

Spirituality and Well-being: Mindfulness as a Mediator

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Background

Well-being is a key component of optimal human functioning and understanding its attainment is crucial to the development of interventions promoting mental health. Current understandings emphasize well-being as multidimensional; comprised of general, psychological, eudaimonic components.

Religiosity and/or spirituality, as the beliefs or attitudes of an individual that reflect their faith in the sacred,¹ has been found to be mildly, but robustly, related to well-being.² This is sensible given that RS is a central paradigm through which many individuals interpret and experience their world.

There is no conclusive understanding of how RS impacts well-being. A lack of mediation studies on this topic means little is known about the mechanisms of this relationship.³ Further, it is unclear if RS variables have any incremental power influencing well-being beyond other well-being correlates.⁵ This study responds to these limits in existing research by conducting an exploratory study of mindfulness as a mediator of the relationship between RS and well-being (Figure 1).

Mindfulness is a mental state focused on open and present awareness that has been rigorously associated with positive well-being outcomes.⁶ There are conceptual reasons to think that RS and mindfulness may be associated as contributors to well-being. Mindfulness is related to RS inasmuch as it traditionally emerges from Eastern spiritual practice. Further, like RS, mindfulness plays a role in mental experience and may influence that way that individuals interpret and experience their world. To the best of our knowledge the relationship between RS and mindfulness has yet to be explored.

Method

Participants. 391 adults (235 females, 156 males) from the general population aged between 18 and 70 ($M = 29.4, SD = 10.2$).

Materials.

- **Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES)** measuring spirituality ($\alpha = .94$).
- **Mysticism Scale Research Form D** measuring experiences of RS ($\alpha = .94$).
- **World Health Organization Quality of Life, Brief Format (WHOQOL)** measuring general well-being ($\alpha = .90$).
- **The psychological health sub-scale (WHOPSYCH)** of the WHOQOL as a measure of psychological well-being ($\alpha = .82$).
- **Psychological Well-being Scale (SPWB)** measuring eudaimonic well-being ($\alpha = .94$).
- **Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)** measuring mindfulness ($\alpha = .92$).

Procedure. Participants were recruited using social networking, advertising, and the snowball technique. Questionnaire was administered online.

Aim

- To examine the relation between spirituality, RS, mindfulness, and multiple conceptualizations of wellbeing (general, psychological, and eudaimonic).
- To explore the mediating role of mindfulness in the relationship between spirituality and well-being, and RS and well-being.

Table 1

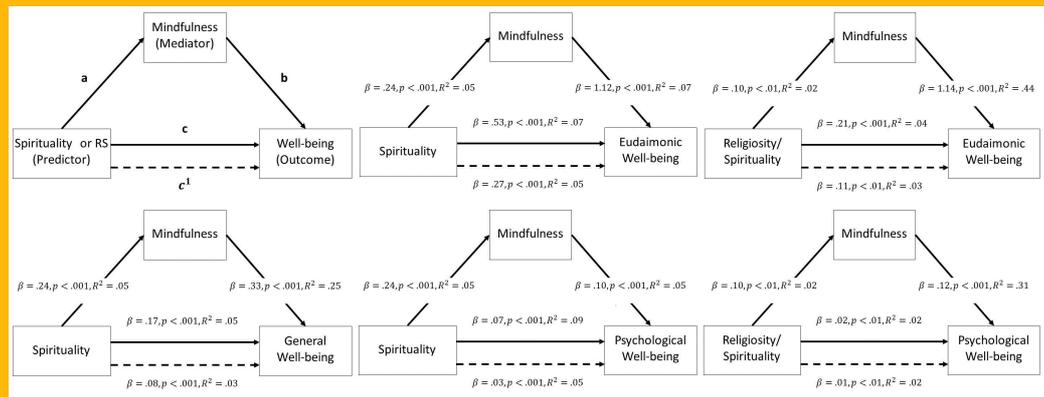
Pearson Product-moment correlations between variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. DSES					
2. MSCALE	.56**				
3. SPWB	.26**	.19**			
4. WHOQOL	.21**	.08	.73**		
5. WHOPSYCH	.30**	.15**	.78**	.82**	
6. FFMQ	.22**	.15**	.66**	.49**	.55**

** $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

Figure 1

Direct and mediated effects between study variables



Key Findings

- Table 1: All variables, except for RS and general well-being were significantly correlated at $p = .001$
- Figure 1: Mindfulness was a significant partial mediator of the relationship between:
 - spirituality and eudaimonic well-being
 - spirituality and general well-being
 - Spirituality and psychological well-being
 - RS and eudaimonic well-being
 - RS and psychological well-being

Conclusion

Association

Findings demonstrate that spirituality and mindfulness both positively impact general well-being, while spirituality, RS, and mindfulness positively impact psychological and eudaimonic well-being. The findings of association are consistent with the salutary relationships identified in existing literature with mindfulness displaying strong association with well-being and RS variables displaying mild associations with well-being. However, the strength of the correlations between RS variables and well-being were stronger in this study than meta-analytical averages ($\alpha = .10 - .16$).^{7,8} These findings also establish a mild, but novel, significant association between RS variables and mindfulness.

Mediation

Findings support mindfulness as a partial mediator of the relationship between RS variables and well-being. This suggests that mindfulness may be a mechanism through which RS impacts well-being. One conceptual explanation could be that mental states emphasising open perspective taking beyond the individual, either through spiritual awareness or through mindful present awareness, appear to positively impact well-being. The cultivation of such open mental states may be productive avenues for the future development of therapeutic interventions. It was found that mindfulness did not fully mediate the association between RS and well-being. This finding of partial mediation suggests that RS variables have an incremental predictive power in determining well-being beyond the influence of other well-being correlates.

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