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Spirituality and life satisfaction among Adolescents in India

Abstract

The present study aims to find out the relationship between spirituality and life satisfaction also competitive mean scores of spirituality and life satisfaction between male and female among adolescent students. For this purpose a total of 80 students were selected from two different faculties of Aligarh Muslim University. The sample included both male and female in equal number. Two scale namely Spirituality assessment scale and life satisfaction scales were administered to all subjects. Obtained scores were analyzed by regression, correlation and independent sample t test. The result shows spirituality is positive significant predictor of life satisfaction and there was positive correlation between Spirituality and life satisfaction, also there was significant difference between male and female students in Spirituality and life satisfaction.

Key Words: Spirituality, life satisfaction and adolescents

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Introduction

Spirituality is additional internal characteristics that have been linked with life satisfaction. The significance of spirituality in everyday life has been supported by empirical studies in the past decade. Studies of spirituality and religiousness have generally reported modest positive correlations between internal characteristics and subjective well-being including life satisfaction (Kelley & Miller, 2007; Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006). A growing body of research suggests that spirituality is related to various outcomes, including physical health, mental health, and psychological well-being (Kelley & Miller, 2007).

Literature review

Spirituality is one of those concepts often referred to in vague, general ways. In the last few decades psychologists have renewed interest in this subject and are continuing to develop ways in which to assess and describe spirituality. (Although psychology of religion is one of the oldest areas of study the increasing interest in the area of spirituality by the general population appears to be relatively recent.) The complexity of the constructs of spirituality and religion has many different definitions and theoretical approaches (Wong, 1998b). Vaughan et al. (1996), defined spirituality as “a subjective experience that exists both within and outside of traditional religious systems” and by Sussman et al. (1997), defined spirituality as “subjectively experiencing a life force”. A slightly different approach to spirituality was taken by Emblen (1992) who conducted an analysis of existing definitions of spirituality to formulate the following definition: “Personal life principle which animates transcendent quality of relationship with God or god being”. A collection of other definitions of spirituality cited by Aldridge (1993) exemplifies the various conceptualizations in relation to experiential, relational and existential phenomena and healing practices associated with spirituality (Thoresen, 1999).

Despite the diversity in the conceptual definitions of spirituality, several common defining characteristics can be extracted. The conceptual definitions generally involve a relationship to something that lies beyond physiological, psychological or social human perception or experience. This relational object of spirituality may be described as “divinity”, “a higher power”, a “divine being”, “ultimate

reality”, “God” or “god-being” (Dyson, Cobb, & Forman, 1997; Thoresen, 1999). The experience associated with this relational aspect of spirituality can be described as transcendent or transpersonal in nature (Vaughan et al., 1996). Most definitions of spirituality support the notion that spirituality is associated with an existential search for meaning and purpose regarding complex questions about life (Larson et al., 1998).

Challenges in measuring spirituality follow the same concerns and trends as difficulties in conceptualizing this concept. In the beginning stages, research was almost exclusively focused on the measurement of religion (George et al., 2000). However, during the past few decades numerous measures of spirituality and religion have been added to the repertoire of available instruments. Reviews of spirituality instruments reveal an overwhelming diversity of operational definitions (Hill & Hood, 1999; MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995). Larson et al. (1998) describe a limited collection of instruments in relation to each of their spiritual domains described earlier. However, the empirical utility of this type of operational taxonomy is constrained by the difficulties in providing empirical validation of the different categories. In addition, different instruments often are derived from different theoretical backgrounds and typically measure diverse aspects of spirituality.

Walker (1992) conducted a qualitative study on the benefits of spirituality for women. She defined spirituality as “a higher level of abstraction which transcends both the physical, the emotional, and all other qualities in adult women. These qualities may include religiosity, intellectual interests, beliefs, and attitudes”. Benefits of spirituality were examined in three areas: personally, in the family, and in friendships. Two common themes discovered in all three of these areas were first Foundation, and second Relationship/Common Bond. Foundation referred to a reference point and a baseline from which to proceed and evolve. This lends support to the view of spirituality as a movement toward connectedness, and suggests there is an inherent human desire for meaning and purpose.

Lauver (2000) discusses women’s spirituality and its relationship with health. She writes about spirituality as community and advocates for connection with self, other women, and one’s community in the cultivation of spirituality. She also emphasizes the centrality of

experience to women's spirituality stating: "as women re-construct rituals, language, and symbols based on their experiences, they value and affirm these experiences. A related assumption is a fundamental honoring of the goodness of women's bodies and their functions". Lauver further articulates that spirituality is viewed holistically, with women's bodies being the means through which life is experienced.

Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. It is one of three major indicators of well-being: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Diener, 1984). Although satisfaction with current life circumstances is often assessed in research studies, Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999) also include the following under life satisfaction: desire to change one's life; satisfaction with past; satisfaction with future; and significant other's views of one's life. Related terms in the literature include happiness (sometimes used interchangeably with life satisfaction), quality of life, and (subjective or psychological) well-being (a broader term than life satisfaction). The research on life satisfaction and cognate concepts is extensive and theoretical debates over the nature and stability of life satisfaction continue. Life satisfaction is frequently included as an outcome or consequence variable in work-family research (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000).

Life satisfaction is often considered a desirable goal, in and of itself, stemming from the Aristotelian ethical model, eudaimonism, (from eudaimonia, the Greek word for happiness) where correct actions lead to individual well-being, with happiness representing the supreme good (Myers, 1992). Moreover, life satisfaction is related to better physical and mental health (Beutell, 2006), longevity, and other outcomes that are considered positive in nature. Men and women are similar in their overall levels of life satisfaction (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999) although women do report more positive and negative affect. Married people are more satisfied with their lives and those with life-long marriages appear to be the most satisfied (Evans & Kelly, 2004). Life satisfaction tends to be stable over time (Cummins, 1998) suggesting a dispositional (Judge & Hulin, 1993), and perhaps, even a genetic component (Judge et al. 1994). Fujita and Diener (2005) have examined the life satisfaction set-point (a relatively stable level that an individual will return to after facing varying life circumstances)

reporting that there are longitudinal changes in satisfaction levels for about one-quarter of their respondents.

Much of the work-family literature, however, has emphasized a conflict perspective (e.g., Greenhaus&Beutell, 1985, although this is changing, e.g., Greenhaus& Powell, 2006) noting the potential for role incompatibility and strain relating to negative outcomes. Life satisfaction is used to assess the impact of conflict levels on overall feelings about one's life. Importantly, life satisfaction exhibits the strongest relationship with work-family conflict of all non-work variables studied (Allen et al. 2000). Research has shown that, beyond direct relationships between work-family conflict and life satisfaction, how people deal with such conflicts is also important. Successful coping with work-family conflict is also associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (e.g., Beutell&Greenhaus, 1982). According to this view, even if conflict is a likely consequence of engaging in work and family roles, how people deal with such conflict is a determinant of life satisfaction possibly because of self-efficacy perceptions generated by successful coping behavior.

Theories of relations between global and life facet satisfaction have proposed either "top-down" or "bottom-up" influences — "Bottom-up" theories proposed that perceptions of structural aspects of the environment lead to satisfaction within various life domains. Social indicators research (Glatzer and Mohr, 1987) has proceeded along the lines of bottom-up theories, under the rationale that changes in overall life satisfaction can be affected by addressing social concerns within specific domains of life.

"Top-down" theories on the other hand (Staw and Ross. 1985; Stones and Kozma, 1985), propose that global satisfaction determines satisfaction with specific life facets. Social interventions may effect changes in satisfaction with specific aspects of life.

A third "bi-directional" or "reciprocal" model proposes that global life satisfaction both determines and results from satisfaction with specific domains of life. (Diener, 1984).Michalos (1980) for example suggested that satisfaction in several life domains may contribute to overall life satisfaction and that satisfaction with life in general influence individual's satisfaction judgements in various life domains. Thus, the bi-directional model acknowledges the importance of both (a) stable dispositional influences on global and domain specific

satisfaction judgements and (b) the impact that life facet satisfactions have on judgements of overall life satisfaction.

Research in this area has demonstrated positive association between overall life satisfaction & satisfactions in several life domains (Headey et al., 1985) and among satisfaction in various life domains (Kopelman, et al. 1983). However the simple co-relational approach taken by most of these studies precludes conclusion about the direction of the caused relation, if any, between global life facet satisfactions.

Sam (2001) did an exploratory study by examining the self-reported satisfaction with life and the factors predicting it among 304 international students (159 males and 145 females, mean age 29.6 yrs.). The students reported on the whole good satisfaction with life, however, students from Europe and North America were on the whole more satisfied than their peers from Africa and Asia. Language proficiency and having a host national friend did not show significant effect on life satisfaction.

Seibel & Johnson (2001) administered measures of perceived parental control and acceptance, trait anxiety and satisfaction with life to 202 undergraduate students (aged 18-22 yrs). Analysis indicated that perception of parents (both mother and father) as psychologically controlling was significantly positively correlated with trait anxiety and significantly negatively correlated with satisfaction with life.

Diener, Lucns, Oishi&Suh (2002) in a two large international studies of subjective well-being, examined whether happy and unhappy individuals weighted 8 life domains (health, finances family, recreation, religion-self and education) differently when constructing life satisfaction judgments. In both studies regression equations predicting life satisfaction showed that there were significant interactions between happiness and a person's best domain and between happiness and a person's work domain.

Researches done across the world on spirituality reveals that it has various effects on life satisfaction. However, the majority of research has been conducted with adult populations while few studies have focused on children and adolescents, therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction and spirituality in adolescent students and other aim from this study is compare spirituality and life satisfaction among adolescent students . However,

the present research questions that this study intends to investigate with alternative hypothesis are:

Hypothesis

H.1 :There is significant effect from spirituality on life satisfaction.

H.2 :There is significant correlation between life satisfaction and spirituality.

H.3 :There is significant difference between the mean scores of students' life satisfaction and spirituality with consideration of gender.

Method:

Sample

A sample of 80 students was selected for this project from Aligarh Muslim University' India. Method sampling was multi-stage sampling. At first two faculties, then ten class from each faculty and finally four students from each class were selected by random sampling.

Tools

Spirituality

The SAS developed by Howden (1992) was used for the assessment of spiritual orientation among students. The scale consists of 28 items and has four dimensions of spirituality, namely, Purpose and Meaning in life, Innerness or Inner Resources, Inter connectedness and Transcendence. The responses of the subject were obtained on 6 point LikertScale from Strongly Agree, "SA (6) to Strongly Disagree, SD (1)". The internal consistency reliability coefficient for the SAS is equal to 0.70.

Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS)

A ten items scale designed by Warr et al. (1979) was used to measure the satisfaction with salient features of daily life and activity of the respondents, psychometric properties of the scale (test, retest reliability, split, half reliability, internal consistency, reliability and validity), were reported by authors and others. Responses were rated on a seven point scale from 1, referring to "I am extremely dissatisfied", to 7, referring to "I am extremely satisfied. The possible range of scores could vary from 10-70. A high score indicated high satisfaction and vice-versa. Test-retest is also very high i.e. $r=0.87$.

Analyses data

Hypothesis1

There is significant effect from spirituality on life satisfaction.

To assertive the answer of this hypothesis the inter regression was applied spirituality was the predictor variable and life satisfaction was the criterion variable.

Table.1. Model Summary of regression of Life satisfaction (LS)

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
	.513	.263	.254	6.4571

1. Predictors: (Constant), Spirituality (S)

As seen in the table 1, regression analysis in inter method is run.

Table.2. Coefficient of Regression of life satisfaction (LS)

Sig.	Variables	B	S.E.	Beta	t
	(Constant)	21.215	5.191		
4.087	0.000				
	Spirituality	.232	.044	.513	5.279

**p < 0.01

As seen in table 2, spirituality (S) is predictor ($\beta = 0.513$, $p = 0.000 < 0.001$) as it mentions spirituality is positive significant predictor of life satisfaction in students.

Hypothesis 2

There is significant correlation between life satisfaction and spirituality.

Table.3. Pearson Correlation between Life Satisfaction and spirituality.

		LSS	SAS
Life Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
	N	80	
Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	.513(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	80	80

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To determine the relationship between the scores of spirituality and life satisfaction the Pearson correlation was applied. The amount

coefficient between life satisfaction and spirituality was 0.513. That is in student, the correlation between mentioned variable was significant with 99% confidence.

Hypothesis 3

There is significant difference between the mean scores of students' life satisfaction and spirituality with consideration of gender.

For responding to this hypothesis independent t-test was calculated.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics on life satisfaction and spirituality between Male and Female

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Life Satisfaction	Male	40	45.8500	7.31542	1.15667
	Female	40	50.8500	6.84461	1.08223
Spirituality	Male	40	112.8250	19.69236	3.11364
	Female	40	121.2250	11.40959	1.8040

The result from above table show the number of students, mean, standard deviation and standard error mean on life satisfaction (LS) and spirituality with consideration of gender i.e. male and female.

Table 5. Summary of t-test on life satisfaction and spirituality between Male and Female

	Levene's F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	M. D.	S.E.D.
Life satisfaction	1.408	.239	-3.157	78	.002	-5.0000	1.58401
Spirituality	23.416	.000	-2.334	78	.022	-8.4000	3.59850

The two groups that is male and female student were compared with regards to score on life satisfaction and spirituality because of $P = 0.002 < 0.01$, $P = 0.022 < 0.05$, there was significant difference between two groups on life satisfaction and spirituality. The result showed that female student has higher mean scores of life satisfaction and spirituality in comparison to their male counter parts.

Conclusion

Tate and Forchheimer (2002) found in his study that spirituality showed strong association with life satisfaction and it was a significant predictor of life satisfaction among subjects. Thus our finding is in same direction. Hence, our hypothesis (H1) has been accepted.

Ciarrocchi&Deneke, 2005; Diener& Clifton, 2002; Diener et al., 1999; Ellison, (1991), in their studies found that spirituality variable has been found to most commonly account for 1-9% of the variance in life satisfaction, Therefore our study reports that spirituality has a relation with life satisfaction in students. Students spiritual beliefs therefore may play a significant role in the experience of life satisfaction. Thus, our hypothesis (H2) has been accepted.

Zullig et al. (2007) to evaluate the life satisfaction of college students used the BMSLSS to determine life satisfaction. The authors used college students (91 percent white) to conduct their study on life satisfaction in relationship to dieting behavior. The independent variables consisted of self-described weight, the degree of worry over weight, binge eating behavior, the degree of worry over binge eating behavior, duration of binge eating behavior, vomiting to get rid of food in the past year, and whether students described themselves as having an eating disorder. The dependent variable life satisfaction was condensed into three levels: dissatisfied, midrange, and satisfied. They concluded that “the majority of students reported at least midrange satisfaction of life or greater (76.2 percent of females and 73 percent of males), while approximately 24 percent of females and 27 percent of males reported being dissatisfied with life” (Zullig et. al., 2007, p. 23). Therefore our result is in conformity with the mentioned findings.

In their study, Dennis et al., (2004) in their study found that males' score are lower than females' on spirituality. Findings may be specifically important information for males, who typically score lower on spirituality assessments than females. (Knox, Langehough, Waiters, and Rowley, 1998), The gender difference on the spirituality scale, with females showing higher levels of life scheme, can also be found in the Daaleman et al. (2002b) data in their aged 65 years and older sample: Females, $M = 22.20$, $SD = 3.52$, Males, $M = 20.91$, $SD = 3.90$. In their sample, the effect size is slightly larger, $t(272) = 2.88$, $p = .004$, $d = .25$. Thus our result is confirmatory with the mentioned findings. Hence the our hypothesis (H3) has been accepted.

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