

# The Protective Nature of Religiosity Against Suicidal Ideation in African-Americans

## Introduction

In 2016, almost 45,000 US citizens chose to end their lives (CDC, 2018). The economic impacts of suicide and self-harm are estimated at \$70 billion in work losses and medical costs (CDC, 2018). African-American *adults* are less likely to die by suicide than other racial groups, but the gap of suicide rates between the racial groups is closing (CDC, 2018).

In the African-American population, it is well-known that faith and spirituality are important to the culture (Taylor, Chatters, & Joe, 2011). Research suggests that African-Americans with higher religiosity scores (attend services more regularly) are less likely to have suicidal ideations (Walker & Bishop, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to determine if religiosity is a protective factor against suicidal ideation in African Americans.

## Methods

The keywords used for this search were African-American, spirituality, religiosity, and suicidal ideation. The search string was African-American AND spirituality OR religiosity AND suicidality. This returned 35 articles. Exclusion criteria eliminated studies that did not seek to specifically look at African-Americans, any studies that *only* focused on spirituality and no aspects of religiosity, studies that focused on African-Americans living outside the U.S., studies that only looked at depressive disorders, and systematic reviews.

An overview of the article search process is found in **Figure 1**.

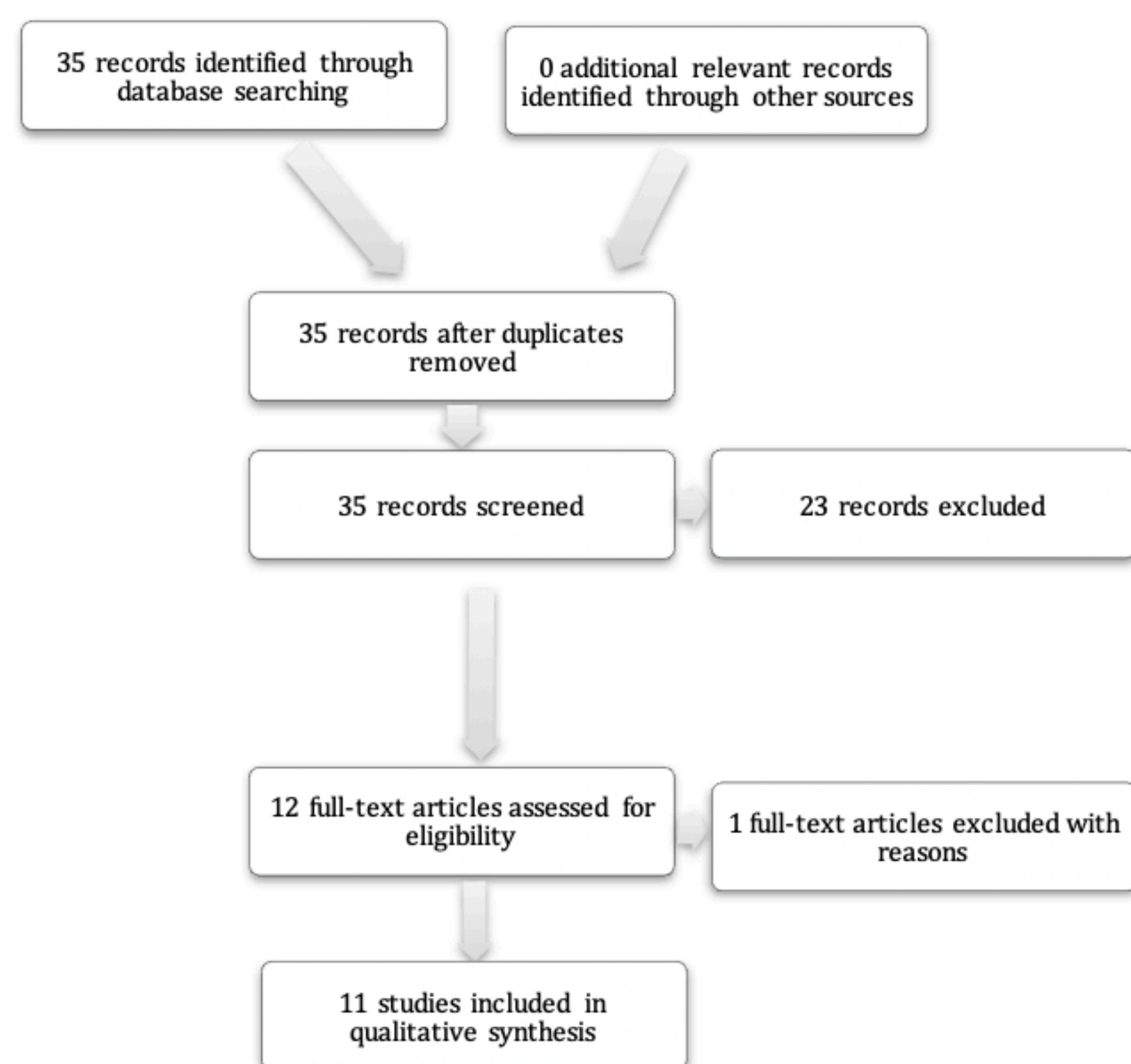


Figure 1: Overview of Article Search Process

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Figure 2: One Style of African-American Religious Practice

## Results

Ten out of eleven of the articles examined were case control studies. One was a randomized control trial, where a culturally and spiritually relevant therapy structure was tested on women who had attempted suicide to check for reduced suicidal ideation after intervention.

An overview of results from all eleven articles can be found in **Table 1**. Average age of study population ranged from 16-17 to 73. Both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity were examined, as well as religious attendance and spirituality.

Sources that found religiosity to be significantly protective ( $p < .05$ )	7
Sources that found only intrinsic religiosity to be protective (of the 7 above)	2
Sources that found religiosity to be non-significantly protective ( $p > .05$ )	3
Sources that did not find a protective (or harmful) relationship	1
<b>Number of Sources (Total)</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 1: Summary of Analyzed Articles

## Discussion

The results of the review do support the previous findings that say that religiosity and spirituality are very important to the African-American community (Taylor et al., 2011). They also suggest that intrinsic religiosity may be more protective than extrinsic, which was surprising. Intrinsic religiosity may be protective because of internal hope and peace in something greater. It may also give an individual hope of a better life after this worldly life.

The findings of this review point towards integrating religiosity and spirituality into treatment for suicidal ideation. Doing this may reduce the likelihood someone attempts suicide or has prolonged suicidal ideation, which would reduce the economic impacts of suicidal ideation and also ideally save human lives. The randomized control trial discussed in **Table 1** is a good example of an intervention that may prove helpful to moving forward with this protective variable for African-Americans. Future research needs to be done on intrinsic versus extrinsic religiosity, as well as the effects on women versus men. From the studies examined, this review did find that religiosity is protective against SI in African-Americans.

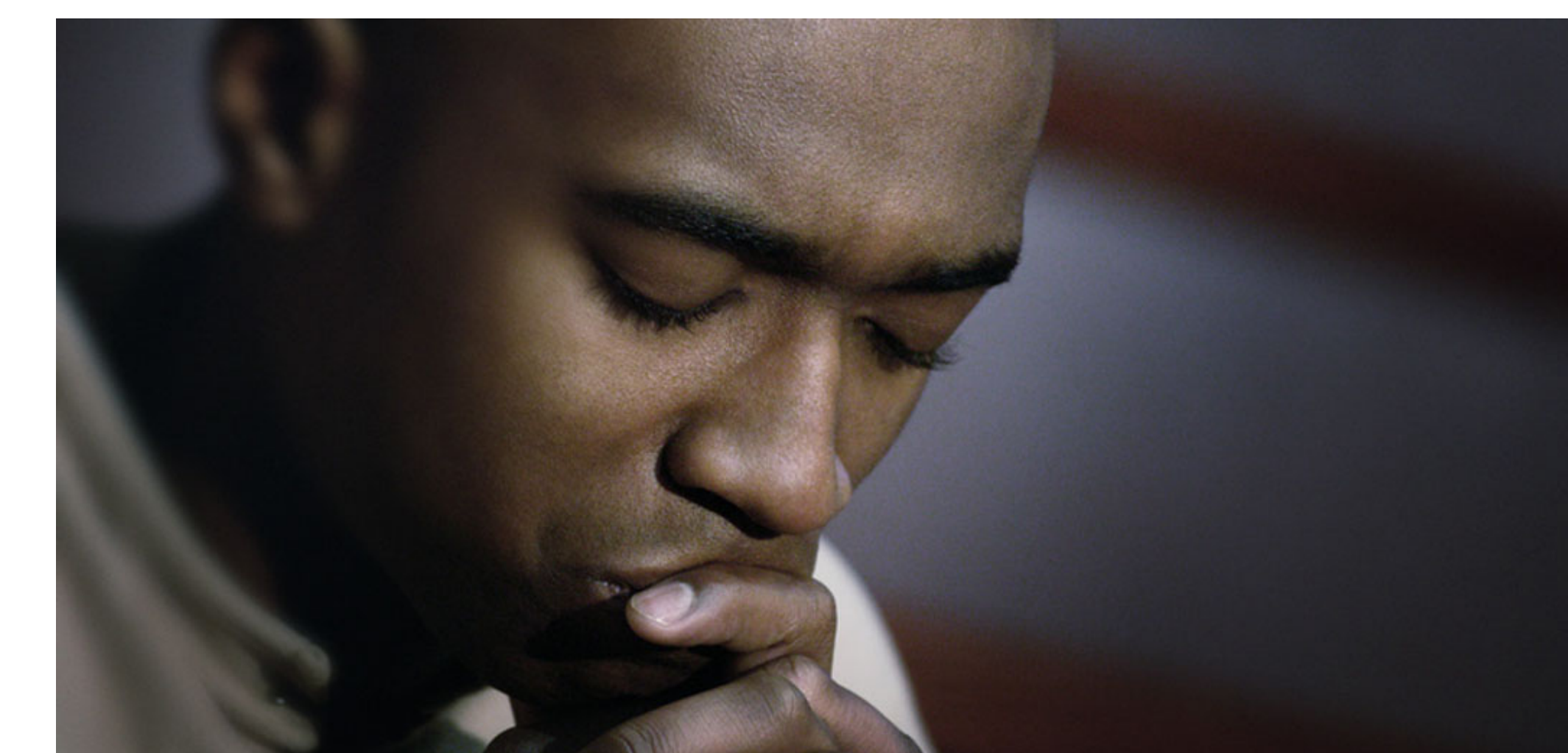


Figure 3: African-American Introspection (Intrinsic Reflection)

## Acknowledgements

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## References

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