



The Association Between Religiosity and Well-Being



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Introduction

- Evidence from a broad spectrum of studies has shown that religious individuals tend to be generally happier and more satisfied with their lives than those who do not consider themselves religious (Abdel-Khalek, 2014).
- A study conducted in Canada, containing Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Jews, identified the intensity of religious belief as a key factor behind the positive relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being observed among religious communities (Dilmaghani, 2018).
- It is unclear how the association between religiosity and well-being varies based on gender; however, previous research has suggested that women are generally more religious than men (Simpson et al., 2018).

Research Questions

- Do religious people have higher levels of well-being than those who are not religious?
- How does well-being vary based on how religious the individuals are?
- Does this relationship differ for males and females?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=3,869) were drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 2021, a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults in the U.S. who speak either English or Spanish
- 41% of the sample identify as Protestant, 21.3% identify as Catholic, 3.2% identify as Christian, 1.9% identify as Jewish, 29% do not identify with a religion, and 1.4% identify with some other religion.

Measures

- Participants were asked to rate how often they attend religious services on a 4-point scale from 1 (never) to 4 (several times a week), about how often they pray on the same 4-point scale, and whether they'd call themselves a strong (religious preference) or not a very strong (religious preference) on a 3-point scale including 1 (not very strong), 2 (somewhat strong), and 3 (very strong)
- These responses were combined to create a quantitative variable that determined each participant's level of religiousness, or religiosity

Results

- To measure well-being, participants were asked to rate their quality of life on a 5-point scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) and to rate their mental health on the same 5-point scale
- These two responses were summed to create a quantitative variable that determines each participant's level of well-being.

Univariate

- Graph shows a bimodal distribution of religiosity scores, with a normal distribution around 3-3.5 (showing fairly religious individuals) and an extreme group of very religious individuals around 4.75 (Fig. 1).

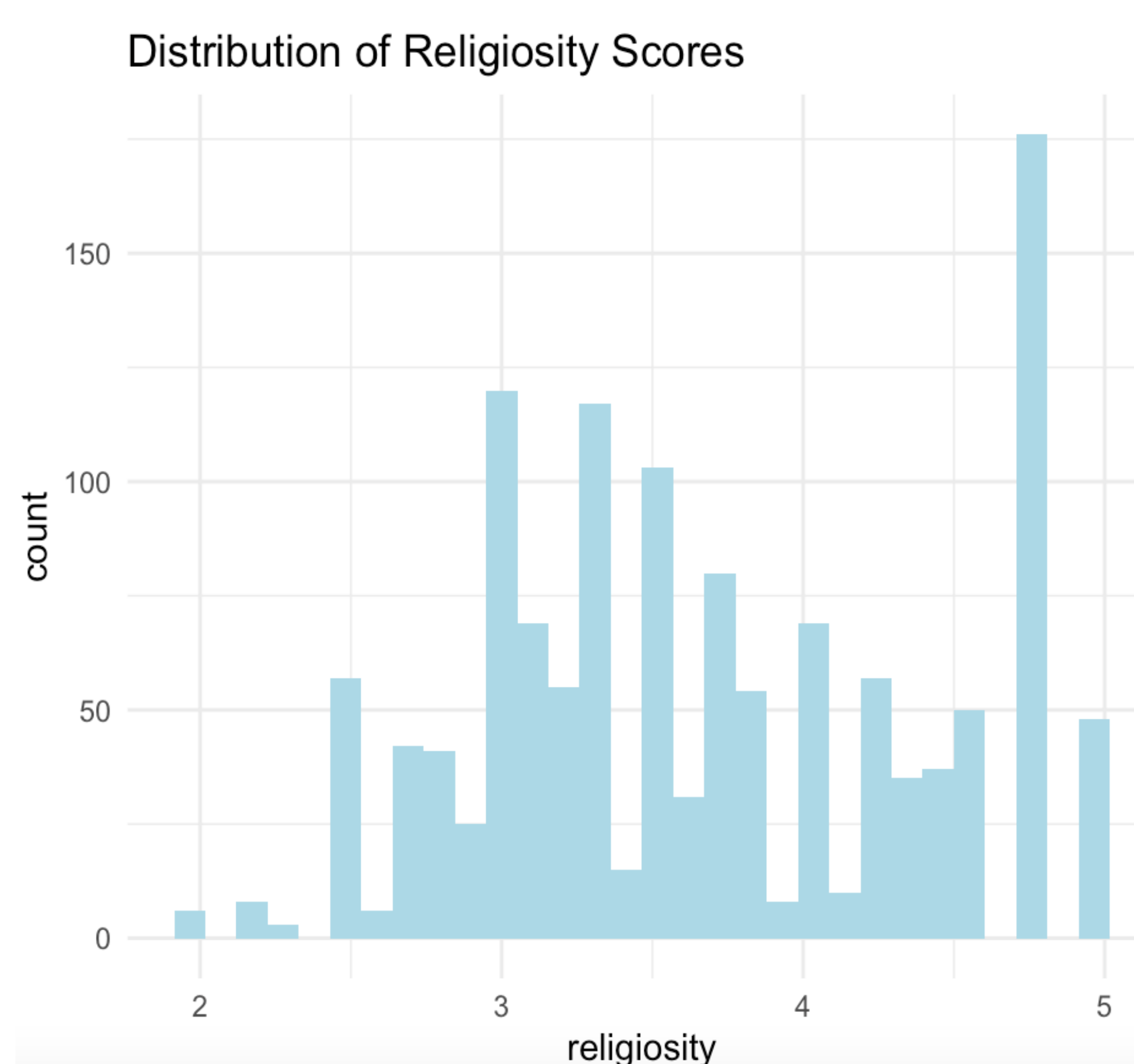


Figure 1: Distribution of Religiosity Scores

Bivariate

- A simple linear regression showed that religiosity was significantly and positively associated with well-being (beta = .096, $p < .01$).
- For every one unit increase in religiosity, wellbeing is expected to increase by .096

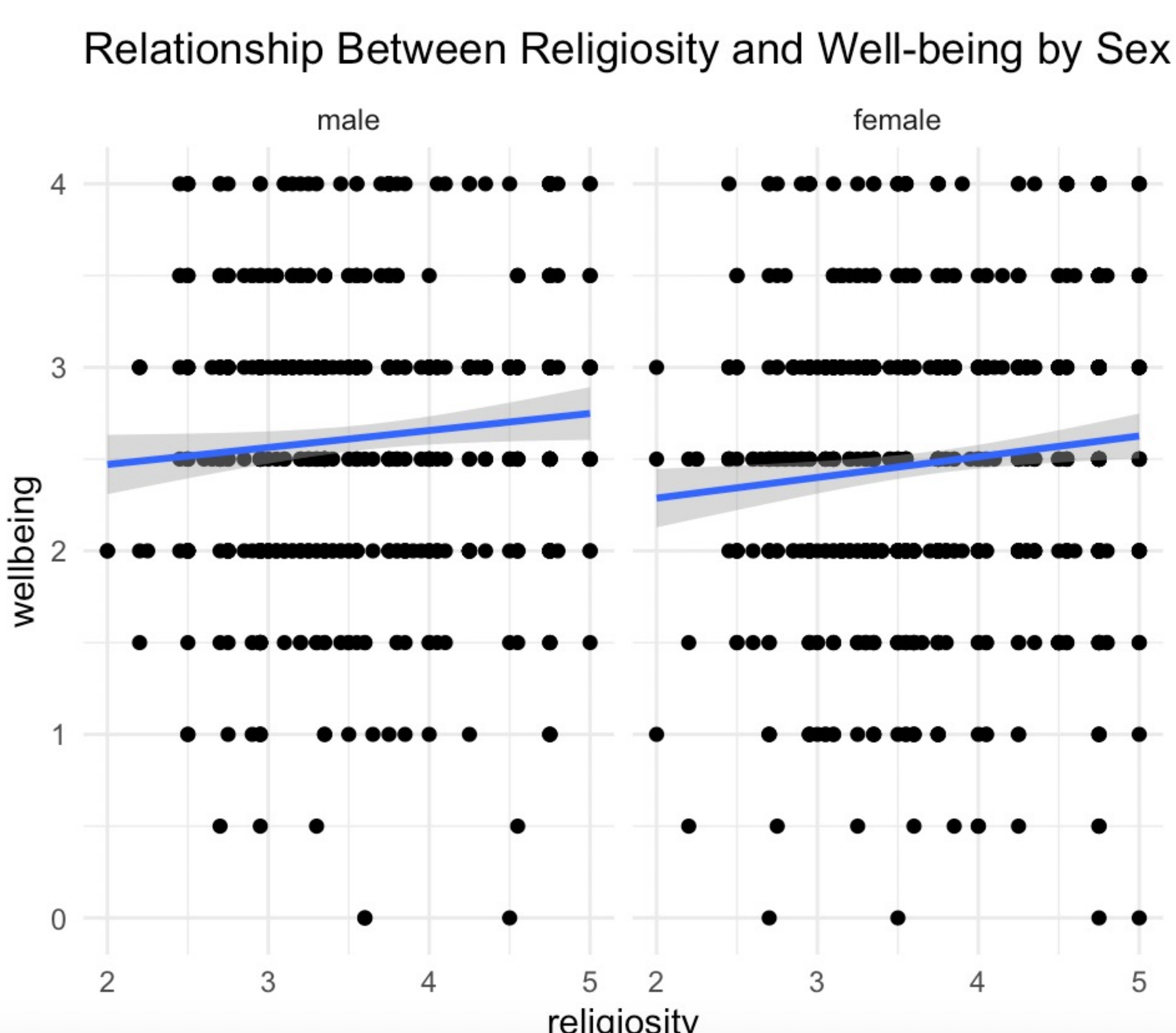


Figure 2: Relationship Between Religiosity and Well-being by Sex

Multivariate

- Multiple regression analyses showed again that religiosity was significantly and positively associated with well-being when gender was added as a third variable (beta = .093, $p < .05$).
- Also revealed that gender is not a moderator or confounder, but simply a third variable
- Graph shows men have slightly higher levels of well-being than women on average (Fig. 2).

Discussion

- The higher an individual's level of religiosity, the higher their expected level of well-being
- These findings suggest that religion could potentially be leveraged as an instrument to promote mental health, happiness, and a higher quality of life, especially for individuals with mental illness or those who struggle in these areas.
- Further research is required to determine the role of potential covariates, any nuances between specific religions, and other religious groups not examined in this study.

References

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