduates. The study concludes on the importance of supporting students' religious and personal development to enhance their overall well-being. The study recommended that students should be encouraged to develop a deeper, intrinsic religious orientation rather than focusing on external aspects of religiosity.

Keywords: Religious Orientation, Locus of Control, Life Satisfaction, Age, Gender

Introduction

Life satisfaction is a subject which has been discussed in literature for a long time, being an individual's evaluation of their overall quality of life based on their chosen criteria, which means one person's satisfaction is different from the next person making it a subjective measure of well-being and happiness, reflecting how content people are with various aspects of their life.

Religion is an important, perhaps central, dimension of human experience across the lifespan, even among groups thought to be the least concerned with spiritual matters; religious concern is active. A growing body of research has suggested that religiosity contributes to subjective well-being (Aghababaei, 2014). Religious orientation encompasses the underlying attitudes and motivations that guide an individual's religious beliefs and practices. Allport and Ross distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations. Intrinsic orientation involves practising religion for its own sake, integrating faith into daily life, and finding personal meaning and purpose. In contrast, extrinsic orientation treats religion to an end, such as social belonging or personal gain. These distinctions highlight the diverse ways in which individuals engage with their religious beliefs, with potential implications for their overall life satisfaction.

Studies suggest that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to have higher life satisfaction. Ng et al. (2021), have shown that an internal locus of control is positively associated with higher life satisfaction, as it promotes a sense of personal efficacy and empowerment. This is because they feel empowered to influence their lives positively, are more likely to engage in proactive behaviours, and cope effectively with challenges.

Religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction interact but have not attracted enough attention within psychological research yet as there are just a few studies on these three variables interacting with one another. Exploring how religious beliefs intersect with individuals' perceptions of control and their overall satisfaction with life will be of immense value in understanding the complexities of human experience and the quest for meaning and fulfilment.

Background of Study

The transition into tertiary education is a significant phase in the lives of young adults, marked by various new experiences, challenges, and opportunities. As students navigate this complex period, understanding the factors that contribute to

their well-being and satisfaction becomes crucial. Studies have argued that God's control and personal control can co-exist by forming a relationship with God that displays mutuality (Zahl and Gibson, 2008). Results from past studies of religious belief and activities and LOC do not offer much help because they have found a variety of associations. In some instances, externality (Wiley, 2006), internality (Wigert, 2002), or neither (Lowis et al., 2009) were related to religiosity.

Locus of control is a psychological concept that refers to an individual's belief about the extent to which they can control events affecting them. Rotter introduced the concept, distinguishing between internal and external locus of control. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that their actions significantly influence outcomes, whereas those with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to external factors like luck or fate. LOC is closely linked to life satisfaction. Studies suggest that individuals with an internal locus of control tend to have higher life satisfaction because they feel empowered to influence their lives positively. They are more likely to engage in proactive behaviours and cope effectively with challenges. Coursey et al. (2013) suggested that intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of religiosity should be measured and studied separately because they are independent or orthogonal to one another.

Life satisfaction is a key indicator of well-being and refers to an individual's overall assessment of their quality of life based on personal criteria. For university students, life satisfaction can be influenced by numerous factors, including academic success, social relationships, and personal development. It reflects not only the achievement of educational goals but also the ability to adapt to new environments and form meaningful connections. Religious orientation can offer a sense of community, moral support, and coping strategies, potentially enhancing life satisfaction. Meanwhile, a strong internal locus of control can empower students to take charge of their lives, further contributing to their overall happiness and fulfilment.

Social Learning Theory of Locus of Control

The study is guided by Julian B. Rotter's theory of locus of control, known as the social learning theory of Rotter (1954). According to Rotter, individuals develop generalised expectancies regarding the degree to which their actions lead to desired outcomes. These expectancies form the basis of their locus of control beliefs.

Internal Locus of Control: Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that their actions directly influence outcomes. They attribute success or failure to their own efforts, abilities, and decisions.

External Locus of Control: Conversely, individuals with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to external factors such as luck, chance, powerful others (e.g., authority figures, fate), or uncontrollable circumstances.

Rotter proposed that locus of control is not fixed but can vary across different situations and domains of life. For example, a person may have an internal locus of control regarding

academic success but an external locus of control regarding health outcomes.

Statement of Problem

The relationship between religious orientation, LOC, and life satisfaction remains an understudied area, particularly within the context of Nigerian University students, where all campuses are dominated by several religious activities. Existing literature has often highlighted the importance of these variables independently but has inadequately addressed their interrelationships and the cumulative impact they may have on psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The complexity of these relationships is often overshadowed by a focus on more generalised populations, thereby neglecting the unique cultural, social, and developmental factors that influence Nigerian students. The study by Akinwale & Ojatorotu (2024) in a study reported that those who are more inclined to forgive may experience greater levels of personal growth and well-being. The result showed a significant influence of religion on forgiveness with Christians reporting the highest in forgiveness compared to other religions. The result further revealed a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and human flourishing but no significant relationship between self-compassion and human flourishing.

Much of the existing research (Coursey, et al, 2013; Fiori, et al 2006) on religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction has been conducted in Western contexts so the findings from these studies may not be directly applicable to Nigerian students due to cultural differences in religious practices, beliefs, and the societal role of religion. Additionally, previous studies have often examined religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction as isolated variables, failing to explore how they interact with each other. There is a need to understand how age and gender may influence the relationship between religious orientation, locus of control and life satisfaction. Understanding how these demographic factors moderate the relationship is crucial for developing tailored interventions.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gaps identified in previous research by exploring the connection between religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction among students and the role sociodemographic variables such as age and gender play. The role of religion in Nigerian society is profound, influencing various aspects of life, including coping mechanisms and psychological well-being.

Objectives of Study

This study explored the relationship between religious orientation, locus of control and life satisfaction among undergraduates. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to: (a) examine religious orientation and its relationship with life satisfaction, (b) explore the association between locus of control and life satisfaction (c) explore gender differences in religious orientation, locus of control and life satisfaction (d) examine age differences in religious orientation, locus of control and life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction

Subjective well-being stands as a significant notion within the realm of positive psychology. It entails an individual's perception and experience with both positive and negative emotional responses, as well as their overall cognitive assessments regarding satisfaction with life, encompassing both general and specific areas. Life satisfaction is the cognitive component of subjective well-being, and it is the appraisal of one's life because of comparisons between the individual's perception of living conditions and the criteria he imposes on himself (Gokalp, 2019). Satisfaction with one's life implies a contentment with or acceptance of one's life circumstances, or the fulfilment of one's wants and needs for one's life.

While external factors such as socioeconomic status and life events undoubtedly influence life satisfaction, internal psychological processes, such as perceptions, attitudes, and coping mechanisms, play a crucial role in determining overall well-being (Ren, 2022). Understanding the factors that contribute to life satisfaction is essential for promoting psychological health and fostering resilience in the face of life's challenges (Ren, 2022).

Life Satisfaction is known to be influenced, predicted or mediated by several variables such as self-esteem, personality traits, locus of control, religious orientation, media use, mental well-being, etc. Two of each will be assessed on life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is often used interchangeably with happiness and is considered a significant component of well-being (Badri et al., 2022), however, there are two different meanings attributed to "satisfaction" in these discussions: in some contexts, it refers to meeting perceived expectations or standards, while in others, it pertains to a feeling of contentment or pleasure. Due to these varying interpretations of "satisfaction," there are two broad conceptions of life satisfaction commonly discussed in this section (Badri, 2022).

It's crucial to differentiate cognitive from mixed conceptions of life satisfaction, as they result in different implications when used as a measure of, or equated with, happiness or well-being. For instance, someone could be cognitively satisfied with their life while experiencing depression or anxiety. The choice of perspective in assessing life satisfaction may depend on values unrelated to happiness or achieving important goals. The mixed perspective, however, underscores the importance of emotional experiences alongside cognitive judgments. In summary, research on happiness and well-being considers the distinct areas of judgment, emotional response, and general affective experiences in understanding life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 2015).

Religious Orientation

According to the APA (2024), "Religion is a system of spiritual beliefs, practices, or both, typically organized around the worship of an all-powerful deity (or deities) and involving behaviors such as prayer, meditation, and participation in

collective rituals" Religious orientation is then defined as an attitude toward religion or religious practices.

Allport introduced two dimensions of religiosity in 1959, initially termed "immature" and "mature," which were later replaced with the terms "extrinsic" and "intrinsic," the focus of the present study. To summarise the distinction, Allport and Ross explained that extrinsic individuals utilise their religion, while intrinsic individuals embody their religion. Extrinsic perceive of religion as a source of "security and solace, sociability and distraction, status and self-justification" (Agorastos et al., 2019). For individuals oriented towards extrinsic religiosity, religion serves as a means to achieve self-serving ends. Religious orientation, from a psychological standpoint, contains the multifaceted ways individuals engage with and derive meaning from their religious beliefs and practices. Additionally, dimensions such as fundamentalism, mysticism, and quest religiosity contribute to the complex tapestry of religious orientation, shaping individuals' attitudes, behaviours, and psychological well-being (Cook et al., 2014). Understanding religious orientation provides insights into how individuals navigate existential questions, find purpose and meaning, and cultivate a sense of community and belonging within their religious or spiritual traditions.

Allport's initial research on religiosity made a distinction between mature and immature religious sentiments. The mature sentiments were described as "well-differentiated, dynamic, productive of a consistent morality, comprehensive, integral, and fundamentally heuristic," while the less mature sentiments were described to be the opposite characteristics (Adwaita, 2015). As discussions progressed, Allport gradually shifted focus from the mature-immature religious sentiments to the concepts of 'intrinsic-extrinsic' religious orientations, which share similarities. The core of an individual's religious orientation lies in the function that religion serves in their life. Religious orientation is categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic orientations.

An extrinsically oriented individual, according to Allport, is someone for whom religious dedication is not inherently valuable, but rather serves to personal comfort, security, and escape, merely bolstering self-esteem and incidental to life, thereby enhancing social status. He characterised the extrinsic-oriented individual as exhibiting traits of immaturity, regression, or fostering exclusion, prejudices, and hatreds that contradict the standards of maturity. Hence, the extrinsic individual views religion as a tool to achieve certain ends. Conversely, intrinsic religious orientation pertains to individuals who view faith as a supreme value, striving to transcend self-centred needs, taking seriously the imperative of brotherhood present in all religious teachings, and seeking unity of existence. Allport also depicted the intrinsic religious individual as mature, inclusive, and integrative, seeing religion as an end, a value underlying all aspects of life and desired for its own sake, to which one submits oneself willingly (Agorastos et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, extrinsic religious orientation was found to be positively related to negative emotions, anxiety, depression,

shame, and guilt. Krause & Hayward (2019) discussed the role of religious involvement in promoting psychological well-being, suggesting that intrinsic orientation can enhance life satisfaction by fostering a deeper sense of purpose and community belonging. Religion has been researched and is known to positively influence psychological well-being as religiosity is positively related to several measures of psychological well-being (Aghababaei, 2016). Other commonly researched religious orientations are:

Quest Orientation: This dimension refers to individuals who are on a spiritual quest or journey, seeking deeper meaning, understanding, and connection with the divine or transcendent. They may explore various religious traditions, philosophical ideas, and spiritual practices in their pursuit of enlightenment or spiritual growth. People with this orientation treat their religion not as a means or an end, but as a search for truth. "An individual who approaches religion in this way recognises that he or she does not know, and probably never will know, the final truth about such matters. Still, the questions are deemed important, and however tentative and subject to changes, answers are sought" (Fether, 2023).

Secular or Non-religious Orientation: Some individuals may identify as atheist, agnostic, or secular humanist, indicating a lack of belief in a higher power or organized religion. They may prioritise reason, science, and humanistic values over supernatural beliefs and religious practices.

Locus of Control

Locus of control is defined as the extent to which you feel you have control over events that impact your life (Cherry, 2022). It is also defined as "a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do – internal control orientation – or on events outside our control – external control orientation" (Cherry, 2022).

Our expectations of specific outcomes affect our behaviours and attitudes. In other words, a person is inclined to chase a goal if they've previously been rewarded for similar endeavours and hold the belief that they can influence their likelihood of future success.

In 1966, Rotter introduced a scale designed to measure and assess external and internal locus of control. The scale utilises a forced choice between two alternatives, where respondents must select one of two options for each item. Though the scale has been globally used, it has also received a considerable amount of criticism from researchers who believe that locus of control cannot be fully understood or measured by such a simplistic scale.

Method

The study's target population consisted of 31,408 undergraduate students from the University of Lagos, based on estimates provided by the University. 400 undergraduate students from the University of Lagos were selected using an accidental sampling technique, a non-probability selection method that involves choosing individuals from faculties near the researcher's location, with diverse backgrounds.

To gather information from participants, a paper and pen questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire was structured into three sections, with Section A consisting of the researcher's self-developed questionnaire that collected data on sociodemographic variables such as gender, age, level and religion. In Section B, questions on measurement for life satisfaction were asked, which were assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). In Section C, a set of questions was asked to assess the degree of acknowledgement of the peripheral role that religion plays, as well as the degree to which participant admits to religious involvement to secure solace and/or social approval, which was assessed using the Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale (1/I-E). And lastly, in Section D, another set of questions was asked to measure the level of internal versus external control of reinforcement, which was assessed using the Levenson Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale.

Research Procedures

Standardised instruments were used to accurately measure the variables of the study. Undergraduate students from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, were recruited to participate in the research, and verbal consent was obtained from each participant after they were addressed by the researcher. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential, and their personal information was not required. Participants were also encouraged to give honest responses. After giving their consent, participants were provided with instructions for completing each section of the questionnaire. The researcher ensured that the environment was conducive to the participants during the questionnaire administration. The questionnaire responses were scored and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The questionnaire results were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26 (SPSS). The research used a significant level of $p.05$ and employed descriptive and inferential statistics, including Spearman Rank correlational analysis, independent t-test and One-way ANOVA. Spearman's Rank correlation analysis was used to test hypothesis 1, which investigated the relationship between religious orientation and life satisfaction. Spearman Rank correlational analysis was also used to examine hypothesis 2, which explored the relationship between locus of control and life satisfaction. Hypothesis 3, which states that sex differences significantly influence life satisfaction, was analysed using an independent t-test. Finally, hypothesis 4, which investigates whether age differences significantly influence life satisfaction, was also analysed using a one-way ANOVA.

3.0. Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Table

	N	MIN	Max	X	Std. Deviation
Sex	400	1	2	1.55	.498
Age	400	1	3	1.96	.650
Level	400	1	4	2.94	1.108
Religion	400	1	4	1.26	.683
Intrinsic RO	400	10	40	25.72	8.141

Extr	Social	400	3	15	6.37	2.847
RO						
ExtrPersonal		400	3	15	10.67	3.472
RO						
Internal LOC		400	2	46	32.43	8.217
Chance LOC		400	0	41	18.40	8.777
Pow	Others	400	0	41	14.92	9.136
LOC						
Life		400	5	33	18.13	6.113
Satisfaction						

Source: fieldwork 2024

Hypothesis Testing

This study set out to test four hypotheses. The inferential statistics used to analyse hypotheses 1 and 2 was Spearman Rank Correlation, Independent Samples t-test was used to analyse hypothesis 3, and One-way ANOVA was used to analyse hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant positive relationship between intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction among undergraduates.

Table 2: Spearman Rank Correlation for intrinsic religious orientation on life satisfaction

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2
1. Intrinsic R.O	400	26.04	7.88		
2. Life S.	400	18.14	6.19	.366**	1.00

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

A Spearman's rank correlation was conducted to evaluate the relationship between religious orientation and the life satisfaction of undergraduates. The result showed that there was a significant positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction ($r_s = .366$, $N = 398$, $p < .001$, one-tailed). Thereby accepting the hypothesis that states "There will be a significant positive relationship between intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction among undergraduates".

Table 3: Linear regression results for intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction

IR	.218	.277	5.753	<.001	.277	.077	33.099	<.001
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a. Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
IRO	Male	189	24.83	8.08	-2.937	398	.004
	Female	211	27.12	7.56			
ILOC	Male	189	33.51	7.33	2.005	398	.046
	Female	211	31.92	8.45			
Life S.	Male	189	16.65	5.79	-	397.52	<.01
	Female	211	19.46	6.25	4.668		

Furthermore, a linear regression analysis revealed that intrinsic religious orientation significantly predicts life satisfaction of undergraduates, given the Beta and P value

scores to be ($B = .277$, $p < .001$). The table also shows that intrinsic religious orientation is responsible for 7.7% variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .077$), which implies that having an intrinsic religious orientation explained 7.7% of the life satisfaction of the participants and indicates that intrinsic religious orientation is a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and life satisfaction among undergraduates.

Table 4: Spearman Rank Correlation for internal locus of control on life satisfaction

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2
1. Internal LOC	400	32.67	7.97		
2. Life S.	400	18.14	6.19	.194**	1.00

****.** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (1-tailed)

A spearman's rank correlation was conducted to evaluate the relationship between locus of control and life satisfaction of undergraduates. Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between internal locus of control and life satisfaction ($r_s = .194$, $N = 398$, $p < .001$, one-tailed). Thereby accepting the hypothesis that states "There will be a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and life satisfaction among undergraduates.

Table 5: Linear regression results for internal locus of control on life satisfaction

a. Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction.

Variable	β	Beta	T	Sig	R	R ²	Fcal	Pv
I-LOC	.127	.163	3.303	.001	.163	.027	10.912	.001

A linear regression analysis revealed that internal locus of control significantly predicts life satisfaction of undergraduates, given the Beta and P value scores to be ($B = .163$, $p = .001$). Furthermore, internal locus of control is responsible for 2.7% variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .027$), which implies that having an internal locus of control explained 2.7% of life satisfaction of the participants and also indicates that it is a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Female students will score higher on life satisfaction, intrinsic religious orientation and internal locus of control.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Tests Comparing Life Satisfaction, Intrinsic Religious Orientation, and Internal Locus of Control by Gender

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores of male and female students on intrinsic religious orientation, internal locus of control, and life satisfaction. For intrinsic religious orientation, there was a significant difference in scores between male ($M = 24.83$, $SD = 8.08$) and female students ($M = 27.12$, $SD = 7.56$); $t(398) = -2.937$, $p =$

0.004. Female students scored significantly higher on intrinsic religious orientation than male students.

For internal locus of control, there was a significant difference in scores between male ($M = 33.51$, $SD = 7.33$) and female students ($M = 31.92$, $SD = 8.45$); $t(398) = 2.005$, $p = 0.046$. Male students scored significantly higher on internal locus of control than female students.

For life satisfaction, there was a significant difference in scores between male ($M = 16.65$, $SD = 5.79$) and female students ($M = 19.46$, $SD = 6.25$); $t(397.52) = -4.668$, $p < 0.01$. Female students scored significantly higher on life satisfaction than male students.

These results partially support the hypothesis that female students score higher on life satisfaction and intrinsic religious orientation, but not on internal locus of control.

Hypothesis 4: There will be significant age differences in the scores of life satisfaction, locus of control and religious orientation.

Table 7: One-way ANOVA test comparing Life Satisfaction, Intrinsic Religious Orientation, and Internal Locus of Control by Age groups.

Variable	Age	N	Mean	S.D	df	F-ratio	p
IRO	16 – 20	92	22.38	8.72	2.397	12.365	<.01
	21 -25	231	26.22	7.53			
	26 & above	77	28.18	8.04			
I-LOC	16 – 20	92	32.63	5.05	2.397	1.418	.243
	21 -25	231	32.82	8.77			
	26 & above	77	31.03	9.38			
LS	16 – 20	93	17.15	5.74	2.397	8.421	<.01
	21 -25	231	17.69	6.12			
	26 & above	77	20.61	5.96			

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effects of age group on intrinsic religious orientation, internal locus of control, and life satisfaction. There was a significant effect of age group on intrinsic religious orientation, $F(2, 397) = 12.365$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 26-30 age group ($M = 28.18$, $SD = 8.04$) was significantly higher than the 16-20 age group ($M = 22.38$, $SD = 8.72$) and 21-25 age group ($M = 26.22$, $SD = 7.53$).

The effect of age group on internal locus of control was not significant, $F(2, 397) = 1.418$, $p = .243$, indicating no significant differences in internal locus of control across age groups. Post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for the 16 – 20 age group ($M = 32.63$, $SD = 5.05$), 21 - 25 age group ($M = 32.82$, $SD = 8.77$) and 26 and above age group ($M = 31.03$, $SD = 9.38$) all had similar mean score.

There was a significant effect of age group on life satisfaction, $F(2, 397) = 8.421$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 26 and above age group ($M = 20.61$, $SD = 5.96$) was significantly higher than the 16-20 age group ($M = 17.15$, $SD = 5.74$) and 21-25 age group ($M = 17.69$, $SD = 6.12$).

These results partially support the hypothesis that there will be significant age differences in life satisfaction, intrinsic religious orientation, but not on internal locus of control.

Discussion

The result of the present study revealed a significant positive relationship between intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction among students. This indicates that higher levels of intrinsic religious orientation are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. Furthermore, a linear regression analysis showed that intrinsic religious orientation is a significant predictor of life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the results of Li (2023), which found that intrinsic religiosity positively influences life satisfaction through the presence of meaning in life. It is also consistent with You & Lim (2019) study, which found that intrinsic religious orientation is positively related to life satisfaction and positive emotions, while extrinsic religious orientation is related to negative emotions. Korff (2016) also found that intrinsic religious orientation significantly predicts life satisfaction, which agrees with our findings.

This present study also revealed a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and life satisfaction among undergraduates. This indicates that higher levels of internal locus of control are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and that internal locus of control is also a significant predictor of life satisfaction. Rehman & Abdul (2017) study supports our finding that internal locus of control has a significantly positive relationship with life satisfaction among university students. Their study also reported that life satisfaction and self-esteem are positively correlated with internal locus of control and that males tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction and internal locus of control compared to females. Kesavayuth (2022) also supports our findings that an internal locus of control is associated with higher reports of life satisfaction.

This study compared the scores of male and female students on intrinsic religious orientation, internal locus of control, and life satisfaction, and it revealed that more female students reported a higher intrinsic religious orientation and higher life satisfaction than male students, but male students reported more internal locus of control. Joshanloo & Jovanovic (2019) study is consistent with our finding, which found that women report higher levels of life satisfaction than men across various demographic groups. This consistency suggests that sex differences in life satisfaction are wide across different cultures and settings. On intrinsic religious orientation and sex differences, our result is in contrast with the findings of Hussain (2021), who reported that males scored higher on intrinsic religious orientation and hope, while females scored higher on extrinsic religious orientation. This discrepancy may reflect cultural or regional differences in how religious orientation is experienced and expressed. Mohd (2015) result also disagrees with our finding, he found that there was no sex differences related to intrinsic religious orientation.

With internal locus of control, contrary to our hypothesis, male students scored higher on internal locus of control; this finding is in line with Rehman & Abdul (2017), who found that

male university students possess higher levels of internal locus of control compared to female students. It appears that males may attribute life outcomes to their actions more than females do, which could influence their life satisfaction and overall sense of control, since Iqbal (2016) study also agrees that males exhibit more internal locus of control than females. This study also reported significant age differences across life satisfaction and intrinsic religious, but not in internal locus of control. The result confirms that age differences exist in life satisfaction and intrinsic religious orientation, but not in internal locus of control. The significant differences in intrinsic religious orientation across age groups suggest that as individuals age, their intrinsic religious orientation fluctuates. Specifically, those in the 26-30 age group showed significantly higher intrinsic religious orientation than both younger and older groups. This finding aligns with Bedin & Sarriera (2014), who found variations in well-being and religious orientation across different ages, indicating that intrinsic religious orientation may peak in young adulthood before declining. The lack of significant age differences in internal locus of control contradicts previous findings by Siu (2011), who found that older managers reported a more internal locus of control. This discrepancy may be due to differences in the samples used (students vs. managers) or cultural variations in how locus of control is perceived and reported. The significant differences in life satisfaction across age groups, with the 36+ age group reporting the highest satisfaction, support the notion that life satisfaction can increase with age. This is consistent with Siu (2011), who found that well-being, including job satisfaction and mental well-being, was positively related to age. Older individuals may have developed better coping mechanisms and experienced fewer sources of stress, contributing to higher life satisfaction.

Conclusion

The present study explored the relationship between religious orientation, locus of control, life satisfaction, gender differences and age differences. The findings revealed important insights.

Regarding religious orientation, the study found positive correlations with life satisfaction for intrinsic religious orientation, which means that students with higher reports of intrinsic religious orientation also have higher reports of life satisfaction. Further analysis also showed that an intrinsic religious orientation predicts life satisfaction, which also means eventually, students with an intrinsic religious orientation will report high life satisfaction.

The study also found positive correlations between internal locus of control and life satisfaction, which means students who have an internal locus of control also have high life satisfaction, and the prediction analysis also showed that internal locus of control predicts life satisfaction.

The study identified notable differences in these variables across sex and age groups. Since females scored higher than males in intrinsic religious orientation and life satisfaction, it suggests that females may be more religious, with personal beliefs leading to life satisfaction. And since males scored higher on internal locus of control, it can be said that males

believe their fate is in their hands rather than believing in fate, chance and religion as compared to females.

Furthermore, the study found significant age differences across age groups; the significant differences in intrinsic religious orientation across age groups suggest that as individuals age, their intrinsic religious orientation may change. More specifically, those in the 26 and above age group showed significantly higher intrinsic religious orientation than other age groups. In internal locus of control, there was no significant differences, this indicates that age may not have a strong influence on their locus of control, but for life satisfaction, older participants recorded the highest life satisfaction, and this may be due to having lived longer and experienced more life events and achieved more than the younger participants.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several important implications:

- 1) The positive relationships between intrinsic religious orientation, internal locus of control, and life satisfaction suggest that educational and counselling programs could benefit from incorporating elements that strengthen students' intrinsic religious beliefs and enhance their sense of personal control. This could be particularly beneficial in fostering a supportive environment that promotes mental well-being and life satisfaction.
- 2) The observed differences in life satisfaction and internal locus of control between male and female students, as well as across different age groups, indicate the need for tailored interventions. Programs should consider these demographic factors when designing strategies to improve life satisfaction and psychological well-being.
- 3) Higher education institutions and policymakers can use these insights to develop policies that support student well-being, focusing on promoting intrinsic religious orientation and internal locus of control as key components of mental health initiatives.

Recommendations

- 1) Students should be encouraged to develop a deeper, intrinsic religious orientation rather than focusing on external aspects of religiosity. Workshops, seminars, and religious study groups can be organised to help students understand and internalise their religious beliefs, which can positively impact their overall well-being. Students should be made aware of the importance of an internal locus of control in achieving higher life satisfaction. Training sessions and self-development workshops that focus on building personal responsibility and self-efficacy can help students feel more in control of their lives and outcomes.
- 2) Parents, guardians, and lecturers should play an active role in supporting students' academic and personal development. They should foster open communication channels to discuss challenges related to religious beliefs, locus of control, and life satisfaction. Regular check-ins and discussions can help identify and address any issues, promoting resilience and academic success.

- 3) Establishing mentorship programs where experienced individuals guide students in balancing their academic, personal, and religious lives can provide valuable support. Mentors can offer insights, advice, and encouragement, helping students navigate their university journey more effectively.
- 4) Educational institutions should establish comprehensive support services, including counselling and mentorship programs, to assist students in managing the challenges they face. These services can provide resources and guidance to help students enhance their intrinsic religious orientation and internal locus of control, thereby improving their life satisfaction.
- 5) Institutions should encourage and facilitate inclusive religious activities that promote intrinsic religious orientation. By providing spaces and opportunities for students to explore and deepen their religious beliefs, universities can contribute to their overall well-being.
- 6) Future research should prioritise investigating the impact of religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction among diverse populations. Studies involving different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds can provide valuable insights into the universality and variability of these relationships.
- 7) Conducting longitudinal studies to explore how religious orientation, locus of control, and life satisfaction interact over time can provide a more comprehensive understanding of these constructs. Such studies can inform the development of targeted interventions and policies that support students' long-term well-being.

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