



**Role of Religious Orientation for the relationship between self-compassion and Psychological well-being of youth**

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**Introduction**

For any person, no matter at which age, peace, hope, and satisfaction are the priorities. Especially when it comes to adulthood or later, the people remain in search of self-compassion (Khan & Kawa, 2015; Lawler-Row, et al., 2005). Different people have different views regarding achieving satisfaction, and thus scholars have also debated in this field from different perspectives (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010). Some of them found positive co-relation between self-compassion, whereas

some indicated the strongest relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). However, some of the authors have highlighted that psychological well-being and self-compassion is highly based on spirituality and religiousness (Khashab, Khashab, Mohammadi, Zarabipour, & Malekpour, 2015). Spirituality and religiousness have been playing an important part in humans' life, and are generally associated with human satisfaction (Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012). It is a belief of all, no matter belonging to which religion, that God has given them life with a purpose (Ismail & Desmukh, 2012). God has guided the human being through different Prophets that life is given to bring positive change in the society, and thus it is obligatory to follow ethical and moral rules of life, in order to keep peace and happiness in the regions (Lawler-Row, et al., 2005). The people are guided to tell truth, forgive others, help the nations, remove hunger, smile, spread happiness, remain positive, be ethical, and morally deal with others in society (Yang, Zhang, & Kou, 2016). When people follow their religious guidelines, they find them being forgiven by God and feel as achieved something marvelous in their lives (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009; Lawler-Row, et al., 2005). This is what gave them psychological peace and keep them satisfied (Koenig & Larson, 2001).

### **Statement of Problem**

The studies have shown that the knowledge of religion stops youth from attempting any negative activity, such as substance abuse, illegal affairs, theft, and other activities. The religious commitment restricts the person to perform all tasks as per the religious guidelines, and prayer keeps them mentally peaceful and strong. Thus, religious commitment is found to be highly linked with self-compassion and psychological well-being (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010; Park, 2007;

Neff & McGehee, 2019; Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). The current study will now study the link between religious orientation, self-compassion and psychological well-being of the youth.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There are lots of researches (Koenig & Larson, 2001; Neff & McGehee, 2019; Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001; Lawler-Row, et al., 2005) from last years on self-compassion, self –compassion and psychological well- being, and psychological well-being with a religious orientation (Neff & McGehee, 2019; Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010). But there is not any single study that measures the relation between self-compassion and psychological well-being of the youth of Pakistan with the mediating role of religious orientation. Self-compassion a concept given by (Neff, 2003) self-compassion is a healthy and positive self-attitude. The self -compassion supports the psychological well-being so there are numbers of researches are proposed on self-compassion and positive psychology construct. But fewer studies were conducted on self-compassion with a religious orientation or religiosity (Patel, Flisher, & McGorry, 2007; Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001; Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). Thus, the purpose of the current study is to explore the relationship of these variable as we all know that adolescence and young adults have a life which is full of transitions, some young adults success fully cope with that change but sometimes it was difficult for them and don't know how to deal with it? This affects their mental health and self –esteem. They become self-critic. Thus, this study will explore the relation of self-compassion and psychological well-being of youth with religious orientations.

### **Objectives**

Following are the research objectives;

- To analyze the types of religious orientation and its impact on the psychological well-being of the Youth.
- To assess the relationship between self -compassion and religious orientation of youth.
- To measure the relationship between religious orientation and psychological well-being of youth.
- To examine the mediating effect of religious orientation between self-compassion and psychological well-being of youth.

### **Research Questions**

On the basis of the above research objectives, the current study will answer the following research questions;

RQ1: What are different types of religious orientation which leave negative or positive impact on the youth's life?

RQ2: How the relationship can be assessed between self -compassion and religious orientation of youth?

RQ3: How to measure the relationship between religious orientation and psychological well-being of youth?

RQ4: What mediating effect does exist between religious orientation, self-compassion and psychological well-being of youth?

## **Significance of Study**

The present study aims to analyze the relation between self-compassion and psychological well-being of youth of Pakistan with the mediating role of religious orientation. This will be a great contribution in the field of psychology, as this will help the parents, educators, and psychologists to understand which factors can improve the self-compassion and the psychological well-being of the youth in Pakistan. Everyone in Pakistani society needs to understand that religious orientation is crucial to let youth understand their targets. The better they understand and accept the realities, the more they show psychological well-being.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Theories and literature also shows that religion prevents all aggressive and tiring activities, and guides the person to stay calm, organized, and happy (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010). Religion helps the person to know who he is and to understand his purpose of life and develop self-compassion amongst the youth (Park, 2007). The concept of self-compassion is very important to understand the psychological condition of youth. Every religion, from Buddhist Philosophy to Islam, guides the individual to understand their realities and accept them as they are (Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012). The religion guides the person to improve self-control and leave the rest on God. Thus, the individuals with strong religion background are found to be having strong self-compassion, which leads to psychological well-being of the person (Neff & McGehee, 2019).

Religion helps the adolescents to understand the purpose of their life (Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012; Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010). The studies have shown (Koenig & Larson,

2001; Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001; Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009; Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010) youth face a rapid social change in their lives. They are exposed to different biological changes, after which they remain weak in controlling their emotional situation, leading to less self-compassion capabilities amongst them (Rye & Pargament, 2002). Thus, in such situation, the youth remain unable to understand the facts, and accept the things as they are, and thus adopt illegal and unethical way for the fulfilment of desires. Maltby, Day, & Lewis (2010) also highlight the relationship between Religious orientation, self-compassion, and psychological well-being. This study focused on different factors, such as the race of life, disappointments, lack of opportunities, lack of obedience, and other social issues lead to stress amongst youth. The literature showed that the unethical activities amongst the youth lead to stress, which is significantly related to suicide, depression, and anxiety (Park, 2007; Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010). The more the person remain in touch to God via prayers, the less he tries or attempts negative activities. Prayer and religious activities protects the individual from any sort of evil activities (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010).

## **Methodology**

A lot of literature has been already published to highlight the role of self-compassion in supporting psychological well-being amongst youth with the impact of religious orientation. However, the current study will focus on the psychological impact of religious orientation on the youth of Pakistan. This will make it more relevant to the Pakistani People, and will be helpful to better understand the connection between religion and the psychology.

## **Research Method**

The research process is to analyze the impact of religious orientation on the psychological well-being of the Pakistani youth, and thus the current study has analyzed the already published studies and reports regarding the research topic. The research relies on the qualitative approach, where the work and theories of other scholars was used to infer something out of existing literature. For this purpose, a lot of research articles and reports were collected through search engines, like Google Scholar. Different keywords, such as psychology well-being, Pakistani youth and religious orientation, and impact of religion on psychological well-being, were used to collect the studies.

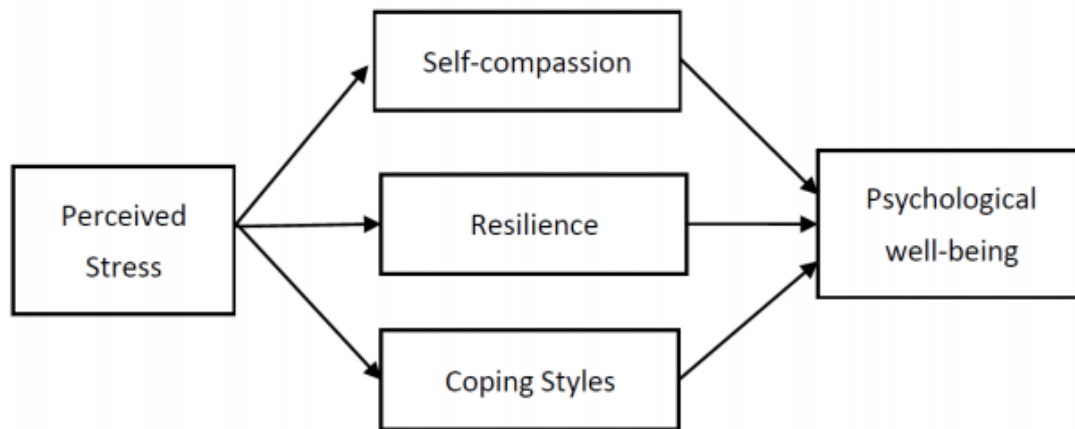
## **Variables of Study**

The study is the assessment of role of self-compassion in supporting psychological well-being amongst youth, with the impact of religious orientation, and thus the study rely on three variables. These three variables are; self-compassion, psychological well-being, and religious orientations. However, the psychological well-being is treated is dependent variable over the other two variables, as the change in self-compassion or religious orientation lead to distress, anxiety, and psychological disturbance amongst the youth. Thus, any change in self-compassion and religious orientation directly and indirectly influence the psychological well-being of the youth in Pakistan.

## **Study Model**

Garcia, Kjell, & Nima (2014) introduced a model in which the psychological well-being of an individual is highly dependent on several other factors. Also, the study indicated that the person's happiness is highly dependent over the psychological well-being, which enable the individual to accept the social enviornemnt and promotes acceptance to the enviornmental

changes. The model highlighted that psychological well-being is highly dependent over several factors, which includes self-compassion, resilience, and coping style. Self-compassion is the acceptance to the facts, whereas coping style can be efficiently guided by the religious approach. Thus, the current study is based on this model, in which the self-compassion and religious orientations are the major variables to influence the psychological well-being of the youth in Pakistan.



### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data was collected via using search engines and specified keywords related to the research topic. Initially around 250 articles were collected, out of which old dated and irrelevant articles were extracted and only 100 articles were used for further analysis of the study. Each study was deeply analyzed and the useful data was extracted and stored in separate files. Finally all data was re-arranged to prove the hypotheses either true or false.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The purpose of the current study is to bring a positive change in the society and that is why all collected data was gathered in ethical way. All open source articles were collected and the data



was used to develop a positive approach for the society. Nothing was used for illegal or unethical reasons. Moreover, no information is being used for personal biased and the approach was only to dig out something better and useful for the psychological field, as well as Pakistani youth.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Religious Orientation**

Religious orientation of a person or the community involves belief or presumption about the existence of God, morality, prescription, and spirituality. It is all about the person's belief of how he/she is going to perform his religious activities and what he/she is going to get in return. It is psychological impact on a person that he/she find peace when performing religious or ethical activities, such as going to Church or Mosque bring great peace and calmness in the personality. According to Whitley and Kit, religion leaves deep psychological impact and also leaves direct impact on person's approach towards peace and success. The study investigated the relationship between two factors; religiosity and the indicators, such as peace, and the evaluated how does the religious practices impact the person's life? The findings of the study showed that *"religious involvement was consistently correlated with a variety of forms of prejudice."* (Whitley & Kite, 2010)

Religious activities not only impact the personal life but also leave deep impact on the relations and approach towards dealings. Religious orientations keeps individuals' directions towards the justified practices and thus religions strengthens the relationships and stops the person from being indulged into unethical or immoral activities. It helps the individual to respect the relations and keep them happy, which creates a strong bond amongst the people in the society (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001). It develops the strongest relation between husband and

wife, neighbors, children and parents, sisters, brothers, siblings, and relatives (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001). In this way, the individual does not remain alone during the hard times and thus does not find himself in trouble during any situation (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). This prevents any sort of psychological distress and thus promotes peace and psychological well-being amongst the followers.

In other words, religion orientation is the approach toward life and involves behaving, feeling, and thinking in accordance with beliefs, as guided by religious institutions (Znnbauer, et al., 1997). Religious orientation prevents any unethical attempt or illegal approach towards getting uncontrollable desires, such as earning countless money via illegal way, and guides the followers regarding how they can perform well in their lives without getting involved into unethical activities. The more the person remain in touch to God via prayers, the less he tries or attempts negative activities.

Prayer and religious activities protects the individual from any sort of evil activities. The religious person do not attempt any negative activity and find himself as forgiven by God. In this way, the followers with religious orientation remain less involved in unethical activities and showed more psychological well-being. Thus, religious activities, such as offering prayer or reading the Holy Book, gives an impression that God has forgiven the individual, and thus the concept of being forgiven provides peace deep inside the personality. This peace is highly essential because it prevents the person from attempting any unethical or illegal activity, such as suicide (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010). Offering prayer, saying thanks to God, and believing God for little things is the only way to have full control over everything in life. This also improves the self-

compassion amongst the followers. However, there are several types of Religious Orientation, which are described below;

### **Extrinsic Religious Orientation**

It defines the use of religious beliefs to achieve non-religious goals (Batson, 1982). It is used by the people, who goes to the religious gatherings and then involves the religion in their all lively activities to achieve some social goals. For example, the politicians who participate in religious activities just to show people his strong relation with religion. Such followers maintain a social network to guides others about how can they perform well in their lives from their religious perspectives, but actually desire to achieve their personal goals in return. It is just a way to reflect strong influence of the religion over the life, where the person has actually no strong relation with religion. They find it socially helpful to follow everything on the basis of religious guidelines and use it to achieve their unattainable goals. As stated by Gordon Allport, extrinsic religious approach is obtained when the person use religion *“to provide security and solace, sociability and distraction, status and self-justification.”* (Allport & Ross, 1967, pp. 432-443)

### **Intrinsic Religious Orientation**

Intrinsic Religious Orientation is exactly opposite to the extrinsic religious orientation. It defines the use of religious beliefs to achieve peace and strengthen the relation with God (Batson, 1982). The followers with this type of religious orientation apply religion to their all social practices for the sake of achieving peace and keeping the God happy, in return their achieve satisfaction. Daniel Batson defined intrinsic religion as ‘While the people with extrinsic religious

orientation find religion as a mean to an end, the people with intrinsic approach find religions as that end.' This makes a huge difference, but only the real followers can understand it.

The intrinsic religious orientation also involves the preaching and guidance to others, through which the followers find their goals accomplished. They guide others how to act according to religion and stops them from doing any sort of unethical or immoral activities. They truly contribute their strengths to bring positivity in the society and keeps the social approach as per guided by their Prophets or by their Holy Books, such as Muslim follows the Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and the Holy Book Quran. As said

*"An active directing force, not just a tool used to reach self-serving ends." (Batson, 1982, p. 807)*

### **Quest Religious Orientation**

Quest religious orientation neither believes on approach towards social benefits nor adopting religion to the end. It is focused to search for the truth. The follower with Quest Religious Orientation research for the truth, that in case the religion has guided me this practice and how it is going to benefit me and my society from the ethical and moral perspective. It is about searching for the right answers of the questions. Such followers do not believe of how the things were preached before or how others are using religion in their practices, instead they study, research, and practice the right guidelines which leads to satisfaction and peace in their lives. As stated by Batson;

*"An individual who approaches religion in this way recognizes that he or she does not know, and probably never will know, the final truth about such matters. Still the questions are deemed important, and however tentative and subject to changes, answers are sought." (pp.821)*

## **Approaches to Religious Orientation**

Several scholars have investigated how does religious orientation impact followers' social practices? The findings answered in three most prominent approaches towards religions; extrinsic approach, intrinsic approach, quest approach. These approaches and their impact on life are well defined by the psychologists and well-known scholars, such as Gordon Allport, Daniel Batson, and Richard Gorsuch (Batson, 1982; Gorsuch, 1989). According to these scholars, there are three basic approaches towards religious orientation; when the person use it for personal benefits, when the person use it to extreme, and when the person use it in search of truth. However, all approaches lead to self-satisfaction amongst the followers (Krauss & Hood, 2013).

## **Religion and Personal Benefits**

Gordon Allport highlighted that when the religion is used to achieve the personal benefits, it reflects the extrinsic approach. The personal benefit may be any, such as political benefits, personal security, social impression, and self-justification (Gorsuch, 1989). When the person use religion for non-religious purpose, that approach may be justified or sometimes not. For example, if the person is living in Muslim society and is forced to practice Islam, he/she may reflect of practicing Islam for the sake of personal security. On the other hand if the person is using religion to gain personal benefits, such as leaders reflects their religious activities to justify their leadership and attain personal benefits, then the approach is used in unjustified manner. Such followers maintain a religious social network to reflect their attachment with religion and do not actually follow it by heart. However, such type of religious approach may be said as unethical, as the person is not using the approach in right way and thus deceiving the society, as well as himself.

Religious Orientation of Betson and Showinerdand, and External Orientations of Allport and Rosses are also helpful to understand the strong relationship between religion and psychological well-being. The reason behind this strong relations is the knowledge of right and wrong. Religion guides the person about what should be attempted and what should be avoided. In this way, the individual remains protected from any sort of evil activity and thus remain mentally satisfied and physically healthy. Religion is a guidance or the pattern and now it depends how the followers are going to use these patterns in their life, some of them use it to achieve goals in their lives, where as some use it in search of truth. However, religion is a set of guidelines to define the ethics and morality of life and thus prevents the person from doing any sort of unethical or immoral activity. It maintains the social discipline by preventing any sort of illegal, negative, or unethical approach towards achievement of targets and thus guides the actual way of approaching the satisfaction and relief in life. Every religion has separate patterns and guidelines, but the approach of all is to bring positive change in the society, prevent evil activities, and achieve satisfaction by developing strong relationship with God. This bring the feeling of being forgiven, with which the person achieve the highest level of satisfaction, which in return contribute to the peace and psychological well-being.

### **Religion to the Extreme**

The second approach is well defined by Denial Botson, that when the person use the religion to the end, it is said as intrinsic religious approach. It is about practicing religion to the extreme. For example, when the person practice Islam in to the extreme that he force others to do the same then it is said as intrinsic approach. Such people may get furious to the ones, who do not

follow the religion and sometimes may lead to the violence to force others for obedience to God and religion. Such type of people touches the extremes of their religious approach (Batson, 1982).

### **Search for Truth**

Finally, the third approach is the real approach of religion, where the person use religions for the sake of personal grooming and satisfaction. As explained by Richard Gorsuch, that when the person adopts religion in search of truth and for the sake of satisfaction, then he is on the right track. Religion is not a belief to be followed for others or to the extremes, instead it is about getting the answers of the questions, which guides the actual meanings of life. Such followers adopts religions for the sake of self-satisfaction and to strength approach to the eternity (Gorsuch, 1989).

### **Analysis**

Youth is found to be more indulged in negative activities due to their curiosity and desire to attempt every new thing in their life. The biological changes and new exposure to social circles prove to be great promoters to the evil (Patel, Flisher, & McGorry, 2007). The youth interaction with new people and unstoppable passions removed the difference between ethical and unethical approaches. Then the youth is left with an emotional approach with their desire to get everything (Ismail & Desmukh, 2012). At this stage, lack of money, lack of resources, restrictions from society, and desire to do more prove to be great contributors to psychological distress and anxiety (Neff & McGehee, 2019). As a result of which the individual follows wrong directions to achieve their goals. For example, the suspiciousness and curiosity to know the impact of substance over the human mind lead to the first substance attempt, and then the attempt turns into a habit and then to the substance abuse (Radloff, 1977; Meer & Mir, 2014). Similarly, the desire to achieve

everything and to be rich leads to theft (Khashab, Khashab, Mohammadi, Zarabipour, & Malekpour, 2015). This is because the boys and girls of a young age are not mature enough to understand the facts and realities of life, leading to less self-compassion. Also, the lack of religious knowledge does not let them differentiate between good and bad. Finally, they are left with nothing but just psychological distress, anxiety, and mental sickness (Patel, Flisher, & McGorry, 2007). On the contrary, the youth with appropriate knowledge of their religion and purpose of life understand the actual purpose of life (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). They remain focused on their specified targets and consult with God in case of any stress or anxiety. This gives them relief and makes them psychologically strong (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

Religion entails particular boundaries, customs, and beliefs of a society, and thus provides meaningfulness in life, motivates the individual to do something for the better future of society, and promotes goal-oriented behavior amongst the believers (Park, 2007). In other words, religion gives meaning to life and involves behaving, feeling, and thinking in accordance with beliefs, as guided by religious institutions (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). However, it also matters that to which extent the person is following religious beliefs (Meer & Mir, 2014). This measurement can be associated with religious commitment, which defines the level of engagement of an individual to his religion (Rye & Pargament, 2002). One indicator of the religious commitment is intrinsic, according to which the person is said to be living according to religious beliefs and following his religion in all aspects of life (Joshi & Kumari, 2011). Worthington et al (2003) also defined religious commitment as;



*“The degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living” (p. 85).*

Religion brings patience, peace, and satisfaction in the personality, because it prevents all harmful and unhealthy activities to the person (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009; Znnbauer, et al., 1997). It defines a healthy lifestyle to the followers, with the follow up of which the individual remains healthy and calm (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). It prevents all aggressive and tiring activities and guides the person to stay calm, organized, and happy. Religion helps the person to know who he is and to understand his purpose of life (Koenig & Larson, 2001). It prevents the follow up of illegal activities and stop the individual from running behind the unachievable targets, such as money (Park, 2007). It guides for the simplest life, which is easiest to achieve and thus the person remains satisfied for what he has and for what he can achieve (Koenig & Larson, 2001). Religions help the individual to respect the relations and keep them happy, which creates a strong bond amongst the people in the society (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001). It develops the strongest relation between husband and wife, neighbors, children and parents, sisters, brothers, siblings, and relatives (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001). In this way, the individual does not remain alone during the hard times and thus does not find himself in trouble during any situation (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). This prevents any sort of psychological distress and thus promotes peace and psychological well-being amongst the followers.

Especially when it comes to youth or adolescence, the individual face rapid social, cognitive, and biological changes. These normative development changes lead to several stress

and mental health problems amongst them (Khan & Kawa, 2015). According to the estimates, the mental health issues amongst the youth and adolescence are found to be 10 to 20%, which contribute to poor education, substance misuse, physical illness, and other social problems in later life. This leads to the situation, where the youth becomes a social burden to the global economy and thus they are left with nothing but just depression, anxiety, and stress. In such a situation the only thing which can help them in social well-being is found to be religious commitment. The more the person will understand his religion, the less he will get engaged to unethical activities, and thus less he will face social issues (Joshi & Kumari, 2011; Lawler-Row, et al., 2005).

During the biological and emotional changes, the youth do not understand the actual purpose of their life and thus remain emotionally disturbed (Koenig & Larson, 2001). Moreover, the race of life, disappointments, lack of opportunities, lack of obedience, and other social issues lead to stress amongst youth (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001). This stress in youth is significantly related to suicide, depression, and anxiety. More specifically, females are found to be more victimized by stress and anxiety (Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012). Here religion plays an effective role. Religious commitment guides youth about how to react to things and which things should be attempted. Religion guides the right way to the youth and restricts them from attempting anything wrong (Patel, Flisher, & McGorry, 2007). When the adult feels lonely, depressed, and frustrated, the connection with God heals him/her (Neff & McGehee, 2019). The religious activities, such as offering a prayer or reading the Holy Book, give the impression that God has forgiven the individual, and thus the concept of being forgiven provides peace deep inside

the personality. This peace is highly essential because it prevents the person from attempting any unethical or illegal activity, such as suicide (Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010).

The studies have shown (Koenig & Larson, 2001; Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001; Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009; Maltby, Day, & Lewis, 2010) youth face a rapid social change in their lives. They are exposed to different biological changes, after which they remain weak in controlling their emotional situation, leading to fewer self-compassion capabilities amongst them (Rye & Pargament, 2002). Thus, in such a situation, the youth remain unable to understand the facts, and accept the things as they are, and thus adopt illegal and unethical way for the fulfilment of desires (Koenig & Larson, 2001). The concept of self-compassion is very important to understand the psychological condition of youth. Every religion, from Buddhist Philosophy to Islam, guides the individual to understand their realities and accept them as they are (Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012). The religion guides the person to improve self-control and leave the rest on God. Thus, individuals with strong religion background are found to be having strong self-compassion, which leads to the psychological well-being of the person (Neff & McGehee, 2019).

This simply means that there is a strong relationship between religious commitment, self-compassion, and psychological well-being (Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim, 2009). Different researchers have also studied the relationship between these three variables; religious commitment, self-compassion, and psychological wellbeing (Radloff, 1977).

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