

Thematic Article

The Differing Effects of Symbolic Interpretation and Inclusion of Transcendence on Life Goals and Mental Health in Hungarian Adults

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the influence of religious attitudes, namely Inclusion of Transcendence and Symbolic Interpretation on life goals and different aspects of mental health.

Participants (N = 604) filled in an online questionnaire including the Post-Critical Belief Scale (Martos et al., 2009), the short version of Aspiration Index (Martos et al., 2006), and the Mental Health Test (MHT; see Oláh et al., 2018).

We investigated the relationship between religious attitudes, life goals, and the subscales of mental health using path analyses. The Symbolic Interpretation of religious content predicts support for intrinsically motivated life goals, while the Inclusion of Transcendence predicts the refusal of extrinsic aspirations. Positive effects were revealed between the Inclusion of Transcendence and global well-being, strategies aim at creating and enhancing happiness, and resilience. Symbolic Interpretation was positively related to creative, executing individual and social efficiency, while negatively influenced resilience.

The Inclusion of Transcendence and Symbolic Interpretation separately predict different aspects of life goals and mental health, and jointly support a higher quality of life.

Keywords: religiosity; Post Critical Belief Scale; mental health; aspiration; quality of life

Introduction

Several large-scale surveys have shown unfavorable indicators of general well-being in Hungary during the recent decades of socio-economic changes (e.g. Eurobarometer, 2014; Hungarostudy, 2013; Kósa et al., 2015). Examining what resources are available for individuals and communities to successfully cope with adaptation difficulties in socio-economic change is reasonable. Religiosity and spirituality, religious upbringing and education could give a chance to regain control over our life and ensure fundamental conditions of well-functioning at a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual level – which refers to mental health, and thus altogether the quality of life. Our study fits in the research line that seeks to find the role of religious attitudes in well-being by exploring the possible positive or negative effects that religion might have on life goals and mental health. In terms of considering the human as a holistic unit whose bio-psycho-socio-spiritual realms interrelate (Cloninger, 2004; Oláh et al., 2018), our goal in this article is to investigate religious attitudes and their impact on life goals and mental health in order to reveal the multifaceted nature of personal religiosity.

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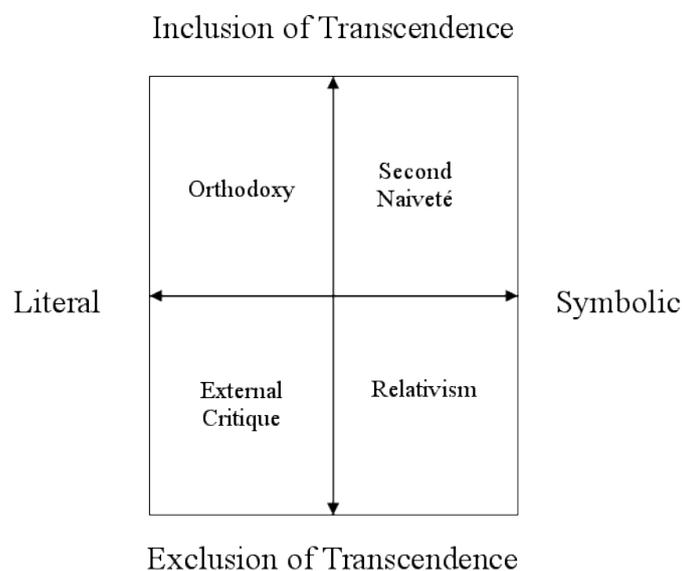
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Religiosity

Endowing at birth with nascent capacities for faith which is interactive and social, requiring nurture (Fowler, 1981), religion is a universal thread in the fabric of human experience (Piedmont, 1999). Even so, in the past decades the individual patterns of religious experience attracted widespread interest and the fact that religiosity, like other psychological phenomena, is complex and multifaceted was proved by a growing body of research (Dormán et al., 2012).

By integrating the relationship of different psychological trends to religion in a comprehensive model, Wulff (1997) has established one of the most dominant models of the psychology of religion on different approaches toward religion. Accordingly, there are two main bipolar dimensions to various forms of relationship to religiosity which define four basic religious attitudes: Orthodoxy, External Critique, Relativism, and Second Naivete (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Integration of the four Post-Critical Belief subscales in Wulff's (1991; 1999) theoretical model according to Hutsebaut (1996) (see Fontaine et al., 2003)



The vertical axis of the model indicates the degree to which the objects (e.g. God, Bible) of religious interest are rendered participation in a transcendent reality. Treating the Bible as an authentic source, the acceptance of transcendence (or the inclusion of the transcendent) expresses full acceptance of the existence of the transcendent, while excluding transcendence specifying total rejection constitutes the other pole (Wulff, 1997). This dimension shows the extent to which the subjects of religious interest could receive transcendental qualities for one, therewith indicates the extent and aspects of the individual's accept of transcendence / inclusion of the transcendent into their lives.

The horizontal axis refers to the way in which religious phenomena and statements are interpreted. One extreme of interpretation can be literal, concrete (e.g. the literal interpretation of the Bible either acceptably or negatively). The other pole is entirely symbolic and abstract (e.g., putting historical biblical statements into context and seeking their underlying meaning).

People constantly use symbolic communication in their day-to-day life. Religion could come almost naturally into human minds due to the specificness of this special language used by human cultures all over the world to convey its meanings: the language of symbols. Referring to religiosity, human symbolic communication implies that the religious believers do not conclude that supernatural agents exist automatically, as it were, but through an interpretation process (Salazar, 2016). Symbolic thinking and openness toward complex questions are supported by the interpretive and symbolic capacity (Hutsebaut, 1996; Fontaine et al., 2000). Symbolic thinking pours over questions of faith and it correlates positively with quest belief (Hutsebaut, 1996, Fontaine et al., 2000). The interpretation of religious statements in the stages of adult development of faith progresses from literal to symbolic (Hutsebaut, 1996).

In theological sense, in the framework of symbolic interpretation man appears as an "open to the world" being. Openness to the world means that the person is completely directed into the open, beyond every

experience, situation, and picture of the world and he would constantly search for further (Pannenberg, 1970, in Wong, 2016). In the root of the symbolic interpretation is spiritual work which reflects the social world also in a symbolic way (Urbán, 2012). People handling religious content in a symbolical way strive integrate into their personality different ways of thinking and values. The integration takes place on an abstract, symbolic psychological level, through the cognitions of themselves, others, and the world (Pannenberg, 1970).

By establishing goals and guarantee mental health, religion pertain human existence with good quality to all aspects of a person's life.

Aspirations

Although religion cannot be reduced to an aggregation of abstract moral norms or values, they are an crucial part of religiousness (Vergote, 1997). However diverse the life-long religious socialization is (Pusztai et al., 2019), it continually reflects on a system of meaningful goals and values. Life goals – in a psychological term aspirations – are integral element of human's overarching system (meaning system) that provides general framework according to individuals structure their lives and attribute meanings to specific linkage with their environment (Park, 2005). Being transsituational (abstract) guiding principles in humans' life, the psychological investigation of aspirations and their relation to religious attitudes is theoretically interesting.

Aspirations play an important role in the quality of life by channeling the individual's focus, energy, and motivations into the appropriate direction. They are fundamental strivings that fit into the basic beliefs of a comprehensive system of meanings (meaning system, Park, 2005). Aspirations are manifested in the interpretation of events when a person understands daily happenings in the outside world or their own experiences in accordance with their worldview (Martos, 2010). Life goals signify ideals, states, or objects that people consider most important in life (Emmons, 1999). Thus, the importance of aspirations is also a value choice, expressing the basic motives that play a significant role in a person's life (Martos et al., 2006).

The processes of inner growth and organization of the constituent elements of the personality into a coordinated, harmonious whole guarantee healthy functioning. The individual is intrinsically driven, intrinsically motivated to meet the needs and participate in experiences, situations, and behaviors (autonomy, desire for positive relationships, capability to act competently) that contribute to growth and internal integration processes to guarantee healthier functioning on the individual and also on the social level (Sheldon & Kasser 1995, 1998). Intrinsic types of goals are self-acceptance, affiliation with others, community feeling, and physical health (Kasser et al., 1996). People striving for these goals are assumed to the aim culminating in self-fulfilment, and to have a greater chance to meet happiness and well-being (Ryan et al., 1999).

However, the predominance of longing for external rewards that makes difficult to achieve real goals that are better suited to a person's inner needs results in lower mental health and personal growth also in the short term and long run (Martos, 2010). For instance, research shows that people with strong extrinsically motivated goals have more hardship fulfilling their needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Kasser, 2002; Ryan et al., 2000). Extrinsic aspirations are financial success, popularity, and good-looking (Kasser et al., 1996). The importance of intrinsic life goals is protective factor for mental health (Ryan et al., 2000; Proctor et al., 2016) that can reduce or even eliminate the negative consequences associated with extrinsic ones (Martos, 2010).

As aspirations comprise human values and guide one's life, their relation to personal religious attitudes can be investigated in Wulff's (1997) theoretical model. It is reasonable to explore the relationship of religious attitudes differentiated into the Inclusion of Transcendence and Symbolic Interpretation dimensions with aspirations in order to reveal their complex relationship.

Mental Health

Positive health (Seligman, 2008) is one of the most significant indicators approaching the quality of life. Although several researchers still search for an answer whether religion has a beneficial or an impedimental influence on an individual's mental health (for review see Pergament, 2002), it becomes more and more clear that this question is too plain to be argued and to catch the complex reality. The multidimensional nature of religion can be one explanation for the complexity of relationships between religiousness and mental health. The Mental Health Test (Oláh et al., 2018) is a new multidimensional measuring tool of mental health, based on an integrative theoretical framework. Importantly from the subjective and positive spectrum of quality of life research (Land et al., 2011, pp. 100), mental health setting forth in terms of positive psychology is a kind of

well- functioning at a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual level (Cloninger, 2004; Oláh et al., 2012). It also means a capacity to maintain positivity with an effective coping and strategies creating and enhancing happiness together with the ability to successfully adapt to life in adverse circumstances and dynamic self-regulation (Oláh et al., 2018). Being based on the theory which combines flourishing (feeling good and functioning well) with capacities (coping, savoring, resiliency, dynamic self-regulation, psychological immunity) generating mental health, the Mental Health Test (MHT) (Oláh et al., 2018) is adapted to measure healthy, well-functioning life entirely by its five subscales (Well-being, Savoring, Executing individual and social efficiency, Resiliency, Self-regulation) (See Table 1.).

Table 1. The five subscales of Mental Health Test (MET) (Oláh és mtsai, 2018)

Name of the subscale	Meaning
Global and subjective well-being (G)	Life full of meaning and values Inclusion of transcendence Satisfactory social relationships The dominance of intrinsic aspirations High level of mental health skills
Savoring (S)	The capacity to focus, evaluate and detect the positive experiences of life. Embracing concept of strategies aim at creating and enhancing happiness.
Creative, executing individual and social efficiency (CE)	It integrates personality traits (ingeniousness, problem solving, self-efficacy, ability to mobilize social resources, social creativity) that help to change the circumstances of a difficult adaptation situation.
Self-regulation (SR)	This subscale integrates personality traits that provide control over attention and consciousness. This is a condition for emotional balance. This ability allows us to behave congruently with our inner values and interests in the long run.
Resilience (R)	This subscale is an individual's ability to successfully adapt to life in adverse circumstances. Hopeful optimism, autonomy, discernment and warmth in social relationships, sophisticated expressiveness.

The Mental Health Test (Oláh et al., 2018) is a newly published measure and its relationship with religious attitudes has not been investigated yet. Examining the effect of religious attitudes on multidimensional aspects of mental health would provide an opportunity to unfold their complex relationship.

The relationship of religious attitudes with aspirations and mental health

Inclusion of Transcendence and Aspirations

Only few results could pertain to the relationship of the inclusion of transcendence and aspirations. Most research apply a more general or simplistic notion of religiosity ("religiousness") without taking into consideration it's complex reality. A previous study (Martos, 2010) that dealt with religiosity in a simplistic way⁵ indicated that higher religiosity commitment relates to minor importance of extrinsic life goals and greater importance of intrinsic aspirations. In order to gain a greater insight into the relationship of inclusion of transcendence and aspirations, some further results should be interpreted which illustrate the relationship of inclusion of transcendence with psychological constructs that may be (semantically) close to aspirations in their meaning.

Religious people in this sense do not have qualitatively different motivations (Neyrinck, 2006; Neyinck et al., 2006). However, different values are considered important. Religious participants appreciated the value terms obedience, respect, commitment, and compliance (Rokeach, 1968, 1969a, 1969b, 1973). They attach more importance to traditional values; the acceptance of the customs and ideas, as well as the acceptance of traditional culture and religion are highly valued among them (Duriez et al., 2007; Fontanie et al., 2005; Schwartz et al., 1995). Research shows that Exclusion versus Inclusion connects to the conflict between Hedonism (pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself), Stimulation (excitement, novelty and challenge in

^[1] The degree of religiosity was estimated by answering the following question: "How important is religion to you in your daily life?" (0 = not at all important; 1 = slightly important; 2 = very important; 3 = influences all my actions)

life), and Self-Direction (independent thought and action) on the one hand and Tradition and Conformity on the other (Fontaine et al., 2005). Religiosity – measured still in simplistic way - was unambiguously associated with de-emphasis of all means of “pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself” (Schwartz et al., 1995). However, exclusion versus inclusion of transcendence do not relate to prejudice, empathy, or moral competence levels (Duriez et al., 2007).

Based on these, inclusion of transcendence does not specify how the values should be followed; therefore it does not lead to psychic work the individual adopt or rejects neither values nor aspirations. The inclusion of transcendence denotes on a cognitive level which values a person should consider important.

Symbolic Interpretation and Aspirations

The way in which people interpret religious content is expected to relate to a specific system of motivations. Regarding the relationship between symbolic interpretation and aspirations, to our knowledge, there is no research conducted on this issue to date. In order to gain a greater insight into their connection, we review existing research which examined the relationship between symbolic interpretation and psychological constructs that may be (semantically) close to aspirations in their meaning.

The symbolic pole of the horizontal dimension in Wulff’s model (1997) is in close relationship with values and that way supposedly with aspirations. People processing religious contents in a symbolic way are open to different ways of thinking and values and they seek to own them on an abstract, symbolic level in an integrated form.

The literal or symbolic dimension of Wulff’s model (1997) comport well with the analysis being done in terms of societal and psychological needs. In a literal interpretation, only one right answer is possible. In this way, clarity is constituted and uncertainty is removed. To the extent that religion is supportive of the existing social order, literal interpretation of the religious contents will not only reduce uncertainty but will also support the existing social order (Fontaine et al., 2000). By contrast, to think about questions of faith, multiple interpretations are imaginable and valid. This implies a tolerance for uncertainty and for interpretations that are critical for to the existing social order (Fontaine et al., 2000). Thus, a literal mode of thinking about religion is supposed to be more compatible with values promoting social stability and reducing uncertainty than a symbolic mode of thinking (Fontaine et al., 2000).

People dealing with religious content in a symbolical way are more likely to feel empathy towards fellow human beings (Duriez, 2004). They show more mature way of thinking in moral questions and they tend to make a sharper distinction in the maturity of attitudes toward a moral arguments comparison to people applying literal interpretation (Duriez et al., 2006b). They attach more importance to values that emphasize concern for the welfare and interests of others (universalism, benevolence) (Self-Transcendence values) as opposed to values emphasizing pursuit of one's own interests, relative success and dominance over others (power, achievement) (Self-Enhancement values) (Duriez et al., 2007). Symbolic thinkers are less likely to possess culturally conservative and prejudiced attitudes (Duriez et al., 2007). They have been associated with qualities such as a greater effort to internal integration processes (Urbán, 2012), which are excellent promoters of intrinsic aspirations. People who interpret religious contents in a symbolic way are agreeable and open to new experiences (Duriez et al., 2006a). They are more likely to feel autonomous rather than feeling controlled (Duriez et al., 2007). Autonomously oriented people initiate their behavior by personal interests and challenges or by well-internalized and self-congruent motives (Duriez et al., 2007). Symbolically interpretive parents encourage their children to pursue intrinsic goals (e.g. community, collaboration, internal development) rather than extrinsic goals (Duriez et al., 2009).

To sum it up, being religious is not the most important thing, but how people approach religion and the way in which they process religious contents seem to be crucial in choosing values and aspirations.

Inclusion of Transcendence and Mental Health

Previous results show that the Exclusion versus Inclusion dimension of Wulff’s model (1997) is unrelated to mental health (Dezutter et al., 2006). Apart from this research, only results could referring to the relationship between the inclusion of transcendence and mental health that applied a more simplistic notion of religiosity (“religiousness”). In this term, the ways in which religiousness is connected with mental health are very intricate. The inconsistency of the results (e.g., James et al., 2003; Krok, 2014; Miller et al., 2005) points to the complexity of relationships between religiousness and mental health and refers to the need for a more differentiated approach to religiosity.

Religiosity in this simplistic notion relates to better mental health, quality of life, well-being, and also gives rise to a meaningful and peaceful life (Peres et al., 2018), which could be identified as global and subjective well-being. However, the relationship between religiosity and savoring proves to be an unexplored area. Only results are known that demonstrate a positive relationship between savoring and constructs closely related to religiosity, for instance meaning of life (Park, 2007; Silberman, 2005; Zábó et al., 2019), satisfaction with life (Salces-Cubero et al., 2019), and positive emotions by waking one to religiousness and spirituality (Saroglou et al., 2008). Nonetheless, no previous research result is available on the relationship between religious attitudes and creative, executing individual and social efficiency. Religiosity does not seem to account for the effects of self-control (Heatherton et al., 1994; Vitell et al., 2009; Welch et al., 2006), but resilience is related to it (Jang et al., 2007; Javanmard, 2013; Reis et al., 2017). Hence, it is assumed that the inclusion of transcendence is positively related to global well-being, savoring, and resilience.

Symbolic Interpretation and Mental Health

Like that of inclusion of transcendence, the relationship between symbolic interpretation and mental health could be discussed only through a few or indirect result. Literal approach of religious contents was associated with lower mental health (Duriez et al., 2007). Based on previous results, symbolic interpretation was positively related to values that highlight the concern for the welfare and interests of others (Self-Transcendence values) as opposed to values prioritising pursuit of one's own interests and relative success over others (Self-Enhancement values) (Duriez et al., 2007). Symbolic interpretation was associated with empathy (Duriez, 2004), and a greater effort to organize the elements of the personality into a coordinated, harmonious whole (Urbán, 2012). These results point that symbolic interpretation is responsible for a higher degree of faith (Husebaut, 1996), which results in better mental well-being. Hence, it is assumed that symbolic interpretation positively relates to global well-being. No previous data could be found on the relationship of religious attitudes and savoring. Symbolic interpretation relates strongly to individual functioning (Dezutter et al., 2006), to a greater effort to self-integration (Urbán, 2012), and prosocial behavior (Duriez, 2007), which, overall, imply a higher level of creative, executing individual and social efficiency. Symbolic interpretation is associated with a higher level of autonomy as opposed to self-control (Duriez et al., 2007). Since symbolic interpretation is associated with a higher level of anxiety (Ventis, 1995), and it strengthens the relationship between doubt and depression (Kézdy, 2010), it indicates a low level of resilience.

Based on these previous results, we can assume that symbolic interpretation positively relates to global well-being, creative, executing individual and social efficacy, and negatively to resilience.

The current study

This study is aimed at investigating how religious attitudes, namely inclusion of transcendence and symbolic interpretation differ according to their impact on aspirations and mental health. We hypothesised that symbolic interpretation is positively related to intrinsic aspirations, while the inclusion of transcendence is independent from aspirations (H1). We also assumed that the inclusion of transcendence is positively associated with global well-being, savoring, and resilience. In case of symbolic interpretation, we hypothesized that it positively relates to global well-being, creative, executing individual and social efficiency, and negatively to resilience (H2).

Research design and Methods

Sample

Altogether 604 adult (20.7% men and 78.6% women⁶) completed the questionnaires. The youngest respondent was 18, and the oldest was 86, with a mean age of 36.67 years (SD = 13.83). 1.5% completed basic education, 12.4% graduated from secondary school, 25% marked ongoing tertiary education, and 61.1% graduated from higher education. Most of the respondents considered religiousness important in their lives (M = 3.88, SD = 1.8) on a 4 point Likert scale. They defined themselves in terms of religiosity by choosing one of the offered 3 types. 41.2% of the sample considered themselves religious according to a church, 37.9% were religious on their own way, and 20.9% were non-religious. The respondents also indicated their denominational

⁶ Four people (.7%) did not want to specify their gender.

affiliation (see Figure 2.) and the frequency of attending religious events (see Figure 3.). Women, those who completed higher education, and religious people were overrepresented in our sample compared to their population rates according to the recent national census (Population Census, 2011).

Figure 2. Denomination

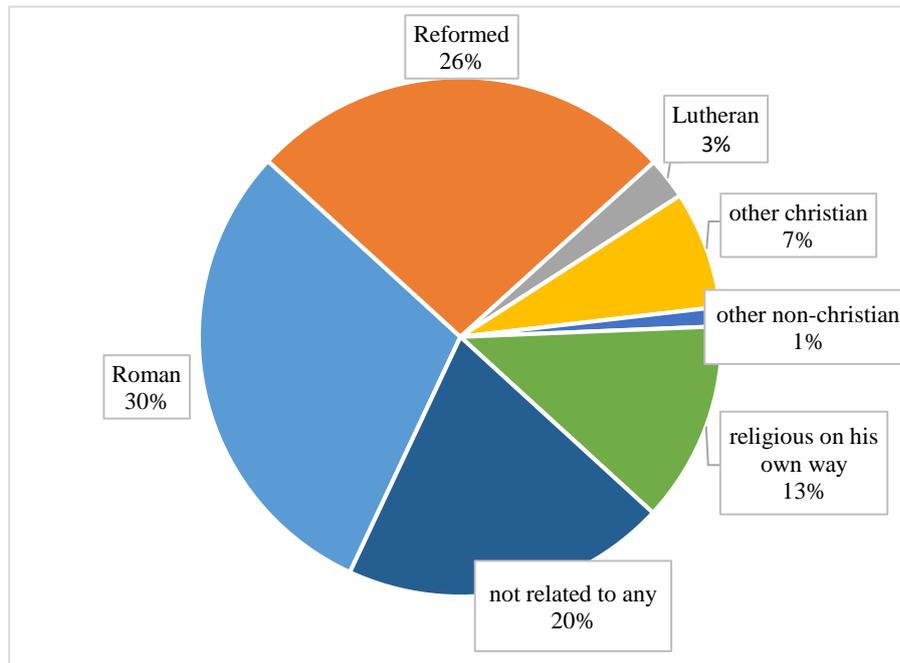
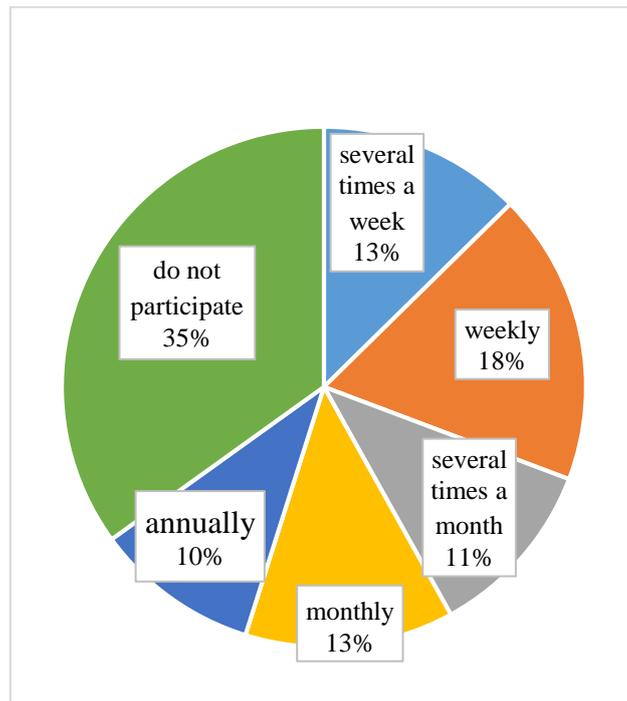


Figure 3. The frequency of attending religious events

Method

Data was collected using online questionnaires by snowball sampling. We aimed to reach religious groups. Participants were required to be older than 18 years old and were recruited via social media platforms. We complied with the ethical standards during all procedures. Respondents received accurate information about the nature and the aim of the study, and they could participate anonymously and voluntarily. The research was conducted with the IRB approval of anonymous university.

Measures

Attitudes toward religiosity. *The Post-Critical Belief Scale* (Duriez, Soenens, & Hutsebaut, 2005; shortened hungarian version was adapted by Martos et al., 2009) allows separating differences in religiosity from differences in the way of religiosity. The questionnaire include questions such as: „*The Bible holds a deeper truth which can only be revealed by personal reflection*” and „*In the end, faith is nothing more than a safety net for human fears*”. The Inclusion of Transcendence Scale and the Symbolic Interpretation Scale were formed by a transformation from the Post Critical Belief Scales according to the instructions of Martos et al. (2009).

Aspirations. We used the shortened Hungarian translation (Martos et al., 2006) of the Aspiration Index (Kasser et al., 1996). We measured extrinsic (wealth, fame, attractiveness) and intrinsic (psychological growth, relatedness to others, and community contribution) aspirations with 6-6 items. We calculated the means of the scales, which were used in further analyses. An example of the questions that measure each aspiration: wealth: „*I will be financially succesful.*”, fame: „*Many people will respect and admire me.*”, attractiveness: „*I will be considered by others an attractive person.*”, psychological growth: „*I will know and accept who I really is.*”, relatedness to others: „*I will have friends that I can count on.*” and community contribution: „*I will work to make the world a better place.*”. Cronbach's alpha values are .797 (Extrinsic Aspiration Scale) and .703 (Intrinsic Aspiration Scale).

Mental health. A complex approach to mental health was made possible by Mental Health Test (Oláh et al., 2018). The questionnaire measures mental health by five subscales: Global and subjective well-being („*Joy is present substantially more than sorrow in my everyday.*”), Savoring („*I can make myself feel good by imagining what a happy time that is about to happen will be like.*”), Creative, executing individual and social efficiency („*I often have ideas that are taken further by others.*”), Self-regulation („*I speak first and think second.*”), and Resilience („*Other people seem to change but I feel like I am walking in circles.*”). People rated the items on all questionnaires on 6-point Likert-scales, where 1 was strong disagreement, and 6 meant strong

agreement. We calculated the means of the scales, which were used in further analyses. Cronbach's alpha for the five scales were .884 (Global and subjective well-being), .733 (Savoring), .764 (Creative, executing individual and social efficiency), and .799 (Self-regulation), and .803 (Resilience).

Results

The research question of this study was how the two dimensions of PCBS relate to aspirations and mental health. Path analyses were performed to test the relationship between inclusion of transcendence, symbolic interpretation, the subscales of aspiration, and mental health.

Descriptive Statistics

We investigated the Pearson correlations between the main measures (see Table 2.). Symbolic Interpretation positively correlated with Intrinsic Aspirations, Creative, executing individual and social efficiency (henceforward CE), and Inclusion of Transcendence. The Inclusion of Transcendence was negatively related to Extrinsic Aspirations. We also found positive correlations between the Inclusion of Transcendence and Intrinsic Aspirations, Global well-being, and Savoring.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the main variables.

	M (SD)	Cronbach's alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Symbolic Interpretation	-	-	-	.130**	.065	.242**	.026	.061	.126**	-.016	-.076
2. Inclusion of Transcendence	-	-	.130**	-	-.198**	.082*	.177**	.096*	.003	.021	.075
3. Extrinsic Aspirations	3.10 (.91)	.797	.065	-.198**	-	.161**	-.056	.070	.098*	-.205**	-.092*
4. Intrinsic Aspirations	5.46 (.57)	.703	.242**	.082*	.161**	-	.209**	.370**	.371**	.016	.066
5. Global well-being	4.69 (1.04)	.884	.026	.177**	-.056	.209**	-	.439**	.402**	.163**	.492**
6. Savoring	4.75 (1.01)	.733	.061	.096*	.070	.370**	.439**	-	.322**	.114**	.304**
7. CE ⁷	4.61 (.83)	.764	.126**	.003	.098*	.371**	.402**	.322**	-	.132**	.360**
8. Self-regulation	3.66 (1.10)	.799	-.016	.021	-.205**	.016	.163**	.114**	.132**	-	.268**
9. Resilience	3.64 (1.10)	.803	-.076	.075	-.092*	.066	.492**	.304**	.360**	.268**	-

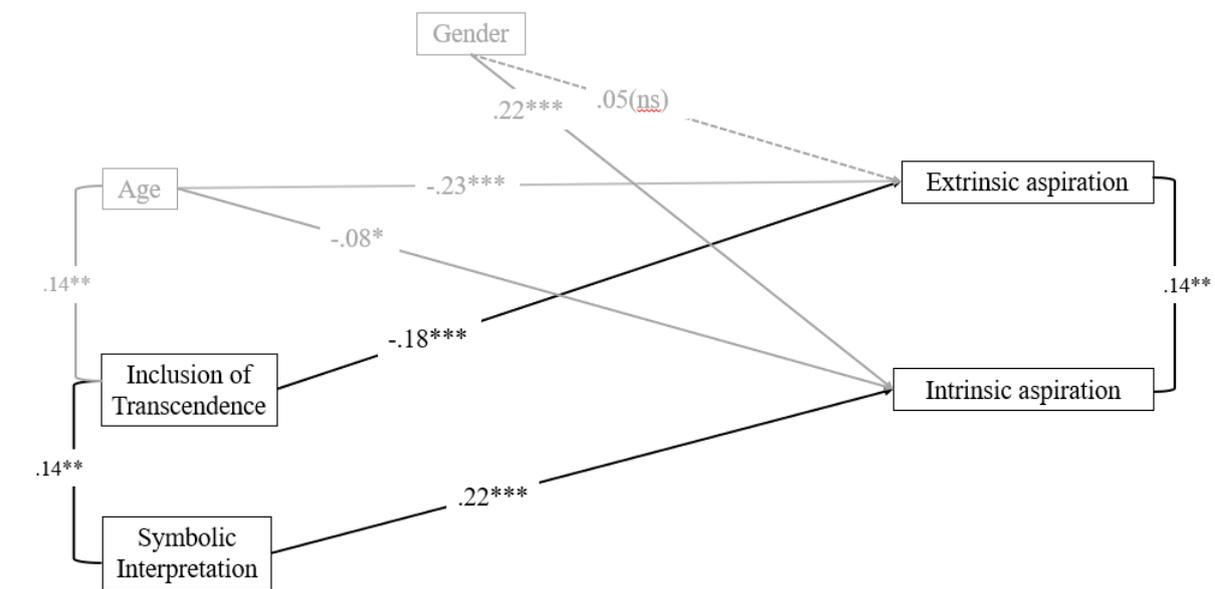
Note. Statistical significance is indicated at the following levels: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. The Inclusion of Transcendence scale and the Symbolic Interpretation scale were formed by a transformation from the Post Critical Belief Scales according to the instructions of Martos et al. (2009). All other measures were rated on 6-point Likert-scales, higher numbers meaning higher agreement.

⁷ CE: Creative, executing individual and social efficiency

Hypothesis Testing

To test our hypotheses we conducted path analyses, using bootstrapping with 2000 re-samples in AMOS (Arbuckle, 2013). Variables related to religious attitudes were entered as observed exogenous variables, and Extrinsic and Intrinsic aspirations were selected as the outcome variables. We controlled age and gender in the model. The model building-model trimming technique was applied (for the description see e.g., Faragó et al., 2019). Saturated models were built in the first step, and the non-significant paths were removed one by one. The saturated model indicated perfect fit indices (χ^2 and RMSEA values of 0 and a CFI and TLI value of 1). The paths from Inclusion of transcendence to Intrinsic aspirations and from Symbolic interpretation to Extrinsic aspirations were not significant, therefore we removed them from the model. The final model ($\chi^2(6) = 11.387$, $p = .077$) had very good model fit (RMSEA= .039, PCLOSE= .666, TLI= .918, CFI= .967). The positive effect of Symbolic interpretation on Intrinsic aspirations was significant ($B = .22$, $p < .001$, CI: .13, .29), while Inclusion of transcendence had significant negative effect on Extrinsic aspirations ($B = -.18$, $p < .001$, CI: -.26, -.11). The path model with the standardized direct effects can be seen in Figure 4.

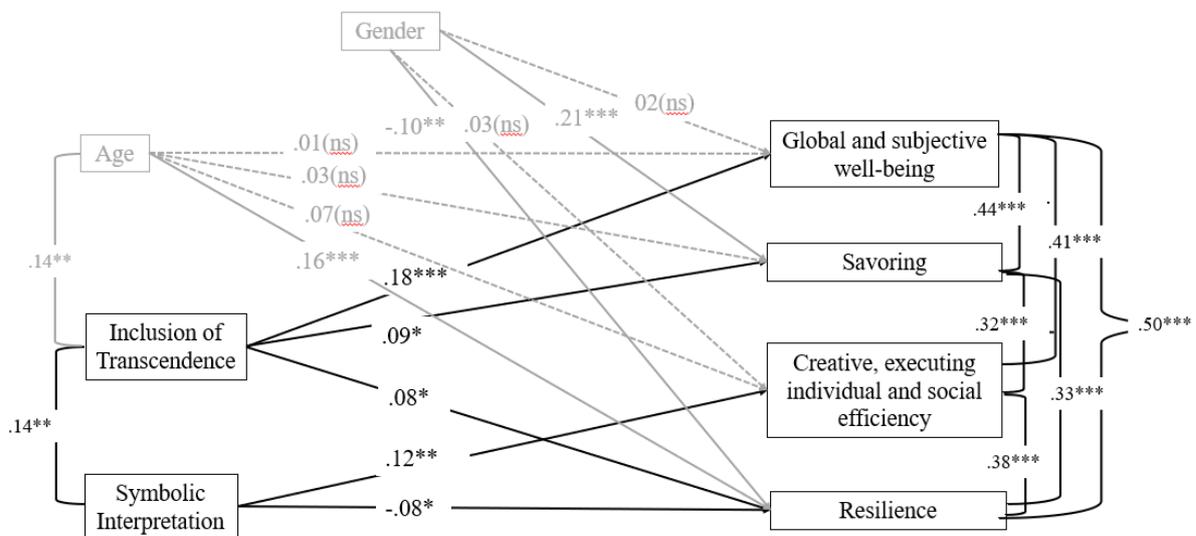
Figure 4. Path analysis revealing the connection of Inclusion of Transcendence and Symbolic Interpretation to aspirations



The results (see Figure 4.) suggest that Symbolic interpretation predicts support for Intrinsic aspirations, while those high on Inclusion of transcendence reduce Extrinsic aspirations.

In the next model, the subscales of mental health were selected as the outcome variables, and the Inclusion of transcendence and Symbolic interpretation remained the exogenous variables. Age and gender were controlled in the model. The same technique (see Faragó et al., 2019) was used for the path analyses as described before. The non-significant connections (the paths from Inclusion of transcendence to CE and to Self-regulation, and from Symbolic interpretation to Global and subjective well-being, Savoring, and Self-regulation) were deleted from the model. The final model ($\chi^2(7) = 8.03$, $p < .330$) had very good model fit (RMSEA= .016, PCLOSE= .922, TLI= .993, CFI= .998). A significant positive effect was found between Symbolic interpretation and CE ($B = .12$, $p < .002$, CI: .05, .19) and a weak, but significant negative effect between Symbolic interpretation and Resilience ($B = -.08$, $p < .040$, CI: -.15, -.004). The positive effect of Inclusion of transcendence was significant on Global wellbeing ($B = .18$, $p < .001$, CI: .12, .25), on Savoring ($B = .09$, $p < .022$, CI: .01, .16), and also on Resilience ($B = .08$, $p < .036$, CI: .006, .15). Figure 5. shows our model with the standardized direct effects.

Figure 5. Path analysis revealing the connection of Inclusion of transcendence and Symbolic interpretation to the subscales of mental health



The results (see Figure 5.) suggest that Symbolic interpretation predicts support for CE and the lack of Resilience. The Inclusion of transcendence predicts weak support for Global wellbeing, Savoring, and Resilience.

Discussion

Exploring paths to a good quality life, this study aimed to reveal how religious attitudes in the spirit of the two dimensions of Post Critical Belief Scale differ according to their impact on aspirations and mental health. Referring to the literal or abstract interpretation of objects of religious interest, symbolic interpretation implies that the object is close to, essentially integrated into one's global meaning system (Park, 2005) and cognitive structure of some content. These integrate into personality. Pertaining to aspirations, the extent to which values are integrated matters. In line with our hypothesis, our results show that symbolic interpretation predicts support for intrinsic aspirations. Intrinsic aspirations by their very nature are congruent, also integrated into personality. This may suggest that symbolic interpretation, by virtue of its support for critical, independent thinking, focuses on the aims pursued. Consequently, symbolic interpretation is inherently responsive to aspirations and it converge with intrinsic aspirations.

The inclusion or exclusion of transcendence regard the extent to which the subjects of religious interest receive transcendental quality (whether the individual endows them with transcendental quality or not). In connection with aspirations, the inclusion of transcendence refers to which values could be accepted or rejected by the belief system. It is important to note that unlike symbolic interpretation, the inclusion of transcendence does not give guidance on how to interpret these values and how to deal with them in an integrated, coherent way with one's global meaning system (Park, 2005). In line with our hypothesis, our results show that intrinsic aspirations, by their very nature, do not show any relationship to the inclusion of transcendence. Unexpectedly, according to our results inclusion of transcendence predicts the refusal of extrinsic aspirations. The reason, why the extrinsic aspirations are connected to the inclusion of transcendence is that extrinsic aspirations are not required to be essentially integrated into the personality, thus it allows them to connect to the inclusion of transcendence which neither demands nor makes this integration possible. Based on the above, the negative effect is because this construct indicates what values should be rejected in case of acceptance of transcendental values.

In line with our hypothesis and the previous results (Jang et al., 2007; Javanmard, 2013; Park, 2007; Reis et al., 2017; Salces-Cubero et al., 2019; Silberman, 2005; Zábó et al., 2019), the inclusion of transcendence relates positively to global wellbeing, savoring, and resilience. Thus, inclusion of transcendence induces bigger fulfilment in the bio-, psycho-, socio-, and spiritual aspects of one's life. It boosts positive experience processing strategies, thus greater savoring of experiences. Because the greater extent of the inclusion of transcendence makes individuals to form more concrete esteem about the controversial ideas, which are basically subjectively valid, it calls for stronger resilience.

The way in which people approach religious content is expected to relate to different states of mental health. In line with previous results (Dezutter et al., 2006; Duriez, 2007; Kézdy, 2010; Urbán, 2012; Ventis, 1995), symbolic interpretation predicts support for creative, executing individual and social efficiency and relates negatively to resilience. Our assumption on global well-being based on past indirect results (Duriez, 2004; Duriez et al., 2007; Husebaut, 1996; Urbán, 2012) has not been verified, which can be due to the fact the low level of resilience precludes a high level of global well-being.

The result is that neither the inclusion of the transcendent nor the symbolic interpretation was connected to self-regulation and should be considered. One possible explanation lies in the distinction inside the construct of self-regulation: the conceptual distinction between capability for self-control and the desire to exercise it (Tittle et al., 2004).

Limitations

Firstly, the most important limitation of our paper is that our study was conducted using a convenient sample with unequal gender distribution. A sample representative of the Hungarian adult population would make our results more generalizable. Secondly, since this is a correlational study and correlations do not imply causation, we could only determine the relationship between variables. Exploring causality would require an experimental arrangement.

Conclusions

The mere fact that one attributes a certain object or content to a transcendent quality does not mean that this kind of religiosity is indicative of the values one should follow. Rather, it only prescribes commitment to goals that have to be avoided. In addition, a greater presence of the transcendent quality in different elements of one's life, through global well-being, savoring, and resilience guarantees a better quality of life.

The symbolic interpretation of contents of religious interest is linked to openness toward the world, openness beyond each experience and situation. Further, it evokes continuous inquiry and research, and the pursuit of connecting and integrating different ways of thinking. Our study confirmed that, as a result of these characteristics, symbolic interpretation clearly supports the pursuit of intrinsic aspirations. Symbolic interpretation evokes personality traits related to creative, executive, social and individual effectiveness, such as ingeniousness, problem solving, self-efficacy, ability to mobilize social resources, and social creativity. However, a high degree of sensitivity that facilitates openness and continuous reinterpretation also inhere low resilience.

Overall, the co-presence of greater inclusion of the transcendent and symbolic interpretation result in optimal mental health and goal orientation for high quality of life.

On account of religious education and socialization, the results suggest the importance of developing moral competence. The content and quality beyond the framework of faith and the viable way for practicing them in through individual faith cannot be provided only by the pure devotion to religion. The ability to think in an abstract, critical, and complex way warrants mature moral reasoning and self-transcendent attitude in the ways of thinking through which individual apperceive themselves, others, and the world. An attitude of aiming to understand and know the world better in its deeper reality leads to the pursuit of goals and values that guarantee the harmonious and healthy functioning of the individual.

Being linked to the social and civic key educational competences (Hungarian National Core Curriculum, 2012) such as active and responsible citizenship and social responsibility, by acquiring value transmitting role, symbolic interpretation is an integral part of personality and it contributes to the basis of the moral character.

It is important to be aware that the development of different aspects of individual faith during religious education and socialization affects different areas of mental health. Solely defining oneself as religious is responsible for individual-level well-being, while the content, quality, and the way of practicing religion – attached by the respect of values that transcend the individual – extend beyond the individual to social- and community-level well-being.

The results emphasize the valuable capacity of religious education and socialization to provide appropriate value socialization and healthy personality function, which should be exploited.

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