

THE LEVELS OF JOY IN MUSLIMS' CELEBRATIONS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN EID AND WEDDINGS

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Abstract

The current study intended to analyze the levels of joy in religious festivals. It involved 387 Pakistani Muslims, including men (n=143) and women (n=282). Data was collected through a specifically developed questionnaire in Urdu. The findings revealed that Pakistani Muslims enjoy their festivals at a very low degree. The levels of joy in Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha remain significantly lower than the levels of joy in weddings. The level of joy for Pakistanis during different festivals could not exceed 31 percent. The findings further revealed that, instead of being joyous, a small minority of respondents felt sadness and tiredness while celebrating different festivals. Men had significantly higher levels of joy on Eid-Ul-Fitr and Eid-Ul-Adha as compared to women. Women had significantly higher levels of joy at close relatives' weddings than men. Unmarried had significantly higher levels of joy at friends' wedding as compared to married.

Kajian kali ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tingkat keceriaan pada hari raya keagamaan. Ini melibatkan 387 Muslim Pakistan termasuk pria (n=143) dan wanita (n=282). Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner yang dikembangkan secara khusus dalam bahasa Urdu. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa Muslim Pakistan menikmati festival mereka pada tingkat yang sangat rendah dan tingkat kegembiraan di Idul Fitri dan Idul Adha tetap jauh lebih rendah

daripada tingkat kegembiraan dalam pernikahan. Tingkat kegembiraan orang Pakistan selama festival yang berbeda tidak bisa melebihi 31 persen. Temuan lebih lanjut mengungkapkan bahwa, alih-alih gembira, sebagian kecil responden merasakan kesedihan dan kelelahan saat merayakan festival yang berbeda. Pria memiliki tingkat kegembiraan yang jauh lebih tinggi pada Idul Fitri dan Idul Adha dibandingkan dengan wanita. Wanita memiliki tingkat kegembiraan yang jauh lebih tinggi pada pernikahan kerabat dekat dibandingkan dengan pria. Belum menikah memiliki tingkat kegembiraan yang jauh lebih tinggi pada pernikahan teman dibandingkan dengan menikah.

Keywords: Joy; festivals; celebration; Eid; wedding

Introduction

The word festival is originated from feast or fiesta, which means celebration (Skoultzos, 2014) that includes cheerfulness, joy, happiness, and excitement (Murgiyanto, 2017). The arrangement of festivals is rooted back in ancient times. The first recorded festival roots back to 534 BC in Athens. This festival was to please the God of wine, feast, and dance (Quinn, 2005). Festivals in ancient times were also celebrated to enjoy the victory over enemies (Levickaite, 2011).

Festivals are traditional symbols that are celebrated on specific dates (Priporas et al., 2018; Revilla Hernandez et al., 2016) for a shorter period (Carlsen et al., 2010; Saleh & Ryan, 1993) and help in increasing social values (Derrett, 2002) and marketing the community (Christou, 2015; Rizzi & Dioli, 2010). The main objectives behind festivals are to celebrate religious occasions and social events, to provide entertainment (Violanti et al., 2006), to display culture (Korec et al., 2012), and to invite tourists to improve the socioeconomic growth (Prayag et al., 2013). Festivals are distinctive from routine life, as they offer unusual activities that evoke special feelings and emotions (Cudny, 2014; Davies, 2015). Enjoyment is the most integral part of a festival (Gibson et al., 2011). Festivals are regarded as significant events (Stevens & Shin, 2014) and are positively associated with the unity within a community (Magpantay et al., 2014). Festivals are also based on one's religious beliefs (Cudny & Rouba, 2011; Osnes, 2011; Roemer, 2007), arts and music (Brennan-Horley et al., 2007), food (Chris Gibson & Kong, 2005; Hall & Fincham, 2013; McCann, 2002), the start of a new month or a new year (Ngernyuang & Ying Wu, 2020; Niko & Atem, 2019), spring and flowers (Magana, 2016; Hamouda, 2016; L, 2016).

Festivals contribute positively to one's emotional health (Keyes et al., 2002), happiness (Biaett, 2017; Gursoy et al., 2004; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Liang et al., 2008; Park & Jung, 2014; Porsche & Maennig, 2011), fulfillment of psychological needs (Mingo & Montecolle, 2014; Newman et al., 2014), personal satisfaction (Eriksson et al., 2016; Gursoy et al., 2010), quality of life (Armbrecht & Andersson, 2020; Jepson & Stadler, 2017; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Yoo et al., 2015), and wellbeing (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2019; Huizinga, 1955; Lengieza et al., 2019). Festivals create social harmony (Krumboltz et al., 2013; Tynsong, 2019). The prime objective of festivals is to attain joy. Joy is a basic human emotion. Like other emotions, the experience of joy must involve a person to feel, perceive, and respond to joy. The components of joy include harmony and unity with oneself and others; a sense of vitality, energy, potency, and aliveness; transcendence; and freedom (Meadows, 2013). Joy is among the positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). It is mostly exhibited to express gratitude, fun, excitement, and pleasure (Richardson et al., 2016). Experiencing joy is ethically and theologically permissible (Johnson, 2020). Experiencing joy helps in motivating a person for future performance (Shiota et al., 2011). The role of joy in religious festivals represents the feelings of being blessed and appraised by God. Theologically, joy is considered a spiritual fruit from God (Moltmann et al., 2017). The believers associate the element of hope (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010) with reward from God with joy.

Pakistan is the sixth largest population in the world. Most of its inhabitants are Muslims who celebrate two major religious festivals a year. Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated for three days after completing fasts in the holy month of Ramadan. The primary purpose of this event is to celebrate the religious and spiritual accomplishments which were achieved during the holy month of Ramadan. Eid-ul-Adha is celebrated after Muslims from all around the world perform pilgrimage in Mekkah. This event is associated with scarifying an animal in the name of Allah. Muslims slotter different animals and distribute their meat among relatives and the poor. Weddings are also considered a religious obligation among Muslims. The wedding festival also includes religion-based activities such as performing Nikah (signing the marriage contract) and giving Walima (giving food in the name of Allah). The earlier literature did not reflect any study that measured the levels of celebration, joy, and happiness of Muslims during different festivals. Therefore, the current study intended to assess and compare the levels of joy for different occasions, i.e., Eid-Ul-Fitr, Eid-Ul-Adha, close relative's wedding, extended relative's wedding, and friend's

wedding. The study assumed that the levels of joy for religious festivals would be lower as compared to the levels of joy for weddings.

Method

Participants

The study involved 385 conveniently selected participants, including 143 men and 242 women from Islamabad, Pakistan. 313 of them were married, and 72 were unmarried. The age of the participants ranged between 18 to 70 years. All the participants were Muslims and educated enough to respond to the study's questionnaire, which was in the Urdu language.

The Instrument

A specific questionnaire in the Urdu language was developed for the study. It asked the respondents about their feelings on the occasions of Eid-Ul-Fitr, Eid-Ul-Adha, close relative's wedding, extended relative's wedding, and friend's wedding. The feelings included sad, tired, as usual, slightly joyful, moderately joyful, and extremely joyful. The respondents were asked to select any feelings described above against each festival. The questionnaire also required some demographic information from the participants, i.e., gender, age, education, marital status, and religion.

Procedure

The researchers approached the study participants individually while visiting different educational institutions and public offices. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent to participate in the study was appropriately taken. Furthermore, they were assured of the confidentiality of the data and were thanked for their participation.

Analysis

The data gathered was recorded in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Frequencies for each festival were obtained and converted to percentages to obtain the levels of joy for each understudied category of respondents. T-test was used to measure the differences in the levels of joy based on gender, age, and marital status.

Findings

The findings revealed that Pakistani Muslims did not feel adequate joy while celebrating different festivals. The level of joy for all the understudied festivals was 27.16% among the respondents, 27.39% in men, 26.93% in women, 27.26% in unmarried, 26.39% in married, 27.14% in youngsters, and 16% in adults (table 1). The level of joy for Eid-Ul-Fitr was 30.66% among the respondents, 31.70% in men, 29.61% in women, 30.46% in unmarried, 30.09% in married, 30.33% in youngsters, and 14.67% in adults (table 1). The level of joy for Eid-Ul-Adha was 28.07% among the respondents, 29.84% in men, 26.31% in women, 27.48% in unmarried, 28.24% in married, 27.53% in youngsters, and 9.67% in adults (table 1). The level of joy for a close relative’s wedding was 29.18% among the respondents, 27.51% in men, 30.85% in women, 29.50% in unmarried, 30.09% in married, 29.33% in youngsters, and 11.33% in adults (table 1). The level of joy for extended relatives’ weddings was 19.80% among the respondents, 19.35% in men, 20.25% in women, 20.02% in unmarried, 19.44% in married, 19.62% in youngsters, and 15.67% in adults (table 2). The level of joy for a friend’s wedding was 30.32% among the respondents, 30.07% in men, 30.58% in women, 30.67% in unmarried, 29.17% in married, 30.43% in youngsters, and 83.67% in adults (table 1).

Table 1. Categorical percentages of joy for different festivals

| Events | Total | Gender | | Marital Status | | Age | |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|---------|----------------|---------|------------|--------|
| | | Males | Females | Single | Married | Youngsters | Adults |
| All Festivals | 27.16 | 27.39 | 26.93 | 27.26 | 26.39 | 27.14 | 16.00 |
| Eid-ul-Fitr | 30.66 | 31.70 | 29.61 | 30.46 | 30.09 | 30.33 | 14.67 |
| Eid-ul-Adha | 28.07 | 29.84 | 26.31 | 27.48 | 28.24 | 27.53 | 9.67 |
| Close Relative’s Wedding | 29.18 | 27.51 | 30.85 | 29.50 | 30.09 | 29.33 | 11.33 |
| Extended Relative’s Wedding | 19.80 | 19.35 | 20.25 | 20.02 | 19.44 | 19.62 | 15.67 |
| Friend’s Wedding | 30.32 | 30.07 | 30.58 | 30.67 | 29.17 | 30.43 | 83.67 |

Source: Author, 2021

The findings further revealed that, instead of being joyous, a small minority of the respondents (3 to 4.5%) felt sadness and tiredness while celebrating different festivals (table 2).

Table 2. Categorical percentages for the understudied feelings for different festivals

| Events | Total | Gender | | Marital Status | | Age | |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------|---------|----------------|---------|------------|--------|
| | | Males | Females | Single | Married | Youngsters | Adults |
| All Festivals | | | | | | | |
| Sad | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Tired | 4.5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| As usual | 11.5 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 14 |
| Slightly joyous | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 21 | 22 | 22 |
| Moderately joyous | 14.5 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 11 |
| Extremely joyous | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 44 | 44 | 47 |
| Eid-ul-Fitr | | | | | | | |
| Sad | 1.5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Tired | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| As usual | 4.5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Slightly joyous | 21 | 18 | 24 | 23 | 18 | 22 | 19 |
| Moderately joyous | 15 | 18 | 12 | 14 | 18 | 16 | 8 |
| Extremely joyous | 55.5 | 59 | 52 | 55 | 54 | 53 | 65 |
| Eid-ul-Adha | | | | | | | |
| Sad | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Tired | 8 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| As usual | 5.5 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 4 |
| Slightly joyous | 19 | 15 | 23 | 21 | 15 | 20 | 17 |
| Moderately joyous | 25.5 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 22 | 27 | 17 |
| Extremely joyous | 39.5 | 49 | 30 | 35 | 47 | 35 | 50 |
| Close Relative's Wedding | | | | | | | |
| Sad | 3.5 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Tired | 2.5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| As usual | 6 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Slightly joyous | 14.5 | 17 | 12 | 13 | 18 | 14 | 15 |
| Moderately joyous | 14.5 | 13 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 13 |
| Extremely joyous | 58 | 52 | 64 | 60 | 57 | 59 | 65 |
| Extended Relative's Wedding | | | | | | | |
| Sad | 3.5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| Tired | 9 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 10 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| As usual | 27.5 | 29 | 26 | 26 | 33 | 28 | 25 |
| Slightly joyous | 40 | 41 | 39 | 39 | 44 | 38 | 50 |
| Moderately joyous | 13 | 12 | 14 | 14 | 7 | 14 | 6 |
| Extremely joyous | 6.5 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 10 |
| Friend's Wedding | | | | | | | |
| Sad | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 2 |
| Tired | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| As usual | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Slightly joyous | 4.5 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 3 | 13 |
| Moderately joyous | 9 | 13 | 5 | 6 | 13 | 6 | 15 |
| Extremely joyous | 78 | 71 | 85 | 83 | 63 | 82 | 62 |

Source: Author, 2021

The study also analyzed the possibly significant differences in the levels of joy while comparing the respondents by gender, marital status, and age. Men had significantly higher levels of joy on Eid-UL-Fitr (table 3; M=5.28 vs 4.99; p=0.011; Cohen's d=0.242) and Eid-UL-Adha (table 3; M=5.04 vs 4.48; p=0.000; Cohen's d=0.413) as compared to women. Women had significantly higher levels of joy on close relatives' weddings as compared to men (table 3; M=5.28 vs. 4.99; p=0.011; Cohen's d=0.384).

Table 3. Gender-based differences in the levels of joy

| Variable | Men (n=143) | | Women (n=242) | | t(383) | p | Cohen's d |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|------------------|-------|--------|------|-----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| All Festivals | 28.685 | 3.810 | 28.450 | 3.648 | 0.670 | .503 | 0.064 |
| Eid-ul-Fitr | 5.287 | 1.004 | 4.996 | 1.256 | 2.539 | .011 | 0.242 |
| Eid-ul-Adha | 5.049 | 1.212 | 4.483 | 1.413 | 4.336 | .000 | 0.413 |
| Close Relative's Wedding | 4.860 | 1.495 | 5.322 | 1.101 | 4.040 | .000 | 0.384 |
| Extended Relative's Wedding | 3.636 | 1.078 | 3.727 | 1.172 | 0.829 | .407 | 0.079 |
| Friend's Wedding | 5.336 | 1.300 | 5.550 | 1.241 | 1.792 | .074 | 0.171 |

Source: Author, 2021

Youngsters and adults did not differ in the levels of joy for different festivals.

Table 4. Age-based differences in the levels of joy

| Variable | Youngsters (n=333) | | Adults (n=52) | | t(383) | p | Cohen's d |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|--------|-------|-----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| All Festivals | 28.480 | 3.703 | 28.675 | 3.559 | 0.435 | 0.663 | 0.053 |
| Eid-ul-Fitr | 5.035 | 1.216 | 5.260 | 1.140 | 1.533 | 0.126 | 0.186 |
| Eid-ul-Adha | 4.580 | 1.372 | 4.844 | 1.496 | 1.564 | 0.118 | 0.190 |
| Close Relative's Wedding | 5.195 | 1.247 | 5.377 | 0.960 | 1.231 | 0.219 | 0.150 |
| Extended Relative's Wedding | 3.687 | 1.166 | 3.844 | 1.040 | 1.120 | 0.263 | 0.136 |
| Friend's Wedding | 5.533 | 1.267 | 5.273 | 1.166 | 1.703 | 0.089 | 0.207 |

Source: Author, 2021

Unmarried had significantly higher levels of joy on friends wedding as compared to married (table 5; $M=5.57$ vs. 5.15 ; $p=0.336$; Cohen's $d=0.242$).

Table 5. Marital status-based differences in the levels of joy

| Variable | Unmarried (n=313) | | Married (n=72) | | t(383) | p | Cohen's d |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|--------|-------|-----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| All Festivals | 28.567 | 3.652 | 28.209 | 3.832 | 0.925 | 0.356 | 0.097 |
| Eid-ul-Fitr | 5.070 | 1.191 | 5.027 | 1.295 | 0.334 | 0.739 | 0.036 |
| Eid-ul-Adha | 4.563 | 1.383 | 4.845 | 1.402 | 1.941 | 0.053 | 0.203 |
| Close Relative's Wedding | 5.230 | 1.224 | 5.155 | 1.182 | 0.592 | 0.554 | 0.062 |
| Extended Relative's Wedding | 3.700 | 1.172 | 3.736 | 1.055 | 0.299 | 0.765 | 0.031 |
| Friend's Wedding | 5.574 | 1.191 | 5.155 | 1.485 | 3.206 | 0.001 | 0.336 |

Source: Author, 2021

Most importantly, the understudied respondents revealed significantly lower levels of joy at religious festivals (Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha) compared to the weddings of relatives and friends (table 6; $M=9.67$ vs. 14.42 ; $p=0.000$; Cohen's $d=1.370$).

Table 6. Differences in the levels of joy between Eids and weddings

| | Eids | | Weddings | | t(384) | p | Cohen's d |
|-----|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|------|-----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| Joy | 9.674 | 2.272 | 14.424 | 2.546 | 34.301 | 0.00 | 1.370 |

Source: Author, 2021

Discussion

Joy is a compulsory element in celebrating any kind of festival (Gibson et al., 2011; Murgiyanto, 2017). It was a common perception and a constant observation of the researchers that Pakistani Muslims did not seem to be much joyous and happy on their religious festivals. The current study was initiated to validate the same observation. The findings confirmed the researchers' observation, and it was revealed that Pakistanis' levels of joy on different festivals and celebrations were quite lower than expected or desired. The study revealed that the level of joy for Pakistanis during different festivals could not exceed 31%. It means that they enjoy their festivals at a very low level. As there was no earlier study available in the country that could have analyzed joy or related feelings for different festivals, it was difficult to explain the reasons for Pakistanis' insufficient levels of joy in their festivals. However, several factors in this regard may contribute to the reduction of joy on different celebrations.

Noticeably, the overall psychosocial wellbeing of Pakistanis is also not up to the mark. They do face several psychosocial stressors in their day-to-day routine (Husain et al., 2016), suffer from several mental problems (Husain, 2018), lack proper information on mental health (Husain & Faize, 2020), and avoid psychotherapeutic consultation (Husain, 2020). An earlier study revealed that medical doctors and nurses in Pakistan, who are supposed to enhance the health of their countrymen, had alarming levels of depression, anxiety, and stress themselves, compared with other professions (Hassan & Husain, 2020). Pakistani teachers in higher education, who are supposed to motivate the students and groom their personalities, have also reflected alarming levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Husain, et al. 2016). Joy is surely a product of adequate mental health. People with adequate levels of psychosocial wellness and positive thinking are more capable of enjoying their lives and celebrating the occasions meant to be celebrated. As exhibited in the current study, the unsatisfactory levels of joy reflect poor mental health and a lack of positive thinking among Pakistanis. Joy is also dependent on other psychosocial factors, e.g., socioeconomic status, political environment, and the situation of security in the country. Joy in shared festivals reflects the nation's unity affected by religious and political sectarianism.

The most important finding of the current study was a statistically significant difference in the levels of joy associated with religious festivals (Eid-ul-Fitr & Eid-ul-Adha) and weddings of relatives and friends. The understudied Muslims revealed significantly lower levels of joy for the religious festivals than

the weddings. The earlier literature does not reflect any relevant study that could have measured Muslims' same aspects. Religiosity has been positively correlated with happiness in the followers of different religions such as Islam (Abdel-Khalek, 2006, 2007, 2014; Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2009; Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007; Hafeez & Rafique, 2013; Jesarati et al., 2013; Parveen et al., 2014; Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004), Christianity (Francis and Lester 1997; Levin and Chatters 1998; French and Joseph 1999), Judaism (Francis et al., 2004), Buddhism (Jung, 2014; Liu et al., 2012), and Hinduism (Gupta & Chadha, 2014; Maheshwari & Singh, 2009). However, the current study depicts that the joy taken from religious festivals is far lesser than the joy taken out of participating in weddings. It also reflects the intensity of the association with religious traditions and rituals among Muslims. As weddings involve activities other than religious ones, people are more inclined to enjoy weddings more than Eid's festivals. Weddings involve music, lavish food, mixed-gender gatherings, etc. Therefore, people get more excited about celebrating weddings as compared to the festivals of Eid. The literature is also silent on exploring the levels of joy and happiness caused by participating in weddings. The current study is unique and invites future researchers to explore the area further in other Muslim cultures.

Conclusion

The current study was the first-ever of its nature. It highlighted the differences in the levels of joy between celebrating different festivals by Muslims. It concluded that the Muslims enjoyed festivals that involved more religious activities and rituals to lesser degrees than the festivals that involved entertainment other than the religious rituals. As reflected in all the festivals, the poor levels of joy were further associated with the poor levels of mental health.

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