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Self Perceived Religiosity and Risky Behaviors

Samantha Schuele

Department of Psychology, Boise State University

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Self Perceived Religiosity and Risky Behaviors

Abstract

I analyzed the relationship between self-perceived religiosity and the prevalence of risky behaviors. The risky behaviors being measured included promiscuous sex, binge drinking, and recreational drug use. There were One hundred and eighteen participants who participated in the study by answering survey questions concerning the prevalence of their participation in risky behaviors as well as there church participation and perception of their religiosity. I predicted that there would be negative correlations between the defined risky behaviors and self-perceived religiosity. The survey information was then input into a statistical analysis program to gather data. After interpreting the data, it was found that there was a significant negative relationship between self perceived religiosity and binge drinking. The same significant negative correlation was found between self-perceived religiosity and promiscuous sex. A significant negative correlation was also found between self perceived religiosity and recreational drug use. This indicates that the more religious an individual perceives himself or herself to be, the less likely they are to participate in risky behaviors. I continued utilizing the data to suggest that the presence of a religious identity can greatly reduce risky behaviors. I then made suggestions for potential action and reform in society to offset the prevalence of risky behaviors.

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Samantha Schuele

Department of Psychology



There have been large amounts of studies conducted and published that have to do with the concept of risky behaviors. Activities such as drug use, sex, and drinking are temptations that large amounts of our population in the United States are confronted with at some point in life. Self-perception and religiosity are factors that can also be considered in thinking about the decisions of a human being. Many individuals find themselves subject to risky behaviors such as alcohol consumption, drug use and sexual promiscuity. Given the consequences that these risky behaviors can have on an individual, it is important to understand the characteristics of individuals who do not end up subjecting themselves to these behaviors. Knowing these characteristics could lead to more insight as to how to prevent the consequences that these risky behaviors could cause. "More than 80 percent of college students drink alcohol, with 44 percent classified as binge drinkers and approximately 23 percent classified as frequent binge drinkers" (Velez-Blasini, 2008, p. 121). Many individuals find that religiosity can have just as much of an impact on decision making as the abuse of risky drugs. Nam (1994) found that there is a significant negative relationship between social deviance and religious identification. Values that are attained through a faith base and resemble those of the family unit as opposed to those of peers tend to lead individuals in a direction away from social deviant behaviors (Dankoski, 1996). Although the analysis of deviant and risky behaviors has been thoroughly conducted numerous times, there is a noticeable gap when considering factors such as religiosity and the presence of a faith base. The purpose of this present study is to find whether or not there is a correlation between self perceived religiosity and risky, deviant behaviors in college students.

Method

A sample of 118 general psychology students participated in this study. There were 47 male participants and 60 female participants, 11 participants chose not to define their gender. Participants were given course credit through research exposure after being recruited through a general psychology program called Experimentrix. Participants were asked 6 questions pertaining to their participation in risky behaviors and self perceived religiosity. These materials were pilot tested on students outside of the general psychology course. Please see Table 1 for the survey items.

Results

It was found that there is a significant relationship between the statement "I consider myself to be religious" and the statement "I participate in binge drinking," $r(107) = -.19, p < .05$. It was found that, there is a significant relationship between the statement "I consider myself to be religious", and the statement "I use recreational drugs," $r(107) = -.21, p < .05$. It was found that there is a significant negative relationship between the statement "I consider myself to be religious" and the statement "I participate in promiscuous sex", $r(103) = -.22, p < .05$. There was a significant positive correlation between the statements "I consider myself to be religious" and the statement "I attend church or some sort of religious service," $r(106) = .63, p < .05$.

Discussion

Upon reviewing the data, the results of this study support the concept that self perceived religiosity can be an indicator of a person's participation in risky behaviors. The specific risky behaviors considered were promiscuous sex, participation in binge drinking,

and use of recreational drugs. The significant negative relationship that was shown between all of these variables agreed with these hypotheses as well as hypotheses conducted in prior published research. There is sufficient data to show that the more a person considers himself or herself to be religious, the less likely they are to participate in risky behaviors. This could be because self perceived religiosity was also found in this study to be related to an individual attending church service. I speculate that the responsibility that an individual feels to attend this sort of service is the same responsibility that one would feel on maintaining the moral code of that religion that the service itself represents. The results of this study could show evidence of how having a moral obligation to a religious sect is a factor that could offset risky behavior.

Abstract

I analyzed the relationship between self perceived religiosity and the prevalence of risky behaviors. Risky behaviors participants engage in included promiscuous sex, binge drinking, and recreational drug use. It was found that there was a significant negative relationship between self perceived religiosity and binge drinking, promiscuous sex, and recreational drug use. This indicates that the more religious an individual perceives themselves to be, the less likely they are to participate in risky behaviors, suggesting that the presence of a religious identity can greatly reduce risky behaviors and makes suggestions for potential action and reform in a social setting to offset the prevalence of risky behaviors in our society.

Table 1

Overall Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Survey Items

Items	M	SD
1. I consider myself to be religious	2.92	1.36
2. A relationship with God is important to me	3.46	1.33
3. I attend church or some sort of religious service	1.00	1.02
4. I participate in binge drinking	0.39	0.67
5. I use recreational drugs	0.32	0.67
6. I participate in promiscuous sex	0.27	0.56

Notes. Items 1-2 were answered using an agreement scale with 1= *strongly agree* and 5= *strongly disagree*. Items 3-6 were answered using a frequency scale with 1= *never*, 2= *seldom*, 3= *sometimes*, 4= *often*, and 5= *always*.