



Charity Work and Religious Orientation: The Experience of the Student-Age Population

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the impact of religious orientation on charitable behaviors among student-aged populations in Kazakhstan, highlighting the impact of internal and external orientations on charitable involvement, social responsibility, and empathy. Using the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale together with the Philanthropic Activities Scale, the analysis draws on data from 128 students across various regions of Kazakhstan, thereby reflecting regional and cultural diversity. Internal religious orientation, defined as belief functioning as a central element of identity and moral guidance, is distinguished from external orientation, where religious practice is shaped more by social pressures and extrinsic factors. The findings reveal that internal religious orientation is strongly associated with positive attitudes toward charitable activities, higher levels of empathy, and greater participation in social initiatives, suggesting that students guided by intrinsic belief systems are more committed to philanthropy and social responsibility. In contrast, external orientation also relates to charitable engagement but has a weaker effect, indicating that extrinsic motivations are less effective in sustaining long-term philanthropic behaviors. These findings underscore the importance of intrinsic religious motivations in shaping youth philanthropy, suggesting that policymakers and educators should prioritize the integration of internalized beliefs into initiatives that encourage sustained participation in social causes. This study thus deepens understanding of the relationship between religion and social responsibility while providing practical recommendations for fostering empathy, responsibility, and engagement within Kazakhstan's younger generation.

KEYWORDS

Religious orientation; charity; inner religiosity; outer religiosity; social responsibility; empathy; youth activism.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of philanthropic is scientifically defined as voluntary actions directed toward achieving goals that benefit society, involving the intentional donation of time, money, or other resources for the common good (Lechterman et al., 2024). Such activities play a key role in social development by supporting vulnerable groups and reinforcing social cohesion within communities. Religious belief has long been recognized as an important factor affecting individuals' engagement with charitable work, as research shows that religious orientations frequently provide the foundation for altruistic values and serve as a motivation for participation in social initiatives (Norenzayan et al., 2016).

In recent years, scholarly attention has increasingly turned to the religious dimensions of philanthropy among young people (King & Boyatzis, 2004; Sukri et al., 2023). As they develop their values and life positions, youth are often especially active in charitable initiatives, with religion serving as a central motivating factor. Johnson and Emerson (2019) note that students with stronger religious orientations are more likely to engage in volunteer projects and social assistance programs. Similarly, Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) claim that religion affects both personal and social values, including philanthropic behavior, while Regnerus et al. (1998) found that higher levels of religious commitment among students correlate with increased involvement in charitable and community activities. Despite this body of research, however, studies remain insufficient in examining how religious orientation specifically affects students' charitable behavior. Moreover, within post-Soviet contexts—particularly in Kazakhstan—this issue has received little scholarly attention, leaving a major gap in the literature and highlighting the need for further investigation.

This study, designed to address this gap, examines the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations on students' involvement in charity activities in Kazakhstan. Theoretically, it seeks to clarify the relationship between religion and social responsibility, while practically, it aims to contribute to the enhancement of civic engagement among young people.

The limited research on this topic represents not only a theoretical gap but also a practical scientific problem. Strategies and public initiatives aimed at strengthening the social responsibility of young people may be less effective if they fail to account for how students' levels of engagement vary by religious orientation. Distinct approaches are required: those with an external religious orientation are more affected by social pressures, while those with an internal orientation are guided by intrinsic motivations and values. In Kazakhstan, religion plays a particularly important role in shaping both internal and external personality traits, thereby affecting the development of social ties. For this reason, the study of this issue is highly relevant and constitutes a scientific necessity.

Thus, this paper examines the relationship by analyzing the motivational factors that affect young people's decisions to engage in philanthropic initiatives. Based on a questionnaire survey of students, the research provides deeper insights into the nature of these processes and

offers practical recommendations for promoting and strengthening charitable activity within the student community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious orientation has long been recognized as a key factor affecting voluntary charitable involvement and broader social activity. Many spiritual texts emphasize altruistic values and encourage active participation in charitable practices. Nevertheless, the relationship between religious values and youth engagement in charitable activities in Kazakhstan remains insufficiently studied. For this reason, the literature review examines major existing studies, identifies their limitations, and underscores the relevance of conducting further research within the Kazakhstani context.

Religious Orientation and Philanthropy

Research shows that religious beliefs foster altruistic values and motivate people to participate in social and charity activities. Herzog et al. (2020), for example, highlights that people with stronger religious convictions are more likely to participate in philanthropy and volunteer work, largely because many religious teachings emphasize the importance of helping others and fulfilling social responsibilities.

Youth, particularly students, represent a unique social group that actively engages in a wide range of public activities, including charitable initiatives (Kilinc et al., 2023; Utemissova et al., 2025). Research indicates that students with stronger religious orientations are more likely to participate in volunteer work, driven both by their beliefs and by the desire to adhere to religious norms (Aksoy & Wiertz, 2024). For instance, Abd Rahman (2022) found that students who regularly attended religious services demonstrated a greater willingness to take part in social projects compared to their less religious peers. However, another view in the research literature argues that the influence of religious beliefs on charitable engagement may be mediated by factors such as social environment, cultural norms, or personal volunteering experiences (Carman, 2003). This view underscores the importance of adopting an integrated approach to understanding the relationship between religion and social activity, taking into account the interaction of multiple influencing factors. Research also indicates that religiosity influences not only charitable engagement but extends to other domains of social life, including young adults' marriage behavior (Pusztai et al., 2022).

Charity Events and Students

Students are often active participants in charitable and social initiatives, and several studies suggest that religious motives frequently underlie their involvement. Hunsberger and Platonow (1986) observed that students with an internal religious orientation are more likely to engage in charity activities. Similarly, research conducted by Xie et al. (2020) at the Chinese University found that students' religious positions fostered positive attitudes toward charity, highlighting the beneficial role of faith in shaping social engagement. Nonetheless, other findings reveal that the overall influence of religiosity on the frequency of volunteering is relatively modest. For

example, Shulha (2023) examined student participation in religious volunteer organizations in Ukraine and Poland, concluding that such activities often stem not only from religious motives but also from a desire for self-expression and the reinforcement of cultural values. These studies show that the relationship between religiosity and students' charitable activity is multifaceted rather than straightforward, shaped by an interplay of social, institutional, and cultural factors.

Current research on the relationship between religion and charity has largely centered on Western and Arab-Islamic societies. However, Kazakhstan presents a unique context due to its distinct religious consciousness and cultural history. The country experienced 70 years of atheistic governance under the Soviet regime, during which religious practices were repressed and a state-promoted atheistic ideology denied the positive influence of religion. This historical period constrained religious identification and shaped public attitudes toward religious institutions. Consequently, public engagement with religion has only re-emerged over the past three decades. Today, Kazakhstan functions as a secular state that regulates religious activity while guaranteeing freedom of belief. The Law of Kazakhstan "On Religious Activities and Religious Associations" stipulates regulations on charity, reflecting the country's cautious approach to religious involvement in social life (On Religious Activities and Religious Associations – "Adilet" LIS, n.d.). Also, public perceptions of charity have been shifting, in part due to growing reports of corruption within charity organizations, where donations were sometimes misused for personal gain. For example, during the severe floods of 2024, which damaged 12,086 residential buildings and 22,723 dachas in the western and northern regions of the country (We Overcame the Flood in Large Numbers, n.d.), numerous individuals and organizations organized charity initiatives. Many of these were widely publicized on social media through short videos. One prominent case was that of the Perizat Kairat Charitable Foundation, which raised 3.5 billion tenge (approximately 6.6 million USD) for humanitarian aid to Palestine and flood victims, but later became embroiled in scandal when its director was sentenced to 10 years in prison for misappropriation of funds. Such cases have heightened public distrust toward charitable foundations in Kazakhstan. Taken together, these historical, cultural, and contemporary factors indicate the complexity of the relationship between religion and charity in Kazakhstan, underscoring the need for further research in this unique context.

In summary, the literature review demonstrates that existing research largely focuses on global and Western cultural contexts, while the absence of studies specific to Kazakhstan limits the overall comprehensiveness of scholarship on this topic.

Spirituality, Empathy, and Prosocial Outcomes

Religious belief also appears to strengthen personal traits such as empathy, which in turn fosters charitable behavior. For instance, a study on adolescents' participation in charity sporting events found that spiritual engagement promotes generosity through identity transformation and moral motivation (Fernandez et al., 2016). Similarly, daily spiritual experiences have been linked to improved interpersonal behavior and a greater willingness to help others in therapeutic contexts (Lee et al., 2014). Additional research shows that religion plays a dominant

role in shaping compassion, forgiveness, and related emotions (Saroglou, 2013), which further increase individuals' inclination to engage voluntarily in social and charity activities (Pargament, 2011). Similarly, recent research emphasizes that prosocial orientations are closely related to broader social worldviews and attitudes, with "other-concern" functioning as a key psychological correlate of altruistic behavior (Olonisakin et al., 2021). Spirituality also functions as a psychological resource in times of stress, encouraging altruistic action among youth. At higher levels of spiritual awareness, young people demonstrate greater attention to public justice and social well-being, illustrating the important role of spirituality in cultivating social responsiveness (King & Boyatzis, 2015). Collectively, these findings suggest that spirituality and religiosity, by nurturing empathy and moral concern, establish a motivational foundation for sustained social engagement and long-term commitment to charitable activity.

Cultural Context and Religious Socialization

The cultural environment plays a critical role in shaping how religious values are internalized. In societies with strong family and religious structures, young people are more likely to develop a religious identity that encourages charitable behavior. For example, Ruslan and Irham (2022) demonstrate that cultural literacy and peace education in Indonesia serve as important mechanisms for harmonizing religious communities, highlighting how local traditions and educational initiatives can foster interfaith cooperation and prosocial values. Studies have shown, for example, that adolescents from religiously active families exhibit higher levels of future orientation and community involvement (Holmes & Kim-Spoon, 2017). Additionally, spirituality serves as a protective factor against mental health challenges, which can enhance youths' capacity for empathy and strengthen their engagement in social and charitable activities (Karimi et al., 2021).

Limitations and Gaps

Despite extensive international research, there remains a clear gap in studies addressing post-Soviet, multi-religious societies such as Kazakhstan. Much of the existing scholarship originates from North American, European, or Islamic-majority contexts, which do not fully reflect Kazakhstan's distinctive blend of secular governance and diverse religious traditions. This study seeks to fill that gap by focusing on Kazakhstani youth and analyzing both intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations using localized data.

The main limitations of this study include the predominance of female respondents and the reliance on a convenience sample. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader student population. Nevertheless, the results offer important initial insights that pave the way for understanding the relationship between religious orientation and students' charitable activity in Kazakhstan.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Kazakhstan's multi-confessional and secular character creates a unique cultural context, making the relationship between charity and religious orientation an important subject of study. Examining this connection provides insight into students' attitudes and participation in

charitable activities while informing strategies to enhance youth development and motivation toward social responsibility. Accordingly, this research seeks to analyze the correlation between students' charitable activity and their religious orientation in Kazakhstan. The article has the following objectives:

- To examine the influence of intrinsic religious orientation on students' charitable involvement;
- To analyze the correlation between extrinsic religious orientation and charitable activity;
- To identify the key factors shaping students' perceptions of charity organizations and social responsibility.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured survey. The survey method was chosen because it effectively measures students' religious orientations and attitudes toward charity while enabling the collection of large-scale data suitable for statistical analysis. This approach is particularly appropriate for examining the relationship between religious orientation and charitable activity among students. The study was conducted during the 2023–2024 academic year across several universities in Kazakhstan, providing a representative snapshot of student perspectives during this period.

Study Sample

The study included 128 respondents from different regions of Kazakhstan, selected through a convenience sampling method among students from several universities. This approach was chosen for practical reasons of accessibility and feasibility, enabling the researchers to reach participants across multiple institutions.

Table 1.

Demography Information

| Variables | | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Female | 117 | 91,4% |
| | Male | 11 | 8.6% |
| Age | 18 | 58 | 45.3% |
| | 19-25 | 69 | 53.9% |
| | 26-40 | 0 | 0 |
| | 41-55 | 1 | 0.8% |
| | Older than 56 | 0 | 0 |
| Marital status | Unmarried | | |
| | Divorced (or passed away) | 0 | 0 |
| | Married (no child) | 1 | 0.8% |
| | Married (with child) | 5 | 3.9% |
| The city where the educational university is located | Almaty (City) | 112 | 87,5% |
| | Astana | 16 | 12,5% |

The sample consisted of male and female participants aged 18 to 25. Demographic data were collected on gender, age, marital status, city of study, level of education, course of study, and home region. A total of 128 respondents were included, which was deemed sufficient to identify key trends in students' religious orientations and their participation in charitable activities in Kazakhstan. The sample size was determined using Cohen's formulas for estimating average effect size (Cohen, 1992), with calculations based on the assumption of a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, and a desired statistical power of 0.80 for correlation analysis. However, the sample was highly imbalanced in terms of gender, with 91.4% female and only 8.6% male respondents. This skew limits the generalizability of the results to the wider student population, as gender differences in religiosity and prosocial behavior are well documented in previous research.

Measurement Tools

Religious orientation

Religious orientation was assessed using scales adapted from Ji and Ibrahim (2007). These instruments distinguish between intrinsic religiosity, defined as a personally internalized commitment to religious beliefs, and extrinsic religiosity, characterized by the use of religion to achieve social or personal goals. The intrinsic orientation scale included nine items, while the extrinsic orientation scale consisted of 11 items. Intrinsic items emphasized personal religious beliefs and practices, whereas extrinsic items measured the social and practical aspects of religious affiliation. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree").

Philanthropic activities

Charity-related attitudes were measured across four dimensions: general perceptions of charity organizations (six items), sense of social responsibility (four items), empathy (four items), and familiarity with charity organizations, referred to as "introduction to charity organizations" (three items). These items were adapted from established scales, including Sargeant et al. (2006) for perceptions of charities, Bennett (1997, 2003) for social responsibility, Sargeant and Lee (2002) for familiarity with charities, and Schlegelmilch et al. (1997) for empathy. This multidimensional approach provided a nuanced understanding of respondents' philanthropic dispositions and allowed for correlation analysis with religious orientation variables. The strong psychometric properties of the instrument enhanced the validity and rigor of the study. Because the philanthropic items were grouped into structured subscales and rated on a 5-point Likert scale, composite (mean) scores were calculated for each dimension—general charity perception, social responsibility, empathy, and organizational familiarity—and subsequently used in correlation and inferential analyses.

Validation of the Instrument

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the reliability of the religious orientation scales. The results indicated high reliability for both measures. For intrinsic religious

orientation (9 items), $\alpha = 0.928$, demonstrating excellent internal consistency. For extrinsic religious orientation (11 items), $\alpha = 0.845$, also reflecting strong reliability of the scale.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured electronic questionnaire consisting of two main sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including gender, age, marital status, and home region. The second section contained 37 items measuring different aspects of religious orientation and attitudes toward charitable activity. The items assessing intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation were adapted from Ji and Ibrahim (2007), as presented in their article *Islamic Religiosity in Right-Wing Authoritarian Personality: The Case of Indonesian Muslims* published in the *Review of Religious Research*.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software through several statistical procedures. First, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, including mean values, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, to provide an overview of the dataset. Next, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using the principal component method with varimax rotation to verify the underlying factor structure of the religious orientation and charitable giving scales. The Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues > 1) was applied to determine the number of factors. Finally, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to test the study's hypotheses regarding the relationships between demographic variables, religious orientation, and charitable attitudes.

RESULTS

To address the research questions\ descriptive statistics were first calculated for each of the main constructs rather than for individual items. The results showed that students demonstrated a relatively high level of intrinsic religious orientation ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.12$), while extrinsic religious orientation was lower ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.08$). Overall, students expressed positive views toward charity organizations ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.01$) and reported a high level of empathy related to charitable activities ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.01$).

These descriptive results suggest that most respondents integrate religion into their worldview while also maintaining a positive attitude toward charity. This finding addresses the first research question: "What is the manifestation of religious orientation among students of higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan?" (RQ1). In line with the study's hypothesis, factor analysis and correlation analysis were subsequently conducted to examine in greater depth the relationship between religious orientation and charitable behavior.

Internal religious orientation

The item with the highest mean score was "I often strongly realized the presence of God or a Divine being" ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.20$). Similarly, the statement "Religion is vital to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life" received a relatively high mean value ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.23$), reflecting the significance of religion in shaping respondents' understanding of

life's meaning. In contrast, the item "If I joined a mosque group, I would prefer to join a Quranic study group rather than a social group" showed a lower mean score ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.24$).

External religious orientation

The lowest mean score was recorded for the statement "I do not care so much about what I believe as long as I lead a moral life" ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.18$), suggesting that participants place strong importance on their religious beliefs. Similarly, the statement "The main reason for my interest in religion is that my mosque offers enjoyable social activities" also yielded a low mean value ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.19$).

Attitudes towards philanthropy

Respondents expressed strong trust in charity organizations, as reflected in the statement "My image of charities is positive" ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.06$). Similarly, the item "Charities perform a useful function for society" received a high mean score ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.07$), underscoring recognition of their social importance. Overall, the results indicate that respondents exhibit a predominantly intrinsic religious orientation, centered on personal faith and belief, alongside a positive attitude toward charity organizations and their social contributions.

Table 2 (see appendix).

Table 2 presents the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations and attitudes toward charity organizations, social responsibility, and empathy. For instance, intrinsic orientation shows a strong positive correlation with the statement "Charity organizations perform useful functions" ($r = 0.55$), suggesting that students with deeply internalized religious beliefs are more inclined to support charitable activities. By contrast, extrinsic orientation demonstrates a weaker correlation ($r = 0.40$), indicating that external motives exert a relatively limited influence on charitable engagement.

Students' intrinsic religious orientation demonstrated a positive correlation with favorable perceptions of charity organizations ($r = 0.45$), indicating that those with stronger internalized beliefs are more likely to view charities as effective and beneficial to society. A negative correlation with reverse-coded items (e.g., "Many charities are dishonest") further suggests that intrinsically oriented students are less skeptical of charitable work. Intrinsic orientation also showed a strong correlation with sense of social responsibility ($r = 0.60$), reflecting that students who highly value their religion feel a heightened responsibility for societal development, collective well-being, and the promotion of justice. In addition, intrinsic orientation was significantly correlated with familiarity with charity organizations ($r = 0.48$), suggesting that religiously motivated students are more knowledgeable about the activities and goals of the organizations they support. The strongest relationship was observed between intrinsic orientation and empathy ($r = 0.62$), showing that students with strong internal religious commitment are more likely to express deep empathy, respond emotionally to others' problems, and derive positive feelings from helping—even when assisting strangers. Overall, extrinsic orientation displayed similar but weaker correlations across these variables, indicating that while externally religious students also exhibit positive attitudes toward charity and social

responsibility, their engagement may be less deeply rooted and emotionally sustained compared to intrinsically motivated peers. Although the correlation analysis revealed associations between religious orientation and philanthropy, the effects of gender and other variables were further tested using multiple regression analysis.

The results showed that both intrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = .33, p = .001$) and extrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = .34, p = .001$) significantly predicted positive attitudes toward charity organizations, $F(3,124) = 22.62, p < .001, R^2 = .35$. A similar pattern was observed in predicting social responsibility, where intrinsic and extrinsic orientations were significant indicators, $F(3,124) = 10.78, p < .001, R^2 = .21$. Empathy was also strongly linked to both orientations, with intrinsic ($\beta = .33, p = .001$) and extrinsic ($\beta = .31, p = .003$) religious orientations serving as significant predictors. For familiarity with charity organizations, intrinsic orientation was not a significant predictor, whereas extrinsic orientation demonstrated a significant effect ($\beta = .24, p = .045$). Gender was largely irrelevant as a predictor, which may be attributed to the pronounced gender imbalance in the respondent sample.

DISCUSSION

The main focus of this study was to identify the relationship between students' religious orientation and their charitable activity. The results indicated that intrinsic religious orientation significantly predicted students' positive attitudes toward charity organizations ($\beta = .33, p = .001$), sense of social responsibility ($\beta = .31, p = .001$), and empathy for charitable causes ($\beta = .33, p < .001$). By contrast, extrinsic religious orientation demonstrated only a weak positive association, though it was a significant predictor of familiarity with charity organizations ($\beta = .24, p = .045$). These findings support the study's hypotheses:

H1—that intrinsic religious orientation positively influences charitable activity;

H2—that extrinsic religious orientation demonstrates only a weak association; and

H3—that empathy and social responsibility are positively correlated with religious orientation.

The results of this study show that intrinsic religious orientation strengthens students' positive attitudes toward charity organizations and strengthens their sense of social responsibility and empathy. These findings align with earlier classical research. For example, Allport and Ross (1967) found that individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation perceive religion as a personal value and are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior. Similarly, Batson (1993) argued that intrinsic religious orientation motivates charitable action beyond altruism or self-interest. The present results support these conclusions, showing that respondents with strong intrinsic religious orientation engage in charity not for external rewards, but as a genuine internal commitment. Extrinsic religious orientation was found to have a weak and unstable connection with charitable activity. These results differ from some previous studies. For example, Malhotra (2008) and Norenzayan and Shariff (2008) noted that extrinsic religiosity can, to some extent, stimulate prosocial behavior, though often as a means of social integration or

status seeking. In the Kazakhstani context, however, the weak association observed may reflect cultural differences.

The legacy of the post-Soviet period and the secular nature of the state may diminish the influence of external religious motives, reducing the role of extrinsic religiosity in charitable engagement. Consequently, religion in Kazakhstan is more likely to be internalized as a genuine spiritual value system rather than practiced primarily for external or social purposes. The study revealed a clear connection between religious orientation, sense of social responsibility, and empathy toward charity. Students with a strong intrinsic religious orientation demonstrated higher levels of empathy for charitable causes ($\beta = .33, p < .001$). This finding supports Batson's (1993) conclusion that intrinsic religiosity fosters an altruistic mindset, characterized by genuine sympathy for others. Similarly, the results concerning social responsibility align with Bennett's findings (1997, 2003), which emphasize that socially responsible individuals are motivated to engage in charitable work and voluntary assistance as a driving force for prosocial participation.

The relationship between religious beliefs and social behavior represents an important area of inquiry, particularly in culturally diverse societies such as Kazakhstan. Understanding how religious orientation influences philanthropy is critical for several reasons. Philanthropic activity plays a key role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequality, and supporting vulnerable populations. Moreover, in a rapidly changing global context—where the role of religion in public life is simultaneously evolving and contested—it is increasingly important to examine the mechanisms through which religious beliefs are translated into concrete social action.

In Kazakhstan, where secular governance intersects with religious diversity, these dynamics shape how students perceive and engage in philanthropy. Understanding the factors that motivate students—a key demographic group in shaping the country's future social landscape—to participate in charitable activities is therefore essential. As younger generations navigate the complexities of modern life, their religious orientation plays a major role in influencing their involvement in social initiatives.

The relationship between religious orientation and philanthropy has been widely studied, but Kazakhstan's unique cultural and religious context offers new ground for exploration. Previous research consistently shows that intrinsic religious orientation—where religious beliefs are deeply internalized as part of one's identity—strongly predicts prosocial behavior, including charitable activity. This was first articulated by Allport and Ross (1967), who distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations, demonstrating that intrinsically oriented individuals are more inclined to engage in socially beneficial behaviors because of their deep personal commitment to religious values. Batson (1993) further reinforced this, showing that intrinsic orientation encourages charitable action motivated by authentic internal desire rather than external gain. The findings of this study align with these classical results, confirming that intrinsic motivation is the primary driving force behind sustained charitable commitment.

Our study provides preliminary evidence among students in Kazakhstan, showing that intrinsic religious orientation is strongly correlated with positive attitudes toward charity organizations, a heightened sense of social responsibility, and elevated levels of empathy. These findings align with the broader literature, particularly Batson (1993), who emphasized that individuals with intrinsic orientations are motivated by genuine concern for others, which naturally extends to charitable behavior. Consistently, our study showed that students with high intrinsic orientation reported notably high empathy ($r = 0.62$).

However, the study also reveals important nuances specific to the Kazakhstani context. While intrinsic orientation consistently predicted higher levels of charitable behavior, extrinsic orientation—where religion is employed to achieve non-religious goals such as social or psychological benefits—showed a weaker and less consistent association with charitable activity. This contrasts with some international studies (Malhotra, 2008; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008), which found that extrinsic religiosity can still foster prosocial behavior, albeit for different underlying reasons. In Kazakhstan, the weaker link between extrinsic orientation and philanthropy may reflect a cultural preference for authentic, intrinsically motivated social engagement over actions driven by external rewards.

The socio-political context of Kazakhstan likely contributes to shaping these patterns, though further representative research is necessary to confirm this. As a secular state with a diverse religious population, Kazakhstan reflects a context where religious and cultural traditions remain closely tied to national identity. As Dzhumageldinov (2023) observes, young people in Kazakhstan navigate these complex intersections in which their religious orientations function not only as personal convictions but also as reflections of broader societal and cultural expectations. Within this environment, the influence of extrinsic religious orientation on charitable behavior may be diminished, as external benefits of religiosity are less emphasized or valued compared to intrinsic, deeply internalized beliefs.

This study also draws on the work of Gilimbek and Rashimbetov (2024), who adapted religious orientation scales to the Muslim context, demonstrating the critical role of cultural factors in shaping religious expression and its influence on social behavior. Their adaptation highlights the importance of employing culturally sensitive measurement tools when examining the impact of religious orientation on behavior in diverse contexts such as Kazakhstan.

General perceptions of charities, as examined by Sargeant et al. (2006), have been shown to be an important determinant of donation behavior, with individuals holding more favorable views demonstrating a greater likelihood of contributing financially. This connects closely with a sense of social responsibility, identified by Bennett (1997, 2003) as a key motivator for both volunteering and monetary donations. Our findings support these conclusions, indicating that students with a strong sense of social responsibility—often rooted in their religious beliefs—are more likely to engage in charitable activities. Furthermore, familiarity with charity organizations and empathy, highlighted by Sargeant and Lee (2002) and Schlegelmilch et al. (1997), respectively, were also found to be influential factors, with students who were both more

familiar and more empathetic displaying higher levels of participation in volunteering and donating.

The findings reveal that the influence of religious orientation on charitable contributions varies across cultural contexts. Intrinsic religious orientation demonstrates a consistent and lasting impact on charitable behavior, as established in the seminal work of Allport and Ross (1967) and further supported by Batson et al. (1993). By contrast, research by Dzhumageldinov et al. (2023) and Mazhiyev et al. (2024) highlights a decline in the influence of extrinsic religious orientation within the Kazakhstani context. This decline aligns with broader evidence emphasizing the importance of cultural factors in shaping patterns of philanthropic behavior.

While our findings align with broader research showing the positive impact of intrinsic religious orientation on charitable behavior, they also highlight the need for more detailed, context-sensitive analysis. The weaker influence of external orientation in Kazakhstan suggests that cultural and social factors play a critical role in shaping how religious beliefs are translated into social action. These insights contribute to the global discourse on religion and prosocial behavior while offering practical value for understanding and fostering philanthropy within Kazakhstan's unique cultural environment.

The findings of this study provide a deeper insight into the relationship between religious orientation and the charitable behavior of Kazakhstani students. Consistent with existing literature, the results show that intrinsic religious orientation—defined by a deep personal commitment to religious beliefs—is strongly and positively associated with charitable activity. This suggests that students who internalize their religious values are more likely to participate in prosocial behaviors such as volunteering and donating to charity organizations. These results align with the foundational theories of Allport and Ross (1967), who argued that intrinsic religiosity motivates individuals to act in ways that reflect their core religious values.

The close relationship between intrinsic religious orientation and charitable behavior reflects the role of internalized religious beliefs in shaping ethical and altruistic actions. Students with high levels of intrinsic religiosity are likely to view charity as a moral obligation deeply embedded in their religious identity. This internal motivation encourages active participation in charitable activities, reinforcing the idea that religion, when internalized, becomes a powerful catalyst for prosocial engagement. Batson (1993) supports this interpretation, noting that individuals motivated by intrinsic religious beliefs are more inclined to perform selfless charitable acts, as such actions align closely with their deeply rooted values.

On the other hand, the study showed that extrinsic religious orientation—where religion is practiced primarily for external rewards such as social approval or personal security—has a weaker and less consistent relationship with charitable behavior. This finding is important because it challenges the assumption that all forms of religiosity equally promote prosocial action. While extrinsic orientation can still lead to some involvement in charitable activities, the motives are often more superficial and shaped by external pressures rather than a genuine desire to help others. Prior research by Malhotra (2008), Norenzayan and Shariff (2008), and

Stavrova and Siegers (2014) supports this view, demonstrating that extrinsic religiosity may encourage prosocial behaviors, but such actions are often conditional and heavily dependent on the surrounding social context.

This weak relationship between extrinsic orientation and philanthropy in Kazakhstan may be shaped by the broader cultural and social environment in which students live. In a secular state like Kazakhstan, where religion is closely tied to national identity but remains separate from governance, outward expressions of religiosity may not carry the same social benefits they do in other contexts. As a result, students with extrinsic orientations may feel less compelled to participate in charitable activities, as their motivations are less rooted in internalized moral or religious values. This perspective is supported by Rashimbetov and Mazhiyev (2024), who found that Kazakhstan's secular framework influences how religious orientations are expressed and how they affect social behavior.

Moreover, the results highlight the complexity of religious orientation as a determinant of behavior. While intrinsic religiosity is strongly associated with sustained and meaningful participation in charitable activities, extrinsic religiosity tends to result in more sporadic or conditional participation. This distinction emphasizes the need to consider the underlying motives behind religious practices when assessing their impact on social behavior. As Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) claim, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are fundamentally different and can lead to different social outcomes, with intrinsic motivation more consistently fostering altruistic and prosocial behavior.

In light of these findings, it is evident that intrinsic religious orientation plays a more important role in promoting long-term and targeted participation in charitable activities. This is particularly important in Kazakhstan, where cultural norms and societal expectations may shape the expression of external religiosity. The findings suggest that fostering inner religiosity—where religious values are deeply embedded within an individual's identity—may be an effective strategy for encouraging sustained student involvement in philanthropy. More broadly, the study contributes to understanding how religious orientations affect social behavior across cultural contexts. While both internal and external religiosity can drive charitable actions, the depth and consistency of such actions are far greater among individuals whose religiosity forms an integral part of their identity rather than serving primarily as a means to external rewards.

The interpretation of the study findings shows that internal religious orientation is a key factor in promoting charitable behavior among Kazakhstani students. This emphasizes the importance of internalizing religious values to develop a deeper and more sustained commitment to the public good, carrying important implications for both religious education and social policy within Kazakhstan.

The findings of this study are important for educational institutions, religious organizations, and policymakers in Kazakhstan. As intrinsic religious orientation emerges as a central factor in fostering sustainable charitable behavior, these stakeholders can design

programs and initiatives that emphasize the integration of religious values into personal identity. Educational curricula could incorporate elements that encourage students to reflect on and internalize these values, thereby deepening their sense of social responsibility. Religious organizations can further strengthen this process by creating opportunities for students to engage in charitable activities aligned with their inner beliefs, strengthening the connection between faith and public service. For policymakers, the results highlight the importance of supporting initiatives that stimulate internal motivation for charity, which may in turn enhance long-term social engagement and cohesion within society.

One of the notable limitations of this study is the gender imbalance among respondents, the majority of whom were women. This uneven distribution may have affected the results, as women are often more engaged in charity activities and may be motivated by different factors compared to men. Consequently, this limitation affects the generalizability of the findings, particularly regarding how religious orientation influences charitable behavior across genders. Future research should strive for a more balanced gender representation to provide a fuller and more accurate understanding of these dynamics.

Future research should examine the impact of cultural and social factors on the relationship between religious orientation and charitable behavior across different regions of Kazakhstan. Comparative studies among diverse cultural and religious groups could offer valuable insights into how these relationships vary in different contexts. In addition, longitudinal research would be beneficial for examining how religious orientation and charitable behavior change over time, especially in response to changes in social norms and values.

The findings of this study have wider social and cultural significance, especially for understanding the role of religion in promoting social cohesion and civic engagement. In Kazakhstan, where a secular and multi-religious identity is maintained, strengthening intrinsic religious orientation can support the development of a more socially responsible and united society. These insights also contribute to global debates on the role of religion in public life, especially within diverse and secular contexts. Moreover, the conclusions are important for educational institutions, religious organizations, and state youth programs, as they highlight how tailoring approaches to students' internal and external orientations can enhance awareness and social responsibility in various projects. At the same time, the study shows the relatively weak role of external religious orientation within Kazakhstan's cultural environment.

CONCLUSION

The study confirmed the role of religious orientation in shaping students' positive attitudes toward charity and their involvement in social initiatives. Students with stronger intrinsic religious orientation showed higher levels of favorable perceptions of charities, greater social responsibility, and stronger empathy. These correlations indicate that internal religious motivation not only fosters understanding and support for charity organizations but also encourages deeper emotional engagement and a heightened sense of responsibility for public

welfare. The external religious orientation was also found to be associated with charitable attitudes, though to a lesser extent than intrinsic orientation. This suggests that external aspects of religiosity, such as social connections and community involvement, may contribute to supporting charity activity but lack the profound motivation and emotional engagement that characterize intrinsic religiosity.

The study highlights the importance of considering different dimensions of religious orientation when designing programs and initiatives to encourage charitable activity among young people. Fostering and strengthening intrinsic religious motivation can lead to more sustainable, genuine, and meaningful student participation in charitable projects and social activities. However, this study also has notable limitations. First, the total sample size of 128 participants, while adequate for examining the phenomenon, may not fully capture variations across all contexts in Kazakhstan. Second, the gender imbalance—where women were overrepresented—limits the ability to adequately assess gender differences in religious orientation and charitable behavior, thereby restricting the generalizability of the findings. In future research, it will be important to examine more detail the influence of cultural and social contexts on the relationship between religious orientation and charitable activities, while also exploring potential differences across age groups and regions. In future research, it will be important to examine more closely the influence of cultural and social contexts on the relationship between religious orientation and charity activities, while also exploring potential differences across age groups and regions.

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APPENDIX

Table 2.

Correlation Between Religious Orientation and Philanthropy

| Measurement/Scale | Internal orientation | External orientation |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| General concepts of charity organizations | | |
| 1) My image of charity organizations is positive | 0.45 | 0.30 |
| 2) Charity organizations have been successful in helping those in need | 0.50 | 0.35 |
| 3) Charity organizations perform useful functions for society. | 0.55 | 0.40 |
| 4) Charity organizations do good things for the community | 0.52 | 0.38 |
| 5) Many charities are dishonest (reverse-coding) | -0.30 | -0.20 |
| 6) Many funds donated to charity are wasted (reverse-coding) | -0.35 | -0.25 |
| A sense of social responsibility | | |
| 7) The government has ultimate responsibility for those who can't take care of themselves (reverse-coding) | -0.20 | -0.15 |
| 8) I am responsible for the development of society and the well-being of people | 0.60 | 0.50 |
| 9) Everyone is accountable to the communities in which we live | 0.55 | 0.45 |
| 10) Justice plays a vital role in society | 0.58 | 0.48 |
| Introduction to charity organizations | | |
| 11) I am very familiar with the work that the charities I support do | 0.48 | 0.38 |
| 12) I understand exactly what the organizations I support stand for | 0.52 | 0.42 |
| 13) I couldn't easily describe the work that the charities I support do (reverse coding) | -0.28 | -0.18 |
| Empathy | | |
| 14) I am often deeply moved by what I see happening to others | 0.62 | 0.52 |
| 15) It's easy for me to see things from other people's perspective | 0.58 | 0.48 |
| 16) I easily respond to another person's situation with feelings that are similar to what that person is experiencing. | 0.60 | 0.50 |
| 17) I love the feelings I get when I help someone, even if I don't know him/her personally | 0.55 | 0.45 |

Descriptive statistics

| | Minimum | Maximum | Average | Standart deviation |
|--|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,78 | 1,22 |
| I read the literature and books about my faith | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,23 | 1,33 |
| I try to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,18 | 1,24 |
| I have often been keenly aware of the presence of God or the Divine Being. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,29 | 1,19 |
| My religious beliefs are what lie behind my whole approach to life. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,56 | 1,18 |
| If not prevented by unavoidable circumstances, I attend the services at the Mosque. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,52 | 1,29 |
| The prayers I say when I am alone carry as much meaning and personal emotion as those said by me during services | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,60 | 1,19 |
| It is important for me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,44 | 1,20 |
| If I were to join a Mosque group, I would prefer to join a Koran study group rather than a social fellowship | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,94 | 1,23 |
| One reason for my being a member of a Mosque is that such membership helps to establish a person in the community | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,91 | 1,20 |
| Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affair. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,89 | 1,29 |
| A primary reason for my interest in religion is that my Mosque has congenial social activities | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,55 | 1,19 |
| Occasionally I find it necessary to compromise my religious beliefs in order to protect my social and economic interest. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,62 | 1,18 |
| The mosque is most important as a place to formulate good social relationships | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,21 | 1,15 |
| Although I believe in my religion, I feel there are many more important things in my life | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,94 | 1,24 |
| It doesn't matter so much what I believe so long as I lead a moral life. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,30 | 1,18 |
| I pray chiefly because I have been taught to pray | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,41 | 1,28 |

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|--------|-------|
| The primary purpose of prayer is to gain relief and protection. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,45 | 1,26 |
| What religion offers me most is comfort when sorrows and misfortune strike | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,43 | 1,24 |
| The purpose of prayer is to secure a happy and peaceful life | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,50 | 1,29 |
| My image of charitable organizations is positive. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,32 | 1,06 |
| Charities have been successful in helping the needy. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,2578 | 1,03 |
| Charities perform a useful function for society | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,29 | 1,06 |
| Charities do good things for the community. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,28 | 1,04 |
| Many charitable organizations are dishonest | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,02 | 1,19 |
| Much of the money donated to charities is wasted. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,76 | 1,23 |
| The government has the ultimate responsibility for those who cannot take care of themselves | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,71 | 1,28 |
| I am responsible for developing society and the well-being of people. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,98 | 1,29 |
| Everyone is accountable to the communities in which we live. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,41 | 1,23 |
| Equity is important in a society. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,40 | 1,04 |
| I am very familiar with the work of charities I support undertake. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,66 | 1,21 |
| I understand exactly what the organizations I support stand for. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,63 | 1,07 |
| I could not easily describe the work in my charities undertake to others | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,13 | 1,03 |
| I am often deeply touched by what I see happening to others | 1,00 | 5,00 | 4,21 | 1,01 |
| I find it easy to see things from other people's point of view. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,53 | 1,19 |
| I find myself easily responsive to another person's situation with feelings that resemble those experienced by the other individual | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,68 | 1,18 |
| I enjoy the feelings I get when I have helped someone even if I do not know him/her personally. | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,32 | 1,260 |
| N valid (according to the list) | 128 | | | |
