

Influence of Religiosity on Perceived Trust among University of Lagos Undergraduate Students

Ayenibiowo K.O.

Psychology Department, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.

Email: kehinde.ayenibiowo@yahoo.com

Ayeni O.B.

Psychology Department, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.

yayeni2002@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study examined the effect of religiosity on perceived trust among undergraduates. A total of 122 undergraduates participated in the study. Fifty eight of them were male while sixty-four were female. Six stories depicting two characters (a male and a female) each of low, moderate and high religiosity were used to assess perceived trust. Participants were requested to determine the extent to which they would trust the characters in the stories. In addition, a Religious Trust Scale was administered on the participants to assess their level of intrinsic religiosity. The results show a significant positive relationship between the participants' level of intrinsic religiosity and their perceived trust of the highly religious ($r = 0.82$) and the moderately religious characters ($r = 0.76$) at $P < 0.01$. It also revealed that level of trust increased slightly with the level of religiosity of the character being assessed. The highly religious characters were assessed as more trustworthy (mean = 65.23; SD = 11.29) than the moderately religious (mean = 62.57; SD = 10.26) and the non religious (mean = 56.82; SD = 15.53) characters. However the differences are not significant. The result did not also show any significant differences between the male and the female participants in religious trust and intrinsic religiosity. The findings underscore the role of similarity and stereotype in interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Religiosity; Perceived Trust

1. Introduction

In its narrowest sense, religiosity deals more with how religious a person is, and less with how a person is religious (in terms of practicing certain rituals, retelling certain myths, revering certain symbols, or accepting certain doctrines about deities and afterlife). In its broadest sense it is a complex, multidimensional construct used to refer to the numerous aspects of religious activity, dedication, and belief (religious doctrine). Some studies have found that there are multiple dimensions of religiosity (they often employ factor analysis). For instance, Cornwall, Albrecht, Cunningham and Pitcher (1986) identified 6 dimensions of religiosity based on the understanding that there are at least three components to religious behaviour: knowing (cognition); this component is manifested through beliefs in supernatural being and varies from absence of such beliefs to acceptance of complete creeds of a doctrine, feeling (affect); this component is measured as intensity of affects of reverence, adoration, humility, thankfulness towards the divine being, and doing (behaviour); this component is demonstrated by the degree of readiness to act according to convictions and emotions. The action component refers to religious behaviour, the practice of religious rites, varying from their absence to maximum respect of prescribed rites.

Trust on the other hand has been an important research issue in the areas of Psychology and Sociology since the late 1950s. Scholars of religion, including such luminaries as Durkheim and Turner have widely assumed that religiosity promotes intra-group trust among adherents. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, (1998) define trust as a “psychological state comprising of the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another.” Similarly, Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, (1998) describe trust as “an individual’s belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of the words, actions, and decisions of another.” While it is broadly recognized that both religion and trust are directly relevant to current world affairs, surprisingly, little attention has been given to how they are related to each other.

2. Previous Research

According to Ruffle & Sosis, (2004), religion can influence trust directly, especially within religious communities by promoting it via rituals. Religion can also influence trust indirectly, via psychological effect. Social categorization is the way by which individuals “simplify and systematize the (complicated) world into categories”(Brown, 2000). Categories facilitate the attribution of certain characteristics (e.g. “trustworthiness”) shared by those belonging to a group (e.g. “highly religious people”), i.e. group stereotyping (. Fiske, 1998). Orbell, Goldman, & Dawes, (1992) reported a widespread belief shared by people of both high and low religiosity alike, that more religious people are more cooperative. Further investigation into such beliefs (if that exist) can be regarded as legitimate beliefs in the sense that they derive from aspects of social reality (Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Major, 1994), i.e. trustworthiness increased with religiosity.

Koenig, McGue, Krueger, & Bouchard, (2005) investigated the relationship between religion and trust, using a questionnaire to measure general religiosity in addition to the extent of religious beliefs, experiences and rituals. These were then analyzed with behaviour in a trust game which was extended by providing information of a potential trustee’s religiosity. The extent to which trusting increased with a trustee’s religiosity in turn, increases with a truster’s religiosity. Trustworthiness also increased with religiosity at an increasing rate.

Ellison (1992) studied the correlation between religious involvement and niceness with a probability national sample of 2,107 black adults (1979-80); used regression analyses to control for factors such as age, education, sex, income, missing income, government aid, skin tone, physical unattractiveness, and self-esteem. The interpersonal friendliness and cooperation determined by post-hoc ratings by NSBA Interviewers shows that persons who

engaged in frequent devotional activities (prayer, Bible study, etc) were more open and less suspicious, and more enjoyable to interview; those who reported that religion was an important source of moral guidance were also viewed as friendlier, more interested, and more open than those for whom religion was less important.

3. Hypotheses

The present study aimed at investigating the influence of religiosity on perceived trust. The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1:** There will be positive and significant relationship between religiosity and perceived trust among the participants
- H2:** Participants with high score in the measure of religiosity will have a significantly high score in the measure of perceived trust.
- H3:** Female participants will score significantly higher than male participants in the measure of religiosity and perceived trust.

4. Research Method

4.1 Hypotheses Testing

4.1.1: Testing relationship between religiosity and perceived trust

To establish the relationship between religious affiliation and perceived trust of participants Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed. The correlation coefficient between the participants' level of religiosity and their perceived trust of the highly religious ($r = 0.82$), moderately religious characters ($r = 0.76$) and low religious characters ($r = 0.32$) against a critical r -value of 0.16, $df = 120$ at $P < 0.01$ revealed that there a positive and significant relationship between religiosity and perceived trust. This implies that the level of trust increased slightly with the level of religiosity of the character being assessed.

4.1.2: Testing effects of religiosity on perceived trust

To test the influence of religiosity level on perceived trust, mean and standard deviation of the participants in the three level of religious groups were calculated. The results shows that participants who were found to be highly religious had the highest mean score for trust (mean = 65.23; SD = 11.29) followed by those who were moderately religious (mean = 62.57; SD = 10.26) while the participants who were low in their level of religiosity had the lowest mean score for trust (mean = 56.82; SD = 15.53).

One way analysis of variance was computed to find out whether the differences **between the trust levels of the three groups are statistically significant. According to** calculated F-value of 0.35, 0.23, 1.45 for participants who were high, moderate and low in level of religiosity respectively against a critical F-value of 2.68, $df = 2/119$ at $p < 0.05$ showed that the differences are not statistically significant.

4.1.3: Testing effects of religiosity on perceived trust

To ascertain whether participants' gender will affect religiosity and perceived trust, the mean scores of the male and female participants were computed. Result shows that male participants have slightly higher mean scores (93.41 & 39.51 for perceived trust and religiosity) than female participants (mean = 91.22 & 38.61 for perceived trust and religiosity).

According to the calculated t-value of 0.74 and 0.46 for religiosity and perceived trust against a critical t-value of 1.96 at $P < 0.05$ level of significance, the mean differences has been rendered not significant. This implies that gender does not necessarily have significant influence on religiosity and perceived trust among the character assessed.

4.2: Participants

A total of 122 participants comprising of (58 males and 64 females) who were undergraduate students of University of Lagos Akoka, Yaba, Lagos with an age range of 17 to 39 years. The mean age for all the participants was 22.24 years with standard deviation of 2.83 years. The convenience and purposive random sampling techniques were used in selecting the participants.

4.3 Research Design

The design of this study is a survey design. The independent variable are

- Levels of Religious Trust Scale
- Gender(i.e. Male & Female)

The dependent variables consist of the trust scores obtained based on the perception of Religious affiliation story.

4.4: Research Instrument.

4.4.1: Religious Trust Scale: This is a 26 items questionnaire developed by Ayeni & Ayenibiowo (2009). It was designed to measure the level of an individual's intrinsic religiosity. It yields score on a 5-point Likert scale response format ranging from 1 to 5. RTS has an internal consistency alpha reliability coefficient of .74, Split-half reliability coefficient of .45, an Odd-Even reliability coefficient of .71 as well as concurrent validity of 0.21 with Religious Affiliation Scale developed by Omoluabi (1995).

4.4.2: Religious affiliation Story: This is a 6-items instrument designed to measure the extent to which an individual would trust another person based on the perception of the religious state of the person by assessing the individual response to a 3 paragraph passage depicting the religious level of a character. The religious affiliation story was designed in 3 variants, the first variant depicting an individual with very high religious affiliation, the second variant depicting an individual with moderate religious affiliation and the third variant depicting an individual with low religious affiliation.

4.4.3: Instruction

The instruction for the Religion Affiliation Story stated thus:

Please read the short story carefully and shade one of the numbers in front of each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. The numbers were: 1= very unlikely; 2= unlikely; 3= undecided, 4= likely; 5= very likely.

Reliability: The time interval for the test-retest reliability used was 14 days with reliability coefficient of .67.

Standardization: The religious affiliation story was designed taking into consideration socio-cultural and religious diversities; All the characters in the religious affiliation story were given Yoruba names so as to enable the test taker identify with the

character, prevent socio-cultural preferences, and to prevent the test taker from perceiving the religion of the character (Ibos are predominantly Christians while Hausas are predominantly Moslems) thereby influencing his/her attitude towards the character.

The religious affiliation story possesses content validity in view of the fact that it was developed by adopting items 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 20 from the Religious Affiliation Scale and ascribing each statement to the character of the story. The religious affiliation story possesses face validity given that during the preliminary administration, the respondents reported that it depicted the religious state of the character.

4.5 Research Procedure

The instruments were stapled together with the Religious Affiliation Story placed in front, and the Religious Trust Scale (RTS) placed at the back. The researcher then assembled the participants into a lecture room. The instructions for filling out the surveys were read aloud. At this time the participants were informed that they could choose to leave at any time and that their information would not be used. The instruments were handed out in the lecture room. Each participant was required to write his/her name, age, religion, sex and date on each of the instruments. No time constraints were placed on the participants. At the conclusion of the exercise, the participants were debriefed on the focus of the study, and the researchers' intentions of finding the influence of religiosity on perceived trust. After this was completed the participants were thanked for taking part in the exercise and then dismissed.

Scoring

After the data had been collected, the different scales were scored based on the manuals attached to the instruments.

All the items on RTS are scored directly; overall score of the individual is derived by dividing the sum of the total items by 3.

The Religious Affiliation Story involved direct scoring and reverse scoring.

Direct scoring items: 1,2

Reverse scoring items: 3,4,5,6

4.6: Data Analysis

In order to find out the influence of religiosity on perceived trust, Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 16 was used to compute the mean and standard deviation of the 122 participants' scores in the religious affiliation story and Religious Trust Scale. Thereafter, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-independent test were computed to ascertain whether the observed differences were statistically significant.

5. The Results of Hypotheses Testing

This study focussed on the influence of religiosity on perceived trust. Based on a very wide array of findings, this study tested certain hypotheses which shed new light to previous works.

5.1: Results of Testing H1

The finding that showed relationship between religiosity and perceived trust is in line with Jonathan and Claudia (2005) who investigated the relationship between religion and trust using 48 samples. They found that trusting increases with the potential trustee's religiosity. The extent to which trusting increases with trustee's religiosity, in turn increases with a truster's religiosity. They also found that trustworthiness increase with religiosity and at an increasing rate. This implies that the level of trust increased slightly with the level of

religiosity of the character being assessed. Also, the relationship between religiosity and perceived trust could be due to the social categorization process of stereotyping. As human beings, we categorize people in order to understand them i.e. introvert or extrovert, religious or irreligious, etc. This categorization simplifies information processing about a person by assigning the person to a group which indicates the possible characteristics of the individual. Once an individual has been categorized into a group, we tend to expect them to behave in a certain manner.

In our society, there is very high regard and respect for religious leaders and religious people alike, as a result of our socio-cultural and moral value system. We tend to perceive religious people as having higher moral standing than irreligious people. Perhaps we meet an individual who we observe as not being dedicated to his religion, we would be cynical towards and perceive him as having low moral standards and attributes such as dishonesty, fraudulence, deception, etc. So also if we meet a religious cleric, we would perceive him possessing high moral standards and attributes such as trustworthiness, integrity, dedication, honesty, etc, therefore, we would demonstrate and manifest more trust towards the religious leader in comparison with the irreligious individual.

5.2: Results of Testing H2

The participants who were found to be highly religious manifested the highest levels of trust in the character in the story followed by the participants who were moderately religious while the participants who were low in religious level manifested the lowest levels of trust at a non significant level. From this finding it can be stated that religiosity level does not necessarily influence perceived trust.

This is consistent with the findings of Fiske (1998) which propose that religion indirectly influences trust through the group stereotyping process. According to Fiske (1998), the likelihood of using certain social categorizes increases with the degree to which one has access to it. That is, “what a person brings to a situation contributes to the ease or difficulty with which categories are assessed” (if an individual is irreligious, it would be difficult for him to use religion as a yardstick in categorizing other people). The use of religiosity as a category is perhaps more accessible for those who are more religious. The underlying assumption of this argument rests on the likelihood that more religious people interact with others of high religiosity more frequently, while at the same time, religion is a more central concept in their lives, and so the category of religiosity is more salient to them. In turn, those who are not religious and perceive the stereotype that trustworthiness increases with religiosity as a legitimate belief deemed it useful for decision making regarding trust. Although it was anticipated that the religious affiliation of an individual would influence his trust towards another individual, that is, the degree to which an individual trusts another individual based on religiosity is dependent on the religiosity of that individual, this study did not find it so.

5.3: Results of Testing H3

The findings that gender does not influence religiosity and trust is contrary to that of Sosis (2005) who argued that the gender differences in religious affiliation are influenced by religion; he suggested that in Christendom, women tend to be more religiously affiliated than men while in Islam, men tend to be more religiously affiliated than women. It is also in line with the findings of various researchers, theologians and experts in religiosity who refuted the assertion that females demonstrate higher religious affiliation and trust than males.

6. Summary and Concluding Remarks

The findings of this study shows relationship between religiosity and perceived trust; highly religious group manifested the highest levels of trust in the character in the story followed by the participants who were moderately religious while the participants who were low in religious level manifested the lowest levels of trust at a non significant level; gender does not necessarily influence religiosity and trust.

Thus, this study shed more and new light to previous works on religiosity and perceived trust.

References

- Ayeni O.B. & Ayenibiowo (2009). Development, Standardization and Validation of Religious Trust Scale.
- Brewer, M.B. & Campbell, D.T. (1976). *Ethnocentrism and Inter-Attitudes: East African*, New York: Sage.
- Brown, R. (2000). *Group Processes* (2nd Ed.), Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cornwall, M., Albrecht, S.L., Cunningham, P.H. & Pitcher, B.L. (1986). *The dimensions of religiosity: A conceptual model with an empirical test*, Review of Religious Research, 27:226-244.
- Durkheim, E. (1995). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, New York: Free Press.
- Ellison, C.G. (1992). Are religious people nice people? Evidence from the National Survey of Black Americans, *Social Forces*, 71(2), 411-430.
- Fiske, S.T. (1998). "Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination" In Gilbert, D.T., Fiske, S.T. & Lindzey, G. (Eds.). *The handbook of Social Psychology*, (4th Ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Jonathan H.W.T. & Claudia V. Religion and Trust: an Experimental Study. *PsycINFO Classification*, 2920-3020.
- Koenig, L.B., McGue, m., Krueger, R.F. & Bouchard, T.J. (2005). *Genetic and environmental influences on religiousness*, New York: Sage.
- Lewicki, R.J., McAllister, D.J. & Bies, R.J. (1998). "Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities" *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 438-458.
- Major, B. (1994). "From social inequality to personal entitlement: The role of social comparisons, legitimacy appraisals and group membership" *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 293-355, 5, New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- Orbell, J., Goldman, M. & Dawes, R. (1992). "Religion, context and constraints towards strangers" *Relationality and Society*, 4, 291-301.
- Rousseau, D.M., Sitkin, S.B., Burt, R.S. & Camerer, C. (1998). "Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust," *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 393-404.
- Ruffle, B. & Sosis, R. (2004). *Does it pay to pray? Field experiments evaluation*. Harvard Negotiation, Organizations and Markets Research Paper, No.03-50.
- Sosis, R. (2005). "Ritual, emotion and sacred symbols" In Alcorta, C. (2005): *The Evolution of Religion as an Adaptive Complex*. Human Nature 16 (in press).
- Stark, R. & Finke, R. (2000). *Acts of faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Turner, V. (1995). *The Ritual Process*. Chicago, Aldine.