

Trust in State Institutions and Satisfaction with Life among Christian Minorities in Pakistan

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Abstract

This article examines the complex link between religious minorities' life satisfaction and their trust in state institutions. The research tries to understand how social cohesiveness affects democracy by examining the effect of faith in institutions including the government, legal system, politicians, political parties, and police on life satisfaction of the religious minorities. The study was cross-sectional in nature and 400 respondents were sampled from four districts of Punjab (100 from each district). Data was analyzed using SPSS and ordinal logistic regression analysis was carried out to predict life satisfaction from trust in state institutions and socio-demographic variables. The results showed that district ($p < .05$), gender ($p < .05$), and trust in state institutions ($p < .01$) significantly contributed to the model. The odds of higher satisfaction increased by 1.09 times (95% CI: 1.04 – 1.15, $p < .01$) with increase in trust in state institutions. The study concludes that trust in state institutions can be a significant factor affecting life satisfaction among minorities.

Keywords: Christians, Minority, Pakistan, Trust in State, Life Satisfaction.

Introduction

What is it like being a religious minority? There are numerous challenges being a religious minority ranging from discrimination to insufficient space for worship. Yet religion remains a significant part for the individuals' well-being as well as for community organization (May & Smidle, 2016). According to numerous studies, religion generally benefits people and this association holds true across a wide range of religious and well-being indicators (Lewis & Cruise, 2006; Villani et al., 2019). Life satisfaction is found to be an important

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component of religious studies (Ellison et al., 1989). Several research have been conducted on the life satisfaction and found a positive relationship between religion and the life satisfaction (Koenig & Larson, 2001). Life satisfaction is characterized as a unique construct representing a cognitive and global assessment of one's overall life quality (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Another important metric of life satisfaction is the phenomenon of integration and belonging for the religious minorities which carries the insinuations for not only their engagement but also their attachment to the mainstream society (Verkuyten, 2008).

Empirically, several research have supported the beneficial impacts of social trust. Social trust encourages positive group results (Claibourn & Martin, 2000). This expresses the notion that when members of a society trust one another and the institutions in their community, it produces in several favorable and advantageous outcomes that boost the society's overall prosperity and well-being (Diener & Suh, 2003). Generally, when the state institutions are performing well the citizens tend to have higher confidence in them. In contrast if they do not perform well, it generates feelings of low confidence and distrust (Newton & Norris, 2000). The actions of the government also have an impact on people's quality of life since they establish and regulate institutions that offer an array of crucial amenities for people's wellbeing (Frey & Stutzer, 2000). High institutional trust levels encourage cooperative behavior among individuals, which helps to sustain social cohesiveness while enabling citizens to live in a predictable, stable, and controllable environment (Abrams & Travaglino, 2018).

Researchers have resorted to different experiential theories of trust due to the scant evidence supporting civic society's ability to foster trust. Therefore, institutional impacts have gotten a lot of attention in this area, and substantial empirical evidence has followed (Freitag & Buhlmann, 2009; Rothstein & Eek 2009; Wang & Gordon, 2011). Additionally, there is strong evidence that institutional trust is a key factor in determining people's sense of life satisfaction and wellbeing, which is significant (Hudson, 2006). The perception of a state's capacity to properly provide basic services is directly related to public trust in institutions. Citizens' quality of life and general well-being are directly impacted when they have confidence in their government to deliver infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other services. The accessibility and quality of these services have a big influence on satisfaction in life (Boulding & Wampler, 2010).

Although the Christian community are peaceful and responsible citizens, yet they experience, discrimination, unfairness and victimization (Aslam et al., 2022; Azmat et al., 2021). Their marginalization can be seen in all segments of life

whether it be their education, employment or their religious freedom. The institutionalized Christian presence has frequently been insufficient and powerless (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020; Raina, 2014). Minorities in Pakistan have serious concerns regarding their security and have often been targeted in the name of Blasphemy Law (Gregory, 2016), for example, a report by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP, 2023) showed that there were 45 incidents of mob violence and attacks on churches and 22 incidents of terrorist attacks on Christian's worship sites resulting in damaging of 111 worship sites in addition to a victim toll of 1500 persons and burning down of more than 300 shops and houses. Unfortunately, most of these cases have either been a result of religious disputes or personal hatred (Gabriel, 2021; Khalid & Rashid, 2019).

The paper is an attempt to assess the relationship between the trust on institution and its overall impact in terms of life satisfaction of the religious minority specifically the Christian community in Pakistan. This is done while considering their trust levels in the state institutions that comprise the parliament of the country, the legal system, politicians, political parties as well as the police. The analysis focuses on how this trust in state institutions results in life satisfaction while considering the impact of age, gender, income, marital status, social organization, and education. This examination helps in understanding how social cohesion a crucial element of how effectively a democracy is, performs over time (Kunene, 2009)

Methods

Design and Sample

The study was cross-sectional in nature and four districts were purposively selected as they had higher number of Christian minorities residing there. These districts were Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, and Rawalpindi. To make the results more representative, equal number of respondents were chosen from all the four districts, that is, 100 respondents from each district, thus making 400 respondents the sample of this study. Likewise, equal representation was given to males and females in the study and 200 respondents from each gender (male/female) were included in the study. An interview schedule was used to collect structured responses from the participants. Ethics of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and no harm to respondents were strictly observed.

Measures

Dependent variable

Satisfaction with life being a Christian minority was the dependent variable in this study. The variable was measured using a single item and the response

categories were ordinal (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 2 = Somewhat Dissatisfied, 3 = Somewhat Satisfied, 4 = Very Satisfied).

Independent variables

The independent variable used in the study was trust in state institutions which was constructed by computing responses of five items. These five items asked the respondents to talk about their level of trust in parliament, legal system, police, politicians, and political parties. The response categories for all the five items were ordinal (1 = Not at all, 2 = Very Little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = A lot). Construct validity and reliability analysis was conducted for these items to assess if they can be treated as a scale (see Table 1).

Socio-Demographic variables

The socio-demographic variables used in the study were District (1 = Lahore, 2 = Faisalabad, 3 = Gujranwala, 4 = Rawalpindi), age in years, gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female), social Organization (1 = Rural, 2 = Urban), household income in PKR/month, currently married (recoded as 0 = Others (Single, Separated, Widowed, Divorced), 1 = Married), Education (1 = Illiterate, 2 = Primary, 3 = Middle, 4 = Matriculation, 5 = Intermediate, 6 = Bachelors, 7 = Masters or above).

Statistical Analysis

Data was processed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, v. 25). Construct validity was assessed using factor analysis and reliability using Cronbach's alpha through SPSS for the independent variable. After assessing this, the items were computed to generate a construct of trust in state institutions (see Table 1). To assess Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages for categorical variables and mean, standard deviations, and range for continuous variables, were calculated (see Table 2). To predict satisfaction with life using trust in state institutions and socio-demographic variables as predictors, ordinal logistic regression analysis was conducted (see Table 3).

Results

Factor analysis and Reliability

Factor analysis was done to assess construct validity of trust in state institutions scale. The results showed that Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin (KMO) value was 0.80 which showed that sampling adequacy was present, and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity showed that items in the construct were not orthogonal ($p < .001$). The five items included in the scale had high construct validity as the factor loadings for all the

items were greater than the recommended value of 0.5. The average variance extracted from the scale was 69.3%.

Table 1: Construct Validity and Reliability statistics of Trust in State Institutions scale (N 400)

Variable	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Trust in State Institutions (AVE = 69.3%)		0.89
Parliament	0.69	
Legal System	0.62	
Police	0.57	
Politicians	0.80	
Political Parties	0.78	

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics of socio-demographics, independent variable (trust in state institutions), and dependent variable (satisfaction with life) are presented in Table 2. Mean age of the respondents in the sample was 37.9 ± 13.7 years (Range = 18 – 78years). The results show that 80.2% of the respondents belonged to rural areas and 74.8% were currently married. Mean household income was 29629 ± 22020 PKR/month and 34.8% were illiterate. With respect to key independent variables, 92.6% held that family is very important and 69.2% rated their health as good. The mean and standard deviation of trust in state institutions was 9.8 ± 4.4 , which showed that most of the respondents scored low to average with respect to trust in state institutions. 60% of the respondents in the sample were very satisfied with their life being a Christian minority in Pakistan.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of variables used in the study (N = 400)

Variables	f	%	M	SD	Range
District					
Lahore	100	25.0			
Faisalabad	100	25.0			
Gujranwala	100	25.0			
Rawalpindi	100	25.0			
Social Organization					
Rural	79	19.8			
Urban	321	80.2			

Gender				
Male	200	50.0		
Female	200	50.0		
Age (years)		37.9	13.7	18 – 78
Currently Married				
No	101	25.2		
Yes	299	74.8		
Household Income (PKR/month)		29628.8	22020.4	3000 – 250000
Education				
No formal schooling	139	34.8		
Primary	60	15.0		
Middle	55	13.8		
Matriculation	66	16.5		
Intermediate	39	9.8		
Bachelors	28	7.0		
Master's or above	13	3.1		
Trust in State Institutions		9.8	4.4	5 – 20
Satisfaction with Life				
Very Dissatisfied	27	6.8		
Somewhat Dissatisfied	17	4.2		
Somewhat Satisfied	116	29.0		
Very Satisfied	240	60.0		

Note. Frequency and percentage distribution given for categorical variables and Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range for continuous variables.

Ordinal Logistic Regression results

The results of ordinal logistic regression are given in Table 3. The results showed that district ($p < .05$), gender ($p < .05$), and trust in state institutions ($p < .01$) significantly contributed to the model. The remaining socio-demographic

variables (social organization, age, marital status, education, monthly household income) were statistically insignificant ($p > .05$). The odds of higher satisfaction were 1.91 times (95% CI: 1.01 – 3.64, $p < .05$) higher in respondents belonging to District Faisalabad compared to Rawalpindi District. The odds of higher satisfaction were lower in Lahore and higher in Gujranwala compared to District Rawalpindi, but these odds were statistically insignificant. The odds of higher satisfaction were 1.58 times (95% CI: 1.03 – 2.36, $p < .05$) higher in male respondents compared to females. The odds of higher satisfaction increased by 1.09 times (95% CI: 1.04 – 1.15, $p < .01$) with increase in trust in state institutions.

Table 3: Ordinal Logistic Regression to predict Satisfaction with Life from socio-demographic and trust in state institutions (N = 400)

Variables	aOR	95% CI	p-value
District			
Lahore	0.75	0.43 – 1.33	.324
Faisalabad	1.91	1.01 – 3.64	.048
Gujranwala	1.47	0.77 – 2.78	.241
Rawalpindi	1		
Social Organization			
Rural	0.75	0.40 – 1.39	.355
Urban	1		
Gender			
Male	1.58	1.03 – 2.36	.037
Female	1		
Age (years)	0.99	0.98 – 1.02	.866
Currently Married			
No	1		
Yes	1.07	0.65 – 1.77	.797
Household Income (PKR/month)	1.00	1.00 – 1.00	.602
Education			
No formal schooling	1.67	0.53 – 5.24	.378
Primary	1.96	0.58 – 6.58	.278
Middle	1.36	0.41 – 4.52	.615
Matriculation	1.56	0.49 – 5.00	.456
Intermediate	1.74	0.51 – 5.93	.379

Bachelors	0.53	0.15 – 1.88	.327
Masters or above	1		
Trust in State Institutions	1.09	1.04 – 1.15	.001

Note. aOR = adjusted odds ratio, 95% CI = Confidence Interval of aOR at 95%

Discussion

Trust plays a significant role in the development of life satisfaction. Trustworthy people have a propensity to view others' motives more favorably, which encourages pro-social behavior and fosters collaboration for the common good that is favorable with benefits for society (Stolle, 2001). The theoretical justification for this viewpoint is that the laws that control how citizens behave have an impact on how individuals judge how trustworthy other people are eventually affecting their life satisfaction (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). More precisely, the fairness and efficiency of state institutions, such as the court, the police, or the parliament, serve as crucial indicators of both social norms and the incentives for dishonest behavior (Knack & Keefer, 1997). Fair and effective governmental institutions serve as a foundation for trust by sending the message that dishonest activity is rare and will be sanctioned regardless of who engages in it (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008).

The institutional explanation is experiential in that it assumes that interactions with state institution representatives, i.e., public servants like bureaucrats and police officers; shape people's conceptions of the generalized other i.e., their social trust (Rothstein & Stolle, 2001). More precisely, it is frequently asserted that views of the fairness and efficacy of governmental institutions act as a mediating factor in how such experiences affect social trust (You 2012; Sønderskov & Dinesen 2014). It is impossible to overstate the impact of faith in state institutions on life happiness since it serves as a vital link between how well a state operates and how well its citizens are treated. The importance of this relationship to people, communities, and society at large cannot be exaggerated. The faith that peoples have in their government's ability to act in their best interests, maintain the law, and deliver necessary services is referred to as trust in state institutions (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008). Contrarily, life satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that includes one's general contentment, happiness, and wellbeing.

Investigating several interrelated factors is necessary to comprehend the impact of trust in governmental institutions on life satisfaction such as quality of governance, social cohesion and stability, citizen engagement and participation, effective service delivery, reduction of injustice and corruption and psychological

and emotional impact. The level of trust acts as a gauge of effective governance (Krawczyk & Sweet –Cushman, 2017). A favorable opinion of governance is fostered when people believe that their government is open, responsible, and responsive to their needs. Due to the belief that their problems are being taken care of and their rights are being respected, people have greater levels of life satisfaction because of this favorable perspective. A society's social stability and cohesiveness are promoted through public trust in institutions (Chan et al., 2006). Citizens are more inclined to willingly comply with rules and regulations when they perceive that governmental institutions are reasonable and fair. Following society's standards and regulations fosters a sense of security and well-being by establishing an atmosphere of order and predictability. Greater life satisfaction results from increased sense of participation and ownership in determining the future of the community (Zhang et al., 2022).

Trust serves as a deterrent to injustice and corruption. There is less tolerance for unethical behavior and the misuse of power when organizations are believed to function honestly and transparently (Luo, 2005). A fairer allocation of chances and resources results from decreased corruption and injustice, which improves general life satisfaction. Trust in state institutions can have negative psychological and emotional effects. Feelings of disappointment, irritability, and disillusionment can result from perceived breaches of trust, such as instances of wrongdoing or failure on the part of the government (Adams et al., 2010). On the other hand, when institutions maintain their pledges and responsibilities, citizens feel confident and optimistic feelings that might increase their life satisfaction.

Apart from the fact that trust in institutions play an important role in one's life satisfaction there are also other contributing factors as well. A lot of factors like age, gender, income, marital status, education and social organization play a key role in determining an individual's life satisfaction (Bibi et al., 2015). The association between one's age and their overall contentment and happiness has changed over time, and this relationship can be seen in the impact of age on life satisfaction, which is a crucial part of human growth and well-being (George et al., 1985; Chen, 2001; Bartram, 2021). Age has an impact on life satisfaction in youth as this time is characterized by new goals; there is an excitement for new experiences along with personal growth. At middle age this transition is marked by career advancement, personal development along with family responsibilities hence resulting in a variation in the life satisfaction. At a later stage of life, the influence on this satisfaction is because of a deeper sense of contemplation and reflection.

The link between gender and life satisfaction is complex and varied, involving the interaction of cultural standards, individual experiences, and subjective feelings of wellbeing (Costanza et al., 2007). People's experiences and assessments of their overall contentment and pleasure can be strongly influenced by gender, a social construct that affects roles, expectations, and possibilities. Social expectations and norms frequently vary by gender (Felmlee et al., 2012). These expectations may have an impact on how satisfied people feel with their lives. For instance, conventional gender roles may impose separate goals and sources of satisfaction on men and women, which may influence their general well-being (Diener et al., 1999).

An important facet of satisfaction that emphasizes the link between financial resources and general contentment and pleasure is the effect of money on life satisfaction (Boyce, Brown, & Moore, 2010). Even while money is not the only factor in determining life happiness, it is quite important in determining many aspects of a person's quality of life. To satisfy fundamental necessities including those for food, shelter, clothes, and healthcare, one must have a sufficient income (Streeten, 1984). Possessing the resources to meet these needs helps one feel secure and stable, which in turn improves overall life satisfaction. The level of living of an individual is directly influenced by income. Access to better housing, education, healthcare, and other amenities that improve quality of life is made possible by more income. Higher income earners are often more likely to report feeling satisfied with their lives (Myers, 2000; Bergefurt et al., 2019).

An important facet of a person's wellbeing that illustrates the significance of interpersonal ties and relationships in determining overall contentment and pleasure is the effect of marital status on life satisfaction. Whether single, married, divorced, or widowed, one's marital status can have an impact on several life satisfaction factors (Botha & Booysen, 2013). Numerous social, emotional, and psychological variables all play a role in the complex relationship between married status and life satisfaction. However, in a study conducted in South Africa no significant relationship was found (Powdthavee, 2003; Hinks & Gruen, 2007). Furthermore, a weak positive relationship was found indicating that married individuals had a higher well-being as compared with other marital groups (Møller, 2007).

The complex link between social organization, especially residing in urban or rural settings, and life satisfaction illustrates how an individual's surroundings may affect their general well-being and satisfaction. Different lifestyles, opportunities, and difficulties are present in urban and rural locations, and these factors might influence different aspects of life satisfaction. Whether one lives in

an urban or rural setting, the influence of social structure on life satisfaction is impacted by a complicated web of variables (Hand, 2020). One important and well researched facet of human well-being is how education affects life satisfaction. Education is crucial in influencing people's experiences, opportunities, and views, which in turn can affect how happy and satisfied they feel on all levels. Education is typically used as a control variable in studies that do focus on happiness, although results are typically mixed, with some pointing to a positive link between education and personal well-being (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004). Therefore, education has a wide-ranging and complex influence on life satisfaction.

The findings of the study should be interpreted keeping in view the following limitations. The study used a positivist methodology and did not include qualitative research methods. Prospective studies should therefore focus on using either mixed methods or qualitative designs to better understand the experiences of Christian minorities in Pakistan. This study exclusively studied the role of trust in state institutions in affecting the life satisfaction of Christian minorities in Pakistan however there are other factors too that can affect life satisfaction and wellbeing such as access to healthcare and religious discrimination. Future studies should focus on these as well as other factors to avoid theoretical reductionism and present a more holistic understanding of factors that affect satisfaction with life among minorities. The study was cross-sectional in nature and repeated measurements were not taken so causality between trust in state institutions and satisfaction with life cannot be established. Also, the study was conducted in just four cities of Punjab with a limited sample in each city so the results should be carefully generalized to wider Christian population in Pakistan.

Conclusion

This study has uncovered a significant and previously underexplored dimension of trust in state institutions in understanding the life satisfaction of Christian minorities in Pakistan. This finding underscores the insightful effects of institutional trust on the overall well-being and satisfaction of this vulnerable group. The significant relationship of trust in state institutions as a predictor of life satisfaction suggests that policies and actions aimed at maintaining trust between the Government and Christian minorities can have far-reaching implications for their quality of life. It highlights the need for transparent, comprehensive, and fair governance that fosters trust among all religious minorities. This study also offers a chance to policymakers to recognize the importance of addressing the exclusive challenges faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. The implementation of anti-discrimination laws and policies such as

enforcing judgment given by Justice Tassaduq Jilani in 2014 and enforcement of National Action Plan 2014 can protect the rights of minorities, decrease their persecution, and increase their trust in state. Likewise, providing and promoting equal access to employment, education, healthcare, and other opportunities for minorities can elevate their status in society, reduce disparities, and increase their trust in state institutions. By encouraging an environment where Christian minorities can trust and rely on state institutions for protection and support, the government can contribute to the improved well-being of these communities.

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