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CAN RELİGİOSİTY BE MEASURED? DİMENSİONS OF RELİGİOUS COMMİTMENT: Theories Revisited

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This article aims to chart influencial approaches to understand religious committment and examines leading therories concerning dimensions and measurement of religiosity. Psychologists and sociologists of religion have long been concerned with the measurement of religiosity and religious committment. As pointed out by Wearing and Brown (1972: 143) the question of dimensionality remained as a persistent question in the pyschological analysis of religious beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. In the last twenty years psychologists and socioliogists of religion have spent considerable time and energy to the conceptualisation and measurement of religious committment. Roof, 1979: 17) Discussions on the nature of religious committment moved from simple and reductionist arguments as to whether religiosity is unitary phenomenon or a multidimesional matter towards more sophisicated issues culminating in synthesis of various theoretical frameworks.

Religion means diffrent things to different people. Depending on social and cultural contexts and their mind-sets people perceive and understand religion in different ways. Even within the same religious tradition there are varieties of interpretations as to the meaning of religion and its relations to individual and society. Religions can not be perceived as monolithic belief systems because monolithic aproaches to religion fails to appreciate varieties of religious experience and expressions of religious orientation[1]. As displayed throughout human history religions are not static but dynamic forces It is this dynamism and fluidity which enable religions to survive on personal as well as societal levels.

Religious commitment entails more than one dimension. One's acceptance of and position towards a supernatural being, towards an ultimate reality and its manifestations, involve a multidimensional process such as attitudes, beliefs, emotions, experiences and rituals. Research on religious commitment indicates that

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[1] There are many many credible studies which support the argument that religious experince has a vast diversity and variety. For this line of argument *see* William (1895) *James The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Original work published 1906). For an attempt to chart İslamic religious experience *see* Frederick M. Denny (1991) 'Varieties of Religious Experince in the Qur'an' in S. Seikaly and R. Baalbaki (eds.) *Quest for Understanding*, Beirut, Lebanon: American University Press: 185-202

religiosity is not a unidimensional experience in individuals' lives[2]. This means that religious orientation has various dimensions.

One of the earliest theorists on the dimension of religiosity proposed a four-dimensional model in approaching religious orientation and religious group involvement (Lenski, 1961: 21-24). These dimensions are 1- 'associational' aspect which includes frequency of religious involvement in worship and prayer services; 2- 'communal' dimension which relates to the preference and frequency of one's primary-type relations; 3- 'doctrinal orthodoxy' which refers to the intellectual acceptance of the prescribed doctrines of the church; and 4- 'devotionalism' which involves private or personal communion with God through prayers, meditation and religious behaviour.

The discussions on the conceptualisation of religious orientation were also contributed by Glock (1972: 39), who proposed a five-dimensional model[3] of 'conceptual framework for the systematic study of differential commitment to religion...'Glock argues that despite the great variety of detail, all world religions share general areas in which religiosity is manifested. These are the five core dimensions of religiosity: '*the experiential*', '*the ritualistic*', '*the ideological*', '*the intellectual*', and '*the consequential*'. According to Glock (ibid: 40), the '*experiential dimension*' of religiosity refers to the achievement of direct knowledge of the ultimate reality or experience of religious emotions in the form of exaltation, fear, humility, joyfulness and peace.

The '*ideological dimension*' gives recognition to the fact that all religions expect that the religious person should hold certain beliefs which followers are expected to adhere to. The '*ritualistic dimension*' includes specific religious practices expected of religious followers. Among them prayer, worship and fasting can be mentioned. The '*intellectual dimension*', in Glock's framework, is constituted by the expectation that the religious person should have some knowledge about the basic tenets of his/her faith and its religious scriptures. The '*consequential dimension*', on the other hand, encompasses man's relation to man. This means that the '*consequential dimension*' includes religious prescriptions which determine

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[2] For a critical review of literature on research focusing on approaches to the religious commitment, *see* W. C. Roof (1979: 17-45).

[3] The article which is entitled 'On the Study of Religious Commitment' was first published in July-August 1962, *Research Supplement of Religious Education*, New York City: The Religious Education Association: 98-110.

attitudes of the adherents as a consequence of their religious belief. Glock argues that these are the core dimesions of religious commiitment and shared by different religions of the world.

Glock's five dimensional approach was added several sub-dimensions (Stark and Glock, 1968: 62-80). On the basis of this five-dimensional explanatory framework, Stark and Glock attempted to document the nature of religious commitment in America and added several sub-dimensions to the original framework. Concerning religious belief, for example, 'orthodoxy', 'religious particularism' and 'ethicalism' were used as indicators for measuring the religious belief. 'Worship', 'communion', 'organisational participation', 'financial support', and 'saying table prayers' or 'grace', on the other hand, were used as the main indicators of religious practice-ritual. Later, Faulkner and DeJong (1966: 246-254) devised items and developed a scale criteria in order to test Stark and Glock's five-dimensional model of religiosity. Faulkner and DeJong used 23 items of scale to see the interrelationship among the five dimensions of religiosity. Their findings led them to conclude that these dimensions were positively related. After the analysis of correlations among the five dimensions of religiosity, they also argued that their findings 'indicate the interdependent nature of these measures of religious involvement'. However, Faulkner and DeJong (ibid: 253) pointed out that 'the degree of relationships differ for the various dimensions. This diversity in degree of relationships lends support to the view that religious involvement is characterised by several dimensions'. Nudelman (1971: 46) also tried to measure the dimensions of religious commitment by using the model proposed by Glock (1972), Stark and Glock (1968). After analysing data on Protestant and Roman Catholic church members, Nudelman concluded that 'devotion' and 'participation' appeared to be two important dimesions of religiosity. Based on his findings, he further argued that religious committment is neither a unidimensional nor a multidimensional pehonomenon.

King (1967: 173-185) also developed a framework for the analysis of religious commitment and proposed nine dimensions to measure religiosity. These dimensions are delineated as 1- 'Credal Assent and Personal Commitment' which refers to the aceptance of the fudamental tenets of a religion such as belief in God, the Scriptures, eternal life, salvation etc. ; 2- 'Participation in Congregational Activities' which is about taking part in organised religion such as participating in Church activities regularly and actively; 3- 'Personal Religious Experience' which encompasses prayer, repentance etc.; 4- 'Personal Ties in the Congregation' which includes church membership and frequency of meeting fellow-believers and organizing social events with them; 5- 'Commitment to Intellectual Search Despite Doubt' which relates to critical stimulation and search for meaning; 6- 'Openness to Religious Growth' which includes moral growth and continuous struggle to understand religion better; 7- 'Dogmatism'; 8- 'Extrinsic Orientation'; 9- 'Financial Behaviour and Financial Attitude' which refers to donations to church or financial contribution to religiosly inspired events; and lastly, 10- 'Talking and Reading about Religion' which refers to the frequency of reading Bible and other religious taxta and discussing about religion.

These dimensions are similar to those proposed in the earlier research. 'Credal Assent and Personal Commitment' includes, for example, Glock's 'ideological', and Lenski's 'doctrinal orthodoxy' dimensions. Similarly, 'Participation in Congregational Activities' is related to Glock's 'ritualistic' and Lenski's 'associational' dimensions. 'Personal Religious Experience' on the other hand, corresponds to Glock's 'experiential' and Lenski's 'devotionalism' dimensions. King and Hunt (1969: 321-323) later revised the early findings and subsequently proposed a new model on similar lines. On the King-Hunt model Roof (1979: 24) notes that it provided the most comprehensive conceptual framework to test the multidimensionality model.

Instead of using the concept of 'dimension' Verbit (1970: 26,27) proposed the concept of '*components*' in his attempt to develop a theoretical framework to understand religiosity. Verbit argues that 'religion has several '*components*', and an individual's behaviour vis-à-vis each one of these components has a number of '*dimensions*''. He identifies six *components* of religion including 'ritual', 'doctrine', 'emotion', 'knowledge', 'ethics' and 'community'. In Verbit's model, these six components of religion are measured along four dimensions as 'content', 'frequency', 'intensity' and 'centrality'. Of these dimensions 'content' refers to the elements of one's religious repertoire and denotes the 'direction' of his/her religious behaviour, indicating participation or non-participation in any item of religion. Dimension of 'frequency', on the other hand, measures the 'amount' of involvement of a person in religious behaviours and practices. 'Intensity', as argued by Verbit, refers to the degree of determination or consistency in relation to one's position towards religion. The fourth dimension, 'centrality', measures the importance that a person attributes to religious tenets, rituals and sentiments.

Drawing upon earlier models and studying dimensions of religiosity among catholics, O'Connell (1975: 200-203) also proposed two more dimensions in addition to the five dimesions presented by Stark and Glock. O'Connel argued that consequential scale should be divided into two main dimensions as individual and societal consequences to find out the relationships between the dimensions of religiosity. The same year, Himmelfarb (1975: 606-618) invented a synthesised form of a typology of religious involvement and argued that religious involvement has at least two elements: '*doctrinal beliefs*' and '*ritual observance*'.

Thus far, I have discussed the most widely cited approaches to the measurement religiosity which support the view that religious committment is a multidimensional human experience and its variety can not be understood within the framework of unidimensional interpretation of religious belief and behaviour. Those who take this view argue that it is now self-evident and taken for granted reality that religion is a multifaceted phenomenon. However, against the near-dogmatic status of multidimensional understanding of religion, Clayton and Gladden (1974:142) argued that 'religiosity is primarily a commiment to an ideology and the other so-called dimensions are merely expressions of the strength of that core committment'.

Conclusions

Analysis of leading thories as presented and in this article indicates that religious commitment and involvement are multidimensional phenomena (*see* Figure 1). The core dimensions of a religious commitment include belief, knowledge, practice and experience. It should be pointed out that each dimension of a religious orientation may have numerous sub-dimensions because of the nature of religious experience. Therefore all the theories and explanatory frameworks for the analysis of religious commitments are susceptible to omitting some of the dimensions and sub-dimensions of religiosity. Nevertheless, they are a useful means of indentifying the general patterns. As Glock (1972: 54) points out however, the real challenge lies in the cross-cultural stduy of religious committment'.

One should bear in mind that almost all of the theroretical frameworks discussed in this article were developed after studying predominantly Christian believers and manifestations of Christian religious experice. It is therefore questionable whether these methodoloigal approaches can explain non-Chritian religious experience in general and manifestations of Islamic orientation in particular. At this juncture, it becomes clear that more research is needed on Muslim subjects to test the reliability and applicability of theories and approaches developed by psychologists and sociologists of religion for the measurement of religiosity. Comparative research will also facilitate the development of more inclusive and coherent methodological approaches to study 'the varieties of religious experince'.

Figure 1. Dimesions of religious committment

Authors:	**Proposed dimensions/components of religious committment**
(Lenski, 1961)	1. 'associational' frequency of religious involvement; 2. 'communal' preference and frequency of one's primary-type relations; 3. 'doctrinal orthodoxy' the intellectual acceptance of the prescribed doctrines; 4. 'devotionalism' communion with God;
Glock (1972)	1. 'experiential' achievement of direct knowledge of the ultimate; 2. 'ideological' beliefs which followers are expected to adhere to; 3. 'ritualistic'' religious practices such prayer and worship; 4. 'intellectual' knowledge about the basic tenets of the faith; 5. 'consequential' religious prescriptions which determine attitudes of the adherents.
King (1967)	1- 'Credal Assent and Personal Commitment'; 2- 'Participation in Congregational Activities'; 3- 'Personal Religious Experience'; 4- 'Personal Ties in the Congregation'; 5- 'Commitment to Intellectual Search Despite Doubt'; 6- 'Openness to Religious Growth'; 7- 'Dogmatism'; 8- 'Extrinsic Orientation'; 9- 'Financial Behaviour and Financial Attitude'; 10- 'Talking and Reading about Religion'.
Verbit (1970)	1- 'ritual'; 2- 'doctrine'; 3- 'emotion'; 4- 'knowledge'; 5- 'ethics'; 6- 'community'.

Notes:

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