

Examining the Relationships among Religiosity, Hopelessness and Life Satisfaction in Male Sports Participating and Non-Sports Students

Muhammad Adnan¹, Fariq Ahmed², Asif Ali³, Muhammad Azam⁴, Qaisar Ali⁵

¹M.Phil. Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

²M.Phil. Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

³Associate Professor, Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

⁴Assistant Professor, Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

⁵BS Physical Education, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

Correspondence: m.azam@gcu.edu.pk⁴

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The present study was carried out to compare life satisfaction, hopelessness, and religiosity among sports participating and non-sports university students and to examine how these variables were related within each group.

Methodology: Data was collected from 397 students among them 196 ($M_{age} = 20.79$, $SD = 1.787$) were male sports participating students and 201 ($M_{age} = 21.25$, $SD = 1.915$) were non-sports students. The nature of this research was quantitative cross-sectional. For life satisfaction a tool named Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), for hopelessness a tool named Hopelessness Inventory-5 Scale (Wang et al., 2023) and for religiosity a tool named Religiosity of Islam Scale (Jana-Masri & Priester, 2007) were utilized. Appropriate statistical tests were run to analyze the data.

Results: The findings showed that students who regularly participated in sports reported greater life satisfaction and lower hopelessness than their non-sports counterparts. However, no difference was observed in religiosity between the two groups. Correlation analysis further showed that hopelessness was negatively related to life satisfaction in both groups. Among sports participating students, religiosity was associated with lower hopelessness but was not related to life satisfaction. In contrast, religiosity among non-sports students was linked with both higher life satisfaction and lower hopelessness.

Conclusion: These findings provide a better understanding of the psychological well-being of university students and may help educational institutions and sports professionals design programs that promote both mental health and positive lifestyle behavior.

Keywords: Hopelessness, Life satisfactions, Religiosity, Sports participating students, Non-sport students

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religiosity is commonly understood as the extent to which individuals adhere to, practice, and derive meaning from religious beliefs, values, and activities (Aggarwal et al., 2023). Among university students, religiosity plays a particularly important role because this period of life is often characterized by major academic, social, and personal transitions (Fatima et al., 2024). During these years, students are required to make important decisions regarding their education, career, relationships, and future aspirations, which may expose them to considerable stress and uncertainty (Duche-Pérez et al., 2024). In such circumstances, religious beliefs and practices can serve as valuable sources of emotional support, purpose, and guidance (Fuad & Masuwd, 2023). Previous research has shown that higher levels of religiosity are often associated with greater psychological well-being, stronger coping abilities, and lower levels of stress and anxiety (Graça & Brandão, 2024). Conversely, lower religiosity or spiritual disengagement may leave some individuals with fewer psychological resources to navigate challenging life circumstances (Grant et al., 2023). Given its role in shaping perceptions of adversity and personal meaning, religiosity has frequently been examined in relation to hopelessness, a psychological state characterized by negative expectations about the future.

Hopelessness, however, refers to a persistent tendency to hold pessimistic views regarding future outcomes and one's ability to overcome difficulties (Tonkuş et al., 2022). It is considered an important indicator of psychological well-being and has received substantial attention in university populations (Zhang et al., 2022). Students frequently encounter academic pressures, financial concerns, social adjustments, and uncertainties regarding future employment, all of which may contribute to feelings of hopelessness (Dobos et al., 2024). While mild concerns about the future may occasionally motivate individuals to work harder toward their goals, prolonged hopelessness has been linked to numerous adverse outcomes, including depression, anxiety, reduced academic performance, and diminished psychological well-being (Iweama et al., 2024). Research has consistently demonstrated that hopelessness is negatively associated with positive life outcomes and overall quality of life (Ramón-Arбуés et al., 2022). As a result, it has become increasingly important to explore factors that may protect students from developing hopelessness and to understand how hopelessness may influence life satisfaction.

On the other hand, individual's personal assessment of how well their life is progressing according to their own standards and expectations (Yaden et al., 2022). It represents a key component of subjective well-being and reflects the degree to which people feel content with various aspects of their lives (Kerry et al., 2023). Acknowledging increased attention toward student wellness, experts have exhibited a rising interest in the impact of spirituality, religious views and emotional sensitivities on psychological well-being (Dubey et al., 2025). According to research, students who have a strong connection to their faith are more likely to deal with academic pressure in a good way, come back from difficulties and feel hopeful about the future (Sajid et al., 2024). Whereas athletes tend to be more resilient and less sad than non-athletes. This is because they exercise regularly and get mental support from their teams (Popovych et al., 2022). In university populations both religiosity and depression have been linked to variations in their mental health and total happiness with life (Abdel-Khalek et al., 2025). These things might influence how well students are able to learn from their difficulties, stay hopeful and keep their emotions in check when they are stressed (Córdova et al., 2023).

In general students who are more religiously committed likely be more resilient and emotionally stable than those who are sad especially in stressful environments (Hussain et al., 2023). Many athletes use their religious beliefs to help them stay motivated, disciplined and mentally strong. Non-athletes on the other hand often depend on social interactions to deal with their problems. These mental tools can help students at universities, where they have to deal with the pressures of academic, social circles and their personal lives. These students can use these resources to make better choices and keep their minds healthy (Chemagosi, 2024). Students stress connections to others, personal views and mental health conditions can all affect their life satisfaction which is their way of rating their overall quality of life (Padmanabhanunni et al., 2023).

A solid understanding of these psychological aspects makes it easier to create more effective psychological assistance and counseling programs that target both positive and negative affective factors (Ciarrochi et al., 2022). Improving protective characteristics like religiosity and reducing hazards like despair are critical steps in encouraging university students well-being and academic success (Karris Bachik et al., 2021). While people are more interested in student psychological well-being and health, more study is needed to understand how religiosity and hopelessness affect university students' daily life satisfaction. This population faces significant psychological problems related to identity formation, academic performance and prospective futures (Potterton et al., 2022).

1.1. Study Objectives

Despite growing interest in the individual relationships between religiosity, hopelessness, and life satisfaction, limited research has simultaneously examined these constructs among sports-participating and non-sports university students. The present study was therefore designed to investigate the relationships among religiosity, hopelessness, and life satisfaction in male sports-participating and non-sports students. By addressing this objective, the study seeks to provide additional evidence on well-being of students and provide insights that may assist educators, counselors, sport psychologists, and university administrators in developing interventions aimed at fostering psychological resilience, promoting life satisfaction, and reducing feelings of hopelessness among university students.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Design of Study

The nature of this research was quantitative cross-sectional.

2.2. Sample and Population

The study participants were selected from five universities [Government College University Lahore (GCUL), University of the Punjab (PU), University of Lahore (UOL), University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS), University of Management and Technology (UMT)] in Lahore, Pakistan. Using the Yamane method (Yamane, 1967) to figure out the sample size, 400 participants between the ages of 18 and 25 were chosen to be part of this study. The data of three participants showed normality issues so after deleting these three case the final sample of this study consisted of 397 male students among them 196 ($M_{age} = 20.79$, $SD = 1.787$) were male sports participating students and 201 ($M_{age} = 21.25$, $SD = 1.915$) were non-sports students. The data was collected from university level sports participating and non-sports students who voluntarily participated in this study. Sports participating students in this study showed above 5 years of sports experience ($M = 7.05$, $SD = 1.601$).

2.3. Demographic and Personal information

This section consisted of 8 personal information related questions. (See Table 1 for details).

Table 1: Sports participating students' demographic characteristics.

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
University		
GCUL	65	32.8
PU	77	38.9
UOL	40	20.2
UVAS	14	7.1
UMT	2	1.0
Playing experience	$M = 7.03$	$SD = 1.606$
Age	$M = 20.78$	$SD = 1.779$

Playing level		
Inter-varsity	100	50.5
National	95	48.0
International	3	1.5

Table 1 presented the demographic features of Sports participating students. Five universities, belonging to the city of Lahore were shortlisted as initial destination for sample collection. The participants' average age was 20.78, with a standard deviation of 1.779. With respect to the playing level, 50.5% of the sports participating students were at the inter-varsity level, 48% were at the national level and 1.5% were at the international level. On average, sports participating students had 7.03 years of sports experience.

2.4. Data Collection Tools

2.4.1. Hopelessness Inventory-5

The hopelessness inventory-5 scale created by Wang et al. (2023), made up the second section of the instrument. It was specifically created to gauge people's symptoms of hopelessness feelings. According to earlier reports it had an outstanding level of internal consistency due to its Cronbach alpha score of 0.87 – 0.92 (Baig et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2023).

2.4.2. Life Satisfaction (SWLS)

The SWLS scale was created by Diener et al. (1985) to assess an individual's total state of mind and life satisfaction was utilized in this study. This scale demonstrated a good level of validity and reliability through Cronbach alpha scores of 0.80 – 0.87 among previous studies (Hinz et al., 2025; Swami et al., 2025). Additionally, in the current study it exhibited a Cronbach alpha score of 0.73 therefore was adopted.

2.4.3. Religiosity of Islam Scale (RoIS)

Religiosity was examined by a scale developed by Jana-Masri and Priester (2007) and was utilized to assess Islamic religious activities. As a guide, the text of the Holy Qur'an was used to make 19 items that showed the difference between religious beliefs (9 items) and Islamic behavior (10 items). This tool was highly valid and reliable as it exhibited a Cronbach alpha score of 0.72 – 0.82 in multiple previous studies (Shamsudheen & Rosly, 2018; Sumin et al., 2023). For this study, the Cronbach alpha value of this tool was 0.75.

2.5. Procedures

There were four parts to the questionnaire that we used to gather information: a section on demographics (Section I), a section on hopelessness (Section II), a section on the life satisfaction scale (Section III), and a section on religiosity (Section IV). Participants were given information about the assessment and were given the chance to ask questions about anything they did not understand. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board of Government College University Lahore. Additionally, they were told that their personal information would be kept private, and they were provided with written informed consent so that their participation was completely voluntary. Information was collected from each respondent individually through the distribution of a questionnaire. Respondents filled out the form in twenty to thirty minutes. After the data gathering was complete, the records were safely stored for subsequent analysis.

2.6. Data Analysis

The collected data were coded, entered, and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22). Descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of the participants' characteristics and the study variables. Additionally, correlation analysis was employed to investigate athletic based potential

associations among life satisfaction, religiosity and hopelessness. Each variable was rated using its own scoring method, which made it easier to understand and analyze the data.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were applied using SPSS to measure participants' demographics.

Table 2: *Non-sports students' demographic characteristics.*

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	M = 21.25	SD = 1.915
University		
GCUL	58	28.9
PU	75	37.3
UOL	68	33.8

Table 2 presented the demographic characteristics of non-sports students. This non-sports sample was gathered from three universities located in Lahore. The average age of the non-sports students was 21.25 years with a standard deviation of SD=1.915.

Table 3: *Summary of Independent Samples t-test*

Variables	Sports participating students		Non-sports students		t	P	Cohens d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Life satisfaction	23.96	6.137	21.89	5.15	3.63	.000	0.365
Hopelessness	9.10	2.50	9.73	2.24	-2.66	.008	0.265
Religiosity	45.13	12.801	44.95	10.27	0.16	.876	0.015

An independent samples t-test was used to assess three constructs (life satisfaction, hopelessness and religiosity) and to determine the difference between sporting and non-sports students. The findings in table 3 showed a small to moderate effect size with a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction between sports participating students (M = 23.96, SD = 6.137) and non-sports students (M = 21.89, SD = 5.154) with $t = 3.632$, $p = .000$ and Cohen's $d = 0.365$. This showed that compared to non-sports students, sports participating students expressed greater levels of life satisfaction. Similarly, there was a significant difference in the hopelessness scores between sports participating students (M = 9.10, SD = 2.500) and non-sports students (M = 9.73, SD = 2.242).

The effect size was minor with $t = -2.659$, $p = .008$ and Cohen's $d = 0.265$. This indicated that sports participating students felt less hopelessness as compared with non-sports counterparts. However, there was no significant difference in religiosity scores between sports participating (M = 45.14, SD = 12.81) and non-sports students (M = 44.96, SD = 10.28), with $t = 0.156$, $p = .876$, Cohen's $d = 0.016$. This demonstrated that both groups had similar levels of religiosity. Overall, these findings indicated that sports participating students have higher life satisfaction and lower hopelessness than non-sports students, whereas religiosity was similar between these two groups.

Table 4: *Summary of Pearson correlation analysis for sports participating students.*

Variables	Life satisfaction	Hopelessness	Religiosity
Life satisfaction	1		
Hopelessness	-.403**	1	
Religiosity	0.132	-.231**	1

In table 4 the relationships for sporting students among three constructs were presented. The results of correlation analysis showed a strong negative relationship between life satisfaction and hopelessness ($r = -.403$, $p < .01$), which means that sports participating students who were more hopeless reported being less satisfied with their lives. On the other hand, the relationship between life satisfaction and religiosity

($r = .132$) was positive but not statistically significant. Additionally, there was a strong negative association between religiosity and hopelessness ($r = -.231$, $p < .01$). This indicated that sports participating students who were more religious had lower levels of hopelessness. Overall, these findings showed that religiosity did not significantly correlate with life satisfaction while hopelessness significantly impacted life satisfaction among sports participating students.

Table 5: *Summary of Pearson Correlation analysis for non-sports students.*

Variables	Life satisfaction	Hopelessness	Religiosity
Life satisfaction	1		
Hopelessness	-.362**	1	
Religiosity	0.299**	-.352**	1

In table 5 the relationships for non-sporting students among three constructs were presented. In accordance with the Pearson correlation analysis, there was a negative significant link between hopelessness and satisfaction with life ($r = -.362$, $p < .01$). The results showed that non-sports students who revealed higher levels of hopelessness appeared to have lower levels of life satisfaction. Additionally, a strong positive correlation between religiosity and life satisfaction was found ($r = .299$, $p < .01$). This indicated that life satisfaction was better among non-sports students who were more religious. Furthermore, there was a strong negative correlation between religiosity and hopelessness ($r = -.352$, $p < .01$). This proposed that higher religiosity was linked to lower hopelessness among non-sports students. Overall, the results showed that among non-sports students had higher levels of religiosity, increased life satisfaction, whereas higher levels of hopelessness decreased it.

4. DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out to compare life satisfaction, hopelessness, and religiosity among sports participating and non-sports university students and to examine how these variables were related within each group. The findings showed that students who regularly participated in sports reported greater life satisfaction and lower hopelessness than their non-sports counterparts. However, no difference was observed in religiosity between the two groups. Correlation analysis further showed that hopelessness was negatively related to life satisfaction in both groups. Among sports participating students, religiosity was associated with lower hopelessness but was not related to life satisfaction. In contrast, religiosity among non-sports students was linked with both higher life satisfaction and lower hopelessness. These findings provide a better understanding of the psychological well-being of university students and may help educational institutions and sports professionals design programs that promote both mental health and positive lifestyle behavior.

The comparison between sports participating and non-sports students showed that those involved in regular sports activities experienced greater life satisfaction and lower hopelessness, whereas both groups reported similar levels of religiosity. The higher level of life satisfaction among sports participants has also been reported by Ari et al. (2020) who found that regular participation in physical activity was associated with better psychological well-being and overall quality of life among university students. Likewise, Litwic-Kaminska and Kotysko (2020) reported that physically active individuals generally experience better emotional health and satisfaction with life than inactive individuals. On the other hand, a few studies have suggested that competitive sport does not always improve psychological well-being. For example, research by Ivantchev and Stoyanova (2019) found that athletes exposed to excessive training demands and competitive pressure may experience emotional exhaustion and reduced well-being. Such differences may be explained by variations in the level of competition, training environment, and available social support. Students who participate in sports often benefit from regular physical activity, interaction with teammates and opportunities to achieve personal goals. These experiences may improve self-confidence, reduce daily stress, and provide a stronger sense of purpose, all of which can contribute to greater life satisfaction and lower feelings of hopelessness.

Among sports participating students, hopelessness was negatively associated with life satisfaction, while religiosity showed a negative relationship with hopelessness but was not significantly related to life satisfaction. This indicated that athletes who experienced greater hopelessness were generally less satisfied with their lives, whereas those with stronger religious beliefs tended to report fewer hopeless feelings. Similar observations have been reported by Guntoro and Putra (2022), who proposed that religiosity may serve as a protective factor against negative emotional states by providing hope, meaning, and emotional support. One possible explanation might be that sports participants often obtain satisfaction from several sources, including athletic achievement, team relationships, and personal development. Therefore, although religiosity may reduce feelings of hopelessness, life satisfaction among athletes may depend more strongly on their sporting experiences and overall quality of life than on religious involvement alone.

For non-sports students, hopelessness was negatively associated with life satisfaction, whereas religiosity was positively related to life satisfaction and negatively related to hopelessness. These findings indicate that students who reported stronger religious beliefs tended to feel more satisfied with their lives and were less likely to experience hopelessness. Similar findings have been reported by Zullig et al. (2006), who concluded that religious involvement is often linked with greater psychological well-being and optimism. Likewise, Habib et al. (2018) demonstrated that religious beliefs and practices help individuals cope with life difficulties by providing meaning, emotional comfort, and hope. Nevertheless, some researchers have argued that religiosity alone may not be enough to improve life satisfaction, particularly when individuals experience financial hardship, academic stress, or poor social support. These contrasting findings suggest that the benefits of religiosity may depend on personal and environmental circumstances. For many university students who are not engaged in regular sports, religion may provide an important source of guidance, emotional stability, and social connectedness. These factors may help them deal with daily challenges more effectively, thereby reducing hopelessness and improving overall satisfaction with life.

4.1. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Future research should evaluate students' participation in individual versus team sports to see if the type of athletic involvement affects psychological results differently. Larger and more diverse samples across different universities and cultural settings should include to increase the broader applicability of findings. Experimental based research is recommended to evaluate programs that combine physical activity, counseling strategies and spiritual practices in order to reduce hopelessness and improve overall well-being. Researchers may also include other psychological categories such as resilience, self-esteem or social support to provide a more complete knowledge of the factors that influence life satisfaction and hopelessness. Furthermore, the relationship between religiosity, hopelessness and life satisfaction may be shaped by different cultural values and belief systems which could be discovered through cross-cultural research.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between life satisfaction, hopelessness and religiosity in both sports participating and non-sports students. The findings demonstrated the beneficial effects of sports participation on well-being by showing that sports participating students reported more life satisfaction and decreased hopelessness. Correlation analysis further showed that hopelessness was negatively related to life satisfaction in both groups. Among sports participating students, religiosity was associated with lower hopelessness but was not related to life satisfaction. In contrast, religiosity among non-sports students was linked with both higher life satisfaction and lower hopelessness. Overall, the results indicate that university students' psychological well-being is enhanced by both participation in sports and religiosity.

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Conflict of Interest

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ORCID iDs

Muhammad Adnan¹  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9544-9101>

Fariq Ahmed²  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3919-1966>

Asif Ali³  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5270-7241>

Muhammad Azam⁴  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1464-2595>

Qaisar Ali⁵  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4928-0285>

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