

## Project Description & Theoretical Background

This project focuses on the relation between *religiosity* and *well-being* – specifically in relation to the cultural prevalence and *perceived cultural norms of religiosity*.

### Project

We aim to evaluate the relation between *religiosity* and *well-being* using a many analysts approach (cf. Silberzahn et al., 2018). This means that we are inviting multiple analysis teams to answer the same research questions based on the same dataset. This approach allows us to evaluate to what extent different analysis teams differ in their conclusions (i.e., is the effect present or not), but also how much variability there is (1) in the computed effect sizes, (2) the inclusion and operationalization of variables, (3) in the statistical models.

We decided to take a many analysts approach, since we believe that the complexity of the data allows for many justifiable choices for the operationalization of the variables and the statistical approaches. We believe that the more consistent the results from different analysis teams are, the more confident we can be in the conclusions we draw from the results.

Furthermore, we are also interested to learn how analysis teams experience participating in a many analysts project (e.g., planning and executing the analysis) and how beliefs about the hypotheses change during the process. For that reason, you will also be asked to complete 3 brief surveys about your experiences throughout the process.

### Project pipeline

As we want to mimic the empirical research process as closely as possible, we will split the analysis process in two stages. In stage 1, we will provide you with the original questionnaire and data documentation file and ask you to plan an appropriate analysis. After submission of the plan, we will share the data and ask you to execute the planned analysis. Finally, we ask you to summarize your results (e.g., statistical approach, effect size estimate, and conclusion).

### Research Questions

1. Do religious people self-report higher well-being?
2. Does the relation between religiosity and self-reported well-being depend on perceived cultural norms of religion?

### Theoretical background

The literature on the psychology of religion has been abound with positive correlations between religiosity and mental health (Koenig, 2009). For instance, increased religious involvement has been associated with a reduced risk for depression (Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003). At the same time, meta-analyses indicated that the relation between religion and well-being is often ambiguous and small (around  $r = .1$ ; Bergin, 1983; Garssen et al., 2020; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Koenig & Larson, 2001). A recent meta-analysis of longitudinal studies found that out of eight religiosity/spirituality measures, only participation in public religious activities and the importance of religion were significantly related to mental health. Furthermore, the type of religiosity (i.e., intrinsic vs extrinsic; positive vs. negative religious coping) appears to moderate

the relationship between religion and mental well-being (Smith et al., 2003). For instance, extrinsic religious orientation (e.g., when people primarily use their religious community as a social network, whereas religious beliefs are secondary) and negative religious coping (e.g., when people have internal religious guilt or doubts) has been shown to be detrimental to well-being (Abu-Raiya, 2013; Weber & Pargament, 2014).

Additionally, there is a large variability in the extent to which religion is ingrained in culture and social identity across the globe (Ruiter & van Tubergen, 2009; Kelley & De Graaf, 1997). Accordingly, when investigating the association between religiosity and well-being, we should possibly take into account the cultural norms related to religiosity within a society. Being religious may contribute to self-rated health and happiness when being religious is perceived to be a socially expected and desirable option (Stavrova, Fetchenhauer, & Schlösser, 2013; Stavrova, 2015). This makes sense from the literature on person-culture fit (Dressler, Balieiro, Ribeiro, & Santos, 2007): a high person-culture fit indicates good agreement between one's personal values and beliefs and the beliefs that are shared by one's surrounding culture. Religious individuals may be more likely to benefit from being religious, when their convictions and behaviors are in consonance with perceived cultural norms. For countries in which religion is stigmatized the relation between religiosity and well-being may be absent or even reversed.

## **Dataset**

The dataset features information of 10,535 participants from 24 countries collected in 2019. The data were collected as part of the cross-cultural religious replication project (<https://www.relcoglab.com/religious-replication-project>). The dataset contains measures of religiosity, well-being, perceived cultural norms of religion, as well as some demographics:

- **Well-being:** Our well-being measure consisted of 18 self-report items from the validated short version of Quality of Life scale as used by the World Health Organization (WHOQOL-BREF; WHOQOL Group, 1998). As we are interested in health and well-being, we only included items from the domains physical health, psychological health and social relationships. Specific items evaluate pain, energy, sleep, mobility, activities, dependence on medication, and work capability (physical domain), life enjoyment, concentration, self-esteem, body-image, negative feelings, and meaningfulness (psychological domain), and personal relationships, social support, and sexual satisfaction (social domain). Additionally, one item measured the quality of life in general, and one item measured the satisfaction of overall health.
- **Religiosity:** Participant religiosity was measured using standardized self-report items taken from the World Values Survey (WVS; World Values Survey, 2010), covering religious behaviors (institutionalized such as church attendance and private such as prayer/meditation), beliefs, identification, values, and denomination.
- **Cultural norms of religiosity:** Cultural norms of religiosity were measured with two items assessing participants' perception of the extent to which the average person in their country considers a religious lifestyle and belief in God/Gods/spirits important (Wan et al., 2007).
- **Other variables:** individual level: age, gender, level of education, subjective socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity. Country-level: GDP per capita (current US\$,

World Bank Group, 2017), sample type (e.g., university students, online panels), compensation (e.g., course credit, monetary reward).

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