

Religiosity, Spirituality, and their Influence on Work-Life Choices in U.S. Online Graduate Psychology Programs

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Abstract: *This study investigates the relationship between religiosity, spirituality, and work-life choice among online graduate psychology students in the United States. It introduces work-life choice WL-CH as a concept distinct from work-life balance. Using validated instruments, the study finds that spirituality, unlike religiosity, significantly influences work-life choice. These findings highlight the need for further research on work-life constructs and their decision-making implications in the context of U.S. online graduate education.*

Keywords: religiosity, spirituality, work-life choice, work-life integration, graduate psychology students, online education

1. Introduction

Industrial and organizational psychologists (I/O psychologists) frequently research how employees spend time at work and on nonwork activities. The aftermath of the global COVID pandemic continues to reveal consequences to worker health and motivation for work (Hjalmsdottir & Bjarnadottir, 2020; Schieman et al., 2020; Vyas, 2022). According to estimates, the average American worker spends 90,000 hours over a lifetime working (Pryce-Jones, 2010). The way a worker describes the friction between commitments at work and home correlates with the verbal or written description of the phenomenon: work-life balance (WLB), which emphasizes choosing between work and nonwork as two polar options (Summit, 2017), and work-life choice (WL-CH), which highlights the consequences of choosing between work and nonwork versus a polarized construct based on balance (Casper et al., 2018; Wargo, 2012).

Indeed, semantics can be nuanced, and for many employees, WLB is neither attainable nor does it accurately describe the tug-of-war employees face in making and dealing with the consequences of difficult choices between work and nonwork (De Carlo et al., 2019; Dousin et al., 2020). In addition, WLB has its distractors in the literature, giving room for a term such as WL-CH to describe better the rub in making choices between work and nonwork. Jack Welch, the famous CEO of GE, responded when asked about WLB: "There is no such thing as work-life balance. There are work-life choices, and you make them, and there are consequences" (Silverman, 2009, p. 1). Research examining WLB's popularity also underscores other related terms, such as work-life harmony, work-life integration, and work-life choice that might better connote the push-and-pull phenomenon between work and nonwork choices. A continued interest in mitigating work-life or work-family conflict has resulted in a growing interest in decision-making versus an emphasis on reaching and maintaining an elusive balance. (Ma et al., 2021).

2. Background

In this study, the term work-life choice (WL-CH) receives preference, acknowledging the historical and widespread use of work-life balance while exploring any effects religiosity and spirituality have on WL-CH. For this study, work-life choice implies a process of choice and consequences versus work-life balance, where both choices and consequences create a suboptimal juxtaposition in a potentially futile attempt to achieve an elusive, ephemeral sense of balance. By removing the term balance, attention moves to the decision-making processes. This edit may lessen the emphasis on the inevitable imbalances the term conveys. As a result, for this study, work-life choice will serve as the preferred term for describing how workers choose between work and nonwork.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos refuted the term work-life balance and instead proffered work-life harmony. Bezos's main complaint about work-life balance lies in its erroneous calculation of hours at work versus nonwork. According to Bezos, choice and consequences represent a better calculus for achieving work-life harmony (Summit, 2017). Furthermore, Sinek (2021) added that the major fault with WLB is that balance comprises two opposing forces, yet work and nonwork need not be in opposition. Smith (2019) writes that work-life balance is dead due to ambiguous objectives and questionable business value; instead proposes a more practical, egalitarian term--work-life choice.

3. Problem Statement

Research by I/O psychologists and other social scientists is robust concerning work-life balance, work-family balance, work-life conflict, and work-family-conflict (Adisa et al., 2017; Altura et al., 2021; De Carlo et al., 2019; Dousin et al., 2020; Gvanchandani, 2017; Julien et al., 2017; and Ma et al., 2021). These topics stem from a desire to mitigate workaholism's detrimental health, social, and psychological effects (Kirrane et al., 2018). Gagnano et al. (2020) proposed the term work-health balance, emphasizing both

physiological and psychological health while providing a precedent for research on work-life choice.

Much of the nascent research on WL-CH has yet to focus more on the ability of an individual to make effective choices between work and nonwork. Instead, it tends to favor a dichotomous work or life balance approach. Opposition to WLB includes the presumption that there are choices between work and nonwork, and there are consequences for those choices on our personal and professional lives, often resulting in imbalance versus balance (Silverman, 2009).

More research is needed regarding religiosity and spirituality regarding WLC/WLB, particularly in a United States context. To this end, this study will analyze questionnaire data on religiosity, spirituality, and WL-CH. By focusing on the nexus of the three constructs, research questions and hypotheses derived from the literature will provide data that could be more abundant in contemporary research.

At the same time, religious and spiritual workplaces are more common in Eastern and Southern Asia. The term workplace spirituality is difficult to define. Moreover, researchers sometimes conflate the terms spirituality and religiosity in terms of workplace spirituality, rituals, meetings, and events that might not gain acceptance by an organization's leadership and other employees (Rathee & Rajain, 2020).

The constructs of workplace spirituality and religiosity are not as popular in a U.S. context, given that religion and spirituality remain primarily separated from secular functions such as school and business (Borgen, 2019; Chinomona, 2017; Garg, 2017; Hassan et al., 2020; Hunsaker, 2020; Jastrzebski, 2017; Lipnicka & Pieciakowski, 2021; Scheitle et al., 2021). Adequate research exists on creating and maintaining spiritual workplaces. However, there is less literature on how employees report their self-reported religiosity and spirituality when choosing between work and nonwork activities (Cardoş & Mone, 2017).

Employed, online graduate students have justified reputations of having a lot to do at work, school, and away from work, according to Berry and Hughes (2019). To that end, this study will invite students from online graduate programs at various online university programs to explore whether religiosity and spirituality assist online students in choosing between work and nonwork more effectively. Potential respondents from private-religious, private-secular, and public online graduate programs received invitations to participate in this study. Implications of the study could apply to online programs, companies where online students work, and a host of other disciplines such as I/O psychology, management, organizational behavior, sociology, and others.

Selecting respondents from a North American context addresses a gap in the literature on work-life choice/balance, religiosity, and spirituality. Generally, religiosity and spirituality in workplace studies have had an Eastern or at least non-Western context. Moreover, one's perceived view of religiosity and spirituality, combined with one's perceived

ability to make practical work and nonwork choices, will add to the knowledge of the topic (Cardoş & Mone, 2016).

A quantitative approach to this study will provide numerical data from a questionnaire to gauge religiosity, spirituality, and work-life choice. Perceived work-life choice decision-making ability among online university students will play a key role in building data to answer the research questions about making effective choices between work and nonwork.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of religiosity and spirituality on work-life choice among online graduate psychology students in U.S.-based programs. This study also fills a gap in the North American research on decision-making between work and nonwork activities (work-life choice, or WL-CH), more commonly described as work-life balance (WLB). Surveying online graduate students at different university programs provides data to assess whether religiosity and spirituality affected participants' perception of their ability to make effective work-life choices.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Do religiosity and spirituality influence online graduate students' perception that they choose effectively between work and nonwork (work-life choice)?

RQ2: Do the variables age and gender affect work-life choice?

RQ3: Do work status (part-time, full-time, gig, or other), online graduate student status (master's, Ph.D., combined, graduate certificate, and parental/caretaker responsibilities) influence work-life choice?

RQ4: Are there statistically significant differences in work-life choice among respondents from private/religious universities and private/nonreligious and public universities?

The following null and alternate hypotheses derive from the research questions and the literature review.

H₀1: Higher scores on religiosity do not result in effective work-life choice.

H₀2: Higher scores on spirituality do not result in effective work-life choice.

H₀3: The demographic variables age and gender do not affect online graduate students' work-life choice.

H₀4: Work and nonwork responsibilities: work status (part-time, full-time, gig, or other), online graduate student status (master's, Ph.D., combined, graduate certificate, and parental/caretaker responsibilities) do not affect work-life choice.

H₀5: There are no statistically significant differences in responses among respondents from private/religious universities and private/nonreligious and public universities.

H_a1: Higher scores on religiosity will result in effective work-life choice.

H_a2: Higher scores on spirituality will result in effective work-life choice.

H_a3: The demographic variables age and gender will affect work-life choice.

H_a4: Work and nonwork responsibilities: work status (part-time, full-time, gig, or other), online graduate student status (master's Ph.D., combined, graduate certificate, and

parental/caretaker responsibilities) will affect work-life choice.

H_{a5}: There are statistically significant differences in work-life choice among respondents from religious and nonreligious universities.

Definition of Terms

Work-life Choice – The process a person goes through in determining whether to spend time on work or nonwork activities, like work-life balance, but not as focused on the dichotomy of choice, but instead on what influences the decision-making process (Soomro et al., 2017; Wynn & Rau, 2020).

Religiosity – The personal and communal expression of someone's ties to a particular religion (Lipnicka & Peciakowski, 2021; Jones, 2018).

Spirituality – A holistic notion primarily concerned with the sacred or belief in a higher, fluid, and spiritual power (Jastrzębski, 2017).

Method

In this study, the methodology includes using previously validated instruments to examine potential relationships among religiosity, spirituality, and work-life choice. The IVs religiosity and spirituality are separate variables in this study, examined collectively.

To assess spirituality (spiritual intelligence), this study employs the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, the SISRI-24 (King & DeCicco, 2008). To gauge religiosity, this study uses the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) (Worthington et al., 2003). Kumar et al. (2021) developed the Work-Life Integration (WLI) survey, referred to as the WLI, and this instrument gauges work-life integration (or choice) in this study. The authors preferred the term work-life integration over work-life balance, given the elusiveness of balance and the efforts workers make to combine or “integrate” both work and nonwork in an effective way. The authors also studied determinants and their potential effects on employee work-life integration.

A literature review did not result in an existing instrument that used the term work-life choice. Still, for this study, the term refers to the processes one uses to choose between work and nonwork, without an obligation to count hours at work and nonwork.

The research design for this study is quantitative, with descriptive and correlational data derived from Likert-scale surveys on scales of agreement. Data analysis includes multiple regression tests for the three constructs: religiosity, spirituality, and work-life choice/integration, as well as correlation and t-tests for demographic variables. Data for this study are available per appropriate request.

Participants

Participants were at least 18 years old. To increase the diversity of the sample population, online university graduate psychology students at religious and nonreligious universities received letters of invitation. No students from in-person graduate programs in psychology participated.

A G*Power calculation for multiple regression analysis (effect size = 0.15, α error of probability = 0.05, Power = [1 - β error of probability] = 0.95, and the number of predictors = 2), resulting in a minimal sample size of 107. In line with best practices, a respondent sample size goal of 200 has been set for this study (Memon et al., 2020).

Instrumentation and Measurement

This study's respondents answered 44 total questions from the RCI-10, SISRI-24, and WLI. The authors of the three instruments received letters requesting permission, and they granted permission to use all three (Appendices A-C). Reliability and validity measures for each instrument are below:

RCI-10

The 3-week test-retest reliability coefficients for the full-scale RCI-10, Intrapersonal Religious Commitment, and Interpersonal Religious Commitment were .87, .86, and .83, respectively (Worthington et al., 2003). For content validity, scores on the RCI-10 were significantly higher for religious individuals by the ranking of salvation among the top 5 values ($M = 31.1$) than for nonreligious individuals ($M = 19.1$), $F(1, 152) = 60.93$, $p < .0001$. Significant differences existed between the religious groups for both Intrapersonal Religious Commitment, $F(1, 152) = 56.34$, $p < .0001$, and Interpersonal Religious Commitment, $F(1, 152) = 43.02$, $p < .0001$ (Worthington et al., 2003).

SISRI-24

Moore (2017) reviewed the reliability and validity of the SISRI-24, noting that the original authors, King and DeCicco (2008), found that the 24 items reported good reliability and validity. Moore (2017) also notes that Hildebrant (2011) and Moosa and Ali (2011) were able to replicate the high reliability of the SISRI-24, with the internal consistency and test-retest reliability as acceptable (Moosa & Ali, 2011). Regarding validity, the SISRI-24 exceeds the recommended minimum Cronbach alpha of .70 (Chan et al., 2016). King and DeCicco (2008) found that the Cronbach alphas ranged from .81 to .96 on test and retest reliability and is reliable. According to the authors, Cronbach's alpha test for reliability achieved a .928 for $n = 24$.

WLI Survey

Kumar and Sakar (2021) validated their questionnaire targeting work-life integration (WLI) via four constructs (i.e., work-family interference [WFI], family-work interference [FWI], work-family strain [WFS], and work-family enrichment [WFE]). The authors' data indicated a Cronbach's alpha of $< .6$, where WFI: $\alpha = 0.868$, FWI: $\alpha = 0.853$, WFS: $\alpha = 0.930$, and WFE: $\alpha = 0.877$. The authors achieved convergent and discriminant validity for the questionnaire via Cronbach alpha scores for each construct > 0.70 .

Data Collection

Following IRB approval from Liberty University (received on April 28, 2023) and dissertation committee approval for the questionnaire, potential respondents from select secular and religious online graduate programs at U.S.-based institutions received invitations to participate. The

questionnaire remained active on SurveyMonkey.com until at least 107 respondents completed the questionnaires, which occurred in two days. Yet, the questionnaire remained open for three weeks, generating 143 completed surveys--well above the G*Power recommended sample size of 107. Potential respondents received follow-up emails and social media correspondence during the first two weeks of data collection.

Operationalization of Variables

Independent Variable – Religiosity is the personal and communal expression of “someone’s ties to a particular religion” (Lipnicka & Peciakowski, 2021; Jones, 2018). Religiosity is a numeric IV measured by the religious commitment inventory (RCI-10). It asks respondents for their level of agreement or disagreement on ten items on a Likert scale (Worthington et al., 2003).

Independent Variable – Spirituality is a holistic notion primarily concerned with the sacred or belief in a higher, fluid, and spiritual power (Jastrzębski, 2017). Spirituality is a numeric IV measured by the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24), which asks respondents for their agreement or disagreement on ten items on a Likert scale (King & DeCicco, 2008).

Dependent Variable – Work-life Choice/Integration (WL-CH/I), or the ability to make effective choices between work and nonwork in a way that does not separate work and nonwork by hours worked versus hours away from work to achieve balance (Summit, 2017). Instead, WL-CH/I integrates them based on the needs of the individual. WL-CH/I is a numeric DV measured by questions formulated and validated previously as the Work-Life Integration survey or WLI (Kumar et al., 2021).

4. Results

The primary goal of this study is to examine potential relationships among spirituality, religiosity, and work-life choice (WL-CH). The term work-life balance (WLB) and the attempts by people worldwide to achieve it, served as a primer for WL-CH, which does not inherently create unrealistic assumptions that quantify balance (number of hours at work and nonwork, for example). Instead, WL-CH, like the similar term work-life integration (WLI), is a term that emphasizes both the decision-making process and the

inevitable consequences of choosing work or nonwork in various circumstances (Silverman, 2009).

Furthermore, existing research on work and nonwork choices, religiosity, and spirituality (primarily outside the United States) informs the methodology for this study and places justified emphasis on religiosity and spirituality as variables that also explain human behavior and the human experience (Rathee & Rajain, 2020). Another aim of this study was to fill a gap in the literature on a potential nexus among religiosity, spirituality, and work-life choice within a United States educational institution.

Data Collection Process

Potential respondents received recruitment letters through their online graduate psychology programs in the United States and through social media and smartphone groups such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Participants first completed two eligibility screening questions:

- Are you at least 18 years of age?
- Are you an online graduate psychology student at a U.S. – based university?

After consenting to participate in the study, participants answered 44 Likert-scale questions corresponding to the RCI-10 (10 questions), the SISRI-24 (24 questions), and the WLI (10 questions). Finally, respondents answered nine demographic questions. Of the 188 respondents, 143 fully completed the survey, resulting in 45 respondents needing to answer the demographic questions. As a result, all analyses performed included only the 143 completed surveys. The sample size of 143 far exceeded the calculated a priori power for this study of 107.

Descriptive Results

Descriptive results for this study comprise Table 1 and include demographic data from respondents. Of note, nearly 80 percent of respondents were women. About fifty-two percent were either child or parent caregivers. Seventy-two percent were full-time students. Seventy-five percent of respondents were psychology Ph.D. students. Nearly seventy-seven percent of respondents worked full-time and studied. Almost 75 percent of respondents were online graduate psychology students at Liberty University, while close to 22 percent were online graduate psychology students at the Harvard Extension School. The remaining 3 percent (6 respondents) represented Adler University, Bellevue University, Purdue Global University, Regent University, and the University of Hartford.

Table 1: Demographic Statistics

		N	%
Age	18 to 24	1	0.7
	25 to 34	26	18.2
	35 to 44	22	15.4
	45 to 54	37	25.9
	55 to 64	2	1.4
	65 to 74	52	36.4
	75 or Older	3	2.1
Gender	Female	114	79.7
	Male	29	20.3
Parent or Child Caretaker	No	69	48.3
	Yes	74	51.7
Caretaker of Parent(s)	No	120	83.9

	Yes	23	16.1
Online Graduate Student Status	Full-Time	103	72.0
	Part-Time	40	28.0
Graduate Degree Program	Doctoral Degree	107	74.8
	Master's Degree	1	0.7
	Graduate Certificate	35	24.5
Name of online university	Liberty University	106	74.1
	Harvard Extension School	31	21.7
	Bellevue University	1	0.7
	Regent	1	0.7
	Adler University	1	0.7
	School of Behavioral Science	1	0.7
	Purdue University Global	1	0.7
	University of Hartford	1	0.7
Name of discipline or major	Industrial/Organizational Psychology	55	38.5
	Developmental Psychology	17	11.9
	Psychology	48	33.6
	Social Psychology	13	9.1
	I/O Psychology	1	0.7
	Ph.D. General Psychology	4	2.8
	DSL	1	0.7
	General Psychology	3	2.1
	Liberal Arts (PSYC)	1	0.7
Work & Study	Works Part-time & Studies	7	4.9
	Works Full-time & Studies	110	76.9
	No Work; Only Studies	26	18.2

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the dependent variable (work-life choice). The total score for the independent variable spirituality ($M = 74.52$, $SD = 16.79$) is considerably higher than that of the independent variable religiosity ($M = 32.03$, $SD = 7.64$) and work-life choice ($M = 29.54$, $SD = 5.17$). The model summary comprises Table 3.

Table 2:

	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
R_total	143	15.00	50.00	32.03	7.64
S_total	143	30.00	119.00	74.52	16.79
WLI_total	143	16.00	43.00	29.54	5.17
Valid N (listwise)	143				

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.198 ^a	.039	.026	5.09954	.039	2.861	2	140	.061

a. Predictors: (Constant), S_total, R_total

A multilinear regression analysis of work-life choice analyzed scores on (a) spirituality and (b) religiosity. The model was not statistically significant, $F(2, 140) = 2.861$ ($p = 0.061$), with only 2.6% of the variance explained by the model (See Table 4).

Key Finding

According to the results in Table 5, religiosity does not moderate work-life choice, given that $p = 0.994$ with $\alpha < 0.05$ is insignificant. At the same time, according to the results in Table 6, spirituality moderates work-life choice, given that $p = 0.034$ with $\alpha < 0.05$ is significant.

Table 4

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	148.790	2	74.395	2.861	.061 ^b
	Residual	3640.749	140	26.005		
	Total	3789.538	142			

a. Dependent Variable: WLI_total
b. Predictors: (Constant), S_total, R_total

Table 5: Coefficients^a

Source	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1	(Constant)	24.989	2.220		11.258	.000	20.600	29.377
	R_total	.000	.062	.001	.007	.994	-.123	.124
	S_total	.061	.028	.198	2.144	.034	.005	.117

a. Dependent Variable: WLI total

The second research question: Do the variables age and gender affect work-life choice? There were no significant relationships between demographic variables and work-life choice.

The third research question: Do work status (part-time, full-time, gig, or other), online graduate student status (master's, Ph.D., combined, graduate certificate, and parental/caretaker responsibilities) influence work-life choice? According to the results in Table 6 above, none of these variables affect work-life choice.

The fourth research question: Are there statistically significant differences in work-life choice among respondents from private/religious universities and

private/nonreligious and public universities? Liberty University and Regent University students comprise students from religious universities. In contrast, students from Adler University, Bellevue University, the Harvard Extension School, Purdue Global University, and the University of Hartford comprise students who attend nonreligious universities (See Table 6).

Regarding the null and alternate hypotheses in the study, only alternate hypothesis b (H_b) is valid: Higher scores on spirituality result in effective work-life choice. Indeed, the statistical analysis leads to the finding that when the level of spirituality increases by one unit, it results in a rise in work-life choice by 0.061.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
WLI_total	Equal variances assumed	.203	.653	1.392	130	.166	1.59551	1.14631	-.67232	3.86335
	Equal variances not assumed			1.377	35.653	.177	1.59551	1.15854	-.75492	3.94594

To assess the differences between the two types of online universities, this study includes an independent samples *t*-test, with work-life choice scores as the dependent variable. The average score for religious schools ($M = 29.64$, $SD = 5.14$) is greater than the nonreligious school score ($M = 28.04$, $SD = 5.23$). This difference is not statistically significant, $t(130) = 1.392$, $p = .653$, $\eta^2 = 0.309$, with 30.9% of the variance in work-life choice scores explained by the type of school respondents attended (See Table 8 above). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference is (-0.672, 3.863).

5. Discussion

The study concludes that spirituality, unlike religiosity, significantly influences work-life choices among U.S. online graduate psychology students. This underscores the distinct roles of spirituality and religiosity in decision-making processes, suggesting a need for further exploration in educational and organizational contexts.

The multilinear regression analyses reveal that the independent variable spirituality moderated work-life choice, with a *p-value* of .036. The second independent variable, religiosity, did not moderate work-life choice, with an insignificant *p-value* of .994. This finding provides additional rationale for treating spirituality and religiosity as separate variables and not combining them in terms of examining their potential effects on work-life choice.

Moreover, demographic variables (age, gender, graduate program, student status, work status, parent/caretaker status, and discipline/major) do not significantly affect work-life choice among respondents. Although the demographic variables provide descriptive information about respondents,

they do not significantly influence work-life choice. Finally, whether a respondent attended an online religious university does not significantly influence work-life choice, despite the religiosity variable in this research and a sample population, which included three-quarters of the respondents attending a Christian online university.

The IV spirituality (and not the IV religiosity) significantly affected work-life choice (or the ability to choose effectively between work and nonwork). At the same time, nearly 75 percent of respondents study in a Christian online graduate psychology program. Despite the Christian majority among respondents, religiosity did not predict higher work-life choice. Moreover, demographic variables, including age, gender, graduate program, student status, work status, parent/caretaker status, discipline/major, and religious or nonreligious university, were insignificant when correlated with work-life choice.

Spirituality

Pertinent to the findings in this study, Jones (2018) asserts that spirituality is a larger umbrella than religiosity and that participants in her research have a difficult time differentiating spirituality from religiosity, noting that both play separate and overlapping roles in healthcare and society writ large. It stands to reason that participants in this study could have seen spirituality as more encompassing and more flexible than religiosity and, as a result, more helpful in informing decisions between work and nonwork.

Other researchers review spirituality's role and describe the benefits of combining spirituality with the workplace (Dal Corso et al., 2020; Chinomona, 2017; Hasan et al., 2020; Jones, 2018;). Additionally, Hunsaker (2020) notes that spirituality helps moderate work-family conflict. Anderson

and Burchell (2019) recount that their qualitative study of 17 employees, who consider themselves spiritual, resulted in many of the respondents making unethical hypothetical decisions.

Religiosity

Although the variable religiosity in this study did not significantly affect respondents' work-life choice, religiosity remains a crucial research subject. Scheitle et al. (2021) emphasize the role of religion in leading graduate students in the sciences toward more teaching and academic positions versus research and medicine, given that family is an essential religious value for many participants. Likewise, Vu (2020), while performing a meta-analysis of Asian research on work-life balance, religiosity, and employee engagement, finds religiosity to be an effective moderator between work-life balance and employee engagement. The author calls on organizations to leverage religiosity to increase work-life balance, productivity, and job satisfaction.

At the same time, Abdala et al. (2021) surveyed over 300 participants from various religious denominations across the United States. The researchers conclude that religiosity positively predicts physical and mental health across age, education, and lifestyle, although that finding did not appear in this study on work-life choice.

Decision-Making Theories

The findings in this study indicate that respondents turned to spirituality to facilitate work-life choice. Moreover, there are germane extrapolations of theories of decision-making, including Normative Decision Theory (NDT), Rational Choice Theory (RCT), and Choice Theory (CT) that are related to this study's findings. In the aggregate, the three theories provide the basis for examining how one chooses between work and nonwork while potentially using tools such as spirituality and religiosity.

The literature review for this study includes the evolution of decision-making theories among philosophers, which goes back centuries to psychologists, often dating back several decades to a century or more. Even the early decision-making theories originated in religious or spiritual doctrine or themes. In the case of Pascal's Wager, one participates in a bet as to whether belief in God is more advantageous than not. In the famous bet, Pascal explains that it is better to believe in God as there is nothing to lose (McKenzie, 2020). Since Pascal, other foundational theories include prospect theory (the ultimatum game), expected utility theory, and game theory (Malecka, 2019).

Normative Decision Theory (NDT)

Elliott (2019) explains the goal of NDT as the "how" and "when" one responds to a decision problem. Further, an NDT hallmark is adherence to or rejection of social norms (Feng et al., 2015). The human dilemma created when choosing between social norms and enforcement (rules, laws, consequences, punishments for violations) creates a gray area for choosing. The well-known ultimatum game, in which players must decide how to choose money, sheds light on a human tendency to focus on what one might gain versus what one might lose.

Is it possible that respondents in this study felt spirituality allowed for more flexibility in choice than religiosity's sometimes strict confines and consequences for "poor" choices? Of primary importance, the data in this study show that spirituality assisted respondents in their work-life choices. At the same time, respondents might have conflated religiosity and spirituality, given the literature contains studies that treat the two variables collectively.

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

In this study, the demographic variables did not correlate with work-life choice. However, further studies could delve deeper into any potential effects familial upbringing might have on work-life choice. To illustrate the human dilemma further, Rational Choice Theory (RCT), also known as public choice theory, presents a model of assumptions in which people are rational and self-interested (Hindmoor & Taylor, 2015). A significant flaw in RCT where spirituality comes in is the notion that humans are always rational. If this were the case, spirituality and religiosity, for that matter, would be obsolete in the decision-making process. Lupu et al. (2018) refute one of the pillars of RCT, the premise that self-interest directs choices, as RCT fails to acknowledge other critical factors, such as familial upbringing when determining an action to be rational.

Choice Theory (CT)

Lastly, Choice Theory (CT), developed by psychiatrist William Glasser, takes decision-making in a polar direction from NDT and RCT. Glasser (1999), unlike supporters of NDT and RCT, openly supports the idea that faith and spirituality are behaviors individuals choose to help satisfy their needs. Glasser contends that the fundamental premises are true: 1) actions people take are behaviors, 2) nearly all behaviors result from personal choice, and 3) humans are genetically driven to seek out five basic needs: survival, freedom, fun, power, and love. It is love for oneself, others, God, or a higher spiritual power that is evident through the findings in this study in which spirituality predicts the construct of work-life choice.

6. Implications

This study's implications immediately point to spirituality's role in helping busy people (online graduate psychology students) choose more effectively between work and nonwork. Industrial and Organizational psychologists advise employers, develop programs for employees, and validate the effectiveness of programs that facilitate work-life choice (Landy & Conte, 2019; Spector, 2021). Given that this study focuses on employee attitudes to phenomena (work-life choice, religiosity, and spirituality), this study falls under the O portion of I/O psychology. Results from this study can inform I/O psychologists as they find creative ways to incorporate best practices and standards for building workplace spirituality to increase work-life choice and possibly other work attitudes, such as job satisfaction and employee engagement (Utama et al., 2021).

Like research on the physiological effects of spirituality on health and overall wellbeing, this study's finding that spirituality predicts work-life choice is more evidence of the value of spirituality in the decision-making process (Dos

Reis & De Oliva Menezes, 2017). At the same time, religiosity did not predict work-life choice, even though - more than 75 percent of the participants are - online graduate psychology students at religious universities. The implications of a preference for spirituality over religiosity could assist Church leaders as they review national studies on religious decline (Brauer, 2018).

Studies on diminishing membership and affiliation with religious denominations in the United States are not new. Brauer (2018) posits that data from the United States indicate the United States is on a similar trajectory of religious decline as European countries, which could be a standard demographic shift in lieu of a paradigm shift specifically away from religion. The author suggests that predicting religious decline in younger generational strata is a product of correctly identifying trends in older generations not previously examined closely due to the widely held belief that older generations remain religious.

Although religiosity did not significantly predict work-life choice and spirituality did, over 32 percent of respondents were between the ages 65-74 (this data point arguably warrants study on students in pursuit of an online graduate degree in psychology at or after the age of 65 at a private religious university). Religious decline in the United States is especially prevalent among Generation Z (Gen Z) or those born between 1997-2012. Manalang (2021) notes a rising trend of unbelief among Gen Z and minority millennials. Hardy et al. (2023) analyze data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, finding declines across adolescence in church attendance, prayer, scripture study, religious importance, and spirituality, while doubt in religion remains stable across time. In this study, only one respondent from Gen Z, or 0.07 percent of the sample population. As a result, in this study, it is challenging to determine whether semantic differences between what it means to be spiritual versus religious affected the results.

Author Note

After receiving IRB approval from Liberty University, the author employed Survey Monkey for data collection. This study derives from research in fulfillment of requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Industrial and Organizational from Liberty University. The author is an adjunct faculty member of Psychology at Liberty University, who also holds a doctoral degree in education.

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