

A Consequential Study of Religion Gender and Age Group on Spiritual Well-Being among Elderly People



Shahin Zafar

Post Doctoral Fellow,
Department of Psychology,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh, U.P., India

Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the religion, gender and age differences on spiritual well-being. The study was carried on 400 male and female elderly people (200 male and 200 females) of Aligarh District. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBs) was developed by Ellison (1983) is a 20 items self – report measure consisting of two sub – scale implemented to assess religious well-being (RWB) and existential well-being (EWB) was used in the present study. Data was analyzed by using t- test to see the religion, gender and age difference between mean scores of Hindu, Muslim, male and female elderly people on spiritual well-being. Finding of the study revealed that the mean score of Muslim elderly people on spiritual well-being is greater than the mean score of Hindu elderly people. Other finding of the present study is that there is no significant difference between male and female elderly people on spiritual well-being.. The present study also reveals that theyoung old age and middle old age elderly people are having significant difference on spiritual well-being.

Keywords: Spiritual Well-Being, Religion, Gender, Age and Elderly People.

Introduction

There are positive and negative elements of older in age and both have vital connections to spiritual and religious development. If spirituality represents a search for the sacred in connectedness and meaning, older people clearly revealed a prime time for spiritual development. Older groups must cope with a number of physical, emotional, relational or existential losses and changes (Leder, 1996). These challenges the individual to maintain a sense of meaning and hope in the face of loss and potential or actual disability. MacKinlay (2001) pointed that they also call the person to maintain relationships rather than surrender to isolation. This view suggested a successful aging might be thought of as maintaining meaningful life in the face of declines and challenges (Wong, 1998a). Spirituality involves a struggle to preserve, reframe worldviews to explain and cope with suffering and maintain a sense of balance and self- reliance. Thus, there is a close association between spirituality and the search for meaning in old age and the ability to be resilient in the face of life's challenges (Langer, 2004). Precisely, how these changes are perceived strongly influenced by cultural attitudes towards aging and the body, which tend to be quite negative in western cultures (Lyon, 2004).

Aging process is of course a biological reality which has its own dynamic largely beyond human control. The age of 60 to 65 roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries, is said to be begging of old age in many parts of developing countries chronological times has little or no importance in the meaning of old age. Old age in many developing countries have seen to begin the point when active contribution is no longer possible (Gorman 2000).Gerontologist have recognised the diversity of old age by defining subgroup ,young old (60 to 69),the middle old (70 to 79)and the very old (80 +)

Spirituality is a universal human experience, crossing cultural and geographical boundaries, although its substance and form may differ. In general, spirituality is something that everyone can experience, help us to find meaning and purpose in the things we value .It can bring hope in time of suffering and loss and encourage us to seek the best relationship with ourselves, other and what lies beyond. Traditionally spirituality was closely related to or synonymous with the concept of religiousness .How over the

years, despite much work have been done, little consensus has been reached about these two terms actually mean (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). There various definitions about these two concepts have been suggested by different scholars. Some scholars have suggested different scholars. Some scholars have suggested one to be the sub domain of the other while other scholars suggesting the opposite. Kelly (1995) posited that spirituality is a subjective experience of the transcendent nature of the institutional and religious expressions spirituality. In the words of Polanski (2002) spirituality is a universal experience, less constrained by the doctrines associated with specific religions. Benson, Roehlkepartain and Rude (2003) support the possibility that there is significant overlap between religion and spirituality, but that both religious development have dimensions that fall beyond the spirituality assumes the realization of non religious goals, such as identity, affiliation, health and well-being (Sawatzky et al. 2005). Religiosity, however, has often been described as being more oriented towards institutions traditions, while spirituality had been conceptualised as a broader construct, without confessional bonds (Sulmasy (2002) Pragerm (1997) defines religion in its broadest sense, as a multidimensional construct including both intuitional religious expressions, such as dogma and ritual, and person religious expressions, such as feeling of spirituality, beliefs about the sacred, and religious practices.

Spiritual Well-Being

Spiritual well-being can be defined as a feeling of communicating with the others, having meaning and goal in life and having belief and relation with an exalted power (Hawks et al., 1995) Ellison (1983) states that spiritual well-being includes a psycho-social and also a religious element. Further, Ellison (1983) discussed definition of spiritual well-being affirms life in a relationship with God, self, community, and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness. Gomez and Fisher (2003) define spiritual well-being in terms of "a state of being, reflecting positive feelings, behaviours, and cognition of relationship with oneself, others, the transcendent and nature, that in turn provide the individual with a sense of identity, wholeness, satisfaction, joy, contentment, beauty, love, respect, positive attitudes, inner peace and harmony, and purpose and direction in life" (p.1976). It is the spirit of human being which enables and motivate on individual to search for meaning and purpose in life. Spiritual well-being affects and is affected by our physical state, feelings thoughts and relationship. Spiritual well-being can have a dramatic impact on various aspect of our wellbeing, particularly with respect to finding overall peace, harmony and happiness with our life and surrounding

Review of Literature

Purohit and Ajawani (2011) studied (30 males and females) subject on spiritual well being and groups were divided in high and low spirituality. Finding revealed high spiritual practice related with more happiness and in females it was more than

males. Agarwal (2014) loneliness causes people to feel empty and unwanted. People who are lonely often crave human contact, but their state of mind makes it more difficult to form connections with other people. Spirituality is an intra- and trans personal experiences that is shaped and directed by experiences of individual and of communities in which they live out their lives. Aim of this study to analyze loneliness or spiritual well-being among elderly people with psychological disorder. The research design of the study was cross sectional. The sample size was 160 (80 residing of old age home and 80 residing in their home). Finding of the study is the majority of the respondents felt lonelier in old age home rather residing in their home and 81.25% and 77.5% respondents believe in God. Khan (2014) studied spiritual well-being and psychological well-being among Muslim students. The aim of the study was to investigate the association between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being and also to investigate gender difference. The study was carried on 100 undergraduate Muslim students from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Results showed significant positive correlation existed between overall spiritual well-being and psychological well-being. Dimensions of spiritual well-being scale (religious well-being scale, existential well-being) were also found to be positively correlated with psychological well-being. Furthermore, there was no significant gender difference found on overall spiritual well-being, religious well-being and psychological well-being but males and females were found to be significantly different on existential well-being. Seraji, Shojaezade, and Rakhshani (2016) conducted a study on spiritual well-being of the elderly. This cross-sectional study was conducted on 117 elderly people. They were selected through population based cluster and random sampling to participate in the study. The result showed that spiritual health of the majority of the participants was from moderate to high level. The results indicate that the participant's spiritual health is not related to any of the demographic variables. Pilger, Santos, Lentsck, Marques, Kusumota (2017) studied spiritual well-being and quality of life of older adults in haemodialysis. This study was conducted to analyze the relationship between spiritual well-being, economic, religious and health variables and the quality of life of older adults undergoing haemodialysis. Sample was 169 older adults undergoing haemodialysis. Results showed that most of the older adults attained a moderate level of total spiritual well-being. In terms of quality of life the psychological domains and social relationship domain presented the highest mean scores. The WHOQOL BREF domains were positively correlated with the subjective well-being scale, with statistical significance among all domains and subscales except the environmental domain.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has set the following objectives:

1. To find out the influence of religion on spiritual well-being among elderly people.

2. To examine the impact of gender on spiritual well-being among elderly people.
3. To see the influence of age group as young old and middle old elderly people on spiritual well-being.

Hypotheses of the study

The present study has set the following hypotheses:

1. There is no influence of religion on spiritual well-being among elderly people.
2. There is no impact of gender on spiritual well-being among elderly people.
3. There is no influence of age group as young old age and middle old age group elderly people on spiritual well-being.

Methodology

Sample and sampling Technique

To comply with the objective of present study 400 male and female elderly people (200 male and 200 female) constituted two categories of elderly people young old (275) and middle old age (125) were selected through the convenient sampling techniques from Aligarh District.

Measure: The Spiritual Well-Being Scale

(SWBs) was developed by Ellison (1983) is a 20 items self-report measure consisting of two sub-scale implemented to assess religious well-being (RWB) and existential well-being (EWB). Each

Results and Discussion

Table- 1: Influence of religion on spiritual well-being among Elderly people.

Variable	Religion	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig. Level
Spiritual Well-being	Hindu	200	74.08	15.736	12.267	.000
	Muslim	200	91.11	11.740		

It is evident from the table-1 that the mean and SD of Hindu religion were found 74.08 and 15.736 where as the mean and SD of Muslim religion were found 91.11 and 11.740 on spiritual well-being. The two groups compared with respect to mean, t-value was found 12.267 which is significant at .01 levels. The mean score of Muslim elderly people on spiritual well-being is greater than the mean score of Hindu elderly people. The result may be interpreted that the Muslim religious elderly people having more spiritual well-being as compared to Hindu religious

of the subscales consists of 10 items. Each items of the scale is rated on a 6 point Likert scale, with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6), with no midpoint. All responses are totalled to yield three scales scores relating to a total SWB scores ranging from 20-120 and score for each of the RWB and EWB subscales ranging from 10-60. A high score indicative of higher levels of spiritual well-being. The RWB subscale assesses the relationship with God, whereas the EWB subscales assesses how well an individual is adjusted to one's self, community and surroundings, referring specifically to life purpose, satisfactions and relations with others. High test-retest reliabilities ($r=.73$ to $.99$), internal consistency reliabilities ($r=.78$ to $.94$), construct validity and to factor structure of the scale (Ellison & Smith, 1999).

Procedure of data collection

To collect the data for the study researcher visited different religious places and individual houses of elderly people of Aligarh District. Participants were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher would access to their data.

Data Analysis

In the present study for analyzing the obtained data, the investigator has used t-test to compare the religion, gender and age differences on spiritual well-being.

elderly people. The result showed that the Hindu and Muslim religious elderly people have statistically significant difference on spiritual well-being. Religion plays an important role in the lives of many people. Researches suggests that people who engage in religious activities having higher level of well-being (Diener et al, 2011; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Oishi & Diener, 2014). Finding of the present study revealed that the Muslim elderly people are more spiritual well-being as compared to Hindu elderly people.

Table-2: Impact of gender on spiritual well-being among Elderly people.

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig. Level
Spiritual Well-being	Male	200	82.92	14.965	.405	.686
	Female	200	82.26	17.522		

Table-2 indicates the results that the mean score of male elderly people was found 82.92 with SD 14.965 and mean score of female elderly people was found 82.26 with SD 17.522. The mean difference between male and female elderly people on spiritual well-being was found t-value .405 which is not significant. The result may be interpreted that the both group male and female elderly people having almost same spiritual well-being. On the basis of mean male elderly people having little higher spiritual well-being as compared to female elderly people but it is not significant difference among both groups. The similar result was also found in the study of Khan (2014) that the male and female are not differing on spiritual well-being.

It is commonly held view that women participate in religious activities more than men. Religiosity may be perceived less positively by men than women, because men participate in less religious activity, report being less devout, and identify less with being religious (Thompson & Remmes, 2002). Gender differences in religiosity may be explained by traditional gender role expectation. For example, women are expected to communal i.e. nurturing, cooperative and submissive, whereas men are expected to be agentic i.e. independent, self-reliant (Barry, Bacon & Child, 1957; Eagly, 1987). But the finding of the present study revealed that there was no gender differences existed on spiritual well-being among male and female elderly people. This finding is in contrast with the various researches, results that

showed gender differences on spirituality and religiosity, such as Kellums (1995) and Hammermeister, et.al (20050).

Now on the basis of this contradictory finding it can be said that today's there is gender equality

Table-3: Influence of Age group as young old age and middle old age elderly people on spiritual well-being.

Variable	Age	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig. Level
Spiritual Well-being	Young Old Age	275	80.17	16.593	3.533	.000
	Middle Old Age	125	85.64	13.214		

Table-3 indicate that the mean and SD of young old age elderly people were found 80.17 and 16.593 where as the mean and SD of middle old age elderly people were found 85.64 and 13.214 on spiritual well-being. Both the groups compared on spiritual well-being and t-ratio was found 3.533 which is significant at .01 levels. The result of the present study interpreted that the middle old age elderly people are significantly having more inclination towards spiritual well-being as compared to young old age elderly people. On the basis of the finding we can say that the middle old age elderly people involved most of the time in religious activities and they have higher level of spiritual well-being as compared to young old age elderly people.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study shows that the Muslim religious elderly people having more spiritual well-being as compared to Hindu religious elderly people. Another finding of the present study revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female elderly people on spiritual well-being. This result may interpreted that the both group (male and female elderly people) having almost same spiritual well-being. Other finding of the study also interpreted that the middle old age elderly people having more inclination towards spiritual well-being as compared to young old age elderly people.

The implications of this study can be carried forward into both elderly and other age group of people to develop hope, religious practices as prayer, yoga and developing positive life style and minimizing the loneliness in the life of older people. Religion are helping and interacting in society and community and understanding the other religious values. Religion plays an important role in society including the extents of people's beliefs, commitments and levels of engagements with the particular religion. Good habits, honesty, simplicity and the feeling of forgiving others an material free mind of religious people can be a symbol for the sinner to mould their hard and take them to the right pathway.

References

Agarwal, S. (2014). *Loneliness and Spiritual Well-being among Elderly Having Psychological Disorder*. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 3(6), 2289-2290.

Barry, H., Bacon, M.D., & Child, I.L.(1957). *A crosscultural study of sex differences in socialization*. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 55 (37), 327-332.

Benson, P.L., Rohelkepartain, E. C., & Rude, S.P.(2003). *Spiritual development in childhood and adolescence: Toward a field*

almost in every field. Male and female both are going through same socialization process and they are treated in a same manner. So male female have almost equal level of spiritual well-being.

of inquiry. *Applied Development Science*, 7(3), 205-213.

Diener, E., Tay, L., & Myers, D.G.(2011). *The religion paradox: If religion makes people happy, why are so many dropping out?* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101 (6), 1278-1290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024402>.

Eagly, A.H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behaviour: A social role interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ ; Erlbaum.

Ellision, C.W. (1983). *Spiritual well-being :Conceptualization and measurement*. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 11, 330-340.

Gomez, R., & Fisher, J.W. (2003). *Domains of spiritual well-being and development and validation of the spiritual well-being Questionnaire*. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35, 1975-1991.

Gorman, M (2000). *Southern Africa Journal of Gerontology*. October 2000.9(2) HAI, 1999 "Contribution of Older Person to Development: the South African Study" (London).

Hackney, C.H., & Sanders, G.S. (2002). *Religiosity and mental health : A meta analysis of recent studies*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42, 43-55. Doi: 10.1111/1468-5906.t01-1-00160

Hammermeister, J., Flint, M., Alayli, A., Ridnour, A., Peterson, M.(2005). *Gender differences in spiritual well-being: are females more spiritually well than males?* *American Journal of Health Studies*, 20 (2), 80-84.

Hawks, S.R., Hull, M.I., Thalman, R.L., &Richins, P.M. (1995). *Review of spiritual health: Definition, role and intervention strategies in health promotion*. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 9,371-378.

Kellums, K.J.(1995). *Gender analysis of the spiritual well-being scale*. *Unpublished science dissertation*, George Fox University Newberg, OR.

Kelly, E. W.(1995) *Spirituality and religion in counselling and psychotherapy: Diversity in theory and practice*. Alexandria, V.A: American Counselling Association.

Ctation. *Association of Psychological science*, ISBN 978-81-929260-0-1.

Langer ,N.,(2004)*The importance of Spirituality in Later life* .*Gerontology and Geriatrics Education*,20,41-50.

- Leder, D. (1996). *Spiritual community in later life: A modest proposal*. *Journal of Aging*
- Lyon, K.B.(2004). *Faith and development in late adulthood* .In F. Kelcourse -(Ed) *Human Development and Faith life- cycle of body, mind and soul*. (pp.269-284).st Louis, MO: Chalice Press.
- McKinelay,E.(2001). *The spiritual dimension of caring :Applying a model for spiritual tasks of aging* .*Journal of Religious Gerontology*. 12 (3/4)151-166.
- Oishi, S., Diener, E. (2014). *Residents of poor nations have a greater sense of meaning in life than residents of wealthy nations*. *Psychological Science*, 25, 422-430.
- Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Thompson, E. H.Jr., & Remmes, K. R.(2002). *Does Masculinity Thwart Being Religious ? An Examination of Older Men's Religiousness*. *Journal for the Scientific study of Religion*, 41, 521-532.
- Pilger, C., Santos,R.O.P.,Lentsck, M.H., Marques,S., &Kusumota,L.(2017). *Spiritual well-being and quality of life of older adults in hemodialysis*, *Rev Bras Enferm*; 70(4) 689-96. {Thematic Edition "Good Practices: Fundamentals of care in Gerontological Nursing"}.
- Polonaski,P.J.(2002).*Exploring Spiritual beliefs in relation to Adelerian Theory*. *Counselling and Values*,46,127-136.
- Purohit, A., and Ajawani,J.C. (2011). *Impact of spiritual practices on happiness in middle ages*. Paper presented at International conference on positivism:Path to success,satisfaction and Bliss. Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur.
- Sawatzky, R., Ratner, P. A., & Chiu, L. (2005).*A meta-analysis of the relationship between spirituality and quality of life*.*Social Indicators Research*, 72, 153-188.
- Seraji,M.,Shojaezade,D., &Rakshani, F.(2016). *The Relationship between Spiritual Well- Being and Quality of Life among Elderly People Residing in ZahedanCity(South –East of Iran)*.*Elderly Health Journal* .,2(2):84-88
- Studies, 10, 103-116.
- Sulmasy, D. (2002). *Abiosychosocial-spiritual model for the care of the patients at the end of life*.*The Gerontologist*, 42(3), 24-33.
- Validation of the spiritual well- being questionnaire*. *Personality and Individual differences*, 35,1975-1991.
- Wong ,P.T.P (1998a).*Implicit theory of meaningful life and the development of the Personal meaning profile*.In P.T.P.Wong&P.S.Fry (Eds) *The human quest for meaning:Ahandbook of psychological research and clinical applications* (pp.111-140).Mahwah, NJ: Erlhaum.
- Zinnbauer ,B. J.,Pragment, K. I.,Cole.,B.,Rye,M.S., Buttler,E.M. belavich,T.G.,Hipp,K.M.,Scott,A.B.,&Kadar,J. L.,(1997).*Religion and Spirituality:Unfuzzifying the fuzzy*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of the Religion*,36(4),549-564.