

An Association between Religiosity Level and Condom Use Behavior

Abdul Rehman Madni, Dr. Norsiah Abdul Hamid, Dr. Sabrina Mohd Rashid*

Abstract

Condom has become inevitable need of all those who are involved in sexual relations. It is one of the best ways to protect from unintended or unwanted pregnancies, but in Muslims societies common people have a shock when they listen that condom use is prohibited in Islam or un-Islamic. Several Muslims express a desire to avoid pregnancy but do not use contraception because of religious concerns. Religious followers with high religiosity level strongly and strictly accept the religious doctrine and strictly follow all the principles, rules, code and ethics of their religion. Studies suggest investigating the association between religious factors and consumer behavior with religiosity by using more reliable and definitive measures and religiosity should be tested in a religious context, particularly if there are strictures against an object in one denomination and the inclusion of object for other denominations.

Keywords: Religion, Religiosity, Condom Use

Introduction

Condom use is the crucial behavior for the prevention of unintended and unwanted pregnancies (Jellema, Abraham, Schaalma, Gebhardt & Van Empelen, 2012). A Condom is the only option of contraceptive for males, which is known as reversible. Condoms are considered as one of the cheapest contraceptive methods which are available everywhere and available without a prescription. Condoms do not involve any side effect (Chidimma, Nirmala, Xin, & Sekesai, 2014). In the current age, condoms have become inevitable need of all those who are involved in sexual relations. Globally, it is estimated that over 100 million acts of sexual intercourse take place daily, resulting estimated one million conceptions of which about 50% are unplanned and 25% definitely unwanted (Geda & Lako, 2012). Globally, around 80 million pregnancies each year are unintended (Bugssa, Kahsay, Asres, Dimtsu, & Tsige, 2014). Condom use is very vital and serious issue among religious people especially among Muslims because condom use is a controversial issue and religious leaders are divided regarding the use of condom for avoiding unintended and unwanted pregnancies. It is also evident that religion has potential to affect the purchasing and consumption behavior of Muslims.

Religion is conceptualized as a consumer subculture (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Essoo and Dibb (2010) mentioned that literature suggests that religion is an important component of culture which has the potential to influence both behavior and purchasing decisions. Al-Hyari, Alnsour, Al-Weshah, & Haffar (2012) stated that religion and religious beliefs found as a strong factor which has the capacity to influence consumer behavior at the macro level (Khraim, 2010). According to Fam, Waller and Erdogan (2004) religion is not a novelty that may change due to changes made by marketers trend, but tend to be in the long term, so that religion can be seen as a valuable variable in understanding customer behavior (Yanu, Fianto, Hadiwidjojo, & Aisjah, 2014).

In the current age, condoms have become inevitable need of all those who are involved in sexual relations (Geda & Lako, 2012). No doubt condom use is one of the best ways to protect from unintended or unwanted pregnancies, but in Muslims societies common people have a shock when they listen that condom use is prohibited in Islam or un-Islamic. Clerics in religiously conservative societies tell the Muslim majority that the Quran instructs women to keep bearing as many babies as possible and contraception is 'haram', or a sin (McCarthy, 2011). Religion has consistently been found significant in shaping condom use and conservative religious beliefs of Muslims substantially impact the fertility behavior (Uddin, 2014).

In such situation, there is a notable point that in Muslim markets religiosity plays an important role in influencing consumer behavior and lifestyles as well, but religiosity levels vary within a country and it influences the consumer behavior according to the context (e.g., Essoo & Dibb, 2010; Safiek Mokhlis, 2010). Previous studies show that religiosity has a discernible effect on attitudes that leads to behavior (Shin, J., Park, M., Moon, M., & Kim, 2010) of Muslim consumers (Ansari, 2014). It is also evident that Muslims who have high levels of religiosity follow the rules of religious obligation more rigorously than Muslims with a lower level of religiosity (Taks & Shreim, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to determine the association between religiosity level and condom use.

Problem Statement

Because of the absence of a central authority in Islam (Stephenson, R., & Hennink, 2004), condom use is still controversy among Islamic jurists (Raees, 2013). Muslim society and its people are bound in some sort of religious boundaries. Several Muslims express a desire to avoid pregnancy but do not use contraception because

of religious concerns (Patterson, 2013). Previous studies show that religious beliefs and religiosity have a discernible effect on behavior (Bashir, A., & Malik, 2010; Shin, J., Park, M., Moon, M., & Kim, 2010) of Muslim consumers toward adoption (Ansari, 2014). The focus of research studies on the subject of religion and religiosity is limited (Munawar, R., Ghaffar, F., Haq, I., & Usman, 2008). The impact of religion on the behavior of people about contraception has recently aroused new attention by scholars and need further debate (Mansori, 2012; Praz, 2009). Essoo and Dibb (2010) and Culey (2014) suggest further study to investigate the association between religious factors and consumer behavior with religiosity by using more reliable and definitive measures (Baig & Baig, 2013; Nooh, Shukor, Aziz, Khairi, & Abdullah, 2014) and religiosity should be tested in a religion (e.g., Islam) context, particularly if there are strictures against object in one denomination and inclusion of object for other denominations (Hopkins, Shanahan, & Raymond, 2014) like Shiite Muslims or Sunni Muslims (Al-Hyari et al., 2012). Allam (2013) also stated that future studies should be conducted to explore the relationship between religiosity, controversial products and consumer behavior of Pakistani viewers.

Research Objective

To determine the association between religiosity and condom use behavior.

Literature Review

Religion

Mokhlis (2010) mentioned that religion is a combination of beliefs and values that lead values and their structure of any society. It is difficult to find such definition of religion that can be generalized and accepted by all. Patel (2012) stated that different scholars worked on religion and tried to define religion. They became successful in identifying at least three historical designations to religion, i.e., (i) “a supernatural power to which individuals must respond”; (ii) “a feeling present in the individual who conceives such a power”; and (iii) “the ritual acts carried out in respect of that power”. Religion has an influence on every segment of society and it defines life in its ideal shape, defines and shapes moral and social ethical structure, support power structures, assigns and justifies social roles and social institutions. It also tells the individuals about their role, duties, responsibilities, and rights and it also gives the purpose of life to individuals (Mokhlis, 2010).

Religion and Consumer Behavior

Mokhlis (2006) mentioned that Lovelock & Weinberg (1978) found only two academic articles which explored the relationship between marketing and religion. Cutler (1991) also worked to find out work on the market and religion from the literature of 1956-1989 and he found 35 marketing academic articles on religion and he also found an interesting fact that 80% of them were published in the 1980s. Cutler and Winans (1999) also conducted a similar analysis and they reviewed marketing articles of twenty years between 1976 and 1995. In their findings, they found seventeen marketing articles on religion. Different studies (e.g., Engel, 1976; Hirschman, 1983; Wilkes, Burnett, & Howell, 1986; LaBarbera, 1987; Delener, & Schiffman, 1988) of consumer behavior also found in the context of religion.

Religion is found to be a very important element of culture and it plays an important role by influencing consumers' attitude and behavior to purchase or consume products or brands. As Haque, Rahman and Haque (2011) said that the influence of religion on behavior found in different areas such as obedience to parents, the style of clothing, eating and drinking, the use of cosmetics, views on social issues and politics, and the control of sexual behavior. Religion works as a cultural lens through which consumers decode the information about products or services which lead to their behavior. Therefore, it is very important to have a better understanding of the religious beliefs of consumers where marketers are going to advertise (Run, Butt, Fam, & Jong, 2010). In general, the dominant religion of any society influences the material life and it also influences the people choices about the purchase and consume. There are many things which are prohibited by religions, for example, in Islam drinking liquor and eating pork is prohibited and being Muslims their religion influences their purchasing and consumption about liquor and pork. Religion also influences different acts of people, for example, prohibiting the use of contraceptives. In this context, religion formulates and shapes attitudes of followers, which affect the consumption choices and behavior (Mokhlis, 2010). Use of a condom is still a controversial issue among Muslims, it is not clear either condom use is lawful (Halal) or unlawful (Haram) because of the two different contradictory views presented by the Islamic scholars (Raees, 2013).

Religiosity

Cleveland, Laroche, and Hallab (2013) stated that religion has got the attention of scholars and marketers and it is an under-researched topic in marketing. Religiosity is a different thing from religion. Religion refers to specific faith or belief like Islam, which is a faith or belief of Muslims and in Islam, there is also sub-divisions Sunni faith and Shia faith. But, religiosity is defined as “the degree to which beliefs in specific religious values and ideals are held and practiced by an individual” (Safiek Mokhlis, 2008). Mokhlis (2009) stated that religion is

considered as a demographic variable like gender or age. He further said that there is a difference between religious affiliation and religiosity.

Religious affiliation is usually known as religious identification of individuals or denominational membership of individuals with any particular sect, whereas religiosity or religious commitment is different from religious affiliation and it can be determined at both cognitive and behavior levels. Cognitive level refers to the degree to which an individual holds religious beliefs and behavioral level refers to the frequency of attendance at church or mosque (S Mokhlis, 2009).

Religiosity can be defined as “the degree of being religious”. However, it is a multidimensional concept which includes different aspects for example beliefs, experiences and practices that create effects on the whole life of any individual (Run et al., 2010). Johnson et al. (2001) mentioned that religiosity is defined as “religiosity or religious commitment is the extent to which an individual’s committed to the religion he or she professes and its teachings, such as the individual attitudes and behaviors reflect this commitment”. Religious commitment, often termed as religiosity, is defined by Worthington et al. (2003) as: “the degree to which a person uses adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs and practices and uses them in daily living. The supposition is that a highly religious person will evaluate the world through religious schemas and thus will integrate his or her religion into much of his or her life.”

Past literature on religion and consumer behavior indicates that there are two perspectives of religion in influencing consumer behavior. First, religion works at the macro level and encourages its followers to adopt particular values. These values recognized as social values at the societal level and because of the social concern parents guide and push children to adopt those certain values so they can adjust in society. Second, within a particular religion, religious commitment and religiosity influence the consumers’ attitudes and behaviors, according to the values and laws of a particular religion (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004; Schiffman, L.G., and Kanuk, 2010).

According to Patel (2012), religiosity is very important cultural and religious force and it has the potential to influence the consumer behavior because it is noticed that consumer behavior also categorized according to the faith of the target audience. Degree and level of influence of religion on consumer behavior depend on their religiosity level. According to Mokhlis (2010), religiosity influence consumer behavior by affecting the personality structure of an individual which includes his/her beliefs, values, and tendencies.

Religious followers with high religiosity level strongly and strictly accept the religious doctrine and strictly follow all the principles, rules, code and ethics of their religion. For instance, they worship regularly, give alms and charities and participate in religious gatherings regularly. But, on the other side followers with a low level of religiosity are seen flexible and liberal who feel free to perform religious obligations strictly. Hence, the religiosity level of the individual should be considered in understanding the nature of consumer behavior, especially in religious societies (Safiek Mokhlis, 2010).

There is a notable point that in Muslim markets religiosity plays an important role in influencing consumer behavior and lifestyles as well, but religiosity levels vary within a country and across the country, so religiosity influences the consumer behavior according to the context (e.g., Essoo & Dibb, 2010; Safiek Mokhlis, 2010). It is also evident that Muslims who have high levels of religiosity follow the rules of religious obligation more rigorously than Muslims with a lower level of religiosity (Taks & Shreim, 2009).

According to Run et al. (2010), review of the literature indicated that degree of religious commitment found as an important element in the context of gender/sex related products. They mentioned that people with high religious commitment, consider gender/sex related products more controversial than people who have a low religiosity level. Run et al. (2010) mentioned that the speedy growth of satellite channels in Muslim countries and increased numbers of controversial advertisements and advertisements of controversial products might have made the people more tolerant of them and increased the acceptability of controversial products in Muslim societies, especially in the younger generation. Although, there are chances of group differences about controversial products and their advertisements on the basis of age, sex, education and income level within a Muslim society. The results of the study also revealed that people with high level of religiosity react more intensely if the advertisements contain sexist images, nudity, violence or subject matter that is too personal.

Discussion

Scholars suggested that religion has potential to formulate the ethical decision making of people about product, service and idea (Weaver, & Agle, 2002). For the last three decades, there has been considerable research establishing a link between cultural and subcultural values and aspects of consumer behavior. However, religion as an inherent human value has received little attention from consumer researchers (Mokhlis, 2010; Mokhlis, 2007; Mokhlis, 2009; Khraim, 2010; Haque, A., Rahman, S., & Haque, 2011). Ansari (2014) mentioned that reason for ignoring the religion in evaluations of consumer processes is that most of the academicians are less religious than the general public and that is why they give less attention to religion to understand consumer behavior. Although a limited number of studies come in consumer literature, but majority section of the scholars

ignores this area. Studies on religion and consumer should be conducted with the same level of rigor and objectivity as other influential social characteristics for developing a comprehensive understanding of consumer lifestyles and behavior (Ansari, 2014).

Family and marriage are fundamental to Islamic society, yet are not obligatory duties. In Islam, parents are bound to fulfill the needs of their children and they are also responsible for providing them food, security, education and religious training (Srikanthan, & Reid, 2008). Islam recognizes the normalcy of sexual drives. Sex is allowed in Islam, but just with spouse(s) and within the limits of Islamic teachings and law. Sex may be used for procreation and pleasure; each sexual act need not be for the exclusive purpose of procreation (Poston, 2005). The question which often arises in Muslim communities has always remained whether the use of contraception is permitted in Islam or not and this needs to be discussed with regard to family planning. The basic sources of Islamic Laws include the Quran, Sunnah and the use of “Ijtihad” (analogy). It is out of these sources that we shall assess the morality and the permissibility of the use of contraception in the Islamic perspective or its objection (Raees, 2013).

The Al-Quran as the first source of Islamic Law does not make any categorical statement either in favor of or against the use of contraceptives. The weak analogy which is often used in the condemnation of the use of contraceptives is the verses of infanticide (Raees, 2013). The verse says “kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well for you. Verily killing them is a great sin” (Quran 17:31). In another verse it says “kill not your children in a plea of want; we provide sustenance for you and them” (Quran 6:151). These verses were revealed to put to stop the human practice during the “Jahiliyyah” (pre- Islamic era) in Arabia, where girls were considered as bad luck, disgrace, and liability; hence, the moment they were born they were buried alive. That is, the custom of the killing of infant female children prevailed in Arabia for long until Islam came and prohibited this barbaric practice. Islam values the family and encourages procreation same like Judaism and Christianity (Raees, 2013).

Some Islamic scholars and common Muslims infer from facts that family planning is prohibited in Islam. They usually present evidence for supporting their argument from Al- Quran (Quran 17:31; 6:151) and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) that the Prophet (P.B.U.H) exhorted Muslims to multiply (Abu Daud), but this argument does not do justice to the complexity of the Islamic position and the totality of its teachings. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain the established fact that the Prophet (P.B.U.H) knew that some of his companions practiced al-'azl (coitus interruptus) and yet he did not prohibit the practice (Abu Hamid).

With respect to contraception, hadiths (sayings) of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) are accepted by all the Islamic scholars and Muslims universally. There is a hadith (saying) of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) that when asked by one of His (P.B.U.H) companions about the permissibility of withdrawal, He (P.B.U.H) said: “if God wanted to create something, no one could avert it” (Raees, 2013). The Islamic scholars and Muslims, who believe that the use of contraception is not prohibited in Islam, say that God does not wish to burden believers, with the implication that the quality of children overrides concerns about quantity. They also present the verse of Al-Quran “and among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect” (Quran 30:21). They present logic from the Al-Quran that marriage is a source of companionship and mutual protection, rather than as primarily for procreation.

The significant portion of Islamic jurists indicates that family planning is not prohibited in Islam. Hassan (2000) stated that progressive Muslims, who support family planning takes the affirmation by saying that the Al-Quran is silent on the issue of family planning, but on the other side, Muslims like Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, insist that “the Quran is not silent”. They point to the Quranic condemnation of the practice of burying female children alive (Quran 81:8-9; 16:57-59); and the killing of children is prohibited (Quran 6:137,140,151; 17:31; 60:12) (Hassan, 2009).

Muslim opinion regarding the further classification of contraception ranges from permissible to disapprove (Srikanthan, & Reid, 2008). There are also some traditional Muslims who insist that the use of condoms and contraceptives are against the will of the God and such people who use condoms or contraceptives, they violate Allah’s intentions. Historically, coitus interruptus has been permitted in the Quran. When contraception justification is provided, such as health, social, or economic indications, coitus interruptus becomes recommended (Poston, 2005). Contraception may be used only within marriage (Pennachio, 2005) with justifiable reasons for contraceptive usage, which include health risks, economics, preservation of the woman’s appearance, and improving the quality of offspring (Reporter, 2014).

The opinion of Muslim adherents regarding contraception varies from ‘permitted’ to ‘permitted but discouraged’ to ‘not permitted’. In Muslim societies, people who want to use condoms or contraceptives, have to face opposition from different segments of the society like family and religion. It is observed that these two sectors of society, i.e., family and religion have great influence on the decisions of the members of the society, especially in religious societies (Raees, 2013).

Religion is considered as highly personal matter in its nature that is why religion influence more

strongly on the individual level and this influence depends on individual's religiosity level. The level of religiosity indicates that how much individual feel the importance of religion in his/her life and how much he or she adheres religious beliefs, values and practice in his/her daily life. It is supposed that individual who has high religiosity level evaluate everything in the light of his/her religious beliefs, values, and frameworks and then decide to adopt or reject anything (Patel, 2012).

Religious beliefs are significant factors in influencing consumer behavior. It is considered as an important element in decision making. Religion strongly influences the daily activities of its believers (Mokhlis, 2010) and it is also conceptualized as a consumer subculture (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). According to Mokhlis (2009), there is a great interest has focused on the culture and its effects on various aspects of consumer behavior. Khraim (2010) also stated that the attitudes and behavior of consumers who belong to different cultural backgrounds are not same. This draws attention to the study of culture and its influence on various aspects of consumer behavior. Scholars described that religion has potential to formulate the ethical decision making of people about product, service and idea (Weaver, & Agle, 2002). Muslim society and its people are bound in some sort of religious boundaries. Muslims express a desire to avoid pregnancy but do not use contraception because of religious concerns (Patterson, 2013). Previous studies show that religious beliefs and religiosity have a discernible effect on behavior (Bashir, & Malik, 2010; Shin, Park, Moon, & Kim, 2010) of Muslim consumers toward adoption (Ansari, 2014). The impact of religion on the behavior of people about contraception has recently aroused new attention by scholars and need further debate (Praz, 2009 & Mansori, 2012).

Conclusion

In the 21st century, religiosity still plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior (Patel, 2012). Religiosity significantly shapes individual's perceived barriers to using contraception (Ragnarsson, A., Onya, H., & Aaro, 2009; Tarkang, 2013). The religious values of the society also play an important role in developing and shaping the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the individuals (Qamar, Lodhi, Qamar, Habiba, & Amin, 2014). It is also evident that Muslims who have high levels of religiosity follow the rules of religious obligation more rigorously than Muslims with a lower level of religiosity (Taks & Shreim, 2009). The findings of the empirical study also suggest that religiosity should be included in future research and that there is a considerable potential for extending research into the influence of religion on consumer behavior (Essoo & Dibb, 2010).