

Religion and Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Positive Virtues

Swati Sharma¹ · Kamlesh Singh¹

Published online: 20 January 2018

© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2018

Abstract Researchers have consistently advocated positive associations between religion and well-being. The present research takes a step forward and explores potential mechanisms behind the same. The mediating role of a surprisingly neglected mechanism, positive virtues, specifically gratitude, forgiveness and altruism, is studied through a quantitative study on a sample of 220 adult respondents residing in Delhi NCR. The participants adhered to one of the six major religions present in India. Mediation analysis revealed that gratitude mediated the relationship between religiosity, spirituality and well-being via two pathways of forgiveness and altruism. The implications for researchers and practitioners working in the field of mental health are discussed.

Keywords Religion · Spirituality · Well-being · Virtues

Introduction

Religion exists in some form across every human culture (Atran and Norenzayan 2004; Boyer 2003), and despite increasing skepticism toward its importance, spirituality along with religiosity has been consistently associated with physical and psychological well-being (Koenig et al. 2012). Research has shown that individuals who are more committed to their religious faith and spiritual convictions are happier, are healthier and have more coping resources at their disposal than those for whom religion and spirituality are less important (Ellison and Fan 2008; Levin and Chatters 1998; Myers and Diener 1995; Patrick and Kinney 2003).

The question which arises next is what might be the mechanism or the process that mediates this effect between religion and well-being. Past researchers have shown that

✉ Swati Sharma
swatisharma3090@gmail.com

¹ MS 611, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110016, India

positive associations between religion and different mental health outcomes are mediated mostly by its social and cognitive resources (Hayward and Krause 2014). Endorsing a religion provides an individual a social support from the fellow followers, a positive sense of self, a sense of shared values with a socially valued community and a sense of belonging (Brodsky 2000; Krause and Hayward 2013). By following a certain religion, most people benefit from enhanced social integration and social support from religious leaders and associate group members (Krause and Hayward 2013; Strawbridge et al. 2001). It is important to note, however, that these results do not reflect the social exclusion certain people or groups face in the context of their religion (e.g., homosexuals, Herek 1987). The failure to reach a sense a connection with other members or failure to fit in the religious institution may also result in negative outcomes of alienation (Brodsky 2000). Hence, suggesting that social support though it is a significant mechanism does not always mediate the relation between religiosity and well-being. Considering cognitive resources, religion imparts among its followers a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which is in turn linked to positive functioning (Kim-Prieto 2014; Steger and Frazier 2005) and perceived control (Levin 2010). Those higher in religiousness/spirituality perceive themselves to share in the control wielded by the higher power with whom they affiliate (Hood et al. 2009). Recently researchers have also highlighted the role of a third mechanism, i.e., positive emotions. Van Cappellen et al. (2016) studied the role of positive emotions, more specifically a particular category of positive emotions, self-transcendent positive emotions of awe, gratitude, love and peace, and found them as significant mediators of well-being. Hope is also explored as a potential mediating variable in the religion–well-being relationship (Aghababaei et al. 2016).

Surprisingly the role of positive virtues, such as altruism, forgiveness and gratitude, which are often seen as accompanying religious or spiritual involvement in eastern cultures, lack significant documentation as mediators between religion and well-being. Despite the widespread and long-standing interest in these concepts, the science of virtues in a spiritual context is still in its infancy. Moreover, much of the research in the field of religion and well-being has been focused on participants living in the USA and in Western Europe, and has largely relied on research on Christians (Kim-Prieto 2014). Most Indian researches have focused on the religious rituals and philosophies of the dominant Hindu group (Khan et al. 2015; Tewari et al. 2012), and a few that have studied minority have also explored the previously established mechanisms of social support and integration (e.g., Sohi et al. 2017). Indian society, though, is characterized by diverse religious beliefs and practices (Begum and Osmany 2016). Thus, there is scope for more exploration in this area. Nevertheless, lately, with reorientation of positive psychology, increasing evidence from around the world, supporting positive effects of religion in diverse range of religions and cultures, has surfaced in mainstream research (Selin and Davey 2012). Social scientists are now shifting their attention to tailored interventions for non-western societies and incorporation of already existing indigenous practices from around the world (e.g., Arya et al. 2017; Singh et al. 2018; Sundar et al. 2016). The role of earlier neglected Indian theories based on wisdom tradition and practices is now being paid due consideration in mainstream research (Thirthalli et al. 2016). The present research hence aims at investigating questions of how and why positive virtues associate with religion and one another, and how this association is utilized by individuals in a religiously diverse and spiritually rich Indian culture to enhance well-being.

Religiosity, Spirituality and Positive Virtues

The terms religiosity and spirituality have been used interchangeably in much of social science research. Psychologists have traditionally regarded religion as a “broadband” construct, not explicitly differentiated from spirituality (Pargament 1999; Zinnbauer et al. 1999). From this perspective, religious and spiritual phenomena have been subsumed beneath the broad umbrella of the construct religion, or the terms religion and spirituality have been used interchangeably (Spilka and McIntosh 1996). Recently, with decline of traditional religious institutions, an increase in individualized forms of faith expression, and a culture of religious pluralism (Hood 2003), spirituality emerged as a distinct construct in the psychology literature. Nevertheless, religion and religious behaviors still represent the many ways in which the search for the sacred becomes organized and sanctioned in society (Snyder and Lopez 2007). In fact, one purpose of most religions is to cultivate spirituality in its members (Miller 1998).

Virtues are psychological process that consistently enable a person to think and act so as to yield benefits for him or herself and society (McCullough and Snyder 2000). In most of the Asian cultures, religious philosophies play an important role in leading human beings toward attainment of positive goals of life. India, like most Asian countries, is historically known for its culminating diverse cultures and rich ancient ethnic traditions (Singh et al. 2014a). Indian culture promotes spirituality and positive virtues such as prosocial behavior, altruism, forgiveness and oneness by different culturally embedded religious and spiritual traditions such as *Seva* (selfless service) and *Satsang* (a spiritual discourse or sacred gathering). Indian religious literatures such as *Gita*, *Guru Granth Sahib* and *Dhammapada* are also found to promote positive virtues such as prosocial behavior, forgiveness and gratitude.

Those who have truth as their fast, contentment as their pilgrimage, spiritual wisdom and meditation as their cleansing bath, kindness as their deity, and forgiveness as their chanting beads, they are the most excellent people.—Guru Granth Sahib (1245:10–11)

In empirical research as well religiosity and spirituality are found to elevate various positive virtues in Individuals (Currier et al. 2016; Krause 2009; Tsang et al. 2012; Van Cappellen et al. 2014). A moderately positive association is found between religion and helping behavior (Saroglou 2006). Shariff and Norenzayan (2007) found when priming religious target words, primed participants gave more than twice the amount of money as compared to non-primed participants. In a recent meta-analysis, Davis et al. (2013) found religion/spirituality positively related to state forgiveness ($r = .15$), trait forgiveness ($r = .29$) and self-forgiveness ($r = .12$). In Smith’s (1790/1976) classic book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he suggested that gratitude and related constructs such as altruism and forgiveness are absolutely crucial in establishing a moral society. This could be one of the reasons why major religions across the world promote these virtues.

Gratitude, Forgiveness, Altruism and Well-being

Gratitude is believed to be “not only the best, but the parent of all other virtues” (Cicero 1851, p. 139). Gratitude is “the sentiment which most immediately and directly prompts us to reward” (Smith 1790/1976, p. 68). Klein (1957) suggested that the development of gratitude in childhood goes together with the development of generosity, because a grateful

person wishes to benefit others by sharing the gifts he or she has received. In a more recent analysis, Tsang (2006) suggested that “the receipt of a benefit from another may trigger the norm of reciprocity, which states that individuals should help, as well as refrain from harming, people who have helped them” (p. 139). Empirical data also suggest gratitude’s association with prosocial behavior (Bartlett and DeSteno 2006) and willingness to forgive (DeShea 2003).

The three virtues have also been positively associated with well-being (Brown 2003; Fredrickson 2004; Watkins 2004). Emmons and McCullough (2003) while examining the effect of grateful outlook on psychological well-being found that conscious focus on blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits. Forgiveness of others obtains its association with psychological well-being precisely because forgiveness helps people maintain and restore close relationships (Karremans et al. 2003). Wohl et al. (2008), among other researchers, found that forgiveness of self, helped participants recover from their depressive states and enhanced their well-being. Kahana et al. (2013) reported that altruistic attitudes, volunteering and informal helping behaviors make unique contributions to the maintenance of life satisfaction, positive affect and other well-being outcomes.

Emmons and Mishra (2011) hypothesized that gratitude enhances well-being by motivating moral behavior that strengthens relationships and promotes prosocial actions. They also correlated gratitude with spirituality. But an empirical study on the same is missing.

Mediating Role of Positive Virtues

Experience of gratitude, forgiveness and altruism are not restricted to religious and spiritual settings or to religious or spiritual people. Khanna and Singh (2016) found significantly positive impact of gratitude building intervention on adolescents’ gratitude and well-being indicators. However, they are arguably more experienced and valued in the context of religion (Emmons and Crumpler 2000; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007). Akhtar, Dolan, and Barlow (2017), reported forgiveness to be an important determinant of well-being among more religious/spiritual population. Given that the present research explores the relation between these virtues and well-being in the specific context of religion and spirituality, it is hypothesized that religiosity indirectly influences well-being through two different pathways: One is via the mediators of spirituality, gratitude and altruism and the other is via mediators of spirituality, gratitude and forgiveness. The proposed theoretical model is shown in Fig. 1.

Method

Participants

A sample of 220 adult respondents (male = 110 and female = 110) from 6 major religions (Hindus = 81.82%, Muslims = 12.73%, Christians = 0.90%, Sikhs = 3.18%, Buddhists = 0.45% and Jains = 0.90%) residing in Delhi NCR, India, was taken for the study. The percentage of participants was similar to the percentage of religions reported Delhi (Hindus = 81.68%, Muslims = 12.86%, Christians = 0.87%, Sikhs = 3.40%, Buddhists = 0.11% and Jains = 0.99%) in the Census of India 2011. The age range of the participants was 18–59 yrs. ($M = 27.38$ years, $SD = 9.98$), and marital status was 27.73%

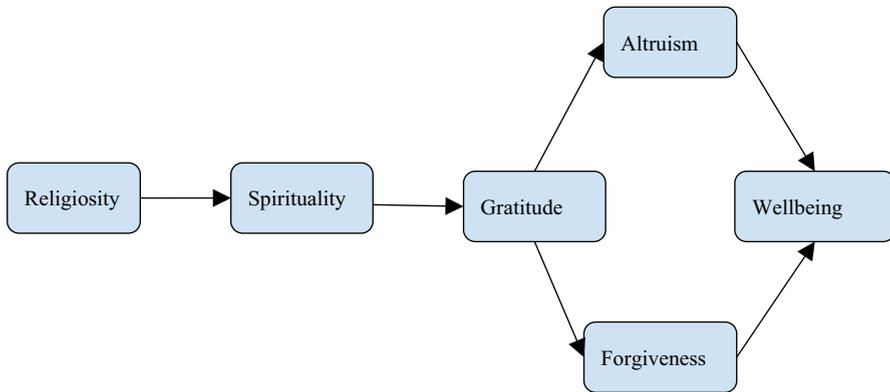


Fig. 1 Proposed theoretical model

married, 70.45% unmarried and 1.82% engaged. The minimum qualification was intermediate (class 12th), and all the respondents were well versed in English.

Measures

Religiosity was measured by using a modified version of the scale developed by Wilkes et al. (1986) (adapted by Mathur 2012). The original scale was modified, two items added and the wording of two items was slightly altered for local suitability in India. Cronbach alpha for the modified version was reported as $\alpha = 0.72$. Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale, the extent to which they agreed with each of the six statements (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). Internal reliability for the present study was also found significant ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Spirituality A six-item scale of the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale developed as incorporated in the General Social Survey (David et al. 2001) was used. This scale was intended to assess a person's perception of the transcendent (God, the divine) in daily life. In the GSS, internal consistency of the short version was 0.91 (Ellison and Fan 2008). Internal consistency of the short version has been further established by different researchers. Cronbach alpha for the present study was found to be 0.92.

Gratitude The Gratitude Questionnaire—six-item form (McCullough et al. 2002)—assesses individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life. The Cronbach alpha estimates for the six-item totals have ranged from .76 to .84. Reliability analysis (internal consistency) was carried out for GQ-6 in the present study which shows high reliability $\alpha = 0.78$.

Altruism A 14-item Self-Report Altruism Scale (Rushton et al. 1981) adapted by Witt and Boleman (2009) was used in the present study. The reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$) and validity of the scale have been previously established (Duerden et al. 2012). In the present study, Cronbach alpha was found to be $\alpha = 0.74$.

Forgiveness was measured using Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al. 2005b). The scale included 18 true or false statements. It has demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.86$ – 0.87) and convergent validity (Thompson et al. 2005a). Cronbach alpha for the present study for the total scale was $\alpha = 0.73$.

Well-being was measured through Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC SF Keyes 2005). It measures positive mental health and comprises 14 items, representing

various feelings of well-being. The short form of the MHC has previously shown excellent internal consistency ($\alpha > .80$) and discriminant validity (Keyes et al. 2008; Westerhof and Keyes 2010). The Cronbach alpha noted in the present study for MHC score was $\alpha = 0.90$.

Procedure

An e-mail was sent to participants with the URL to research questionnaire. Participants filled in the research questionnaire through the given link. The data filled by the participants were hence collected and saved on an online portal. Any query or doubt on the part of the participant was resolved thoroughly.

Results

This study examined the mediating role of spirituality, gratitude, altruism and forgiveness in the causal relationship between religiosity and well-being. Results are presented in two sections: preliminary analysis and mediation analysis.

Preliminary Analysis

To test the associations among the variables, a correlation analysis was conducted including all variables from the current study (see Table 1). The results of this analysis revealed that religiosity and spirituality were positively correlated with each other, gratitude and well-being. Gratitude was positively correlated with altruism, forgiveness and well-being.

Mediation Analysis

The proposed theoretical model was empirically investigated using mediation analysis. Mediation analysis was performed using the SPSS macro PROCESS developed by Hayes (2012). Bootstrap analyses of indirect effects with 10,000 bootstrap samples and bias-corrected confidence intervals of 95% were employed. Serial mediation postulates “a causal chain linking the mediators, with a specified direction of causal flow” (Hayes 2012, p. 14). The gender and religion of participants were controlled for in our analysis.

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and correlations among variables under study

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Religiosity	18.30	6.55	1.00	.68**	.13*	.13*	-.060	.23**
2. Spirituality	18.85	8.19		1.00	.34**	.21**	.096	.48**
3. Gratitude	30.90	6.312			1.00	.28**	.51**	.44**
4. Altruism	37.55	7.223				1.00	.16*	.34**
5. Forgiveness	83.68	14.51					1.00	.42**
6. MHC	48.63	10.99						1.00

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

1. The first analysis was performed with spirituality, gratitude and altruism as serial mediators (religiosity → spirituality → gratitude → altruism → well-being);
2. The second analysis was performed with forgiveness in place of altruism (religiosity → spirituality → gratitude → forgiveness → well-being)

It was found that religiosity indirectly influenced participants’ well-being through the mediators of spirituality, gratitude and altruism. A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($B = 0.02$) based on 10,000 bootstrap samples was significant as zero did not fall in the class interval (0.01–0.06). The total indirect effect, which is the sum of the specific indirect effects, was also significant ($B = 0.58$) as zero did not fall in the class interval (0.35–0.83). An examination of the coefficients (Fig. 2) revealed that religiosity was positively related to spirituality, spirituality was positively related to gratitude, gratitude was positively related to altruism and altruism was positively related to well-being. Figure 2 also depicts the total effect of religiosity on well-being: $c1 = .35 (.12)$ which is significant becomes insignificant in the absence of mediators and the total direct effect: $c1' = -.22 (.12)$.

It was also found that religiosity indirectly influenced participants’ well-being through the mediators of spirituality, gratitude and forgiveness. A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect ($B = -0.08$) based on 10,000 bootstrap samples was found to be significant as zero did not appear in the class interval (–0.04 to 0.13). The total indirect effect, which is the sum of the specific indirect effects, was also significant ($B = 0.50$) as zero did not appear in the class interval (0.26–0.77). Path coefficients, the total effect of religiosity on well-being: $c2 = .35 (.12)$ which turns insignificant in the absence of mediators and the total direct effect $c2' = -.15 (.12)$, are reported in Fig. 3.

The above-mentioned findings have provided empirical support to the proposed theoretical model.

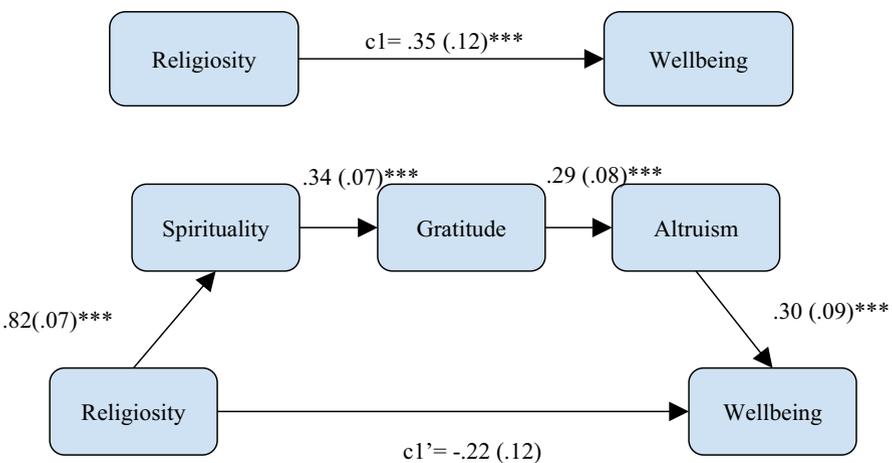


Fig. 2 Serial mediator model of the indirect effect of religiosity on well-being through spirituality, gratitude and altruism. Note: Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported. Numbers in parentheses represent standard error terms. *** $p < .001$

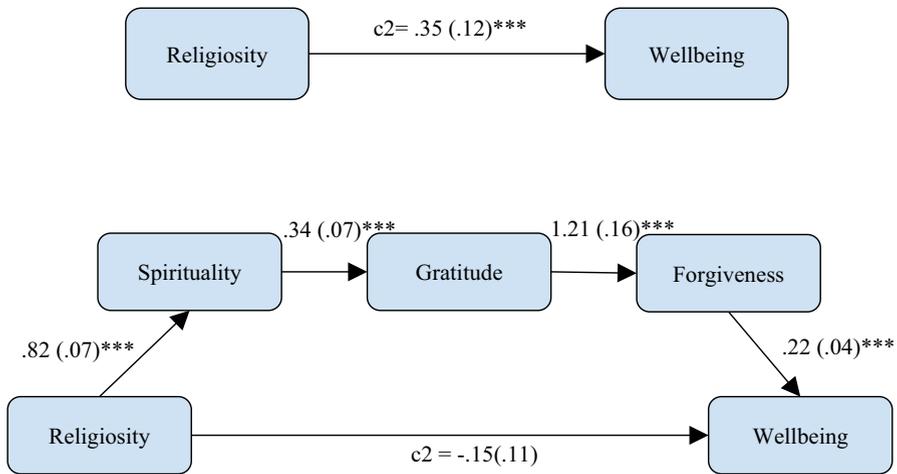


Fig. 3 Serial mediator model of the indirect effect of religiosity on well-being through spirituality, gratitude and forgiveness. Note: Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported. Numbers in parentheses represent standard error terms. *** $p < .001$

Discussion

This present research aimed to study the mediating role of spirituality, gratitude, altruism and forgiveness in the causal relationship between religiosity and well-being. It was found that religiosity indirectly influences well-being through two causal pathways as hypothesized. Spirituality was found to mediate the relationship between religiosity and well-being. One of the reasons for this could be that one purpose of most religions is to cultivate spirituality in its members (Miller 1998). For example, individual prayer is typically defined as a measure of spirituality; however, individual prayer occurs within the context of religious services and in the private practices of individuals as part of their religious beliefs. In sum, it is impossible to create two distinct groups of people defined as either religious or spiritual; most people are characterized by elements of both, to varying degrees (Delaney et al. 2007). Given the function of spirituality within religions and the trends in religiosity, it is reasonable to expect that people may be religious and spiritual or that they may be spiritual but not religious or that they may be neither. It is not expected that people will be religious but not spiritual, since spirituality is incorporated into religions and is manifested in practices such as prayer and worship, especially in Indian culture which is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual practices (Singh and Modi 2011), such as *satsang*, *aarti*, *bhajan*, which are spiritual folk songs that are associated with promoting individual well-being (e.g., Singh et al. 2017).

It further positively impacts gratitude. This can be explained as most world religions commend gratitude as a desirable human trait (Carman and Streng 1989; Emmons and Crumpler 2000), which may cause spiritual or religious people to adopt a grateful outlook. Spiritually inclined people tend to attribute positive outcomes to God's intervention, but not negative ones (Lupfer et al. 1994, 1996). As a result, many positive life events that are not due to the actions of another person (e.g., pleasant weather, avoiding an automobile accident) may be perceived as occasions for gratitude to God, although negative events

(e.g., a long winter, an automobile accident) would likely not be attributed to God (Greeley and Hout 2006).

Gratitude is then found to positively impact altruism which further impacts well-being. It could be proposed that gratitude reinforces prosocial behavior (altruism) because expressions of gratitude (for example, saying “thanks”) increase the likelihood that benefactors will behave prosocially again in the future (McCullough et al. 2001): when the beneficiary’s expression of thanks acknowledges to the benefactor that he or she has noticed a kindness and, he/she, might be prone to reciprocate when a future opportunity to do so arises. Gratitude may also motivate prosocial behavior by influencing psychological states that support generosity and cooperation. For example, Jackson et al. (2001) found that having participants recall a real-life gratitude-inducing experience caused them to attribute another person’s good fortune to stable causes.

In the second pathway, gratitude positively impacts forgiveness which then influences well-being. Theoretical work supports the notion that forgiveness and gratitude are connected with enhanced well-being, and this connection is likely mediated by cognitive–affective changes (Emmons and McCullough 2003; McCullough et al. 2002; Worthington and Wade 1999; Worthington et al. 2001). Empirical work on forgiveness, gratitude and well-being is also growing rapidly and generally supports the conclusion that these constructs are positively associated (Bono and McCullough 2006; Friedman and Toussaint 2006; Singh et al. 2014b). Emmons and McCullough (2003) found that priming thoughts of gratitude each day over a period of weeks measurably improved people’s sense of health and well-being. Thoresen et al. (2000) suggested forgiveness may lead to increased optimistic thinking and decreased hopelessness, increased self-efficacy, higher levels of perceived social and emotional support, and, for some, a greater sense of transcendent consciousness and communion with God, all of which might promote physical health. Forgiveness may contribute to well-being mainly from its potential to help people mend and preserve supportive, close relationships (Karremans et al. 2003).

Religion and spirituality offer a strong base to the experience of positive virtues and well-being. Involvement in religious and spiritual practices reinforces positive virtues on a regular basis. Understanding the mechanisms by which religion/spirituality impact well-being is significant as it can inspire future interventions that seek to improve well-being within or outside of a religious context. In religious contexts, these findings underscore that the religious teachings and practices that induce and elevate virtues are not trivial but rather can improve believers’ well-being. However, these virtues are not restricted to the religious or spiritual domain and also occur outside of its context and among non-religious people. Yet the role of religion and spirituality as a strong footing in the form of different texts, rituals and practices for growth of positive virtues and well-being cannot be undermined.

Implications, Limitations and Future Scope

The present study helps establish the role of religiosity and spirituality in promoting positive virtues and well-being among individuals in Indian context. It provides practitioners and future researchers insights into exploring religion, spirituality and positive virtues for promoting mental health of individuals especially in Indian and Asian context. Recently, it has also been emphasized that health care professionals should incorporate discussions of spirituality to develop a positive approach to living (Rentala et al. 2017).

Naturally, some limitations to this study exist. The sample of the study was narrow, mostly young adults residing in Delhi NCR. The role of socioeconomic status and inter-religion comparison could have also been explored. Future researchers can examine the generalizability of the findings across different demographic variables such as age, socioeconomic status and religion.

References

- Aghababaei, N., Sohrabi, F., Eskandari, H., Borjali, A., Farrokhi, N., & Chen, Z. J. (2016). Predicting subjective well-being by religious and scientific attitudes with hope, purpose in life, and death anxiety as mediators. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *90*, 93–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.10.046>.
- Akhtar, S., Dolan, A., & Barlow, J. (2017). Understanding the relationship between state forgiveness and psychological wellbeing: A qualitative study. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *56*(2), 450–463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-016-0188-9>.
- Arya, N. K., Singh, K., & Malik, A. (2017). Impact of five days spiritual practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters and selected physiological indicators. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *4*(2/88), 36–50.
- Atran, S., & Norenzayan, A. (2004). Religion's evolutionary landscape: Counterintuition, commitment, compassion, communion. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0140525x04000172>.
- Bartlett, M. Y., & DeSteno, D. (2006). Gratitude and prosocial behavior: Helping when it costs you. *Psychological Science*, *17*, 319–325.
- Begum, G. T., & Osmany, M. (2016). Religiosity, social distance and well-being among Hindu and Muslim Young adults. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *3*(2/7), 30–39.
- Bono, G., & McCullough, M. E. (2006). Positive responses to benefit and harm: Bringing forgiveness and gratitude into cognitive psychotherapy. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *20*, 147–158. <https://doi.org/10.1891/jcop.20.2.147>.
- Boyer, P. (2003). Religious thought and behaviour as by-products of brain function. *Trends In Cognitive Sciences*, *7*(3), 119–124. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1364-6613\(03\)00031-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1364-6613(03)00031-7).
- Brodsky, A. E. (2000). The role of religion in the lives of resilient, urban, African American, single mothers. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *28*(2), 199–219.
- Brown, R. P. (2003). Measuring individual differences in the tendency to forgive: Construct validity and links with depression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *29*, 759–771.
- Carman, J. B., & Streng, F. J. (1989). *Spoken and unspoken thanks: Some comparative soundings*. Dallas, TX: Center for World Thanksgiving.
- Census of India. (2011). Retrieved June 21, 2016, from <http://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php>.
- Cicero, M. T. (1851). *The orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero, Vol. III* (C.D. Younge, Trans.). London: George Bell & Sons.
- Currier, J. M., Drescher, K. D., Holland, J. M., Lisman, R., & Foy, D. W. (2016). Spirituality, forgiveness, and quality of life: Testing a mediational model with military veterans with PTSD. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *26*(2), 167–179.
- David, J. A., Smith, T. W., & Marsden, P. V. (2001). *General Social Surveys, 1972–2000: Cumulative codebook*. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center.
- Davis, D. E., Worthington, E. L., Jr., Hook, J. N., & Hill, P. C. (2013). Research on religion/spirituality and forgiveness: A meta-analytic review. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *5*(4), 233–241. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a003363>.
- Delaney, H. D., Miller, W. R., & Bisono, A. M. (2007). Religiosity and spirituality among psychologists: A survey of clinician members of the American Psychological Association. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *38*(5), 538–546. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.38.5.538>.
- DeShea, L. (2003). A scenario-based scale of willingness to forgive. *Individual Differences Research*, *1*, 201–217.
- Duerden, M. D., Witt, P. A., Fernandez, M., Jolliff, M., & Theriault, D. (2012). Measuring life skills: Standardizing the assessment of youth development indicators. *Journal of Youth Development*, *7*(1). Retrieved from http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nae4a/JYD_0701final.pdf.

- Ellison, C. G., & Fan, D. (2008). Daily spiritual experiences and psychological well-being among US adults. *Social Indicators Research*, 88(2), 247–271.
- Emmons, R. A., & Crumpler, C. A. (2000). Gratitude as a human strength: Appraising the evidence. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19, 56–69.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377–389.
- Emmons, R. A., & Mishra, A. (2011). Why gratitude enhances well-being: What we know, what we need to know. In K. M. Sheldon, T. B. Kashdan, & M. F. Steger (Eds.), *Designing positive psychology: Taking stock and moving forward* (pp. 248–262). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). Gratitude, like other positive emotions, broadens and builds. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 145–166). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, P. H., & Toussaint, L. L. (2006). The relationship between forgiveness, gratitude, distress, and well-being: An integrative review of the literature. *The International Journal of Healing and Caring*, 6, 1–10. Retrieved August 11, 2006, from www.ijhc.org.
- Greeley, A. M., & Hout, M. (2006). *The truth about conservative Christians—What they think and what they believe*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.
- Hayes, A. F. (2012). PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling [White paper]. Retrieved from <http://www.afhayes.com/public/process2012.pdf>.
- Hayward, R. D., & Krause, N. (2014). Religion, mental health and well-being: Social aspects. In V. Saroglou (Ed.), *Religion, personality, and social behavior* (pp. 255–280). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Herek, G. (1987). Religious orientation and prejudice: A comparison of racial and sexual attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 13(1), 34–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167287131003>.
- Hood, R. W. (2003). The relationship between religion and spirituality. In A. L. Greil & D. Bromley (Eds.), *Defining religion: Investigating the boundaries between the sacred and the secular: Vol. 10. Religion and the social order* (Vol. 10, pp. 241–265). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Hood, R. W., Jr., Hill, P. C., & Spilka, B. (2009). *The psychology of religion: An empirical approach* (4th ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Jackson, L. A., Lewandowski, D. A., Fleury, R. E., & Chin, P. P. (2001). Effects of affect, stereotype consistency, and valence of behavior on causal attributions. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 141, 31–48.
- Kahana, E., Bhatta, T., Lovegreen, L. D., Kahana, B., & Midlarsky, E. (2013). Altruism, helping, and volunteering: Pathways to well-being in late life. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 25(1), 159–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264312469665>.
- Karremans, J. C., Van Lange, P. A. M., Ouwerkerk, J. W., & Kluwer, E. S. (2003). When forgiving enhances psychological well-being: The role of interpersonal commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 1011–1026.
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2005). The subjective well-being of America's youth: Toward a comprehensive assessment. *Adolescent and Family Health*, 4, 3–11.
- Keyes, C. L. M., Wissing, M., Potgieter, J. P., Temane, M., Kruger, A., & van Rooy, S. (2008). Evaluation of the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) in Setswana speaking South Africans. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 15, 181–192.
- Khan, S. S., Hopkins, N., Reicher, S., Tewari, S., Srinivasan, N., & Stevenson, C. (2015). Shared identity predicts enhanced health at a mass gathering. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430214556703>.
- Khanna, P., & Singh, K. (2016). Effect of gratitude educational intervention on well-being indicators among North Indian adolescents. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 20(4), 305–314. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-016-0087-9>.
- Kim-Prieto, C. (2014). *Religion and spirituality across cultures*. NY: Springer.
- Klein, M. (1957). *Envy and gratitude*. New York: Basic Books.
- Koenig, H. G., King, D., & Carson, V. (2012). *Handbook of religion and health* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Krause, N. (2009). Religious involvement, gratitude, and change in depressive symptoms over time. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 19(3), 155–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508610902880204>.
- Krause, N., & Hayward, R. (2013). Religious involvement and feelings of connectedness with others among older Americans. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 35(2), 259–282. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15736121-12341266>.

- Levin, J. (2010). Religion and mental health: Theory and research. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 7, 102–115.
- Levin, J. S., & Chatters, L. M. (1998). Research on religion and mental health: An overview of empirical findings and theoretical issues. In H. G. Koenig (Ed.), *Handbook of religion and mental health*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Lupfer, M. B., De Paola, S. J., Brock, K. F., & Clement, L. (1994). Making secular and religious attributions: The availability hypothesis revisited. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33, 162–171.
- Lupfer, M. B., Tolliver, D., & Jackson, M. (1996). Explaining life-altering occurrences: A test of the “God-of-the-gaps” hypothesis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35, 379–391.
- Mathur, A. (2012). Measurement and meaning of religiosity: A cross-cultural comparison of religiosity and charitable giving. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 20, 84–95. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jt.2012.6>.
- McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 112–127.
- McCullough, M. E., Kilpatrick, S. D., Emmons, R. A., & Larson, D. B. (2001). Is gratitude a moral affect? *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 249–266.
- McCullough, M. E., & Snyder, C. (2000). Classical sources of human strength: Revisiting an old home and building a new one. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2000.19.1.1>.
- Miller, W. (1998). Researching the spiritual dimensions of alcohol and other drug problems. *Addiction*, 93(7), 979–990.
- Myers, D. G., & Diener, E. (1995). Who is happy? *Psychological Science*, 6, 10–17.
- Pargament, K. I. (1999). The psychology of religion and spirituality? Yes and no. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 9, 3–16.
- Patrick, J. H., & Kinney, J. M. (2003). Why believe? The effects of religious beliefs on emotional well being. *Journal Of Religious Gerontology*, 14(2–3), 153–170.
- Rental, S., Lau, B., & Chan, C. (2017). Association between spirituality and depression among depressive disorder patients in India. *Journal Of Spirituality In Mental Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2017.1286962>.
- Rushton, J. P., Chrisjohn, R. D., & Fekken, G. C. (1981). The altruistic personality and the self-report altruism scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2(4), 293–302.
- Saroglou, V. (2006). Religion’s role in prosocial behavior: Myth or reality? *Psychology of Religion Newsletter*, 31(2), 1–8.
- Selin, H., & Davey, G. (Eds.). (2012). *Happiness across cultures*. New York: Springer.
- Shariff, A. F., & Norenzayan, A. (2007). God is watching you: Priming god concepts increases prosocial behavior in an anonymous economic game. *Psychological Science*, 18, 803–809.
- Singh, K., Jain, A., & Singh, D. (2014a). *Satsang*: A culture specific effective practice for well-being. In H. A. Marujo & L. M. Neto (Eds.), *Positive nations and communities, cross-cultural advancements in positive psychology* (pp. 79–100). New York: Springer.
- Singh, K., Junnarkar, M., Singh, D., Suchday, S., Mitra, S., & Dayal, P. (2018). Effect of spiritual practices on well-being of Indian elderly rural women (Manuscript is under review in *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*).
- Singh, K., Kaur, J., Singh, D., & Suri, S. (2014b). Correlates of well-being: A rural women study. *Journal of Indian Health Psychology*, 8(2), 31–42.
- Singh, A., & Modi, R. (2011). Indian ancient thought and well-being (happiness). *Shodh Sanchayan*, 2(1&2), 1–4.
- Singh, K., Sigroha, S., Singh, D., & Shokeen, D. (2017). Religious and spiritual messages in folk songs: A study of women from rural India. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2017.1356812>.
- Smith, A. (1790/1976). *The theory of moral sentiments, The Glasgow edition of the works and correspondence of Adam Smith* (D. Raphael, Ed.), Glasgow: Glasgow Publishers.
- Snyder, C., & Lopez, S. (2007). *Positive psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Sohi, K. K., Singh, P., & Bopanna, K. (2017). Ritual participation, sense of community, and social well-being: A study of *Seva* in the Sikh community. *Journal of Religion and Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0424-y>.
- Spilka, B., & McIntosh, D. N. (1996, August). Religion and spirituality: The known and the unknown. Paper presented at the American Psychological Association annual conference, Toronto, Canada.
- Steger, M. F., & Frazier, P. (2005). Meaning in life: One link in the chain from religion to well-being. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 574–582.

- Strawbridge, W. J., Shema, S. J., Cohen, R. D., & Kaplan, G. A. (2001). Religious attendance increases survival by improving and maintaining good health behaviors, mental health, and social relationships. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 23, 68–74.
- Sundar, S., Qureshi, A., & Galiatsatos, P. (2016). A positive psychology intervention in a Hindu Community: The Pilot Study of the Hero Lab Curriculum. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55(6), 2189–2198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-016-0289-5>.
- Tewari, S., Khan, S. S., Hopkins, N. P., Srinivasan, N., & Reicher, S. D. (2012). Participation in mass gatherings can benefit well-being: Longitudinal and control data from a North Indian Hindu pilgrimage event. *PLoS ONE*, 7(10), e47291. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0047291>.
- Thirthalli, J., Zhou, L., Kumar, K., Gao, J., Vaid, H., Liu, H., et al. (2016). Traditional, complementary, and alternative medicine approaches to mental health care and psychological wellbeing in India and China. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 3(7), 660–672. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(16\)30025-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(16)30025-6).
- Thompson, L. Y., Snyder, C. R., & Hoffman, L. (2005). Heartland Forgiveness Scale. Faculty Publications, Department of Psychology. Paper 452. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/psychfacpub/452>. Accessed 25 July 2016.
- Thompson, L. Y., Snyder, C. R., Hoffman, L., Michael, S. T., Rasmussen, H. N., & Billings, L. S. (2005b). Dispositional forgiveness of self, others, and situations. *Journal of Personality*, 73, 313–359.
- Thoresen, C. E., Harris, A. H. S., & Luskin, F. (2000). Forgiveness and health: An unanswered question. In M. E. McCullough & K. I. Pargament (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 254–280). New York: Guilford Press.
- Tsang, J. (2006). Gratitude and prosocial behavior: An experimental test of gratitude. *Cognition and Emotion*, 20, 138–148.
- Tsang, J., Schulwitz, A., & Carlisle, R. (2012). An experimental test of the relationship between religion and gratitude. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 4(1), 40–55. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025632>.
- Van Cappellen, P., Saroglou, V., & Toth-Gauthier, M. (2014). Religiosity and prosocial behavior among churchgoers: Exploring underlying mechanisms. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 26, 19–30.
- Van Cappellen, P., Toth-Gauthier, M., Saroglou, V., & Fredrickson, B. (2016). Religion and well-being: The mediating role of positive emotions. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17(2), 485–505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9605-5>.
- Watkins, P. C. (2004). Gratitude and subjective well-being. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *Psychology of gratitude* (pp. 167–192). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Westerhof, G. J., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2010). Mental illness and mental health: The two continua model across the lifespan. *Journal of Adult Development*, 17, 110–119.
- Wilkes, R. E., Burnett, J. J., & Howell, R. D. (1986). On the meaning and measurement of religiosity in consumer research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 14, 47–56.
- Witt, P., & Boleman, C. (2009). Adapted Self-Report Altruism Scale. CYFAR Vetted Additional Instruments 4-H Healthy Living. http://dcyfernetsearch.cehd.umn.edu/sites/default/files/InstrumentFiles/Adapted%20Self-Report%20Altruism%20%28Youth%20-%20All%20Ages%29_0.pdf. Accessed 25 July 2016.
- Wohl, M. J. A., DeShea, L., & Wahkinney, R. L. (2008). Looking within: Measuring state self-forgiveness and its relationship to psychological well-being. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 40, 1–10.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., Bursley, K., Berry, J. T., McCullough, M., Baier, S. N., Berry, J. W., et al. (2001). Religious commitment, religious experiences, and ways of coping with sexual attraction. *Marriage and Family: A Christian Journal*, 4, 411–423.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Wade, N. G. (1999). The psychology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18, 385–418.
- Zinnbauer, B. J., Pargament, K. I., & Scott, A. B. (1999). The emerging meanings of religiousness and spirituality: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Personality*, 67, 889–919.