

## Role of Religion in Shaping Ethical and Moral Values Among the Youths in Athens, Greece

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### Abstract

Religion can be understood as a system of beliefs, practices, and values that relate to the nature of existence and the universe, and that often involve a belief in one or more supernatural or divine entities. Different religions have different beliefs, practices, and values, and there is often significant diversity within a particular religion as well. Many religions provide a set of moral and ethical principles that guide behavior and decision-making, helping individuals to navigate complex ethical issues and make choices that align with their values. Ethical and moral values are principles or beliefs that guide behavior and decision-making. Moral values are important for individuals to live in harmony with others and to make ethical choices. Moral values among youths are shaped by a variety of factors, including family, education, religion, and culture. It was discovered that young people who are actively involved in religious communities are more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior, such as volunteerism, empathy, and moral reasoning, than those who are not involved in religious communities. Religion provides a supportive and nurturing environment for young people, and offers guidance and support as they navigate complex ethical and moral issues. The study concluded that religion plays a significant role in shaping human history and culture, influencing art, literature, music, and philosophy, and contributing to the development of social and political institutions. The study recommended that religious institutions should strive to create welcoming and inclusive environments that foster a sense of community and belonging among young people. Religious leaders should engage with young people and encourage them to develop their own moral compass. Religious institutions should also collaborate with parents and educators to promote positive values and ethical behavior among young people.

**Keywords:** *Religion, Ethical, Moral Values, Youths, Greece*

## **1.0 Background of the Study**

Religion is a complex and multifaceted concept, and there is no single definition that can encompass all of its various aspects (Malone & Dadswell, 2018). At its core, however, religion can be understood as a system of beliefs, practices, and values that relate to the nature of existence and the universe, and that often involve a belief in one or more supernatural or divine entities. Religion can provide individuals with a sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging, and can shape their beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life, the nature of good and evil, and the afterlife. Religions often involve the use of ritual, prayer, and worship to connect with the divine or to express one's faith, and may also involve a set of moral and ethical principles that guide behavior and decision-making (LiyanaPathirana & Akroyd, 2023). Different religions have different beliefs, practices, and values, and there is often significant diversity within a particular religion as well. Of course, not everyone finds religion to be important or relevant to their lives, and there are many different beliefs and perspectives about the role and significance of religion. Nonetheless, for many people, religion can offer a source of meaning, community, guidance, and support that enriches their lives and helps them to navigate the complexities of the world (Laksana & Wood, 2019).

The importance of religion can be understood in a variety of ways, depending on one's perspective and beliefs. Religion can provide individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose in life by offering answers to questions about the nature of existence, the purpose of life, and the meaning of suffering (Davis, Kimball, Aten, Andrews, Van Tongeren, Hook & Park, 2019). Religious institutions often serve as centers of community and social support, offering opportunities for individuals to connect with others who share their beliefs and values, and to participate in shared rituals, traditions, and activities. Many religions provide a set of moral and ethical principles that guide behavior and decision-making, helping individuals to navigate complex ethical issues and make choices that align with their values (Cornwell, Chi Cui, Mitchell, Schlegelmilch, Dzulkiflee & Chan, 2019). Religious practices such as meditation, prayer, and mindfulness have been shown to have psychological and emotional benefits, such as reducing stress and anxiety, increasing feelings of well-being and contentment, and fostering a sense of inner peace. Rayman-Bacchus and Radavoi (2020) reported that religion has played a significant role in shaping human history and culture, influencing art, literature, music, and philosophy, and contributing to the development of social and political institutions.

Religion has historically played a significant role in shaping ethical and moral values (Astrachan, Binz Astrachan, Campopiano & Baù, 2020). Religious beliefs and teachings have been used as a foundation for ethical and moral principles in many societies throughout human history. Religious texts often contain moral and ethical teachings, and religious leaders have served as guides and role models for how to behave ethically and morally. Religion provides a framework for understanding what is right and wrong, good and evil, and what actions are acceptable and unacceptable (Vuong, Ho, Nguyen, Vuong, Tran, Hoang & La, 2020). Religious teachings can shape an individual's moral and ethical beliefs by providing a set of values and beliefs to guide their actions. Many religions emphasize the importance of treating others with respect, compassion, and kindness, which can lead to more positive and ethical behavior. However, it's important to note that religion is not the only source of ethical and moral values. Many people who are not religious hold strong ethical and moral beliefs based on other sources, such as secular philosophy, personal experience, or cultural traditions. According to Verkuyten, Adelman and Yogeewaran (2022), religion has been used to justify unethical and immoral behavior throughout

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history, and some religious teachings have been criticized for promoting discrimination or intolerance.

Ethical and moral values are principles or beliefs that guide behavior and decision-making (Fathallah, Sidani & Khalil, 2020). While the terms are often used interchangeably, there is a subtle distinction between them. Moral values refer to a set of beliefs or principles that relate to what is right and wrong, good and evil, and what actions are acceptable and unacceptable. Moral values are often shaped by cultural, religious, and social norms and are concerned with issues such as honesty, respect, kindness, compassion, and justice. Ethical values, on the other hand, refer to a set of principles or guidelines that govern professional or organizational behavior. Ethical values are often concerned with issues such as fairness, honesty, accountability, and responsibility, and are intended to promote integrity and prevent misconduct (Chou, Lee & Fudano, 2022). However, both moral and ethical values are concerned with guiding behavior and decision-making in a way that aligns with a set of principles or beliefs. Both types of values can be shaped by a variety of factors, including culture, religion, education, personal experience, and societal norms. Ultimately, ethical and moral values are intended to promote positive behavior and prevent harmful actions, and can serve as a guide for individuals and organizations as they navigate complex ethical and moral issues (Smith & Kouchaki, 2021).

Moral values are important for individuals to live in harmony with others and to make ethical choices. Among youths, moral values are shaped by a variety of factors, including family, friends, education, religion, and culture (Haron, Jamil & Ramli, 2020). Parents and guardians play a crucial role in instilling moral values in their children. They can do so by modeling good behavior, teaching and discussing the importance of values such as honesty, respect, kindness, and responsibility, and by setting clear expectations for behavior. Education can also play a significant role in shaping moral values among youths. Schools can incorporate moral education into their curriculum by teaching students about values, ethics, and social responsibility (Akram, Al-Adwan, Aslam & Khan, 2021). Community service programs and extracurricular activities can also provide opportunities for students to develop empathy, compassion, and a sense of civic duty.

Religion can also influence moral values among youths, as religious teachings often emphasize the importance of living a virtuous and ethical life (Mamarasulovich, 2022). Religious institutions can provide guidance and support for young people as they navigate complex moral issues. However, the media and popular culture can also have a significant impact on the moral values of young people. Social media, for example, can expose youths to a wide range of perspectives and behaviors, some of which may conflict with traditional moral values. Overall, moral values among youths are shaped by a variety of factors, including family, education, religion, and culture. It is important for parents, educators, and religious leaders to work together to promote positive values and ethical behavior among young people (Pearce, Uecker & Denton, 2019).

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Elsayed (2022) conducted study to investigate the effect of self-religiosity and the religious attitudes of fathers in the moral behavior of youth from religious and non-religious institutions. The pilot research's indigenous measures of self-religiosity, father's religious attitude, and moral behavior were employed in the main study. The primary research included 250 male Malay students between the ages of 16 and 18, chosen equally from religious and nonreligious schools. Class teachers assisted with data collection. The subjects were given the father's religious attitude

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questionnaire in a sealed envelope and asked to return it after their dads had filled it. Multiple regression analysis of self-religiosity, father's religious attitude, and school type to moral behavior revealed a significant regression effect and a significant beta coefficient for self-religiosity, indicating that self-religiosity was the only predictor of youth moral behavior. There were also strong relationships between self-religiosity and moral behavior, and between self-religiosity and father's religious attitude. T-tests for moral behavior, self-religiosity, and father's religious attitude between religious and nonreligious schools revealed significant differences, indicating that youth from religious schools exhibited more moral behavior and they and their fathers were more religious than youth from non-religious schools. The findings indicate a path analytical link between the variables, implying that religiosity and religious education played a beneficial impact in moral behavior of youth.

According to research by Izzati, Bachri, Sahid and Indriani (2019), schools are one of the primary sources of moral socialization for children. The aim of this study is to explore the effect of religious schools on the moral education of English secondary school learners. To assess general religious attitudes, particular Catholic beliefs, specific Jewish beliefs, and secular morals, four scores were developed. These measures were evaluated for internal consistency before being used to compare Catholic, Jewish, and public schools. According to the findings of this study, religious schools develop learners with stronger and more consistent views toward religion and morality than public schools. According to the findings of this study, religious schools develop learners with stronger and more consistent views toward religion and morality than public schools. Moreover, little proof exists of socioeconomic and racial variations between schools playing a role in defining religious or secular moral values. Religion continues to play an essential role in the teaching of moral values to learners in secondary schools.

A study by Alam, Aliyu and Shahriar (2019) looked at the influence of religious beliefs and ethical ideology on consumer ethics in the dispute over whether ethics should be separated from religion or not. As a result, the goal of this research is to look at the impact of consumers' religion, moral philosophy, and generational cohort on their assessment of diverse customers' ethical behavior practices. The research draws on data from three separate cohorts in Australia (Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers). There are a total of 251 responders. The number of male and female responses is about equal. (52 and 48 percent, respectively). The majority of participants (56%) are single, while 24% are married. The age groups are as follows: Gen-Y (60%), Gen-X (20%), and Baby Boomers (8%). (14 per cent). In terms of religion, 51 % of participants identified as Christian or Catholic, while 38% claimed having no religion. The results indicate that religion had the greatest impact when compared to moral theories and generation cohorts. When two concepts meet between religion and ethical ideologies, it can be anticipated that religious principles will take precedence over ethical ideologies, at least for religious consumers. The study has a number of consequences for marketers, educators, and policymakers. This study has significant limitations, including the use of convenience sampling, which may limit the findings' generalizability. In terms of ethical judgements, Australian consumers may differ from general consumers or other cohorts. This is one of the earliest studies in Australia to look at consumer ethics. It was concluded that religion will triumph over ethical ideologies in some ethical situations. As a result, it is critical not to exclude religion from ethics instruction, particularly for religious consumers.

Khaddafi, Heikal, Aspan and Husna (2017) conducted study to examine the impact and connection of Islamic moral standards on the conduct of learners in Aceh Province. Learning Objects are Islamic moral standards learned in high school and vocational schools that are expected to influence students' conduct. The SPSS application was used to execute the quantitative procedures in this investigation. The MRPI Likert Scale instrument was used to analyze the data. The data were collected from 191 different learners at the institution. This study sample's data is analyzed using the t-test and the r test. The study discovered a strong correlation between Islamic moral standards and behavioral student at the level [ $r(96) = 3.213$   $P < 0.05$ ]. The mean difference scores are 5.8 percent at the level ( $\beta_2 = 0.0056$ ), and it is explained by the mean score at the rate (35.06: 6.67), and the average score describes learner conduct. (45.7: 5.12). In which horizontal and vertical Islamic moral standards are related to behavioral characteristics (Y). ( $X_1$  and  $X_2$ ). Multiple regression test (r) with a score of 21.23 percent represents these findings. The research discovered substantial disparities between male and female students, which were positively associated to learner behavior. The results explain the pattern of relationships and the effect of moral values on learners, and implications for future research practice as a result of Islamic moral values and student behavior.

Rabelo and Pilati (2021) conducted study by polling learners at two institutions in the southern United States. (One public and one private, religiously affiliated). Two major hypotheses were examined using a survey instrument with 25 vignettes: whether religiosity affects ethical views ( $H_1$ ) and if courses in ethics, religion, or theology impact ethical attitudes ( $H_2$ ). Using a behavior-based measure of religiosity (church attendance), findings show that religiosity is a statistically significant predictor of reactions in a variety of ethical contexts. The effect of religion is negative in seven of the eight vignettes where it is significant, meaning that it affects the "acceptability" of morally laden events. Completing ethics or religion classes, on the other hand, was only a significant predictor of ethical sentiments in two of the 25 vignettes (and in the expected direction). It was also discovered that males and younger respondents are more receptive of the ethically dubious scenarios. The study suggested that variables outside of the educational system may be more powerful than ethics and religion courses in determining reactions to ethical vignettes.

Sulaiman, Toulson, Brougham, Lempp and Haar (2022) performed study to look at the influence of ethical sensitivity on ethical decision making, using religion as a moderating variable. This study collected data through a survey questionnaire from five universities (two public and three private), namely STIE Asia, Universitas Negeri Malang, Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang (UNIKAMA), Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, and STIE Malangkucecwara. This study's samples are accounting students in their seventh semester. Based on the 202 responses obtained, this study discovered that ethical sensitivity and religiosity had a substantial influence on ethical decision making. Furthermore, religion functions as a moderator in the link between moral sensitivity and ethical decision making.

Hassan, Rahman and Islam (2023) argued that religion is an important component of everyday life that influences consumer decisions and actions. Religious consumers are expected to be more ethical than non-religious consumers. Nonetheless, previous research indicates conflicting results. The current study has two major goals: to analyze variations in moral ideologies and ethical views between religious and non-religious consumers in Indonesia and Australia, and to evaluate the influence of moral ideologies and religiosity on consumer ethical beliefs. This is one of the first cross-cultural studies to compare religious and non-religious consumers' moral ideologies

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(particularly, idealism and relativism) and ethical convictions. In comparison to non-religious consumers, religious consumers lean more toward idealism than relativism and have higher ethical attitudes about harmful consumer ethical actions. However, religious attitudes on certain consumer habits, such as recycling and software piracy/buying counterfeit, were eclipsed by cultural differences between the two countries. This study adds to the discussion of the influence of moral ideologies and religion on consumer ethical views. The findings might aid managers and public politicians in their attempts to reduce unethical customer behavior.

Pio and Lengkong (2020) noted that unethical business practices are gaining traction in business circle, academia, and government. To control the threat, numerous rules of ethics, codes of practice, codes of conduct, and punitive measures have been used. Despite the fact that spiritual values have a positive influence on one's perception, choices, actions, and relationships with others and that spiritually virtuous people act in Godly ways, spirituality as a control measure for unethical behavior and business has not been adequately explored. This study looked at the link between a spiritual person's behavioral traits, spiritual ideals, spiritual virtues, ethical behavior, and ethical business. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze survey data from 200 respondents. The findings demonstrated a substantial relationship between a spiritual person's behavioral features, spiritual ideals, spiritual virtues, ethical behavior, and ethical business. It is believed that, in addition to punitive measures, businessmen/women internalizing and practicing spiritual ideals will assure spiritually virtuous and ethical businessmen/women and ethical enterprises.

Setiyawan, Lestari and Setiyowati (2022) conducted study to investigate the impact of religion and gender on consumer ethics among Indonesian teenagers. The study included a convenience sample of 350 students from a prominent private institution in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The major constructs were measured using established scales. The independent factors were intrinsic religiosity and gender, while the dependent variables were each component of consumer ethics. Except for "downloading," the findings of seven multiple regression analyses revealed that gender and intrinsic religiosity had a substantial impact on consumer ethical characteristics. Individuals who spend their everyday lives according to their faith are less likely to engage in immoral behavior than those who do not. In addition, ladies were shown to be more ethical than males across five domains of consumer ethics. Males were more supportive of "doing good" for the seller than females. In overall, the data imply that gender and religiosity do influence consumer ethics among Indonesian teenagers. These findings offer vital insights for religious leaders, university lecturers, and policymakers working to prevent unethical behavior among the young population.

### **3.0 Research Findings**

Religion has been studied extensively in various fields, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, and theology. The role of religion is a complex and multifaceted topic, and research has yielded a wide range of findings. The study has found that religious individuals tend to have better health outcomes, such as lower rates of depression and anxiety, better coping skills, and longer lifespans. This may be due to the social support and sense of meaning that religious communities can provide. Religion plays a significant role in shaping an individual's moral values and beliefs. Religious teachings often emphasize compassion, forgiveness, and respect for others, which can contribute to the development of empathy and ethical decision-making. Religious communities can provide a sense of belonging and social support for their members. This can be

particularly important for individuals who may feel isolated or marginalized in other areas of their lives. Moreover, the study found that religious beliefs and practices can shape an individual's political views. For example, individuals who attend religious services regularly tend to be more politically conservative, while those who do not identify with any religion tend to be more politically liberal. While religion can promote tolerance and understanding, it can also contribute to prejudice and discrimination. The study found that religious individuals may be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward members of other religions or minority groups.

Research has noted that religion can play a significant role in shaping ethical and moral values among young people. It was discovered that young people who are actively involved in religious communities are more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior, such as volunteerism, empathy, and moral reasoning, than those who are not involved in religious communities. Exposure to religious teachings can influence ethical and moral decision-making among young people. Religious teachings can provide a framework for understanding ethical and moral issues, and can help young people to develop a sense of right and wrong. Religious communities can provide a supportive and nurturing environment for young people, and can offer guidance and support as they navigate complex ethical and moral issues. This can include mentoring, counseling, and support networks.

Moreover, the study found that religious involvement can promote resilience and coping skills among young people, helping them to deal with stress, anxiety, and other challenges. This can include developing a sense of purpose and meaning, cultivating a sense of community, and providing opportunities for reflection and prayer. Also, diversity within religious communities can shape ethical and moral values among young people. Exposure to different beliefs and perspectives can help young people to develop a more nuanced understanding of ethical and moral issues, and can promote empathy, understanding, and respect for others. It's worth noting that the role of religion can vary greatly depending on the individual and the specific religious tradition they follow. Some people may find great comfort and meaning in their religious beliefs, while others may reject religion entirely. Ultimately, the role of religion is a complex and deeply personal topic that is shaped by a wide range of factors.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

To conclude religion can play a significant role in the lives of individuals and communities. It can provide a sense of meaning and purpose, offer guidance and support during difficult times, and help individuals to navigate complex ethical and moral issues. Religion has also played a significant role in shaping human history and culture, influencing art, literature, music, and philosophy, and contributing to the development of social and political institutions. However, the role of religion is complex and multifaceted, and there is often significant diversity within a particular religion as well as differences between religions. Moreover, not everyone finds religion to be relevant or important to their lives, and there are many different beliefs and perspectives about the role and significance of religion.

Ultimately, the role of religion depends on individual beliefs, values, and experiences, and can vary widely across different cultures, societies, and historical periods. Nonetheless, for many people, religion can offer a source of meaning, community, guidance, and support that enriches their lives and helps them to navigate the complexities of the world. In conclusion, religion can play a significant role in shaping ethical and moral values among young people. Religious teachings often emphasize the importance of living a virtuous and ethical life, and religious

institutions can provide guidance and support for young people as they navigate complex moral issues. However, moral values among youths are shaped by a variety of factors, including family, education, culture, and the media, and it is important for parents, educators, and religious leaders to work together to promote positive values and ethical behavior. Ultimately, the development of strong ethical and moral values is essential for individuals to live in harmony with others and to make responsible and ethical choices throughout their lives.

## 5.0 Recommendations

The study recommended that religious institutions should strive to create welcoming and inclusive environments that foster a sense of community and belonging among young people. This can help them to feel connected to others who share their beliefs and values, and provide opportunities for them to participate in shared rituals and activities. Religious teachings should emphasize the importance of living a virtuous and ethical life, and provide guidance on how to navigate complex moral issues. Religious leaders should engage with young people and encourage them to develop their own moral compass. Religious institutions should encourage critical thinking and questioning among young people, and allow them to explore different perspectives and beliefs. This can help young people to develop a deeper understanding of their own beliefs and values, and respect the beliefs of others. Religious institutions should provide opportunities for young people to engage in service and volunteerism, both within their own communities and in other parts of the world. This can help young people to develop empathy, compassion, and a sense of responsibility to others. Religious institutions should also collaborate with parents and educators to promote positive values and ethical behavior among young people. This can include providing resources and support for parents and educators, as well as working with schools and community organizations to create opportunities for youth engagement. Religious institutions, parents, and educators can help shape ethical and moral values among young people through the role of religion.

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