

Academic Pressure, Religious Coping, and Irritability in Adolescents

Areeg Kamran^{1*}, Aqsa Zaheer², Tariq Mehmood³

1 MPhil Scholar, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus.

*corresponding author: areejkamran2000@gmail.com

2 Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus.

aqsa.zaheer@riphahfsd.edu.pk

3 Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan

tariqmehmoodmalikofficial@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63163/jpehss.v4i2.1464>

Abstract

Adolescents in Pakistan face intense academic pressures that heighten their vulnerability to emotional dysregulation, including irritability. The present study examined the relationships among academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability, with a particular focus on the mediating role of religious coping in the academic pressure–irritability pathway. A cross-sectional quantitative correlational design was employed with a balanced community sample of 300 adolescents (150 males, 150 females) aged 13–19 years, enrolled in secondary, higher-secondary, and first-semester undergraduate institutions in Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan, recruited through convenience sampling. Academic pressure was assessed using the Academic Stress Scale, religious coping was measured using the Religious Coping Activities Checklist (Pargament et al., 2000), and irritability was assessed using the Affective Reactivity Index (Stringaris et al., 2012). Results revealed that academic pressure was significantly positively correlated with irritability and religious coping, while religious coping was significantly negatively correlated with irritability. Mediation analysis using the PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018, Model 4) confirmed that religious coping significantly mediated the relationship between academic pressure and irritability, with the opposite signs of the direct and indirect effects revealing a suppression pattern: academic pressure directly elevated irritability while simultaneously activating religious coping, which in turn attenuated irritability. Significant gender differences were observed across study variables. The findings underscore the importance of integrating culturally sensitive, religiously informed coping resources into school-based mental health programs for Pakistani adolescents.

Keywords: Academic pressure, religious coping, irritability, adolescents, Pakistan, mediation

INTRODUCTION

Among the emotional consequences of sustained academic pressure, irritability characterized by a lowered threshold for frustration, disproportionate emotional responsivity to minor provocations, and a persistent underlying negative mood state has received growing attention in the recent clinical and developmental literature as both a marker of acute psychological distress and a potential precursor to more entrenched affective pathology (Suárez et al., 2022; Leibenluft, 2021; Khan et al., 2020). The psychological and cultural mechanisms through which academic pressure translates into irritability, and the resources that might interrupt or attenuate this process, remain inadequately examined within the Pakistani context (Khan et al., 2025). The present study addressed this gap by investigating the

mediating role of religious coping in the relationship between academic pressure and irritability among Pakistani adolescents (Timmins et al., 2021).

Practically, identifying religious coping as a modifiable mediator creates a pathway for evidence-based, culturally resonant interventions that school counselors and mental health professionals in Pakistan can employ to reduce the probability that academic pressure converts into clinically significant irritability and more severe psychopathology (Pascoe et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022; Hamid et al., 2025).

Clinically, the demonstration that religious coping mediates the academic pressure to irritability relationship supports the development and implementation of school-based mental health programs that harness religious resources as culturally accessible and normatively legitimate stress management tools.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

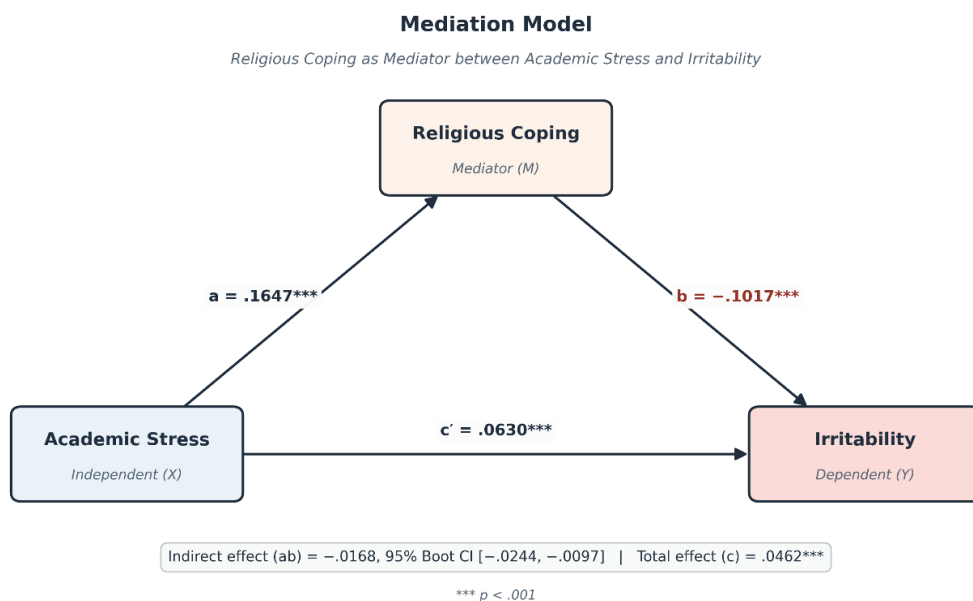


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study

The conceptual framework of the present study positions academic pressure as the independent variable (IV), religious coping as the mediating variable, and irritability as the dependent variable (DV) within a partial mediation model informed by the stress and coping perspective (Pascoe et al., 2020), the Conservation of Resources perspective (Li et al., 2021), and the religious coping framework (Abu-Raiya et al., 2020). Academic pressure exerts a direct positive effect on irritability and also an indirect effect operating through the sequential activation of religious coping (path a) and the subsequent protective influence of religious coping on irritability (path b). The indirect or mediated effect ($a \times b$) captures the portion of the total effect transmitted through religious coping.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of transactional model of stress and coping, psychological stress originates when the individual appraises demands of the environment as threatening, or that a demand may a challenge (exceed) their coping capacity. Developed by Pargament et al. (2000), the religious coping theory explains how religious practices and community support help people cope with life's stressors. It is from the perspective of psychological adjustment that religious coping can be seen to help or hurt. According to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, in the chronic stress, religion serves to protect, preserve, and replenish the resources that are depleted as a result of negative emotional dysregulation or chronic stress.

In Huang's review, the researchers found that academic pressure predicts anxiety and sadness on the internal spectrum and, in many cultures, creates external emotional dysregulation in the form of anger and irritability (Fegert et al., 2020). Ahmad and Hameed (2020) noted that, in Pakistani secondary school students, girls experience more academic pressure in the form of examination anxiety and parental comparative stress than boys. Another researcher reported high academic stress and psychological distress in university students in Pakistan and identified parental pressure as the most influential (Aftab et al., 2022).

In the context of Pakistan, Khan and Ilyas (2021) acknowledged that Islamic coping methods significantly reduced the psychological impact of stress related to COVID-19 among Pakistani students. Clobert et al. (2020) showed that the protective function of religious coping is most evident when no other resources are available.

Timmins et al. (2021) reported the first systematic, comprehensive examination of developmental studies' data on irritability. The reviewed studies reported that 5% and 15% of the general adolescent population exhibited clinically significant irritability, respectively, across different countries, with even higher incidences reported in samples with increased environmental stressors. Pan and Yeh (2022) investigated the relationship between irritability and adolescents' academic performance in detail and found that higher ARI scores were associated with poorer performance, increased refusal to attend class, and increased social conflict, demonstrating the functional limitations of academic-context irritability.

Ahmad and Hameed (2020) documented significant associations between academic pressure and emotional reactivity in Pakistani secondary students, with examination anxiety and parental performance pressure identified as the most potent specific contributors to emotional dysregulation in this sample (Panchal et al., 2021). Hussain et al. (2023) reported higher positive religious coping among Pakistani Muslim college students and associated it with positive engagement coping, as expected for the culturally Muslim community (Kamran & Mirza, 2021).

Gender Differences

Gender differences in academic pressure, religious coping, and emotional reactivity have been documented across multiple recent studies, and there are compelling theoretical and cultural reasons to expect significant gender differences in all three constructs within the Pakistani adolescent population. Aftab et al. (2022) replicated this pattern in Pakistan, finding that female university students reported significantly higher academic pressure than males, with family performance expectations operating as a particularly strong gender-differential stressor.

Mediating Role of Religious Coping

The statistical methods appropriate for testing mediation in the present study Hayes's (2018) PROCESS macro with bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals based on 5,000 bootstrap samples represent the current methodological gold standard for indirect effect estimation, providing accurate estimates without the distributional assumptions of earlier approaches. The present study provided the first direct test of the academic pressure to religious coping to irritability mediation model in a systematically recruited Pakistani secondary school adolescent sample using these rigorous statistical methods (MacKinnon et al., 2020; Hayes, 2018).

Research Gap

The review of the existing literature identifies a specific and consequential gap in knowledge: no published study has examined the mediating role of religious coping in the relationship between academic pressure and irritability in a systematically recruited sample of Pakistani secondary school adolescents, using a validated mediation design with bootstrapped indirect effects and validated psychometric instruments. Although related mediation models have been tested in university samples

and irritability as an independent outcome has received growing research attention (Timmins et al., 2021), the integration of these lines of inquiry within a single study focused specifically on secondary school adolescents in Pakistan has not been attempted. This gap is significant for three reasons. Conceptually, it leaves the proposed theoretical mediation pathway academic pressure activating religious coping, which in turn reduces irritability without the direct empirical test needed to move from theoretical proposition to evidence-based clinical inference. Empirically, it means that clinicians and educators working with Pakistani secondary school adolescents lack the evidence needed to target irritability specifically as a consequence of academic pressure and to leverage religious coping as a modifiable mediating mechanism. Practically, without direct evidence for this mediation pathway, mental health promotion programs in Pakistani schools cannot justify including religious coping enhancement as a component of evidence-based intervention targeting irritability in academically stressed adolescents. The present study addressed each dimension of this gap (Captari et al., 2021; Hajira et al, 2025).

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the present research:

1. To examine the relationship among academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability in adolescents.
2. To investigate whether academic pressure and religious coping significantly predict irritability in adolescents.
3. To explore gender differences in academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability among adolescents.
4. To examine the mediating role of religious coping in the relationship between academic pressure and irritability among adolescents.

Hypotheses

On the basis of the theoretical and empirical literature, the following hypotheses were proposed:

1. There will be a significant relationship among academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability in adolescents.
2. Academic pressure and religious coping will significantly predict irritability in adolescents.
3. There will be significant gender differences in academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability among adolescents.
4. Religious coping will significantly mediate the relationship between academic pressure and irritability among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design.

Sample and Sampling Strategy

A convenience sample of $N = 300$ adolescents was recruited from multiple educational institutions in Faisalabad. The required sample size is approximately 92 participants, which the present sample of $N = 300$ substantially exceeds, providing adequate statistical power for both the main effects and the mediation analysis. Participants were recruited through in-person visits to multiple institutions, following procedures for institutional permission, individual informed assent, and parental consent (MacKinnon et al., 2020).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were included if they:

1. Were between 13 and 19 years of age at the time of data collection
2. Were enrolled in a recognized secondary, higher secondary, or undergraduate (under 19, 1st semester only) educational institution in Faisalabad
3. Identified as Muslim, ensuring shared membership in the religious and cultural context within which the Islamic religious coping constructs measured by the RCAC are embedded
4. Were able to understand and complete self-report questionnaires in Urdu or English
5. Provided written informed consent, and in the case of participants under 18, parental or guardian consent alongside personal assent

Exclusion Criteria

Participants were excluded if they:

1. Fell outside the 13-to-19-year age range
2. Identified as non-Muslim
3. Reported a diagnosed psychiatric disorder at the time of data collection
4. Completed less than 90% of items on any single study instrument
5. Withdrew consent at any point during data collection

Data Collection Procedure

The study collected data using a standardized protocol in different schools in Faisalabad from the end of September to the end of December in 2025. The researcher visited the schools to share the study objectives, distribute information and consent forms. Questionnaires were distributed to the students in their classrooms. The in-person data collection was designed to follow the most recent studies for academic stress conducted in Pakistan that worked with secondary and higher secondary school students-

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.0 and the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for all scales. For Hypothesis 1, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed among the three principal variables and among RCAC subscales. For Hypothesis 2, simultaneous multiple regression was conducted with ARI as the dependent variable and ASS and RCAC as predictors. For Hypothesis 3, independent-samples t-tests were conducted comparing male and female participants across all three variables, with Cohen's *d* and 95% confidence intervals reported. For Hypothesis 4, mediation was analyzed using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples, with a bootstrapped 95% confidence interval that does not include zero adopted as the criterion for statistical significance of the indirect effect (MacKinnon et al., 2020; Hayes, 2018). All tests were two-tailed with $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS

The study included 300 adolescents with equal gender representation. Most participants were unmarried (95%), reflecting the sample's adolescent nature. Age groups were almost evenly split between 13–15 years (50.3%) and 16–19 years (49.7%). The majority studied at the Matric level (60%), followed by FSc (30%) and BS (10%). Most belonged to joint family systems (56.7%), resided in urban areas (70%), and fell in the middle socioeconomic category (70%). This demographic profile

is consistent with that of Pakistani adolescents in Punjab, where joint family systems and urban migration patterns are prevalent (Siddiqui & Khalid, 2019).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants (N = 300)

Variable	Categories	f	%
Gender	Male	150	50.0
	Female	150	50.0
Age	13–15 years	151	50.3
	16–19 years	149	49.7
Marital Status	Married	15	5.0
	Unmarried	285	95.0
Education Status	Matric	180	60.0
	FSc	90	30.0
	BS	30	10.0
Family System	Nuclear	130	43.3
	Joint	170	56.7
Residential Area	Rural	90	30.0
	Urban	210	70.0
Socioeconomic Status	Lower	60	20.0
	Middle	210	70.0
	Upper	30	10.0

Table 2

Psychometric Properties of Study Scales

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Items	α
ASS	300	30.00	150.00	92.61	35.49	30	.88
RCAC	300	29.00	115.00	70.46	20.63	29	.74
ARI	300	0.00	12.00	6.24	4.06	7	.80

Note. ASS = Academic Stress Scale; RCAC = Religious Coping Activities Checklist; ARI = Affective Reactivity Index. ARI total score is based on items 1–6; item 7 (impairment) is scored separately.

Table 2 shows the Academic Stress Scale was the most reliable ($\alpha = .88$), followed by the Affective Reactivity Index ($\alpha = .80$), while the Religious Coping Activities Checklist showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .748$). Participants reported moderate-to-relatively-high academic stress ($M = 92.61$, $SD = 35.49$), moderate religious coping ($M = 70.46$, $SD = 20.63$), and moderate irritability ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 4.06$). The score ranges suggest adequate variability, indicating that the scales captured meaningful individual differences effectively across the study sample.

Table 3

Correlation Analysis among Academic Pressure, Religious Coping, and Irritability (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3
1. ASS	1		
2. RCAC	.28**	1	
3. ARI	.40**	-.36**	1

Note. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). ASS = Academic Stress Scale; RCAC = Religious Coping Activities Checklist; ARI = Affective Reactivity Index.

Table 3 shows that academic pressure was significantly positively related to irritability ($r = .40$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher academic stress was associated with greater irritability among adolescents. Academic pressure also showed a significant positive association with religious coping ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), suggesting that adolescents experiencing higher academic stress tended to engage in more religious coping activities. Importantly, religious coping was significantly negatively related to irritability ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$), indicating that greater use of religious coping was associated with lower levels of irritability. Overall, these findings support H1 and demonstrate that all three variables are significantly interrelated among Pakistani adolescents.

Table 4

Correlation Analysis among Subscales of Academic Pressure, Religious Coping, and Irritability (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. ASS	1							
2. RCAC-SB	.19**	1						
3. RCAC-GD	.19**	.88**	1					
4. RCAC-DC	.22**	-.21**	-.18**	1				
5. RCAC-IRS	.20**	.78**	.71**	-.18**	1			
6. RCAC-PL	.25**	.44**	.42**	.37**	.35**	1		
7. RCAC-RA	.329*	.30**	.30**	.44**	.24**	.42**	1	
8. ARI	.40**	-.46**	-.42**	.38**	-.37**	-.08	.07	1

Note. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). RCAC-SB = Spiritually Based Coping; RCAC-GD = Good Deeds; RCAC-DC = Discontent; RCAC-IRS = Interpersonal Religious Support; RCAC-PL = Plead; RCAC-RA = Religious Avoidance.

Table 4 provides positive coping subscales Spiritually Based Coping ($r = -.46$, $p < .01$), Good Deeds ($r = -.42$, $p < .01$), and Interpersonal Religious Support ($r = -.37$, $p < .01$) were all significantly and negatively correlated with irritability, demonstrating that constructive religious engagement serves as a protective factor against emotional dysregulation. In contrast, Discontent reflecting anger and distance from God showed a significant positive correlation with irritability ($r = .38$, $p < .01$), indicating that negative religious coping exacerbates irritability. Notably, Plead ($r = -.08$) and Religious Avoidance ($r = .079$) showed non-significant correlations with irritability, suggesting that bargaining with God and avoidant religious behaviors have ambiguous effects on emotional outcomes. Academic pressure was positively correlated with all RCAC subscales, with the strongest associations observed for Religious Avoidance ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) and Plead ($r = .25$, $p < .01$), suggesting that stressed adolescents may resort to bargaining and avoidant coping more than to purely spiritual approaches. The positive coping subscales were strongly intercorrelated ($r = .71$ to $.88$), reflecting their shared core of constructive religious engagement.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis Academic Pressure and Religious Coping Predicting Irritability (N = 300)

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	7.57	0.71	---	10.59	.000
ASS	0.06	0.00	.55	11.83	.000

RCAC	-0.10	0.00	-0.51	-11.11	.000
R ²	.40				

$p < .001$.

Multiple regression analysis revealed that academic pressure and religious coping significantly predicted irritability among adolescents. The overall model explained 40.9% of the variance in irritability, which represents a large effect according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines. Academic pressure emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$), indicating that for every unit increase in academic stress, irritability increased by 0.063 points when controlling for religious coping. Religious coping emerged as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.51$, $p < .001$), indicating that greater engagement in religious coping was associated with lower irritability after controlling for academic pressure. These findings support H2 and highlight that both academic pressure and religious coping are important determinants of irritability in Pakistani adolescents.

Table 6

Differences in Academic Pressure, Religious Coping, and Irritability by Gender (N = 300)

Variables	Male (n = 150)		Female (n = 150)		t	df	p	95% CI [LL, UL]	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD					
ASS	83.43	34.64	101.79	34.04	-4.63	298	.000	[-26.16, -10.55]	-0.53
RCAC-SB	31.63	11.84	26.35	10.59	4.07	298	.000	[2.73, 7.83]	0.47
RCAC-GD	15.65	5.77	13.35	5.53	3.51	298	.001	[1.01, 3.58]	0.40
RCAC	74.69	20.70	66.23	19.74	3.62	298	.000	[3.86, 13.05]	0.41
ARI	5.33	4.04	7.16	3.88	-4.01	298	.000	[-2.73, -0.93]	-0.46

Note. RCAC-SB = Spiritually Based Coping; RCAC-GD = Good Deeds. RCAC-DC (Discontent) gender difference was non-significant ($t = -0.88$, $p = .378$) and is not tabled.

Table 6 demonstrates significant gender differences across all major study variables. Female adolescents reported significantly higher academic pressure ($M = 101.79$) compared to males ($M = 83.43$), with a moderate effect size ($d = -0.534$). Female adolescents also reported significantly higher irritability ($M = 7.16$) than males ($M = 5.33$, $d = -0.463$), which aligns with studies indicating that gender differences in emotional reactivity emerge during adolescence, particularly in high-pressure academic environments (Stringaris et al., 2012). Conversely, male adolescents scored significantly higher on overall religious coping ($M = 74.69$ vs. 66.23 , $d = 0.41$), Spiritually Based Coping ($M = 31.63$ vs. 26.35 , $d = 0.470$), and Good Deeds ($M = 15.65$ vs. 13.35 , $d = 0.40$). Overall, these findings support H3 and indicate that gender plays a meaningful role in shaping academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability among Pakistani adolescents.

Table 7

Mediation Analysis: Religious Coping as Mediator between Academic Stress and Irritability (Model 4)

Total Effect

Variables	Effect b	p	Boot SE	95% Boot CI	
				Boot LL	Boot UL
ASS → ARI	.0462	< .001	.0064	.0335	.0589

Direct Effect

Variables	Effect b	p	Boot SE	95% Boot CI	
				Boot LL	Boot UL
ASS → RCAC (Path a)	.1647	< .001	.0323	.1014	.2280
RCAC → ARI (Path b)	-.1017	< .001	.0092	-.1196	-.0837
ASS → ARI (Direct, c')	.0630	< .001	.0053	.0526	.0734

Indirect Effect

Mediator	Effect b	Boot SE	95% Boot CI	
			Boot LL	Boot UL
Religious Coping (RCAC)	-.0168	—	-.0244	-.0097

Note. X = Academic Stress (ASS); M = Religious Coping (RCAC); Y = Irritability (ARI). 95% Boot CI is based on 5,000 bootstrap samples (percentile method). The indirect effect is significant when the confidence interval does not include zero. Path a = effect of X on M; Path b = effect of M on Y; Direct effect (c') = effect of X on Y controlling for M; Total effect (c) = c' + ab.

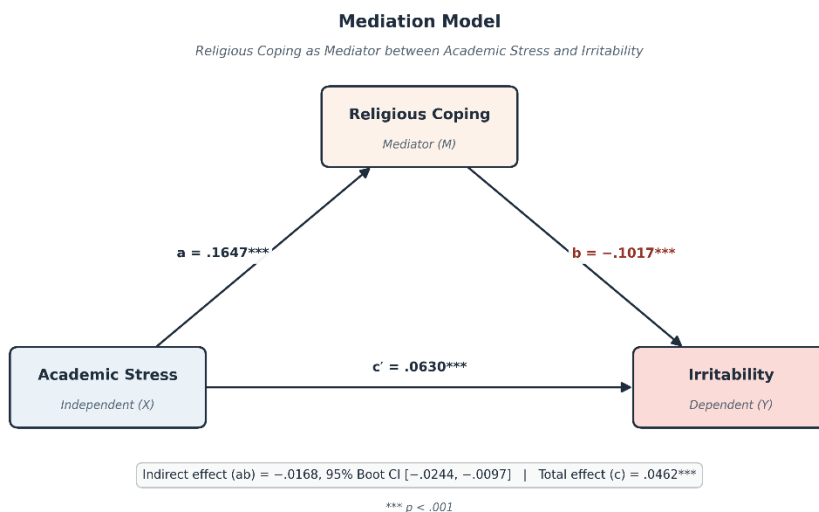


Figure 2. Mediation Model: Religious Coping as Mediator between Academic Stress and Irritability

Table 7 presents the parallel mediation analysis testing religious coping as a mediator between academic stress and irritability among college students. The total effect of academic stress on irritability was statistically significant ($b = .0462, p < .001, 95\% \text{ Boot CI } [.0335, .0589]$), indicating that, in aggregate, higher academic stress was associated with greater irritability. Decomposing this effect, academic stress was a significant positive predictor of religious coping (Path a: $b = .1647, p < .001, 95\% \text{ Boot CI } [.1014, .2280]$), demonstrating that students experiencing higher academic stress engaged more frequently in religious coping activities. Religious coping, in turn, significantly and negatively predicted irritability (Path b: $b = -.1017, p < .001, 95\% \text{ Boot CI } [-.1196, -.0837]$), confirming its role as a protective resource against affective reactivity even after controlling for academic stress.

The direct effect of academic stress on irritability remained significant and positive after including religious coping in the model ($c': b = .0630, p < .001, 95\% \text{ Boot CI } [.0526, .0734]$), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect through religious coping was statistically significant ($ab = -.0168,$

Boot SE = .0037, 95% Boot CI [-.0244, -.0097]), with the confidence interval excluding zero. The opposite signs of the direct (+.0630) and indirect (-.0168) effects reveal a classic suppression pattern. These findings support H4 and suggest that strengthening religious coping resources among Pakistani college students may partially buffer the negative emotional impact of academic stress on irritability.

Discussion

Academic pressure was significantly and positively associated with both religious coping and irritability, while religious coping was significantly and negatively associated with irritability. Academic pressure and religious coping together explained 40.9% of the variance in irritability. Significant gender differences were documented, with female adolescents reporting higher academic pressure and irritability, and male adolescents reporting higher religious coping engagement. Religious coping significantly and partially mediated the relationship between academic pressure and irritability, with a negative indirect effect reflecting the stress-activating and irritability-buffering functions of religious coping in Pakistani Muslim adolescents.

Limitations

The present study has several important limitations. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference regarding temporal precedence among the three principal constructs, and longitudinal designs with repeated measurement would be needed to establish the temporal dynamics of the proposed mediation pathway with greater confidence. Second, convenience sampling from Faisalabad urban institutions limits generalizability to other Pakistani cities, rural populations, private versus public school environments, and other regional and cultural contexts. Third, relying on self-report measures across all constructs introduces common method variance, which may inflate observed correlations. Fourth, the exclusion of non-Muslim participants limits generalizability to adolescents of other religious backgrounds. Fifth, the sample's predominantly middle socioeconomic status and urban demographic composition limit its representativeness of rural and economically disadvantaged Pakistani adolescent populations. Sixth, the absence of a general coping measure means that the specific contribution of religious coping above and beyond secular coping strategies cannot be estimated, leaving open the question of unique religious coping effects independent of general approach coping.

Recommendations

Based on the present findings and their limitations, several recommendations are offered for future research and practice. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs with repeated measures across the academic year, particularly during examination periods, to establish the temporal dynamics of the academic pressure-to-religious coping-to-irritability pathway. Multi-informant designs combining adolescent self-report with parent and teacher reports of irritability would reduce dependence on single-method assessment and provide ecologically valid irritability data across multiple relational contexts. School administrators and policymakers should prioritize the establishment of culturally informed counseling services in Pakistani secondary schools that integrate both psychological and religious resources. Training programs for school counselors should include content on Islamic approaches to stress management and the clinical significance of negative religious coping as a risk factor for emotional dysregulation.

Conclusion

The present study provides the first comprehensive examination of the relationships among academic pressure, religious coping, and irritability, and the first direct mediation test of religious coping in the academic pressure-to-irritability pathway, in a systematically recruited sample of Pakistani secondary school adolescents. Academic pressure emerged as a significant positive predictor of irritability,

religious coping as a significant negative predictor, and religious coping as a significant partial mediator. Female adolescents experienced significantly greater academic pressure and irritability, whereas males reported higher engagement in religious coping. Future longitudinal, multi-informant research should build on these findings to refine understanding of the temporal dynamics of the documented pathways and to develop and evaluate culturally informed interventions that harness religious coping as a resource for reducing irritability and promoting emotional well-being in academically pressured Pakistani adolescents.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Raiya, H., Pargament, K. I., Weissberger, A., & Huis in 't Veld, E. (2020). Religious coping and mental health outcomes among diverse Muslim samples. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 23(3), 184–199.
- Aftab, R., Ali, S., & Saleem, S. (2022). Academic stress and mental health among Pakistani university students. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 37(2), 213–228.
- Ahmad, S., & Hameed, A. (2020). Gender differences in academic stressors and performance among secondary school students in Pakistan. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 15(10), 623–630.
- Arshad, M., Khan, M. L., & Afzal, S. (2024). Marital Satisfaction, Emotion Regulation and Self-Efficacy in Women with Postpartum Depression. *Research Journal for Societal Issues*, 6(2), 28-43.
- Aslam, R., Rasool, A., & Khan, M. L. (2025). Urdu Translation and Validation of Acceptance of Change Scale in Pakistan. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, 3(1), 1638-1651.
- Bukhari, S. R. H. (2025). Assessing the Ukraine-Russia Conflict: A Threat to Global Energy Security and the Prospect of a Third World War. *International Journal of Advanced Research (IJAR)*.
- Bukhari, S. R. H., & Mujaddid, G. (2025). Strategic Ceasefire or Tactical Deception A Geopolitical Analysis of the Iran, Israel, US Crisis in 2025. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 146-156.
- Bukhari, S. R. H., Malik, S. M., & Mahmood, M. A. (2024). Chinese BRICS: Contamination of US-led Neoliberalism. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 8(2), 320-331.
- Captari, L. E., Hook, J. N., Aten, J. D., Davis, E. B., & Keskin, O. C. (2021). Spirituality and religion in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis of outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(3), 316–330.
- Clobert Park, C. L., Aldwin, C. M., & Snyder, E. (2020). Pathways from religion/spirituality to health and well-being. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 54(11), 868–876.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Elahi, N. S., Rasheed, M. A., & Bajwa, S. U. (2025). Staying grounded to thrive: how job insecurity transforms managerial support and organizational job embeddedness for technology professionals. *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior*, 1-18.
- Fegert, J. M., Vitiello, B., Plener, P. L., & Clemens, V. (2020). Challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic for child and adolescent mental health. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 14(4), 220-244.
- Ghazanfar, H., & Ul Haq, A. (2025). Ethical and legal implications of AI in human resource management. *Journal of Social & Organizational Matters*, 4(2), 417-428.
- Hajira, B., Hamid, S., ur Rehman, N., Ahmed, S. N., & ur Rehman, S. (2025). Mobile-assisted language learning in a preparatory year English program: Enhancing motivation and receptive skills. *Journal of Political Stability Archive*, 3(3), 1147-1173.
- Hamid, S. (2025). The Reforming Pakistan's Education System: Bridging the Gap for 21st-Century Skills: Reforming Pakistan's Education System: Bridging the Gap for 21st-Century Skills. *Dialogue Social Science Review (DSSR)*, 3(3), 637-647.

- Hayes, A. F. (2018). Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Huang, X., Kang, Z., & Li, Z. (2022). Academic stress and emotional dysregulation in adolescents: A cross-cultural perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13* (6), 104-126.
- Hussain, S., Hussain, S., & Hamid, S. (2023). Spiritual coping and resilience among Pakistani college students. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research, 38*(1), 85–101.
- Kamran, M. A., & Mirza, T. I. (2021). Role of collective religiosity in mental health of Pakistani youth during COVID-19. *Al-Idah, 39*(1), 1–12.
- Kausar, R., & Qayyum, A. (2018). How Cash Flow News and Discount Rate News Impact the Unexpected Stock Returns of Energy Firms of Pakistan.
- Kausar, R., Khan, I., Khan, M. T., Perdana, A. I., & Siddique, M. (2021). The Impact Of Financial Inclusion On The Stability Of Monetary Policy Of The South Asian Countries, Panel Ardl Approach. *Webology (ISSN: 1735-188X), 18*(5).
- Khan, M. L., Sarfraz, A., & Tabassum, S. (2020). Parental occupation relationship with parental authority, introversion, self-esteem, religiosity and social anxiety among youngsters. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review, 4*, 234-245.
- Khan, M. L., Sarfraz, A., & Tabassum, S. (2020). Parental occupation relationship with parental authority, introversion, self-esteem, religiosity and social anxiety among youngsters. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review, 4*, 234-245.
- Khan, M. N., & Ilyas, M. (2021). Religious coping and psychological distress among Pakistani university students during COVID-19. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences, 31*(2), 1–18.
- Khan, S., Khan, M. L., & Waqas, M. (2025). Parental Expressed Emotions, Social-Emotional Competence and Vocational Identity in Adolescents. *Journal of Political Stability Archive, 3*(1), 244-263.
- Leibenluft, E. (2021). The neurobiology of irritability in children and adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 12*(4), 45-76.
- Li, F., Luo, S., Mu, W., Li, Y., Ye, L., Zheng, X., Xu, B., Ding, Y., Ling, P., & Chen, X. (2021). Effects of social support and resilience on mental health of different age groups during COVID-19. *BMC Psychiatry, 21*(1), 78-94.
- Li, Y., Wang, A., Wu, Y., Han, N., & Huang, H. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health of college students. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment, 17*(4), 1783–1804.
- MacKinnon, D. P., Valente, M. J., & Wurpts, A. (2020). Benchmark mediation analysis. *Psychological Methods, 25*(6), 733–753.
- Naeem, M., Zaheer, A., & Khan, M. L. (2024). Emotional Intelligence, Gratitude and Forgiveness among University Students. *Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology, 1*(1), 8-14.
- Pan, P. Y., & Yeh, C. B. (2022). Association of irritability with academic functioning in adolescents. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 29*(9), 432–437.
- Panchal, U., Salazar de Pablo, G., Franco, M., Moreno, C., Parellada, M., Arango, C., & Fusar-Poli, P. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 lockdown on child and adolescent mental health. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 30*(11), 1627–1640.
- Pargament, K. I., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. M. (2000). The many methods of religious coping: Development and initial validation of the RCOPE. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*(4), 519–543.
- Pascoe, M. C., Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 25*(1), 104–112.
- Saddique, R., & Haq, A. U. (2025). Assessing the impact of regulatory frameworks on corporate governance, CSR, and firm performance in Pakistan. *Dialogue Social Science Review (DSSR), 3*(6), 524-538.

- Shabeer, M. G., Khan, A. W., Iqbal, Z., & Ayyubi, M. S. (2024). A Study of Pakistan's Fiscal Landscape: Examining the Influence of Institutional Quality and Tax Policy Transformation. *Journal of Economic Impact*, 6(1), 106-114.
- Shehzad, M., Khan, M. L., & Khan, S. A. (2024). Perceived Social Stigma, Family Support and Mental Health Issues in Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS. *Journal of Health and Rehabilitation Research*, 4(2), 116-121.
- Siddiqui, S., & Khalid, J. (2019). Determining the caregivers' burden in caregivers of patients with mental illness. *Pakistan journal of medical sciences*, 35(5), 1329.
- Stringaris, A., Goodman, R., Ferdinando, S., Razdan, V., Muhrer, E., Leibenluft, E., & Brotman, M. A. (2012). The Affective Reactivity Index: A concise irritability scale for clinical and research settings. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(11), 1109–1117.
- Suárez, L., O'Callaghan, G., Bellato, A., Stavriou, M., & Stringaris, A. (2022). Irritability in youth: Progress and challenges. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 63(8), 905–930.
- Tariq, M., Khan, M. L., & Atta, N. (2024). Exploring the Interplay of Alexithymia, Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among Doctors. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 8(1), 437-443.
- Taymoor, A., Ayyubi, M. S., Bhatti, M. A., & Shabeer, M. G. (2025). Demographic And Socioeconomic Drivers of Household Savings in Pakistan: Revisiting Classical Saving Models. *Center for Management Science Research*, 3(3), 415-425.
- Timmins, L., Minnis, H., & McAuliffe, S. (2021). Irritability in adolescents: A systematic review of community-based prevalence studies. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 15(1), 78-98.
- Urooj, R., Bibi, S., & Khan, M. L. (2025). Self-Efficacy, Mindfulness, and Burnout among Phd Students. *Research Journal of Psychology*, 3(2), 542-558.
- Zubair, R., Rehman, H. U., Kalim, R., & Shabeer, M. G. (2025). An analysis of the impact of green entrepreneur orientation on SME performance with the institutional environment as a moderator. *Journal of Political Stability Archive*, 3(3), 1677-1696.