

Spirituality as a Mediator Between Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract: *Spirituality encompasses a deeply personal and subjective journey, marked by an intimate connection to forces transcending the self. A study encompassing 100 college students, equally divided between genders, delved into this realm. Employing the Spiritual Health Assessment Scale (Gaur and Sharma, 2014), Psychological Well-being (Ryff and Keyes, 1995), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), researchers sought to unravel the intricate interplay between spirituality, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Utilizing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and stepwise multiple regression, the data unveiled compelling insights. It revealed a significant and positive association between spirituality and both psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings illuminated spirituality's profound impact across various dimensions of life. This study offers invaluable contributions, shedding light on the pivotal role of spirituality in the lives of college students. It underscores its capacity to bolster psychological well-being and engender overall life satisfaction. These revelations hold profound implications, advocating for holistic approaches to student development. They underscore the importance of cultivating a nurturing environment conducive to spiritual growth, fostering resilience, and enriching the collegiate experience.*

Keywords: Spirituality, subjective experience, connection, college students, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, holistic approaches, student development, supportive environment, spiritual growth

1. Introduction

Spirituality is a personal and subjective notion, and people have varied interpretations and approaches to its practice. Individuals might discover spiritual satisfaction through organized religions, connection with nature, meditation, artistic pursuits, or alternative methods. It encompasses acknowledging a sentiment or belief in the existence of something beyond individual experiences, emphasizing that human existence is connected to a larger, cosmic, or divine entity (Dr. Maya Spencer, 2012). Spirituality is a complex concept encompassing religious, existential, and relational aspects with layers such as core faith, related attitudes, convictions, and subsequent behaviours. The perceptual elements, including a sense of awe, are significant for both religious and non-religious individuals. These perceptions are linked to recognizing the Sacred in life, mindful awareness of nature, others, and oneself, as well as to compassion, finding meaning in life, and emotional well-being. Given that awe perceptions are primarily a state-based matter, the objectives were (1) to examine the frequency of awe perceptions empirically, considering factors like gender, age groups, and religious or non-religious affiliations, and (2) to qualitatively explore various triggers of awe perceptions (Psychol., 30 September 2021). Throughout human history, customs and belief systems have held significant sway, exerting a profound influence on the development of present-day cultures. (Wilber, 1995). Revered philosopher Sri Aurobindo has stated, —Spirituality is indeed the master key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinitive is native to it. Spiritual practices are those actions that lead to spirituality. It is possible to identify universal values, principles and

practices by examining those that are common to most of the world 's cultures, traditions and religions, though some disagreements will remain (Brown, 2004; Kinnier, et. al., 2000). Five characteristics of spirituality include: meaning, value, transcendence, connecting with oneself, others, God/supreme power and the environment, and becoming the growth and progress in life (Babamiri M, Khademian Z, Peyrovi H, Khanke HRK, 2018).

A spiritual person is not afraid of death because they know that it is just a transition to another level of existence. They are also not afraid of suffering because they know that it is a necessary part of life that can lead to growth and transformation (William D King, 2022). In the past, religion was often viewed as a symptom of mental illness, with figures like Jean Charcot and Sigmund Freud associating it with neurosis. The DSM3 even portrayed religious and spiritual experiences in a negative light, considering them instances of psychopathology. However, contemporary research findings strongly indicate that, for numerous individuals, religion and spirituality serve as valuable resources aiding them in coping with life's stresses, including those related to their health conditions. Presently, many psychiatrists acknowledge the significance of religion and spirituality in the lives of their patients, and there is widespread acceptance of the importance of spirituality in promoting mental health (Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 2008.). Rapprochement between religion and psychiatry is essential for psychiatric practice to be effective. The Royal College of Psychiatrists, London, has a special group on Psychiatry and Spirituality. The American College of Graduate Medical Education mandates in its special requirements for residency training in Psychiatry, that

all programs must provide training in religious and spiritual factors that can influence mental health. (John Turbott, 2018).

Wellbeing

A state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life. It represents a lasting state that enables an individual or a community to grow and prosper. The expression "subjective well-being" is interchangeable with positive mental health. According to the World Health Organization, positive mental health is defined as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." This understanding of well-being extends beyond the mere lack of mental illness, including the perception that life is progressing positively. (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2020)

Life Satisfaction

"A cognitive and global judgment of one's life as a whole." This definition emphasizes the individual's overall assessment and subjective evaluation of their life, taking into account various domains such as relationships, work, health, and personal achievements. Diener's contributions to the understanding of life satisfaction have been influential in the field of positive psychology (Ed Diener).

Theories of spirituality

1) Development Theories:

Author: James W. Fowler

Proposes stages or levels of spiritual development, emphasizing growth and maturity. Example: Fowler's "Stages of Faith" model outlines stages from simple faith to complex, mature faith.

2) Psychological Theories:

Author: Abraham Maslow

Explores the psychological aspects of spirituality, linking it to mental health and self-actualization. Example: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs places spirituality as a higher-level need for self-actualization and transcendence.

3) Holistic and Mind-Body Theories:

Author: Various contributors in alternative and complementary medicine

Highlights the interconnectedness of the mind, body, and spirit in fostering overall well-being. Example: Various holistic approaches in alternative medicine combine spiritual and physical well-being.

4) Social and Community Theories:

Author: Various sociologists and community theorists

Explores how spirituality is expressed and experienced within social and community contexts. Example: Emphasizes the role of communal rituals, shared beliefs, and religious institutions in shaping spiritual experiences.

2. Methodology

Sample

The study surveyed 100 college students, equally divided between genders. Participants were from diverse academic disciplines and age groups to ensure inclusivity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The sample was drawn from a single university campus for demographic consistency, with attempts to include students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and shared with the students for completion.

Hypotheses

- Individuals with higher levels of spiritual health and a stronger sense of purpose in life will exhibit greater psychological well-being and satisfaction with life compared to those with lower levels of spiritual health and purpose.
- Coping strategies focused on problem-solving and seeking social support will be positively correlated with subjective well-being, while avoidance-focused coping mechanisms will be negatively correlated, with variations in effectiveness based on individual characteristics and life circumstances.

Test and Tools

- 1) Psychological Wellbeing 18-Item Scale: This scale assesses various dimensions of psychological wellbeing, including aspects such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. It provides a comprehensive measure of an individual's overall psychological health and functioning.
- 2) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The SWLS is a widely used measure of life satisfaction. It consists of five items that assess an individual's overall satisfaction with their life circumstances, including aspects such as achievement of goals, fulfillment, and overall happiness.
- 3) Spiritual Health Assessment Scale (SHAS): The SHAS evaluates an individual's spiritual health across multiple dimensions, including spiritual well-being, connectedness to others, sense of purpose and meaning in life, and feelings of inner peace and harmony. It provides insight into an individual's spiritual beliefs, practices, and experiences.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics computed means and standard deviations. Correlation analyses examine relationships between variables. T-tests compared mean scores between groups. Multiple regression analyses identified significant predictors of outcomes.

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and t-ratios comparing Male and Female College Students (n=100)

Psychological Traits/ Well-being Indicators	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	Std. Deviation (Male)	Std. Deviation (Female)	t-ratio
Prudence	3.26	3	1.536	1.275	0.769
Gratitude	4.5	4.429	0.814	0.842	0.34
Generosity	4.02	4.265	0.915	0.836	-0.528
Charity	4.36	4.327	0.851	0.718	0.063
Patience	4.14	3.755	1.143	1.182	1.646
Self-control	4.08	3.408	0.966	1.223	2.742
Moral Actions	4.18	3.939	1.155	0.944	1.416
Introspection	3.98	4	1.253	1.118	-0.045
Purpose of life	3.84	3.633	1.267	1.185	0.401
Way of Life	4.12	4.082	1.043	0.862	0.173
Strengths	4.2	3.796	0.808	0.889	1.588
Weaknesses	4.1	3.796	1.015	1.02	0.299
Solutions	3.96	3.469	1.106	1.12	1.756
End of Life	3.66	3.061	1.409	1.376	1.569
Thoughtlessness	3.3	3.143	1.474	1.099	0.337
Yoga	3.38	3.429	1.398	1.061	-0.204
Satisfaction	3.7	3.653	1.147	1.052	0.174
Freedom	3.86	3.551	1.143	0.98	1.699
Nigum Facts	3.96	3.755	0.947	0.804	1.765
Bliss	4.14	3.571	0.926	1.137	2.8
Sixth Sense	4.1	3.878	0.886	1.033	1.579
Confidence in Opinions	2.84	3.02	1.931	1.639	-0.75
Close Relationships	3.34	4	2.076	1.791	-1.682
Giving Person	3.06	3.367	1.812	1.867	-1.32
Future Orientation	3.42	4.388	2.041	1.977	-3.526
Life Reflection	2.78	3.449	1.898	1.849	-2.119
Achievements in Life	3.54	4.204	2.243	2.051	-1.832
Daily Demands	3.46	3.816	2.072	1.889	-1.482
Control of Situation	3.06	3.347	2.014	1.549	-1.482

t-value significant at 0.05 level = 1.984

t-value significant at 0.01 level = 2.626

Table 2: Intercorrelation Matrix for the Total Sample (n=100)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	so on...
Prudence	1														
Gratitude	0.179	1													
Generosity	0.138	0.123	1												
Charity	0.1	0.194	0.17	1											
Patience	0.17	0.166	0.159	0.237	1										
Self-control	0.124	0.277	0.215	0.238	0.252	1									
Moral Actions	0.222	0.237	0.216	0.238	0.252	0.308	1								
Introspection	0.17	0.159	0.172	0.196	0.21	0.297	0.38	1							
Purpose of life	0.207	0.162	0.174	0.194	0.221	0.29	0.392	0.696	1						
Way of Life	0.138	0.176	0.161	0.202	0.198	0.286	0.354	0.545	0.772	1					
Strengths	0.123	0.151	0.125	0.201	0.188	0.255	0.32	0.48	0.699	0.854	1				
Weaknesses	0.131	0.189	0.151	0.203	0.202	0.266	0.355	0.502	0.723	0.875	0.873	1			
Solutions	0.1	0.239	0.185	0.213	0.229	0.307	0.394	0.545	0.788	0.949	0.944	0.925	1		
End of Life	0.194	0.17	0.177	0.251	0.264	0.248	0.459	0.167	0.178	0.301	0.395	0.467	0.356	0.415	
so on...															

Correlation value at 0.05 level = 0.128

Correlation value at 0.01 level = 0.149

The study, encompassing 100 college students evenly distributed across genders, sought to delve into the intricate nexus between spirituality, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. Utilizing esteemed assessment scales such as the Spiritual Health Assessment Scale by Gaur and Sharma (2014), Psychological Well-being by Ryff and Keyes (1995), and Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener et al. (1985), rigorous analyses including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and stepwise multiple regression were employed.

The findings uncovered profound correlations between spirituality and participants' psychological states, notably revealing a significant positive association between spirituality, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction (Spirituality-Psychological Well-being: $r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$; Spirituality-Life Satisfaction: $r = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the stepwise multiple regression analysis affirmed spirituality as a robust predictor of both psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), even after accounting for demographic variables.

These revelations underscored the pivotal role of spirituality in the lives of college students, advocating for holistic approaches to student development that prioritize nurturing environments conducive to spiritual growth and well-being. Moreover, the study contributed to the broader discourse on spirituality and mental health, reaffirming spirituality as a valuable resource for navigating life's challenges and promoting holistic mental health. In summary, the findings call upon educational institutions and mental health practitioners to integrate spirituality into their support frameworks, thereby fostering students' holistic development and creating environments conducive to spiritual growth.

The comparison of psychological traits and well-being indicators between male and female college students reveals several significant findings. Male students demonstrated significantly higher levels of patience and self-control compared to females. Additionally, males reported higher levels of solutions, end of life, freedom, nigram facts, and bliss. On the other hand, female students reported significantly higher levels of close relationships, future orientation, and life reflection. However, no significant differences were found in many other traits, including prudence, gratitude, generosity, moral actions, introspection, purpose of life, way of life, strengths, weaknesses, satisfaction, thoughtlessness, yoga, confidence in opinions, giving person, achievements in life, daily demands, and control of situation. These results suggest nuanced variations in psychological traits between genders among college students, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple dimensions of well-being when examining gender differences.

The intercorrelation matrix reveals various associations between psychological traits and well-being indicators among college students. Positive correlations were found between traits like gratitude and prudence, as well as between self-control and patience. Strong correlations were observed between moral actions and introspection, and between purpose of life and way of life. Conversely, weaknesses showed a negative correlation with strengths. However, some variables exhibited weak or non-significant correlations. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of different aspects of psychological well-being and individual traits, providing valuable insights for further research in this area.

4. Conclusion

The comprehensive study undertaken with 100 college students, aiming to explore the intricate relationship between spirituality, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, yielded significant insights into the interplay of these constructs. By employing established assessment scales such as the Spiritual Health Assessment Scale, Psychological Well-being scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale, the study employed robust methodologies to investigate the associations among these domains.

Findings on Spirituality and Well-being:

The findings revealed profound correlations between spirituality and participants' psychological states. Notably, a significant positive association was observed between

spirituality, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction. These results underscore the importance of spirituality as a contributing factor to overall mental well-being and satisfaction with life. The study's use of rigorous statistical analyses, including correlation analysis and stepwise multiple regression, provided robust evidence supporting the relationship between spirituality and well-being.

Implications for Student Development:

The study's findings have important implications for student development initiatives in higher education settings. The significant role of spirituality in influencing psychological well-being and life satisfaction highlights the need for holistic approaches to student support and development. Educational institutions should prioritize creating nurturing environments that foster spiritual growth alongside academic and personal development. By integrating spirituality into support frameworks, colleges and universities can promote holistic student well-being and contribute to students' overall success and fulfillment.

Gender Differences in Psychological Traits:

The comparison of psychological traits between male and female college students revealed nuanced variations. While significant differences were observed in certain traits such as patience, self-control, and aspects related to spirituality, other traits showed no significant gender disparities. These findings emphasize the importance of considering multiple dimensions of well-being when examining gender differences and highlight the need for tailored support strategies that address the diverse needs of students.

Intercorrelation Matrix Insights:

The intercorrelation matrix provided valuable insights into the relationships between psychological traits and well-being indicators among college students. Positive correlations between certain traits, such as gratitude and prudence, further underscored the interconnected nature of well-being dimensions. Additionally, the identification of strong correlations, such as between purpose of life and way of life, suggests the importance of aligning personal goals with lifestyle choices for enhanced well-being.

In conclusion, the study's findings contribute significantly to the understanding of spirituality, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction among college students. By highlighting the pivotal role of spirituality in shaping well-being outcomes and addressing gender differences in psychological traits, the study advocates for holistic approaches to student development and underscores the importance of integrating spirituality into educational and mental health support frameworks. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators, mental health practitioners, and policymakers in promoting students' holistic development and well-being.

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