

Spirituality, Death Anxiety, Transliminality among Middle Aged Adults

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Abstract: *Introduction:* Spirituality connotes the self's existential search for ultimate meaning through an individualized understanding of the sacred (Atchley, 1997; Roof, 1993, 1999; Tillich, 1963). Death anxiety is a "feeling of dread, apprehension or solicitude (anxiety) when one thinks of the process of dying, or ceasing to 'be'". (Farley G, 2010). Transliminality is defined as "a hypothetical tendency for psychological material to cross (trans) thresholds (limines) into or out of consciousness" (Thalbourne & Houran, 2000). Atchley tried to use a nonreligious approach to describe spirituality as 'deep inner silence', 'insight', 'compassions', 'connection with the ground of being', 'transcendence of personal self', 'wonder', 'transformation', and a 'concept that sensitizes us to a region of human experience and tells us generally what to look for in that region'. (Lavretsky, 2010). Jung (1943, 1964) argued that around midlife individuals typically begin to turn inward to explore the more spiritual aspect of the self. (Wink & Dillon, 2002). Statistically significant correlation was found between middle adulthood and death anxiety. (Nivya, Keerthi, Ajayan & Pavithra, 2013). Previous researches have studied how spirituality, death anxiety and transliminality individually play a role in middle adulthood. The objective of this study is to find the relationship between spirituality, transliminality and death anxiety among middle adulthood men and women. *Methodology:* Cross sectional research design was used. Using purposive sampling techniques, a sample of 110 middle aged men and women (50 men and 60 women) of age ranging from 40-60 were selected. Tools used in the study to collect the data were Spirituality scale (Bindhu & Swaminathan, 2007), Death Anxiety scale (Templer, D., 1970) and Revised Transliminality Scale (Lange, R., Thalbourne, MA, Houran, J., Storm, L., 2000). *Result:* Karl Pearson product moment correlation was used to find out the relationship. Independent sample t test was used to find out the difference between men and women. It was found that there was significant relationship between Spirituality and death anxiety. Also, it was found that the relationship of transliminality with spirituality and death anxiety was not significant. No differences in all three dimensions were found between males and females of middle adulthood.

Keywords: Death Anxiety, Middle Adulthood, Spirituality, Transliminality

1. Introduction

Middle adulthood is the phase of life that succeeds early adulthood and precedes old age. The US Census lists the category middle age around 45 to 64, while prominent psychologist Erik Erikson saw it ending a little later and defines middle adulthood as between 40 and 65. Jung (1943, 1964) argued that around midlife individuals typically begin to turn inward to explore the more spiritual aspect of the self. Prior to this stage, external constraints associated with launching a career and establishing a family tend to be paramount. The inward turn that characterizes the second half of adulthood complements, according to Jung, the outer directed orientation of young adulthood in a way that expands one's sense of the self and thus completes the process of self-realization. (Wink & Dillon, 2002). Spirituality is the product of the maturational process that occurs in the course of adult life (Alexander et al., 1990; Sinnott, 1994). Atchley tried to use a nonreligious approach to describe spirituality as 'deep inner silence', 'insight', 'compassions', 'connection with the ground of being', 'transcendence of personal self', 'wonder', 'transformation', and a 'concept that sensitizes us to a region of human experience and tells us generally what to look for in that region'. (Lavretsky, 2010).

Death anxiety is a "feeling of dread, apprehension or solicitude (anxiety) when one thinks of the process of dying, or ceasing to 'be'". (Farley G, 2010). When we're young busy enjoying the sense of immortality and indestructibility,

death may seem so far in the future as not to much matter. But sooner or later, reality can hit, sometimes followed by a surging fear of death or ongoing death anxiety. Death anxiety involves the dread of no longer existing, or complete annihilation. It hits on the mental and spiritual levels, bringing an awareness of the loss of existence. A research study observed that the absence of a relation between spirituality and fear of death reflected the spiritual individual's emphasis on personal searching, creativity, and the positive use of reminiscence. (Wink .P, 2006). This calls for a study to find the relationship between spirituality, death anxiety and transliminality.

The origins of transliminality trace back to 1991, when it was first conceptualized as "an openness or receptiveness to impulses and experiences whose sources are in preconscious (or unconscious) processes" (Thalbourne, 1991). Empirical evidence for a factor that was to become known as transliminality arose from a study by Thalbourne and Delin (1994). They administered a series of tests to samples of manic-depressives, schizophrenics and university students. It was found that scores on belief in the paranormal correlated with scores on measures of creative personality, mystical experience, magical ideation, and history of manic-like and depressive experience. Transliminality is currently defined as "a hypothesised tendency for psychological material to cross (trans) thresholds (limines) into or out of consciousness" (Thalbourne&Houran, 2000).

1.1 Need for the Study

Earlier studies have attempted to study the relationship between spirituality and death anxiety but not that of with transliminality as it can also be a potential influence on death anxiety. The current study explores the relationship between Spirituality, Death anxiety and transliminality among the middle age people and the difference of the same between men and women.

1.2 Methodology

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the present investigation are as follows:

- To explore the relationship between Spirituality and Death anxiety among middle aged adults.
- To explore the relationship between Spirituality and Transliminality among middle aged adults.
- To explore the gender differences in Spirituality among middle aged adults.
- To explore the gender differences in Death anxiety among middle aged adults.
- To explore the gender differences in Transliminality among middle aged adults.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant relationship between Spirituality and death anxiety among middle aged adults.

Hypothesis 2- There will be no significant relationship between Spirituality and transliminality middle aged adults.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant relationship between Death anxiety and transliminality among middle aged adults.

Hypothesis 4- There will be no significant difference in spirituality among male and female middle aged adults

Hypothesis 5- There will be no significant difference in the level of Death Anxiety among male and female middle aged adults.

Hypothesis 6: There will be no significant difference in the level of among male and female middle aged adults.

1.3 Sample

The target group for the study was chosen by purposive sampling method, a sample of 100 middle aged adults (50 men and 60 women) of age ranging from 40-60 were selected for the present investigation.

1.4 Research design

The present study adopted an exposed –factor research design to explore the relationship between Spirituality, Death anxiety and Transliminality among middle aged adults

1.5 Tools

The following were the tools used for the present study.

- 1) Spirituality Scale (Bindhu & Swaminathan, 2007)
- 2) Death Anxiety Scale (Templer, 1970)

- 3) Revised Transliminality Scale (Lange, R., Thalbourne, M. A., Houran, J.& Storm, L., 2000)

1.6 Description of the Tools

Spirituality Scale

The spirituality scale developed by Bindu & Swaminathan (2007) is a 25 item scale with a four point response scale ranging from ‘Almost Never’, ‘Sometimes’, ‘often’ & ‘Almost Always’. The scale has a few items that need to be reverse scored with a minimum and maximum possible score. The reliability coefficient is 0.67 (test-retest method). Inter-item correlation coefficient ranged between 0.65 and 0.78. Item correlation coefficient ranged from 0.72 to 0.81. Rational validity is 0.82. The scale is under revision for standardised norms.

Death Anxiety Scale

The Death Anxiety Scale developed by Donald Templer (1970) is also a 25 item scale with a five point response scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Strongly Disagree’. The scale has eight items that has to reverse scored. The reliability coefficient is 0.55. A separate correlation for each subscale was not reported. Many researchers have reported positive correlations between the Death Anxiety Scale by Templer and other Scales proving the concurrent validity of the scale.

Revised Transliminality Scale

The concept of transliminality ("a hypothesized tendency for psychological material to cross thresholds into or out of consciousness") was anticipated by William James (1902/1982), but it was only recently given an empirical definition by Thalbourne in terms of a 29-item Transliminality Scale. The 17-item Revised Transliminality Scale (or RTS) that corrects age and gender biases, is unidimensional by a Rasch criterion, and has a reliability of.82. The scale defines a probabilistic hierarchy of items that address magical ideation, mystical experience, absorption, hyperaesthesia, manic experience, dream interpretation, and fantasy proneness. These findings validate the suggestions by James and Thalbourne that some mental phenomena share a common underlying dimension with selected sensory experiences (such being overwhelmed by smells, bright lights, sights, and sounds). Low scores on transliminality remain correlated with "tough mindedness" in on Cattell 16PF test, as well as "self-control" and "rule consciousness, " whereas high scores are associated with "abstractedness" and an "openness to change" on that test. An independent validation study confirmed the predictions implied by our definition of transliminality. Implications for test construction are discussed.

1.7 Procedure

The data collection process took about a week. Place in two phases. Informed consent was obtained from the samples of the study. The samples were given a demographic profile and followed by Spirituality Scale, Death Anxiety Scale and Revised Transliminality Scale..The questionnaires were administered abiding to all the norms of testing.

1.8 Statistical Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software package (windows version 16.0) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the baseline data and Karl Pearson's Product moment correlation, 't' test were used to analyse the relationship between the variables and Independent sample t test were used to determine any significant gender differences.

2. Results and Discussion

Table 2.1: Shows the mean age of the sample

Sample Character	Gender	N	Mean
Age	Male	50	52.56
	Female	60	50.03

From the above table it is inferred that the mean age of the male sample is 52.6 and for female sample is 50.03. Thus the mean age of the male subjects were 53 years and the female subjects were 50 years.

Table 2.2: Shows Sample Characteristics

Sample Characteristics	Gender	
	Male	Female
Frequency	50	60
Percentage	45.5%	54.5%

From the above table, it is inferred that among 110 subjects, 50 subjects were male and 60 subjects were female.

Table 2.3: Shows Inter-correlation between Spirituality, Death Anxiety and Transliminality among middle adults

Variables	Spirituality	Death Anxiety	Transliminality
Spirituality	1	.333**	.217*
Death Anxiety	.333**	1	.022
Transliminality	.217*	.022	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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

From the above table 2.3, it was inferred that there is a significant relationship between Spirituality and Death Anxiety. Their correlation level (r) is .333 being significant at the 0.01 level. Hence, the **Hypothesis 1 stated, "There will be no significant relationship between Spirituality and Death Anxiety" is rejected.** The positive relationship between Spirituality and Death Anxiety maybe because people who are anxious about death seek to explore the spiritual world as their last resort.

Also, it is observed that there is no significant relationship between Spirituality and Transliminality though there exists a positive correlation of .217 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, **Hypothesis 2 that states, "There will be no significant relationship between Spirituality and Transliminality" is accepted.**

Though there is no significant relationship between Spirituality and transliminality, there exists a mild relationship that might have resulted due to the spiritual individual's emphasis on personal searching; creativity and the positive use of reminiscence that helped him/her attain a

certain level of transliminality. Since an individual begins to get interested in spirituality during middle adulthood, he/she would not have received the full impact of spirituality on his/her transliminal skills because of which there is no significant relationship between spirituality and transliminality among men and women of middle adulthood.

The table also shows that there is no significant relationship between Death Anxiety and Transliminality with the correlation level being 0.022. Hence, **the Hypothesis 3, "There will be no significant relationship between Death Anxiety and Transliminality" is accepted.** Since transliminality and death anxiety are two extremes of a continuum, a person who has high levels of transliminality might not have high levels of death anxiety.

Table 2.4: Shows gender differences in Spirituality, Death Anxiety and Transliminality among middle aged males and females

Variables	Males		Females		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Spirituality	67.56	14.38	68.95	12.64	.54 (NS)
Death Anxiety	77.92	14.5	7.72	12.95	.460 (NS)
Transliminality	8.20	6.14	8.48	5.23	.261 (NS)

NS- Non Significant

From the above table, it is inferred that explored that there was no significant difference in Spirituality (t=0.54), Death Anxiety (t=0.4) and Transliminality (t=0.2) between males and females of middle aged adults. This shows that the males and females of the sample population are almost equally involved in spirituality and have equitable influence of transliminality and death anxiety. Hence the following Hypotheses, **Hypothesis 4, "There will be no significant difference in spirituality among male and female middle aged adults", Hypothesis 5, " There will be no significant difference in the level of Death Anxiety among male and female middle aged adults."** and **Hypothesis 6, " There will be no significant difference in the level of among male and female middle aged adults." were accepted.**

3. Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that there was a positive relationship between Spirituality and Death Anxiety and that there was no significant relationship between Spirituality and Transliminality though there exists a positive correlation between them. Further there were no significant difference in Spirituality, Death Anxiety and Transliminality between males and females of middle aged adults.

4. Implication of the Study

Transliminality is an obscure but a very essential aspect of middle adulthood. It is the hypersensitivity to psychological material like imagery, ideation, and creativity originating in the unconscious and/or in the external environment. While, Spirituality can have both a positive as well as an unhealthy influence, one can embrace his/her transliminal skills as well as over think about death and afterlife and be anxious about it. This study provides a scope for middle adults to assess their spiritual life and take the best out of this. According to the theory of psychosocial development, Erikson's idea of

generativity- to create or nurture things that will outlast them by creating a positive change that benefits other people- is enabled and enhanced if the individual encourages his/her transliminal skills. Else, if the individual is anxious about death and afterlife, it will lead to inactivity and meaninglessness in life. Erickson terms it as *stagnation*. Also, it will help them to avoid the anxiety about death during old adulthood and achieve personal development by increasing their transliminal skills like creativity, personal searching, etc.

5. Limitation

Due to time constraint, the sample size is small with only 110 samples. Thus the sample cannot be considered as representative of all middle aged people and cannot be generalised to the entire population. The study used correlation to ascertain the relationship between the variables, However cause and effect were not studied. Only self-reports were considered for data collection and analysis which may suffer from response bias.

6. Strength of the Study

The limitations of the study are offset by several strengths. Perhaps, most importantly fills an important gap in the literature by examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles among students in the Indian context.

7. Suggestions for Future Research

The research study gives suggestions for future studies to be conducted by selecting a larger sample in order to generalise this study.

8. Declaration

I solemnly declare that the manuscript submitted is original and the same has neither been previously published nor submitted elsewhere. In case of publication of my manuscript, the copyright of the same will vest with the editor/publisher.

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