

Relationship Between Spiritual Practices and Psychological Well-Being Among College Students

M. Meeran Mohideen

Department of Psychology, JAIN Centre for Distance and Online Education, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, India
Corresponding Author Email: [mrnmohideen\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:mrnmohideen[at]gmail.com)

Abstract: *The present study examined the relationship between spiritual practices and psychological well-being among college students. A sample of 110 college students aged 18–25 years from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, participated in the study. A correlational research design was employed. Spiritual practices were assessed using the 17-item SpREUK-P SF17 questionnaire developed by Arndt Büssing, while psychological well-being was assessed using the 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale associated with Ryff and Keyes. Frequency and percentage, descriptive analysis, the Shapiro–Wilk test, and Spearman’s rank-order correlation were used for data analysis. The results showed a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between spiritual practices and psychological well-being ($p = .510$, $p < .01$, $N = 110$). The finding indicates that students reporting higher levels of spiritual practices also tended to report higher levels of psychological well-being. However, the correlational design does not establish causality or the direction of the relationship. The findings suggest that spiritual practices may represent one potentially relevant psychological resource in understanding positive functioning among college students.*

Keywords: spiritual practices; psychological well-being; college students; spirituality; Spearman’s rho

1. Introduction

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept involving positive psychological functioning, meaningful relationships, self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Ryff’s model conceptualizes these six dimensions as important components of positive functioning, while Ryff and Keyes further examined the structure of psychological well-being. [1,2] College students experience academic, social, emotional, and developmental changes that may influence their psychological functioning. Consequently, identifying factors associated with positive psychological functioning is an important area of psychological research.

Spirituality generally involves the search for meaning, purpose, connectedness, inner awareness, or transcendence. Spiritual practices may include prayer, meditation, contemplation, reflection, mindfulness, and other personally meaningful activities. Spirituality and religion are related but are not necessarily identical constructs. Spiritual coping has been described as a framework through which individuals interpret difficult experiences, seek comfort, and maintain hope and purpose. [3,4] Meaning-making may also connect spirituality with well-being, as meaning and purpose are relevant to positive psychological functioning. [5,6]

Research involving college students has highlighted the relevance of spiritual and inner development during higher education. [7] Studies of contemplative practices have also reported associations with psychological functioning and stress-related outcomes. [8] More directly, Božek et al. reported positive relationships between spirituality and psychological well-being among students. [9] These findings provide a rationale for examining spiritual practices as an experiential construct rather than focusing only on religious affiliation.

Although previous research has examined spirituality, religious involvement, spiritual coping, mindfulness,

meaning in life, and psychological well-being, further research is warranted on the specific relationship between engagement in spiritual practices and psychological well-being among college students, particularly in the Indian context. The present study therefore examined whether spiritual practices were significantly associated with psychological well-being among college students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Participants

A correlational research design was used. The sample consisted of 110 college or university students aged 18–25 years from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling. Eligibility criteria included current enrollment in an undergraduate or postgraduate programme, ability to complete the questionnaire in English, voluntary participation, informed consent, and completion of the required questionnaires.

2.2 Measures

Spiritual practices were assessed using the SpREUK-P SF17, a 17-item short-form practices questionnaire developed by Arndt Büssing. [10] The measure assesses frequency of engagement in organized and private religious, spiritual, existential, and philosophical practices on a four-point frequency scale. Psychological well-being was assessed using the 18-item version of the Psychological Well-Being Scale based on Ryff’s multidimensional model. [1,2]

2.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

Participants completed the standardized questionnaires voluntarily after being informed about the study and their right to withdraw. Responses were analyzed using frequency and percentage, descriptive statistics, and the Shapiro–Wilk test of normality. Because psychological well-being scores significantly deviated from normality ($p = .017$), Spearman’s

rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationship between spiritual practices and psychological well-being.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants' spiritual and religious beliefs were treated respectfully and without evaluation or criticism.

3. Results

The sample comprised 63 males (57.3%) and 47 females (42.7%). The study's primary analysis showed a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between spiritual practices and psychological well-being.

Table 1: Gender distribution of participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	63	57.3
Female	47	42.7

Table 2: Test of normality

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk W	p
Spiritual practices	0.978	.064
Psychological well-being	0.971	.017

Spiritual practices did not significantly deviate from normality ($W = 0.978$, $p = .064$), whereas psychological well-being scores did ($W = 0.971$, $p = .017$). Therefore, Spearman's rho was selected for the correlation analysis.

Table 3: Spearman correlation between spiritual practices and psychological well-being

Variables	Spiritual practices	Psychological well-being
Spiritual practices	1.000	.510**
Psychological well-being	.510**	1.000

Note. $N = 110$. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). Spearman's $\rho = .510$. The positive coefficient indicates that higher levels of spiritual practices were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being.

4. Discussion

The present study found a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between spiritual practices and psychological well-being among college students ($\rho = .510$, $p < .01$). Thus, the hypothesis that spiritual practices would be significantly positively related to psychological well-being was supported. Students reporting greater engagement in spiritual practices tended to report higher psychological well-being.

The finding is consistent with Božek et al., who reported positive relationships between spirituality and psychological well-being among students.[9] It is also broadly compatible with research emphasizing the role of spiritual and inner development during college.[7] Theoretical perspectives on spiritual coping and meaning-making suggest that spiritual engagement may provide opportunities for reflection, interpretation of stressful experiences, meaning, purpose, and coping.[3,4,6] These processes are theoretically relevant

to several dimensions of Ryff's model, particularly purpose in life, self-acceptance, personal growth, and positive relations.[1]

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. The present study used a cross-sectional correlational design; therefore, it cannot establish that spiritual practices cause better psychological well-being, nor can it establish the direction of the relationship. Other variables, including social support, personality, academic experiences, cultural background, coping style, and individual differences, may also contribute to psychological well-being. In addition, the use of convenience sampling and self-report measures limits generalizability.

The findings have practical relevance for counselling and student support. Counsellors and educational institutions may consider students' spiritual or reflective resources as one component of a holistic understanding of psychological well-being, while respecting individual beliefs and cultural differences. Any such approach should remain inclusive and should not promote a particular religion or belief system.

5. Limitations

The sample was limited to 110 college students recruited through convenience sampling in a limited geographical context. The study relied on self-report measures, which may be affected by response bias or social desirability. The correlational design does not permit causal inference. Other potentially relevant variables, such as social support, academic stress, socioeconomic factors, and personality, were not examined in detail.

6. Conclusion

The study demonstrated a significant positive association between spiritual practices and psychological well-being among college students ($\rho = .510$, $p < .01$). The result supports the relevance of examining spiritual practices as one potentially important correlate of positive psychological functioning. However, the finding should be interpreted as an association rather than a causal effect. Future research using larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal or experimental designs could provide stronger evidence regarding the nature and direction of the relationship.

References

- [1] C. D. Ryff, "Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 57, no. 6, pp. 1069–1081, 1989, doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069.
- [2] C. D. Ryff and C. L. M. Keyes, "The structure of psychological well-being revisited," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 69, no. 4, pp. 719–727, 1995, doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719.
- [3] K. I. Pargament, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice*. New York, NY, USA: Guilford Press, 1997.
- [4] H. G. Koenig, "Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications," *ISRN Psychiatry*,

- vol. 2012, Article 278730, 2012, doi: 10.5402/2012/278730.
- [5] M. F. Steger and P. Frazier, "Meaning in life: One link in the chain from religiousness to well-being," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 574–582, 2005, doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.4.574.
 - [6] C. L. Park, "Religion as a meaning-making framework in coping with life stress," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 61, no. 4, pp. 707–729, 2005, doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00428.x.
 - [7] A. W. Astin, H. S. Astin, and J. A. Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*. San Francisco, CA, USA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
 - [8] S. L. Shapiro, J. A. Astin, S. R. Bishop, and M. J. Cordova, "Mindfulness-based stress reduction for health care professionals: Results from a randomized trial," *International Journal of Stress Management*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 164–176, 2005, doi: 10.1037/1072-5245.12.2.164.
 - [9] A. Božek, P. F. Nowak, and M. Blukacz, "The relationship between spirituality, health-related behavior, and psychological well-being," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 11, Article 1997, 2020, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01997.
 - [10] A. Büssing, F. Reiser, A. Michalsen, and K. Baumann, "Engagement of patients with chronic diseases in spiritual and secular forms of practice: Results with the shortened SpREUK-P SF17 questionnaire," *Integrative Medicine: A Clinician's Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 28–38, 2012.

Author Profile

Meeran Mohideen has completed a B.Sc. in Physics and a B.Tech. in Mechanical Engineering. He is qualified as an Analyst II in Vibration Analysis, He is also a businessperson he is pursuing an MSc in Psychology (Counselling).