

INTEGRATION BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF BODY, MIND, AND SOUL OF THE HUMAN PERSON WITH AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE DIVINE

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Abstract

This study delves into the dynamics between theology and psychology, exploring the historical attitudes held by practitioners in each field. Historically, psychology has often overlooked the role of religion in shaping human behaviour and cognition, leading to a fragmented understanding of the human experience. The neglect of spirituality has limited the effectiveness of psychological research in addressing the complex interplay between mind, body, and soul. This study adopts a literature review methodology drawing from psychology, theology, and neuroscience. Data analysis revealed a significant correlation between religious beliefs/practices and human adaptation, highlighting the importance of integrating religious factors into psychological research paradigms. Moreover, recent developments suggest increasing recognition of the interface between religion and psychology, indicating promising collaboration and further exploration opportunities. The study recommends fostering greater collaboration and dialogue between psychology and theology. By synthesising insights from psychology and theology, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers can develop more holistic interventions that promote human flourishing and facilitate individuals' spiritual growth. Therefore, future research should explore and deepen the synergies between psychology and theology, aiming to cultivate a more profound understanding of human nature and harness the transformative power of spirituality in enhancing the overall quality of life.

Key terms: Integration, neuroscience, psychology, theology, well-being.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Psychology, as a discipline, delves into the intricacies of the human mind and behaviour. Within this field, there exists a dichotomy between man-centred psychology, which aims to enhance individual happiness and success within the confines of personal worldviews, and God-centred psychology, which seeks fulfilment within the framework of divine principles (John 10:10). The latter emphasises eternal desires such as holiness over transient happiness (John 2:15-17), obedience to God even in adversity (Philippians 3:7-16), and a focus on God's eternal perspective (Matthew 6:19-20). Integration of theology and psychology has emerged as a significant area of inquiry, offering insights into the holistic transformation of the human person. This interdisciplinary approach, exemplified by studies like Ano and Vasconcelles (2005), explores how encounters with the divine can influence overall well-being, promoting spiritual growth and emotional healing. By merging psychology with Catholic systematic theology, the researcher aims to honour the sacredness and wholeness of the human condition (Myers, 1993). This integration underscores the interplay between intelligence, reason, and responsible decision-making in human growth, alongside the theological concept of grace as a catalyst for holiness and moral discernment. As neuroscience sheds light on the metaphysical aspects of human existence, the synthesis of psychology and theology offers a profound understanding of human nature and the divine influence therein.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of psychology and theology has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, with various perspectives highlighting the intersection of human nature, spirituality, and well-being. In his encyclical "Pacem in Terris" (1945), Pope John XXIII emphasises the growing recognition of human dignity and the importance of responsible freedom in contemporary society. This demand for freedom, particularly in exercising religion, reflects a deepening awareness of the values inherent in the human spirit. Similarly, the Vatican Council acknowledges these desires and seeks to align them with truth and justice by exploring sacred tradition and Church doctrine.

This interdisciplinary study merges insights from psychology with Catholic systematic theology, aiming to delve into the sacredness and comprehensive essence of the human individual (Myers, 1993). Within this framework, human development is perceived as a process driven by intentional actions shaped by intelligence, rationality, and ethical discernment. Moreover, it emphasises the significance of virtuous conduct and the alignment of one's intentions with divine principles, thus acting as a conduit between psychology and theology. From a theological standpoint, the concept of grace underscores God's active role in human existence, nurturing a yearning for sanctity and rejecting sin from the genesis of revelation. Furthermore, neuroscience suggests that the interplay between the human body, mind, and soul carries profound metaphysical implications. The inherent dignity of individuals, bestowed upon them by their possession of reason and free will, mandates a dual imperative and moral duty to pursue truth, particularly religious truth. Once apprehended, truth must be embraced, guiding every aspect of one's existence. However, fulfilling these obligations requires not only freedom from external coercion but also psychological liberty. Thus, the right to religious freedom derives not from personal inclination but from the essence of human nature itself. Consequently, this entitlement persists even among those who may fail to actively seek or adhere to truth, with its exercise subject only to maintaining just public order (Pope John XXIII, 1945).

According to Manning (2020), prayer practices entail purposeful acts woven into the fabric of daily life, passed down through generations. As a Christian journeying toward communion with the Triune God—

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Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—prayer demands intentional engagement from both divine and human beings. Guided by God’s grace, pilgrims traverse the path to holiness while human choice directs them toward the wellspring of truth and love in God’s embrace. Manning’s study underscores an interactive dialogue between God and humanity, wherein physical and spiritual transformations occur, bridging theology and psychology in an interdisciplinary exploration of human nature. Pargament (1997) defined religion as a quest for significance intertwined with the sacred. This definition comprises two key components: the pursuit of significance and the sacred. The quest for significance encompasses discovering the sacred, preserving its essence once found, and adapting it when confronted with internal or external pressures. Additionally, this pursuit can be viewed through various pathways individuals undertake to achieve their objectives.

A study conducted by Tarakeshwar et al. (2003) reveals that religious pathways manifest through various dimensions intertwined with the sacred. These dimensions include ideology, ethical conduct, emotional experience, social interactions, and study. Within these dimensions, diverse goals emerge, such as spanning personal, social, and sacred domains. Personal goals encompass finding meaning in life and fostering self-development, while social objectives involve nurturing intimacy with others and promoting justice in society. Additionally, sacred aspirations entail seeking closeness to God and embracing a life characterised by moral and ethical values. In his encyclical “Pacem in Terris” (1945), Pope John XXIII emphasises the increasing recognition of human dignity in the consciousness of contemporary society. He underscores the growing demand for individuals to exercise their judgment and responsible freedom, motivated not by coercion but by a sense of duty. Furthermore, Pope John XXIII advocates for constitutional limits on governmental powers to safeguard the rightful freedom of individuals and associations. Central to this demand for freedom is the pursuit of values inherent to the human spirit, particularly the freedom to practice religion in society.

The encyclical acknowledges these desires and proposes to align them with truth and justice. To achieve this, theology and psychology must be integrated to explore the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church, ensuring that new developments align with established principles. Throughout history, psychologists and mental health professionals have often held a narrow and stereotypical view of religion. From a psychological standpoint, religion has frequently been portrayed negatively. Psychology has characterised religion as an avoidance strategy for coping, a form of denial, and a defence mechanism against anxiety (Cole, 2005). While instances of religious passivity, denial, and defensiveness are not uncommon, recent research has uncovered examples of active religious coping and a readiness to confront life’s challenges directly. Indeed, empirical studies have shown that religious engagement is more consistently associated with active coping strategies than passive ones. However, it is essential to recognise that religion manifests in diverse forms and varies significantly among individuals.

It is important to acknowledge that religious practices are not isolated occurrences; they are deeply intertwined with individuals’ lives. Religious solutions to challenges stem from a broader framework of established beliefs, practices, attitudes, goals, and values that shape one’s orientation. Therefore, specific circumstances often prompt religiosity, particularly those that exceed individuals’ everyday understandings and available personal and social resources. For instance, research by Ano (2003) highlights that even after accounting for demographic and other relevant variables, personality traits, situational factors, and various religious aspects significantly influence specific religious practices and strategies. Hence, religiosity is heavily influenced by cultural factors.

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The ongoing debate regarding the compatibility of psychology and religion has spanned many years. While certain psychological theories, like Freud's atheistic materialism, present challenges to Christian beliefs by reducing theism to a simplistic desire for a paternal figure, there have been instances of collaboration, overlap, and occasional contradictions between psychology and religion (Gay, 2017). Recent research has shed light on positive psychology, a contemporary approach that emphasises optimism, individual strengths, and the pursuit of happiness, offering fresh perspectives on the relationship between psychology and religion. Traditionally, psychology has primarily focused on mental health issues like such as anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder. However, during his tenure as president of the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman prioritised the study of positive aspects of human behaviour, including optimism and individual strengths, rather than solely concentrating on helplessness and depression (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023).

In their recent publication by Seligman et al. (2016), "Homo Prospectus" delves into the dynamic interplay between psychology and Catholicism. Through this exploration, he highlights the historical collaboration, coexistence, and occasional contradictions between these two realms until the mid-1960s. However, the emergence of positive psychology presents a contemporary avenue for redefining their relationship. Traditionally, psychology predominantly concentrated on pathologies like bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression. Nonetheless, Seligman's presidential term in 1998 at the American Psychology Association signalled a shift towards studying the positive dimensions of psychology, including optimism, identifying individual strengths, and fostering happiness growth.

Martin Seligman introduced positive psychology, a field dedicated to the exploration of happiness and overall well-being, sparking the inception of a vibrant new discipline. Tal Ben-Shahar, renowned for his book "Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfilment" played a pivotal role in popularising positive psychology through his teaching, notably establishing it as one of Harvard's most sought-after undergraduate courses (Ben-Shahar, 2007). Presently, advanced degrees in positive psychology are offered at esteemed institutions like the University of Pennsylvania and Claremont Graduate University. For those seeking an accessible introduction to the subject, Sonja Lyubomirsky's book "The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want" (2008) stands out as an exemplary resource. As a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, Lyubomirsky brings a wealth of expertise to her insightful exploration of happiness science.

In contrast to Norman Vincent Peale's advocacy of positive thinking, proponents of positive psychology emphasise their approach's empirical and scientific foundation. Similar to the rigorous testing protocols applied in pharmaceutical research, strategies that enhance happiness undergo scrutiny through double-blind, replicated studies employing placebos. Pursuing happiness, well-being, and positive thinking extends beyond psychological realms, also intersecting with theological discussions (Seligman et al., 2016). The field of positive psychology shares numerous parallels with pastoral theology, offering interventions that can enrich Christian practice. This convergence was envisioned by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in their document, "Gaudium et Spes", where they underscored the significance of integrating theological principles and insights from secular sciences like psychology and sociology into pastoral care. This integration aims to guide the faithful toward a deeper and more mature life of faith (Pope Paul VI, 1965). One pivotal revelation of positive psychology highlighted in this discourse is the relationship between happiness and wealth. While contemporary society often equates material possessions and riches with a satisfying life, genuine happiness, from a Christian standpoint, springs from love for God and

neighbour. Excessive attachment to wealth is viewed as a significant impediment to salvation, with greed categorised as a cardinal sin due to its potential to lead individuals and others into wrongdoing, such as theft, familial neglect, manipulation, and deceit.

Similarly, a plethora of research in positive psychology aligns with the Christian tenet that happiness is not contingent upon the accumulation or possession of wealth (Eichstaedt et al., 2015). These studies have delved into the relationship between money and happiness, revealing that while an augmentation in wealth can indeed bolster happiness, it primarily impacts those lacking essential material goods for basic sustenance. Individuals unable to afford three meals daily, a comfortable bed, or adequate clothing experience profound happiness upon attaining these necessities. However, once these fundamental needs are fulfilled, researchers have observed no corresponding increase in reported happiness.

Furthermore, Myers (1993), in his book "The Pursuit of Happiness", highlights that the average American has experienced an increase in wealth over the past five decades. Americans now reside in larger homes, possess more cars and televisions, and enjoy greater disposable income than previous generations. However, despite these material advancements, overall happiness levels have remained stagnant. Surprisingly, even lottery winners report no significant increase in happiness following their windfall, while individuals with considerable fortunes often exhibit lower happiness levels than the general population. This phenomenon challenges the common belief that a ten to fifteen per cent increase in wealth is necessary for one to feel financially secure. As individuals attain higher incomes, they tend to acclimate to their newfound affluence and desire even greater wealth. For those who disregard the Gospel's admonitions against greed, the insights of positive psychology may serve as a form of natural moral theology.

Moreover, a significant overlap exists between positive psychology and pastoral theology, particularly in their emphasis on gratitude. A prominent practice within positive psychology is the "three good things" exercise, which involves reflecting on three positive events experienced during the day, such as a meaningful conversation with a friend, a satisfying meal, or a successful work project. Engaging in this exercise daily fosters mindfulness regarding the positive aspects of daily life. Research conducted by Seligman demonstrated that among depressed patients, 94 per cent experienced relief from the consistent practice of the "three good things" exercise (Chirof & Seligman, 2001). Likewise, within the pastoral tradition, a profound emphasis on gratitude exists. For instance, in his *Spiritual Exercises* during the 16th century, St. Ignatius Loyola advocated for the Jesuit examination of conscience, performed at noon and night. This spiritual practice entails reflecting on the time since the previous examination and recognising God's blessings bestowed upon individuals. Ignatius likely drew inspiration from St. Thomas Aquinas's teachings in the 13th century, underscoring thankfulness and gratitude toward God and benefactors as essential virtues for happiness. Each Eucharist, stemming from the Greek word for thanksgiving, reminds Christians to express gratitude for the blessings encountered in everyday life. This sentiment aligns with the scriptural directive, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Additionally, forgiveness holds significant importance in human life, extending beyond religious teachings to contemporary psychological insights. Jesus emphasised the importance of forgiveness, promoting a mind-set of unlimited forgiveness, extending beyond a mere count of seven but forgiving seventy times seven times. Christopher Peterson, a prominent figure in positive psychology, asserts that forgiveness is

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the trait most strongly correlated with happiness. Peterson argues that forgiveness serves as a gift to oneself, alleviating the emotional burden of harbouring grudges. It is important to note that forgiveness does not entail forgetting past transgressions but rather liberates individuals from their grip. Without forgiveness, sustaining long-term relationships becomes challenging, as conflicts and disagreements are inevitable in any relational context. Research indicates that nurturing healthy, enduring relationships is paramount for fostering happiness.

Certainly, the theological virtue of hope, as expounded by Aquinas, entails a steadfast belief in the eternal happiness-awaiting believers in heaven with the assistance of God (Mann, 1998). Christians imbued with this virtue exhibit optimism and resilience in the face of adversity, confidently asserting that no evil is enduring, for God will ultimately eradicate all sorrow and suffering. This hope, rooted in faith, remains inviolable, capable of withstanding even the gravest of sins, as repentance remains a constant possibility. For those embracing hope, every circumstance presents an opportunity for action; they can seek repentance for their transgressions, intercede through prayer, and align their sufferings with the redemptive journey of Jesus. Notably, this article's "optimistic explanatory style" aligns seamlessly with Christian beliefs and practices, fostering a mind-set deeply ingrained in the theological virtue of hope (Mann, 1998).

In addition, my exploration has unveiled a remarkable alignment between many Christian practices and the principles of positive psychology, with scarcely any instances of contradiction apart from one theoretical divergence. In his work "Authentic Happiness," Seligman undertakes a philosophical inquiry into concepts such as God, evil, and freedom, revealing that his understanding of these subjects has not significantly evolved since his undergraduate studies in philosophy (Seligman, 2002). While positive psychologists may espouse diverse religious beliefs, they unanimously recognise the significance of forgiveness, philanthropy, detachment from material wealth, and gratitude. Additionally, the practical insights derived from positive psychology can serve to enrich one's spiritual journey by fostering the development of moral character in myriad ways. Furthermore, Seligman and Peterson delve into the intricacies of character development in their seminal work, "Character Strengths and Virtues". In this comprehensive handbook, they explore how character traits can be cultivated and imparted, identifying effective methods of instruction and examining the influence of various societal factors such as family dynamics, educational institutions, media, religious teachings, and cultural norms (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Through their research, they have devised assessments designed to pinpoint individuals' signature strengths, which, when harnessed and applied innovatively, can lead to heightened levels of happiness and offer pathways for addressing personal shortcomings. These assessments are a valuable tool in the discernment process for individuals aspiring to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Although habits are formed with every decision we make, and these habits can either reinforce or undermine our Christian way of life. Similarly, insights from positive psychology and contemporary neuroscience offer guidance on habit formation. In his book, "The Brain That Changes Itself", Norman Doidge elucidates that the brain's inherent plasticity means no individual is fixed in their character. Instead, our choices continuously mould us, for better or for worse, as our brains adapt to new experiences. Those seeking to cultivate moral virtues and adopt positive habits can leverage these findings to their advantage. One key revelation is the importance of focusing on one habit at a time instead of attempting to adopt multiple habits simultaneously. Habit formation places a strain on the brain, so endeavours to quit drinking, increase prayer, and engage in volunteer work all at once are unlikely to succeed. Once a single

habit is selected, establishing it typically takes around 30 to 40 days. Therefore, it may be beneficial to concentrate on one habit per month while reserving the Lenten season, with its slightly longer duration, for tackling particularly challenging habits to break (Doidge, 2007).

Moreover, concentrating on one habit at a time is crucial, and self-monitoring plays a pivotal role in this endeavour. In their book "Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength", Baumeister and Tierney assert that self-awareness and awareness of how others perceive us are closely linked to self-control. Monitoring progress or lack thereof daily is essential for personal development. Baumeister and Tierney emphasise that "keeping track" goes beyond mere awareness of one's current state; it entails understanding where one should be. Changing personal behaviour to meet certain standards requires willpower, yet willpower alone, devoid of self-awareness, is as ineffective as a cannon directed by a blind individual. This insight echoes the counsel provided by spiritual leaders, who advocate daily self-reflection to monitor one's moral progression (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011).

As noted by Myers (1993), the spiritual practice of being conscious of God's presence, entailing the belief in being observed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has been promoted by numerous spiritual mentors. This practice aligns with research findings indicating that religious engagement can aid in two aspects of self-control: enhancing willpower and refining self-monitoring. Willpower is cultivated through prayer habits, directing attention toward God, and adhering to designated fasting periods. Meanwhile, self-monitoring is bolstered by the conviction of divine surveillance and oversight from fellow members of the religious community. While engaging in religious practices does not guarantee moral behaviour, it does heighten the likelihood of its manifestation. Consequently, this study affirms that moral character is forged through virtuous acts, whereas malevolent deeds shape immoral character. Nonetheless, throughout the habit-forming process, individuals may face temptations to veer off course or neglect to do what is right. Despite knowing the correct course of action, many individuals struggle to make the right choice when confronted with temptation.

Furthermore, some researchers propose that increasing self-control can be achieved by raising the glucose level in the body. Low blood sugar diminishes a person's ability to resist temptation. Another method, "gratitude breathing," leverages insights from neuroscience regarding the brain's different activity centres. During periods of stress, the pleasure-driven amygdala and striatum can become hyperactive, while logical centres like the anterior cingulate gyrus lose dominance. To rebalance this, engaging in three or four deep breaths while focusing on something one is grateful for can help reassert control over the brain's logical centres and stabilise irregular breathing, thereby enabling better management of temptation. Stressful situations, such as those involving temptation, disrupt the coordination between the logical and pleasure-driven brain centres, and gratitude breathing restores their proper connection. In her book "The Willpower Instinct: How Self-Control Works, Why It Matters, and What You Can Do to Get More of It", Kelly McGonigal emphasises states, "You won't find many quick fixes in this book, but there is one way to immediately boost willpower: Slow your breathing down to four to six breaths per minute. ... Slowing the breath down activates the prefrontal cortex while increasing heart rate variability, which helps shift the brain and body from stress to self-control mode" (McGonigal, 2013). This article posits that the technique of gratitude breathing can be complemented by the earlier-mentioned practice of being aware of others. Importantly, when utilised as a prayer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, gratitude breathing merges the physiological advantages of deep breathing with the added dimension of being mindful of divine presence.

Moreover, positive psychology can be a valuable tool when addressing undesirable habits. Merely advising someone to “think about something else” is often ineffective for individuals grappling with entrenched behaviours. Psychologists term this phenomenon “ironic processing,” wherein the more one attempts to avoid thinking about something, the more it occupies their thoughts. Candeo offers an online program grounded in recent discoveries from positive psychology and neuroscience to combat habitual pornography use and other unwanted sexual behaviours. Rather than relying solely on sheer willpower and the directive to “just don’t think about it,” Candeo encourages students to systematically confront internal and external triggers contributing to their unwanted actions. By engaging the brain’s logical and reasoning faculties, the Candeo program empowers individuals to regain control over their behaviours. Substantiating the effectiveness of this approach, an article published in the scholarly journal “Sexual Addiction” provides evidence of its efficacy (Estellon & Mouras, 2012).

Furthermore, in his book “Psychology and Catholicism: Contested Boundaries”, Kugelmann delves into the intricate relationship between psychology and Christianity. He contends that while certain aspects and methodologies within psychology may seem at odds with Christian beliefs, positive psychology presents opportunities for affirming Christian principles and offering valuable assistance in Christian lifestyles. Kugelmann suggests that positive psychology can furnish empirical validation and support for the pastoral endeavours of the Christian community, akin to the principles of natural moral theology (Kugelmann, 2011).

Alternatively, Kugelmann parallels contemporary Christian engagement with positive psychology and historical encounters with thinkers like Aristotle. Just as some Christians initially reacted with apprehension towards Aristotle’s teachings, others, such as St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, embraced his ideas and synthesised them with Christian wisdom to significant effect. Similarly, positive psychology can serve as an ally in fostering orthopraxy within the faith community. A preliminary investigation into an online psych educational program targeting hyper-sexuality revealed significant improvements in various aspects of recovery among participants who adhered to the program, as indicated by retrospective and current assessments (Hardy et al., 2010). Furthermore, with a decade of research dedicated to exploring the convergence of religion and coping, numerous insights have been garnered into this intricate interplay. While strides have been made beyond the realm of stereotypical and pathological interpretations of religion, there remain several unanswered inquiries. In light of this, it is imperative to contemplate some intriguing new avenues for research within the psychology of religion and coping.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study utilised a literature review to explore the fusion of psychology and theology’s impact on human well-being and spirituality. It involved thorough searches in databases like PubMed, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and religious studies databases using relevant keywords. Articles and books were chosen based on their direct relevance, excluding non-empirical or irrelevant works. Data collection focused on key findings, theories, methodologies, and author conclusions, emphasising identifying common themes and gaps. Qualitative analysis techniques were applied to uncover recurring ideas. The researchers synthesised these findings, critically evaluated strengths and limitations, and developed a cohesive narrative. Finally, implications were discussed, and recommendations for future research and practical applications were provided, catering to practitioners, policymakers, and researchers interested in exploring the psychology-theology integration further.

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Studies in positive psychology reveal the limited correlation between wealth and happiness, challenging societal notions of materialism and highlighting the importance of spiritual fulfilment. The three good things exercise, popular in positive psychology, promotes gratitude and has been shown to alleviate depression (Chirof & Seligman, 2001). The research establishes that mindfulness practices and spirituality are integrated.

Studies by Kabat-Zinn (2003) and Baer (2003) have explored this integration of mindfulness practices rooted in Buddhist traditions with psychological interventions. These practices emphasise present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance, offering insights into the role of spirituality in enhancing psychological well-being. Further, theology enhances spiritual coping mechanisms, just as psychology proposes. Research by Bryant-Davis and Wong (2013) and Koenig (2009) delves into the various spiritual coping mechanisms employed by individuals facing adversity. These mechanisms, including prayer, meditation, and seeking spiritual support, contribute to resilience and positive outcomes in the face of stressors.

The study also shows the cultural influences on religious coping attitudes. Studies by Chatters et al. (2004) and Taylor et al. (2003) highlight the cultural influences on religious coping strategies and posit cultural factors that shape individuals' religious beliefs, practices, and coping mechanisms. This underscores the importance of considering cultural diversity in studying psychology and theology. Additionally, neurobiological correlates well with spiritual experiences. Neuroscientific research by Newberg et al. (2002) and Beauregard (2006) investigates the neurobiological correlates of spiritual experiences, shedding light on the neural mechanisms underlying religious practices and beliefs. This interdisciplinary approach bridges the gap between neuroscience, psychology, and theology. However, it also explores the concept of positive religious coping, emphasising its adaptive role in promoting psychological well-being and resilience. It gives religious strategies, such as finding meaning and seeking spiritual growth, which contribute to positive outcomes in times of adversity.

Moreover, both theology and psychology provide an intersectionality of identity. Intersectional studies examine the intersectionality of religious, ethnic, and cultural identities in shaping individuals' psychological experiences. This study highlights the complex interplay between various aspects of identity and their impact on mental health outcomes. The study establishes that religious practices have psychological effects. It investigated the psychological effects of religious practices, such as forgiveness, gratitude, and compassion. It concluded with the therapeutic benefits of incorporating spiritual practices into psychological interventions. Nevertheless, positive psychology intervenes in religious settings. This study has examined the efficacy of positive psychology interventions in religious settings. Such gratitude and acts of kindness demonstrate the potential for integrating positive psychology principles with religious teachings to promote well-being.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study establishes hope that researchers will find these new directions for research in the psychology of religion fascinating. Answering our outlined questions will help us better understand how people utilise religion to cope with difficulties and crises. Religion is the most distinctively human dimension of life, and any psychological approach that neglects the religious dimension is necessarily incomplete. Further, by expanding our understanding of religious life, we can enhance our general

understanding of what it means to be human and, in turn, apply this knowledge to our efforts to enhance people's lives in their communities.

Recommendations: Recommend conducting research on religious coping across diverse cultures and religious traditions, as this would yield valuable insights and benefits. Additionally, future research should explore the intersection of religion and psychology, specifically focusing on neglected spiritual outcomes. Likewise, researchers should take a serious look at religion's capacity for promoting life transformations of a person's body, soul, and mind.

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