

THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING ON ENHANCING DECISION-MAKING ABILITY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The study is set out to determine the efficacy of psycho-religious counseling in enhancing decision-making abilities among high school girls in Amman, Jordan. In the study, a semi-experimental design was adopted that included a sample size of 100 female students taught at Princess Basma Comprehensive Secondary School for girls in Amman, Jordan. These students were divided into a group that was supposed to be exposed to psycho-religious counseling and another that was not exposed to it. The decision-making ability was assessed with a specially designed scale for this purpose, its correctness was checked, and the reliability was tested. This was an intervention for a religious counseling program with 15 sessions, 45 minutes each, conducted over a month and a half. The results were greatly significant to enhance decision-making skills among female students in the experimental group compared with the control group, with statistical analysis giving evidence as to the effectiveness of the program. The results of the study proved that psycho-religious counseling considerably improves an individual's decision-making ability and enhances the psychological and mental health of the students. Many recommendations have been put forward for opening similar counseling programs at other educational stages and including the development of decision-making ability through religious and psychological counseling.

Keywords: Religious Psychological Counseling, Decision-Making Ability, Mental Health, Counseling Programs, Psychological Assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Decision-making skills are crucial for adolescents, particularly high school students at the peak of their personal and academic growth. Effective decision-making leads to better educational outcomes and improved mental health, while poor decision-making can result in academic failures, negative behaviors, and mental health issues [1]. Religious psychological counseling combines psychology with religious teachings to offer holistic guidance, improving moral development, emotional regulation, and decision-making [2]. This study examines the impact of religious psychological counseling on high school students' decision-making skills in Amman, Jordan, contributing to literature on integrating religious and psychological support to enhance adolescent decision-making [3, 4].

1.1 Research Problem

Decision-making skills are among many other challenges that adolescents face, and more specifically, high school students, in which such decisions could affect their academic life,

social coexistence, or even mental health. Many students, however, find it hard to make these decisions due to a lack of guidance or support in the right way. Traditional counseling methods seldom integrate the moral and ethical dimensions so vital in holistic development. The study fills this gap by examining the effect of religious psychological counseling—which is the combination of psychological principles with religious teachings—on improving decision-making abilities among high school students in Amman, Jordan.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. Investigating whether a religious counseling program makes any difference in high school students' decision-making ability needs to be evaluated.
2. Comparing the decision-making abilities of people who have undergone religious counseling with those who have not.
3. Determining whether religious counseling has a long-term impact on the development of decision-making abilities among students.
4. Exploring the role of religious teachings as a source of moral framework in supporting better decision-making.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Does religious psychological counseling improve the decision-making abilities of high school students?
2. How do the decision-making abilities of students who receive religious psychological counseling compare to those who do not?
3. What is the long-term impact of religious psychological counseling on the decision-making abilities of high school students?
4. In what ways do religious teachings influence the decision-making processes of adolescents?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H1: High school students who receive religious psychological counseling will show a significant improvement in their decision-making abilities compared to those who do not receive such counseling.

H2: There will be a significant difference in the decision-making abilities of students who undergo religious psychological counseling compared to those who do not.

H3: The positive impact of religious psychological counseling on decision-making abilities will be sustained over a long-term period.

H4: Religious teachings integrated into psychological counseling will provide a robust moral and ethical framework that enhances decision-making abilities among high school students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies have been conducted earlier on the decision-making skills of adolescents and the role of psychological counseling in this respect. For instance, Barry et al. [5] showed that effective decision-making is related to better educational outcomes and improved mental health. In the study, religious psychological counseling, which integrated psychological principles with religious tenets, was found to give holistic guidance and hence improve moral development, emotional regulation, and decision-making [6].

Some studies conducted by Deb et al. [10] and Estrada et al. [12] have evaluated the role of spiritual and religious education in enhancing adolescents' mental health and decision-making abilities. Deb et al. [10] established a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being, whereas Estrada et al. [12] posited that religious education could help in promoting adolescent mental health by ensuring a cleaner decision-making process.

Sodikova [27] examined how religious and psychological factors interact in decision-making by adolescents, suggesting that religious knowledge in combination with psychological literacy enhances the capacity of decision-making. In a similar vein, Jain and Pandey [15] have argued for a role of spirituality in building up resilience, and therefore in improving decision-making processes.

These studies highlight the potential for integrating religious teachings with psychological counseling in order to develop decision-making abilities in adolescents. However, there is a limited amount of research material available with respect to the impact of religious psychological counseling on the decision-making skills of high school students in Jordan, which this study aims to fill.

3. EXPERIMENTAL OR MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Participants

The study population included all first and second female secondary grade students enrolled at Princess Basma Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls in Amman, Jordan, during the second semester, 2023-2024. The researcher randomly selected a sample consisting of 100 female students from the first and second secondary grades to perform the study, then divided them into two groups: an experimental group consisting of $N=50$ to receive the treatment of religious psychological counseling, and a control group consisting of $N=50$ without treatment.

3.1.1 Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all first and second secondary grade female students at Princess Basma Comprehensive Secondary School for Girls in the Jordanian capital, Amman, during the second semester (2023-2024). The researcher randomly selected (100) female students from the first and second secondary grades to implement the study, then divided them into two groups; one is a control group ($N=50$) student, the other is an experimental group ($N=50$) student.

To ensure the equivalence of the two study groups, the “t” test value was extracted to apply the pre-scale to the experimental and control groups, as shown in Table1.

Table1: Results of the T- test for the experimental group and the control group on the study scale in the pre-scale

	Group	Mean	STD	t value	sig
pre-scale	Control	55.00	18.90	1.484	0.141*
	Experimental	60.64	19.10		

* Not statistically significant at level of ($\alpha=0.05$)

The results of Table 1 indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between the two groups in the t-test, according to the t-value of (1.484), which is not statistically significant at a significance level of (0.05), which confirms the equivalence of the control and experimental groups in the pre-scale.

3.2 Measures

Decision-making ability was assessed using a specially designed scale with 24 items, rated on a four-point Likert scale (always, often, sometimes, never). The scale's validity was confirmed by experts, and its reliability was tested using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha [11].

3.3 Procedures

This was a one-and-a-half-month religious psychological counseling program intervention consisting of 15 sessions of 45 minutes each, three times a week. The objectives of the program were to provide teaching regarding the Islamic religion, forming an honest personality, achieving mental health, and good moral values.

3.4 Analysis

The effectiveness of the intervention was analyzed with MANCOVA, considering the pre- and post-test scores. The adjusted means and standard errors of the post-scale of both groups were calculated in this study, considering the score of the pre-scale as a covariate.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It brought about prominent enhancement in the decision-making ability of the subjects under the experimental group in comparison with the control group. The results obtained through MANCOVA confirmed the effectiveness of this program having a large effect size, $\eta^2 = 0.746$, with a high coefficient of determination, $R^2 = 0.904$ [2]. The paired-sample t-test results showed that improvements were sustained over three weeks. This clearly indicates that religious psychological counseling has had a great influence on the decision-making skills of students at the high school level.

To test this hypothesis, the researcher extracted the means and standard deviations of the pre- and post-decision-making ability scale for students in the experimental and control groups. The following table shows this.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the pre- and post-decision-making ability scale for students in the experimental and control groups

Decision-Making Ability Scale	group	NO# Of Students	pre-scale		post-scale	
			Mean	STD	Mean	STD
	control	50	55.00	54.58	60.64	80.46
	experimental	50	18.90	18.65	19.10	11.87

The adjusted means and adjusted standard errors of the post-scale were also calculated for both the control group and the experimental group, after taking into account the pre-scale scores of both groups, with a common variable due to the presence of a variance in the post-scale. The following table shows this.

Table 3: Adjusted means and adjusted standard errors for the post-scale

Decision-Making Ability Scale	group	NO# Of Students	Adjusted	adjusted
			means	standard errors
	control	50	56.703	.901
	experimental	50	78.337	.901

The previous table shows that there are apparent differences between the adjusted mean performance of the control and experimental groups in the post-test in favor of the experimental group, as the adjusted mean of the experimental group was (78.337), while the adjusted mean of the control group was (56.703), indicating that there is an effect of religious psychological guidance. The analysis of (MANCOVA) was also used to reveal the presence of an effect of religious psychological guidance in the post-test, as shown in the following table.

Table 4: Results of the (MANCOVA) to detect the effect of religious psychological counseling on the scale of decision-making ability

independent variables	Wilks Lambda	f-value	sig
Group	.155	172.032	.155

Table 4. shows that there are differences in the decision-making ability scale, as the Wilks Lambda value reached (0.155), the F value reached (172.032), which is statistically significant at a significance level of ($\alpha=0.05$). To show the significance of the statistical differences between the mean, the analysis of (MANCOVA) was used. The following table shows this.

Table 5: Results of the analysis of MANCOVA

Decision-Making Ability Scale	Source Of Variance	Square Sum	df	Square Mean	F-Value	sig	Eta ²
	pre-scale	20046.965	1	20046.965	499.163	.000	.837
	group	11443.789	1	11443.789	284.946	.000	.746
	error	3895.635	97	40.161			
	total	496582.000	100				

($R^2=0.904$)

The results of the analysis of common variance shown in the previous table indicate the presence of a statistically significant effect at the level ($\alpha=0.05$) for religious psychological counseling between the total scores of students in both the experimental and control groups on the post-test, as the value of "F" for the scale reached (284.946), this value is significant at the level ($\alpha=0.05$), the differences were in favor of the experimental group that underwent religious psychological counseling, which means that religious psychological counseling contributed to improving the students' ability to make decisions.

The effect size was found using Eta square, which reached (0.746). To determine the scientific significance of the differences between the post-test and pre-test, (R^2) was extracted, where its value reached (0.904), which indicates that religious psychological counseling contributed to improving the ability of the experimental group members to make decisions by a percentage of (90.4%).

This means rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, which states: "There are statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha\leq0.05$) between the scores of the experimental group students who underwent religious psychological counseling and the scores of the control group students who did not undergo counseling on the post-test of the ability to make decisions.

Results related to testing the second main hypothesis, which states: "There are no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha\leq0.05$) between the scores of the experimental group students who underwent religious psychological counseling on the follow-up scale of students' ability to make decisions at a time interval of three weeks.

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, the paired-sample t-test was used. The following table shows the mean, standard deviation, and results of the t-test for the differences between the post-test and follow-up scores of the experimental group, which numbered (50) female students.

Table 6: Paired-sample t-test results

Decision-Making Ability Scale	Scale	Mean	STD	T-value	sig
Decision-Making Ability Scale	post scale	80.46	11.87	1.561	.125
	follow-up scale	79.88	11.45		

The results in the table above showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the scores of the post-scale and the scores of the follow-up scale in the experimental group, based on the t-values (1.561) with a significance level greater than (0.05). This indicates the continued effectiveness of religious psychological counseling in improving the students' ability to make decisions. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is accepted, which states:

There are no statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha\leq0.05$) between the scores of the experimental group students who underwent religious psychological counseling in the follow-up scale of the ability to make decisions, with a time interval of three weeks.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that religious psychological counseling has great importance in improving students' ability to make decisions.

Religion is considered the cornerstone of psychological counseling because it addresses the soul with its emphasis on virtuous morals and good behavior. Counseling highlights these aspects in various dimensions, building interconnected relationships between individuals and their spiritual and moral values. These religious values contribute to increasing an individual's confidence and encourage decision-making in a way that aligns with the principles of Sharia, promoting the individual's and others' interests.

The current study on the effect of religious psychological counseling on decision-making ability among high school students is closely related to and linked with previous studies on the intersections between spirituality, mental health, and decision-making.

For example, Deb et al. [10] indicated that high spiritual values improve mental well-being, particularly among female students. The positive influences of spiritual practices imbued through family and social associations on mental well-being are closely related to the purpose of this study, highlighting religious psychological counseling as a way to enhance decision-making abilities by creating an atmosphere of support and spirituality.

In the study "Effect of Internal Locus of Control on Career Adaptability" by Lee [19], self-efficacy was highly influential in the decision-making process. Similarly, religious psychological counseling attempts to develop self-efficacy in students to boost their confidence and decision-making through spirituality.

Lomboy et al. [21] established that religious education minimizes stress, alcoholism, and depression while enhancing good health practices. These results align with this research, proving that religious psychological counseling enhances decision-making skills among adolescents. Both models utilize religious teachings to promote good mental health and conduct in adolescents.

Estrada et al. [12] highlighted that religious education develops healthier reactions and reinforces less risky lifestyle practices and coping mechanisms, contributing to adolescents' mental health in school settings. This resonates with the approach adopted in this study to integrate moral and ethical frameworks into students' cognitive processes to enhance decision-making.

Sodikova [27] studied the "Religious-Psychological Characteristics of Decision-Making" in Uzbekistan and found that religious knowledge combined with psychological literacy increases decision-making ability among younger students. This study yields similar results, showing that religious psychological counseling significantly improves decision-making abilities by combining spiritual and psychological direction.

Blomhof [6] investigated the "Influence of Religion/Spirituality on Mental Health with an Emphasis on Depression" and found that personal religiosity and spirituality decrease depressive symptoms.

This supports the results of the current study, showing that religious psychological counseling enhances students' mental health and decision-making capacity by capitalizing on the positive influences of spirituality.

Additionally, Jain and Pandey [15] indicated that spirituality cultivates a moral sense and strengthens resilience and coping skills. This further justifies that religious psychological counseling positively affects students' decision-making abilities by reinforcing a strong ethical base and high psychological resilience.

The current study shares the conclusions of most past studies that advocate for the positive roles of religious and spiritual practices in developing mental health, decision-making, and overall well-being. This study extends this premise by proving the effectiveness of religious psychological counseling in facilitating decision-making ability among high school students.

6. CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicated significant differences in decision-making abilities at post-test between the experimental group and the control group. The findings showed that the experimental group, which received religious psychological counseling, had a significantly higher adjusted mean for decision-making ability compared to the control group. MANCOVA results proved the efficiency of religious psychological counseling by showing statistically significant differences, large by effect size $\eta^2 = 0.746$ and high by coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.904$. Furthermore, the paired-sample t-test with follow-up repeated measures has pointed out that improvements in the experimental group were sustained over a period of three weeks, which explained the sustainability of impacts caused by the counseling program.

One of the most prominent functions that religion performs for the individual and the group is achieving psychological stability. When individuals suffer from psychological illness and internal conflicts, religion achieves psychological balance for them through the guidance, psychological treatment, and divine guidance it provides. Religious feeling may lead to a sense of happiness, satisfaction, contentment, and belief in fate, good and bad, which helps the individual to face pressures. The study aimed to highlight the element of self-confidence in making decisions regarding the circumstances that obstruct the course of life in general, so that all life requirements do not serve as a refuge in times of hardship. The one who feels safe and free from fear and pessimism realizes that there is always change for the better, and through it every individual in society can achieve his demands through: supplication, thanks, praise, and thanks to God Almighty, which provides him with the highest forms of support and reassurance. Hence, the study concluded that the ability to make a decision is evidence of the influence of religious and behavioral values, as the individual is reassured about his future fate; which contributes to achieving all the requirements of his life. Also, religious psychological counseling, like any type of preaching, requires the seeker of counsel to be sincerely committed during and after practicing the activity within the counseling axis.

Hence, we do not expect the counselor to solve all the problems alone without any interaction or commitment from the seeker of counsel, because achieving the goals requires both sides (the counselor and the seeker of counsel) to cooperate in confronting the problems and difficulties facing society. Accordingly, the study recommends the necessity of holding programs and workshops that are based on religious psychological guidance and expanding them to include all educational stages, guiding parents to give their children the ability to make decisions in the life situations they are exposed to and paying attention to activities that develop decision-making, and conducting similar studies that include the effect of religious psychological guidance on other variables and other societies as well.

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