

## **A Study on Interconnections among Sprituality, Religion and Well-Being**

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**ABSTRACT-** *This article describes the relation between spirituality and well-being. First, we started with the term religious groups, and then we define the term religion. We define spirituality from religion by focusing on the inner attitude of living life directly related to the sacred that is not restricted to a membership of a religion. Then, spirituality is proposed as an element of well-being. At the end, the author has defined the relationship between spirituality and well-being. The association between religion and happiness, religion and life satisfaction, or religion and well-being the data collection is purely based on the secondary data as text books, research articles etc.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Religion is an organized, community-based system of beliefs, while spirituality resides within the individual and what they personally believe. “The idea of religion and spirituality is like a rectangle versus a square. Within religion there is spirituality, but if you have spirituality, it doesn’t necessarily mean you have religion,” says someone who practices both religion and spirituality.

#### **Religion and religious groups**

The term “religious group” means a set of individuals whose identity as such is distinctive in terms of common religious creed, beliefs, doctrines, practices, or rituals. Religion and spirituality are both rooted in trying to understand the meaning of life and, in some cases, how a relationship with a higher power may influence that meaning. While religion and spirituality are similar in foundation, they are very different in practice.

#### **Spirituality and religion**

Spirituality as an element of well-being

Spirituality, despite its significance for individuals and institutions, has mostly been neglected by psychologists and other mental health professionals in this century. It has been argued that it cannot, or even should not, be studied scientifically. In more recent years, however, there have been signs of renewed interest in the study of spirituality and religion. Recent years have witnessed encouraging developments in research interest in the interaction of spirituality and mental health, and this interest is currently growing.

Since time immemorial, it is believed that spiritual experiences and practices are significant in life and play an important part in establishing an integrated personality. Several studies have shown that the majority of practicing psychologists, though not involved in organized religion, consider spirituality important not only to their personal lives but also to their clinical work.

In this article, we would like to differentiate spirituality from religion. Both have the search for the sacred in common. In definitions on religion, quite often it is viewed as a covenant faith community institution with beliefs and concepts to give the sacred a specific place in life and that encourages morality. Spirituality is usually associated with living by one’s inner truth to produce positive attitudes and relationships in your life. Definitions of spirituality deal with the ultimate goal in life, the experience of a transcendent dimension that gives meaning to existence, and the capacity to experience the sacred. When asked to differentiate religion from spirituality, people associate religiousness usually with authoritarianism, religious orthodoxy, dogma, a closed community, and church attendance. Spirituality, in contrast, is associated with a focus on the essence of life, creativeness, spirit, mystical experiences, new age beliefs.

In this view, religion has a strong institutionalized, community focus, whereas spirituality has a more individually, experiential focus. It should not be forgotten, however, that in essence, religion signifies a bond between man and a greater-than-human power. The rituals that are part of every religion are essentially meant to help the individual feel the presence of such a power and to give them a place in day-to-day living. One can see a similarity between the distinction between spirituality and religion, and the intrinsic and extrinsic orientation on religiousness. An extrinsic orientation focuses on using religion to provide security, comfort, status, or social support. Religion is used for utilitarian and external motives. In contrast, to people with an intrinsic orientation,

religion is not a mode of conformity, a crutch, a tranquilizer, or a way to achieve status. It is an internal attitude focused on the unification with the sacred and living an unselfish and compassionate life. “The extrinsically motivated person uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically oriented lives his religion”

In the remainder of this article, we will use the term spirituality to indicate a way of living that is not restricted to a once-a-week worship service or that is directly related to membership of a religion, although it can be. Spirituality signifies the inner attitude of living life directly related to the sacred.

### **Research studies on spirituality and well-being**

There is a growing stream of empirical evidence that confirms the link between spirituality and well-being. For example, in a two-year exploratory group study of participants in spiritual healing practices, found that the healing which occurred was related to various measures of psychological wellness, defined as the construct of subjective health. There is also a correlating studies investigating the relationship between spirituality and psychological mood states in response to life change, found that spiritual well-being, existential well-being, and a spiritual outlook showed a strong inverse relationship with negative moods, suggesting that spiritual variables may influence well-being.

### **Benefits of religion**

Both religion and spirituality can have a positive impact on mental health. In some ways, they provide the same impact. For example: Both religion and spirituality can help a person tolerate stress by generating peace, purpose and forgiveness. But benefits generally vary between the two due to their different nature.

#### **Mental Health Benefits of Religion**

Religion gives people something to believe in, provides a sense of structure and typically offers a group of people to connect with over similar beliefs. These facets can have a large positive impact on mental health—research suggests that religiosity reduces suicide rates, alcoholism and drug use. Here are some of religion’s main mental health benefits.

#### **Community**

- Initiates social connections with other members
- Creates a sense of belonging to a group
- Offers trustworthy and safe social engagement

#### **Ritual**

- Helps people to cope with difficult life situations (i.e. a ceremony for the loss of a loved one)
- Provides structure, regularity and predictability
- Allows for time to rest as well as holidays and other special times of the year

#### **Teachings**

- Provides guidelines to live by (i.e. the importance of doing the right thing)
- Teaches compassion, forgiveness and gratitude
- Identifies life lessons, even from challenging situations

### **Mental Health Benefits of Spirituality**

Spirituality is a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves—it helps a person look within and understand themselves while also figuring out the greater answer of how they fit in to the rest of the world. In other words: It helps people understand their interpretation of the meaning of life.

Spirituality also incorporates healthy practices for the mind and body, which positively influences mental health and emotional wellbeing. Here are some of those benefits:

#### **Individuality**

- Enhances a person’s sense of self and empowerment through the choice to decide what their practice looks like
- Focuses on an individual’s connection to what they believe in and their own personal growth
- Accepts any person, whether they are part of a religion or not

#### **Mindfulness**

- Encourages meditation and self-reflection
- Leads to a meaningful life philosophy (i.e. feeling connected to others, nature or art)
- Prompts expression in any form such as art, poetry, myth or religious practice

#### **Unity with Surroundings**

- Renews a sense of belonging in the world
- Inspires appreciation and awareness of a person’s interaction with the physical environment

### **Defining Well-Being**

In the psychological literature, the terms happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being have come to refer to somewhat overlapping yet distinct constructs. Happiness refers to positive feelings such as joy, contentment, and calm. Life satisfaction is the cognitive appraisal or judgment about how well things are going. Importantly, life satisfaction may differ significantly from objective appraisals. For example, religious individuals involved in tragic circumstances often report finding peace, hope, or increased faith; and, consequently, reporting high life satisfaction. Subjective well-being is the evaluation of one's global life circumstances, reflecting a sense that one's life is going well and one would not change much if one's life could be lived over again. The association between religion and happiness, religion and life satisfaction, or religion and well-being; and we primarily use the term well-being in this paper to refer broadly to all three of these.

Happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being have also been framed in terms of the fulfillment of various goals. For example, Seligman has argued that well-being, or human flourishing, involves having important social relationships, meaning in life, and the achievement of personal goals (Seligman 2011). Religious rituals, moral codes, and communities may be particularly well-suited to help people meet these goals. For example, the teachings of many religions regarding fellowship, cooperation, and pro-social behavior can make some religious groups mainstays of social support. Such groups may provide resources in times of trouble, promote positive coping strategies, or reduce loneliness. The relation between spirituality and social trust was fully mediated through a sense of community. Community level and personal level well-being were related.

### **Dimensions of Religion and Well-Being**

Religious orientation is another important factor in understanding the association between religion and well-being. Within and between the religious groups and subgroups we have mentioned, there are many ways of being religious. This is believed that intrinsically oriented people have sensed the presence of God, that prayer is personally meaningful, and that religion is the master motive of their lives.

Extrinsically religious people use their religion in an instrumental way to achieve goals.

## **II. Conclusion**

From the above data we have reached a point that measurements of quality of life, individual happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being may actually reflect the scientist's own values, cultural inputs, and religious views. Consequently, the conclusions reached in the study of well-being in psychology today are based on assumptions that may be grounded in a secular or ethnocentric worldview of human flourishing as the attainment of positive affect and the achievement of personal goals. Instead, we must take into consideration the sometimes competing ideals of individualism, collectivism, and visions of a cosmic or divine order, and how these ultimate goals might differentially influence how we define human flourishing.

We have argued that the answer also needs to be qualified in light of the fact that religions are different from each other; there are meaningful subgroups within major religions; there are many ways of being religious; that religion interacts with other cultural values; and that religion both makes and unmakes happiness. Giving due regard to the various religious and cultural perspectives, psychologists must conclude that well-being is a relative, and not a universally agreed upon, construct. However, from a psychological perspective, religion often, but not always, contributes to human flourishing. Spirituality as an element of well-being.

Spirituality, despite its significance for individuals and institutions, has mostly been neglected by psychologists and other mental health professionals in this century. It has been argued that it cannot, or even should not, be studied scientifically. In more recent years, however, there have been signs of renewed interest in the study of spirituality and religion. Recent years have witnessed encouraging developments in research interest in the interaction of spirituality and mental health, and this interest is currently growing.

Since time immemorial, it is believed that spiritual experiences and practices are significant in life and play an important part in establishing an integrated personality. Several studies have shown that the majority of practicing psychologists, though not involved in organized religion, consider spirituality important not only to their personal lives but also to their clinical work.

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