

The title of this project is, “Predictors of Mental Health Outcomes among a Sample of Churchgoing Catholics.” Dr. Kelly Rohan is the faculty sponsor for this research. I, Zoe Chapman, am acting as the Principal Investigator.

Past research has generally found that religious involvement has protective effects on psychological well-being. However, few studies have attempted to understand which elements of religious attendance are particularly important for producing this trend. I explore this important question by focusing on churchgoing members of one particular world religion, Catholicism.

Several hypotheses are associated with this research. First, it is hypothesized that those who go to Confession at least once a year will exhibit better mental health outcomes than those who do not confess yearly. Second, it is hypothesized that greater intrinsic motivation for church attendance will be associated with better mental outcomes and that greater extrinsic motivation will be associated with poorer mental health outcomes. Intrinsic motivation refers to those who fully *live* religious principles, attending services simply to worship God. Extrinsic motivation refers to those who use religion as a means to an end. Finally, it is hypothesized that higher levels of perceived social support from God, religious leaders, and the congregation will be related to better mental health outcomes.

Eligible participants, who must be 18 years of age or older and must attend Mass at least once a week, complete a series of online questionnaires. These surveys cover an array of topics, such as the motivation for religious service attendance and life satisfaction.

Religious activities, which exert a powerful influence on the lives of many, can no longer be ignored, looked down upon, or idealized by psychologists. In systematically examining the effect of Catholic experience on mental health, we may achieve a better understanding of the relationship between religion and well-being.