Research Report: 24-01

Latter-day Saint Temple Attendance: Connections with Mental Health and Religiosity

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Executive Summary

This paper examines the relationship between temple attendance, religious practices, and mental health in Latter-day Saint youth. Data are from the Family Foundations of Youth Development survey which followed over 1000 youth from ages 12 to 20 in Arizona and Utah.

Temple attendance declined overtime with 8% never attending at age 12 to 32% never attending at age 18. Analyses explored whether certain aspects of religiosity influenced temple attendance, or vice versa. Scripture study at younger ages was associated with increasing or maintaining temple attendance across adolescence. Evidence suggests family prayer, church attendance, and restoration beliefs were supported by, and supportive of, temple attendance.

Temple attendance was closely tied to disaffiliation. Of those who never attended the temple at age 12, 33% disaffiliated by age 18. Of those attending monthly, only 12% disaffiliated. Analyses suggest temple attendance may reduce disaffiliation by reinforcing beliefs in restoration doctrines such in a living prophet and the Book of Mormon.

Temple attendance also correlated with better mental health, including lower levels of depression and anxiety. Depression at age 14 was related to reduced temple attendance at age 16, and age 16 temple attendance was related to reduced depression at age 18. Youth with character traits such as honesty and humility increased their temple attendance between ages 14 and 16.

Scripture study was the strongest predictor of being endowed. 55% of daily scripture readers were endowed compared to 11% of those who had not read scriptures in the past year. Being endowed was also associated with positive character traits.

Overall, temple attendance was positively related to religious commitment and mental health at various points across adolescence. Those who engaged in scripture study and family prayer were more likely to attend the temple which was associated with stronger restoration beliefs which, in turn, were associated with a lower likelihood of disaffiliation.

Introduction

Research has found a robust connection between religiosity and positive mental health (Koenig et al., 2023). Several reasons for this association have been suggested, such as religious people having more extensive social networks, lower likelihood of risk-taking behaviors, and greater meaning in life and meaning in suffering (Stack & Kposowa, 2011; Stark et al., 1983). Latter-day Saint teens are a particularly religious group (Smith, 2005) and appear to benefit from their religiosity. A review of research on Latter-day Saints from 2005 to 2022 found that "[w]hen comparisons are made, Latter-day Saints are typically found to have better mental health than those of other religions or no religion" (Dyer et al., 2023, p. 1). With few exceptions, research typically found that the more religious Latter-day were, the better their mental health.

Further, different aspects of religiosity tend to reinforce each other across time. One study (Dyer et al., 2022) found that church attendance, religious salience (feeling religion is an important part of your identity), and prayer reinforced each other over time. For example, church attendance from ages 12 to 15 impacted religious salience, whereas salience from ages 16 to 20 impacted church attendance. It appears attendance in early adolescence does help to build a sense that religion is part of one's identity. Then, in late adolescence and emerging adulthood, identity drives attendance.

One aspect of religiosity unique to Latter-day Saint youth that has yet to be explored is temple attendance. Unique to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is youth attending what are known as *temples* and performing proxy baptisms for those who have passed on. Although temple attendance has been emphasized for many decades, in recent years it seems there has been particular emphasis. In the April 2024 General Conference, Russell M. Nelson, current president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said: "The temple is the gateway to the greatest blessings God has in store for each of us" and encouraged Latter-day

Saints to "[worship] in the temple as regularly as your circumstances permit" (Nelson, 2024, p. 122). This emphasis on attending the temple has coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of temples worldwide over the last few years (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.).

A question that has yet to be investigated is how this form of religiosity, unique to Latter-day Saints, is related to wellbeing and to other aspects of religiosity. As President Russell M. Nelson said in 2024: "Nothing will help you *more* to hold fast to the iron rod than worshipping in the temple as regularly as your circumstances permit" (Nelson, 2024, p. 122). Given the importance placed on temple attendance, it was determined to examine just how this unique form of religiosity related to wellbeing and other aspects of religiosity.

Analyses

This research report uses the Family Foundations of Youth Development survey, which has collected data on youth from the ages of 12 to 14 (collected in 2016) to ages 18 to 20 (collected in 2022). Data were collected on youth every other year. Parents also participated along with their children and reported on their own temple attendance, mental health, and other aspects of religiosity. To obtain a random sample within the areas of interest, the national research company InfoUSA (now called Data Axel) was utilized. This company collects information from publicly available sources to identify U.S. households and their characteristics. Their database contains over 80 million households and their information is regularly updated. This company is not associated with Brigham Young University or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 2016 we requested a random sample of households with youth between the ages of 12 and 14 and obtained their address and phone number. Participants were recruited by mail and phone. No household could participate if they had not been randomly selected. Snowball sampling was not used. This was strictly enforced. We interviewed youth in 2016,

2018, 2020, and 2022 (Waves 1-4). For more details on the methodology and analyses see the appendix at the end of this paper as well as the methodology section of foundations.byu.edu.

Measuring Temple Attendance

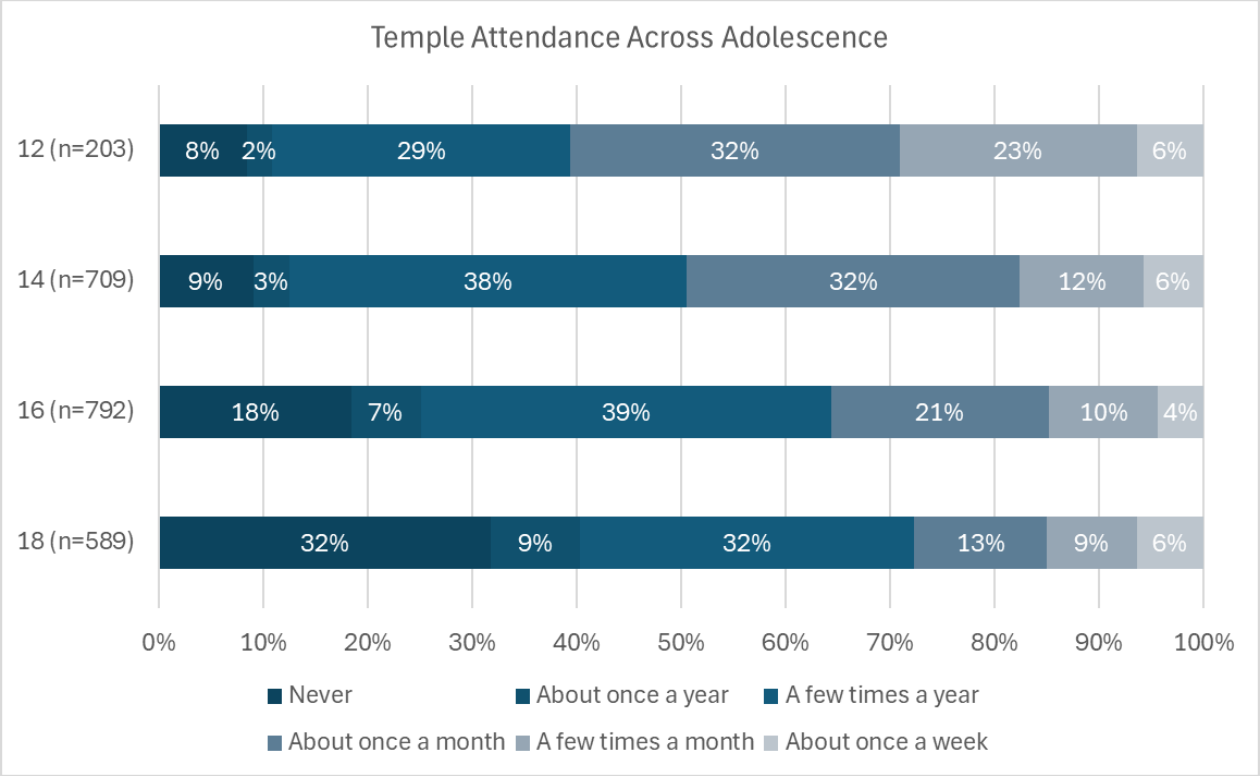
Temple attendance was measured using a single item. Participants were asked: "*How often do you attend the temple*?" with responses: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *About once a year*, 3 = *A few times a year*, 4 = *About once a month*, 5 = *A few times a month*, 6 = *About once a week*, 7 = *More than once a week*. Given there were few individuals who attended more than once a week, this response was combined with *About once a week* for a scale of 1 to 6. Details of other measures used in this research report can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Frequency of Temple Attendance

Figure 1 displays the temple attendance of youth from age 12 to 18 and their parents.

Figure 1. *Temple Attendance by Age*



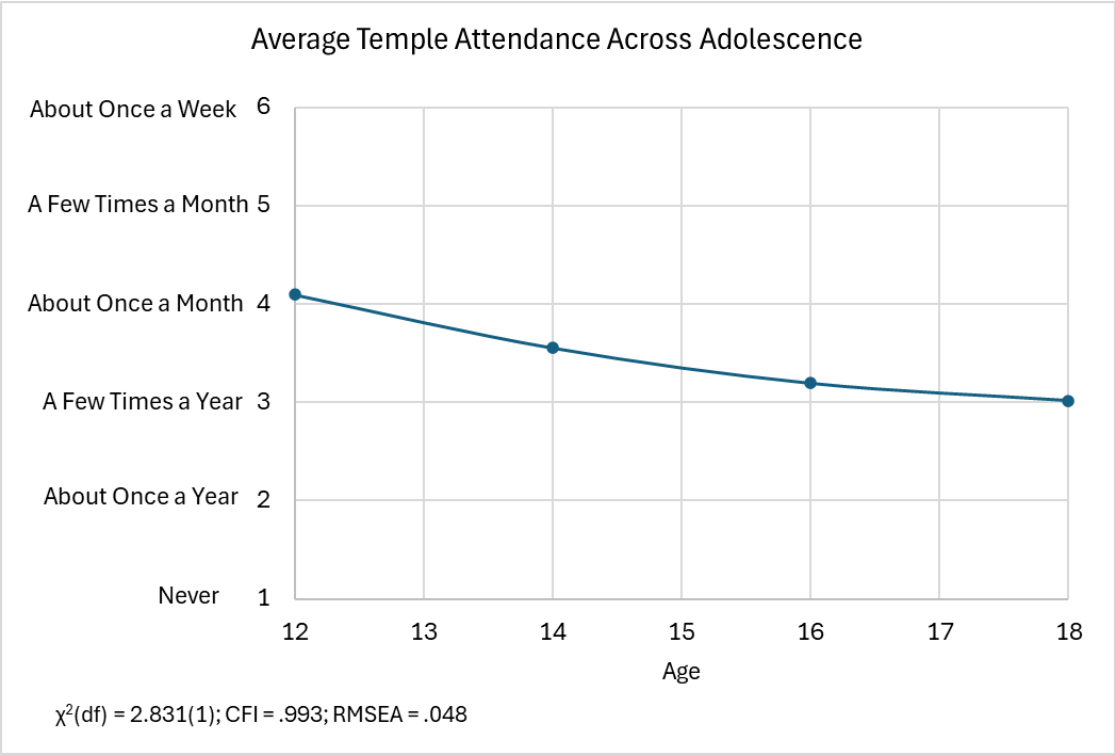
The percentage of youth who attend about once a week remains relatively steady from 12 to 18. However, youth who never attend the temple increases substantially from 8% at age 12 to 32% at age 18. The percentage of those who attend the temple at least once a month decreases from 61% at age 12 to 28% at age 18.

Another way to look at change in temple attendance is to calculate average temple attendance across time.[1] As can be seen in Figure 2, on average, youth at age 12 attend the

[1] A latent variable growth curve model was used to examine average temple attendance from age 12 to 18. In the growth curve the model fit best with a quadratic term ($\chi 2(df1) = .035(1)$, $p = .852$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.000). The mean of the quadratic term was not significant (indicating linear growth), but its variance was significant

temple about once a month with a steady decline through the teenage years to “a few times a year” at the age of 18.

Figure 2: *Growth Curve for Temple Attendance*



At younger ages, children likely have fewer activities independent of the family. Thus, it may be easier for parents and church leaders to bring youth to the temple. The influence of others is paramount in youth attending the temple given youth younger than 16 would typically need leaders, parents, friends, or older siblings for transport to a temple.

Temple Attendance and Youth Characteristics

Characteristics of youth who were more likely to attend the temple were examined. These characteristic were examined in the same statistical model to see which ones were most predictive of temple attendance. It is also possible that what is most important changes over time

(indicating there was significant variance around the quadratic term). However, the variance of the slope and intercept were not significant, indicating very little variance in these, though the intercept, linear slope, and quadratic slope can all still be predicted (see below).

and so these analyses were done separately for ages 12 through 18. Characteristics examined were child gender (male vs. female), the state the children were from (Utah vs. Arizona), parent income, child race (White vs. minority), and child extraversion. Results can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: *Regressions of Temple Attendance Being Predicted by Demographics*

	Temple Attendance Age 12	**Temple Attendance Age 14**	**Temple Attendance Age 16**	**Temple Attendance Age 18**
Male (v. Female)	-0.13t	-0.09*	-0.07t	-0.05
Utah (v. Arizona)	-0.24**	-0.08*	0.01	-0.08
Parent Income	-0.05	0.12**	0.11*	0.04
White (v. Minority Race)	0.06	-0.02	0.06t	0.08t
Extraversion	-0.01	0.04	0.11**	0.03
Adjusted R-Squared	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.01

t $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

It appears that girls go to the temple slightly more than boys from ages 14 to 16, but there were no gender differences in attending the temple at age 18. At age 16, more extraverted youth were more likely to attend the temple than less extraverted youth. It was suspected that youth who were more outgoing may be more likely to participate in group activities going to the temple. They may also appreciate the interactions in the temple more than introverted youth.

At age 12, youth from Arizona were more likely to attend the temple than youth from Utah, though that difference diminished and disappeared by age 16. Children whose parents had higher incomes were more likely to attend the temple at ages 14 and 16, but there was no difference in temple attendance by income at ages 12 and 18. Child race (white vs. minority) did not predict temple attendance. There were no significant demographic predictors of temple attendance at age 18. Further, even though some background characteristics were significantly related to temple attendance, they accounted for very little of the variance in temple attendance (less than 5% of temple attendance was related to these child characteristics).

Temple Attendance and Other Indicators of Religiosity

At each age, it was examined how temple attendance connected with other aspects of worship and belief such as prayer, scripture study, church attendance, family prayer, restoration beliefs (belief in Joseph Smith as a prophet, belief in the Book of Mormon, belief in a prophet today, belief the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is "true"), and internalized religiosity (engaging in religion because it's meaningful to the person versus because of external forces such as parental pressures). Not surprisingly, temple attendance was significantly correlated with all of these. All correlations were moderate ranging from .27 to .47 (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Correlations between Temple Attendance and Measures of Religiosity at Age 16*

	Temple Attendance Age 12	**Temple Attendance Age 14**	**Temple Attendance Age 16**	**Temple Attendance Age 18**
Prayer	.38	.38	.44	.42
Scripture Study	.38	.41	.47	.47
Church Attendance	.31	.31	.41	.45
Family Prayer	.33	.36	.31	.27
Restoration Beliefs	.31	.36	.27	.29
Internalized Religiosity	.38	.31	.33	.37

Another analysis was conducted that included all of these aspects of religiosity in the same statistical model to see which ones were most important. In this analysis, prayer, internalized religiosity, and beliefs were no longer significantly connected with temple attendance. Scripture study had the strongest connection to temple attendance followed by church attendance, and family prayer (see Table 2; these analyses also controlled for the background characteristics discussed earlier).

Table 2. *Standardized Regression Results Predicting Temple Attendance Controlling for All Measures of Religiosity and Demographics*

	Temple Attendance Age 12	Temple Attendance Age 14	Temple Attendance Age 16	Temple Attendance Age 18
Prayer	0.07	0.03	0.06	-0.02
Scripture Study	0.09	0.19***	0.24***	0.26***
Church Attendance	0.08	0.10*	0.16***	0.21***
Family Prayer	0.17*	0.22***	0.11**	0.09t
Restoration Beliefs	0.08	0.16***	0.03	0.04
Internalized Religiosity	0.15t	0.02	0.06	0.09
Adj. R-Squared	.23	.28	.29	.28

t $p < .10$ (marginally significant). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Looking at these analyses by age, at age 12, only family prayer predicted temple attendance, with internalized religiosity being marginally significant. This likely reflects that, at this early age, a youth going to the temple is largely determined by how engaged the family is with religious activities.

At older ages, scripture study has the strongest relationship with temple attendance. Scripture study is a voluntary activity that takes time out of one's schedule. It may be that those youth who are willing to make such a sacrifice of time for scripture study are also more likely to make the sacrifice of time for temple attendance.

The importance of church attendance to temple attendance also appears to grow with time, having the strongest relationship with temple attendance at age 18. Church attendance likely becomes more voluntary across time given parents may be less able to influence an older child's church attendance. Older youth who decide not to attend church are also unlikely to attend the temple, particularly because church attendance is a requirement for temple attendance.

The only predictor significant at each age was family prayer (though only marginally so at age 18). This seems to reinforce the influence of family throughout all of adolescence, though its influence does appear to wain over time.

What Causes What?

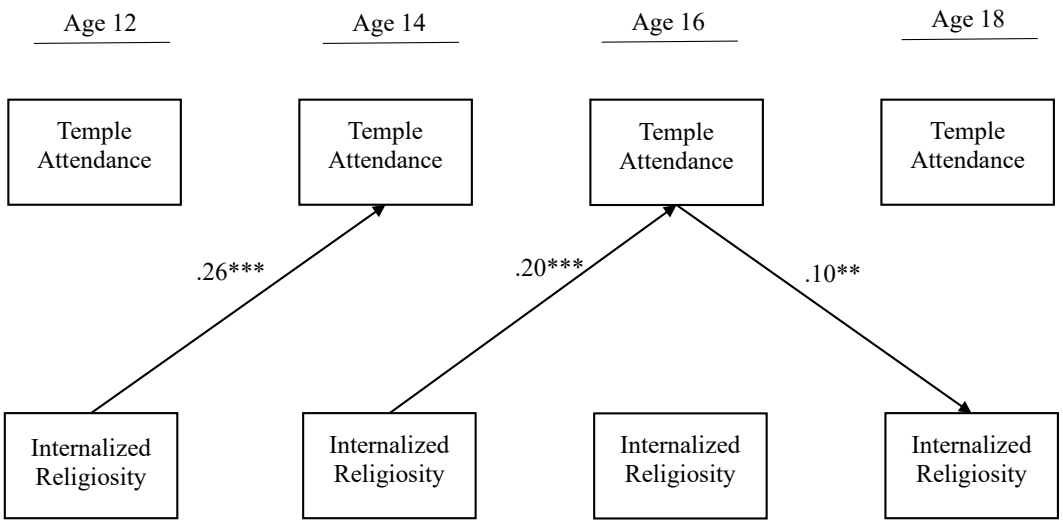
The above analyses examined to what degree these measures of religiosity "bundle together" but provide no insight into which causes which. An important question is how temple attendance and other aspects of religiosity may affect each other over time. Said another way, it is important to answer "chicken or egg" questions. By tracking the same youth over time, we can better answer such questions. With the Foundations data we can ask: "To what degree does scripture reading and family prayer influence how temple attendance changes over time?" and "To what degree does temple attendance influence scripture reading and family prayer over time?"[2]

Figures 3 through 7 display results of asking these questions. From year to year we can see, for example, whether temple attendance influences internalized religiosity or whether internalized religiosity influences temple attendance, or whether they mutually influence each other.

Figure 3 displays these results for internalized religiosity and temple attendance from age 12 to age 18. At earlier ages (12 to 14 and 14 to 16) internalized religiosity predicted temple attendance with temple attendance predicting internalized religiosity from age 16 to 18. However, it was only at the later ages, from 16 to 18, that temple attendance predicted greater internalized religiosity. In other words, earlier in adolescence, having a strong sense that religion is an important part of you predicts going to the temple, whereas later adolescence, temple attendance increases adolescences' feelings that religion is important.

[2] To test this, we use autoregressive cross-lagged models, a standard way of examining reciprocal influences.

Figure 3. *Temple Attendance and Internalized Religiosity*

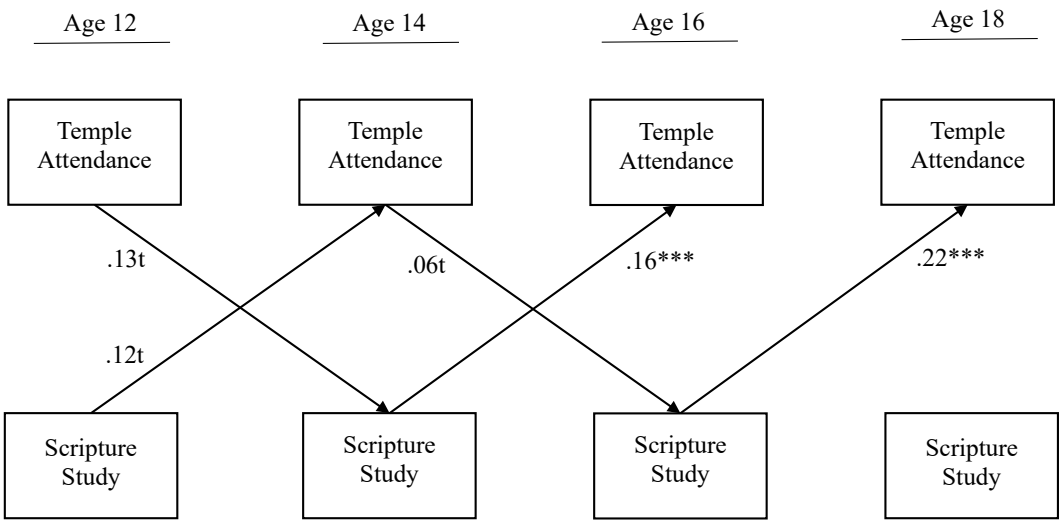


χ^2(df) = 9.364(4); CFI = .995; RMSEA = .041

t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Figure 4 displays results for temple attendance and scripture study. These results suggest scripture study at ages 14 and 16 is related to greater temple attendance at ages 16 and 18 respectively. At earlier ages there was some indication that they influenced each other (a reciprocal effect), though these were only marginally significant. Thus, while there is good evidence for scripture study impacting temple attendance in later adolescence, there was some weak evidence that they influenced each other earlier in adolescence.

Figure 4. *Temple Attendance and Scripture Study*

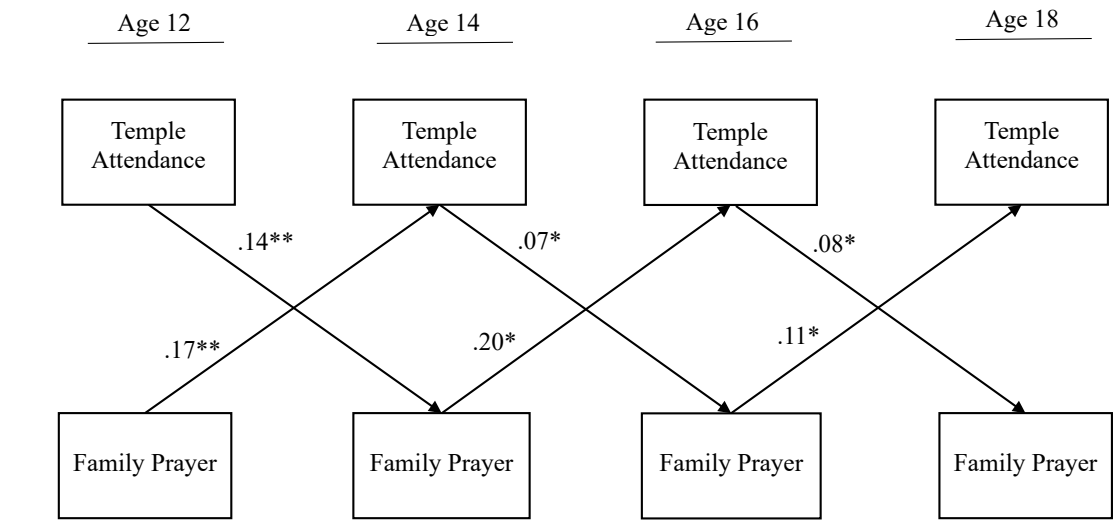


χ^2(df) = 16.447(6)*; CFI = .990; RMSEA = .047

t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Figures 5 and 6 display results of temple attendance and family prayer. All of the effects in these models were statistically significant with one marginally significant (church attendance at 16 predicting temple attendance at 18). There appears to be a clear and consistent reciprocal relationship between temple attendance and family prayer and church attendance, each reinforcing the other.

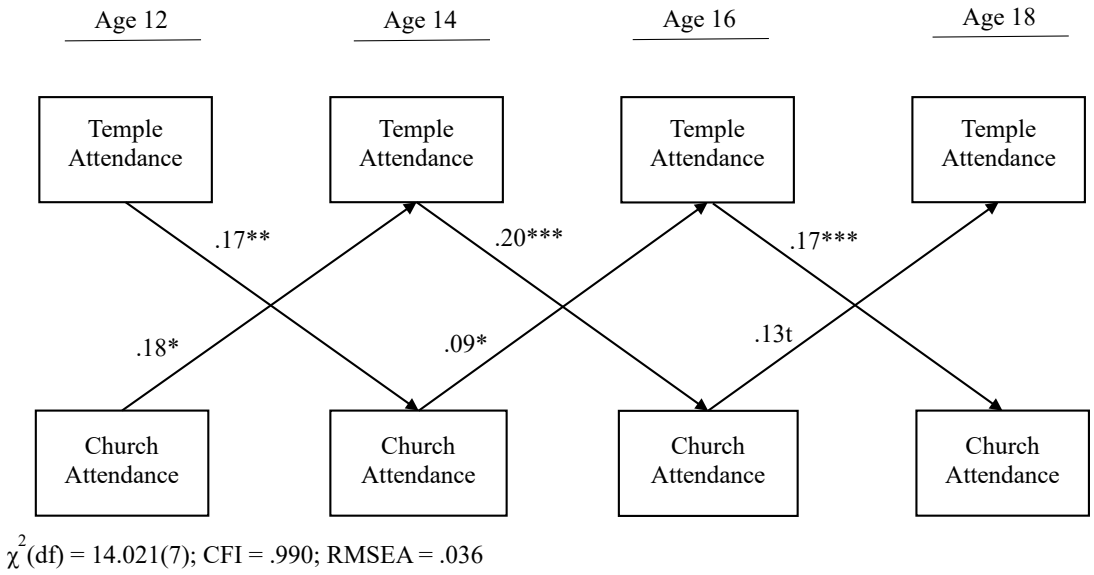
Figure 5. *Temple Attendance and Family Prayer*



χ^2(df) = 15.761(6)*; CFI = .992; RMSEA = .045

t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

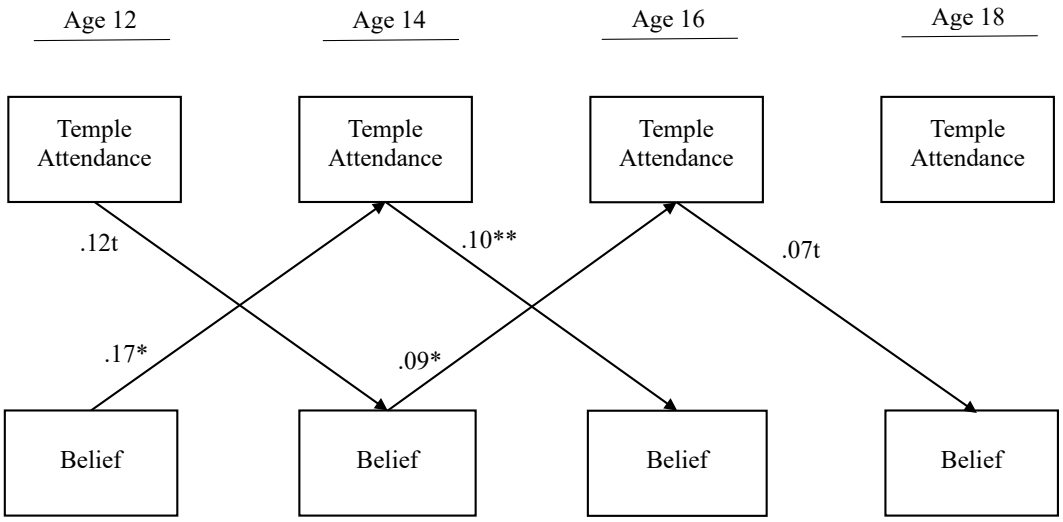
Figure 6. *Temple Attendance and Church Attendance*



t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Finally, in Figure 7 we find that restoration beliefs at ages 12 and 14 related to greater temple attendance at ages 14 and 16 respectively. Temple attendance appears to be related to beliefs at each age, though the relationship is only marginally significant in two instances (age 12 predicting age 14 and age 16 predicting age 18). Thus (similar to results for internalized religiosity), beliefs appear to initially relate to higher levels of temple attendance with temple attendance supporting beliefs in mid-adolescence. There is also the possibility of attendance supporting beliefs in earlier and later adolescence.

Figure 7. *Temple Attendance and Restoration Beliefs.*



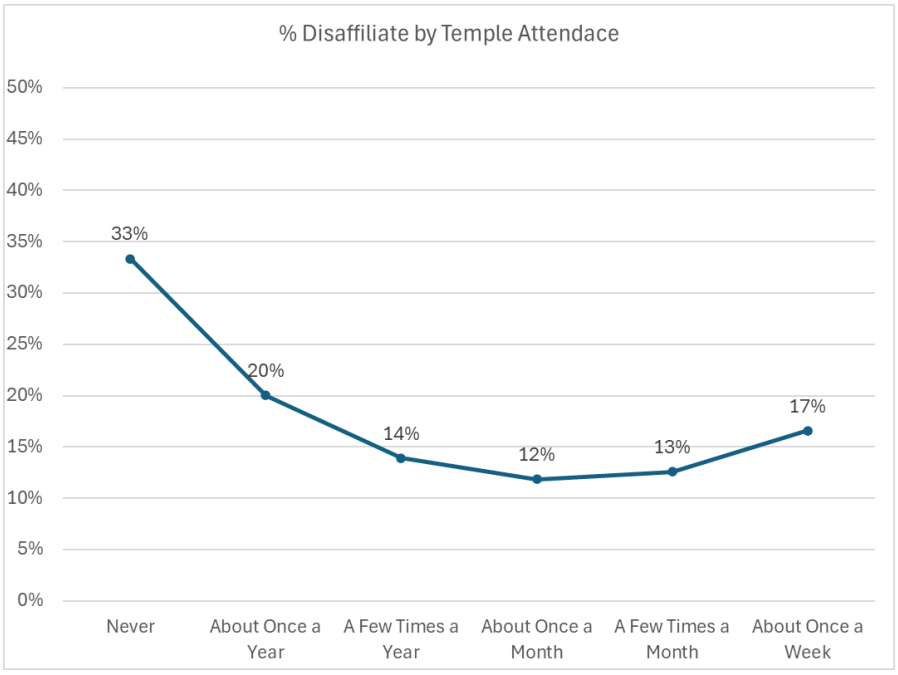
χ^2(df) = 19.512(7)**; CFI = .986; RMSEA = .047

t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Temple Attendance and Disaffiliation

It was also examined if temple attendance at Wave 2 (ages 13-16) predicted whether a person would disaffiliate as a Latter-day Saint by Wave 4 (ages 17-20).[3] Figure 8 displays results. Of the youth who never attended the temple at Wave 2, 33% disaffiliated four years later. As temple attendance increased, the likelihood of disaffiliating dropped such that those who attended the temple once a month had only a 12% chance of disaffiliating. As can be seen in Figure 8, the likelihood of disaffiliation increased after attending once a month. However, given the large confidence intervals around attending once a week, this was not significantly different from prior levels. It can therefore be said that there is a steep decline in the likelihood of disaffiliation up until attendance about once a month, after which the likelihood levels off.

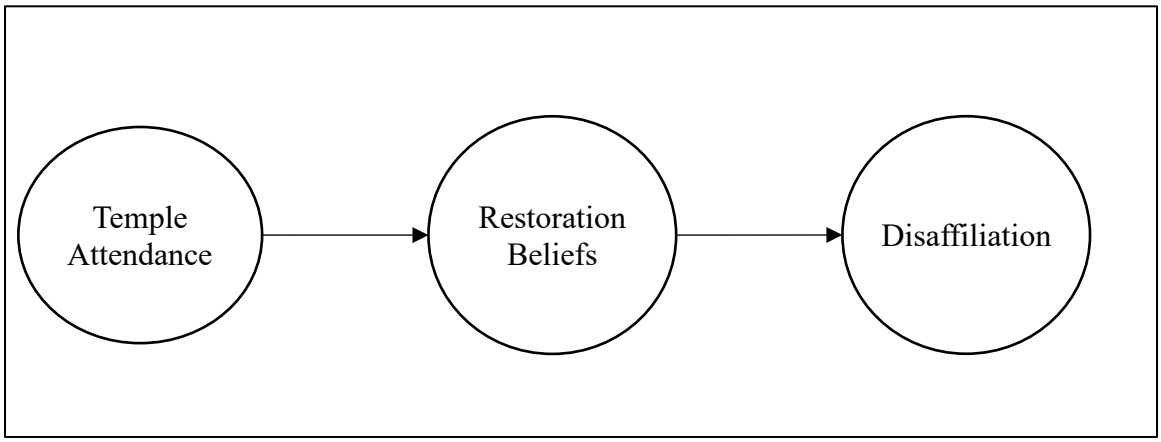
Figure 8. *Temple Attendance Predicting Disaffiliation Four Years Later.*



[3] A logistic regression was used to predict disaffiliation. Temple attendance was found to have a curvilinear relationship with disaffiliation (OR main effect = .34, p = .003; OR quadratic effect = 1.14, p = .018). Demographic controls were added but did not predict disaffiliation and were therefore omitted.

The analysis in Figure 8 included only the temple attendance variable. When other religiosity variables were included, temple attendance became non-significant. However, restoration beliefs and internalized religiosity were both found to significantly reduce the likelihood of disaffiliation. For each unit increase in restoration beliefs (for example, a youth saying they "strongly agreed" versus saying they "agreed" that Joseph Smith was a prophet), the likelihood of disaffiliation decreased by 24.4%. And for each unit of internalized religiosity, the likelihood of disaffiliation decreased by 37.9%. Given the results from the "chicken or egg" analyses above, it may be that temple attendance increases beliefs and internalized religiosity which, in turn, decrease the likelihood of disaffiliation. This was statistically tested (see the Appendix for details) with results suggesting that temple attendance does indeed increase restoration beliefs which, in turn, decrease disaffiliation. Thus, it appears one reason temple attendance is related to lower rates of disaffiliation is because it increases beliefs in the restoration.

Figure 9. *Temple Attendance Increases Restoration Beliefs Which Decreases Disaffiliation*



Temple Attendance and Mental Health

As mentioned earlier, religiosity is often tied to better mental health. However, no research has examined temple attendance as a predictor of mental health. To begin this exploration, Table 3 reports the correlations between depression and anxiety as well as a positive aspect of development, child character (see the Appendix for details on the measure of character). This is done at child ages 12 through 18.

Table 3. *Correlations between Temple attendance and Depression, Anxiety, and Character*

	Temple Attendance Age 12	**Temple Attendance Age 14**	**Temple Attendance Age 16**	**Temple Attendance Age 18**
Depression	-.21**	-.12**	-.14***	-.19***
Anxiety	-.11	-.05	-.07t	-.11*
Character	.07	.09*	.19***	.17**

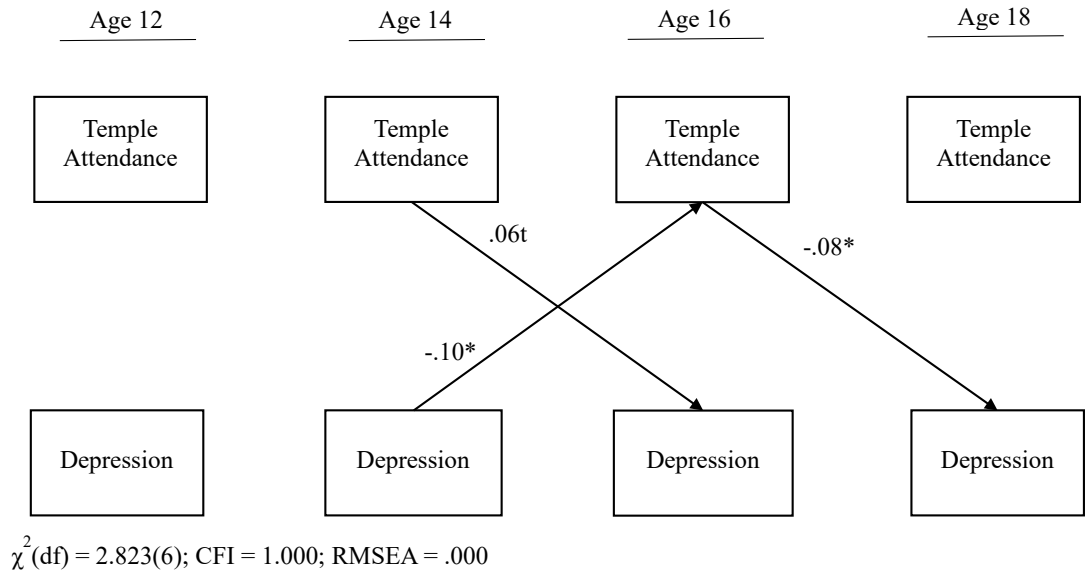
t p < .10 ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

The correlation between depression and temple attendance was significant and remained somewhat steady across time, ranging from -.12 to -.21. In other words, greater temple attendance was related to lower depression. However, given these are simple correlations, it can be equally stated that greater depression was related to less temple attendance. Anxiety was negatively related to temple attendance, being marginally significant at age 16 and significant at age 18. The relationship between temple attendance and character appeared to grow over time with no significant relationship between the two at age 12, then significant at .09 at age 14 and then growing to be significant at .19 and .17 at ages 16 and 18 respectively.

"Chicken or egg" analyses were then conducted, examining whether there was evidence of temple attendance influencing mental health and character, whether it was the other way around, or, whether they mutually influenced each other. Figure 9 shows results for depression. Greater depression at age 14 was related to less temple attendance at age 16. Then, temple attendance at age 16 was related to less depression at age 18. Thus, early depression may lead to

less temple attendance, which may lead to more depression. Temple attendance at 14 did predict depression at 16, though this was marginally significant.

Figure 9. *Temple Attendance and Depression.*

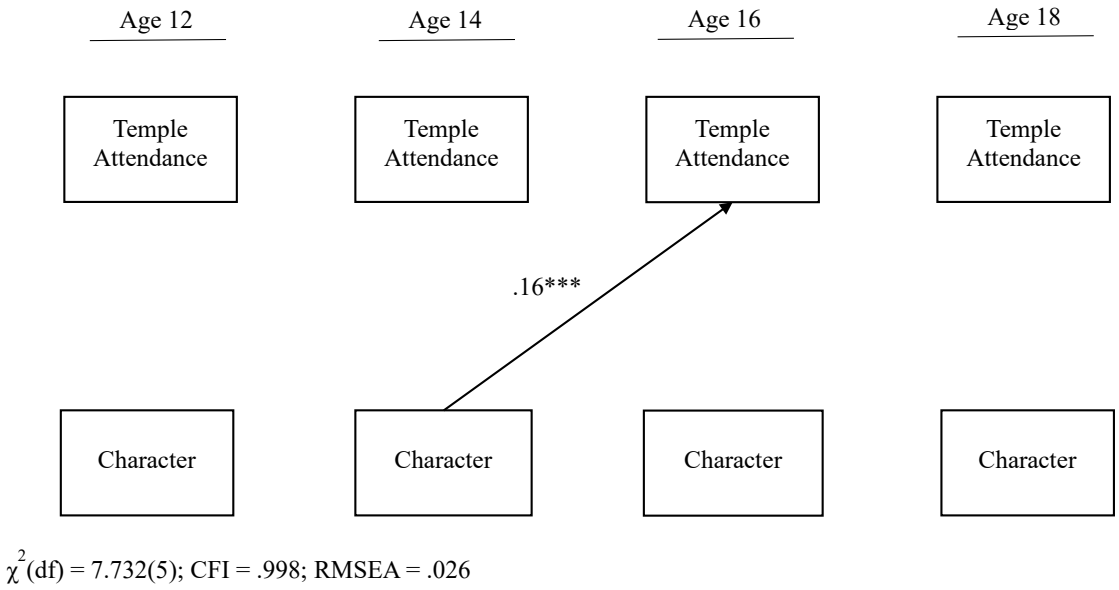


t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

For anxiety, there was no evidence that one predicted the other over time.

For character (see Figure 10), it was found that greater character age 14 led to greater temple attendance two years later. There were no other significant findings for character.

Figure 10. *Temple Attendance and Character.*



χ^2(df) = 7.732(5); CFI = .998; RMSEA = .026

t p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Results here suggest that mental health and character can influence the degree to which individuals attend the temple. It may be that more depressed individuals find it difficult to engage in activities that involve social interactions such as attending the temple. It also seems those who are kinder, honest, and humble (strong character) are also more likely to desire to attend the temple. However, attending the temple seemed to have a smaller impact on mental health and character. No evidence suggested temple attendance affected anxiety or character, though, in one instance, temple attendance was related to a decrease in depression. Thus, while youth characteristics may impact temple attendance, there was less evidence of temple attendance impacting youth characteristics. It is important to note that these analyses only deal

with a particular timeframe. Until further data is collected, we cannot determine how earlier temple attendance may impact later characteristics.

Endowment

To this point, the analyses have primarily focused on proxy baptisms, the temple work available to youth. However, because at Wave 4 some of the individuals in our sample were old enough to be endowed, we can begin to answer some questions about this ordinance. Unfortunately, we currently do not have longitudinal data on being endowed because it was only in our last wave of data that participants were old enough to be endowed. In the Foundations data, there were 303 participants who were Latter-day Saint at Wave 4 and who met the age and schooling criteria for being endowed: graduated from high school and were 18 years or older.

Of these, 35.0% had been endowed. The only demographic predictor of being endowed was gender, with 49.0% of males being endowed and 24.7% of females being endowed. Income, race, extraversion, and parents' income did not predict being endowed.

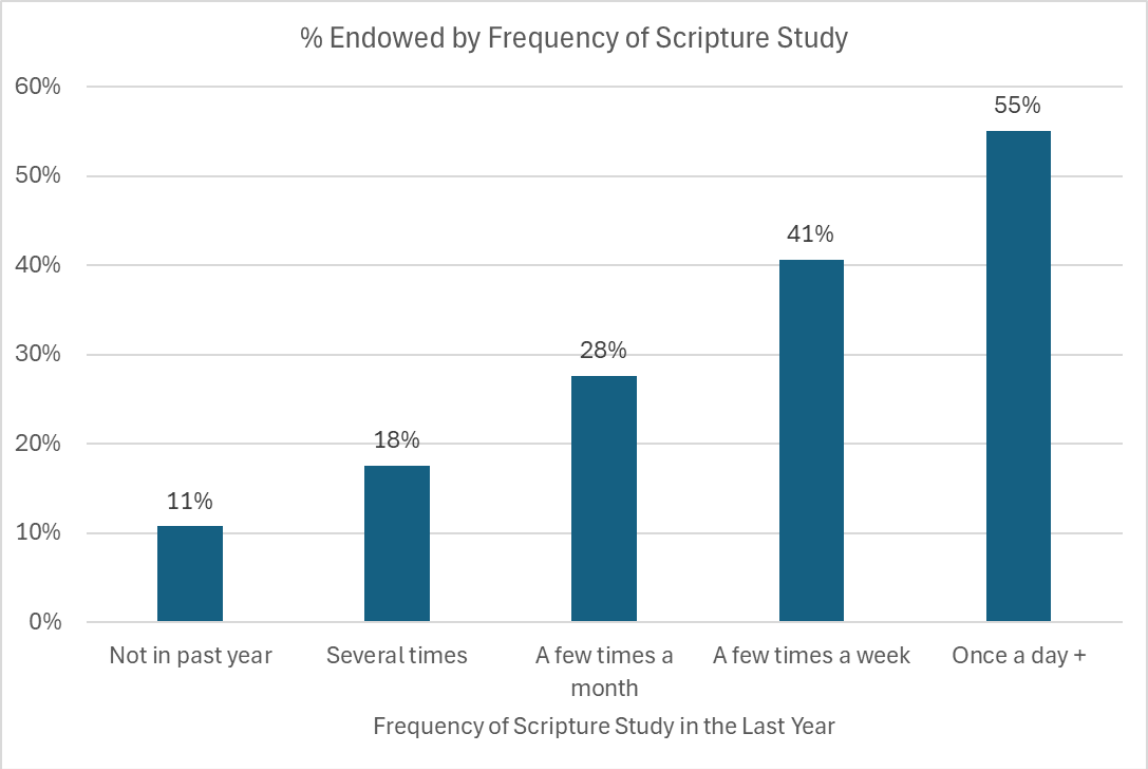
Various aspects of religiosity at Wave 4 were used to predict whether a person would be endowed.[4] Two predictors were significant: temple attendance and scripture reading.[5] Temple attendance is unsurprisingly related to being endowed given one must attend the temple at least once to be endowed. That scripture reading is predictive of being endowed is consistent with the earlier analyses that found it one of the strongest predictors of temple attendance in earlier analyses. Figure 11 shows the percentages of those who were endowed across various levels of

[4] Models were also fit using Wave 2 religiosity and Wave 3 religiosity. However, curiously, none of the religiosity variables were significantly related to being endowed at Wave 4.

[5] Church attendance also significantly predicted being endowed, but the relationship was negative which is inconsistent given it is positively correlated with being endowed. However, temple attendance is also included in the model which necessarily overlaps with church attendance given temple attendance is predicated on church attendance. Church attendance was therefore dropped from the model. A model was also fit with temple attendance removed and church attendance included. Church attendance was not significantly related to being endowed but scripture study was. Indeed, scripture study was the only variable linked to being endowed.

scripture reading. Of those reading daily or more, 55% had been endowed. However, for those reading a few times a month, the likelihood of being endowed drops by nearly half (28%). Thus, daily reading compared to sporadic reading appears to have a substantial impact (though, again, we cannot determine which causes which). For those who did not read in the past year, only 11% were endowed.

Figure 11. *Endowment Status by Scripture Reading*



It was also examined whether being endowed at Wave 4 was related to depression, anxiety, and character at Wave 4. The only significant relationship was that between being endowed was related to greater character. Again, because we only have one wave of data on being endowed, we are not able to examine whether mental health and character influence being endowed or whether it is the other way around.

Limitations

It should be noted that these findings do not necessarily generalize beyond the population studied. Further, it should be noted that in observational studies such as this one, causality cannot be determined. Experimental designs are important to demonstrate causality. However, such a design would not be possible with these questions as we could not randomly assign individuals to be Latter-day Saints or randomly assign some youth to be worthy of a temple recommend and some youth not to be worthy. However, despite not being an experiment, longitudinal studies, such as this one, do provide some of the best evidence for causality in observational studies. It should also be emphasized that this study deals in average trends. Although there may be a significant relationship between temple attendance and religiosity and other child characteristics, there are individual differences around those effects. One should not assume everyone will be affected in the same way.

References

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Appendix: Additional Notes on Methodology

Measures

All measures used demonstrated good reliability. Rather than simply summing or averaging multi-item scales, the far more rigorous method of using confirmatory factor analysis and saving factor scores was used to reduce measurement error. In all instances, the confirmatory factor analyses had good model fit.

Depression was measured with the CES-D-10, a commonly used and well validated measure of depression (Björgvinsson et al., 2013). Anxiety was measured with the Spence Child Anxiety Inventory (Spence, 1998). The Character Growth Index (Liston, 2014) was used to assess child character and was reported by the parent. Six items were used which asked the parent to rate the child on traits such as honesty, concern, compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, and humility.

Analyses

Various types of analyses were used in this research report. To obtain a better understanding of how temple attendance relates to other aspects of religiosity and mental health at specific ages, for most analyses, data were restructured by the age of the participant. For these analyses, data were restructured with average ages of 12 (n = 203), 14 (n = 709), 16 (n = 792), and 18 (n = 589). Such restructuring is referred to as an accelerated longitudinal design (Little, 2024). However, due to the nature of some analyses, data were analyzed by wave, such as in the case of predicting disaffiliation. Sample sizes for those analyses are reported with those analyses.

Missing Data

Data for the analyses came from Wave 2, 3, and 4 of the Family Foundations of Youth Development study. Only those who were Latter-day Saints at Wave 2 were included. Sample sizes at each wave were: Wave 2 = 794, Wave 3 = 737, and Wave 4 = 595. This is a relatively

high responses rate (75%) over a 4-year time period. For example, the Faith Matters survey (conducted by Harvard's Robert Putnam and Notre Dame's David Campbell) had at 62% response rate after only one year (Putnam & Campbell, 2010).

The likelihood of dropout was assessed with a logistic regression predicting dropout with all variables used in analyses above (controls and religiosity variables) used as predictors. Age was also added. The following youth were more likely to drop out: younger youth, youth from Utah, females, and youth whose families had family prayer. Regarding data on temple attendance, less than 1% were missing at Wave 2, 15.5% were missing at Wave 3, and 38.3% were missing at Wave 4. Little's test for missing completely at random in Stata (mcartest) was used to determine whether the data were missing completely at random, missing at random, or missing not at random (Li, 2013). For temple attendance, Little's test was significant, indicating the data were missing at random. When covariates were entered (demographics and other religiosity and mental health variables), the test became non-significant indicating that, with covariates, the missing data process was recovered and, given appropriate missing data techniques, the missing data would not bias parameter estimates (Enders, 2010).

Depending on the analysis, one of the two most rigorous methods for handling missing data were used: multiple imputation and full information maximum likelihood with auxiliary variables to aid in handling missingness. For multiple imputation, all variables used in the analyses were included in the imputation process with 30 imputations created. All analyses carried out in Stata using the mi estimate command. Structural equation models were conducted in Mplus with the "auxiliary = (m)" command that included demographics and other variables that were necessary to handle the missing data.

Temple Attendance Mediation

In order to fully test mediation, three waves of data are ideal (Little, 2024). However, the disaffiliation variable was calculated from Wave 2 to Wave 4, providing a sufficient sample size of those who disaffiliated. In other words, there were too few who disaffiliated between Wave 2 and Wave 3, and Wave 3 and Wave 4 to estimate disaffiliation during those time periods. Given only two waves are used (Wave 2 and Wave 4), a half mediation model was specified (Little, 2024). Although not as strong as a three-wave full mediation model, it provides better evidence of mediation than using a single timepoint. In this half-mediation design, disaffiliation by Wave 4 was the outcome and was predicted by temple attendance, restoration beliefs, and internalized religiosity at Wave 2 (two half-mediation models were fit, one testing beliefs as a mediator and the other testing internalized religiosity as a mediator). Wave 4 temple attendance, restoration beliefs, and internalized religiosity at Wave 4 were predicted their Wave 2 counterparts. The indirect effect is the relationship between disaffiliation by Wave 4 and beliefs (or internalized religiosity) at Wave 2 multiplied by the relationship between temple attendance at Wave 2 and beliefs (or internalized religiosity) at Wave 4. The indirect effect was specified, and bootstrapped (5000) confidence intervals were used to determine significance. The indirect effect was significant for restoration beliefs (b[95%CI] = -.083[-0.145, -0.041]), providing evidence that temple attendance may reduce disaffiliation through increasing restoration beliefs. However, the indirect effect of temple attendance through internalized religiosity was not significant.