

## A co-relational study between mental health and religious attitudes of young adults

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The paper explores the correlation between religious attitude and mental health in males and females of generation Y. The rationale of this study is to empirically analyze how the religious attitude impacts the mental health of males and females of generation Y. **Methodology:** A total of 210 subject, 100 males and 110 females of age group (17-36) were selected. All the subjects were exposed to Indian adaptation and given a Religious Attitudes Scale developed by Dr. M. Rajamanickam(1985) and Mental Health Checklist developed by Pramod Kumar(1992). The subjects were informed about the purpose of the study and consent was taken prior to data collection. The questionnaire had been constructed specifically for measuring the 6 religious attitudes; Nature of God, Prayer and worship, Formal Religion, Future Life, Priests, Spirits and Spirit world. It consists of 60 questions, 10 of which measure each attitude. The mental health checklist consists of 5 physical and 6 mental issues pertaining to an individual's mental health. The test was administered to both the groups in order to be completed within a given period of time. **Results:** No significant correlation was found between religious attitudes and mental health of males and females of age group 17-36, in the cities of Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar and Gandhinagar

**Keywords:** *Nature of God, Prayer and worship, Formal Religion, Future Life, Priests, Spirits and Spirit world, correlation.*

An individual's intensity of faith on religion and his/her religious attitude can shape his/her attitude towards life. Religion is used as a medium to answer every mortal's questions about their ultimate destiny. It answers their fate after the end of their existence, in some religions it is related to the kind of relations one has with the supreme power and in other religions, it related to more realist way of how one is devoted to the well being of mankind and other creatures. There are innumerable religions in the world. Each religion has a different outlook on life. The manner in which each individual perceives the holy texts is again different. Thus, different religious attitudes are formed. Some components to be studied in the prevailing study are Nature of God, Prayer and worship, Formal Religion, Priests, Future life and spirits and spiritual world (Azar. B).

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Mental Health of any being is as important as physical health of that person. It affects one's decisions, actions and behaviour. The paper shall study both physical and mental components of mental health and well-being.

One might face troubles with their mental health, this could be due to some disturbing incidents in the past or genes or the environment in which one is brought up. One's beliefs and attitude towards life can play an important role in the mental health of that person. The study of this paper is to understand if religious attitudes of a person affect his/her mental health.

Through this paper the author shall try to understand to what extent religion plays a role in the well-being of an individual. (Nordqvist.C).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*"Religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that related humanity to an order of existence."*-Dr. Rajamanickam.

Sophia, N. S., & Kavitha, G. (2017) studied that religious attitudes can impact all the aspects of an individual's life. Religion has been known to have power to affect one's personal and professional life. It has the ability to heal a person and make a difference in a positive or negative manner. This being said, positive religious attitude has a hold over one's mental and physical well-being. It leads to a changed, positive and healthy form of lifestyle. This can mainly be linked to inner-healing, as one develops a positive attitude towards life and finds purpose of life.

Niyas Muhammed's research on influence of religiosity in adolescents showed that religion plays a constructive role in the positive lifestyle of a person as researched before. Religion has been known to affect an individual's societal and private progress. Even with 4200 religions present in the world, most of them preach the message of love and peace. This attitude can help a person evolve as a better person along with him/her being conscious of what is "good" and "bad".

Religious attitude is basically an individual's perception on different areas of the religion like Nature of God, Prayer and Worship, Formal Religion, Priests, Future Life, Spirits and Spirit World. (Rajamanickam, 1958) (Niyas Muhammed)

Dr. K. Kajavinthan, in 2015 published about how religion has been involved with human social life significantly. Human beliefs and perspectives have been known to be impacted by religion. An individual's perspective plays a major role in his/her conducts. Apart from religion, other factors like experience and influence too play an important role in his/her decision to act upon a situation in a certain manner. This may come out to be in a positive or negative manner. Perspectives are formed in an individual, concerning his/her bringing up and social institutions around him/her. These could include caste, gender, religion or creed. Religious attitudes could play a significant role in one's existence and thriving.

Behere, P. B., Das, A., Yadav, R., & Behere, A. P. (2013) studies show that religion and mental health are strongly co-related according to previous studies. Religion in today's age helps in protecting an individual from unhealthy distractions. Most of the religions have a specific system or rules that the followers must abide by. These generally include food and lifestyle habits. Through such means an individual has the chance to control his desires and

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thus not fall prey to unhealthy lifestyle habits. This could reduce various physical, sexual and emotional diseases. This in-turn leads to reduced mental illnesses.

A study in Canada has shown that a lot of psychiatric illnesses have been linked to religion since long. Religion has shown to provide a sense of warmth, protection and the idea of someone being there to have faith in, in cases of suicidal tendencies, depression, psychosis, anxiety, etc. But at times religion could create more complexities in neurotic diseases.

Jahoda, M. (1958) put forward how mental illness can be just well defined after including the positive and constructive aspects of welfare and health and is not just a state of mind where no illness was detected. Happiness has become an important aspect of wellbeing when it comes to mental health.

Mental Health of any being is as important as physical health of that person. It affects one's decisions, actions and behaviour. The paper shall study both physical and mental components of mental health and well-being.

One might face troubles with their mental health, this could be due to some disturbing incidents in the past or genes or the environment in which one is brought up. One's beliefs and attitude towards life can play an important role in the mental health of that person. The study of this paper is to understand if religious attitudes of a person affect his/her mental health.

According to Chengti, S, primitives have been known to conceptualize mental health in respect to religion. Today, we know mental illnesses are treatable. Mental health has always somewhere been related to religion in terms of acting according to God's will or not.

### ***Research Gap***

The study has been conducted on young adults (17-36) with the gender aspect. The study was specifically directed on subjects exposed to urban Indian adaptation. Such study has not been conducted over this specific group of subjects in the cities of Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar and Gandhinagar. There are very few researches that relate religious attitudes to physical attributes of mental health.

### ***Objectives***

- To test the correlation between the Religious Attitudes and Mental Health in the young adults
- To test the extent of correlation of internal factors of Religious Attitudes and internal factors of Mental Health

### ***Hypothesis***

H<sub>1</sub>: There is strong positive correlation between Religious Attitudes and Mental Health of males and females.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no strong correlation between Religious Attitudes and Mental Health of males and females

## **MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY**

The study is aimed to determine the co-relation between religious attitudes and mental health of an individual, if any. For the purpose of the study, two questionnaires were administered

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to subjects in individual situation and general instructions were given in the beginning of the test. The first questionnaire pertains to questions related to Mental Health from the Mental Health Checklist developed by Pramod Kumar (1992). It consists of 11 questions. 6 of which are related to mental attributes and the other 5 to physical attributes. The second questionnaire pertains to questions related to Religious attitudes of an individual. It consists of 60 questions which understand the following 6 components, Nature of God, Prayer and Worship, Formal Religion, Priests, Future Life and Spirits and Spiritual world. The objective of the test was well explained to the subjects before the administration. The study was conducted on a group of 210 subjects with equal representation of gender belonging to (17-36). Hundred males and hundred and ten females of age group 17-36 were taken. All the subjects were exposed to Indian adaptation. Random Stratified sampling method was used for data collection.

There were four possible ways to reply for the mental health checklist, Always, Often, Sometimes and Never. In consideration of the Religious Attitude Scale by Dr. Rajamanickam (1985) there were five possible views, which could be taken by the subject regarding each of sixty statements and they were strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. These views were given numerical values ranging from 1 to 5.

### **Limitations:**

The study has been conducted on a sample size of 210 subjects. Thus, the study can be held valid for a very specific group of people, which is young adults (17-36), exposed to Indian urban adaptation, specifically in the cities of Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar and Gandhinagar.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

**DATA TABLE 1: Table showing the average attitudes of females towards religious factors**

<b>RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES FEMALES</b>		
Factors	Mean	Level of attitude
Nature of God	28.88	Neutral
Prayer and Worship	29.98	Neutral
Formal Religion	27.83	Neutral
Future Life	28.66	Neutral
Priests	27.58	Neutral
Spirits and Spirit World	32.01	Neutral

**DATA TABLE 2: Table showing the average attitudes of males towards religious factors**

<b>RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES MALES</b>		
Factors	Mean	Level of attitude
Nature of God	29.29	Neutral
Prayer and Worship	29.93	Neutral
Formal Religion	27.3	Neutral
Future Life	28.13	Neutral
Priests	28.39	Neutral
Spirits and Spirit World	31.49	Neutral

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**DATA TABLE 3: Table observing the correlation value of internal factors of religious attitudes and mental health in females.**

<b>Females correlation</b>	<b>mental factors</b>	<b>physical factors</b>
Nature of God	0.027869	0.145549
Prayer and Worship	-0.04157	-0.00833
Formal Religion	-0.06807	0.082873
Future Life	0.021898	0.096841
Priests	-0.02819	0.200193
Spirits and Spirit World	0.067276	0.008289

**DATA TABLE 4: Table observing the correlation value of internal factors of religious attitudes and mental health in males.**

<b>Males correlation</b>	<b>mental factors</b>	<b>physical factors</b>
Nature of God	0.252339	0.075086
Prayer and Worship	0.053785	0.212089
Formal Religion	0.07461	0.041181
Future Life	0.050018	0.069213
Priests	-0.02302	0.083048
Spirits and Spirit World	-0.03428	0.090222

**DATA TABLE 5: Table showing overall correlation between religious attitudes and mental health in females.**

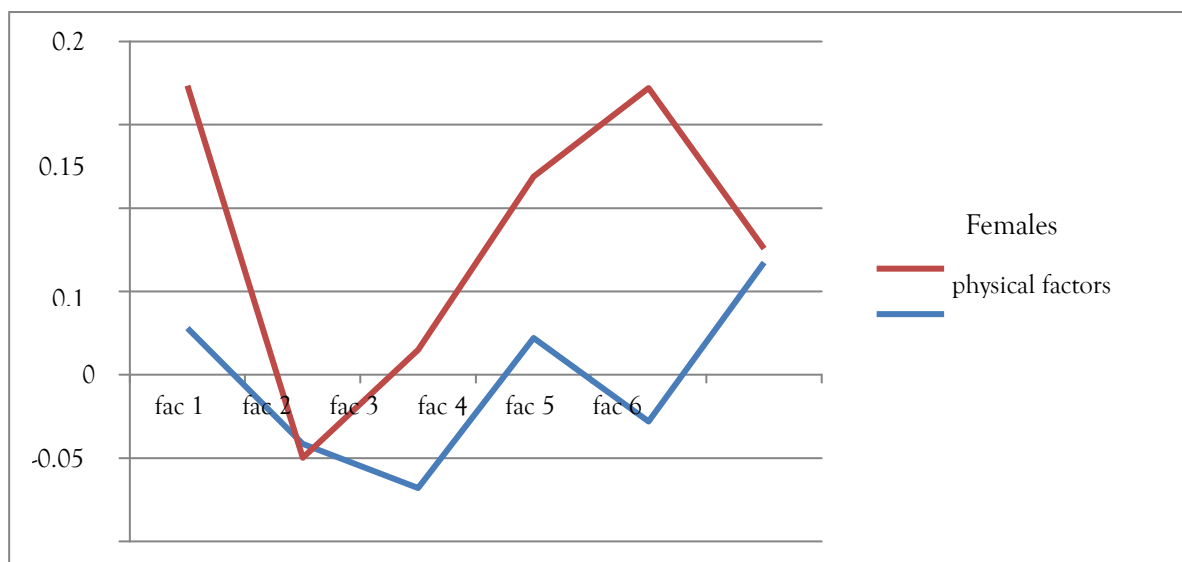
<b>Overall correlation females</b>	<b>rasff</b>	<b>Mhf</b>
rasff	1	
Mhf	0.065772	1

**DATA TABLE 6: Table showing overall correlation between religious attitudes and mental health in males.**

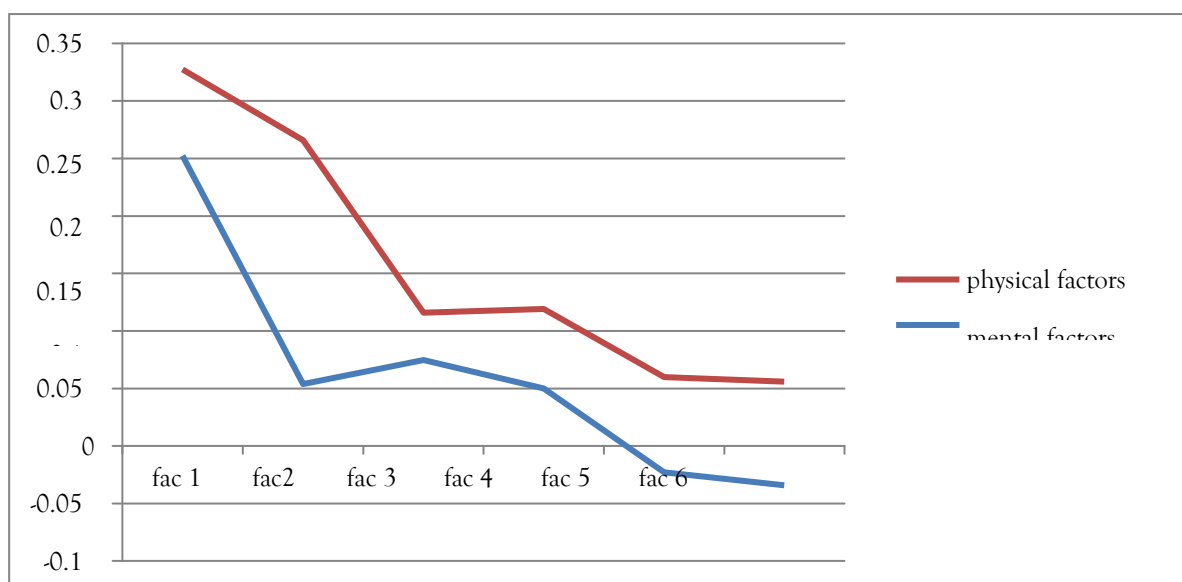
<b>Overall correlation males</b>	<b>rasmf</b>	<b>Mhm</b>
Rasmf	1	
Mhm	0.111305	1

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**GRAPH 1: Graph observing the correlation value of internal factors of religious attitudes and mental health in females**



**GRAPH 2: Graph observing the correlation value of internal factors of religious attitudes and mental health in males.**



According to the statistical data derived by applying the correlation test on the two tests, Religious Attitude Scale and Mental Health Checklist, taken from the entire population of 210, there is very weak positive correlation of religious attitudes with mental health in both males and females.

Let us consider each factor of Religious Attitudes Scale measured individually.

1. Nature of God: This factor tries to understand the supremacy that God holds on an individual's mind. God is known to be the undisputable justice and the Creator of all. In many religions God is known to be omnipresent and the guide of all the actions. He is present in the five elements of environment, fire, water, air, earth and metal. He causes miracles and controls the universe. In Hinduism, God is known to incarnate

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- whenever there is an increase in evil doings on the earth. Both females (28.88) and males (29.29) are unable to decide upon their belief in Nature of God. This is shown in the data table 1 and 2. Compared to males, females have more belief as of this factor.
2. **Prayer and Worship:** This factor refers to different kinds of devotions offered to the God. These vary from religion to religion. Some believe in praying, some believe in offering sacrifices while others believe in good deeds. These prayers and worships are generally offered with the motive of God helping an individual with their financial, health, family, social, professional needs/wants, etc. Prayers and worships are the form of showing affection, praise and gratitude to the Almighty. Forms of worship might differ with religions but the basic purpose generally remains the same. Females (29.98) and males (29.93) have a neutral opinion on Prayers and Worship as well, as shown in data table 1 and 2.
  3. **Formal Religion:** Formal religion refers to the adhering to the formalities and religious rituals. This might include going to the place of worship every morning (Going to the church every evening) or going to the pilgrimage every year during the festival (Muslims visit Mecca every year). This brings the feeling of belongingness in the community, society and religious groups. It gives a sense of being one. Formal religion can be associated to some kind of loyalty to an ideology. Males (27.30) show highest belief in this factor, as compared to other factors. According to the norms both females (27.82) and males (27.30) show neutral opinion on this factor, as shown in data table 1 and 2.
  4. **Future Life:** Every religion has one thing in common, which is to preach about living a healthy lifestyle. Religious texts often provide a guide for living a good and better life. This is basically, for the betterment of the followers of the religion and their future life. Often, the concepts of heaven and hell are used to make sure people act in the right manner. Ultimately, every human wants to achieve a state of salvation and wants freedom from the cycle of birth- rebirth. This has been very well explained in the religious texts through different means, with the same purpose. Females (28.66) and males (28.13) express neutral opinion on future life in accordance to religion. As shown in data table 1 and 2.
  5. **Priests:** Priests are often considered the “middlemen” between God and mortals. They are supposed to have the formal knowledge of the religion they preach about. Priests conduct rituals and sermons with the knowledge and power they possess. Most religious texts are difficult to understand for a layman. Priests simplify the texts and preach the message of God to the rest. These duties as performed by the priest, make him the next most respected person, after God. A priest lives a life of utmost simplicity, as given in the sacred texts. Most individuals consider the message given by priests as the voice of God. Thus, making them extremely important in social settings. Females (27.5) and males (28.39) express neutral opinion on this factor as well. Although, females (27.5) show most positive inclination in this factor as compared to the other factors, as observed in data table 1 and 2.
  6. **Spirits and Spirit World:** The belief in spirits has dated back to ancient times. Religions like Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe in spirits in countries including India, Greece, Rome, China and Japan. With increasing power being given to rationality, the faith of people in spirits is decreasing. As compared to all other factors, least belief has been expressed by margins, by both the genders for this factor. Females (32.01) and males (31.49) as shown in data table 1 and 2.

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Overall females (174.96) and males (174.55) express a neutral opinion on Religious Attitudes.

Now, let us consider each of Mental Health Checklist's factors individually.

1. **Mental Factors:** These include the symptoms that one might face when dealing with poor mental health. The sub-factors included are, Anxiety, Restlessness, Nervousness, Loneliness, Disappointment, and Anger. Through these symptoms one can judge an individual's mental health status. Females (13.54) are affected more in this factor than men (12.58).
2. **Physical Factors:** These include the physical symptoms that an individual might face while dealing with poor mental health. The sub-factors included are, Headache, Fatigue, Insomnia, Indigestion and Acidity. Females (9.29) are affected more than men (8.37) in this factor.

Correlation test has been applied between:

- Religious Attitudes of Females and Mental Health of Females (Data table 5).
- Religious Attitudes of Males and Mental Health of Males (Data table 6).
- Religious Attitudes internal 6 factors of Females and Mental Health internal 2 factors of Females (Data table 3) (Graph 1).
- Religious Attitudes internal 6 factors of Males and Mental Health internal 2 factors of Males (Data table 4) (Graph 2).

On the basis of the results found from the correlation test between the above given factors, the author concludes that there is no significant/strong correlation between Religious Attitudes and Mental Health of an individual of age 17-36. Females of this age group show weak positive correlation between Religious attitudes and Mental Health (0.065772) and males also show weak positive correlation between these two dynamics (0.111305), as shown in data table 5 and 6.

As observed in data table 3, we can interpret that in females, factor relating to priests have highest correlation with physical symptoms of mental health (0.200193, weak positive correlation). Priests also have the lowest correlation with the mental symptoms of mental health (-0.02819, weak negative correlation).

In females, the correlation of the factor relating with Nature of God and physical symptoms (0.145549) is higher than that with mental symptoms (0.027869). Similarly, stronger negative correlation is found in the factor considering Prayer and worship along with mental symptoms (-0.04157) than with physical symptoms (-0.00833). Weak negative correlation is found in mental symptoms and formal religion (-0.06807) and weak positive correlation is found in physical symptoms and Formal Religion (0.082873). Weak positive correlation is shown by both mental (0.021898) and physical (0.096841) with Future Life. Similarly, weak positive correlation is observed in both mental (0.067276) and physical (0.008289) symptoms and Spirits and Spirit world.

As observed in data table 4, we can interpret that in males, factor relating to the Nature of God has the highest correlation with mental symptoms of mental health (0.252339, moderate positive correlation), whereas, the factor relating to Spirits and spirit world has the highest



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negative correlation in comparison to others with mental symptoms (-0.03428, weak negative correlation).

In males, the correlation of the factor relating to Nature of god and physical symptoms of mental health (0.075086) is considerably lower than that with mental symptoms. Whereas, in the factor pertaining to Prayers and worship, the physical symptoms of mental health (0.212089) have higher correlation than the mental symptoms of mental health (0.053785). Weak positive correlation is shown by both mental (0.07461) and physical (0.041181) symptoms of mental health with Formal Religion. Future life has weak positive correlation with both mental (0.050018) and physical (0.69213) symptoms of mental health.

Mental symptoms (-0.02392) have a weak negative correlation with the factor dealing with Priests, whereas, weak positive correlation is observed with physical factors (0.083048). Highest negative correlation shown is that of Spirit and Spirit World with mental symptoms of mental health (-0.03428, weak negative correlation). Physical symptoms show weak positive correlation with the factor relating to Spirit and spirit world (0.090222).

The conclusion for all the data is interpreted with the help of Dr. Rajamanickam's norms table constructed on different samples of various groups. The Mental Health Checklist was interpreted on the basis of the mean calculated. The correlation method of analysis was considered as the base of interpretation of the data.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

No significant relationship is expressed between Religious Attitudes and Mental Health of a person. Females exhibit a weak positive correlation (0.065772) between religious attitudes and mental health. Males also exhibit weak positive correlation (0.111305) between religious attitudes and mental health.

Religious attitudes are formed early in life, through societal and parental influences. The religious attitudes are initially raw, as an individual develops his own ideologies and mental frame; he understands the religion better with respect to his own situation and environment. In today's fast-paced world, the youth has missed the aspect of exploring their religious attitudes and thus have very few strong beliefs for the same. At the same time, there are various other external and internal factors that lead to the same. These might have an overpowering effect on the religious aspect alone. Thus, insignificant relationship between the two variables can be observed.

This study is significant for understanding the difference between mental health of males and females. With better knowledge about the doubts and lack of understanding in youth, we can have those topics included in the curriculum, specifically designed to better the lifestyle of individuals. A lot of positive aspects of religions should be included since the childhood, to develop better mental health. Such studies should be conducted on various populations so as to understand the effect of these two variables on them. Further study on this topic is encouraged.

Mental health issues can be intervened with the help of CBT. A better understanding of religion can also help an individual cope with his issues. Thus, the coming generations should be brought up to understand religion, which might in turn help them deal with their mental health issues.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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