

Psychology

LaGrange College Undergraduate Spiritual Involvement And Subjective Happiness

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In a research study done by Anne Berthold (2014), a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at the University of Zurich, it was found that religiously affiliated people who were active in religious groups experienced more satisfaction and meaning in life than those who were not active in religious groups (Berthold, 2014). I was very interested in this correlation and wondered if there had been other studies which obtained similar results. Another study done by Dariusz Krok (2014) of the Institute of Family Science at Opole University, found that mental health improved in individuals who took part in meaningful religious practices (Krok, 2014). The purpose of this study is to assess students' involvement in spiritual activities on campus (frequency, type, religious doctrine, etc.) and to assess the mental state/ subjective happiness of spiritually involved students at LaGrange College. Through this study, I hope to see if there is any correlation between student involvement in spiritual activities and a student's positive mental state (as assessed through self-report). I also hope that feedback provided may help our campus Spiritual Life leaders to better minister to undergraduates at LaGrange College.

Method

Participants

My participant population was made up of all undergraduate members of Spiritual Life groups on campus. I had a total of 33 participants, 12 of whom were male and 21 of whom were female. I had 6 participants that responded online and 27 who responded to the paper questionnaire.

Procedure

I attended meetings of Spiritual Life groups on campus and asked members to participate in the survey. If they agreed to participate in the study, they were given a survey and asked to return it to the envelope after completion. The envelope collection technique insured that data was collected anonymously. For online data collection, I sent out an email to all students who have attended

spiritual life activities asking them to complete the online version of the questionnaire. A link to the survey was included in the email along with instructions for completing the survey (like those included at the top of the paper questionnaire). The link to the online survey is as follows: <http://kwiksurveys.com/s/MZAyfyAv>

Results

In examining group statistics (shown in Table1), male participants showed a mean frequency of attendance of 1.58 (SD= 1.165), while female participants showed a mean frequency of attendance of 2.05 (SD=1.284) [4 representing "I go to every meeting", 3 representing "I go every other week", 2 representing "I go once a month", and 1 representing "I rarely ever go"] (shown in Table1). When looking at general contentedness with life, male participants showed a mean of 3.42 (SD= .739), while female participants showed a mean of 3.48 (SD=.602) [with 4 representing Very Content and 1 representing Very Discontent]. In running an independent samples t-test (shown in Table2), frequency of attendance, with equal variances assumed, $F=1.035$ (Sig=.317), while general contentedness with life, with equal variances assumed, $F=1.809$ (Sig=.188). In examining group statistics (shown in Table 3), participants who see themselves as a happy person showed a mean contentedness with life of 3.50 (SD= .622); participants who do not see themselves as a happy person showed a mean contentedness with life of 2.00 (SD=0, only one respondent). When looking at number of groups attended, participants who see themselves as a happy person showed a mean 1.65 (SD= .950), while one participant who did not see himself as a happy person had a score of 1.00 (SD=0, only one respondent). In running an independent samples t-test (shown in Table 4), frequency of attendance and number of groups attended, with equal variances assumed, F could not be calculated.

Table 1

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
FA	1Male	12	1.58	1.165	.336
	2 Female	21	2.05	1.284	.280
CLife	1 Male	12	3.42	.793	.229
	2 Female	21	3.48	.602	.131

Table 2

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
FA	Equal variances assumed	1.035	.317	1.032	31	.310	-.464	.450	-1.381	.453	
	Equal variances not assumed			1.061	24.959	.299	-.464	.438	-1.366	.437	
CLife	Equal variances assumed	1.809	.188	-.243	31	.809	-.060	.245	-.558	.439	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.226	18.335	.824	-.060	.264	-.613	.494	

Table 3

Group Statistics					
	Happy Person	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CLife	1 Yes	32	3.50	.622	.110
	2 No	1	2.00	.	.
NumG	1 Yes	31	1.65	.950	.171
	2 No	1	1.00	.	.

Table 4

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
CLife	Equal variances assumed	.	.	2.374	31	.024	1.500	.632	.211	2.789	
	Equal variances not assumed			.	.	.	1.500	.	.	.	
NumG	Equal variances assumed	.	.	.668	30	.509	.645	.966	-1.327	2.617	
	Equal variances not assumed		645	.	.	.	

Discussion

I found it interesting that male participants showed a mean frequency of attendance of 1.58 (SD= 1.165), while female participants showed a mean frequency of attendance of 2.05 (SD=1.284). This shows that females are more likely than males to attend spiritual life frequently. A possible cause of this difference could simply be that I had a larger population of females represented than males, and that with a larger sample size I might get similar results for the male participants. Another possible explanation of the discrepancy would be that women come more frequently to socialize and see their friends, whereas the male population, being smaller, may not come as frequently because fewer of their friends attend. Male contentedness with life showed a mean of 3.42 (SD=.739), and female contentedness with life showed a mean of 3.48 (SD=.602). Both of these were very high contentedness scores on the four point scale (with 4 representing Very Content and 1 representing Very Discontent) with very low standard deviations. This tells us that overall, most participants in Spiritual Life are very content with their lives; whether that contentment is in some way caused by their spiritual involvement would require further research with the larger population that is not spiritually involved. As it is, there is definitely a strong positive correlation between spiritual involvement and contentedness. From the independent samples t-test frequency of attendance, with equal variances assumed, $F=1.035$, which means that most individuals who participate in spiritual life only go to one specific group. The participants who see themselves as a happy person showed a mean contentedness with life of 3.50 (SD= .622). Participants who do not see themselves as a happy person showed a mean contentedness with life of 2.00 (SD=0, only one respondent); this means that those who see themselves as happy tend to show greater contentedness in life than those who do not. I would like to find a population of people who do not view themselves as happy to draw further conclusions about this correlation (with greater statistical strength), but I was unable to do so in the circumstance of this study.

Survey Instrument

LaGrange College Undergraduate Spiritual Involvement And Subjective Happiness

This questionnaire asks for information about your involvement in Spiritual Life activities and assesses your perspective on your personal happiness. I request your help to make this study a success. Your responses will provide feedback that may help your Spiritual Life leaders better minister to undergraduates at LaGrange College. Since only a small number of students are being surveyed, your responses to this questionnaire are very important. **Please do not complete this questionnaire if you have already done so in a different Spiritual Life group on campus or online.**

This should take 5-10 minutes of your time. Your responses will be anonymous and will be pooled with the responses of other students. Please note that completion of this questionnaire implies you have given permission for your responses to be used for the purposes of the study.

Demographic Information

What is your Gender? (Circle one)

- Male
- Female

With which religious denomination do you most identify? (Circle one)

- Catholic Church
- Methodist Church
- Baptist Church
- Presbyterian Church
- Pentecostal Church
- Lutheran Church
- Non- Denominational Church
- Anglican Church
- Other: _____ (Please Specify)

What is your class? (Circle one)

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

Spiritual Life Involvement

What types of college sponsored Spiritual Life groups do you attend?
(Circle all that apply)

- Wesleyan Bible Study
- Hillside 8:02 (BCM)
- Reformed Bible Fellowship
- FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes)
- Soul Food
- Other: _____ (Please Specify)

How often do you attend Spiritual Life group meetings on campus? (Choose one)

- I go to every meeting.
- I go every other week.
- I go once a month.
- I rarely ever go.

Do you participate in religious activities NOT sponsored by the school?

- Yes
- No

If YES, Check all that apply:

- I attend a local church
- I attend a small group Bible study
- I volunteer/ work at a religiously affiliated organization
- Watch religious podcasts
- Listen to Christian music on my own time
- Other: _____ (Please Specify)

Mental Health/ Happiness Measures

Thinking of your Immediate family, in general, how close are your relationships?
(Circle one)

Very Close Close Not Close No Relationship

Thinking of your Friends, in general, how close are your relationships?
(Circle one)

Very Close Close Not Close No Relationship

How content are you in the following areas of your life? (Circle one answer per item)

Academics

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

Social Life

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

Athletic Activities (if applicable)

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

Participation in Religious Activities

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

Work (if applicable)

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

Religious Opportunities offered on Campus

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

Do you see yourself as a generally happy person?

- Yes
- No

In summary, how content are you with your life in general? (Circle one)

Extremely content Content Discontent Extremely Discontent

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Comments

Is there anything you would like to see added to spiritual life opportunities offered on campus?

What can your spiritual life groups and their leaders do to better encourage your spiritual growth?

Please use the following section to make any further comments or to clarify any of your above answers

References

Berthold, A., & Ruch, W. (2014). Satisfaction with life and character strengths of non-religious and religious people: It's practicing one's religion that makes the difference. *Frontiers In Psychology*, 5

Krok, D. (2014). The mediating role of coping in the relationships between religiousness and mental health. *Archives of Psychiatry And Psychotherapy*, 16(2), 5-13. doi:10.12740/APP/26313