

Exploring Link Between Dietary Intake And Mental Well-Being In Nigerian Law Enforcement Officers: The Mediating Roles Of Religious Coping And Mindfulness

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Abstract

Laws are made to be obeyed and defaulters are prosecuted according to the lay down rules of any independent nation. For there to be adherence to the enacted law, there has to be a body or bodies responsible for its enforcement. In Nigeria, there are many law-enforcement agencies whose responsibilities spans across – maintenance of public peace, security and civil rights, ensuring of commuters' safety, checkmating of illegal drugs, food and drug consumption safety, curbing corrupt practices, and managing defaulters through correctional services. In this study, we investigated the mediating influences of religious coping and mindfulness in the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being. One thousand six hundred and fifty-eight law-enforcement agents/officers (1,164 males and 494 females) from 10 selected states in Nigeria completed measures of dietary intake, mental well-being, religious coping, and mindfulness. 24-Hour Dietary Recall Scale (24-HDRS), Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWS), Brief Religious Coping Scale (Brief RCOPE), and Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS) were used. Result showed that dietary intake was positively associated with mental well-being ($\beta = .43, p < .001$) and religious coping ($\beta = .17, p < .001$) was significantly associated with mental well-being. Mindfulness was associated with mental well-being ($\beta = .79, p < .001$) and religious coping mediated the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being ($\beta = .36, p < .001$). Mindfulness mediated the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being ($\beta = .09, p < .001$). Combination of religious coping and mindfulness mediated between dietary intake and mental well-being ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). In conclusion, these study findings have important clinical, religious, and general implications for improved mental well-being in law-enforcement officers in sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria. Introducing proper and adequate nutrition and diet, access to practice ones' faith, and mind targeted therapies aimed at increasing the mental well-being of law-enforcement officers.

Exploration du lien entre l'intake alimentaire et le bien-être mental chez les agents des forces de l'ordre nigérianes: les rôles médiateurs de la pratique religieuse et de la pleine conscience

Résumé

Les lois sont faites pour être respectées et les contrevenants sont poursuivis selon les règles établies de toute nation indépendante. Pour qu'il y ait adhérence à la loi promulguée, il doit y avoir un ou des organismes responsables de son application. Au Nigeria, il existe de

nombreuses agences de maintien de l'ordre dont les responsabilités s'étendent à la maintenance de la paix publique, à la sécurité et aux droits civils, à la sécurité des passagers, à la lutte contre les drogues illégales, à la sécurité des aliments et des médicaments, à la lutte contre la corruption, et à la gestion des délinquants à travers des services correctionnels. Dans cette étude, nous avons examiné les influences médiatrices de la pratique religieuse et de la pleine conscience dans la relation entre l'alimentation et le bien-être mental. Mille six cent cinquante-huit agents des forces de l'ordre (1 164 hommes et 494 femmes) de 10 états sélectionnés du Nigeria ont rempli des mesures de l'alimentation, du bien-être mental, de la pratique religieuse et de la pleine conscience. Les échelles du rappel alimentaire sur 24 heures (24-HDRS), de l'échelle du bien-être mental de Warwick-Edinburg (WEMWS), de l'échelle de la pratique religieuse brève (Brief RCOPE) et de l'échelle de l'attention en pleine conscience (MAAS) ont été utilisées. Les résultats ont montré que l'alimentation était positivement associée au bien-être mental ($\beta = .43, p < .001$) et que la pratique religieuse ($\beta = .17, p < .001$) était significativement associée au bien-être mental. La pleine conscience était associée au bien-être mental ($\beta = .79, p < .001$) et la pratique religieuse a médié la relation entre l'alimentation et le bien-être mental ($\beta = .36, p < .001$). La pleine conscience a médié la relation entre l'alimentation et le bien-être mental ($\beta = .09, p < .001$). La combinaison de la pratique religieuse et de la pleine conscience a médié la relation entre l'alimentation et le bien-être mental ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). En conclusion, les résultats de cette étude ont des implications cliniques, religieuses et générales importantes pour améliorer le bien-être mental des agents des forces de l'ordre dans les pays d'Afrique subsaharienne comme le Nigeria. L'introduction d'une nutrition et d'un régime alimentaire appropriés, l'accès à la pratique de sa foi, et les thérapies ciblées sur l'esprit visant à augmenter le bien-être mental des agents des forces de l'ordre.

ملخص

يتم وضع القوانين للإطاعة ومقاومة المتخلفين عن السداد وفقاً للقواعد الموضوعة لأي دولة مستقلة. لكي يكون هناك التزام بالقانون الصادر، يجب أن تكون هناك هيئة أو هيئات مسؤولة عن إنفاذه. في نيجيريا، هناك العديد من وكالات إنفاذ القانون التي تمتد مسؤولياتها عبر - الحفاظ على السلام العام والأمن والحقوق المدنية، وضمان سلامة الركاب، والتحقق من المخدرات غير المشروعة، وسلامة استهلاك الغذاء والمخدرات، والحد من الممارسات الفاسدة، وإدارة المتعثرين من خلال الخدمات الإصلاحية. في هذه الدراسة، قمنا بالتحقيق في التأثيرات الوسيطة للتأقلم الديني واليقظة في العلاقة بين تناول النظام الغذائي والرفاهية العقلية. أكمل ألف وستمائة وثمانية وخمسون من ضباط/ضباط إنفاذ القانون (1164 ذكرًا و 494 أنثى) من 10 ولايات مختارة في نيجيريا مقاييس المدخول الغذائي، والرفاهية العقلية، والتأقلم الديني، واليقظة. تم استخدام مقياس الاسترجاع الغذائي على مدار 24 ساعة (24-HDRS)، ومقياس وارويك-إدنبرغ للرفاهية العقلية (WEMWS)، ومقياس موجز للتكيف الديني (موجز RCOPE)، ومقياس انتباه الوعي باليقظة (MAAS). أظهرت النتيجة أن المدخول الغذائي كان مرتبطاً بشكل إيجابي بالصحة العقلية ($\beta = .43, p < .001$) وأن التأقلم الديني ($\beta = .17, p < .001$) كان مرتبطاً بشكل كبير بالصحة العقلية. ارتبطت اليقظة بالسلامة العقلية ($\beta = .79, p < .001$) وتوسط التأقلم الديني في العلاقة بين المدخول الغذائي والجلب العقلي ($\beta = .36, p < .001$). توسط اليقظة في العلاقة بين تناول الطعام والرفاهية العقلية ($\beta = .09, p < .001$). توسط مزيج من التأقلم الديني واليقظة بين تناول الطعام والرفاهية العقلية ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). في الختام، لنتائج الدراسة هذه آثار إكلينيكية ودينية وعامة مهمة على تحسين الصحة العقلية لدى ضباط إنفاذ القانون في دول أفريقيا جنوب الصحراء الكبرى مثل نيجيريا. إدخال التغذية السليمة والكافية والنظام الغذائي، والوصول إلى عقيدة الممارسين، والعقل العلاجات المستهدفة التي تهدف إلى زيادة الرفاهية العقلية لضباط إنفاذ القانون.

Introduction

Law enforcement agency (LEA) is an organization that is responsible for enforcing law and maintaining public order

and safety (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2016). The primary functions of a law enforcement agency include crime prevention and investigation –

patrolling and monitoring public areas to deter and prevent criminal activities, responding to emergency calls and reports of crimes, investigating criminal incidents and gathering evidence, apprehending and arresting suspected criminals (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2016); Maintaining public order and safety – controlling and dispersing crowds during public events or protests, responding to natural disasters, accidents, and other emergencies, providing security and protection for public officials and important events (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019); Enforcing laws and regulations – issuing citations and tickets for traffic violations and other infractions, enforcing local, state, and federal laws and regulations, and serving warrants and executing court orders (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). These agencies are typically staffed by trained and sworn law enforcement officers, such as police officers, detectives, and special agents, who have the authority to make arrests, conduct investigations, and enforce the law (National Institute of Justice, 2019). Law enforcement agencies play a crucial role on maintaining public safety, protecting citizens, and upholding the rule of law within their respective jurisdictions (Government Accountability Office, 2017); these can be possible if these officers/agents are well-fed and healthy, are mentally balanced, and are mindfully aware and attentive.

Dietary intake refers to the daily eating patterns of an individual, including specific foods and calories consumed and relative quantities (Hooper et al., 2015). Nutrient recommendations are issued by the Food and Nutrition Board of National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2010). These

Method

Participants and procedures

Participants for the study were 1,658 officers of five Nigerian Law Enforcement agencies—Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency

recommendations are based on the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) – is the general term for a set of reference values used to plan and assess nutrient intake of health people (Hooper et al., 2015). These values may vary by age and sex and they are: Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) – average daily level of intake sufficient to meet the nutrient requirements of nearly all (97%-98%) health individuals, often used to plan nutritionally adequate diets for individuals; Adequate Intake (AI) – intake at this level is assumed to ensure nutritional adequacy, established when evidence is insufficient to develop an RDA (Nishida and Uauy, 2009); Estimated Average Requirement (EAR) – average daily level of intake estimated to meet the requirements of 50% of healthy individuals, usually used to assess the nutrient intake of groups of people and to plan nutritionally adequate diets for them, and can also be used to assess the nutrient intakes of individuals (Nishida and Uauy, 2009; World Health Organization, 2018); and Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL) – maximum daily intake unlikely to cause adverse intake unlikely to cause adverse health effects (World Health Organization, 2018). Studies correlating nutrient or dietary intake on mental well-being (behavioural/psychological variables) are rare. A research has it that less fruit and vegetables intake, and obesity and increased alcohol consumption (dietary intake) (Stranges et al., 2014) have been reported to be negatively associated with mental well-being; this suggest that more fruit and vegetable consumption, healthy body weight, and decrease in alcohol intake will likely improve mental well-being. This study was geared towards dietary intake predicting mental well-being.

(NDLEA), Nigeria Correctional Service (NCS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), and Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) – who were actively in service across 10 selected states including Federal Capital Territory – Abia, Enugu,

Delta, Gombe, Kano, Lagos, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers States and Abuja (FCT) within the months of August 2022 to May 2023. The participants were sampled based on availability sampling method and inclusion criteria was an officer actively serving with any of the above-mentioned Law-enforcement agencies as well as living in the above listed states. The researchers and their trained research assistants met the participants in their various offices and team

Measures

24-Hour Dietary Recall Scale (24-HDRS): This was a method used to assess an individual's dietary intake over a 24-hour period. It involved asking a person to recall and report everything they ate and drank during the past 24 hours, including portion sizes and preparation methods. The 24-hour dietary recall is a common tool used by registered dietitians, nutritionists, and health professionals to gain insights into an

units and explained the nature of the research. Those who were willing to participate signed an informed consent form and were given the questionnaires for completion which took an average of 20 minutes to complete. The respondents were verbally appreciated for taking part in the study, and no material reward was given to them.

individual's eating habits and provide guidance on healthy eating practices This information was typically collected through a questionnaire and used for assessing nutrient intake and dietary patterns, identifying potential nutrient deficiencies or excesses, informing personalized nutrition recommendations, monitoring dietary changes over time, and conducting research studies on diet and health relationships (as this study was set out for).

Mental Well-Being (MWB): was assessed using a Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWS). Items were scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 6 (all of the time), with higher score indicating better mental well-being. The developers reported .89 α reliability coefficient (Tennant et al., 2006 cited in Okwuosa et al., 2023).

Religious Coping: was measured by Brief Religious Coping Scale (Brief RCOPE) the brief RCOPE was a 14-item instrument, generated from the larger RCOPE that assesses religious coping strategies. Brief RCOPE had two subscales: positive religious coping (PRC, 7 items) and negative religious coping (NRC, 7 items). Positive religious coping was designed to evaluate a secure relationship with God, while negative religious coping items represent a religious struggle that develops out of a more fragile relationship with God (Pargament et al., 2011). The scale was 4-point Likert response set that ranges from 1 (a great deal), to 4 (not at all). The items in

each dimension were reversed scored and summed up to get the total score for each of the subscale. The total scores for each subscale ranged from 7 to 28 with higher scores indicating higher positive or negative religious coping. The reliability and validity of B-RCOPE has been supported by previous studies (Pargament et al., 2011).

Mindfulness (MF): was assessed using a Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS). Items are scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never), with higher score indicating higher mindfulness. Test-retest reliability coefficient of .82 was reported for the Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (Brown and Ryan, 2003 cited in Okwuosa et al., 2023).

Design and Statistics

The study applied cross-sectional research design. SPSS version 25 was used for data analysis. Pearson's correlation (r) analysis was conducted among the study's demographic variables, predictor and

independent variables, while multiple regression was applied. Demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, years of experience, etc.) were included as control variables in regression models. PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2.01 (Hayes, 2013) was used to test for mediation regression analysis, the Macro PROCESS approach for SPSS automatically executes computations, runs the analysis, and produce more meaningful results. In this

Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of 1,658 participants and they comprised of 1,164 (70.2%) male and 494 (29.8%) female with a mean age of 44.00 (SD = 9.10). Half of the participants were married (77.6%) and more of them attended tertiary education (60.4%). Close to half of

study, the two mediator variables (religious coping and mindfulness) were included in the mediator model at the same time. Coutts and Hayes (2022) argue that a mediation model is more likely to be realistic if it is designed to capture multiple mechanisms at the same time with the inclusion of more than one mediator.

the participants had served between 8 and 12 years (49.5%). Handful of the participants reported been ill with hypertension (44.3%) while the participants partially represented all the five selected law-enforcement agencies.

Table 1: Demographic and Characteristic of the Participants

Variables	N	%	Mean	SD*
Age	28 – 60		44.00	9.10
Gender				
Male	1,164	70.2%		
Female	494	29.8%		
Marital Status				
Single	247	14.9%		
Married	1,286	77.6%		
Divorced	35	2.1%		
Widowed	90	5.4%		
Educational Qualification				
Primary Education	108	6.5%		
Secondary Education	548	33.1%		
Tertiary Education	1002	60.4%		
Duration in service				
Less than 4 years	115	6.9%		
4-8 years	479	28.9%		
8-12 years	821	49.5%		
Over 12 years	243	14.7%		
Existing Health Issues/Illnesses				
None	395	23.8%		
Insomnia/Sleep disorders	102	6.2%		
PTSD*	27	1.6%		
Diabetes	150	9.1%		
Hypertension	734	44.3%		
Eye defects	250	15.0%		
Enforcement Agency				
NPF*	458	27.6%		
NDLEA*	364	22.0%		
NCS*	314	19.0%		
NSCDC*	250	15.1%		
FRSC*	272	16.3%		

*Note: SD – Standard Deviation; PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; NPF – Nigeria Police Force; NDLEA – Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency; NCS – Nigeria Correctional Service; NSCDC –Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps; FRSC – Federal Road Safety Corps.

The correlation analysis, presented in Table 2, revealed significant relationships among the variables. Notably, age was found to be positively correlated with mindfulness ($r = .17, p < .001$), suggesting that older participants tended to have higher levels of mindfulness. Duration of service was also found to be significantly correlated with mental well-being ($r = .12, p < .001$), indicating that participants with longer durations of service tended to have better mental well-being. Additionally, duration of service was positively correlated with illness ($r = .45, p < .001$), suggesting that

participants with longer durations of service were more likely to experience illness. Illness was found to be negatively correlated with mental well-being ($r = .16, p < .001$), indicating that participants who experienced illness tended to have poorer mental well-being. Dietary intake was positively correlated with mental well-being ($r = .53, p < .001$), suggesting that participants who had a healthier dietary intake tended to have better mental well-being. Religious coping was also positively correlated with mental well-being ($r = .19, p < .001$), indicating that participants who engaged in religious

coping tended to have better mental well-being. Finally, mindfulness was positively correlated with mental well-being ($r = .23$, $p < .001$), suggesting that participants who

were more mindful tended to have better mental well-being.

Table 2: Correlations of demographic factors, dietary intake, mental well-being, religious coping, and mindfulness

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	-										
2. Gender	-.10	-									
3. Marital Status	-.43	.08*	-								
4. Edu. Qualification	.09	.15	.03	-							
5. Duration in Service	.21*	-.12	.12	.03	-						
6. Illnesses	.32*	-.32	.10	.12	.45**	-					
7. Enforcement Agency	.12	.38*	-.26	.27*	.02	-.23	-				
8. DI	.12	.26*	-.29*	.32	.24*	-.20*	.05*	-			
9. MWB	-.24	-.33	.42*	-.23	.12**	.16**	.28	.53**	-		
10. RC	-.21	.17	.01	.07	-.13*	.19*	-.04	.05*	.19**	-	
11. MF	.17**	.23	-.32*	.33	-.01	-.23	.25*	-.03	.23**	.17*	-

** $p < .001$ (two-tailed); * $p < .005$ (two-tailed). Gender (0 = male, 1 = female).

Note: DI = Dietary Intake; MWB = Mental Well-being; RC = Religious Coping; MF = Mindfulness.

The results presented in Table 3 reveal the predictive associations between the independent variable (dietary intake), mediating variables (religious coping and mindfulness), and the dependent variable (mental well-being). Notably, dietary intake was found to be a significant predictor of mental well-being ($\beta = .43$, $SE = .08$, $95\%CI = -.15, .08$). This suggests that a healthy dietary intake is associated with better mental well-being. Religious coping was

also found to be a significant predictor of mental well-being ($\beta = .17$, $SE = .14$, $95\%CI = .14, .22$). This indicates that engaging in religious coping strategies is associated with better mental well-being. Mindfulness was found to be a significant predictor of mental well-being ($\beta = .79$, $SE = .19$, $95\%CI = 1.21, .29$). This suggests that being more mindful is associated with better mental well-being.

Table 3: Hayes PROCESS macro results for predicting mental well-being by dietary intake, religious coping, and mindfulness

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95%CI</i>
Dietary intake	-.19	.08	.43	-1.14	.001	[-.15, .08]
Religious coping	.23	.14	.17	1.79	.001	[.14, .22]
Mindfulness	.29	.19	.79	3.94	.001	[1.21, .29]

The results presented in Table 4 reveal the mediating relationships between the independent variable (dietary intake), mediating variables (religious coping and mindfulness), and the dependent variable (mental well-being). Religious coping was found to mediate the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being ($\beta = .36$, $SE = .07$, $95\%CI = 1.94, .35$). This suggests that religious coping plays a

significant role in the association between dietary intake and mental well-being. Mindfulness was also found to mediate the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being ($\beta = .09$, $SE = 1.04$, $95\%CI = 2.57, 1.23$). This indicates that mindfulness is also an important factor in the association between dietary intake and mental well-being. Most importantly, the combination of religious coping and

mindfulness was found to significantly mediate the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being ($\beta = .29$, $SE = .95$, $95\%CI = .73, .81$). This suggests that

the combination of these two mediating variables has a stronger mediating effect than either variable alone.

Table 4: Results for mediating relationship of religious coping, mindfulness, and religious coping + mindfulness between dietary intake and mental well-being

Variables	B	SE	T	CI (95%)
RC	.36	.07	1.27*	[1.94, .35]
MF	.09	1.04	.54*	[2.57, 1.23]
RC + MF	.29	.95	2.18*	[.73, .81]

Pearson's correlation was significant at * $p < .001$

Note: RC = Religious Coping; MF = Mindfulness.

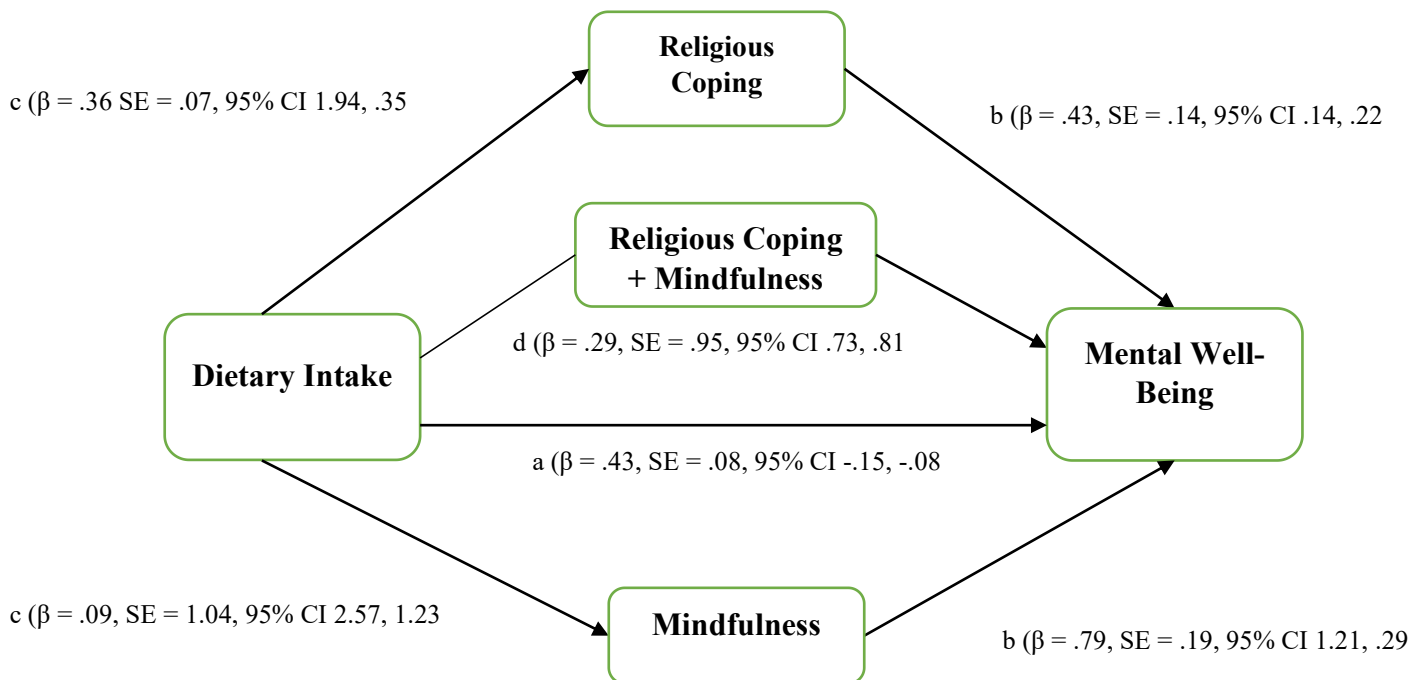


Figure 1: Results of Mediating Roles of Religious Coping and Mindfulness in the Association between Dietary Intake and Mental Well-Being

Fig. 1: Results of mediating roles of religious coping and mindfulness in the association between dietary intake and mental well-being of law enforcement officers. Standardized coefficients (β) are reported. Paths a represents the relationship between independent variable (DI) and dependent variable (MWB); the b path indicates the relationship between the two mediating variables ((RC) and (MF)) and dependent variable (MWB); path c represents the separate mediating variables ((RC) and (MF)) mediating between independent variable (DI) and dependent variable (MWB); and d path indicates the combination of the two mediating variables (RC + MF) mediating between the independent variable (DI) and dependent variable (MWB).

Discussion

The major objective of this study was to examine the mediating roles of religious coping and mindfulness in the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being in a sample of law-enforcement officers in Nigeria. Consistent with previous study (Stranges et al., 2014) who found that food intake predicted mental well-being. This finding suggests that better dietary intake (or food consumption) of law-enforcement officers, would signify better their mental well-being and which will result to satisfactory performance in service. Religious coping predicted mental well-

being which is consonance with previous literature (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2014; Karekla and Constantinou, 2010; Koenig, 2012; Okwuosa et al., 2011; Taheri-Kharamel et al., 2016) which indicated that religious coping when negative can negatively affect health and also, when positive can positively affect both physical and mental health status of individuals. This finding suggests that reappraisal of God's power may contribute in explaining why law-enforcement officers usually experience better mental well-being. This has contributed in strengthening the literature on the pattern of relationship between religious

coping and mental well-being. In like manner, mindfulness predicted mental well-being. Thus, law-enforcement officers who are alert of their inner self and the environment tend to perform better due to their better mental well-being state. This is consistent with existing literature (Bennett et al., 2010; Brewer et al., 2009; Burzunska et al., 2010; Chiesa et al., 2011) who found similar relationship between mindfulness and physical and mental health-related quality of life. This demonstrate that mindfulness can go a long way to improve (if there is positive mindfulness) mental health, also, negative mindfulness can impair one's mental state and/or health.

The mediating roles of religious coping and mindfulness between dietary intake and mental well-being has not been evaluated and thus previous findings did not directly relate to these variables as it is in this present study. There was a mediation of religious coping between dietary intake and mental well-being. This implies that the participants (law-enforcement officers) who may not have had enough dietary intake reported relatively good mental well-being due to their positive religious coping. Thus, religious coping seems to be a proven good mediator between dietary intake and mental well-being. This same goes with mindfulness as a mediating variable

Conclusion

This study had shed light on the crucial role of religious coping and mindfulness in promoting mental well-being among law enforcement officers. The findings indicate that dietary intake, religious coping, and mindfulness are all positively correlated with mental well-being, and that religious coping and mindfulness mediate the relationship between dietary intake and mental well-being. This suggests that these factors are interconnected and influence one

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between dietary intake and mental well-being, as there no significant work to that effect. The present study indicated that participants (law-enforcement officers) whose mindfulness was higher experienced better mental well-being not minding the adequacy of their dietary intake. This point out that mental alertness of one's self and the environment can probably result to better mental well-being regardless of the intake of diet or food an individual gets. Combination of the two mediating variables (religious coping and mindfulness) resulted to an even better mental well-being of the participants (law-enforcement officers) not minding the quality and quantity of their dietary intake. There are no significant previous were such variable combinations have been research on. Thus, the present work indicated that positive religious coping and high mindfulness can mediate (enhance) the effects of dietary intake on mental well-being. This study suggests to nutritionists, dietitians, psychologist, psychiatrists, religious leaders, researchers, and government that encouraging individuals to be positive on their religious coping strategies as well as been mindful of their activities is a way of having better mental well-being despite any situation their work or any stressor may throw or pose at them.

another and that promoting religious coping and mindfulness can have a positive impact on mental well-being. The study's results highlight the importance of considering the complex and multifaceted nature of religious coping and mindfulness in promoting mental well-being. These constructs are not simply individual traits or behaviors, but are shaped by a range of factors, including cultural, social, and environmental influences.

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