

The Role of Gender Identification on the Relationship Between Religiosity, Socio-economic status and Morality

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Abstract- Gender plays a pivotal role in causing myriad behaviors in similar situations. The aim of the current study is to assess the moderating effect of Gender Identification in the relationship between Religiosity, Morality and Socio-economic Status. The study used data collected from 99 participants between the ages 28 to 43. Moderation Analysis and Regression Analysis was carried out for the purpose of this study. The findings indicated insignificant role of Gender Identification as the moderator variable, while the results of multiple regression showed a significant positive cause-and-effect relationship of Religiosity and Socio-economic Status on Morality. The findings imply that Religiosity and Socio-economic Status play a key role in forming a sense of morality.

Index Terms: Gender Identity, Religion, Moral inclinations, Caste, Standard of living, Economy

I. INTRODUCTION

Overview

India's diverse religious landscape—including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, and others—shapes a wide array of cultural values, rituals, and moral beliefs. Religiosity, or the importance of religion in one's life, influences personality and behavior by encouraging individuals to act in line with their faith's ethical standards. Religiosity is the level of significance of religion for an individual. "Religiosity portrays the degree of an individual's belief in God, his/her adherence to the religious practices and values applied in his/her daily routine" (Chin, Mansori, Rezaee, & Homayoun, 2021). Morality, as per Dahl "comprises obligatory concerns with how to treat other sentient beings, as well as the judgments, reasoning, emotions, and actions that spring from these concerns" (2023). Gender also influences moral decisions. As stated by

Brickell, Gender is the cultural overlay that creates men and women (2006). Traditionally seen as binary, gender is now viewed as a spectrum between masculinity and femininity. Gender identity is closely affiliated with Gender roles. Gender roles are traditionally predetermined roles set for men and women, such as a man is the sole breadwinner of the family while the woman assumes the role of caretaker. Association of gender roles and one's identity gives rise to gender identification. Gender Identification refers to an individual sense of own self-identified gender (2021). Gender Identification seeks to note if individuals are in compliance with the pre-established gender roles. Gender identity impacts moral reasoning and self-concept. As individuals move beyond stereotypical roles, their moral values may evolve.

Socio-economic status (SES), another significant factor, "can be defined as a representation of an individual's relative position in an economic-social-cultural hierarchy tied to power, prestige, and control over resources" (2023; 2019). SES may be affected by factors such as disability (2017), immigrant status (2012), or criminal background. Low SES can lead to insecurity and fear of social exclusion, prompting practical, survival-oriented decisions that may sometimes override moral values.

Overall, religiosity, gender identification, and socio-economic status collectively shape an individual's moral functioning, influencing how they perceive right and wrong and how they respond to social and ethical situations. These factors are crucial to understanding morality in a diverse and evolving society like India.

Rational

Moral identity is shaped by upbringing, religion, culture, socio-economic status, personal values, and gender. Research shows gender identification moderates the relationship between religiosity and socio-economic status in influencing morality. However, such studies lack

relevance in the Indian context, especially considering culturally rooted gender norms. Moreover, the influence of socio-economic status in establishing moral foundations is an understudied phenomenon. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on Indian millennials (aged 28–43), a key segment of today's workforce. Understanding their values and motivations can inform organizational training programs that foster stronger work ethics, employee loyalty, and moral development tailored to generational and cultural contexts.

Theoretical Perspectives

German sociologist Hartmut Rosa theorizes “resonance” as a reciprocal relationship with the world, suggesting that religion offers this resonance by fostering a sense of presence and connection. Thus, religion shapes not only spiritual practices but also psychological traits, behavior, and social life (Žalec, 2021). UK researchers Stephen Joseph and Deborah Diduca determine religiosity in terms of preoccupation, guidance, conviction, and emotional involvement, focusing on its psychological dimensions (2007). Meanwhile, German psychologists Huber and Huber propose five dimensions—intellectual, ideological, public and private practice, and experience—to measure religiosity's role in personality (2012). While both models overlap, they differ in focus and application. Evolutionary psychology explores morality as a human virtue that evolved to enhance social cooperation and community living. As social beings, humans adopt cooperative strategies for long-term survival (2023). Sensitivity to emotional cues like facial expressions and tone helps detect deceit, reinforcing trust and social cohesion. Morality likely co-evolved with religion, as both reinforce communal values. The Moral Foundations Theory by Haidt, Joseph, and Graham posits “moral intuitions derive from innate psychological mechanisms that co-evolved with cultural institutions and practices” (2009). Values like fairness, justice, and reciprocity align with the concept of reciprocal altruism—where helping others leads to future reciprocation. Though individuals might avoid reciprocation for self-preservation, humans are socially conditioned to uphold such virtues for long-term relational and communal benefits (Trivers, 1971). This is supported by the idea of a social contract, where individuals

may endure short-term sacrifices for long-term cooperative advantages. Thus, morality fosters loyalty, equality, and trust, essential for human survival and societal harmony.

The Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), developed by Jesse Graham and others, emerged from research in evolutionary psychology and anthropology to explain morality's nuanced roots. It identifies five moral foundations: Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity (Individuality-based), and Ingroup/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, Purity/Sanctity (Group-based) (2011). These foundations reflect both personal and communal dimensions of morality. Another influential model, the “Big Three” from cross-cultural studies in the U.S. and India, categorizes morality into the Ethics of Autonomy, Community, and Divinity. Autonomy emphasizes harm, justice, and individual rights, often associated with individualistic cultures like the U.S. (1997). The Ethic of Community focuses on group norms and loyalty, while the Ethic of Divinity centers on sanctity and purity, shaped by religious and cultural values (Bruce, 2013). Comparatively, Autonomy aligns with Harm and Fairness in MFT; Community parallels Ingroup and Authority; and Divinity resonates with Purity. These models together underscore how morality is shaped by both evolutionary imperatives and cultural-religious contexts, highlighting varied moral emphasis across societies depending on cultural and religious orientations.

The Theory of Basic Human Values defines values as emotion-linked, motivational beliefs that guide actions, decisions, and evaluations across situations. Schwartz (2006) outlines ten core values common across cultures: Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Security, Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence, and Universalism. Power values involve social status, control, and dominance within societal structures. In this context, Socio-economic Status aligns with power values and is considered a key factor influencing moral inclinations, as values serve a motivational function shaping behavior and ethical orientation.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Intersection of Gender, Religion and Morality

A study by Chin et al. (2021) explored the impact of religiosity, ethnicity, and gender identification on moral judgment, with self-transcendence as a mediating factor. Using 300 self-administered questionnaires across five Malaysian universities, the study found a strong direct

correlation between religiosity and self-transcendence, along with positive links between gender identification, self-transcendence, and moral judgment. Ethnicity had the strongest influence on moral judgment, followed by religiosity and gender. Moral judgment was measured through scenario-based assessments, while other variables used standardized scales. The authors emphasized incorporating ethical values in organizational training to enhance accountability and reduce misconduct.

On the other hand, Fumagalli et al. (2009) studied 100 participants (50 male, 50 female) aged 20–32 from various educational and religious backgrounds. Despite evaluating cultural variables, findings indicated gender-based differences in moral judgments, unaffected by religion or education. The study suggested biological factors may better explain these differences, advocating further research across diverse age groups.

A Turkish study (2016) involving 167 mostly female Muslim participants aged 18–30 examined moral decision-making using harmless-taboo scenarios. It found the ethic of divinity most influential, especially among religious and Islamist individuals. Less religious and Neither Secularist Neither Islamist (NSNI) individuals leaned toward autonomy, while secularists favored community ethics. Women were more likely to feel disgust and intervene, aligning with the theory that women experience stronger disgust responses, leading to stricter moral judgments. The study also highlighted socio-economic and ethnic influences on moral reasoning. Collectively, these studies illustrate the complex interplay between gender, religiosity, culture, and biology in shaping moral judgment.

Researches on Morality

The article “*Morality in Everyday Life*” by Hofmann et al. (2014) studied 3,828 participants' moral and immoral acts using the five dimensions of Moral Foundations Theory. It found political ideology influenced moral focus: liberals emphasized Fairness, Liberty, and Honesty, while conservatives focused on Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity. Happiness was impacted by being the recipient of moral or immoral acts, while a sense of purpose increased with performing moral acts. Moral contagion and moral self-licensing also boosted

individuals' likelihood of engaging in future moral behavior.

Neurobiology behind Moral Thinking

Joshua D. Greene and colleagues (2001) conducted brain imaging studies using fMRI on 18 participants to examine neural responses during moral and non-moral decision-making. Participants judged 60 dilemmas (moral-personal, moral-impersonal, and non-moral) as “appropriate” or “inappropriate.” Results showed greater activation in the medial frontal gyrus, posterior cingulate gyrus, and bilateral angular gyrus during personal moral dilemmas—regions linked with emotional processing—indicating emotional involvement in such decisions. In contrast, cognitive-processing areas like the middle frontal gyrus and parietal lobe were more active during impersonal and non-moral dilemmas, suggesting these rely more on reasoning. No significant neural difference was found between moral-impersonal and non-moral judgments.

In a follow-up study, Greene et al. (2004) further analyzed brain activity in easy vs. difficult personal moral dilemmas and utilitarian vs. non-utilitarian judgments. Difficult dilemmas activated the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), inferior parietal lobes, and anterior cingulate cortex, reflecting cognitive conflict. Utilitarian judgments—where moral violations are accepted for greater good—showed increased activity in the anterior DLPFC and right inferior parietal lobe. Thus, DLPFC activity predicts utilitarian reasoning in moral decision-making.

Caravita et al. (2012) studied moral reasoning in children and adolescents, revealing that SES and cultural background influence moral evaluations. Children from lower SES families were more likely to view disobedient but non-harmful actions as moral violations, unlike their higher SES peers. Immigrant children also viewed rules more rigidly, likely due to fear of social exclusion from rule-breaking, reflecting their heightened sensitivity to societal norms.

III. METHODOLOGY

Aim

To investigate the nature of impact, Gender Identification causes on the role of Religiosity and Socio-economic status on Moral Behaviour, and the nature of relationship between Religiosity, Socio-economic status and Morality.

Variables

- Independent Variables: Religiosity and Socio- economic Status
- Dependent Variable: Morality
- Moderating Variable: Gender Identification

Participants

Data from 99 participants was collected. 39 of them were woman and 60 were men. People who resided in India and belonged to the age of 28 to 43 years were considered in the study. Participants varied on the aspects of Religion and Area of Residence.

Research Design

The study was conducted through the survey method with separate Gender Identification questions for men and women included in the same form. The study aims to explore the moderating effects of Gender Identification on the role of Religiosity and Socio- economic Status on Morality. The relationship between Religiosity and Morality, and Socio-economic Status and Morality is also assessed using regression analysis. Participants were also measure on Social Desirability to detect the tendency to present oneself as favourable by others and assess whether it affects the variables.

Thus, in addition to findings of previous research, emotional as well as cognitive processes are at work while judging an event in the contexts of morality.

Social factors influencing Morality

Karen Heimer (1997) examined how socio- economic status (SES), parenting, peer influence, and prior violence affect violent delinquency. Her findings showed that lower SES youth are more prone to violent behavior. This is linked to power-assertive parenting styles and poor monitoring, leading to associations with aggressive peers.

Data Collection

Participants were circulated the questionnaire through Google Forms via social media platforms using convenience sampling method.

Data Analysis

In line with the nature of this research, Moderation Analysis was conducted on R and RStudio Software. Jasp Software was used to conduct Regression Analysis as well as to compute of Descriptive Statistics.

IV. RESULTS

85% of the Participants belonged to Hinduism and more than half perceived themselves as residing in Urban area. The Mean and Standard Deviation of Gender Identification Male (GIM), Gender Identification Female (GIF), Socio-economic Status (SES), Religiosity, Morality, Social Desirability, Age and Gender are given in Table1. The mean age of the participants was 36.39 (Table1).

Table1: Descriptive Statistics

	<i>GIM</i>	<i>GIF</i>	<i>SES</i>	<i>Religiosity</i>	<i>Morality</i>	<i>Social Desirability</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>
<i>N</i>	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
<i>Mean</i>	4.040	2.717	38.010	3.608	13.051	2.939	36.394	1.404
<i>Std. Deviation</i>	3.990	3.761	9.488	0.868	4.26	0.935	4.453	0.493
<i>Minimum</i>	0.000	0.000	10.000	1.130	0.000	1.000	28.000	1.000
<i>Maximum</i>	16.000	13.000	50.000	5.000	16.000	4.000	43.000	2.000

Table 2: Regression Analysis

<i>Model</i>		<i>Unstandardized Error</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Standardized</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>M₀</i>	(Intercept)	13.051	0.428		30.479	< .001
<i>M₁</i>	(Intercept)	4.640	3.116		1.489	0.140
	Religiosity	1.350	0.485	0.275	2.785	0.006
	SES	0.082	0.048	0.167	1.691	0.094
	Social Desirability	0.120	0.446	0.026	0.270	0.788

Table 3: Moderation Analysis

<i>Gender Identity as a Moderator</i>		Morality and Religiosity		Morality and SES	
Variable		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Religiosity * Gender Identity		0.10	0.21		
SES * Gender Identity				-0.03	0.02

Note. Separate moderation analyses were computed where 'Gender Identity' was treated as a moderator in the relationship between Morality and Religiosity, and Morality and Socio-economic status.

Table 2 shows regression analysis of Religiosity, Socio-economic Status and Social Desirability as the predictor variables and Morality as the response variable. The table reports that Religiosity cause moderately positive and statistically significant influence on Morality ($t = 2.758$, $p < 0.05$). Following Religiosity, Socio-economic status also plays a moderately positive and statistically significant role as a predictor of Morality ($t = 1.691$, $p < 0.05$). On the other hand, the values produced by Social Desirability as the predictor suggest that it has very small and statistically insignificant effect on the dependent variable ($t = 0.270$, p value significantly greater than 0.05).

Table 3 represents the Moderation analysis of Gender Identification as the moderator in the impact of Religiosity on Morality and Socio-economic Status on Morality. The Standardized Beta Coefficient (B) and the Standard Error of Beta Coefficient ($SE B$) were both found to be insignificant. This indicated that Gender Identification enhances the positive effect of Religiosity on Morality although the strength of this relationship is statistically insignificant. The B and $SE B$ values for Gender Identification as a moderator in the relationship between Socio-economic Status and Morality imply that Gender Identification causes a negative effect in the aforementioned relationship, however the smaller magnitude of the coefficients (-0.03) indicate that the moderation effect of Gender Identification is not practically significant.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that Religiosity and Socio-economic Status (SES) significantly predict Morality. Increased religiosity and higher SES correlate with higher moral judgment, especially regarding decisions around immoral acts for monetary gain. This suggests that individuals with

strong religious beliefs and higher SES are less likely to engage in morally questionable behavior, while those with weak religious faith and lower SES may be more inclined to do so, possibly explaining higher crime rates in economically disadvantaged groups.

The Moral Foundations Sacredness Scale aligns with the economic dimension of SES, supporting the claim that morality is influenced by financial incentives and ethical beliefs. However, Gender Identification was not found to moderate the relationship between Religiosity and SES on Morality, indicating that conformity to traditional gender roles does not significantly impact these variables.

Furthermore, Social Desirability was not a significant predictor of Morality, suggesting participants responded honestly and not just to conform with social norms. Altogether, the study confirms a strong positive influence of Religiosity and Socio-economic status on Morality.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study's sample size may not accurately represent the Indian population aged 28–43, potentially explaining the non-significant moderation effects, despite past research indicating otherwise. The Socio-economic Status (SES) scale used was outdated, lacking crucial indicators like income, internet access, or modern assets, instead focusing on obsolete measures such as farm ownership or household items from the 1960s–70s. This highlights the urgent need for a relevant, flexible SES scale that reflects current Indian and global economic realities.

Additionally, the morality scale's binary scoring system (1 for "Never for any amount of money," 0 for all other responses) oversimplifies responses, failing to capture nuances between options and limiting interpretative depth.

Future research should involve diverse age groups and improved SES and morality measures, with representative samples to better examine the moderating role of Gender Identification. Investigating the link between SES and criminal behavior may further explain socio-economic

influences on moral actions. Broader insights into morality's predictors can help guide policy and organizational efforts to foster ethical behavior and cooperative social living.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Gender Identification does not significantly moderate the relationship between Religiosity or Socio-economic Status (SES) and Morality. However, Religiosity and SES emerged as strong predictors of Morality. Greater religious faith often aligns with higher moral values.

The positive link between SES and Morality suggests that as SES increases, so does moral behavior, though exceptions exist. Lower SES individuals may still act morally, influenced by their religious beliefs and personal values, indicating a more intricate moral processing. The Moral Foundations Sacredness Scale offers insights into moral compromise for monetary gain, but moral dilemmas could better assess complex moral reasoning.

For organizations, monetary incentives can promote ethical behavior, but since Religiosity has a stronger influence on Morality, long-term ethical improvement may require fostering employee loyalty, purpose, and commitment through value-driven programs.

The findings highlight the need for more culturally relevant, large-scale studies to deepen understanding of how religiosity, SES, and morality interact within the Indian context.

APPENDIX

Instruments:

1. *Gender Identification Scale* (Chin, Mansori, Rezaee, & Homayoun, 2021)
2. *Centrality of Religiosity Scale* (Huber & Huber, 2012)
3. *Udai Pareek Socio-economic Status Scale* (Majumdar, 2021)
4. *Moral Sacredness Foundations Scale* (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009)
5. *Brief Social Desirability Scale* (Haghighat, 2013)

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