



***A Marriage of Happiness
and Religious Beliefs in a Nutshell
Relacyjna bliskość szczęścia
i przekonań religijnych w zarysie***

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between happiness and religious beliefs.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND METHODS: The research problem is contained in the question: What is the relationship between happiness and religious beliefs in the light of the theoretical-cognitive analysis? The literature on the subject was analyzed.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: The analysis of the literature relevant to the subject began with selected approaches to happiness, among others in relation to positive psychology. Next, the researcher referred to category – religious beliefs, and finally, the relationship between two the analyzed categories was examined. The process concluded with forensic attention that was focused on the conclusions resulting from this analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS: Happiness, determined by many factors, including essentially a person's personality and the events that occur in his /her life, is linked to the religious beliefs. Religious people tend to be happy more than those without beliefs. Thus, it can be implied that there is a correlation between the categories: religious beliefs and happiness.

CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The conducted analysis of the research subject, eliciting aspects of positive psychology such as happiness, the sense of meaning in life, indicated an important factor shaping positive attitudes towards the life trajectory, which are religious beliefs. This issue should be dealt with in the future in the context of shaping a mature human personality, which is undoubtedly influenced by religious beliefs and their quality considered in the category of the quality of spiritual life, and the quality of life, in general.

→ **KEYWORDS:** **HAPPINESS, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, RELIGION, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, QUALITY OF LIFE**

STRESZCZENIE

CEL NAUKOWY: Celem artykułu jest zbadanie rozumienia związku szczęścia z przekonaniami religijnymi.

PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE: Problem badawczy zawiera się w pytaniu: Jak przedstawia się związek szczęścia z przekonaniami religijnymi w świetle przeprowadzonej analizy teorio-poznawczej? Przeprowadzono analizę literatury przedmiotu.

PROCES WYWODU: Analizę literatury przedmiotu zapoczątkowało dokonanie wybranych ujęć szczęścia, między innymi w odniesieniu do psychologii pozytywnej. Następnie odniesiono się do kategorii „przekonania religijne”, wreszcie do zbadania związku pomiędzy analizowanymi kategoriami. Wreszcie uwaga została skupiona wokół wniosków wypływających z tejże analizy.

WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ: Szczęście, uwarunkowane wieloma czynnikami, w tym zasadniczo osobowością człowieka i wydarzeniami, które pojawiają się w jego życiu, jest powiązane z przekonaniami religijnymi. Osoby religijne wykazują większą tendencję do bycia szczęśliwymi. Zachodzi zatem korelacja pomiędzy przekonaniami religijnymi a szczęściem.

WNIOSKI, INNOWACJE, REKOMENDACJE: Przeprowadzona analiza przedmiotu badań wydobytła aspekty psychologii pozytywnej, takie jak między innymi szczęście, poczucie sensu życia, wskazała na ważny czynnik kształtujący postawy pozytywne wobec trajektorii życiowej, jakim są przekonania religijne. Tymże zagadnieniem warto zająć się w przyszłości w kontekście kształtowania dojrzałej osobowości człowieka, na którą niewątpliwie mają wpływ przekonania religijne, ich jakość rozpatrywana w kategorii jakości życia duchowego, jakości życia w ogólności.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** **SZCZĘŚCIE, PRZEKONANIA RELIGIJNE, RELIGIA,
PSYCHOLOGIA POZYTYWNA, JAKOŚĆ ŻYCIA**

Introduction

This article examines the relationship between happiness and religious beliefs based on different religious traditions such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam to mention a few. Various writers have long claimed that happiness and personal beliefs are linked. But a notion that happiness and religious beliefs are not linked is predominantly a more modern assumption based on the recent works of psychologists (Czapiński, 2022). In the current study the basic supposition that happiness and different religious traditions are linked is examined through a number of viewpoints that coincide with such an assumption. Various studies on different religious beliefs across cultures tend to confirm that people who have religious beliefs are happier than those who are less likely to indicate any association with practiced religion. It also appears that belonging to a particular religious tradition influences people's lifestyle which in turn influences their level of happiness. It is also claimed that people who do not identify themselves with any

religious beliefs would seem to follow lifestyle that might include the use of excessive alcohol, soft, or hard-drugs and a preponderance to overindulgence. This article generalizes that there is a positive relationship between religious beliefs and happiness since these beliefs influence happier and healthier lifestyle among religious people.

Happiness in Relation to Religious Beliefs. In brief

The notion of happiness needs explanation in terms of emotional and mental states that brings the widely understood sense of well-being. The first aspect of happiness elicits the positive emotions that enable the person experience fulfilment accompanied by feeling the high pleasure reflected in the attitude of joy and contentment (Ferguson, 2002). The second one is connected with such mental state which often influences a person who immerses into own self in order to better understand what happens inside and who can make the true judgement about own overall well-being. It is a need to mention here that building attitude of well-being in the perspective of achieving happiness, needs to make effort on reinforcing the will and choosing an appropriate way (metho) to be happier (Lyubomirsky at al., 2011). These aspects of happiness should be seen in the context of determiners influencing it. Sonja Lyubomirsky, Rene Dickerhoof, Julia K. Boehm, Kennon M. Sheldon see the meaning of genes, personal qualities, and particularly, mental activities oriented towards increasing the state of happiness, among which there is the positive -optimistic thinking (Lyubomirsky at al., 2011).

Considering the issues enlightened above, we can see that obtaining the state of happiness is complicated and requires multifaced perception. There are many approaches towards happiness; religious, biological, philosophical, economic and psychological that impose applying a diverse scope of scientific methods in attempts to find answers to questions about happiness and ways it happiness can be achieved.

According to the aim posed in this paper, the main reflection has to be put on the correlation between happiness and religion, or religious attitude to life that can be named the happy life aligned with well-being. Daniela Villani, Angela Sorgente, Paola Ianello, and Alessandro Antonietti claim that "Spirituality and religiosity have been found to be positive predictors of subjective wellbeing, even if results are not altogether consistent across studies" (Villani al et., 2019). Thus, we can imply that deep spiritual inner life tailored tightly with religious beliefs perform a great role in achieving the mature state of happiness that there is nothing with hedonistic experience. Religious thinkers from various belief traditions and philosophers consider happiness to be more than just simple emotions like joy; these thinkers see happiness reflected in the quality of life and/or health of the individual. Happiness is a complex term that can mean very many things to different people (Brülde, 2010).

Religion and happiness have been central to pursuing research studies over time; religious structures seeks to address the components contributing to happiness (Chittister, 2011). The relationship between religion, religious beliefs, and happiness gains a new

perspective from social point of view that reveals the deeper sense of prayer taking place in religious community. Prayer understood as developmental spiritual activity may facilitate obtaining the state of happiness. Hence, religion can positively influence people's happiness and positive thinking by their participation in social – communities' events and by the support that individuals may receive from varied religious affiliations (Lafitte & Ribush, 2002). People who profess religious beliefs may better understand psychological factors that have an impact on happiness, and this helps them deal with stress effectively (Lewis & Cruise, 2006). Religious beliefs may have an influence on people's behaviour and lifestyle; according to some scholars religious people try to avoid habits that may have an adverse affect on their lives like substance abuse (More & Gwatkin, 1796). Such beliefs tend to have a positive impact on the emotional and mental state of the majority of religious people as substance abuse has often been associated with depression and overall poor health (Levin, 2013). In *Handbook of Religion and Health* Koenig explores the state of happiness in Americans who had given up their religious beliefs; however, based on his survey, the writer concluded that there was little relationship between unhappiness and the giving up of religious beliefs (Koenig et al., 2001). Koenig's results published in his book were cited by Lachman and Kosmin in their survey. They concluded that in general terms people without religious affiliations are more likely to suffer from depression than those with religious beliefs (Kosmin & Lachman, 1993). The results of Koenig and of Kosmin and Lachman can be disputed but in traditional psychology researchers tend to agree that people who are more religious are likely to be happier than those who are not associated with any religious beliefs (Popova, 2010).

Lagatum Prosperity Index has had published research results that confirm that there is a positive link between people's wellbeing, religious beliefs and their affiliations; people who confess that God plays an important role in their lives are on average more satisfied and content with their lives (Legatum Institute, 2015) in spite of their income or age; the acceptance of positive influence of their religious beliefs seems to play an important role in their happiness (Ridington & Ridington, 2013). This index can support the thesis that religious people appear to feel happier than those who do not admit themselves to any religious beliefs and do not affiliate to any religious community. This thesis relates with some research mentioned already, although, there are arguments that the ties between religious beliefs and religion seem to be weak, as many believers who rely on scripture (Sharpe, 2005), often do not deploy the mature understanding of the religious principles into the religious life, even within the religious community. However, in numerous peer reviewed journals researchers tend to agree, that in general that there is a strong relationship between religious beliefs and commitment including such signs as happiness, positive self-esteem and sense of wellbeing (Snow & Trivigno, 2016). They also indicate that religious commitment fosters lowering the levels of delinquency, hypertension, and depression (Sung-Gun, 2010). Analysis by NEC of the topic across many journals, resulted in the conclusion that psychological well-being (happiness, morale, and satisfaction) was associated with a positive commitment to religious beliefs and activities with less substance abuse or depression (*History*, n.d.).

Different religions have different beliefs about happiness. In Buddhism, for example a major teaching's theme is happiness. Happiness is closely associated with meditation. Buddhists who go through different stages of suffering learn how to achieve a high state of peace through meditation. It helps them to achieve peace and happiness. According to Buddhism, happiness can only be achieved by avoiding all forms of human desires (Wangu, 1993). An everyday form of happiness like peaceful relations with others are recognised as worthy means of achieving happiness (Toussaint & Friedman, 2008). Buddhists beliefs proclaim compassion and empathy towards others which in turn leads them to loving other beings. In Judaism happiness reflected in serving God. The Bible states that people should be joyful and happy when serving Him (De Lange, 1986). This belief gives Jewish people 'motivation to achieve happiness in their daily activities and when serving God; this in turn might help them to better manage depression. In Catholicism the main reason and goal of existence is happiness; it is believed that God's plan for humanity is for people to be resurrected not in the mundane life but after death (Veenhoven, 2009); and we are to experience ultimate happiness not in this world but after (Pegis, 1950). Believers tend to experience feelings of well-being thinking about the goodness of the Divine.

Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, the recent research in understanding the relationship between happiness and religious beliefs has revealed many factors and components of happiness that have a great impact on the state of well-being. What is more, the thesis that religious beliefs tend to be the main reason in achieving happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2002) has appeared significant for promoting the spiritual activities in human development that can be fostered in the process of creative-transformative formation (Szymańska, 2017). The true and valuable correlation between happiness and religious practice can lead to build a new quality of life perceived in personal and social dimension. Therefore, while happiness has an effect on the quality of life that one lives, it seems that people with positive-optimistic attitudes usually tend to achieve a higher level of happiness than pessimists. In the light of article contents, it is necessary to add that religious beliefs occur to be very important for achieving the level of happiness (Pursuit of Happiness, n.d.) and their well-being expressed in self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism connected with the hope. Nevertheless, despite the fact the people do have the choice not to have any religious affiliations, it is important to underline the negative implications of not possessing or belonging to any religious affiliations. Though happiness can be viewed in different contexts, people from different religions experience the same value of happiness. Finally, positive psychology, a dynamic and constantly evolving area of traditional psychology stresses a holistic approach to the understanding of happiness of the human being. It includes the elements shaping positive psychology, as well as its internal processes of change (Czapiński, 2022).

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