

Spiritual Strivings, Patience, and Well-being in a Religious Adolescent Sample

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Abstract

Patience, operationalized as “the propensity to wait calmly in the face of frustration, adversity, or suffering” (Schnitker, 2010), has been acknowledged as a distinct virtue within historical, philosophical and religious lexicons. However, empirical research of patience as a unique psychological construct and character strength is minimal and has primarily focused on adult populations. Patience has previously been associated with a variety of well-being outcomes including: less negative affect and depression, fewer health problems, empathy, and gratitude (Schnitker & Emmons, 2007). Additionally, patience has been positively correlated with religiosity and spirituality (Schnitker, 2010).

Despite the findings linking patience to well-being outcomes, little is known about the mechanisms through which patience acts on these processes. The impact of patience on human striving has been proposed as a central pathway through which patience improves well-being (Schnitker, 2010). The current study expands upon the extant research by exploring the relationship between patience, sanctified strivings, and well-being in a religious adolescent sample.

Research Questions

1. Is sanctification of strivings associated with greater patience and subsequently, well-being?

1. Will religiosity and spirituality moderate the relation between sanctified strivings and patience?

Method

The data utilized for this study consisted of a subset of responses from adolescents who participated in a Young Life trip to Bulgaria, whose data was originally collected as part of a larger longitudinal Young Life study conducted at the University of California, Davis.

The participants ($N = 136$; 74 females, 1 not specified), filled out the following measures:

Self Reported Strivings List and Strivings Assessment Scales (Emmons, 1999)

➤ The Self Reported Strivings List asks participants to list five strivings by filling in the sentence stem, “I typically try to _____.”
➤ The Strivings Assessment Scales asks participants to rate each of their five previously listed strivings on four striving characteristics: closeness to God, meaningfulness, extrinsic/intrinsic orientation, and support. Closeness to God measured whether or not participants felt their striving brought them closer to God.

Patience Scale 10 (Schnitker & Emmons, 2007)

➤ The PS-10 measures patience on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Very much unlike me) to 5 (Very much like me). Using this scale participant's rated a total of 10 questions assessing both beliefs about the importance of patience (e.g., “Patience is a characteristic that I admire in others”) and self-evaluations of patience (e.g., “Most people would say that I am a patient person”).

➤ The PS-10 yields a total patience score and two subscale scores reflecting beliefs about the importance of patience and one's self-evaluation of patience.

Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (Worthington et al., 2003)

➤ The RCI-10 is a 10 item questionnaire that assesses intrapersonal and interpersonal religious commitment by having participants rate their responses on a 1 (Not at all true of me) to 5 (Totally true of me) scale.

Spiritual Transcendence Index (Seidnitz et al., 2002)

➤ The STI is an 8 item measure that assesses how a person's normal psychological and daily experiences/circumstances are transcended into one's notion of spirituality (Seidnitz et al. 2002: 6).

Introduction

Patience and Well-being:

➤ Despite the findings linking patience to well-being outcomes, little is known about the mechanisms through which patience acts on these well-being processes.

➤ The impact of patience on human striving is a potential pathway through which patience improves well-being

Why sanctification of strivings and patience?

➤ Schnitker (2010) proposed three possible ways that strivings might be associated with patience:

- “Patience might serve as a coping mechanism for contending with goal delay or potential goal failure”.
- “Patience might serve as a form of flexible goal adjustment”.
- “Patience might help one persist in the pursuit of important goals, thus leading to greater satisfaction and goal attainment”.

➤ Patience is touted by all major religions as a virtue to be employed during times of struggle and has previously been positively correlated with religiosity and spirituality.

➤ When compared with non-spiritual strivings, spiritual strivings are reported as more important, requiring more effort, and are engaged in for more intrinsic reasons (Emmons & Schnitker, 2010).

➤ *Because of the extra effort and importance placed on spiritual strivings, and the religious/spiritual emphasis on patience as a virtue; those who are religious/spiritual might manifest more patience when pursuing sanctified strivings.*

➤ Thus, sanctified strivings provide an ideal construct through which to explore the relation between strivings and patience.

Why look at religiosity and spirituality as moderators?

➤ Prior research on sanctification and well-being is unclear:

➤ Sanctification has positive associations when no desecration of the sacred has occurred. However, if desecration occurs, sanctification is associated with increased negative affect, more negative health symptoms, and poorer psychological health.

➤ As indicated by the research on desecration of the sacred, sanctification of strivings might be detrimental to those who are highly religious or spiritual, and thus, hinder the development of patience.

➤ Additionally, sanctification of strivings may not improve patience if the striving is sanctified by an individual with no firm rootedness in a religious or spiritual meaning system.

Why separate religiosity and spirituality?

Two different constructs:

➤ The religiosity measure assessed practices that go along with being a member of a religious group and religious commitment.

➤ The spirituality measure assessed more general transcendence with less emphasis on membership in a religious group.

Correlation

Patience and Striving Sanctification

A Pearson Correlation failed to demonstrate a significant relation between striving sanctification and patience, $r(136) = .08, p = .35$.

Means and Standard Deviations for Striving Sanctification and Patience Scores ($N = 136$)

Variable	M	SD
Striving Sanctification	3.34	0.79
Patience	3.39	0.64

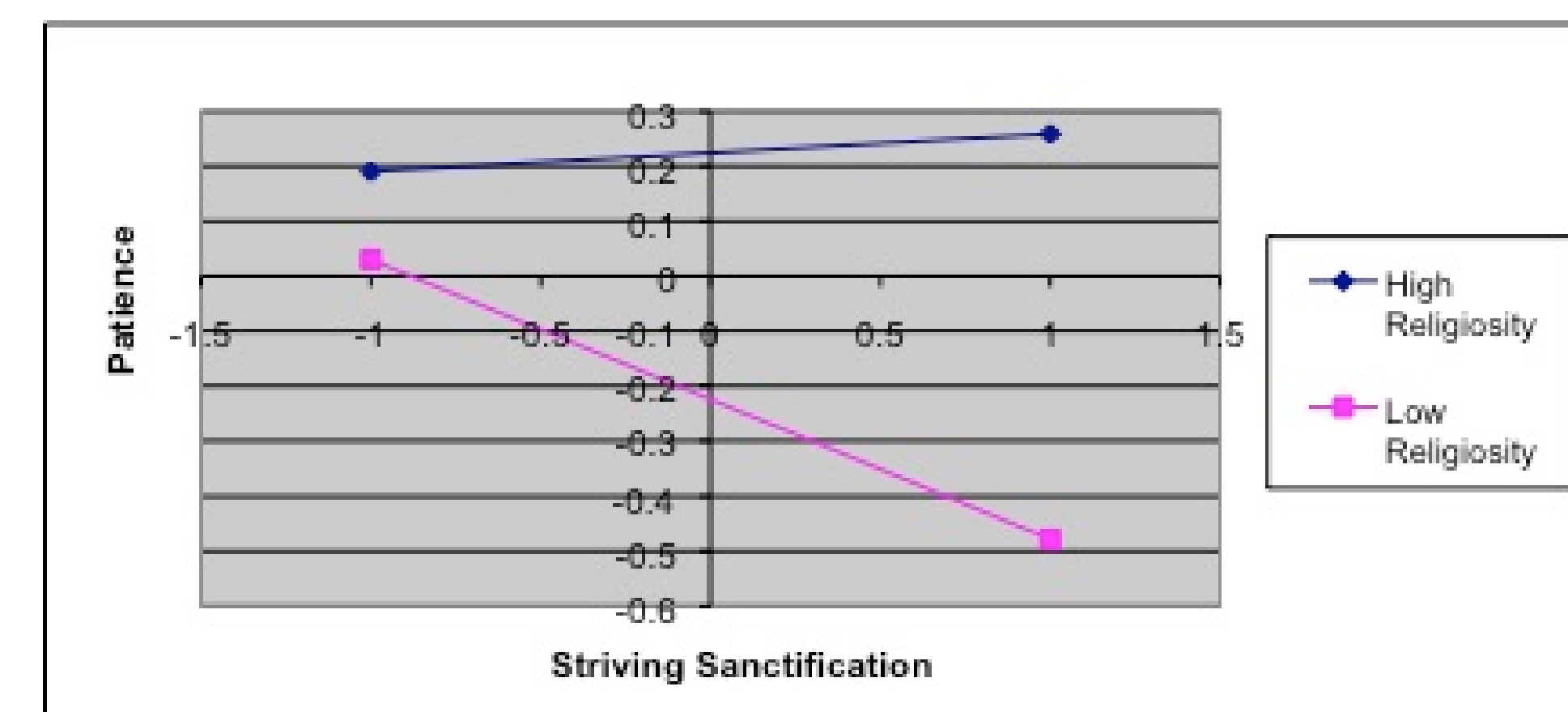
Moderation

Striving Sanctification, Patience, and Religiosity

The relation between striving sanctification and patience was moderated by religiosity, such that:

➤ For adolescents who were low on striving sanctification, religiosity did not significantly impact patience scores

➤ For adolescents who were high on striving sanctification, high religiosity was associated with the highest levels of patience, while low religiosity was associated with the lowest levels of patience.



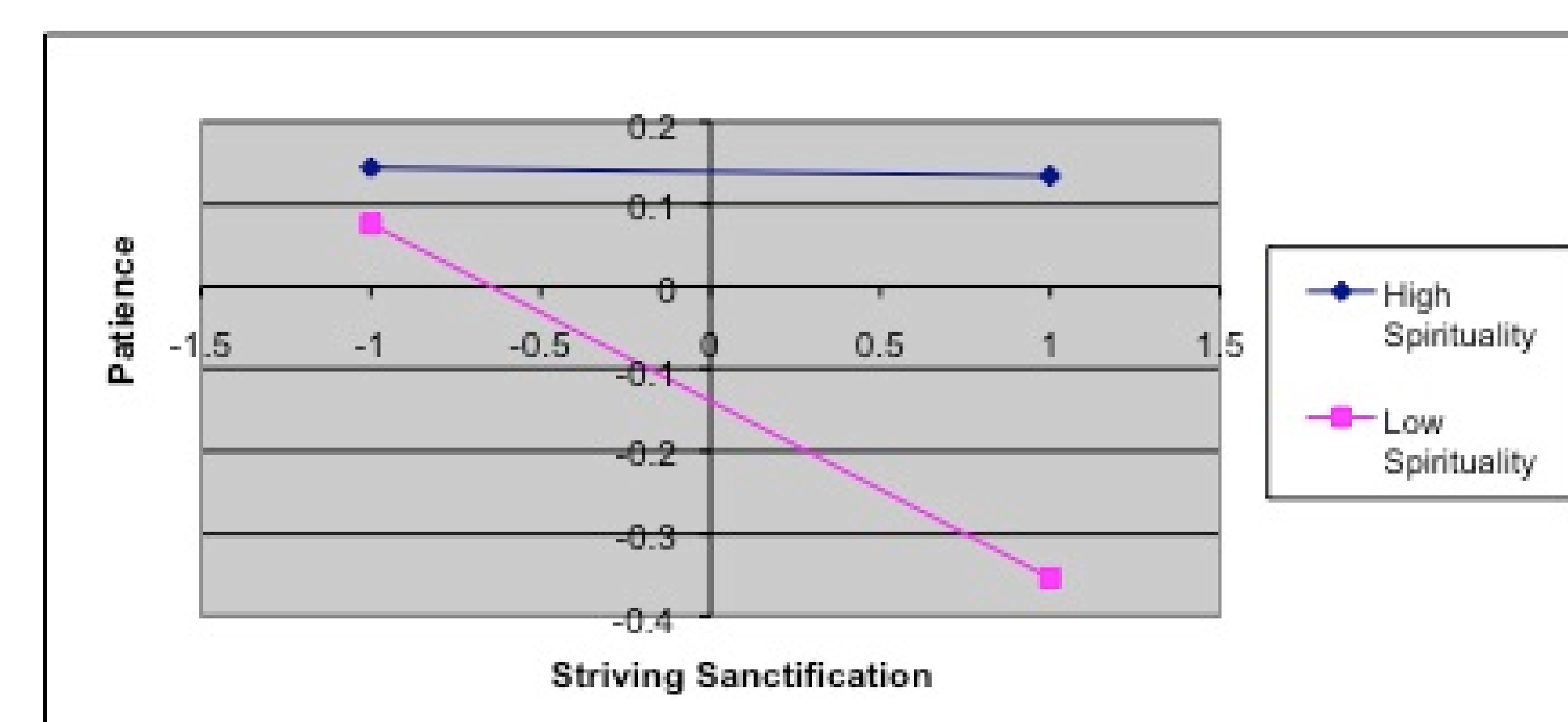
Striving Sanctification, Patience, and Spirituality

The relationship between striving sanctification and patience was moderated by spirituality, such that:

➤ Regardless of strivings sanctification, adolescents who had high spirituality reported the highest levels of patience.

➤ Adolescents who were low on striving sanctification and low on spirituality, still showed high levels of patience.

➤ Adolescents who were high on sanctification and low on spirituality demonstrated significantly lower patience scores.



Summary of Findings

Correlation

➤ There was no relation between striving sanctification and patience.

Moderation

➤ Religiosity moderated the relation between striving sanctification and patience. It appears that striving sanctification may actually hinder patience when strivings are sanctified by individuals who are not very religious. Conversely, when strivings are sanctified within a religious framework, patience remains high. Similarly, regardless of religiosity, low striving sanctification does not significantly hinder patience.

➤ Spirituality moderated the relation between striving sanctification and patience. It seems that sanctifying strivings when one is not particularly spiritual may actually harm the development of patience. However, when spirituality and striving sanctification is high, patience is high. Additionally, when spirituality and striving sanctification is low, patience remains relatively high.

➤ Thus, it appears that sanctifying strivings may be detrimental to the development of patience and subsequently, well-being, when the individual does not have a strong spiritual or religious meaning system from which to sanctify their strivings.

➤ Future research is needed to further clarify how patience may impact strivings and ultimately, well-being.

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