

NARCISSISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTITLEMENT AS PREDICTORS OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS ATTRIBUTIONS

BEATA ZARZYCKA, KAMIL TOMAKA, KATARZYNA ZAJĄC, KLAUDIA MAREK

Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, Institute of Psychology, Poland

ABSTRACT

B. Zarzycka, K. Tomaka, K. Zajęc, K. Marek

Objectives. Narcissism and psychological entitlement were examined as predictors of divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning, and religious doubt struggles, in two separate studies. Religious attributions were tested as mediators of these relationships.

Participants and setting. The participants were 180 adults, 102 women and 78 men (study 1) and 213 college students, 107 women and 106 men (study 2). Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire (EAQ), Religious and Spiritual Struggle Scale (RSSS), and Attributions toward God Scale (AtG) were applied.

Hypothesis. Narcissism—self-admiration, leadership, vanity, and self-sufficiency—correlates with religious struggle. Active, passive, and revengeful entitlement correlates with religious struggles. Religious attributions—kind and cruel—are mediators in the relationships between narcissism and entitlement and religious struggle.

Statistical analyses. The study was designed cross-sectionally. Correlations among the key constructs—narcissism/psychological entitlement, religious attributions, and religious struggle were calculated. The mediating effects of religious attributions on the relationships between narcissism/psychological entitlement and

religious struggle were established by means of a series of mediation analyses.

Results. Narcissism correlated with interpersonal struggle. Kind religious attributions were mediators in the relationships between narcissism and demonic, moral, and religious struggle with doubt. Psychological entitlement correlated with divine struggle. Cruelty and kind religious attributions were mediators in the relationships between psychological entitlement and demonic, moral, and struggle with ultimate meaning.

Study limitation. The findings are affected by a relatively youthful sample. Religious struggle were measured by retrospective accounts of participant reactions to adverse events, whereas narcissism and psychological entitlement were measured through the present experiences of the participants.

key words:

psychological entitlement,
narcissism,
religious and spiritual struggle,
religious attribution

klíčová slova:

psychologický nárok,
narcismus,
náboženský a duchovní zápas,
náboženské atribuce

Many studies have shown associations between personality and religiousness (for reviews, see Saroglou, 2002, 2010), however, to date, few studies have examined individual differences in religious and spiritual (R/S) struggle (Ano & Pargament, 2013; Zarzycka, 2017). Grubbs, Exline, and Campbell (2013) suggested that narcissistic entitlement can predict divine struggle, particularly anger toward God.

Previous, mainly American studies recognized entitlement as a component of a narcissistic personality, involving unjustified demand for special treatment. Conceptual-

Došlo: 28. 5. 2019; B. Z., Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II - Institute of Psychology, Al. Raclawickie 14 Lublin 20-950, Poland; e-mail: zarzycka@kul.pl

izations of narcissism and entitlement in Polish studies differ from American ones in that entitlement is not a dimension of narcissism (Bazińska & Drat-Ruszczak, 2000). Taken separately, narcissism and entitlement manifest different patterns of correlations with dimensions of religiosity (Franczak et al., 2010; Wiechetek et al., 2014). We therefore expect that narcissism and entitlement would differently predict R/S struggle. We also examined kind or cruel attributions toward God as mediators in these relationships.

Religiosity as a source of struggle

Although religion and spirituality are important aspects of life for many people, thinking about God does not always bring comfort. When people try to live according to the moral principles of their religion, they often feel guilty when they cannot live up to its demands. Some people feel anger and distrust toward God, or blame God for the adverse events in their lives. Others experience stress when they face hypocrisy from religious people or clergy (Krause et al., 2000). Religious people struggle when they try to understand their place in the eternal plan for all things, and its meaning for personal relationships with the world and other people (Spilka et al., 2003).

The notion of *religious and spiritual struggle* involves a wide range of phenomena, all marked by strains and conflicts related to religion or spirituality (Exline, 2013; Pargament et al., 2005). Exline (2013; Stauner et al., 2016) distinguished six types of R/S struggles: *divine struggle* involves negative emotions centered on beliefs about God or a perceived relationship with God; *demonic struggle* involves concerns that the devil or evil spirits are attacking an individual or causing negative events; *interpersonal struggle* involves concerns about negative experiences with religious people or institutions; *moral struggle* involves wrestling with attempts to follow moral principles and feelings of worry or guilt about offenses the subjects perceive themselves to have committed; *ultimate meaning* struggle involves concerns about not finding deep meaning in one's life, and *religious doubt* involves feeling troubled by doubts or questions about one's religious and spiritual beliefs. The vast majority of empirical data suggests that R/S struggle is related to indicators of low personal adaptation, and poor mental and physical health (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Exline, 2013). It is therefore necessary to identify predictors of R/S struggle.

Individual Differences, Narcissism, Psychological Entitlement, and Religious Struggle

Given that personality traits are relevant to religiosity (see meta-analyses by Saroglou, 2002, 2010) it stands to reason that they would contribute to the experience of R/S struggle. Studies have demonstrated that R/S struggle correlated positively with neuroticisms (Pargament et al., 2005; Wilt et al., 2016; Zarzycka, 2017), pessimism, trait anger (Ano & Pargament, 2013), negative affect, narcissistic (Grubbs et al., 2013), and psychological entitlement (Grubbs et al., 2016).

Narcissism

Narcissism is an individual-differences construct with the primary characteristic of a grandiose and inflated sense of self (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). The narcissistic self also entails a sense of specialness and uniqueness (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell & Finkel, 2004). The increasing prevalence of narcissism in contemporary society has important implications for both the salience and nature of individual religiosity. Research to date suggests that narcissism is negatively related to intrinsic religiosity (Sandage & Moe, 2011), church attendance (Hermann & Fuller,

2017), and motivation for prayer (Hermannet al., 2015). In most studies, researchers applied the total score of the NPI (Ano & Pargament, 2013), which is widely known to be problematic, because it conflates various adaptive and maladaptive personality dimensions into a composite (Ackerman et al., 2011). As we noted before, studies have suggested that anger toward God is related to narcissistic entitlement (Grubbs et al., 2013, 2016). Other types of R/S struggle—e.g. interpersonal—have not been studied, and yet conflicts with other believers may be the reactions of narcissistic individuals to insufficient attention or criticism. We know even less about the way in which narcissism predicts R/S struggle. The aim of this study was to analyze whether the predictive role of narcissism would remain significant for struggles of divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning, and religious doubt. We also tested whether kind and cruel attributions toward God are mediators in the relationship between narcissism and R/S struggles.

Entitlement

The core of entitlement is the belief that one deserves or is entitled to more than other people (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline & Bushman, 2004). In psychology, there have been at least two approaches to the conceptualization of entitlement. One approach has focused on the clinical aspects of entitlement, with a particular emphasis on its link to narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). From this perspective, entitlement is seen as a component of a narcissistic personality and understood as an exploitive, unjustified demand for special treatment because of a person's special capabilities, characteristics, or position. The entitlement subscale of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) is used to measure this (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The other approach has focused on psychological entitlement, which is defined as a stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others. The concept of psychological entitlement is more general or global, and does not necessarily refer to entitlement that results from a specific situation. The Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES) was developed to measure this (Campbell et al., 2004).

Most studies on entitlement focus on the general tendency to formulate demands. Žemojtel-Piotrowska and colleagues (2015) proposed a multifactorial model of psychological entitlement, comprising: *active entitlement* which involves the promotion of self-interest and self-reliance in achieving life goals; *passive entitlement* which involves the belief that other people and institutions have certain obligations toward the self and must serve the interest of this individual; and *revengefulness* which involves a tendency to insist on revenge and the inability to forgive prior insults. The personality aspects of entitlement are reflected in active and revengeful entitlement, whereas the social aspects are reflected in passive entitlement. Study of passive entitlement, which typically focuses on expectations of others, including the state, has become more popular among Central-European scholars, who have focused on problems with exploitive demands and the passivity of people with the *gimme-syndrome* (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2015). This model has been confirmed across student samples from 28 Central-European countries.

Studies conducted in English-speaking, Western populations demonstrated associations between psychological and narcissistic entitlement, and anger toward God (Grubbs et al., 2013, 2016; Wood et al., 2010). These connections persist even when various aspects of personality that could feasibly explain volatile affective states (e.g. trait anger, neuroticism, humility) were controlled (Grubbs et al., 2013). Our aim was to determine whether the predictive role of active, passive, and revengeful entitlement would remain significant for divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning,

and religious doubt struggle; and whether kind and cruel religious attributions are mediators in these relationships.

Religious Attributions

A person's beliefs about God's attributes may also predict R/S struggle. In psychology, terms such as 'the God concept', 'explicit God image', or 'doctrinal God representation' have been used to capture these ideas. To date, however, there has been little work clarifying how specific facets of a person's God concept could predict distinctive types of R/S struggle. Exline, Grubbs, and Homolka (2015) considered how seeing God as cruel versus distant might relate to anger toward God and fear of God's disapproval.

In our research, religious attributions were considered in relation to R/S struggle. The concept of *religious attributions* was developed in cognitive social psychology. It assumes that people try to attribute meaning to what happens to them (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1997). Looking for the causes of events in God may be expressed by attributing responsibility for positive or difficult events to God (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002). A person may attribute positive intent to God, wherein God would be seen as having positive intentions toward people. If a person attributes negative intent toward God, then God would be seen as having negative intentions toward people. We examined kind and cruel attributions toward God as mediators in the relationships between narcissism and psychological entitlement with R/S struggle.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Although theoretically similar, entitlement and narcissism contribute differently to increasing levels of one's sense of self. There is a tendency for narcissists to form inflated self-perceptions or overestimate their own abilities (Credo et al., 2016). Increased levels of entitlement have been empirically linked to self-serving attributional biases. Although narcissism and psychological entitlement are correlated, they may predict different patterns of religiosity (Franczak et al., 2010; Wiechetek, et al., 2014). For this reason, we expect that they would differently predict R/S struggle.

Testing narcissism and psychological entitlement as predictors of R/S struggle is not a new idea. Grubbs and colleagues (2013, 2016) have confirmed that psychological and narcissistic entitlement are significant predictors of anger toward God. In the Polish population, the structure of narcissism and the structure of entitlement are both different from those in the American population. The main difference is that entitlement, namely the expectation of privileges without having merit, is not a component of narcissism (Bazińska & Drat-Ruszczak, 2000). The Polish version of the NPI used in our research therefore does not include an entitlement subscale. Entitlement, in turn, is a complex construct, and among Central-European samples is more often expressed by focusing on group interest and beliefs about the existence of bonds between individuals and institutions, than by actively promoting their own interest (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2015). This approaches to narcissism and entitlement may be an opportunity to expand further upon the work of Grubbs and colleagues (2013, 2016).

We use a multifactorial model of narcissism, consisting of self-admiration, leadership, vanity, and self-sufficiency. Previous research on narcissistic traits suggests that they are associated with difficulties in functioning in interpersonal relationships (e.g. Credo et al., 2016), and so we expected that the 'socially sensitive' dimensions of narcissism—self-admiration, self-sufficiency, and leadership—would be associated

with interpersonal struggle. Vanity, which includes admiration for your own physical appearance and a sense of uniqueness was expected to correlate with moral struggle, as it is associated with difficulties in ethical judgment (Cooper & Pullig, 2013). We also included a multifactorial model of psychological entitlement, including active and passive entitlement, and revengefulness. Research has shown that entitlement is associated with negative emotions toward God (Grubbs et al., 2013, 2016) which is why we predicted that it will be associated with divine struggle. We also predicted that entitlement which includes internal, hidden claims, as measured by the passive subscale, will trigger stronger religious struggles than open forms of demanding one's own rights. The expected positive correlation between revengefulness and R/S struggle is similar to that seen in research on forgiveness (Exline et al., 2004). The relationships between the entitlement dimensions and other types of struggle were treated as exploratory in nature.

Due to their excessive demand for admiration, narcissistic individuals are not always highly respected by others. People with high levels of entitlement are more likely to feel that life itself is unfair, or does not provide them with the things they believe they deserve.

Both narcissism and entitlement are related to a specific set of beliefs dominated by moral categories in the assessment of the social world, focus on the negative aspects of other people's activity, and a lack of self-activity (Lewicka, 2002). In the belief systems of entitled individuals, the most basic belief is that there is someone else who is responsible for their (negative) well-being. The narcissistic self entails a sense of specialness and uniqueness (Exline, et al., 2004). These beliefs predict how they formulate attributions and shape their attitudes (Lewicka, 2001). We expected that narcissism and entitlement would be also expressed in religious beliefs, especially in the anticipation of special treatment by God or in the sense of being treated unfairly by God, respectively. Since both narcissism and entitlement are related to a lack of self-activity, narcissistic or entitled people attribute to others, including God, responsibility for negative events, making others, including God, responsible for their own well-being. For this reason we expect that kind or cruel religious attributions are mediators in the relationships between narcissism and psychological entitlement with religious struggles. People high in entitlement or narcissism are expected to make more cruel and fewer kind attributions to God, and in turn experience more R/S struggles.

The article contains the results of two studies. In Study 1 we aimed to identify the associations between four dimensions of narcissism—self-admiration, leadership, vanity, and self-sufficiency—and R/S struggle. The aim of Study 2 was to identify the associations between active, passive, and revengeful entitlement and R/S struggles. We included six types of R/S struggles in the studies: divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning struggle, and religious doubt. In both studies, we expected that religious attributions—kind and cruel—are mediators in the relationships between narcissism (study 1) or entitlement (study 2) and R/S struggle.

Study 1. Narcissism and R/S Struggle: The Mediating Effect of Religious Attributions

Study 1 focused on self-admiration, leadership, vanity, and self-sufficiency as predictors of divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning, and religious doubt struggle, and on attributions of kindness and cruelty as mediators of these relationships.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 102 women and 78 men, mostly college students. Their mean age was 23 years ($SD = 5.14$). Table 1 presents additional demographic data. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling via word of mouth, social media, and conventional news outlets. They completed the set of questionnaires in Polish.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants: Study 1 (N = 180) and study 2 (N = 213)

Characteristic	Study 1 <i>n</i> (%)	Study 2 <i>n</i> (%)
Sex		
Female	102 (56.7)	107 (50.2)
Male	78 (43.3)	106 (49.8)
Education		
Elementary	1 (0.6)	2 (0.9)
Secondary	137 (76.1)	186 (87.3)
Higher	42 (23.3)	25 (11.7)
Confession		
Catholic	155 (86.2)	169 (79.3)
Greek Catholic		3 (1.4)
Baptist		2 (1.0)
Atheist	14 (7.8)	15 (7)
Agnostic	11 (6.1)	24 (11.3)
Marital status		
Single	132 (73.3)	200 (93.9)
Married	37 (20.6)	13 (6.1)
Separated / divorced	8 (4.5)	
Widow / widower	3 (1.7)	
Place of residence		
Village	49 (27.2)	68 (31.9)
City or town below 200,000	61 (33.9)	71 (33.3)
City above 200,000	70 (38.9)	34 (34.7)

Note. Total of percentages is not 100 because of rounding.

Measurement

Demographics. Participants reported their gender, age, marital status, place of residence, and religious affiliation. They also defined the levels of their religiosity (*How religious are you?*); response options ranged from 1 (*not religious*) to 6 (*very religious*).

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). We included the widely used Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) as a measure of narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988) using the Polish adaptation by Bazińska and Drat-Ruszczak (2000). The NPI measures four dimensions of narcissism: self-admiration is the desire for meaning, admiration, and to be the center of attention (e.g. *I really like being the center of attention*, $a = .82^1$); leadership/authority involves a conviction about having the ability to influence other people, and having strong leadership skills (*I am a born leader*, $a = .79$); vanity involves admiration for your own physical appearance and sense of uniqueness (*I think I'm special*, $a = .63$); and self-sufficiency involves a conviction of being competent, successful, and independent (*I arrange my life the way I want*, $a = .79$). The Polish NPI consists of 34 items, which are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*it's not me*) to 5 (*it's about me*). The structure of the Polish NPI adaptation differs from the original in that it does not contain Entitlement subscale. Some items belonging to the Entitlement subscale in the original NPI, entered the self-admiration subscale, and those remaining (with the lowest factor loadings) did not enter the scale. That is why the Polish NPI differs from the original NPI number of items.

Religious and Spiritual Struggle Scale (RSSS). The 26-items RSSS was applied to measure six domains of R/S struggle: the divine (e.g. *feeling angry at God*, $a = .92$), demonic (*feeling tormented by the devil or evil spirits*, $a = .90$), interpersonal (*feeling hurt, mistreated, or offended by religious/spiritual people*, $a = .89$), moral (*wrestling with attempts to follow my moral principles*, $a = .90$), ultimate meaning (*questioning whether life really matters*, $a = .85$) and religious doubt struggle (*struggling to figure out what I really believe about religion/spirituality*, $a = .89$) (Exline et al., 2014; Zarzycka, Ciszek, & Rykowska, 2018). Participants were asked to focus on the most stressful event they had faced in the past six months. They read this prompt: "Recall an adverse event or situation you experienced in the last six months, which elicited references to God in you, e.g. you prayed to God, asked Him for help, were angry at God, etc. Recall the thoughts and emotions you had towards God at that time". Response options were from 1 (*not at all/does not apply*) to 5 (*a great deal*).

Attributions toward God Scale (AtG). We applied the 19-items AtG scale to measure cruelty attributions toward God (e.g. *God wanted to hurt me; had betrayed me; wanted to see me suffer*, $a = .96$), and kind intent attributions toward God (*God cared for me; was protecting me; was trustworthy*, $a = .96$) (Exline, Park, Smyth & Carey, 2011). The instructions included this prompt: "In the event or adverse situation you recalled previously, which of the following were likely to appear in your head?" Response options were from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*).

Study design and analyses

We established whether there were correlations among the key constructs—narcissism, religious attributions, and R/S struggle by means of zero order correlations among the NPI, RSSS, and AtG subscales. In the regression models, self-admiration, leadership/authority, vanity, and self-sufficiency, were examined as predictors of struggle with divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning, and religious

¹ The a means Cronbach's coefficient alpha obtained in our sample.

doubt. Cruelty and kind intent attributions were examined as mediators of these relationships. Figure 1 shows the mediation model tested. We performed all mediation analyses using PROCESS (Hayes, 2018). PROCESS is a path-analytic macro based on regression and estimates indirect effects and bias-corrected confidence intervals. We tested the significance of indirect effects using the bootstrapping procedure. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of the 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals were computed.

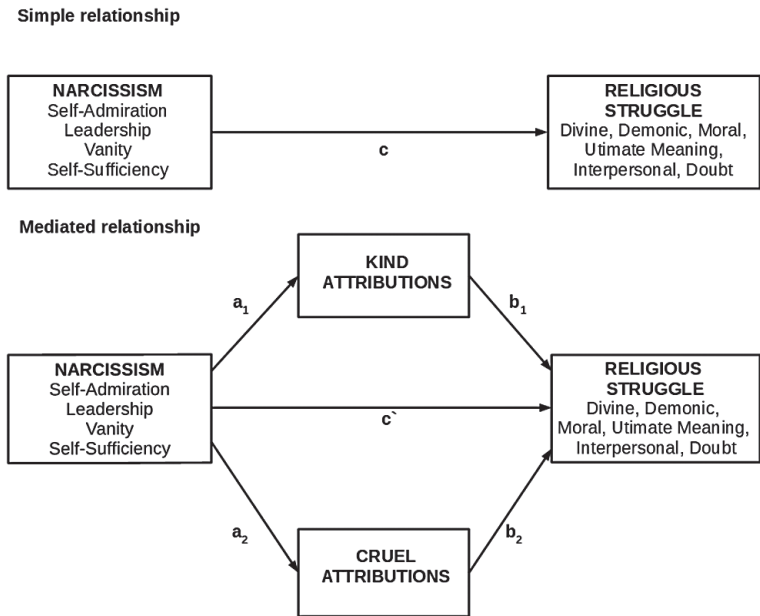


Figure 1 Diagram of the mediation model

RESULTS

Data analysis

Prior to the main analyses, the coefficients of skewness, kurtosis, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test with Lilliefors correction were calculated for each construct. The mean scores for the leadership and vanity subscales of the NPI, all RSSS subscales, and the cruelty attributions subscale of the AtG were positively skewed (skewness from 0.07 to 1.78; $p < .05$). The mean score for the kind attributions (-0.44; $p < .001$) subscale of the AtG was negatively skewed. All skewness coefficients are close to 1, which suggests a slight difference from the normal distribution. The results for the self-admiration and self-sufficiency subscales were normally distributed.

Basic associations: Narcissism and R/S struggle

All dimensions of narcissism, except for vanity, were related to high interpersonal struggle. Vanity correlated positively with moral and religious doubt struggle. Kind intent attributions correlated positively with demonic and moral, and negatively with divine struggle. Cruelty attributions were related to high divine and religious doubt

struggle (Table 2). Religiosity correlated positively with demonic, moral and religious doubt struggle, as well as with kind attributions, and negatively with dimensions of narcissism, interpersonal struggle, and attributions of cruelty.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations of dimensions of Narcissistic Personality Inventory and Religious Attribution Scale with measures of Religious and Spiritual Struggle Scale

Measure	Divine	Demonic	Moral	Ultimate Meaning	Interper- sonal	Doubt	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Narcissism								
Self-Admiration	-.04	-.09	-.03	-.09	.25**	.01	2.96	0.69
Leadership	-.14	-.11	-.03	-.02	.18*	.01	3.00	0.66
Vanity	.01	-.01	.21**	.08	.08	.17*	2.88	0.72
Self-Sufficiency	-.09	-.09	.06	-.01	.22**	.02	2.96	0.78
Attributions								
Kind	-.15*	.18*	.28**	.07	-.05	.10	5.22	2.15
Cruel	.55**	.02	.06	.06	.14	.19*	2.93	1.91
Religiosity	.05	.23**	.28**	.07	-.21**	.20**	3.82	1.40
<i>M</i>	1.71	1.50	2.28	2.21	2.02	2.29		
<i>SD</i>	0.97	0.87	1.14	1.17	1.04	1.12		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Multiple mediation analyses: Narcissism – religious attributions – R/S struggle

Table 3 contains the significant outcomes of mediation analyses from narcissism to R/S struggle, assessing the indirect effects of attributions toward God. Attributions of kindness were mediators in the relationships between self-admiration, leadership, and self-sufficiency and demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle. Three dimensions of narcissism decreased attributions of kind intent toward God, which in turn decreased demonic and religious doubt struggle. Leadership and self-sufficiency, and decreasing kind religious attributions, are also related to less moral struggle. The measured aspects of narcissism can thus reduce demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle, because they predict low levels of kind attributions toward God. Attributions of cruelty were not mediators in the narcissism-religious struggle link.

Study 2. Psychological Entitlement and R/S Struggle: The Mediating Effect of Religious Attributions

Study 2 focused on active, passive, and revengeful entitlement as predictors of divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning, and religious doubt struggle, and on kind and cruel religious attributions as mediators of these relationships.

Table 3 Outcomes of mediation analyses from narcissism to religious struggle assessing indirect effects of religious attributions

n = 178	Models without mediators		Models with mediators for indirect effects				Bootstrap results		
	B		B					(95% CI)	
	R ²	c	R ²	c'	a	b	ab	Lower	Upper
Admir-Kind-Dem	<.01	-.10	.04 [^]	-.04	-.81***	.07*	-.06	-.139	-.013
Leader-Kind-Dem	.01	-.14	.04*	-.10	-.50*	.07*	-.04	-.100	-.002
Suff-Kind-Dem	.01	-.09	.04 [^]	-.03	-.77***	.07*	-.06	-.126	-.011
Leader-Kind-Mor	<.01	-.04	.09***	.04	-.50*	.16***	-.08	-.179	-.006
Suff-Kind-Mor	.01	.12	.12***	.25*	-.77***	.18***	-.14	-.252	-.066
Admi-Kind-Doubt	<.01	.03	.06*	.09	-.81***	.08**	-.06	-.163	-.005
Leader-Kind-Doubt	<.01	.03	.05*	.06	-.50*	.07*	-.04	-.115	-.001
Suff-Kind-Doubt	<.01	.04	.06*	.09	-.77***	.08*	-.06	-.149	-.006

Note. Admir – Self-Admiration; Leader – Leadership; Suff – Self- Sufficiency; Dem – Demonic; Mor – Moral; B unstandardized regression weight; c – total effect of predictor on outcome without the mediator in the model; c' – direct effect of predictor on outcome while controlling for the mediator; a – effect of the predictor on the mediator; b – effect of the mediator on the outcome; ab – indirect effect of predictor on outcome through the mediator; R² – amount of variance explained by the model; CI – confidence intervals; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 213 college students, 107 women and 106 men. All participants were in the 18-35 years age range, the mean age being 23 years ($SD = 3.57$). Participants were recruited through snowball sampling via word of mouth, social media, and conventional news outlets. They completed the set of questionnaires in Polish. Table 1 contains the demographic data of the participants.

Measurement

Demographics. The survey assessed gender, age, marital status, place of residence and religious affiliation. Participants also defined their levels of religiosity (*How religious you are?*); the response options ranged from 1 (*not religious*) to 6 (*very religious*).

Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire (EAQ). The EAQ was applied to measure active, passive, and revengeful entitlement (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2015). The EAQ consists of 15 items and includes three subscales: Active Entitlement (e.g. *It is necessary to claim what you deserve, a =.74*), Passive Entitlement (*Everybody has the right to expect help from the state when in need, a =.90*), and Revengefulness (*I have difficulty forgiving harm done to me, a =.80*). Items were scored on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

Religious and Spiritual Struggle Scale (RSSS). The respondents were asked to focus on the most adverse event they had faced in the past six months when completing the RSSS. Cronbach alpha values for the subscales were from .85 to .92.

Attributions toward God Scale (AtG). We applied the AtG to assesses cruel ($a = .95$) and kind ($a = .96$) intent attributions toward God (Exline et al., 2011).

Study design and analyses

This study was designed cross-sectionally. Firstly, we wanted to establish whether there were correlations among the key constructs—psychological entitlement, religious attributions, and R/S struggle. To this end, we calculated zero order correlations among the EQA, AtG, and RSSS subscales. We then conducted a series of mediation analyses, in which we investigated the mediating effects of cruel and kind intent attributions on the relationships between psychological entitlement and R/S struggle. In the mediation models, active and passive entitlement, and revengefulness were examined as predictors of divine, demonic, moral, ultimate meaning, interpersonal, and religious doubt struggle. Figure 2 shows the mediation model tested. We performed all mediation analyses using PROCESS (Hayes, 2018). The significance of indirect effects were tested using the bootstrapping procedure. Unstandardized indirect effects and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals were computed for each of the 5,000 bootstrapped samples.

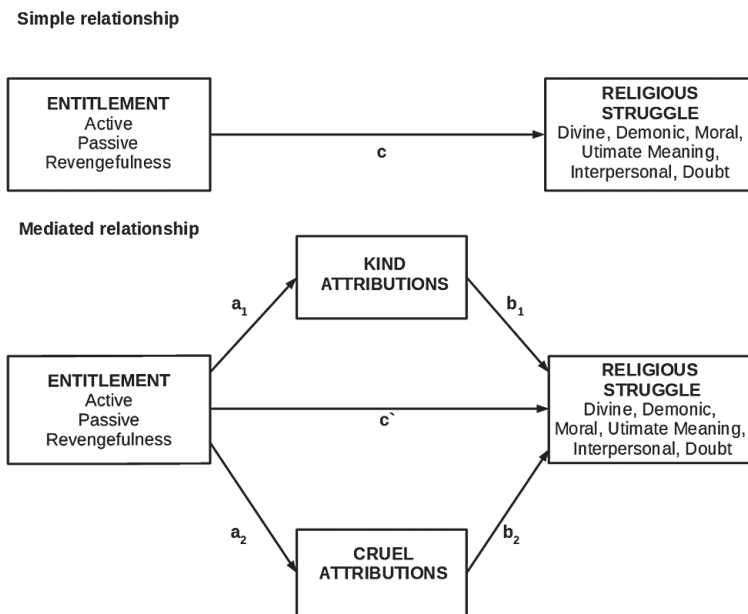


Figure 2 Diagram of the mediation model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis

The K-S test indicated that the mean scores on the RSSS subscales, the Cruel Attribution subscale of the AtG, and the Active and Revengefulness subscales of the EAQ were positively skewed (skewness from 0.33 to 1.56; $p < .05$), with more low values.

The mean scores on the Kind Attribution subscale of the AtG and the Passive subscale of the EAQ were negatively skewed (from -1.03 to -0.32; $p < .001$), with more high values. All skewness coefficients are close to 1, which suggests a slight difference from the normal distribution.

Basic associations: Psychological entitlement and R/S struggle

We calculated Pearson correlations for all variables examined in the regression model (Table 4). Revengefulness was positively correlated with divine, interpersonal, and ultimate meaning struggle. Divine struggle correlated negatively with active, and positively with passive entitlement. Attributions of cruelty were positively correlated with five types of struggle (excluding moral struggle). Attributions of kind intent were correlated negatively with divine and ultimate meaning struggle, and positively with demonic and moral struggle. Religiosity was correlated positively with demonic and moral struggle, as well as with kind attributions, and negatively with revengefulness, ultimate meaning struggle, and attributions of cruelty.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics, correlations of dimensions of Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire and Religious Attribution Scale with measures of Religious and Spiritual Struggle Scale

Measure	Divine	Demonic	Moral	Ultimate Meaning	Interpersonal	Doubt	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Entitlement – EAQ								
Active	-.14*	-.01	-.09	-.11	-.08	-.07	4.04	0.83
Passive	.07*	-.02	.09	.01	.07	-.10	4.41	1.22
Revengefulness	.20**	.04	-.02	.21*	.20**	.10	3.01	1.07
Attributions – ATG								
Kind	-.25**	.19**	.20**	-.27**	-.13	-.01	4.09	1.80
Cruel	.61**	.16*	.13	.26**	.30**	.33**	2.15	1.38
Religiosity	-.01	.28***	.26***	-.22***	-.13	.05	3.98	1.29
<i>M</i>	1.96	1.68	2.46	2.65	2.10	2.39		
<i>SD</i>	1.05	0.98	1.11	1.33	1.03	1.18		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Multiple mediation analyses: Psychological entitlement – religious attributions – R/S struggle

Table 5 contains the significant outcomes of the mediation analyses for psychological entitlement to R/S struggle, assessing the indirect effects of kind and cruel attributions toward God. Cruelty attributions were mediators in the relationships between revengefulness and divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, religious doubts, and ultimate meaning struggle. Revengefulness increased cruelly attributions toward God, which in turn increased divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, religious doubts, and

ultimate meaning struggle. Two mediators—cruelty and kind attributions—were mediators in the relationships between revengefulness and demonic, moral, and ultimate meaning struggle. Revengefulness increases cruelty and decreases kind intent attributions toward God, which in turn increases demonic and moral struggle. Both kind and cruel attributions toward God thus make demonic and moral struggle stronger. This is not the case for ultimate meaning struggle; in this instance, only attributions of cruelty make ultimate meaning struggle stronger, whilst attributions of kindness make them weaker. Kind attributions were not mediators in the relationships between revengefulness and divine, interpersonal, and religious doubts struggles.

Table 5 Outcomes of mediation analyses from revengefulness to religious struggle assessing indirect effects of religious attributions

<i>n</i> = 213	Models without mediators		Models with mediators for indirect effects					Bootstrap results	
	B		B					(95% CI)	
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>c</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>c</i> '	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>ab</i>	Lower	Upper
Revang-Cruel-Div	.04**	.20**	.38***	.05	.30***	.45***	.13	.044	.247
Revang-Cruel-Dem	<.01	.04	.09***	.07	.30***	.16**	.05	.008	.124
Revang-Kind-Dem	<.01	.04	.09***	.07	-.53***	.15**	-.08	-.155	-.029
Revang-Cruel-Mor	<.01	-.02	.08***	.02	.30***	.17**	.05	.009	.124
Revang-Kind-Mor	<.01	-.02	.08***	.02	-.53***	.17***	-.09	-.171	-.031
Revang-Cruel-Mean	.04**	.26**	.12***	.14	.30***	.18**	.05	.010	.124
Revang-Kind-Mean	.04**	.26**	.12***	.14	-.53***	-.13*	.07	.015	.151
Revang-Cruel-Inter	.04**	.19**	.10***	.13	.30***	.20***	.06	.014	.139
Revang-Cruel-Doubt	.01	.11	.12***	.06	.30***	.30***	.09	.030	.183

Note. Revang – Revengefulness; Div – Divine; Dem – Demonic; Mor – Moral; Mean – Ultimate Meaning; Inter – Interpersonal; B unstandardized regression weight; *c* – total effect of predictor on outcome without the mediator in the model; *c*' – direct effect of predictor on outcome while controlling for the mediator; *a* – effect of the predictor on the mediator; *b* – effect of the mediator on the outcome; *ab* – indirect effect of predictor on outcome through the mediator; *R*² – amount of variance explained by the model; CI – confidence intervals; * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001

DISCUSSION

We examined the relationships between self-admiration, leadership, vanity, and self-sufficiency (Study 1), active, passive and revengeful entitlement (Study 2), and divine, demonic, moral, interpersonal, ultimate meaning, and religious doubt struggle. We also proposed kind and cruel attributions toward God as mediators of the relationships between narcissism and entitlement and R/S struggle.

Narcissism as Predictor of R/S Struggle

Our research showed that self-admiration, leadership, and self-sufficiency were related to high interpersonal struggle. Vanity was related to high moral and religious doubt struggle. People high in narcissism are self-focused, and sensitive to any criticism or challenge to their authority (Campbell et al., 2004), show hostile interpersonal styles (Miller et al., 2011; Moeller, Crocker & Bushman, 2009), have difficulty getting along with others, and hold grudges until they get exact retribution for even the smallest slights (Cooper & Pullig, 2013). It is no wonder that their social interactions surrounding religion are also full of strain. People high in vanity, who are focused on their appearance and physical attractiveness, might wrestle with attempts to follow moral principles. This result is in line with findings which showed that narcissism overall had a negative effect on ethical judgment (Cooper & Pullig, 2013, 2013). People high in narcissism tend to ignore rules that govern the behavior of others (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), attain their own goals at the expense of others (Glad, 2002), and are insensitive to what society expects of them in terms of conformity to its norms (Kramer, 2003).

Psychological Entitlement as Predictor of R/S Struggle

We applied the multifactorial model of entitlement that has been typically studied in Central and Eastern European countries (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2013). It postulates three forms of entitlement: active, passive and revengefulness. Our results found that revengefulness, which is a maladaptive form of entitlement, was related to high divine struggle. Active entitlement, which is its healthy and adaptive form, involving assertiveness and taking matters into your own hands, was correlated with low divine struggle. Previous studies, conducted in Western, mostly American, samples, showed positive correlations between psychological entitlement and anger toward God (Grubbs et al., 2013), however, they applied the PES, which does not differentiate adaptive from maladaptive forms of entitlement. We also demonstrated that revengefulness was related to high interpersonal and ultimate meaning struggle, which has not been documented in previous work.

In keeping with prior work, our findings support the idea that entitlement presents individuals with the distinct possibility of R/S struggle (Grubbs et al., 2013), however, our research shows that only revengefulness, which is one of the aspects of entitlement, predicts R/S struggle. Revengefulness focuses on sustained insults in the belief that they need to be reciprocated (Bishop & Lane, 2002). Such expectation is inconsistent with the doctrines all of the major world religions, which promote forgiveness. Previous studies (e.g. Campbell et al., 2004; Twenge & Campbell, 2003) demonstrated that people high in psychological entitlement are more likely to derogate or attack those who provide ego-threatening feedback. When such findings are applied to an individual's religiousness, similar patterns should emerge. When people high in revengefulness are unable to receive something that they believe they deserve, blaming God for that denial could be a natural response (Exline et al., 2014). Our research demonstrated that this response can also be generalized to religious people or institutions, and can even lead to the loss of religious meaning in one's life. Our findings strongly support this interpretation, and suggest three domains in which revengefulness can be associated with R/S struggle: divine, interpersonal, and ultimate meaning.

It is worth noting that it is revengefulness rather than active or passive entitlement that predicts divine, interpersonal, and ultimate meaning struggle. In other words,

people who believe that they deserve “special treatment” or insist on being given the restitution that they see as their right, are more likely to feel displeased with God’s plan, which can lead to R/S struggle. In practical terms, it is valuable to be able to identify revengeful entitlement as a robust risk factor for divine, interpersonal, and ultimate meaning struggle, particularly given the consistent link between R/S struggle and poor mental health (Exline et al., 2014).

Two Mediators: Kind and Cruel Religious Attributions

In the final analyses, religious attributions emerged as the mediators of the relationships between dimensions of narcissism and R/S struggle, as well as between revengefulness and R/S struggle.

Kind religious attributions are mediators of the relationships between leadership and self-sufficiency with demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle. Kind attributions also mediated the relationships between self-admiration and demonic and religious doubt struggle. People high in the ‘socially sensitive’ dimensions of narcissism—self-admiration, leadership, and self-sufficiency—thus tend to make fewer kind attributions toward God, which in turn decreases demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle. These results support the studies which showed the positive correlations between demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle and religiousness (Exline et al., 2014; Zarzycka Ciszek, & Rykowska, 2018). Levels of declared religiosity also correlated positively with moral, demonic, and doubt struggle in this research. Concern about living up to the moral standards of religion, a stronger belief in supernatural reality, including a stronger belief in the existence of evil spirits, and religious doubts thus indicate a positive approach to God and matters related to religion. High narcissistic traits decrease this positive approach toward God, and also decrease demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle.

Surprisingly, the mediation effects of the dimensions of narcissism on r/s struggle are significant even though the total effects are insignificant. Since, the results of the previous studies provided some empirical support for a link between narcissism and r/s struggle in the general population (Grubbs et al., 2013, 2016), we did not hypothesize the effect of suppression. Our results suggest, however, that in the sufficiency-attributions-moral struggle link the total effect can be suppressed by mediation paths of opposite signs. However, we find difficult to explain the other indirect effects. Therefore, we conclude that our findings may be affected by the sample characteristics, in which the rates of narcissism are particularly high, whereas the rates of religiousness are low. Further progress in understanding the relationship between narcissism and r/s struggle will require a sample much more differentiated, both with regard to narcissism and r/s struggle.

Cruelty attributions are mediators of the relationship between revengefulness and divine, interpersonal, and religious doubt struggle. Attributions of kindness and of cruelty are both mediators in the relationships between revengefulness and demonic, moral, and ultimate meaning struggle. People high in revengefulness make more cruel attributions toward God, which in turn increases divine, demonic, interpersonal, moral, ultimate meaning, and religious doubt struggle. Interestingly, attributions of cruelty partially explain the relationships between revengefulness and divine, interpersonal, and ultimate meaning struggle; and fully explain the relationships between revengefulness and demonic, moral, and religious doubt struggle—the inclusion of the mediators removed the direct effects of revengefulness on religious struggles.

Kind attributions mediated the relationships between revengefulness and demonic, moral, and ultimate meaning struggles. Revengefulness predicts fewer kind attributions toward God, which in turn increases ultimate meaning struggle, but decreases demonic and moral struggle. Kind religious attributions fully explain the relationships of revengefulness with demonic and moral struggle. Interestingly, revengefulness affects religious struggle in two ways. Revengeful people can experience more struggles involving God, since they tend to attribute cruelty to God's intents and actions, however, they also attribute fewer attributions of kind intent to God, which in turn makes them less prone to feel demonic or moral struggle. It seems to be no accident that demonic and moral struggle are positively related to attributions of kindness, since they are also positively related to religiousness (cf. Exline et al., 2014; Zarzycka Ciszek, & Rykowska, 2018). High levels of revengefulness, decreasing this positive approach toward God, decrease demonic and moral struggle.

In summary, interestingly, the links between narcissism, psychological entitlement and R/S struggle can be characterized as specific, and thus narcissism triggers conflicts in the interpersonal domain while entitlement triggers conflicts in the divine, interpersonal, and ultimate meaning domains. There are two mechanisms of religious attributions as mediators in the relationships between narcissism, entitlement, and R/S struggle. Both narcissism and entitlement decrease demonic and moral struggle through its effect in decreasing kind religious attribution; this mechanism can be characterized as non-specific. Entitlement significantly increases R/S struggle, however, through its effect of increasing cruel attributions. This effect can be seen as specific.

This study was limited in several respects. First, the cross-sectional designs of the two individual studies exclude any conclusive statements that psychological entitlement or narcissism necessarily cause R/S struggle. Future research should include longitudinal designs that assess people before, during, and after their struggle. Second, the sample was restricted to college students, and to mainstream and conservative Christians, mainly Catholics, so, our findings are affected by a relatively youthful sample, in which the rates of entitlement and narcissism are particularly high (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), whereas the rates of religiousness are relatively low. Third, both studies included both religious and non-religious respondents. Although, correlations between religious struggles and attributions toward God can be explained by religiosity, we decided not to exclude non-believers from the samples. Exline and her collaborators (Exline et al., 2011) pointed out that it was rather non-believers than believers who declared stronger divine struggle. Novotni and Petersen (2001) claimed that atheism can be the result of disappointment with God or of negative interactions with religious people and organizations. They coined the phrase *emotional atheism* to describe this phenomenon. Also in Polish research, those who declared themselves as non-believers reported stronger religious struggles (Zarzycka, 2017). Based on these results, we decided not to exclude non-believers from our studies. Finally, the Polish cultural context, in which religion still plays a significant role, also limits the generalization of the results. In other, more secularized cultural contexts, religious phenomena, including conflicts related to faith, may take different forms.

Third, R/S struggle were measured by retrospective accounts of participant reactions to adverse events, whereas narcissism and psychological entitlement were measured through the present experiences of the participants. There are several important areas for further research. These findings need to be replicated in a larger sample to determine whether the results generalize to other religious groups, such as Protestants, Jewish, or Muslim.

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SOUHRN

Narcismus a psychologický nárok jako prediktory náboženského a duchovního zápasu: zprostředkující účinek náboženských atribucí

Cíle. Narcismus a psychologický nárok byly ve dvou studiích zkoumány jako prediktory zápasů: božských, ďábelských, morálních, interpersonálních, o základní význam a s náboženskými

pochybnostmi. Náboženské atribuce byly testovány jako zprostředkovatelé těchto vztahů.

Účastníci a uspořádání. Účastníci byli dospělí v počtu 180, z toho 102 žen a 78 mužů (studie 1) a středoškolští studenti v počtu 213, z toho 107 žen a 106 mužů (studie 2). Byly použity tyto metody: Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire (EAQ), Religious and Spiritual Struggle Scale (RSSS) a Attributions toward God Scale (AtG).

Hypotéza. Narcismus – sebeobdivování, vůdcovství, marnivost a soběstačnost koreluje s náboženským zápasem. Aktivní, pasivní a mstivý nárok koreluje s náboženskými zápasy. Náboženské atribuce – laskavé a kruté – jsou zprostředkovateli ve vztazích mezi narcismem a nárokem a náboženským zápasem.

Statistické analýzy. Výzkum byl navržen jako průřezová studie. Byly vypočítány korelace mezi klíčovými konstrukty – narcismem/psychologickým nárokem, náboženskými atribu-

cemi a náboženským zápasem. Zprostředkující účinky náboženských atribucí na vztahy mezi narcismem/psychologickým nárokem a náboženským zápasem byly určeny pomocí série mediačních analýz.

Výsledky. Narcismus koreloval s interpersonálním zápasem. Laskavé náboženské atribuce byly zprostředkovateli ve vztazích mezi narcismem a zápasy: ďábelskými, morálními a náboženskými s pochybnostmi. Psychologický nárok koreloval s božským zápasem. Krutost a laskavé náboženské atribuce byly zprostředkovateli ve vztazích mezi psychologickým nárokem a zápasy: ďábelským, morálním a zápasem o základní význam.

Ómezení studie. Zjištění jsou ovlivněna relativně mladým souborem. Náboženský zápas byl měřen retrospektivními záznamy reakcí účastníků na nepříznivé události, zatímco narcismus a psychologický nárok byly měřeny prostřednictvím současných zážitků účastníků.