

Ways of coping and eudaimonic wellbeing of theists and atheists

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ABSTRACT

Religion has always played a great role in a person's coping styles and well-being in the present-day scenario of the Indian culture. Factors such as coping and wellbeing therefore have an edge in these excruciating times. Such a research as this has not been done in India context before, combining two factors together which are coping skills and wellbeing of theists and atheists. Participants included 50 people between the age of 18 to 25, they were further divided into two groups of 25 theists and 25 atheists each. Questionnaire for eudaimonic wellbeing (QEWB) and Ways of Coping (WOC) Questionnaire by the Folkman and Lazarus (1984) were used as a tool for assessment. Analysis of responses show that there are significant differences in some areas of WOC and eudaimonic wellbeing remains non-significant.

Keywords: *Eudaimonic Wellbeing, Theists And Atheists, Religion*

Religion has always played a sacred role in defining potentialities and wellbeing. 'Today we see many youngsters turning to atheists (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999). Will it affect their wellbeing and coping strategies in their daily living? Will a life without religion generate a variation in the light of ways of coping in situations in lifestyle?

Eudaimonic well being

Eudaimonic well-being refers to the subjective experiences associated with eudaimonia or living a life of virtue in pursuit of human excellence. The phenomenological experiences derived from such living include self-actualization, personal expressiveness, and vitality.

Well-being is a complex, multifaceted construct that can be defined as optimal human experience and psychological functioning (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2001) and involves subjective experiences and objective conditions indicative of physical, psychological, and social wellness. From the dawn of intellectual history, philosophers have debated what constitutes "the good life" and how such a life may be achieved, and this debate has recently permeated psychological theory and research (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008; Ryan & Huta, 2009; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Waterman, 2008).

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Ways of coping

Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. Two general coping strategies have been distinguished: problem-solving strategies are efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988) strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events. Research indicates that people use both types of strategies to combat most stressful events.

The predominance of one type of strategy over another is determined, in part, by personal style (e.g., some people cope more actively than others) and also by the type of stressful event; for example, people typically employ problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988) to deal with potential controllable problems such as work-related problems and family-related problems, whereas stressors perceived as less controllable, such as certain kinds of physical health problems, prompt more emotion-focused coping.

Religion

Dictionary states that “The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.” And when one believes on God, we call him a “Theist” but an unbeliever is termed to be an “Atheist.”

India has had a rich historical evidence of culture and religion through ages. Today in 2020 we have 99.5% of the Indian population (World Population Review, 2019) believing on a Deity. Less than one percentage of our population has an evidential believe that god never exists in any form or stature.

Religion is considered to have a way of life (Franchi, 2018). All the religion teaches us about living a lifestyle so that we can please God (Pfaff, 2013), the creator of the universe. Every believer has a complete advantage of believing on a deity (Jacobs, 2009) and having its power which comes in the form of positivity in their live. Whether its Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism or any other religion, they tend to follow a particular belief system which enhances the way they cope up in circumstances and maintain a wellbeing.

Prayer is a multi-dimensional (Kelley, 2009) experience which has been studied by various people.. Prayer is an effective coping strategy (Cheng, Lau, & Chan, 2014) which functions by creating a means of feeling in control despite confronting adversities in life and it may also transform negative events as opportunities for spiritual growth, asking for strength in the face of illness or engendering mental models of a loving God that provide meaning and purpose in life (Dein and Littlewood, 2008). The association between prayer and well-being may occur through a number of means: relaxation, increased self-esteem and provision of optimism (Krause, 2004). – 357.

Religious Coping- Coping designates a cognitive and behavioural effort to reduce, restrain or tolerate the internal or external demands which exceed personal resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Religious coping is the use of religious beliefs and behaviours to facilitate problem-solving, to prevent or diminish negative emotional consequences of stressful life situations (Pargament, 1997).

In the past years there has been a change from negative attitudes (Stark, Flache, & Veenstra, 2013) in psychology, concerning religion, to the identification of more positive relations

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between religion and different aspects of mental health (GENOVA, 2002). If mental health and religion have a positive relation than we can surely understand that the link between (Athota, 2017)(Myers, 2013) plays an important role in the functionality of atheist's lifestyle. Recent research proves that some forms of religiosity are associated with low levels of depression (McCullough and Larson, 1999), a personal well-being (Koenig, 2001), positive social attitudes (Baton et. al, 1993), a low risk of divorce and an increase in the degree of marital functionality (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar and Swank, 2001).

If we understand the concept of religion with ways of coping and wellbeing clearly, we will see that with increasing atheism in the population we will individuals either more or may be less tolerant and stressful. Therefore, this study takes up the role to fill the gap of knowledge in the present-day Indian scenario. There had been always a positive association between religion and mental well-being which eventually enhances general psychological functioning.

Objective

1. To assess ways of coping in theists and atheists.
2. To assess eudaimonic wellbeing in theists and atheists.
3. To assess the relationship between ways of coping and eudaimonic wellbeing in theists and atheists.

Hypothesis

1. Theists will show better confront as compared to atheists.
2. Theists will show better distancing as compared to atheists.
3. Theists will show better self-control as compared to atheists.
4. Theists will show better seeking of social support as compared to atheists.
5. Theists will show better accepting responsibility as compared to atheists.
6. Theists will show better escape avoidance as compared to atheists.
7. Theists will show better plan full problem solving as compared to atheists.
8. Theists will show better positive reappraisal as compared to atheists.
9. Theists will show better eudaimonic wellbeing as compared to atheists.
10. There will be a positive correlation between eudaimonic wellbeing and ways of coping skills of theists.
11. There will be a positive correlation between eudaimonic wellbeing and ways of coping skills of atheists.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A sample of 50 people was selected. They were further divided into two groups, group A was the group of theists or religious people. Group A had 25 people. Group B also had 25 people who were atheists. The age group taken was from 18 to 25 which included college going and job-oriented people too.

Survey Measures

1. Ways of Coping (WOC) Questionnaire by the Folkman and Lazarus (1984)

The tool a 66-item, self-report questionnaire using a four-point Likert scale that can be completed in approximately twenty minutes. This has been designed to assess coping processes in response to a specific stressful event experienced by the sample during the past four weeks. This tool has been designed to assess the eight ways of coping include: Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self-Controlling, Escape-Avoidance (emotion-focused coping) and Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility, plan full Problem Solving and

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Positive Reappraisal (problem-focused coping). Individuals responded to each item on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (does not apply and/or not used) to 3 (used a great deal) showing the frequency of each strategy which were used.

2. Eudaimonic Well-Being

The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being (QEWB) was developed to measure well-being in a manner consistent with how it is conceptualized in eudaemonist philosophy. Aspects of eudaimonic well-being assessed by the QEWB include self-discovery, perceived development of one's best potentials, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, intense involvement in activities, investment of significant effort, and enjoyment of activities as personally expressive. The questionnaire consists of 21 question in all and were to be rated from 0 to 4. Zero meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree.

Design

Correlational design will be used to find out the results. The test will be given to college going young adults. They will fill the questionnaire and answer all the questions in a stressful situation in their mind. The test however will be completed in 25 to 30 minutes.

Procedure

The test was given to college going students and some people in the jobs. They were required to fill the questionnaire which had 83 questions in all, of eudaimonic wellbeing and ways of coping. They had to keep a stressful situation in mind and then they had to answer all the questions. The test could be easily completed in 30 minutes or so.

RESULT

The first hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better confront as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be -0.8984 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 1.

Table 1 showing mean confront scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Confrontive scores	N	M	SD	t
Theists	25	9.24	3.37	-0.8984*
Atheists	25	14.2	27.3968	

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.407$ * not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The second hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better distancing as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be --2.3559 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 2.

Table 2 showing mean distancing scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Distancing scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	8.48	3.0973	-2.3559*
Theists	25	9.92	2.4139	

$t_{(0.05)} = 1.711$ * are significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The third hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better self control as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large,

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independent sample. The t value was found to be 0 is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 3.

Table 3 showing mean self controlling scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Self- controlling scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	2.8137	3.1885	0*
Theists	25	11.4	11.4	

$t_{(0.05)} = 0$ * not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The fourth hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better seeking of social support as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be 2.4423 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 4.

Table 4 showing mean seeking social support scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Seeking social support scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	11.2	2.582	2.4423*
Theists	25	8.6	4.6548	

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.407$ * are significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The fifth hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better accepting responsibility as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be -0.8984 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 5.

Table 5 showing mean accepting responsibility scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Accepting responsibility scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	7.36	5.36	2.7236*
Theists	25	2.8267	2.3431	

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.407$ * are significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The sixth hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better escape avoidance as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be -0.2794 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 6.

Table 6 showing mean escape avoidance scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Escape avoidance scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	11.56	11.88	-0.2794*
Theists	25	4.1239	3.972	

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.407$ * not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The seventh hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better plan full problem solving as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be 1.5785 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 7.

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Table 7 showing mean planful problem solving scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Planfull problem solving scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	11.4	10	1.5785*
Theists	25	2.5981		

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.407$ * not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The eighth hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better positive reappraisal as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be 3.0068 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 8.

Table 8 showing mean positive reappraisal scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Positive reappraisal scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	14.48	11.36	3.0068*
Theists	25	4.0324	3.2645	

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.407$ *are significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The ninth hypothesis under study stated that Theists will show better eudaimonic wellbeing as compared to atheists. The hypothesis was tested with the help of t-test as applicable to large, independent sample. The t value was found to be 1.3757 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. The data obtained is depicted below in table 9.

Table 9 showing mean eudaimonic scores, SD and t value of theists and atheists

Eudaimonic wellbeing scores	N	M	SD	t
Atheists	25	56.12	52.08	1.3757*
Theists	25	11.4285	9.2192	

$t_{(0.05)} = 2.682$ * not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 10 Correlation between ways of coping and Eudaimonic well being of theists and atheists.

Correlation between ways of coping and Eudaimonic wellbeing of	
Theists	r = 0.1212
Atheists	r = 0.0251

There was positive correlation between ways of coping and eudaimonic wellbeing for theists and for atheists.

DISCUSSION

The study conducted on theist and atheists and following results were found. When someone confronts or faces the issue or problem in life directly or indirectly. They make aggressive effort of altering the situation or suggesting certain degree of hostility as well as risk taking. It is a way of coping which includes anger. That was no significant difference found in group A and group B. Which means that both the groups show equal aggression or aggressive behaviour when it comes to coping of a situation in their life.

Usually when people are loaded up with the work many situations come forward, people of group A and group B show same amount of activeness to confront the situation and try their best to alter the situation or to find a particular way to get out of the situation. Therefore

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religiosity does not play any particular role in a person's behaviour while he confronts a particular situation in life.

The second type of way of coping which was measured between both the groups was distancing. Distancing is a particular behaviour of seeing denial what detaching oneself and minimising the importance of situation. People of group A are different people of group B because they know when to detach themselves so that the importance of the situation can be minimised. On the contrary people in group B are persistence in arguing and making their own point important in the middle of the situation. People of group A have better knowledge off when to get cut off so that an aggressive argument in the middle of the situation is dropped. They believe more in creating peace and harmony with others by denying rather than proving their own point. Therefore, a significant difference can be marked in both the groups in this area of way of coping in lifestyle.

The third area of way of coping talks about self-control of person in life. As per the result found out there was no significant difference between group A and group B. Both the people of the groups show similar self-control in different situations of their life. Which brings us to the point that religiosity never promotes a person to practice higher degree of self-control. It is the potential of the person which he uses in different situations to find out answers to life.

In the field of social support there was significant difference found at $p < 0.01$ level. Which means that people of group A seek more social support as compared to people of group B. Social support is the key to many human accomplishments, including the successful management of stress. People belonging to group A need high social support as compared to group B. The people of group A or not prone to depression anxiety problems and other worries of life because they have friends to share all their feelings with. On the other hand, people in group B are more prone to depression anxiety and suicidal tendencies.

The fifth area talks about accepting responsibility in life there was a significant difference found at $p < 0.01$ level. People of group A like to work in teams and are responsible for their own work stop the usually do not miss deadlines and try bringing new challenges to make their work interesting. They worked beautifully with teams and do not blame others for their mistakes while working in a team. The sense of responsibility in the people of group A is higher than the people of group B.

In the field of planful problem solving. There was no significant difference found at $p < 0.01$ level between both the groups. Therefore, we can say that people of group A and group B do Plan full problem solving or at times take decision in a hasty way. Keeping what the possibilities in mind we see that there is no difference in the approach to solve a problem between a theist and atheist.

Positive reappraisal means to reframe a situation and to see it in a positive manner. In our study significant difference was found at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. That means people of group A by depending on religion and spiritual beliefs have a positive insight to situations in life. When they go through negative situations the imagine positivity out of all the negativity and see that situation in a meaningful way. Religion has somewhere or the other impacted their way of coping in life. On the other hand, people of group B consider less of positivity negative situations of life which can at times lead to distress in different situations of life. As we compared to the groups, we find that in this area theists are different from atheists.

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The correlation between eudaimonic wellbeing and ways of coping of group A enthusiasts was $r=0.1212$. By looking at the positive correlation we see that somewhere or the other wellbeing and ways of coping and religiosity of theists correlate but on a very negligible level. We know that when correlation is closer to 1 there are very high chances of significant and positive strong correlation. On the other hand, when correlation is nearer to 0 the relationship between the variables is weak. As per the results received for group A, we see that correlation is positive but negligible. There for eudaimonic wellbeing is not affected by the ways of coping or the interference of religion. A man is happy by attending his purpose in life and leading is life in physical mental and psychological happiness.

On the other hand, for group B a positive correlation was found in both the variable where $r=0.0251$. Although we see that positive correlation exists but it's negligible. Therefore, we can conclude that the happiness of people of group B is not getting affected by religious impact or by the ways of coping they opt in life to cope up in circumstances. Seeing the results of group, A and group B we can conclude that there is negligible positive correlation which creates no impact or negligible impact on the wellbeing of people of both the groups. Hence eudaimonic wellbeing is not affected by the ways of coping which people opt to handle a particular situation in life.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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