



THE CONTRIBUTION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND RELIGIOSITY IN PREDICTING PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG ISRAELI PALESTINIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Previous studies have revealed that emotional intelligence and religiosity may be protective factors for psychological resilience; however, this study is unique since it is the first to explore the relationships among the Palestinian minority in Israel. The purpose of the current study was to examine emotional intelligence and religiosity as predictors of psychological resilience among Palestinian high school students. A cross-sectional and descriptive design study was carried out with a convenience sample consisting of 512 high school students. Three scales administered were: The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), the Religiosity Scale and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10). Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient tests were used to analyse the data. Linear regression analysis was performed to check the prediction of emotional intelligence and religiosity on psychological resilience. The findings revealed positive correlations between emotional intelligence and religiosity with psychological resilience respectively ($r=.73$, $p<.01$), ($r=.41$, $p<.01$). The main contribution of the present study is its approach in examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and religiosity to psychological resilience among high school students, specifically within the context of Palestinian society in Israel.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; religiosity, resilience; Israeli Palestinian high school students

1. Introduction

Adolescence marks a challenging phase in life, characterized by the transition from childhood to adulthood. Throughout this time, adolescents experience a variety of psychological, physiological, and cognitive developments. These advancements in maturity equip young people to make independent decisions for the first time, stepping away from parental guidance and support. Additionally, teenagers face various stressors

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including fear, discomfort, and anxiety as they navigate through numerous challenges like social influences, academic demands, newfound responsibilities, peer pressure, and forming relationships with others.

Resilience is a critical aspect of mental health, significantly contributing to daily happiness and long-term psychological well-being. It embodies an individual's capacity to withstand stressors without succumbing to psychological impairments, such as mental disorders or persistent negative moods. Commonly, resilience is understood as an individual's capability to steer clear of mental health issues despite facing challenging situations, playing a crucial role in how people deal with life's hardships. Individuals vary in their ability to handle life's changes and challenges; they do not react identically or with the same intensity, do not adapt uniformly, and exhibit diverse responses (Othmani, 2016).

Considered a form of mental fortitude (Galatzer-Levy *et al.*, 2018), resilience involves adapting to stressful occurrences and life's shifts, managing to navigate through and grow from trials and tribulations (Laufer and Salmon, 2006; Shilstein, 2020). The American Psychological Association (APA, 2013) describes resilience as encompassing personal and social characteristics. Additionally, Shilstein (2020) emphasizes the critical role of social support or "social capital" in effectively dealing with crises. Social capital encompasses various internal and communal resources, such as a sense of community, active social engagement, unity, and trust in others. Mohammed (2019) defines resilience as the individual's capacity to positively regulate emotional and mental reactions, allowing for effective adaptation to life's adversities and achieving adaptable resilience to stressful situations.

Abu Ajaj (2016) noted in his study that resilience has three main components. The first is a person's personal strengths, the social and family support he receives; secondly, the person's character and interpersonal problem-solving skills; and finally, a person's optimism, and ability to solve problems and regulate emotions.

Research on resilience and vulnerability in children and adolescents underscores the crucial role of perceived support from parents, teachers, and peers. This support is found to be inversely associated with the extent of post-traumatic symptoms (Greca *et al.*, 1996; Vernberg *et al.*, 1999). Studies also indicate that schools play a vital role in fostering personal resilience among students facing crises or emergencies, and can act as a pillar of community resilience throughout the crisis management process (Chandra *et al.*, 2011).

Resilience, along with its elements like social support, spiritual beliefs, and interpersonal connections, enhances an individual's capacity to withstand stressful events and maintain a positive outlook on life. It functions as a mechanism for coping with stress and crises. Defined as a form of mental fortitude (Galatzer-Levy *et al.*, 2018), resilience encompasses an individual's natural capacity to bounce back independently, with assistance, or through other means after experiencing setbacks, whether brief or prolonged. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2013) characterizes resilience as a combination of personal and social characteristics. Abu Ajaj (2016) highlights the

complexity of mental resilience, noting it relies on individual strengths, received social support, personal traits, and the ability to solve problems and manage emotions.

Studies have been conducted on the subject of emotional intelligence and psychological resilience, but only a limited number explore their interconnection, particularly among high school students. Specifically, the exploration of how emotional intelligence influences resilience in this population is scarce, with most research being carried out in Western and Jewish contexts. Notably, the impact of emotional intelligence on resilience among high school students in Israeli-Palestinian society remains unexplored. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by assessing how emotional intelligence serves as a predictor of psychological resilience among Palestinian high school students in Israel.

This research sets out two primary goals. The first is to assess the levels of emotional intelligence, religiosity, and psychological resilience among Palestinian high school students in Israel. The second goal is to investigate the extent to which emotional intelligence and religiosity can predict psychological resilience in this group. The study proposes two hypotheses: There will be a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience among Palestinian high school students, and a similar positive correlation will be identified between religiosity and psychological resilience in this student population in Israel.

2. Emotional intelligence and resilience

Emotional intelligence is characterized by an individual's capacity to recognize and understand emotions both in themselves and in others (Mayer *et al.*, 2000). Alternatively, it is described as a collection of abilities, skills, and competencies that enhance an individual's ability to navigate life's challenges and improve effectiveness in personal and social arenas (Bar-On, 2006). Emotional intelligence comprises four core components: assessing one's own emotions, evaluating the emotions of others, harnessing emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, and managing emotions to maintain emotional stability and achieve goals (Wong and Law, 2002).

Goleman (1995) discusses the pivotal role of emotional intelligence in enhancing an individual's resilience, especially in times of crisis. He notes that individuals who possess self-awareness, social adaptability, and empathy are more likely to overcome life crises. This is because they have the necessary social and relational competencies to manage unforeseen and adverse situations effectively. Such individuals are adept at self-advocacy, problem-solving, and seeking help when needed. Additionally, research has explored the linkage between emotional intelligence and resilience. For instance, Collado-Soler *et al.* (2023) suggest that emotional intelligence and resilience are crucial during adolescence as they can forecast life outcomes. They argue that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to lead more fulfilling lives, while those who are resilient are better at mitigating stress and discomfort. Andrew *et al.* (2011) examined how six dimensions of emotional intelligence influence the capacity to bounce back from multiple

adverse life events. Their findings highlighted the significance of emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, emotional self-control, and particularly emotional self-management in fostering resilience following such events. Furthermore, a pronounced correlation between resilience and emotional intelligence has been observed, particularly when individuals exhibit sufficient levels of both. Hence, it's vital for young people to cultivate internal mechanisms that serve as safeguards against future adversities and changes they might encounter (Collado-Soler *et al.*, 2023).

The study by Sarrionandia *et al.* (2018) revealed that for both American and Basque university students, emotional intelligence acts as a deterrent to perceived stress, with resilience serving as an intervening factor. The research found that students who demonstrated higher levels of emotional intelligence and resilience experienced less perceived stress. Thus, enhancing emotional intelligence and resilience among students could serve as a strategy to reduce stress perceptions within the higher education context. Additionally, emotional intelligence has been recognized for its strong association with personal growth and success in professional environments, as well as with individual performance. It is also seen as a precursor to resilience (Magnano, Craparo, & Paolillo, 2016).

This study aimed to explore the connection between emotional intelligence and resilience among teenagers. Emotional Intelligence is described as the capacity to comprehend, utilize, and manage one's emotions positively to relieve stress, resolve issues, and communicate effectively. Resilience refers to the ability to withstand mental and emotional challenges during a crisis and to recover afterwards. The research utilized a convenience sampling approach, with a participant pool of 100 adults, split evenly between 50 men and 50 women, within the 18-24 age range. The Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Tool and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale were the instruments employed. Findings indicated a strong positive link between Emotional Intelligence and Resilience, and also noted no significant gender differences in emotional intelligence and resilience levels (Sehrawat A. & Simon S., 2021).

The findings from Kumar & Varma (2021) indicate a positive correlation between resilience and emotional intelligence in adolescents, with notable gender differences observed. Girls were found to exhibit higher levels of both resilience and emotional intelligence compared to boys. In contrast, research conducted by Torres-Gázquez (2023) highlighted a positive and significant connection between emotional intelligence variables and resilience, with emotional intelligence and resilience scoring higher in boys than in girls, a departure from prior studies possibly due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also found that emotional intelligence was a stronger predictor of resilience in boys than in girls.

Lucero (2021) reported that participants generally displayed average emotional intelligence and very high resilience, alongside high levels of well-being. Their coping mechanisms were divided into personal and professional categories, with a significant correlation between resilience and emotional intelligence. Well-being was also identified as a significant predictor of emotional intelligence and resilience among helping

professionals. However, there is a scarcity of research on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience among high school students, particularly within the Palestinian minority in Israel.

3. Religiosity and resilience

Religiosity encompasses the practical aspects of adhering to the teachings, norms, and laws prescribed by religion. It reflects the degree to which individuals dedicate themselves to religious beliefs, principles, and practices (Ellis *et al.*, 2019). Religiosity can significantly impact the psychological well-being of the youth, many of whom may grapple with feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about their current and future circumstances. Tabish (2021) describes religiosity as the individual's cognitive beliefs in and devotion to a transcendent divine force that offers guidance and support, providing essential elements for navigating life.

The role of religiosity during adolescence is recognized for its protective benefits against conditions like depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse, while also enhancing positive psychological attributes such as resilience, self-discipline, and personality traits. Furthermore, a positive link has been established between religiosity and overall life satisfaction (Papanikolopoulos & Kaprinis, 2022). Religiosity contributes to an individual's resilience, bolstering it through enhanced attachment and trust, which in turn, enriches one's life with meaning, hope, and community support within spiritual contexts. Many professionals consider religiosity a crucial coping resource during challenging times, helping individuals to rediscover life's significance during stress. It's also associated with healthier behavior and improvements in mental health, psychological well-being, and social interaction (Sista *et al.*, 2021).

Studies have shown a positive correlation between religious practice and various aspects of life, including mental health, happiness, and marital contentment (Rohani & Manavipoor, 2008). Current research increasingly supports the connection between resilience or spirituality and improved mental health outcomes, notably in areas such as depression, substance misuse, and suicidal behavior (Bonelli, 2017). A systematic review revealed a moderate association between spirituality/religiosity and resilience, a finding consistent even in high-quality studies included in the meta-analysis. Moreover, it was observed that spirituality, in particular, had a stronger correlation with resilience than traditional measures of religiosity. Recognizing this link could aid researchers, healthcare practitioners, and policymakers in devising strategies to foster resilience and guide future investigations in this field. Nonetheless, despite the acknowledged importance of resilience in contemporary society and the expanding body of research on religiosity's role in alleviating suffering, there remains a scarcity of systematic reviews on this topic (Schwalm *et al.*, 2021).

Spirituality and religiosity have been recognized as beneficial predictors of subjective well-being (Kim-Prieto and Miller, 2018). It is posited that religiosity, serving as a coping mechanism during stressful times, significantly influences students' approach

to problem-solving and overcoming challenges. Students with strong religious beliefs tend to accept their circumstances more readily, thereby reducing stress and negative emotions (Sista *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, the global surge of COVID-19 highlighted the importance of religion and theology, with findings by Ilyashenko, Ivanova, & Khasimova (2021) suggesting that Islamic practices promote hygiene and health, thus contributing to disease prevention and well-being through adherence to spiritual rituals and divine guidance.

Ramsay *et al.* (2019) proposed that individuals with a deeper sense of connection and guidance from a higher entity generally have a more positive outlook on life. The religious faith of adolescents, especially when combined with family cohesion – which is both influenced by and contributes to religiosity – positively impacts their psychological resilience and personal development (Filipović & Rihtar, 2023). Moreover, a significant link was discovered between Muslim religiosity and the psychological health, resilience, and life satisfaction of medical students in Turkey (Akbaram & Keten, 2024).

Emotional intelligence and religiosity are both crucial in building resilience. Emotional intelligence promotes self-awareness, emotional control, and social skills, whereas religiosity offers spiritual backing, purpose, and direction. These elements collectively support an individual's capability to withstand adversity, remain optimistic, and recover from setbacks. In Arab cultures, where religion profoundly affects everyday life, these factors provide strength and support in facing hardships. The interaction between a person's religious beliefs, their practices, and their emotional intelligence significantly influences their resilience across different individuals and cultural contexts. In conclusion, the literature identifies both religiosity and emotional intelligence as key factors influencing resilience among adolescents, which can be a source of both support and challenge, particularly in educational settings such as early childhood education. Additionally, these factors have a reciprocal effect on the emotional, social, and academic skill development of both educators and children due to their interactions within the classroom environment. Understanding the relationship between resilience and religiosity will enhance the scientific knowledge base, facilitating the development of new preventive strategies for managing chronic conditions. Research focusing on Muslims and Arabs is limited, with no studies addressing this correlation among Palestinian Arabs in Israel. This study represents a pioneering effort to explore this area within the Arab population of Israel, aiming to examine the role of religiosity in fostering psychological resilience. There is also a noted scarcity of research on the combined impact of emotional intelligence and religiosity on psychological resilience among Palestinian high school students.

4. Method

4.1 Sample

The sample comprised 512 Israeli Palestinian high school students, they were selected by using a convenience sample. (61.7%) of whom were girls. (67.6%) of the students' parents

have worked. More than (70.5%) of the students' mothers have academic degrees whereas only half of the students' fathers have had academic degrees.

4.2 Materials

4.2.1 Demographic variables questionnaire

This instrument was created by the researcher and included self-reported questions for gender, economic status, parents' employment and parents' education.

4.2.2 Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)

This questionnaire is a self-assessment scale. It was developed by Wong and Law (2002) and consists of 16 items grouped into four factors (four items per factor). The WLEIS response format includes seven-point Likert-type questions, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a higher level of emotional intelligence. The four dimensions are: self-emotion appraisal, other's emotion appraisal, use of emotions; and regulation of emotions. Self-emotion appraisal refers to people's awareness of their feelings and thoughts about those feelings. Others' emotion appraisal is linked to the perception and understanding of other people's emotions. The use of emotion involves monitoring, evaluation, and control measures to modify one's feelings. Regulation of emotion enables people to improve their performance through self-motivated emotions.

There are four self-emotion appraisal statements such as *"I have good understandings of my own emotions"*. An example of other's emotion appraisal is *"I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others"*. Use of emotions is assessed by four statements, such as *"I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them"*. Finally, there are four regulation of emotions statements, such as *"I have good control of my own emotions"*. For the current study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated for the questionnaire and the reliability value was $\alpha = 0.88$.

4.2.3 The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10)

Based on Connor & Davidson, 2003: Personal resilience refers to an individual's ability to successfully cope with challenging and/or difficult events and return to his previous functioning as soon as possible. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) is a self-administered scale containing 10 items that evaluate the psychological trait of resilience. For the current study, Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for the questionnaire and the reliability value was $\alpha = 0.89$.

4.2.4 The Arab Scale for Religiosity

This questionnaire was developed by Abdel-Khaleq, 2016. The questionnaire is adapted to a Muslim population; The questionnaire includes 15 items, with each statement graded on a 5-level scale. The validity of the questionnaire was examined by 5 judges. Cronbach's alpha value for the questionnaire was high ($\alpha = 0.947$). The questionnaire examines various attitudes on Religiosity, faith in God, and personal religious practices and values.

An example of a statement is “*My religious beliefs are behind my behavior and my approach to life*”.

4.3 Procedure

The current study included Israeli Palestinian high school students studying in different high schools in Arab villages and towns in North Israel during the academic year 2023-2024. Data collection was done by filling out an anonymous online self-administered questionnaire. All participants were aware of the purpose of the study, and the quality of data collected and gave prior informed consent. Participation in this study was voluntary and no incentive was given to the participants.

4.4 Statistical analysis

Means, standard deviations, and maximum and minimum values for emotional intelligence, religiosity and psychological resilience were calculated first. Alpha of Cronbach calculated for the research tools. Correlations among the study's variables were then calculated. To test the research hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was performed to test the prediction of emotional intelligence and religiosity on psychological resilience. Statistical analyses were performed by SPSS version 26.

5. Findings

In order to examine the levels of the study variables, means and standard deviations were calculated first, along with minimum and maximum values for emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and classroom management as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for the study variables

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Religiosity	4.40	.63	1	4.18
Emotional intelligence	3.82	.61	1.4	4.42
Resilience	3.71	.76	1.35	4.21

Table 1 shows that relatively high scores were obtained for the three variables. The first hypothesis focused on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience. Table 2 below shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and resilience ($r = .73, p < .01$).

Table 2: Pearson correlations for the research variables (N = 512)

	1	2	3
Religiosity		.514**	.417**
Emotional intelligence			.732**
Resilience			

** $p < .01$

In the regression analysis for predicting resilience shown in Table 3, it was found that the contribution of emotional intelligence was significant in explaining the variance in resilience ($B = .87$, $SE = .04$, $\beta = .70$). The second research hypothesis focused on the relationship between religiosity and resilience. Table 2 above shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between religiosity and resilience ($r = .41$, $p < .01$).

Table 3: Multiple regression coefficients for predicting classroom management

	β (standardized coefficient)	B (unstandardized coefficient)	SE	R2
Total model				.538**
Religiosity	.456	.368**	.042	
Emotional intelligence	.703	.878**	.044	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; $n = 337$

The regression analysis for predicting resilience in Table 3 shows that the contribution of religiosity was significant in explaining the variance in resilience ($B = .36$, $SE = .04$, $\beta = .45$).

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the contribution of emotional intelligence and religiosity in predicting psychological resilience among Palestinian high school students. For the first time, these two variables were examined in the context of Israeli-Arab high school students.

The first research hypothesis focused on the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience. The findings indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience, thus confirming the research hypothesis. This aligns with prior research that has identified a relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience, as evidenced by studies from Sarrionandia *et al.* (2018), Sehrawat & Simon (2021), and Torres-Gázquez (2023).

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in predicting psychological resilience. Individuals with high emotional intelligence have a deep understanding of and heightened awareness towards their own emotions and those of others around them. This awareness and empathy equip them to better manage stress, challenges, and adversity, thereby enhancing their psychological resilience. Additionally, people with high emotional intelligence often possess strong social skills, helping them to forge and maintain beneficial social connections. These relationships provide a protective net, offering support and resources during difficult times, which in turn strengthens psychological resilience.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence is linked to the effective management of emotions, enabling individuals to navigate and adapt to stressful situations more efficiently. The ability to regulate emotions and maintain a positive outlook contributes to greater psychological resilience during tough times. In essence, individuals with

elevated emotional intelligence are likely to navigate and surmount life's challenges more successfully, thereby increasing their capacity for psychological resilience. The findings also demonstrated that emotional intelligence is a positive predictor of resilience, which, conversely, predicts lower levels of test anxiety and academic stress (Trigueros *et al.*, 2020).

The second hypothesis of this research examined the connection between religiosity and resilience, revealing a statistically significant positive correlation. This confirms the hypothesis by demonstrating that students with higher levels of religiosity are more adept at managing stress and are less likely to experience worry, sadness, and mental distress. Religiosity not only provides ways to navigate through stressful situations and aids in overcoming them, but it also often prevents these situations from worsening and transforms them into growth opportunities. This outcome aligns with previous research that has established a relationship between religiosity and psychological resilience, as noted by studies from Akbayram & Keten (2024), Arifiana & Ubaidillah (2021), Ilyashenko, Ivanova, & Khasimova (2021), Kim-Prieto and Miller (2018), Schwalm *et al.*, (2021), and Sista *et al.*, (2021). The findings from this study indicate that an increase in religiosity is linked to enhanced psychological resilience.

There are various ways in which religiosity might support psychological resilience. First and foremost, having a feeling of meaning and purpose from one's religious beliefs and practices can help people stay optimistic and resilient in the face of tragedy. Religious communities can also offer a sense of community and social support, both of which are crucial protective elements in developing resilience. It is significant to remember that there are individual differences and societal factors in the complex interaction between psychological resilience and religiosity. While for many people religion can be a source of strength and support, for others it might not have the same impact.

In summary, the findings reveal that religiosity, by offering individuals a sense of purpose, meaning, and community support, plays a significant role in enhancing psychological resilience. However, to fully understand the complex relationship between religiosity and psychological resilience, further research is required. It's crucial to develop socio-emotional programs for adolescents to help improve or alter their resilience and emotional intelligence, which would be advantageous for their development.

Finally, the study faces several limitations, notably the use of convenience sampling for data collection, which casts doubts on the ability to generalize the findings. Consequently, there is a pressing need for further studies utilizing random sampling methods to bolster the credibility of these results. Expanding the diversity of the student sample would offer a more detailed view of the current situation.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Dr. Hamza Egbaria is a school counsellor at Al-Ahliya High School in Um al-Fahem, Israel; and expert in measurement and evaluation. He is also a lecturer in the Ministry of Education. He has got Ph.D. in administration in education from Al-Yarmouk University in Jordan. He also studied educational counselling at the University of Haifa, Israel.

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