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The Effects of Religiousness and Spirituality on COVID-19 Health Behavior Compliance

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Introduction

- COVID-19 has affected all aspects of our lives
- The pandemic affects ordinary daily or weekly events, especially attending religious or spiritual services
- Many religious organizations shut their doors and moved online, which was unexpected and caused distress
- Worship services and practices can help support individuals during this time^[1]
- Religion can increase resilience psychologically and decrease stress^[2]
- With the decrease in public services, many could be losing their coping strategy
- Other ways to cope could be private religious practices to deepen faith, staying healthy, caring for others, following guidelines^[3]
- Negative consequences of places of worship include holding large gatherings and not following recommended protective measures such as social distancing and mask wearing^[2]

Our research question: During the COVID-19 pandemic, does religiousness and spirituality predict COVID-19 related health behaviors?

Hypothesis: We hypothesize that more religious and spiritual individuals will better comply with COVID-19 health behaviors to protect the common good.

Methods

- Sample included 1382 participants surveyed in April-May 2020
- National panel managed by the Harvard Digital Lab for the Social Sciences
- Included Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Jewish, Muslim, other Christian, and other Non-Christian religious affiliations
- Survey measures:
 - 3-item measure of COVID-19 compliance behaviors
 - 1-item measure of self-rated religiousness, 1-item measure of self-rated spirituality
 - 2-item measure of daily spiritual experiences
 - 1-item measure of concern for worship activities being cancelled
“Have you been upset because of worship services, or other religious or spiritual group activities being canceled due to the coronavirus?”
 - 4-item measure of religious coping
- Composite scores of religiousness and spirituality were calculated:
 - Religiousness composite included affiliation, importance, identity, and attendance
 - Spirituality composite included identity and Daily Spiritual Experiences
- Multiple linear regression analyses were used to test hypotheses




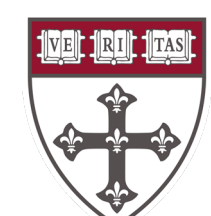
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- [2] Levin J. (2020). The Faith Community and the SARS-CoV-2 Outbreak: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?. *Journal of religion and health*, 59(5), 2215–2228.
- [3] Koenig H. G. (2020). Ways of Protecting Religious Older Adults from the Consequences of COVID-19. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 28(7), 776–779.



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Results

As seen in Table 1, in unadjusted models, religiousness and COVID compliance were significantly, negatively associated such that for people lower in religiousness, reported compliance is higher ($\beta = -0.080$, $p = 0.006$). After adjusting for conservative ideology, gender, age, race, salary, and education, this relationship stayed significant ($\beta = -0.077$, $p = 0.009$). Conservative ideology and race predicted lower compliance whereas gender, age, and salary predicted higher compliance.

In unadjusted models, religious identity and COVID compliance were significantly, negatively associated such that for people with a lower religious identity, COVID compliance is higher ($\beta = -0.061$, $p = 0.038$). After adjusting for conservative ideology, gender, age, race, salary, and education, this relationship stayed marginally significant ($\beta = -0.055$, $p = 0.078$). Conservative ideology and race predicted lower compliance and gender, age, and salary predicted higher compliance.

Spirituality, religious affiliation, religious importance, religious attendance, negative religious coping, positive religious coping, spiritual identity, and daily spiritual experiences (DSE) showed no significant association with COVID compliance.

Table 1 Predictors of COVID Compliance	Religiousness		Religious Identity	
	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 1 β	Model 2 β
R ² value	0.006	0.067	0.004	0.061
Predictor	-0.080**	-0.077**	-0.061*	-0.055+
Conservative ideology	--	-0.097***	--	-0.079*
Gender	--	0.182***	--	0.188***
Race	--	-0.066*	--	-0.069*
Salary	--	0.089**	--	0.082**
Education	--	0.036	--	0.038
Age	--	0.079**	--	0.075*

Note. + $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

- More religiousness and spiritual people did not show higher COVID-19 compliance
- Spirituality did not have a significant association with compliance
- Opposite to our hypotheses, those lower in overall religiousness as well as religious identity showed higher COVID-19 behavior compliance
 - Religious identity drove the overall effect of overall religiousness
 - This effect was driven by conservative ideology
- Results could indicate that religious communities set norms of poor COVID-19 compliance^[2]
- Future research areas include investigating more components of COVID-19 compliance and overall behaviors of the congregation to determine further whether places of worship had a direct impact on the behavior of individuals