Correlations between Religious Practices and Stress Management of Superintendents

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Abstract

Public school superintendents face wide-ranging pressures and would benefit from improved understanding of ways to manage stress. This quantitative study used the theoretical framework of Transformational Leadership to investigate whether the presence or absence of faith practices resulted in better stress management for superintendents, and whether the presence or absence of faith practices correlated with other demographic factors. No statistically significant associations were observed between degree of religious practice and degree of stress management for overall scores or for combinations of demographic characteristics. This study generally supported findings from related research which showed that many superintendents engage in religious practices; however, little evidence supported the efficacy of those practices on stress management. More research is needed to better identify which, if any, stress management strategies are of value for superintendents.

Keywords: superintendent, stress, religion, transformational leadership

"I don't know how people do this job without God." This was not the first time I had heard these words from a fellow superintendent of schools. In fact, I had made the same statement on many occasions over the course of my administrative career. I regularly rely on my faith in God, daily Bible reading and prayer, inspirational words and music, and other spiritual practices to guide my thoughts, decision-making, and interactions with others. In stressful times I often pray for direction, wisdom, peace, and strength. These faith practices help me cope with the stressors related to my job as superintendent, and it appears that I am not alone.

In September 2018, a dinner conversation with five superintendents turned to personal religious beliefs and impact on private lives and work. One man read the Bible every morning to start his day on a positive note. A woman identified herself as a "lapsed Catholic" and reported that, despite maintaining spiritual beliefs, she had given up on organized religion due to scandals in the church. A third individual was reared as a Methodist and converted to Catholicism when she

married, but no longer engaged in any formal or personal religious practices. The fourth superintendent attended church services but did not fully engage in faith practices. The last person quietly remarked that she did not know how anyone could do this job without God.

The following day, at the 2018 annual conference for the Illinois Association of School Administrators, a superintendent and his university advisor presented the results of his dissertation research regarding stress in the superintendency (Ehrman & Wolff, 2019). The quantitative study that formed the basis of the presentation (Ehrman, 2018) revealed significant stress for superintendents, with highest levels of stress for superintendents in their mid-40s, women superintendents, and superintendents of larger school systems.

For the previous two years the Illinois Association of Christian Administrators (IACA) had met at statewide educator conferences. Part of a multi-state organization, IACA was established in 2014 "to provide a network of Christ-like support and spiritual growth for school leaders" (IACA, 2019, para. 1). The growing membership of the group suggested interest in spiritual support among school leaders throughout the state.

Jeff Dillon, Superintendent of Wilder School District in Wilder, Ohio, was featured in the December 2018 issue of *School Administrator*, a publication of the American Association of School Administrators (Riede, 2018). The topic was innovation and the article entitled "Personalizing His Ministry Work in School." Dillon, who had left his work as a pastor to enter public education, said "I really feel that it was a call to ministry, but ministry is different to different people" (p. 55). The *School Administrator* article stood out because it mentioned the sense of calling or ministry that some superintendents report experiencing (Zaharris et al., 2017).

Religion and its impact on K-12 public education have rarely been discussed—religion has not been disparaged or promoted, but often simply ignored or overlooked. Yet for many educators and educational leaders, religion has played a central role in who they are, and why and how they do their work.

The dinner conversation with my colleagues, presentation on stress in the superintendency, and observations of growing conversations regarding the role of religious beliefs in the lives of superintendents, led me to question whether the presence or absence of personal religious beliefs affected the ability of superintendents to manage stress related to their job, and how the presence or absence of religious beliefs affected the job performance of superintendents.

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to investigate whether the presence or absence of religious beliefs and faith practices resulted in better stress management for public school superintendents. The following research questions were examined:

1. Did superintendents who engage in faith practices manage stress more effectively?
2. Did the presence or absence of religious beliefs and faith practices correlate with other demographic factors, including superintendent's gender, age, race, years as a superintendent, superintendent's years in current position, district's level of funding adequacy, type of school district (rural, non-rural, unit, high school, or elementary), number of students enrolled in PreK through 12th grade, and percentage of schools achieving Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designations of commendable or exemplary?

Literature Review

Spirituality and Leadership

Leadership theorists and researchers, and popular leadership authors have frequently written about benefits of spiritual guidance or character-related attributes for high-level leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2010; Blanchard, 2003; Cash & Gray, 2000; Covey, 2004; Frisdiantara & Sahertian, 2012; Fry, 2003; Greenleaf, 2008; Houston & Sokolow, 2006; Jones & Sheffield, 2009; Thompson, 2005a; Thompson, 2005b). "Servant leadership," "spiritual leadership," and "transformational leadership" have been examples of approaches that reportedly resulted in greater employee satisfaction, stronger customer relationships, and long-term stability of organizations. Except for Covey (2004), which was based on extensive quantitative and qualitative study of high performing companies and matched firms which did not meet the same standard, nearly all of these publications have been in the form of essays, empirical arguments, and theoretical proposals.

Professional standards for educational leaders are infused with value-laden expectations (NPBEA, 2015). Williams & Hatch (2012) conducted a mixed methods study of Pennsylvania superintendents and found evidence that leaders who engaged in religious practices had a positive impact on school culture. Kiel (2015) and Posner et al. (1985) examined datasets for corporation performance for 84 and 1498 companies, respectively, and further conducted interviews with people within organizations. They found that leaders who engaged in religious practices created a strong corporate ethical identity and positive financial performance for the organization.

Servant Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, and Transformational Leadership Theories

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in an essay entitled *The Servant as Leader* (1970). Servant leadership was said to begin with the desire to serve first, followed by the aspiration to lead. The first priority of the servant leader was to ensure that the needs of other people are served first, and that those who were served grew in all aspects of their lives so that they would be more likely to become servant-leaders.

L.W. Fry (2003) proposed a model of spiritual leadership that embedded vision, altruistic love, hope, and faith in practice to create a sense of meaning purpose and holistic integration in the workplace. The qualities of servant leadership could be found within the spiritual leader.

The focus on working for the greater good of the organization fit within Transformational Leadership (TL) Theory, which espoused and built on the qualities of servant and spiritual leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns 1978). James MacGregor Burns (1978) viewed leadership as either transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders relied on values such as responsibility, fairness ,and honesty to facilitate social exchange to motivate followers to achieve desired goals. Examples included offering financial incentives for productivity or offering a job for a campaign contribution. Power and position were used to obtain results and specific outcomes. Alternatively, transformational leaders inspired and empowered followers to achieve goals that were mutually beneficial for the follower, leader, and organization. TL was based on moral commitments, integrity, and altruism, and values such as liberty, equality, justice, and respect. Under TL, both leaders and followers lifted each other up to higher levels of functioning.

Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio (1994) expanded the concept of TL by defining its characteristics and situating it within the Full Range of Leadership (FRL) model. Within TL, the characteristic of Idealized Influence referred to transformational leaders as role models who engaged

in behaviors that were ethical, trustworthy, altruistic, and admirable. Followers' needs were put ahead of their own. Behavior was consistent with the leader's own values and those of the organization. The characteristics of Inspirational Motivation described leaders who were visionary, optimistic, enthusiastic, and inspired followers to do great things. The characteristic of Intellectual Stimulation described a leader's efforts to challenge followers to learn, grow, challenge assumptions, and approach problems from new perspectives. Leaders did not criticize mistakes, but instead encouraged others to generate solutions. The characteristic of Individualized Consideration described a leader who supported followers in achieving their personal goals. Leaders served as mentors and coaches for followers and provided them with learning opportunities.

Bass (1998) coined the terms authentic and pseudo-transformational to distinguish between ethical and unethical leaders who used principles of TL. Authentic TL was said to be motivated by altruism, integrity, and genuine interest in the well-being and development of followers. Pseudo-TL leaders were said to use the approach for their own personal gain and selfish ends. They were motivated by greed, power, anger, and deception. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) identified the "three pillars" of ethics in leadership: "(1) the moral character of the leader; (2) the ethical legitimacy of the values embedded in the leaders vision; and (3) the morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue" (p. 181).

Transformational leaders have been said to inspire their followers to greater morality and motivation by serving as role models, inspiring and motivating by communicating a vision for the organization, showing genuine concern for the needs and development of followers, and challenging followers to greater creativity and accomplishment through Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation (Bass, 1998; Bass & Riggio, 2010; Cansoy, 2019; Chi et al., 2011; Fadhilah Abdul et al., 2018; Tse et al., 2018; Yuan-Duen & Chen-Tsung, 2019). TL espoused the principles within servant leadership and spiritual leadership, including the importance of spiritual habits and practices that support leader efficacy in all types of organizations, including public schools. (Crossman, 2003, 2016; Frisdiantara & Sahertian, 2012; L. Fry & Cohen, 2009; Houston & Sokolow, 2006, 2008; K.P, Rodrigus L.R, K.P.V, & Pai, 2019; Riaz & Normore, 2008; Zaharris et al., 2017).

Definitions of Religion and Spiritual Practices

Durkheim (2001) held that religion made meaningful connections between our own subjectivities and the externalities which may threaten us. Crossman (2003) defined religion as a "public and institutionalized process based on sacred texts, rituals and practices" and spirituality as "unsystematized, individually interpreted, private experience" (p. 504). Thompson (2005a) identified the following spiritual practices or disciplines: prayer, meditation, scripture reading, attending religious services, listening to inspirational music, journal-writing, and seeking solitude. Through persistent and consistent exercise, engaging in spiritual practices was said to develop spiritual qualities such as "faith, patience, intuition, humility, expectancy, inspiration, [and] compassion" which led to "stability and clarity" in stressful leadership situations (para. 3).

Thompson (2005b, p. 5) defined spirituality as "a state of mind or consciousness that enables one to perceive deeper levels of experience, meaning, values and purpose than can be perceived from a strictly materialistic vantage point" and spiritual leadership as "leading from those deeper levels" (p. 62). This state of mind could have possibly come from a specific religious tradition, may have been unrelated to organized religion, or even non-religious in nature. Thompson

emphasized that in public education, one should not attempt to promote or proselytize specific religious beliefs, but that did not require hiding or denial of one's spiritual identity. L. W. Fry (2003) similarly defined spirituality as transcending denominational doctrine and practice, to lead from deeper levels through purposeful actions.

Stephen Sokolow & Paul Houston (2008) defined "spiritual" as a way of "thinking, being, and doing that are life-sustaining and life-enhancing both for individuals and organizations" (p. 14). They did not use the term in a religious way but saw spiritual principles as "habits of mind and soul that can act as guideposts for…leadership" (Sokolow & Houston, 2008, p. 14). The habits included setting personal intentions that were aligned with inner values, focusing attention on the right things for the right reasons, using one's own unique gifts and talents for the benefit of others and developing the gifts and talents of others, expressing gratitude, growing through reflection, cultivating a holistic perspective, being open to receive and provide truth, love, and compassion, and to trust and be trusted.

Mindel and Vaughan (1978) viewed religious participation as potentially occurring in different ways. Active participation in organized religion was characterized by attending religious services or contributing money to religious activities. Other people might not have actively participated in organized religious services but considered themselves religiously involved because they participated in nonorganizational religious activities, such as listening to religious services or music on radio and television, praying alone or with family, Bible reading, and meditation.

Public Schools and Religion

Public schools in the United States have historically avoided the topic of religion and the role it played in the efficacy of school leaders (Jones & Sheffield, 2009). Increasingly, researchers have investigated the role of spiritual practices within educational leadership and its impact on school districts (Arnold & Brooks, 2013; Marshall, 2014; Pijanowski, 2017; Riaz & Normore, 2008; Striepe, Clarke, & O'Donoghue, 2014; Zaharris et al., 2017). Zaharris et al. (2017) found that principals and assistant principals who demonstrated spiritually based core values also displayed the practices of exemplary leadership. Little information has been available on the possible relationship between the presence or absence of spiritual practices among district leaders and the efficacy of school superintendents.

Role of Superintendent, Stressors, and Impact

School superintendents play key roles in establishing the direction of their districts and implementing initiatives that support vision and goals (Forner et al., 2012; Waters & Marzano, 2007). The pressures of many competing constituencies and interests create unique stressors upon superintendents (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Ehrman & Wolff, 2019; Glass, 2003; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Richardson 1998, Tienken & Domenech, 2021). Those pressures may negatively impact superintendents' behavior, judgment, performance, and longevity (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Barling & Cloutier, 2017).

More than half of superintendents have been in their current position for five years or less (McCord & Finnan, 2019, p. 13). Superintendent tenure was positively correlated with student achievement – with evidence of impact as early as year 2 of a superintendent's employment, and correlated to long-term stability of the district through development of a shared vision for the dis-

trict and goals for instruction, monitoring goals for achievement and instruction, identifying resources to support instructional goals, and providing staff with the necessary training to implement initiatives (Waters & Marzano, 2007, p. 10).

Previous studies have found evidence that school leaders used religious practices such as meditation, prayer, and solitude to cope with difficult times (Carleton et al., 2018; Kohn, 2008; Metzger, 2006). Zaharris et al. (2017) found in a qualitative study of eight building level administrators that school leaders who engaged in religious practices were deeply committed to their work but were less satisfied with life. Zaharris (2017) postulated that these school leaders lacked balance between personal and professional demands, which was stressful.

Few quantitative studies regarding relationships between religious practices and stress management or leadership efficacy are available for school district leaders. Research in these areas has more usually employed qualitative methodologies and focused on school building level leadership.

Theoretical Framework

Religious beliefs and faith practices have been shown to aid in management of stress for high-level executives and have been related to practices which included elements of TL, including moral commitment, integrity, and altruism, and values such as liberty, equality, justice, and respect (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Carleton, Barling, & Trivisonno, 2018). TL encompasses and builds upon the principles of servant leadership and spiritual leadership. This quantitative study used the theoretical framework of TL to investigate whether the presence or absence of religious beliefs and faith practices resulted in better stress management for public school superintendents.

Methodology

Superintendents from Illinois were invited to take a structured survey that included demographic questions and selected items from the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS) to answer the research questions. Simple and multiple regression was used for statistical analysis of questions regarding religious beliefs/practices and stress management.

Sample

The survey was sent to all 882 public school superintendents in Illinois and 143 responded with at least one answer. One hundred and seventeen superintendents substantially completed the survey and were included in the analysis, yielding a response rate of 13.3 percent. Superintendents were considered to have substantially completed the survey if they responded with most of the demographic information and completed the subscales for the BRS. Respondents with incomplete demographic information were analyzed when possible.

Participants were typically male (74.4%), married (91.5%), with an average age of 50.79 years, had served as a superintendent for an average of 9.19 years, and in their current position for 6.29 years. All but one participant identified race as white. One male respondent identified race as Asian. Table 1 summarizes demographic information for study participants.

Table 1: Participant *Characteristics*

Characteristic	Participants (N = 117)
Gender	
Male	87 (74.4%)
Female	30 (25.6%)
Age	
M (SD)	50.8 (7.0)
Race	
White	116 (99.1%)
Asian	1 (0.9%)
Marital status	
Divorced-not currently married	7 (6.0%)
Married	107 (91.5%)
Single-never married	2 (1.7%)
Widowed-not currently married	1 (0.9%)
Years as superintendent[a]	
M (SD)	9.2 (5.6)
Years in current position[b]	
M (SD)	6.3 (4.4)

[a]N = 115.
[b]N = 116.

Most respondents served rural (65%) or suburban districts (32.5%), with 54.7% of those districts classified as unit, 35.9% as elementary, and 9.4% as high school districts. Districts ranged in size from 1-25 schools, with total enrollments ranging from 54 to 13,308 students, a median of 908 students. Of those districts, 32.5% were categorized as Tier 1 for state funding purposes, or at the lowest percentage of funding adequacy, 40.2% Tier 2, 12% Tier 3, and 15.4% at Tier 4, or the highest percentage of funding adequacy. On average, 85% of schools within the districts served by the respondents received ESSA designations of commendable or exemplary. Table 2 summarizes descriptive information for the school districts represented in the study.

Table 2: *Corresponding Participant District Characteristics*

Characteristic	Participant districts (N = 117)
Level of funding adequacy	
Tier 1 (lowest)	38 (32.5%)
Tier 2	47 (40.2%)
Tier 3	14 (12.0%)
Tier 4	18 (15.4%)
Type of school district	

Characteristic	Participant districts (N = 117)
Rural	76 (65.0%)
Non-rural	41 (35.0%)
Urban	2 (1.7%)
Suburban	38 (32.5%)
University town	1 (0.9%)
Elementary	42 (35.9%)
High school	11 (9.4%)
Unit	64 (54.7%)
District enrollment including PreK[a]	
Mdn (IQR)	908 (1156)
% of schools rated commendable or exemplary[b]	
< 80%	27 (22.8%)
≥ 80%	88 (77.2%)

[a]N = 113.
[b]N = 114.

Definition of Survey Variables

Degree of Religious Belief/Practices

Religious practices include belief in God or a higher power, attendance at religious services at a place of worship, prayer, reading sacred books, and meditation. Sixteen questions from the BRS were included in the survey to assess religious practices. For each question, participants were assigned a score of 0, 1, or 2 depending on the degree of professed belief or practice. For example, one question stated, "How often do you turn to your religion or your spiritual beliefs to help you deal with your daily problems?" Response options included "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always". Those that responded "Never" were assigned 0 points for this question, those that responded "Rarely" or "Sometimes" were assigned 1 point, and those that responded "Often" or "Always" were assigned 2 points. The values were added together to obtain a final score for Religious Practices between 0 and 32. Table 3 summarizes the point assignments for the specific scoring for each question. The survey questions are included in Appendix B.

Table 3: *BRS Religious Practice/Belief Questions and Scoring for Specific Responses*

Religious practice question	Response score		
	0	1	2
How religious do you consider yourself?	Not	Slightly, Moderately	Very
How spiritual do you consider yourself?	Not	Slightly, Moderately	Very

How often attend religious services?	Never, less than once a year	Once or twice a year, several times a year, once a month	2-3 times a month, once a week, twice a week or more
How often do you pray?	Never, certain occasions	Once a week or less, few times a week	Once a day, two or more times a day
How often do you read sacred books?	Never, less than once a year, once or twice a year	Several times a year, once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week	Several times a week
How often do you meditate?	Never, certain occasions	Once a week or less, few times a week	Once a day, two or more times a day
Personal beliefs about God	Don't know, do not believe, have no opinion	Some doubts, sometimes believe, higher power	No doubt God exists
God seems impersonal to me	Strongly agree, agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems	Strongly agree, agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
God knows when I need support	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
God is generally responsive to me	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I decide what to do without relying on God	Strongly agree, agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When good or bad things happen, I see it as part of God's plan	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
God has decided what my life will be	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I depend on God for help and guidance	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
How often do you turn to your religion or spiritual beliefs to deal with daily problems?	Never, rarely	Sometimes	Often, always

Religious Practices and BRS

The BRS is a national survey of religious beliefs, values, and behaviors that has been administered in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2021. Some of the questions on the BRS were outside of the scope of this investigation. With permission from the BRS authors, the BRS was modified for this research by selecting only those questions that directly related to evaluating the religious beliefs and religious practices, and lifestyle behaviors, feelings, and health related to stress levels of study participants. Appendix B displays communications with Baylor University

regarding permission to use the BRS as part of this study, the questions asked on the full BRS, which questions were omitted from the modified form used for the present study and the actual survey questions used for this study.

Degree of Stress Management and Baylor Religion Survey

Stress may involve multiple aspects of an individual's life, including relationships, health, lifestyle choices, and emotional well-being. Thirty-seven relationship, lifestyle, and physical and emotional health questions from the BRS were administered to participants to assess stress management. Each response was assigned a score of 0, 1, or 2 depending on degree of professed stress management. For example, one question asked, "In general, would you say your health is: Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, or Poor?" Individuals who responded "Fair" or "Poor" were assigned 0 points, those that responded "Good" were assigned 1 point, and those that responded "Very good" were assigned 2 points. The values were added together to obtain a final score for Stress Management between 0 and 74. Table 4 summarizes the point assignments for the specific scoring for each question.

Table 4: *BRS Stress Management Questions and Scoring for Specific Responses*

Stress management questions	Response score		
	0	**1**	**2**
Trust people	Little, none	Some	A lot
Health	Fair, poor	Good	Very good
Happy with your life	Not too happy	Pretty happy	Very happy
Trouble falling asleep	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
Felt rested in the morning	Hardly ever, never	Some of the time	Most of the time
Physical health conditions that limit activity	Yes		No
Take medication for anxiety	Yes		No
In past week:			
a. Bothered by things that don't usually bother me	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
b. Could not shake off the blues	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
c. Felt I was as good as other people	Hardly ever, never	Some of the time	Most or all the time
d. Had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
e. Felt depressed	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
f. Felt too tired to do things	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never

Stress management questions	Response score		
	0	**1**	**2**
g. Felt happy	Hardly ever, never	Some of the time	Most or all the time
h. Enjoyed life	Hardly ever, never	Some of the time	Most or all the time
i. Felt sad	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
j. Felt people disliked me	Most or all the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever, never
Extent to which you agree/disagree:			
a. Looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful	Strongly agree, agree	Disagree, undecided	Strongly disagree
b. Have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree, undecided	Strongly agree
c. I have satisfying life purpose	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree, undecided	Strongly agree
d. My life has no clear purpose	Strongly agree, agree	Disagree, undecided	Strongly disagree
How close do you feel to the following?			
a. Your family	Not very, not at all	Somewhat, undecided	Very
b. Your friends	Not very, not at all	Somewhat, undecided	Very
c. Neighbors	Not very, not at all	Somewhat, undecided	Very
Did any of these things occur in the past year? What was its effect on you?			
a. Had a child	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
b. Got married	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
c. Divorced/Separated	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
d. Death of loved one	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
e. Lost a job	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
f. Long-term illness or injury	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful

Stress management questions	Response score		
	0	**1**	**2**
g. Moved	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
h. House fore-closed	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
i. Crisis of faith	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
j. Failed at something important to me	Happened, very stressful	Happened, somewhat stressful	Did not happen, happened and not at all stressful
Rate agree or disagree with following:			
a. I bounce back quickly after hard times	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree, undecided	Strongly agree
b. Does not take me long to recover from stressful event	Strongly disagree, disagree	Agree, undecided	Strongly agree
c. Have a hard time making it through stressful event	Strongly agree, agree	Disagree, undecided	Strongly disagree

Demographic Questions

Participants were asked to report the following personal characteristics: gender, age, race, total years of experience in current position, and total years of experience as superintendent. Since only one participant identified as non-white, the analysis of the factor of race could not be meaningfully run and was removed from the study.

Participants reported the following characteristics for the districts where currently employed: current level of funding adequacy used for calculating district state-aid payments within the state's evidence-based funding system; district type as urban, suburban, rural, or university town; district type as elementary, high school, or unit; number of students currently enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade; and percentage of schools within their district that achieved ESSA designations of commendable or exemplary. A high number of respondents identified their school district as rural. Post-hoc analysis was conducted for categories of rural and non-rural. The non-rural category was comprised of participants from suburban, urban, and university town districts.

Data Management and Statistical Analysis

Simple and multiple linear regression were used to evaluate associations between degree of religious practice and degree of stress management by superintendents. Effect sizes were assessed using partial correlations, r_p. All statistical tests were performed at the .05 significance level. Confidence intervals were calculated to represent a .95 coverage probability. Planned analyses by research question are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: *Research Questions and Analyses*

Research Questions	Variables	Planned Analysis
1. Is there a statistically significant association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with a predictor for degree of religious belief/practice
1a. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by gender?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, gender DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, gender, and the corresponding interaction
1b. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by age?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, age DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, age, and the corresponding interaction
1c. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by race?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, race DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, race, and the corresponding interaction
1d. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by years of experience as a superintendent?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, years of experience as a superintendent DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, years of experience, and the corresponding interaction
1e. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by years of experience in current position?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, years of experience in current position DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, years of experience in current position, and the corresponding interaction
1f. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by the school district's level of funding adequacy within the	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, level of funding adequacy DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, level of funding adequacy, and the corresponding interaction

state's evidence-based funding system?		
1g. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by type of school district?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, type of school district DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, type of school district, and the corresponding interaction
1h. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by student enrollment in Pre-K through 12th grade?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, enrollment DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, student enrollment, and the corresponding interaction
1i. Is the observed association between the degree of religious practice and superintendent leadership style moderated by the percentage of schools in the district achieving ESSA designations of commendable or exemplary?	IV: Degree of religious belief/practice, percent ESSA commendable/ exemplary DV: MLQ subscale scores	Multivariate regression with predictors for degree of religious belief/practice, percent ESSA commendable/exemplary, and the corresponding interaction

Note. DV = Dependent Variable. IV = Independent Variable.

Assumptions

This study assumed that questions selected from the BRS were sufficiently robust to measure religious beliefs and practices and provided lifestyle and health information related to stress management as reported by superintendents. This study further assumed that the volunteer sample was representative of the general population of superintendents, and that superintendents who participated in the study accurately responded to the survey questions.

Limitations

Results may not be representative of superintendents throughout the state of Illinois as the study sample was 99% Caucasian and heavily weighted toward rural school systems. Items from BRS were used to assess stress and religious practice. BRS is not validated for this purpose, so results should be viewed with caution. It is possible that potential participants who were religious were more likely to take the survey once they saw the topic, which may have impacted results.

A multiple regression quantitative study may provide correlation information, but it cannot prove causation. The survey was conducted during the 1st few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in statewide closing of schools from mid-March 2020 to the end of that school year. These changes, along with related changes in the larger society, significantly increased pressures and workload on school leaders and may have affected the responses to the survey for this study.

Delimitations

This study was limited to superintendents within one Midwestern state and focused on self-reported religious beliefs and practices, relationship, lifestyle, and physical and emotional health.

Many additional factors could and should be studied, but scope was limited to key factors of interest to keep the survey at a manageable length for participants. Quantitative methods were chosen to fill a gap in the literature, specifically the limited quantitative research related to the questions addressed in this study.

Discussion of Findings: Stress Management and Religious Practice

Religious practice scores averaged 61% of 30 possible points ($M = 18.35$). Stress/health scores averaged 81% of 74 possible points ($M = 59.66$). To answer the first research question, the association between degree of religious practice and degree of stress management was evaluated using simple and multiple linear regression (see Table 6).

Table 6: *Overall Association Between Degree of Stress Management and Degree of Religious Practice and Corresponding Interactions with Participant and District Characteristics*

Characteristic	Intercept		Slope		r_p	p
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI		
Overall	57.55	[53.98, 61.11]	0.12	[-0.06, 0.29]		.193
Gender						.057
Male	56.49	[52.40, 60.58]	0.21	[0.01, 0.41]	.19	
Female	60.72	[53,88, 67.55]	-0.17	[-0.51, 0.17]	-.09	
Age						.373
Years as superintendent						.180
Years in current position						.299
Level of funding adequacy						.348
Type of school district						
Rural/non-rural						.746
Elementary/high school/unit						.777
PreK-12$^{\text{th}}$ grade enrollment						.952
% ESSA commendable / exemplary schools						.667

Note. Values of *p* in participant and district characteristic rows correspond to tests of interaction between the degree of religious practice and the given characteristic.

No statistically significant overall associations were observed between degree of religious practice and degree of stress management. Further, no statistically significant interaction with degree of religious practice was observed for any of the participant or district characteristics. Although not statistically significant, some degree of differentiation in the association between the

degrees of religious practice and stress management was observed based on gender (p = .057). In particular, male superintendents who professed a higher degree of religious practice also demonstrated a greater tendency toward stress management. Conversely, female superintendents exhibited little to no association between religious practice and stress management.

Optional Open-Ended Question

The survey included an optional question that allowed superintendents to share any thoughts, comments, or anecdotes related to the topic so that related examples could bring life to the statistical analysis. Written comments on this item were categorized using content analysis. Twenty participants provided a response to this item pertaining to the research topic. Nine comments (all male: four from rural, and five from unit districts) stated that a relationship with God was important to the work of a superintendent. One (male, rural, unit district) found purpose in Christ. Two (one male, one female: both rural unit districts,) said God gives people tools for more effective living. Three believe in a higher power and agreed that good conduct, prayer, love, and positive thoughts were important (two males, one female, three elementary districts: two non-rural and one rural). Two people gave examples of answers to prayer (one male, one female: one rural district and one unit district,). Three said that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their responses (two males, one female: two elementary districts, one unit district, two rural and one non-rural).

Discussion of Findings: Stress Management for School Leaders

One goal of this study was to identify potential supports for school leaders to manage stress. Previous studies found evidence that school leaders used religious practices such as meditation, prayer, and solitude to cope with difficult times (Carleton et al., 2018; Kohn, 2008; Metzger, 2006). Zaharris et al. (2017) found that school leaders who engaged in religious practices were deeply committed to their work but were less satisfied with life, possibly lacking balance between personal and professional demands.

The present study agreed in large measure with these previous studies by finding that some superintendents engage in religious practices in an effort to manage the demands of their work, but no significant statistical association was found to validate the effectiveness of this approach. These outcomes suggested possible hypotheses for further study. One hypothesis is that religious practices do not have an impact on school leaders' ability to do their job or manage stress. It is merely a placebo effect or coping mechanism but makes no difference in outcomes or performance. A second hypothesis is that religious individuals view their roles as spiritual callings and feel the responsibilities of their position more keenly, thus creating more stress for themselves than non-religious individuals. Religious individuals engage in spiritual practices to manage this stress and continue with their work more effectively than if they did not engage in spiritual practices. More study is needed to identify ways for superintendents to effectively manage stress.

Implications for Practice

School boards, professional organizations, and individual superintendents should consider placing greater emphasis on managing superintendent stress. The superintendency is highly stressful (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Ehrman & Wolff, 2019; Glass, 2003; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Richardson, 1998) and those job pressures may negatively impact

the behavior, judgment, performance, and longevity of those who hold those positions (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Barling & Cloutier, 2017). To that end, it is important that we continue to explore the topic and identify effective methods that individuals can employ in their own lives, and ways for colleagues, professional associations, and school boards to support superintendents.

Implications for Future Research

Superintendents experience significant levels of stress in their work and need effective methods to manage that stress. Future studies should explore specific mechanisms used by superintendents to manage stress, such as specific religious practices, exercise, sleep, medication, alcohol, counseling, professional or other group involvement, and hobbies, and compare with stress levels of superintendents to determine which, if any, are effective. This would be a useful study for educational leaders and leaders in other fields. Future research should use validated tests for stress and religious practices to assess these constructs and their relationship, if any.

Conclusion

Public school superintendents face significant stressors from wide-ranging pressures and would benefit from improved understanding of ways to manage stress and effective ways to lead schools in stressful times. This study generally supported findings from related research that showed many superintendents engage in religious practices. However, little evidence supports the efficacy of those practices on stress management. More research is needed to better identify which, if any, stress management strategies have value for superintendents.

It is this researcher's hope that school boards, professional organizations, and individual superintendents place greater emphasis on managing stress. The job pressures of the superintendency may negatively impact the behavior, judgment, performance, and longevity of those who hold those positions (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Bartling & Cloutier, 2017). To that end, it is important that we continue to explore the topic and work to identify effective methods that individuals can employ in their own lives, and also ways for colleagues, professional organizations, and school boards to support superintendents in their vital work.

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Dr. Wilson retired in 2020 as superintendent of Blue Ridge Schools in East Central Illinois. Over the course of her career she served rural, urban, and suburban Illinois school districts as a school psychologist, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent.

APPENDIX
SURVEY DOCUMENTS

Baylor Religion Survey Documents

Communications with Baylor University regarding permission to use the Baylor Religion Survey

(BRS) as part of this study. Questions from the BRS, Wave 5 are published at https://www.bay-

lor.edu/baylorreligionsurvey/doc.php/289167.pdf. This research study used the following se-

lected questions from the BRS: 3-5, 12-14, 17, 20, 24, 33, 37-38, 40-43, 48, 51, 65, 70, and 71.

Results from the BRS are available at http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descrip-

tions/BRS5.asp

Re: Use of BRS in Study for Dissertation

Susan Wilson06 <swilson06@aurora.edu>
Mon 1/27/2020 6:58 PM
To: Froese, Paul <Paul_Froese@baylor.edu>
Cc: Goodrich, Terry <Terry_Goodrich@baylor.edu>
Thank you so much – and for such a quick response. I truly appreciate it.

All my best,
Susan.

_____

From: Froese, Paul <Paul_Froese@baylor.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2020 4:05 PM
To: Susan Wilson06 <swilson06@aurora.edu>
Cc: Goodrich, Terry <Terry_Goodrich@baylor.edu>
Subject: Re: Use of BRS in Study for Dissertation

Hi Susan,

So glad that the survey was useful. And you have our permission to use the selected items. Good luck
with the survey and let us know some of your findings.

My best, Paul

Paul Froese
Sociology Department
Baylor University

From: Susan Wilson06 <swilson06@aurora.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2020 3:47 PM
To: Froese, Paul <Paul_Froese@baylor.edu>
Cc: Goodrich, Terry <Terry_Goodrich@baylor.edu>
Subject: Use of BRS in Study for Dissertation

Hello, Dr. Froese,

I contacted you last fall regarding the use of selected items from the 2017 Baylor Religion Survey for my
research study as part of my dissertation and you were very helpful. I am preparing the defense of my
research proposal and would like to include specific authorization from you to use selected items from
the BRS, including some of the items regarding religious beliefs and practices, and lifestyle and health
questions. Is that acceptable to you? (Note: a draft form of the survey is attached to this email for
reference.)

If you have additional questions, please let me know. Thank you for your time and consideration.

All my best,
Mrs. Susan Wilson
Doctoral Student, Aurora University
Aurora, Illinois

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Documents

Permission to use the MLQ (5x-Short) as part of this study, and sample questions asked on the MLQ (5x-Short)

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire™

Instrument (Leader and Rater Form)

and Scoring Guide
(Form 5X-Short)

by Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass

Published by Mind Garden, Inc.

info@mindgarden.com
www.mindgarden.com

m\nd garden

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below. Sample Items:

As a leader ....

    I talk optimistically about the future.
    I spend time teaching and coaching.
    I avoid making decisions.

The person I am rating....
    Talks optimistically about the future.
    Spends time teaching and coaching.
    Avoids making decisions

Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc.
www.mindgarden.com

Survey Questions

Welcome to My Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study seeks to investigate whether the presence or absence of religious beliefs and faith practices is associated with better stress management and leadership style.

Superintendents are asked to complete a three-part survey consisting of a modified version of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS), the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Third Edition (MLQ), and demographic information. The survey includes several questions regarding mental health and substance use. An optional question allows superintendents to share any thoughts, comments, or anecdotes related to the topic.

The demographic survey will obtain the following information: participant's gender, race, years as a superintendent, years in present position, present district's level of funding adequacy, type of school district (rural, suburban, urban, unit, high school, or elementary), district's enrollment, and percentage of schools in the district who achieved ESSA designations of commendable or exemplary.

Questions from the BRS ask for information regarding your religious beliefs and practices, if any, health and lifestyle related to stress management, and mental health and substance use. Questions from the MLQ ask for information regarding your leadership behaviors in specific situations.

The survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey will be open for responses for approximately 3 weeks.

This research project has minimal risks to participants. Names of participants and names of school districts are not provided on the survey, but there is a small chance that someone reading the results of this study will be able to associate responses with a specific individual participant if only one response is received from a particular type of district. If this should occur, then the data from that district will not be reported in the study.

This research is expected to benefit the body of knowledge regarding superintendents, stressors they face, and whether religious beliefs or practices assist superintendents in managing those stressors. It will also provide information regarding leadership practices and any relationships between stress, stress management, religious beliefs and practices, and leadership style.

All data will be kept confidential through a variety of measures. Digital information will be stored in a password secured document on a password protected device in a secure location. Analog resources and documents will be secured in a locked drawer within a secure facility. Data will be stored securely for 3 years and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the researcher, Susan Wilson, at PO Box 257, Farmer City, IL 61842, swilson06@aurora.edu, and 309-533-1471. If you have questions about

your rights as a participant, contact, Austin Pickup, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Aurora
University, apickup@aurora.edu, (630) 844-4625. If you have need of a counselor as a result of
participation, please contact Dr. Marcie Wiseman, mwiseman@aurora.edu, 630-844-4932.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you
decide not to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you
withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or
destroyed.

1. I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

○ Yes

○ No

Demographic Information

2. How many years have you been a superintendent, including the current school year?

3. How many years have you been employed in your current position, including the current school year?

4. What is your age in years?

5. What is your sex?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Other (please specify)

6. Which of the following best describes your race?

○ White

○ Black or African-American

○ American Indian or Alaska Native

○ Asian

○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

7. What is your current marital status?

○ Single-never married

○ Married

○ Separated

○ Divorced-not currently married

○ Widowed-not currently married

○ Domestic partnership/living with partner (not legally married)

School District Information

8. Under the Evidence Based Funding Model, what is your district's current level of funding adequacy used for purposes of calculating state aid payments?

○ Tier 1 - Lowest Percentage of Adequacy

○ Tier 2

○ Tier 3

○ Tier 4- Highest Percentage of Adequacy

9. How would you classify your school district?

○ Urban

○ Suburban

○ Rural

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

10. Which of the following describes your school district?

○ Unit District

○ Elementary District

○ High School District

11. What was your district's 6th day student enrollment this year (include any grades you serve from PreK through 12th grade)?

[   ]

12. How many schools are in your district?

[   ]

13. What number of schools in your district received ESSA designations of commendable or exemplary on the most recent school report card?

[   ]

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

This part of the questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank. 36 descriptive statements are listed on the following pages.

14. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts	○	○	○	○	○
I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	○	○	○	○	○
I fail to interfere until problems become serious	○	○	○	○	○
I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards	○	○	○	○	○
I avoid getting involved when important issues arise	○	○	○	○	○

15. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I talk about my most important values and beliefs	○	○	○	○	○
I am absent when needed	○	○	○	○	○
I seek differing perspectives when solving problems	○	○	○	○	○
I talk optimistically about the future	○	○	○	○	○
I instill pride in others for being associated with me	○	○	○	○	○

16. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets	○	○	○	○	○
I wait for things to go wrong before taking action	○	○	○	○	○
I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	○	○	○	○	○
I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	○	○	○	○	○
I spend time teaching and coaching	○	○	○	○	○

17. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I make clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved	○	○	○	○	○
I show that I am a firm believer in "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"	○	○	○	○	○
I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group	○	○	○	○	○
I treat others as individuals rather than just as a member of a group	○	○	○	○	○
I demonstrate that problems must become chronic before I take action	○	○	○	○	○

18. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I act in ways that build others' respect for me	○	○	○	○	○
I concentrate my full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures	○	○	○	○	○
I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	○	○	○	○	○
I keep track of all mistakes	○	○	○	○	○
I display a sense of power and confidence	○	○	○	○	○

19. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I articulate a compelling vision of the future	○	○	○	○	○
I direct my attention toward failures to meet standards	○	○	○	○	○
I avoid making decisions	○	○	○	○	○
I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others	○	○	○	○	○
I get others to look at problems from many different angles	○	○	○	○	○

20. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently, if not always
I help others to develop their strengths	○	○	○	○	○
I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	○	○	○	○	○
I delay responding to urgent questions	○	○	○	○	○
I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission	○	○	○	○	○
I express satisfaction when others meet expectations	○	○	○	○	○
I express confidence that goals will be achieved	○	○	○	○	○

Baylor Religion Survey
This section of the survey will use selected questions from the Baylor Religion Survey to collect information regarding religious beliefs and practices, health, lifestyle, and stress.

21. How much would you say you trust people in general?

○ A lot

○ Some

○ A little

○ None at all

22. In general, would you say your health is:

○ Very good

○ Good

○ Fair

○ Poor

23. In general, how happy are you with your life as a whole these days?

○ Very happy

○ Pretty happy

○ Not too happy

24. During the past month, on average, how many hours of sleep did you get each night?

25. In the past month, how often have you had trouble falling asleep?

○ Most of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly Ever

○ Never

26. In the past month, how often have you felt rested in the morning?

○ Most of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly Ever

○ Never

27. Do you have any physical health condition or problem that limits the kinds of activity or amount of activity that you can carry out?

○ Yes

○ No

28. Do you currently take tranquilizers, antidepressants, or pills for anxiety?

○ Yes

○ No

29. In the past week, about how often were you bothered by things that don't usually bother you?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

30. In the past week, about how often were you unable to shake off the blues, even with help from your family and your friends?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

31. In the past week, about how often did you feel you were just as good as other people?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

32. In the past week, about how often did you have trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

33. In the past week, about how often did you feel depressed?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

34. In the past week, how often did you feel too tired to do things?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

35. In the past week, how often did you feel happy?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

36. In the past week, how often did you feel you enjoyed life?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

37. In the past week, how often did you feel sad?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

38. In the past week, how often did you feel that people disliked you?

○ Most or all of the time

○ Some of the time

○ Hardly ever

○ Never

39. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Undecided

40. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Undecided

41. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Undecided

42. My life has no clear purpose

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Undecided

43. How close do you feel to your family?

○ Very close

○ Somewhat close

○ Not very close

○ Not at all close

○ Undecided

44. How close do you feel to your friends?

○ Very close

○ Somewhat close

○ Not very close

○ Not at all close

○ Undecided

45. How close do you feel to your neighbors?

○ Very close

○ Somewhat close

○ Not very close

○ Not at all close

○ Undecided

46. Did you have a child this year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

47. Did you get married this year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

48. Did you get divorced/separated this year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

49. Did you experience the death of a loved one this year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

50. Did you get a new job/promotion this year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

51. Did you lose a job this year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

52. Did you get a long-term illness or injury this past year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

53. Did you move this past year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

54. Did you have a house foreclosed this past year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

55. Did you have a crisis of faith this past year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

56. Did you fail at something important to you this past year? What was its effect on you?

○ Did not happen to me

○ Happened to me and was not at all stressful

○ Happened to me and was somewhat stressful

○ Happened to me and was very stressful

57. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Undecided

58. It does not take me long to recover from stressful events

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Undecided

59. I have a hard time making it through stressful events

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Undecided

60. How religious do you consider yourself to be?

- ◯ Not religious
- ◯ Slightly religious
- ◯ Moderately religious
- ◯ Very religious

61. How spiritual do you consider yourself to be?

- ◯ Not spiritual
- ◯ Slightly spiritual
- ◯ Moderately spiritual
- ◯ Very spiritual

62. How often do you attend religious services at a place of worship

○ Never

○ Less than once a year

○ Once or twice a year

○ Several times a year

○ Once a month

○ 2-3 times a month

○ About once a week

○ Twice a week or more

63. About how often do you spend time alone praying outside of religious services?

○ Never

○ Only on certain occasions

○ Once a week or less

○ A few times a week

○ Once a day

○ Two or more times a day

64. Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you spend time alone reading the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred book?

○ Never

○ Less than once a year

○ Once or twice a year

○ Several times a year

○ Once a month

○ 2-3 times a month

○ About once a week

○ Several times a week

65. About how often do you practice meditation outside of religious services?

○ Never

○ Only on certain occasions

○ Once a week or less

○ A few times a week

○ Once a day

○ Two or more times a day

66. Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs about God?

○ I have no doubts that God exists

○ I believe in God, but with some doubts

○ I sometimes believe in God

○ I believe in a higher power or cosmic force

○ I don't know and there is no way to find out

○ I do not believe in God

○ I have no opinion

67. God seems impersonal to me

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

68. God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

69. God knows when I need support

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

70. I feel that God is generally responsive to me

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

71. I decide what to do without relying on God

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

72. When good or bad things happen to me, I see it as part of God's plan for me

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

73. God has decided what my life will be

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

74. I depend on God for help and guidance

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree