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Job Insecurity and Happiness Among Muslim Americans: Does the Moderating Role of Religious Involvement Differ by Gender?

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Abstract

A substantial body of literature has examined the factors predicting happiness among various groups; however, few studies have systematically focused on happiness and related factors among Muslim Americans. Within the framework of the stress-process paradigm, this current study addresses fundamental arguments regarding job insecurity as a key predictor of happiness and the role of religious involvement as a buffering factor against the deleterious effects of job insecurity as a structural stressor. Thus, our work contributes to the literature by examining the potential relationships between religious covariates and job insecurity with happiness. Using data from the 2007 Pew Survey of Muslim Americans, we test the study hypotheses accordingly. Findings from the binary logistic regression models demonstrate that (a) job insecurity is a negative predictor of happiness for both males and females; (b) religious involvement is positively associated with happiness for both males and females; and remarkably (c) religious involvement buffers the adverse effects of job insecurity on happiness for females, not males. We discuss the study findings and address implications, limitations, and future research avenues.

Keywords: happiness; job insecurity; religious involvement; Muslim Americans; minority; gender

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1. Introduction

A well-established body of literature emphasizes the importance of understanding the factors that influence happiness (Diener 2000; Diener and Chan 2011; Singh et al. 2023). Previous research demonstrates that various detrimental factors—such as stress (Schiffrin and Nelson 2010), anxiety (Demorest 2019), depression (Argyle and Martin 1991), discrimination (Jang et al. 2008), insecurity (Lam et al. 2014), fear of crime (Hanslmaier 2013; Warr 2000), and job insecurity or unemployment (De Witte et al. 2015; Stiglbauer and Batinic 2015; Ustaoğlu 2024)—serve as significant predictors of happiness and related health outcomes. In contrast, both organizational and non-organizational dimensions of religiosity have been shown to enhance happiness and offer valuable psychosocial resources for coping with life challenges (Abdel-Khalek 2006; Abdel-Khalek and Lester 2013; Argyle and Hills 2000; Ellison 1991; Francis and Lester 1997; Upenieks 2025). Despite numerous studies across various populations and faith groups in the United States, researchers have

devoted comparatively less attention to understanding these dynamics within the Muslim American community.

The Muslim population is one of the fastest-growing religious groups in the United States (Hedayat-Diba 2014; Pew Research Center 2011). Similar to other minority groups, Muslim Americans face systemic inequalities and negative societal attitudes. In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, incidents of prejudice, discrimination, and hate crimes against Muslims increased markedly (Abdo 2005; Byng 2008; Gilbert 2002; Hodge et al. 2015; Miller 2023). These issues have become pressing concerns for Muslim communities, affecting both workplace experiences (Kaushal et al. 2007) and recreational settings (Al Rawi 2024; Livengood and Stodolska 2004). For instance, Peek (2011) highlighted how negative media portrayals have contributed to social exclusion, heightened suspicion, and verbal and physical harassment of Muslims. Despite the rise in unfair experiences, scholarly attention toward the experiences of Muslim Americans remains relatively limited compared to other minority groups (Martin 2015). Scholars have pointed to a notable gap in the literature concerning the impact of such adverse experiences on health and happiness, particularly across variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, education level, birthplace, personality traits, and religious involvement (Ahmed and Reddy 2007; Abu El-Haj 2007; Ghaffari and Çiftçi 2010). As with other minority populations, the unique challenges and resilience of Muslim Americans merit deeper and broader investigation.

Existing studies suggest that individuals with high levels of religious involvement tend to be happier than their non-religious counterparts, often attributing this to the influence of religious teachings and principles (Ağılkaya Şahin 2024b; Ellison 1991; Ellison et al. 1989; Myers 2008; Rizvi and Hossain 2017). Their faith-based individual and social resources provide cognitive frameworks, emotional support, a sense of purpose in life, and coping strategies that foster psychological resilience in the face of adversity (Bradley et al. 2020; Ellis 1962; Ellison and George 1994; Krause 2006; VanderWeele 2017b). Similarly, for Muslim Americans, Islam occupies a central place in their lives, enhancing identity, integration, and cohesion within society (Haque 2004). Both organizational and non-organizational religious practices not only protect them from the detrimental effects of life issues (e.g., job insecurity, socioeconomic hardship, or financial strain) but may also boost overall happiness and subjective well-being (Ağılkaya Şahin 2024a; Bradshaw and Ellison 2010; Chaves 2004; Hastings and Roeser 2020; Hout and Hastings 2014). However, surprisingly, no study has directly examined the stress-buffering role of religious dimensions on the relationship between job insecurity and happiness among Muslims in the U.S.

Overall, this study aims to make a significant contribution to the literature in three ways. First, we explore the relationship between religious involvement, job insecurity, and happiness among Muslim Americans, reviewing and integrating existing theoretical and empirical evidence. Second, we investigate whether dimensions of religious involvement alleviate the deleterious effect of job insecurity on happiness. Third, we examine whether the moderating role of religious involvement in this association differs by gender. Using data from the 2007 Pew Survey of Muslim Americans Study (PSMAS), a nationally representative sample of American Muslims, we focus on the specified issues, present results from binary logistic regression models, and discuss the implications of our findings for future research and practice.

Historical and Social Context

Historical and sociological scholarship provides an important contextual frame for the analysis of contemporary attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors among American Muslims. As has been elegantly chronicled in several major works, early Muslim presence in the United States can be traced to the insidious practice of slavery, where many enslaved

Muslims, some of whom practiced Islam, became a central part of America's religious history, albeit one that is often overlooked (Al-Kuwari 2024; Curtis 2009). However, some scholars have recently questioned the assertion of large Muslim populations entering the United States via the introduction of slavery to the Southern colonies, claiming that this perspective lacks compelling empirical verification. Instead, this perspective suggests that larger-scale Muslim immigration to the United States is a more recent phenomenon, tracing more substantial migration to large Midwestern states from the late 1800s, and later to the Northeastern US in the period between the two world wars (Haniff 2003).

It is also important to note that Muslim immigration should not be separated from national origin, as followers of Islam are not a monolithic group but instead hold distinct cultural, social, and behavioral characteristics, reflecting distinct national identities from regions around the world. As the important volume from Haddad and Smith (1994) shows, waves of immigration from the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries contributed to the growth of an ethnically diverse population representing national identities from various parts of the world. Such diverse national origins are reflected in the wide ethnic diversity of US Muslims, who, based on reliable data from the Pew Research Center, are not characterized by one obvious racial majority. What is most common, however, is the current geographic representation of today's American Muslims, which is largely clustered in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the US. Specifically, it is states like Illinois, New York, and New Jersey that have the highest concentration of American Muslims (Pew Research Center 2025), while cities as diverse as Dearborn, Michigan, and Houston, Texas also host considerable Muslim populations (Grammich et al. 2023).

In more recent history, the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act provided more opportunities for immigration from Muslim-majority countries and saw increased representation of Muslims from South Asia and the Middle East (Curtis 2009, pp. 72–73; Pew Research Center 2017). Finally, under the leadership of prominent figures like Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam—a fusion of traditional Islamic beliefs and 1960s Black Nationalism—gained prominence as a distinctly American expression of Islam, particularly in urban centers such as Detroit and Chicago (Al-Kuwari 2024, p. 27; Lincoln 1994).

This historical context reveals an immigration narrative that is unified by a shared religious identity yet marked by dynamic national demographic diversity. In many ways, this pattern mirrors other immigrant groups in the U.S.—such as Latino communities—who may share language and cultural attributes but who also maintain strong ties to their countries of origin. Moreover, while followers of Islam make up roughly 1.3% (approximately 3.45 million) of the total US population—making sustained and systematic research more challenging than among the larger, traditional American religious denominations—it bears noting that Islam represents one of the fastest-growing faiths in the US (Mohamed 2025; Pew Research Center 2017). Furthermore, while in several ways American Muslims' religious profile is similar to that of Americans who are members of other religious faiths, there are also areas of distinctiveness. On the one hand, recent surveys show that American Muslims resemble members of other faiths in terms of religious salience, belief in a higher power, and attendance at religious services. The latter indicator of attendance is especially notable given that the weekly communal Muslim prayer occurs during the workweek (Mohamed 2025). In terms of areas of divergence, several areas stand out. Demographically, American Muslims are, on average, younger than non-Muslims and consequently are more likely to be enrolled in higher education institutions. Muslims tend to have higher levels of education than members of other religious faiths (Mohamed 2025) and are also more likely to be naturalized citizens, with estimates suggesting that almost 70% of foreign-born

American Muslims are naturalized citizens (Pew Research Center 2017). Another distinctive feature of Muslim American life is the central role of the mosque in the religious and civic life of this population, an area of importance to which we now turn.

Drawing from several sources that draw from extensive survey and institutional data focused on the growth of religious organizations in the US (Grammich et al. 2023; Bagby 2020), we next highlight the central role of the mosque as a source of both spiritual and social support for American Muslims. We begin with major studies undertaken by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), a research-based non-profit organization based in Dearborn, Michigan. Their "US Mosque Survey" (see Bagby 2020), applies a sophisticated methodology to evaluate multiple dimensions of the spiritual life of American Muslims, with emphasis on activities surrounding Muslim houses of worship throughout the United States. According to the 2020 survey, the growth in the number of American mosques grew by 31% leading to a final 2020 tally of 2769 mosques (Bagby 2020, p. 7; see also Grammich et al. 2023, p. 12). Explanations for this growth revolve more around patterns of Muslim migration and higher birth rates than patterns of religious switching from other religious traditions to Islam. Additionally, this growth has coincided with a geographic shift, as newer mosques are increasingly located in expanding suburban areas rather than in traditional downtown locations where earlier mosque construction was previously concentrated. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that this growth is characterized by a rise in the percentage of purpose-built mosques, increasing from 30% to 37% between 2010 and 2020, implying that these structures are specifically constructed to serve Muslim adherents (Bagby 2020, pp. 5–7). Consequently, the contemporary mosque provides multiple functions beyond the spiritual expression of the Muslim faith. For example, Dana et al. (2011), drawing on the Muslim American Public Opinion Survey (MAPOS), demonstrate the vital role that mosques play in fostering greater social and political participation among adherents. Their findings suggest that (a) frequent mosque attendance is linked to stronger identification as "American Muslim"; (b) higher religious salience correlates positively with support for democratic participation; and (c) regular mosque involvement fosters views of the mosque as a space that encourages secular civic engagement. Similarly, Mohammed's (2024) synthesis of previous literature highlights the role that mosques play in fostering inter-faith dialog, youth outreach, and community service.

In closing, these findings underscore how American mosques serve not only as spaces for religious expression but also as vital civic institutions that foster identity, interfaith engagement, and democratic participation within Muslim communities. While not exhaustive, this overview of American Muslim history and demographic trends, we hope, offers a helpful frame for situating the empirical results that follow. We next turn to a review of theoretical and empirical literature examining happiness as a function of various social factors.

2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

2.1. Happiness

Happiness is a judgment by which individuals consider the overall quality of their lives as favorable (Veenhoven 1991). Namely, it is "a global, subjective assessment of whether one is a happy or an unhappy person" (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999, p. 139). As a cheerful mood in individuals and a significant factor influencing subjective well-being (Diener 2000; Peterson et al. 2007), it includes a degree of positive effect, a crucial element of life quality, and human flourishing, encompassing emotions, joy, life satisfaction, and the absence of negative influences (Argyle 2013; Argyle and Hills 2000; Francis et al. 2017; Steptoe 2019; VanderWeele 2017a).

Over the past few decades, numerous studies have explored happiness from various perspectives and examined relevant connections (Schiffrin and Nelson 2010; Steptoe 2019). Swinyard et al. (2001) found that happiness was linked to an individual's perceived inner world, rather than their material wealth. Le et al. (2009) reported that having a multicultural social environment was associated with a higher level of subjective happiness among ethnic minority and immigrant youth. Additionally, Angner et al. (2010) noted that lower happiness levels were linked to poverty, unfavorable self-rated health, and lower health literacy among adults in the U.S. Schiffrin and Nelson (2010) documented that happiness was inversely associated with perceived stress. Furthermore, previous research highlighted that income is important for happiness, as it indeed contributes to it (Blanchflower and Oswald 2004; Frey and Stutzer 2002).

Additionally, research has explored happiness and related factors within the Islamic framework and among Muslims worldwide (Shahama et al. 2022). Suhail and Chaudhry (2004) found that work satisfaction was a positive predictor of personal happiness among Indonesian Muslims. Moreover, previous inquiries reported that mental health and self-efficacy were positively associated with higher levels of happiness for both male and female Muslims, while depression and anxiety were adversely associated with happiness (Abdel-Khalek 2006, 2007; Abdel-Khalek and Lester 2017). Furthermore, Aydogdu et al. (2021) documented that income and full-time employment were positively correlated with happiness among adult Turkish Muslims. Also, Ullah et al. (2024) indicated that increased psychological distress in young adult Muslims correlated with lower levels of happiness. Overall, research has emphasized the need for more inquiries from scholars in this field.

A growing body of literature has also explored the links between happiness (e.g., subjective well-being, life satisfaction, life quality) and various detrimental factors among Muslim Americans (Gallup 2009; Pew Research Center 2007). Jamal and Badawi (1993) revealed that job stress was negatively associated with happiness in life among Muslims living in Canada and the U.S. Also, Gallup (2009) reported that, compared to other religious groups, Muslim American adults were significantly less likely to be satisfied with their living standards, and young adult Muslim Americans indicated the lowest levels of happiness. Additionally, Padela and Heisler (2010) found that Arab American adults experienced reduced levels of happiness and poorer health status due to discrimination-related psychological distress. Similarly, Bassioni and Langrehr (2021) indicated that higher religious prejudice and environmental discrimination were linked to lower life satisfaction among Muslim American adults. Given the existing research, there is still a need for a detailed examination of Muslim Americans in this regard.

2.2. Happiness and Job Insecurity

Feeling of confidence in retaining employment is one of the key determinants of happiness and overall well-being (Konow and Earley 2008). Previous studies using both qualitative and quantitative methods have often examined job insecurity among industrial workers. These studies suggest that apprehension about potential job loss can lead to heightened anxiety, which may, in turn, increase feelings of uncertainty and fear about the future (Joelson and Wahlquist 1987; Heaney et al. 1994; Kuhnert et al. 1989). Recent studies have broadened the unit of analysis to include workers outside the industrial sector (An et al. 2023; Låstad et al. 2021), employing complex survey designs and multivariate modeling (Wang et al. 2024). Findings from large-scale cross-sectional studies of U.S. adults tend to show reduced levels of psychological distress among people who reported greater levels of job security. Additionally, they also find that flexibility in the workplace, in terms of scheduling and work–life balance, is often associated with improved health outcomes (Zhang et al. 2024).

Empirically, our measures are designed to assess the impact of job insecurity on indicators of well-being, specifically self-reported happiness. To that end, several studies have similarly operationalized their study designs. In their study, which employs longitudinal, cross-sectional, and panel data, Burgard et al. (2009) show significant associations between job insecurity and poor self-rated health. Additionally, their models, which include extensive socio-demographic, health-related behavioral factors as well as controls for hypertension, show that the exposure to prolonged job insecurity adds a noxious toll on health. Even more aligned with our work, studies employing various methodological approaches have consistently shown an inverse relationship between job insecurity and happiness (De Witte et al. 2016; Hur 2022). Drawing on this body of research, we propose the following empirical hypothesis:

H1. *Job insecurity is negatively associated with happiness among American Muslims.*

We note several limitations in the accumulated scholarship that we aim to address here. First, we have found little work that has addressed this issue among a sample of American Muslims. Studies have investigated job insecurity and well-being from a comparative perspective that includes countries with predominantly Muslim populations (De Witte et al. 2016). However, we could find scant evidence of such work among Muslim Americans. Second, ours is one of the first studies to apply specific theories of stress in understanding the role of non-Judeo-Christian religiosity in moderating the effects of job insecurity on happiness. Before presenting our theoretical framework, which is grounded in the stress process tradition, we provide a brief review of the literature linking religious factors to overall happiness.

2.3. Happiness and Religious Involvement

A significant body of research has consistently shown a positive association between greater religious involvement and happiness (Cohen and Johnson 2017; Krause et al. 2018). This includes studies that have shown this correlation to be amplified for individuals who report a strong sense of accountability to God (Bradshaw et al. 2022), by the influence of congregational network ties (Snoep 2008) and among emerging adults (Aggarwal et al. 2023). Moreover, while most quantitative studies control for socio-demographic factors, several key studies have identified links between subjective religiosity, various dimensions of religious involvement (including religious attendance, church membership, religious books, prayer, etc.) and higher levels of subjective happiness among African Americans and US Latinos (Levin and Taylor 1998; Nguyen 2020; Taylor et al. 2004).

One shortcoming in this literature is the lack of empirical work in this area that examines happiness among members of non-Judeo-Christian faiths. Here, we begin to note several exceptions to this general pattern. Sahraian et al. (2013) reported that religious beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors were positively associated with happiness among Muslim undergraduate students. Francis and Lester (1997) indicated that religiosity is a predictor of happiness among Muslim Turkish university students. In a review of Muslim populations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, Anlı (2025) found that Muslim religious practices were consistently linked to enhanced psychological well-being. What is less accessible in this body of research is a systematic line of scholarship assessing possible associations between religion and happiness among Muslim Americans, one of the fastest-growing religious groups in the U.S. We aim to address this gap in the literature by examining a representative sample of Muslim Americans. Building on this framework, we also examine the potential direct effects of religious involvement on happiness. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. *Religious involvement is positively associated with happiness among American Muslims.*

2.4. The Stress-Buffering Role of Religious Involvement

In the seminal article that articulated the central tenets of the stress-process model, Pearlin et al. (1981) identify pathways by which stressors, moderators, and exacerbating factors interact to shape mental health and well-being. The stress process model is a conceptual model that begins with psychosocial stressors (e.g., poverty, job loss, discrimination), which may be mediated by intervening resources (e.g., coping strategies, social support systems) that, in turn, buffer or exacerbate the effects of stressors, ultimately influencing the level of psychological distress or mental health outcomes experienced by individuals. We can conceptually situate this model by initially considering the direct effects of stressors and social resources in predicting psychological outcomes. In our study, we expect a social resource (religious engagement) to be positively associated with happiness, while a stressor (job insecurity) is expected to reduce happiness levels. This conceptual relationship further suggests minimal interaction between stressors and resources. In other words, applied to our study, this first conceptual model suggests that religious involvement will play a negligible role in moderating the relationship between job insecurity and happiness.

A second conceptual model revisits Pearlin and colleagues' early work, retaining the first two premises of the offsetting model and adding an important dimension. The stress-process model posits that the level of resources available to an individual influences the relationships between stressors and psychological outcomes. For our study, this suggests that the level of available religious resources will moderate the negative association between job insecurity and happiness. The stress model has been highly influential in diverse areas of research, notably recent work that has applied this conceptual framework to better understand the role of psychosocial resources in moderating links between multiple forms of psychosocial stress, social disadvantage, and psychological distress (Acevedo et al. 2014; Fetter and Thompson 2023; Mouzon and Brock 2022).

Our focus is on work that conceptualizes religious involvement as providing a moderating effect between stressors and mental health outcomes, through both individual (Schieman et al. 2003) and social religious resources (Chai and Xue 2023; Ellison et al. 2023; Ellison and Henderson 2011; Schieman 2011). How might that work in our case, or why would religious involvement help buffer the detrimental effect of job insecurity on happiness? First, religious beliefs would act as a resilience resource. When faced with uncertainty, threats, or stress, believers may cope through their religious doctrines, teachings, or principles. For example, religious beliefs may encourage followers to be patient, maintain hope, focus on meaning, and cultivate individual support resources while dealing with job-related insecurity (Ferraro and Kelley-Moore 2000; Karaca 2003; Pargament 1997). Second, religious involvement would provide various areas of life where believers can find meaning and purpose amid struggles. This can help them see job insecurity or unemployment as temporary and view it as an opportunity to explore better options in the future (Krause 1995; Pollner 1989; Tokur 2018). For instance, since the participants are Muslim Americans in this study, the following Quranic advice might serve as a motivating reminder during uncertain times: "You may not like something even though it is good for you. You may like something even though it is bad for you. Only Allah knows, you do not know." (Quran 2025, Baqarah, 216). Third, deeply religious individuals understand that not everything occurs justly on earth, but they trust in divine justice regarding the events of life. For example, adherents may interpret potential problems as part of a divine plan or a test, believing that they need to be strong and resilient in the face of such worrying situations. Therefore, this belief might help them overcome challenges and maintain their happiness despite job insecurity or related issues (Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Koenig et al. 2001; Wik-

ström 1987). Taken together, religious involvement would provide essential functions in such distressing experiences.

In addition, we specifically draw attention to a less developed line of scholarship that has explored the moderating role of religious involvement when exploring links between job insecurity and mental health. We begin with a study by Hastings and Roeser (2020), which highlights the significance of religion in navigating challenging times in life. The study demonstrates that religious service attendance, belief in the afterlife, and incorporating religious beliefs and values into all aspects of life moderate the adverse effects of unemployment on happiness. Upenieks and Ellison (2022) found evidence for religious psychosocial support during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in times of employment and financial distress. Other recent studies have reported similar results, emphasizing that specific religious factors (e.g., prayer, attendance, beliefs in an afterlife) play distinct roles in moderating the relationship between job insecurity and psychological outcomes (Obrenovic et al. 2021; van der Meer et al. 2025). Furthermore, while some empirical research has explored the moderating role of religion in the relationship between job insecurity and mental health from a Muslim context, (Haq et al. 2022; Shams 1993) most of the work using Muslim samples focused on experiences of discrimination as the key independent variable while we find no published research specifically focused on job insecurity and happiness among American Muslims. We hope that our study will contribute to this gap in the literature. As a final consideration, we examine the potential role of religious involvement in mitigating the effects of job insecurity on happiness. Based on expectations of the stress process model, we advance the following and final hypothesis:

H3. *Religious involvement moderates the relationship between job insecurity and happiness among American Muslims, such that the negative association between job insecurity and happiness is weaker for individuals with higher levels of religious involvement.*

2.5. Gender and Religion

The observation that women generally exhibit higher levels of religiosity than men has long been central to the social scientific study of religion, often at the expense of nuance. Early research consistently found that women score higher on various indicators of religiosity, including belief in God, frequency of prayer, religious salience, and attendance at religious services. These studies established a robust theoretical and empirical foundation, showing that women tend to hold stronger beliefs and engage more deeply in religious practices (Miller and Stark 2002; Miller and Hoffman 1995). Drawing on rational choice theory, this work attributed gender differences to women's greater risk aversion, suggesting that women are more inclined to embrace religion to avoid the risk of missing out on spiritual rewards such as heaven or the afterlife. Although this framework has been critiqued for being overly deterministic and neglecting the emotional dimensions of spirituality, subsequent studies continue to find that women score higher on many religious measures (Holman and Podrazik 2018; Schnabel 2017).

More recent scholarship has expanded on this foundation, arguing that (a) purely economic models fail to capture the emotional and symbolic complexity of spiritual life (Freese 2004; Montgomery 2003), and (b) in Ammerman's framework, "lived religion" remains an empirically valid category but is not reducible to cost–benefit analyses. Instead, religious life is embedded in daily practices, meaningful narratives, and the relational dynamics of religious communities (Ammerman 2006, 2014). This perspective suggests that women's greater religiosity stems not from risk aversion alone but from socially gendered experiences and emotional labor that align with religious engagement. Research adopting this view has shown that religiosity is especially pronounced among Christian adherents with traditional gender role beliefs, regardless of gender (Schnabel 2017); that as the gender

wage gap narrows, the religiosity gap also shifts (Schnabel 2016); and that in Muslim contexts, public and private religiosity are shaped by cultural norms. For example, Muslim men may attend mosque more frequently due to greater access, while Muslim women may engage more in private practices such as fasting or reading the Qur'an (Bodman and Tawḥīdī 1998).

Despite these complexities, evidence still supports the notion that Muslim women often report higher levels of religiosity than men (Khan 2014; Scheible and Fleischmann 2013). We propose that, as in other religious traditions, religion may moderate the relationship between stress and well-being in gender-specific ways. Accordingly, and in line with prior studies using similar approaches, we estimate gender-specific models of happiness. Our analysis, detailed below, is based on separate samples of Muslim American males and females, allowing us to examine gender-specific effects among both direct and indirect predictors of happiness.

3. Conceptual Models

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the conceptual models used to test the study hypotheses.

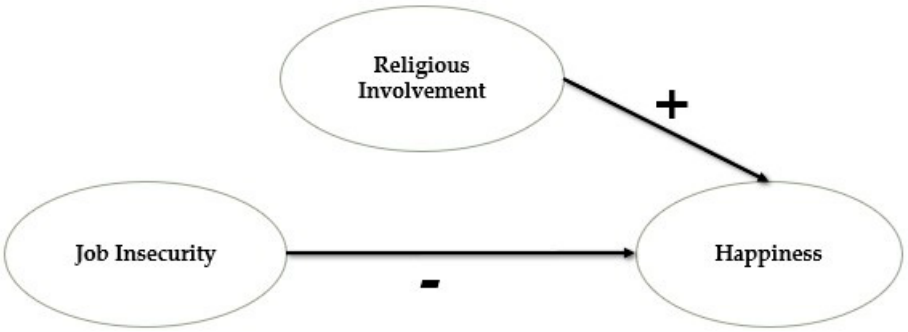


Figure 1. The Offsetting Effects Model.

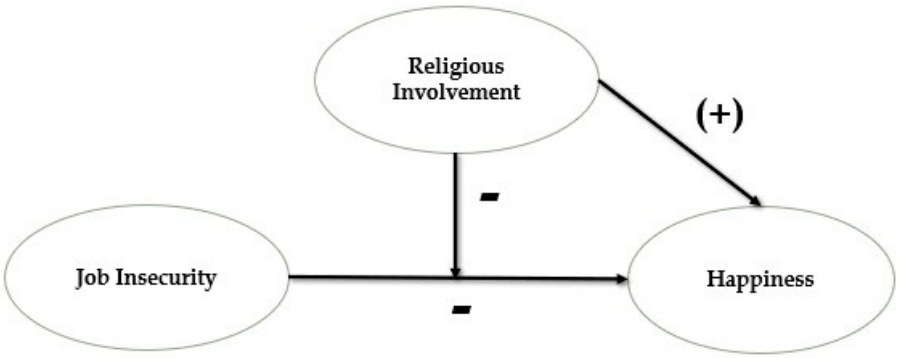


Figure 2. The Stress-Buffering Model.

4. Methods

4.1. Data

We used data from the 2007 Pew Survey of Muslim Americans (PSMA), a probability sample of Muslim American adults aged 18 and older living in the U.S. between 24 January and 30 April 2007. As a cross-sectional study, 1050 respondents completed a questionnaire in English, Arabic, Urdu, or Farsi with trained interviewers, either by phone or mail, in an average of 30 min. Researchers selected the sample using two sampling frames (a random digit dial sample and a recontact sample) to ensure a diverse representation of Muslim Americans. Respondents were offered an incentive of $50 for completing the questionnaire as compensation for their time (for further information, see Pew Research Center 2007).

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Dependent Variable: Happiness

We measured happiness with a single survey item. To capture the respondents' perception of happiness, they were asked: "Generally, how would you say things are these days in your life—would you say that you are very happy (1), pretty happy (2), or not too happy (3)?". We recoded the response categories as dummy variables: "very happy" = 1, "pretty happy" = 1, and "not too happy" = 0. "1" refers to yes, I am happy, and "0" refers to no, I am not happy.

4.2.2. Independent Variables

In this study, we used several independent variables. First, we focused on job insecurity as our primary independent variable. We measured it with a single survey item: "How worried are you about not being hired for a job or promoted because of your religion?" Second, we gauged surveillance worry using a single survey item: "How worried are you about your telephone calls and e-mails being monitored by the government because of your religion?" Third, we also measured hijab worry with a survey item: "How worried are you that women who wear the head cover or hijab (hee-jab) in public will be poorly treated because it identifies them as Muslim?" Response categories for the three items ranged from "not at all worried" = 0 to "very worried" = 3.

Additionally, we gauged experiences of discrimination with the following items. Participants were asked: "Because you are a Muslim: (1) Have people acted as if they are suspicious of you? (2) Has someone expressed support for you? (3) Have you been called offensive names? (4) Have you been singled out by airport security? (5) Have you been singled out by (other) law enforcement officers? (6) Have you been physically threatened or attacked? and (7) Have you ever been the victim of discrimination as a Muslim?" Response options were coded as "yes" = 1 and "no" = 0. The seven items were combined to form a discrimination experience index, with higher scores indicating greater levels of discrimination ($\alpha = 0.68$).

Furthermore, this study used several independent variables to explore different aspects of religious involvement, including the importance of religion, mosque attendance, and praying five times a day. A single survey item measured the importance of religion, asking respondents: "How important is religion in your life?" Responses were coded as "very important" = 3, "somewhat important" = 2, "not too important" = 1, or "not at all important" = 0. To assess mosque attendance, respondents were asked: "On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic center for salah (sal-AH) and Jum'ah (joom-AH) prayer?" Response options were coded as "never = 0, seldom = 1, a few times in a year, especially for the Eid = 2, once or twice a month = 3, once a week for Jum'ah prayer = 4, and more than once a week = 5." Lastly, for daily salah, the question asked: "Concerning daily salah (sal-AH) or prayer, do you, in general, pray all five salah daily, make some of the five salah daily, occasionally make salah, only make Eid (EED) prayers, or do you never pray?" Responses were coded as "five times" = 4, "some of five times" = 3, "occasionally five times" = 2, "only Eid prayers" = 1, and "never pray" = 0.

4.2.3. Socio-Demographics

This study also considered certain control variables regarding the leading associations. These variables, including age, gender, race, marital status, financial situation, educational attainment, employment status, and birth country, were included in all models to control for relevant associations between the dependent and independent variables. Whereas we deploy age and education as continuous variables, gender, race, marital status, financial situation, educational attainment, employment status, and birth country were, respectively,

dummy coded as "male" = 0 and "female" = 1, "White" = 0 and "Asian, Black, and Other Races" = 1 (separately), "not married" = 0 and "married" = 1, "others" = 0 and "excellent financial situation" = 1, "others" = 0 and "part-time employment" = 1, and "born in other countries" = 0 and "born in the U.S." = 1.

4.3. Analytic Strategies

By using STATA MP17 software, we conducted a binary logistic regression analysis on the data. Accordingly, five nested regression models were deployed for data estimation. The models predicted the main effects of job insecurity, concerns about discrimination, experiences of actual discrimination, dimensions of religious involvement, and control variables on happiness. Moreover, specific interaction terms were created to examine the moderating or buffering effect of religious dimensions on the association between job insecurity and happiness. Additionally, the variables were centered beforehand to avoid potential issues with multicollinearity in the analysis. The buffering effects, which include the interaction terms between job insecurity and religious involvement on happiness, were predicted in the last model. Binary logistic regression models, which predict odds coefficients, were considered when interpreting the findings. Primarily, we assessed and interpreted the findings in comparison with those of females and males. Additionally, since the data utilized survey weights and mean-centered variables, the finding tables displayed F-test and degrees of freedom (df) values.

5. Results

The weighted descriptive statistics of the study variables are shown below. Participants reported low to moderate levels of job insecurity, surveillance worry, and hijab worry, while demonstrating moderate to high levels of involvement in religious dimensions. For instance, they consider religion important with a mean of 2.56, which is remarkably high. Additionally, participants reported an average level of educational attainment.

Table 1 illustrates detailed descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Weighed descriptive statistics (PSAMS, 2007).

	Percentage	Mean	Range	SD	N
Happiness	82.94	-	0−1	-	1008
Job insecurity	-	1.19	0−3	1.15	1050
Surveillance worry	-	1.05	0−3	1.16	1050
Hijab worry		1.55	0−3	1.07	1050
Experiences of actual discrimination (Index)	-	1.28	0−7	1.53	992
Importance of religion	-	2.56	0−3	0.75	1050
Mosque attendance	-	2.60	0−5	1.72	1050
Daily Salah	-	2.74	0−4	1.35	1050
Age	-	42.36	18−88	15.85	1050
Female	47.14	-	0−1	-	495
Male	52.86	-	0−1	-	555
Asian	29.52	-	0−1	-	310
Black	20.19	-	0−1	-	212
White	32.86	-	0−1	-	345
Other Races	17.43	-	0−1	-	183
Married	67.44	-	0−1	-	694
Education	-	5.14	1−9	1.78	1050
Excellent financial situation	11.55	-	0−1	-	117
Part-time employment	17.39	-	0−1	-	177
Born in the US	26.56	-	0−1	-	272

Note: PSAMS Pew Survey of Muslim Americans Study (N = 1050).

Table 2 demonstrates the results of binary logistic regression models examining happiness among males, along with odds ratios (ORs). First, job insecurity is a negative predictor of happiness across all models (ORs = 0.70–0.71, $p < .05$–0.01). Accordingly, males who have job insecurity are about 29–30% less happy than those who do not have job insecurity. This finding partially supports H_1. In terms of religious covariates, mosque attendance is a positive predictor of happiness in models 4 and 5 (ORs = 1.27–1.26, $p < .05$). In more detail, males who have regular mosque attendance are 26–27% happier than those without regular attendance. This finding partially supports H_2. Furthermore, age, other races, educational attainment, part-time employment, and being born in the U.S. are significant predictors of happiness among males. However, religious involvement does not buffer the deleterious effects of job insecurity on happiness among males. Thus, we do not find support for H_3.

Table 2. Binary logistic regression models predicting odds coefficients of happiness by male.

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
Focal Variables										
Job insecurity	0.71	**	0.71	**	0.71	*	0.70	*	0.71	*
Surveillance worry	1.22		1.23		1.21		1.21		1.22	
Hijab worry	1.22		1.20		1.33		1.32		1.31	
Experiences of actual discrimination (Index)	0.86		0.91		0.86		0.86		0.86	
Sociodemographics										
Age			0.98		0.98	*	0.98		0.98	
Black			0.65		0.48		0.47		0.49	
Asian			0.95		1.03		0.89		0.93	
Other Races			0.48	*	0.40	*	0.36	*	0.38	*
Married			1.22		1.32		1.34		1.30	
Education (Continuous)					1.19	*	1.18	*	1.18	*
Excellent finance					2.50		2.71		2.81	*
Part-time employment					0.42	**	0.38	**	0.38	**
Born in the U.S.					2.56	*	2.69	*	2.61	*
Religious Covariates										
Importance of religion							1.05		1.03	
Mosque attendance							1.27	*	1.26	*
Pray five times a day							0.79		0.79	
Interaction Effect										
Importance of religion X Job insecurity									1.13	
Model df	502		439		423		423		423	
F Test	3.41	**	2.10	*	3.22	***	3.01	***	2.81	***
N	502		495		478		478		478	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Note: Odds ratios reported, and reference category for race is white.

Table 3 shows the results of binary logistic regression models examining happiness among females, along with the corresponding odds ratios (ORs). First, job insecurity is a strong and negative predictor of happiness across all models (ORs = 0.50–0.60, $p < 0.01$–$.000$). Accordingly, females who have job insecurity are about 40–50% less happy than those who do not have job insecurity. This finding partially supports H_1. About religious covariates, the importance of religion is a positive predictor of happiness in models 4 and 5 (ORs = 1.77–1.98, $p < .05$). Accordingly, females who consider religion important are 77–98% happier than those who do not. This finding partially supports H_2 as well. Additionally, being married, being Asian, educational attainment, having excellent financial resources, and being born in the U.S. are also significant predictors of happiness among

females. Foremost, the importance of religion buffers the adverse effects of job insecurity on happiness among females. Thus, we address that this finding partially supports H_3.

Table 3. Binary logistic regression models predicting odds coefficients of happiness by female.

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
Focal Variables										
Job insecurity	0.60	***	0.58	***	0.58	**	0.52	***	0.50	***
Surveillance worry	1.00		1.04		1.03		1.31		1.16	
Hijab worry	1.41	*	1.40	*	1.42	*	1.50	*	1.52	*
Experiences of actual discrimination (Index)	0.90		0.92		0.77	*	0.72	*	0.70	**
Sociodemographics										
Age			0.99		0.99		0.99		0.99	
Black			2.04		1.73		1.46		1.45	
Asian			1.97		2.70	*	2.15		2.13	
Other Races			1.70		1.74		1.74		1.75	
Married			2.09	*	2.50	**	2.03	*	1.91	*
Education (Continuous)					1.26	**	1.35	**	1.36	**
Excellent finance					3.20		3.60	*	3.65	*
Part-time employment					0.68		0.61		0.61	
Born in the U.S.					3.78	**	3.70	**	3.74	**
Religious Covariates										
Importance of religion							1.77	*	1.98	**
Mosque attendance							0.88		0.88	
Pray five times a day							1.19		1.18	
Interaction Effect										
Importance of religion X Job insecurity					-				1.49	*
Model df	426		416		405		405		405	
F Test	4.59	*	3.44	**	3.83	***	3.54	***	3.39	***
N	452		442		429		429		429	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Note: Odds ratios reported, and reference category for race is white.

Taken together, job insecurity is directly associated with happiness for both males and females. In contrast, religious covariates exhibit different patterns by gender. Whereas regular mosque attendance is positively associated with happiness among males, the importance of religion is positively associated with happiness among females. While religious involvement moderates the detrimental effects of job insecurity on happiness for females, we do not observe this influence on the relationship between job insecurity and happiness for males.

Ancillary Results

In the tables, we included the interaction effect with the importance of religion, and it was not significant except for females. Some readers may wonder how the interaction effect works with the other religious covariates. In additional analyses, we tested interactions between job insecurity and the other religious covariates on happiness, both with the whole sample and by gender. The results were not significant in any of the models. That is why we only kept the interaction effect for the importance of religion in the models and reported it accordingly.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

This study has contributed to the literature by examining the association between job insecurity and happiness, as well as the moderating role of religious involvement, with a

focus on one of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population: American Muslims. Several key findings are noteworthy from the analysis. First, job security is adversely associated with happiness for both males and females. Second, religious involvement is positively associated with happiness for both genders: regular mosque attendance for males and the importance of religion for females. Third, religious involvement moderates the relationship between job insecurity and happiness, serving as a buffer against the deleterious effects of job insecurity on happiness only for females. Overall, these findings augment the existing literature on Muslim Americans, support the stress-buffering model presented in our study, and merit a detailed discussion.

First, why would job insecurity be linked to a reduced level of happiness? First and foremost, having secure employment is an essential component of happiness and psychological well-being (Konow and Earley 2008). Individuals who feel confident in their job and occupational position may be better equipped to avoid various stressors, develop long-term career and family plans, and utilize helpful resources to maintain happiness and purpose in life (Hur 2022; Zhang et al. 2024). On the contrary, persistent job insecurity may lead to heightened life uncertainty, loss of control, and psychological distress (De Witte et al. 2015; Callea et al. 2019) and undermine psychological well-being, social identity, work engagement, and job satisfaction because of creating a higher financial burden (Basyouni and El Keshky 2021; Chirumbolo et al. 2022; Li et al. 2023). Moreover, job insecurity would increase job-related anxiety and physical health problems, erode trust and proactive coping efforts, and cause amplified work-family conflict (Adeel and Shakir 2025; Richter and Näswall 2019). Overall, these adverse effects would result in diminished happiness, particularly for minority individuals.

Second, why would religious involvement be related to an increasing level of happiness, and does this differ by gender? Religious involvement has multidimensional aspects, and each one is linked to a heightened level of happiness via different pathways, such as cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial (Bradshaw et al. 2022; Snoep 2008; Anlı 2025). While having regular mosque attendance is a positive predictor of happiness among males, considering religion important is a positive predictor for females, which is consistent with the existing literature. We would address several reasons that the dimensions of religious involvement can promote happiness among believers in different ways. First, religion offers various resources for meaning-making and finding purpose in life, providing a coherent and consistent worldview that diminishes uncertainty and anxiety, thereby enhancing overall happiness (Ağılkaya Şahin 2024b; Ellison 1991; Park 2005). Second, in the case of American Muslims, mosque attendance is a fundamental part of Islamic life, particularly for males. Community-based resources and mosque environments may provide social support, enhance social integration within the existing social structure, and build a sense of belonging and connectedness. Thus, it would foster emotional support, combat loneliness and related issues, and boost happiness (Lim and Putnam 2010). Additionally, religious engagement may foster values and virtues (e.g., forgiveness, gratitude, patience, humility, optimism, transcendence) in the lives of believers. Thus, it may foster moral discipline, stable life choices, and faith in a divine power, ultimately leading to long-term happiness (Ağılkaya Şahin 2018a, 2018b; McCullough and Willoughby 2009; Seligman 2002). Taken together, males are more active and engaged in the organizational aspects of religious involvement. In contrast, females frequently report heightened levels of non-organizational aspects of religious involvement, such as intrinsic religious motivation, prayer, Quranic reflection, and trust in God (Abdel-Khalek 2014). Similarly, research emphasizes that the dimensions of religion have different effects on well-being and gender roles among men and women (Ayub et al. 2022).

Lastly, the most novel finding of this research is the interaction effect of job insecurity and the importance of religion on happiness. That is, considering religion important and having it as an internalized system in life buffers the deleterious effects of job insecurity on happiness among females. This would also be explained with a similar approach as stated above regarding gender differences. Pargament (1997) claims that believers would employ positive religious coping strategies, such as prayer and trust in God, when facing adversity. In this way, they may buffer the deleterious effects of life stressors and build greater resilience and happiness. Female Muslims have more private religious activities and apply for individual religious resources more than males. Furthermore, they are more likely to face unexpected attitudes and behaviors and are therefore more vulnerable in the given society compared to male Muslim Americans. Attributing such unanticipated incidents is also related to both the level of religious involvement and perceptions of gender roles (Abdel-Khalek 2014). Particularly, this may lead them to engage in supplicatory and devotional practices more often than males (Haddad and Smith 2006; Mahoney and Cano 2014; Schnabel 2017). Indeed, religious involvement not only may serve as a belief system but also may provide support resources for believers in uncertain and vulnerable periods (Bagby 2020). In this regard, the buffering role of the importance of religious involvement has diminished the detrimental effects of job insecurity on happiness among female American Muslims, not males.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to address that this recent study supports the Stress Process Model by identifying job insecurity as a stressor and religious involvement as a coping resource (Ellison et al. 2023; Upenieks and Ellison 2022). The findings highlight how important religious coping mechanisms are in minority populations facing structural stressors and unexpected traits (Pargament 1997; Tokur 2017). Additionally, this research points out that religious involvement may serve as a protective factor in the mental health of American Muslims (Pargament 1997; Sahraian et al. 2013).

Results from our study also provide several key implications related to the lived experiences of Muslim Americans and how religiousness and spirituality can be connected to well-being, particularly in times of work-related stress. Considering our comments above, presenting the multifaceted nature of mosques as sites of not only religious but also social and civic engagement, we suggest that one implication of our findings is that mosques may serve as valuable spaces for providing support services and group conversations around workplace challenges and for providing faith-informed guidance on coping with workplace stress. The overall positive effects of religious factors and happiness for both men and women further highlight the role of the mosque in shaping elements of psychological well-being. On the other hand, an additional implication from our study is related to the gender differences we report, indicating the presence of workplace stress-moderating effects from religion, but only among women. Consequently, as a meaningful source of psychological workplace support, discussions and programs within the mosque could be tailored to meet the needs of professional and working women adherents.

Next, given the rapid pace of population growth among American Muslims, our results also have implications for organizational policy. While a focus on religious diversity is not often prioritized as a benefit to enhance employee well-being (Gebert et al. 2014), our findings suggest that workplace organizations can foster a greater sense of inclusion and belonging among employees who are members of religious minority communities. In the case of American Muslims, offering flexible scheduling for religious activities, such as Friday prayers, and culturally sensitive wellness programs, as well as supporting employee conversations about religious tolerance and diversity, may promote a greater sense of equity, which often translates into increased workplace engagement and productivity.

Finally, we suggest that our findings also have relevant implications for mental health advocacy in the Muslim American community. Based on our results showing the positive effects of religious involvement in moderating the deleterious effects of job insecurity—particularly among the women in our sample—faith-based collaboration with community partners, hospitals, and other providers may be a helpful mechanism for delivering culturally informed mental health resources to members of Muslim religious communities. Tied to the role of mosques in providing social and community-based resources, we see this as a plausible way to leverage the resources within the religious community and to provide additional psychological and wellness support to adherents.

Taken together, these results highlight the importance of religious involvement in maintaining happiness in life, particularly in mitigating the deleterious influence of job-related worries among females. Muslim American women who observe hijab may face unique and additional microaggressions related to their visible religious identity—experiences that may not be as commonly encountered by Muslim men. Thus, they may apply religious sources to cope with unforeseen incidents. Within the given societal structure, they may be more likely to face unfair treatment and attitudes; therefore, religious meaning-making teachings and principles can help them strengthen and function more effectively (Ellison et al. 2023; Flannelly 2017; Karaca 2020). Consequently, this current study (a) suggests that religious institutions may play a critical role in promoting psychological well-being in marginalized communities, (b) contributes to broader discussions on the intersection of religion, mental health, and social inequality, and (c) encourages interdisciplinary approaches that combine the sociology of religion, mental health research, and stress theory.

7. Limitations and Future Research Avenues

While suggesting novel findings for an important minority group regarding the intersections of job insecurity, health, and religious involvement, this study has several limitations. First, we used a cross-sectional data set coming from the Pew Survey of Muslim Americans Study (PSMAS). Second, this study used a weighted and older sample. Therefore, it may not be representative of all Muslim Americans, particularly considering more recent migration patterns to the U.S. Third, measures of job insecurity are limited. Thus, future work could tap into larger indices or scales to conceptualize job insecurity more comprehensively. Fourth, researchers may also employ more comprehensive measures of religious covariates, particularly considering the characteristics of Islamic teachings and principles, as well as the structural inequalities faced by Muslim Americans within the given society. Fifth, future research should investigate these associations using longitudinal data and assess changes over time. Last, researchers may consider examining other coping resources and their interaction with religious involvement.

Despite these limitations, this study offers a new perspective on the connection between job-related issues and happiness among American Muslims. Furthermore, the buffering role of religious involvement in mitigating the impact of job insecurity on happiness highlights the importance of religious cognitions and related psychosocial resources for female Muslim Americans (Laher and Khan 2011; Park 2017). Additionally, the findings showing different direct relationships of religious covariates for males and females suggest that religious factors may influence behaviors and attitudes differently, even though American Muslims often adhere to traditional Islamic gender values. The intersection of religion, spirituality, health, and stress theory among American Muslims merits more attention from researchers.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviation is used in this manuscript:

PSMAS Pew Survey of Muslim American Study

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