

# God Perfectionism as a Mediator of Intrinsic Religiosity and Life Satisfaction



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## Introduction

- Perfectionism can serve either functional or dysfunctional purposes in the lives of individuals (Wang et al., 2017).
- Perceived perfectionism from God (God perfectionism) is a form of perfectionism experienced by religious individuals and includes both adaptive (perceived standards from God) and maladaptive (perceived discrepancy from God) components (Wang et al., 2017). Not much is known on the effect of God perfectionism within the religious community.
- Intrinsic religiosity is a focus on religion for its own sake versus extrinsic religiosity, which focuses on religion for its perceived benefits (Cohen et al., 2017).
- Maladaptive God perfectionism has been used as a mediator between intrinsic religiosity and negative mood, with higher levels of intrinsic religiosity predicting lower levels of negative mood.

## Hypotheses

- I. Intrinsic religiosity predicts life satisfaction.
- II. God perfectionism is a causal pathway of intrinsic religiosity improving life satisfaction, and that it does so due to higher standards from God.

## Method

### Participants

- 125 (44% male, 56% female;  $M_{age} = 19.9$ ; range: 18-27, college students).
- Ethnicity: White 66.4%; Asian American 14.4%; Hispanic or Latino American 4.8%; Black 2.4%; Mixed 10.4%; Other .8%.
- Religious Denomination: Evangelical Protestant 71.2%; Mainline Protestant 12.8%; None or unaffiliated 9.6%; Historically Black Protestant 1.6%; Orthodox Christian 1.6%; Other 2.4%; Catholic .8%.

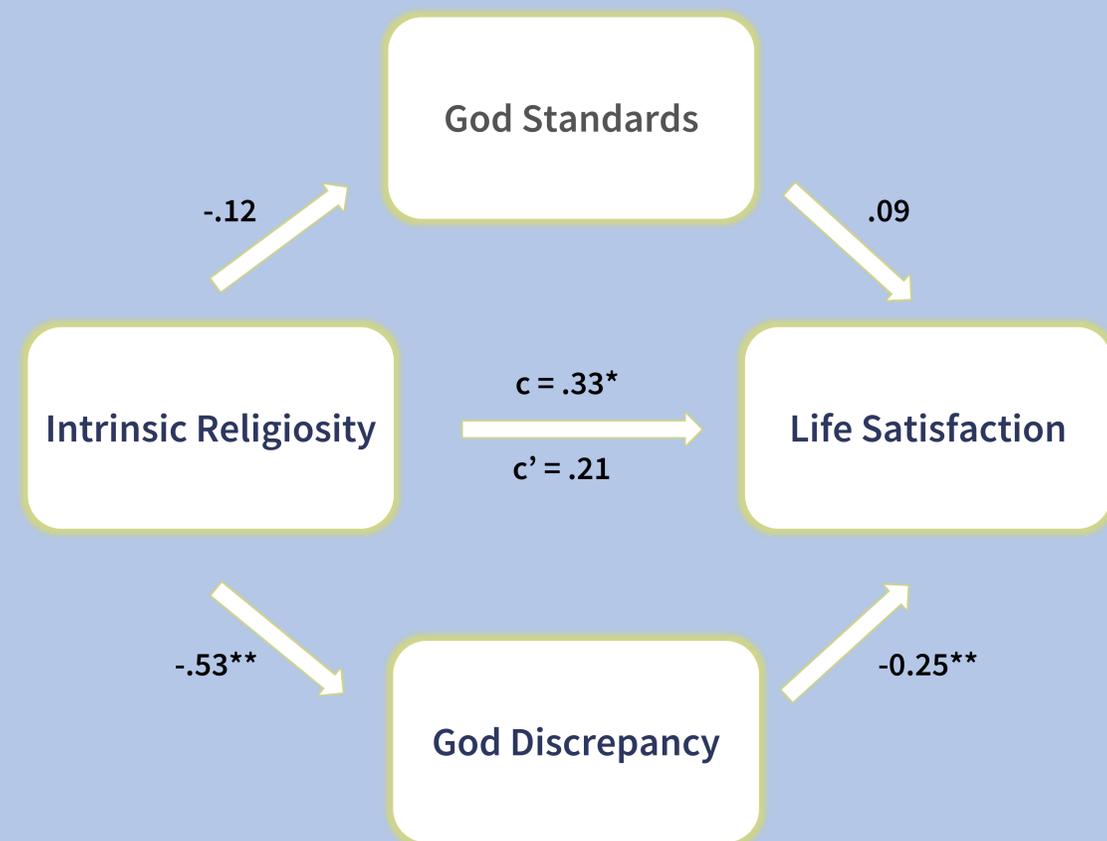
### Procedure

- Participants were surveyed using the Duke University Religion Index (DUREL), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Perceived Perfectionism from God Scale (PPG) including two subscales; Perceived Standards from God (“God has high standards for my performance at work or at school”) and Perceived Discrepancy from God (“God is hardly ever satisfied with my performance”).

## Results

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018).

- Results indicated that intrinsic religiosity predicts life satisfaction ( $c = .33$ ,  $p = .0183$ ).
- Intrinsic religiosity indirectly related to life satisfaction through perceived discrepancy from God ( $b = -.13$  CI = .02 to .32) but not perceived standards from God ( $b = -.01$ , CI = -.07 to .02).
- Intrinsic religiosity negatively associated with perceived discrepancy from God ( $a1 = -.53$ ,  $p = .003$ ).
- Discrepancy associated with less life satisfaction ( $b1 = -0.25$ ;  $p = .002$ ).
- When considering the indirect effect through both mediators, intrinsic religiosity was not significantly associated with life satisfaction ( $c' = .21$ ,  $p = .14$ ).



**Those who practice religion from a less intrinsically motivated place may experience God as being more punitive and discrepant, therefore having less overall life satisfaction.**

## Discussion

- Intrinsic religiosity can affect life satisfaction based on one's personal perception of God's standards and discrepancies. More research is needed on whether those who are more intrinsically religious perceive God's standards for them as having a positive impact on their life.
- Limitations of this study include the cross-sectional design, self-report measures, and demographics of participants including a majority White and Christian sample in a young adult age group. Further studies conducted with more diverse racial, religious, and age groups would provide more context to generalizability.
- Implications of these findings could be useful for mental health professionals working with religious populations and spiritual counselors such as clergy. Understanding what motivates an individual's religiosity could provide clergy and mental health professionals with a starting point on where to address life satisfaction within their communities.
- Further research on what aspects of religiosity contribute to discrepancy from God could conceivably lead to the development of future interventions focused on reducing maladaptive God perfectionism in religious individuals.