RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM SCALE

Reference:

Description of Measure:
A 20-item scale designed to measure militant conservative belief. Respondents answer the items using a 9-point scale. 10 items are worded in a portrait direction and 10 items in a contrait direction.

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:


In this article, I extend the work of Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) on religious fundamentalism to several non-Christian groups. The psychometric properties of the Religious Fundamentalism scale remained strong among small, self-selected samples of adults from Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish backgrounds. Also, as in past research with persons from Christian backgrounds, correlations from .42 to .74 emerged among scores on the Religious Fundamentalism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scales (Altemayer and Hunsberger, 1992). That is, the religious fundamentalists within each of four religious groups tended to be authoritarian and to have hostile attitudes toward homosexuals. Within the limitations of the present samples, the findings provide initial evidence that fundamentalists in many religions may tend to be authoritarian and hostile toward homosexuals, that religious fundamentalism may consist of essentially the same attitudes in these four major religious groups, and can be measured with some efficiency with the Religious Fundamentalism scale.


This study examined how social desirability and religious fundamentalism may moderate relationships between religious orientation and measures of psychological and spiritual health. Intrinsic scores higher on fundamentalism but were not susceptible to a social desirability response bias. In multiple regression equations, intrinsic religion emerged as the strongest predictor of psychospiritual health. Fundamentalism added little or no variance in predicting psychological or spiritual well-being. Quest yielded negative correlations with social desirability and fundamentalism. High quest scorers also reported more personal distress and lower spiritual well-being. Social extrinsics (Es) was unrelated to psychological or spiritual health whereas personal extrinsicness (Ep) predicted higher personal distress when social desirability and fundamentalism were controlled. Ep was also associated with a satisfying relationship with God but was unrelated to a sense of life satisfaction. With the exception of the extrinsic subscales, all religious measures exhibited good psychometric qualities. Ep and Es suffered from weak internal consistency.

Psychologists have tended to view religion from a distance as a global, undifferentiated, stable process that is largely good or largely bad. This article presents a more fine-grained analysis of religion and its implications for well-being, positive and negative. The empirical literature points to five conclusions. First, some forms of religion are more helpful than others. Well-being has been linked positively to a religion that is internalized, intrinsically motivated, and based on a secure relationship with God and negatively to a religion that is imposed, unexamined, and reflective of a tenuous relationship with God and the world.

Second, there are advantages and disadvantages to even controversial forms of religion, such as fundamentalism. Third, religion is particularly helpful to socially marginalized groups and to those who embed religion more fully in their lives. Fourth, religious beliefs and practices appear to be especially valuable in stressful situations that push people to the limits of their resources. Finally, the efficacy of religion is tied to the degree to which it is well integrated in the individual’s life. These conclusions belie stereotypes or simple summaries about religion. Instead, they suggest that religion is a richer, more complex process than psychologists have imagined, one that has the potential both to help and to harm. Questions about the general efficacy of religion should give way to the more difficult but more appropriate question, How helpful or harmful are particular forms of religious expression for particular people dealing with particular situations in particular social contexts according to particular criteria of helpfulness or harmfulness?

Scale: Please contact Dr. Altemeyer directly concerning permission to use items.