

Locus of Control Beliefs Mediate the Relationship Between Religious Functioning and Psychological Health

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Theistic and spiritually-based beliefs and behaviours have been demonstrated to consistently predict physical and mental health, although the psychological processes underlying these relationships are unclear. The present study investigated associative relationships and pathways of mediation between religious functioning, locus of control (LOC) and health. The sample consisted of 122 Christians (79 female, 43 male) who were predominately Catholic, ranging in age from 18 to 80 ($M = 45.47$, $SD = 15.0$). Participants were recruited from churches in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, and completed a questionnaire package measuring (1) psychological and physical health, (2) the religious variables of awareness of God, instability and impression management and, (3) God, internal and external LOC domains. Results indicated that awareness of God and internal LOC were associated with better health, whereas external LOC and instability were associated with poorer health. God LOC and impression management were not significantly associated with health. Sobel tests were used to analyse mediation hypotheses. Internal LOC was found to mediate the relationship between awareness of God and better psychological health, and external LOC was found to mediate the relationship between instability and poorer psychological health. These findings are of considerable clinical significance.