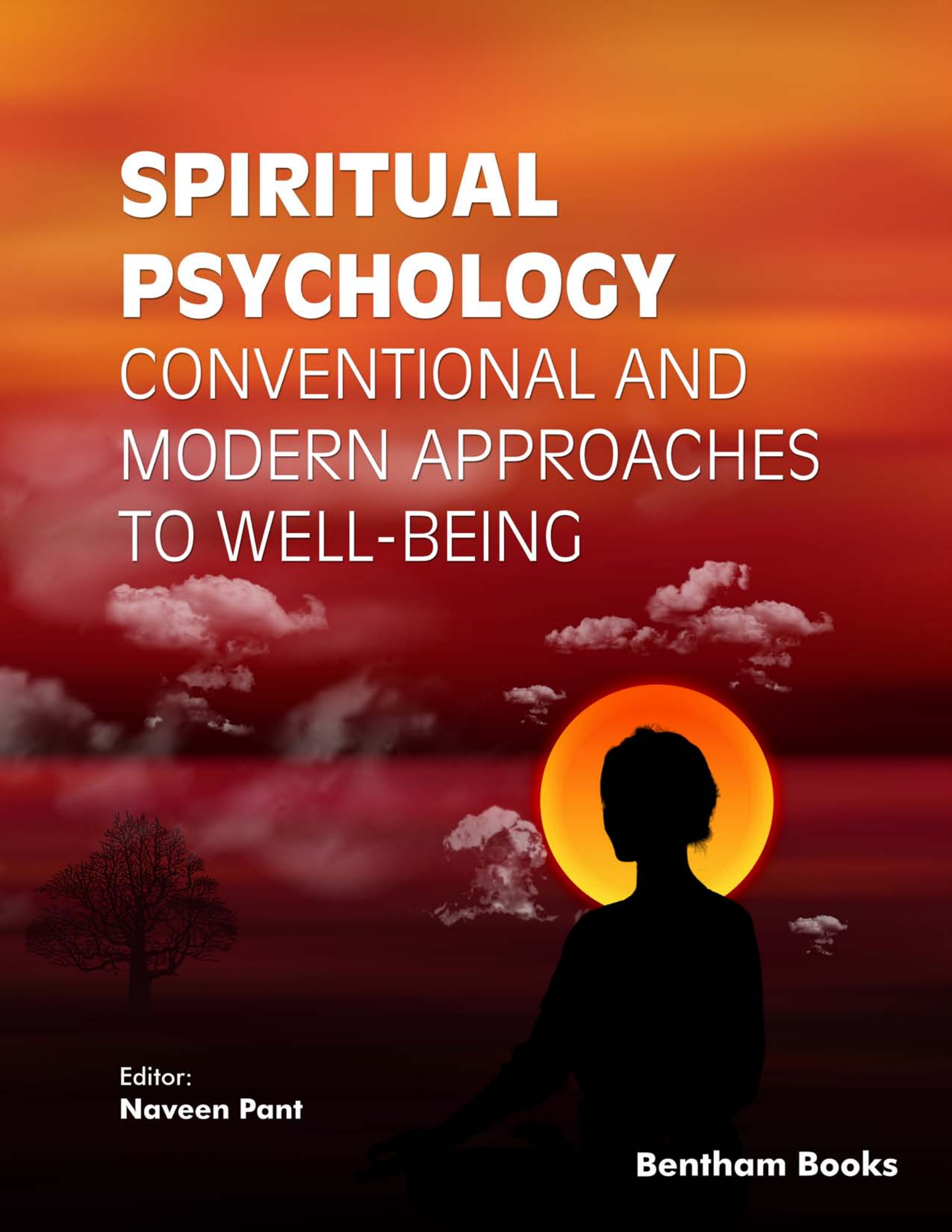
SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

CONVENTIONAL AND MODERN APPROACHES TO WELL-BEING



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PREFACE

Spiritual Psychology: Conventional and Modern Approaches to Well-being is a scholarly book that addresses the complex interrelation between spirituality and psychology in the quest to attain overall well-being. Drawing on classical wisdom and contemporary scientific thinking, the book proposes a kaleidoscope of interdisciplinary research, theoretical considerations, and practical studies across a diverse array of cultural and spiritual backgrounds.

This book is divided into four key sections. The first presents both preliminary themes and important reflections on the proliferating scope of spiritual psychology, the challenges it raises, the loci of change, and integrative thinking. The second part explores both the traditional and transpersonal models, reflecting on Sufi spiritual approach, psychoanalysis, faith-related worldviews, and meditation traditions to illustrate the everlasting relationship, drawing on psychological, emotional, and spiritual dynamics.

The third section is about the contributions of spirituality to improvements in mental health, emotional resilience, stress, and life satisfaction. Issues connected to addiction, mindfulness, coping responses, and the virtual world are further understood with the help of a spiritually informed psychological understanding. The last part focuses on modern and practical applications, demonstrating how a spiritual psychology can be used in education, organisational management, geriatrics, gender and community health, and, in some cases, even art.

By uniting experts and theorists from various fields with practitioners, the book provides a more subtle and broader view of the human mind that cannot be understood through reduction. Spiritual Psychology is a valuable concept for students, scholars, counselors, professors, and religious seekers alike and can also serve as a teacher of the spiritual aspects of psychology in the life of the practitioner.

This book volume is prepared by the editor with a preplanned content base and an open call for chapters. After a large national/ international proposal review (more than a hundred) and final accepted chapters' revision, the editor finalized 22 chapters for the final book volume. Now the final book volume has a total of 22 chapters (21 chapters from the different authors and 1 chapter of the editor's own writing). Thus, this book covers a unique, modern, effective, and required content/ modern research of the area.

This book is of great importance to the academic and scientific community. As the field is growing and improving rapidly, the book editor sees significant potential in the area of 'Spiritual Psychology' for further exploration.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the "Supreme Soul"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Section/Part 1: Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Critiques and Challenges in Traditional Spiritual Psychology

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Abstract: Traditional spiritual psychology bridges ancient spiritual wisdom with contemporary psychological frameworks, exploring human experience by synthesising religious, philosophical, and scientific perspectives. Despite the dominance of materialist paradigms, the role of spirituality in mental well-being has gained increasing recognition. This chapter examines the historical foundations, critiques, and challenges of traditional spiritual psychology, including reductionism, oversimplification, and cultural appropriation. Additionally, it discusses integrating spiritual psychology into modern therapeutic practices, highlighting emerging research on mindfulness, transpersonal psychology, and the neuroscientific study of spiritual experiences. The chapter underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches that balance empirical evidence with the rich, diverse traditions of spiritual thought, ultimately advocating for a holistic understanding of human consciousness and well-being.

Keywords: Traditional spiritual psychology, Transpersonal psychology, Integrative psychotherapy, Spiritual well-being, Existential psychology, Consciousness studies, Interdisciplinary mental health.

INTRODUCTION TO TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

The present chapter addresses some critiques and challenges to traditional spiritual psychology, underscoring the relevance of spiritual wisdom in contemporary psychological discourse. Spirituality brings out the whole meaning of life discourse across cultures, philosophies, and religious traditions. Despite the dominant materialistic paradigms, the relevance of spirituality in modern psychological practices has also been showing exponential growth (Beehner, 2024). Traditional spiritual psychologies emerged from the special experiences of men and women who tried to know their inner and outer realities, thereby developing specific paths of human transformation leading to meaningful life and

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blessedness. At the intersection of applied spiritual practices and spiritual competencies, they attempted to develop a psychological approach to deal within aspects related to human perception, experiences, doctrines, pathologies, traumas, virtues, and aspirations, primarily rooted in ancient wisdom. From another perspective, at the intersection of psychology and religion, scholars attempted to understand spirituality as a lived experience of the divine or the ultimate transcendence and its expressions in human phenomena and the cosmos (Vuong, 2023). The intersection of these two psychological perspectives of spiritual practitioners, psychologists, and religious scholars contained many complex psychological and spiritual experiences that occurred in the contexts of the psychological ecology of given socio-cultural and biological conditions. The contemporary generation seeking to elaborate on these themes faces significant critiques and challenges to traditional spiritual psychologies. They are: (a) cultural, (b) psycho-historical, (c) experiential-phenomenological, (d) psychological typology, (e) existential pathologies and fixed beliefs, (f) ethical-psychological, and (g) critical-thinking challenges. With these challenges, our approaches should aim to serve as a type of bridge between ancient psychologies and modern psychological commitments and wisdom.

Definition and Scope

Traditional spiritual psychology is concerned with definitions and treatments of the spiritual and its implications; as a logical extension, it is concerned with the transcendent. However, it is only the intersection of spirituality and psychology that we wish to allude to here. There is a widely accepted interpretation of this issue, which asserts that it is the effort to offer a psychological rationale for occurrences that are either seen as governed by a personal deity or commonly referred to as 'spiritual.' The rapid growth of psychological research and practice related to spiritual factors has led to the emergence of a distinct subspecialty, known as spiritual psychology. This subdiscipline encompasses psychological factors and their clinical implications that are directly linked to spirituality, religiosity, and even transcendence. Various edited books are now available that could serve as a guide to different issues encountered in the practice of spiritual psychology (Pargament & Exline, 2021). Further definitions by clinical subspecialists in this field have also been attempted.

This agenda may be viewed as a multidimensional approach that provides a context for scientific validation of certain traditional religious and spiritual practices that have long been established as potential sources for enhancing mental health. There have been no clinical trials of 'spirit-embedded' cognitive behaviour therapy for various disorders. Furthermore, this framework integrates religious and spiritual ideas into psychotherapy, creating a clinic without walls

that is less intimidating for those who cannot seek professional help due to personal or cultural reasons (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2020). Research has shown that prospering spirituality guards people against mental illness (Pargament & Exline, 2021; Phillips, 2024). In specific experiments, participants' religious beliefs guarded them from developing depression, with lifestyle changes also playing a role (Allen *et al.*, 2021; Aggarwal *et al.*, 2023).

Historical Background

The field of spirituality within Western psychology remains relatively young, despite its roots in ancient practices. One of the first breakthroughs towards developing what we may now consider to be part of Traditional Spiritual Psychology was embodied in "religious consciousness" (Pratt, 2006). The proposed intentional consciousness led to significant psychological exploration in the study of religion and Western mysticism at the time. Moreover, these writings helped lay the foundation for modern existential psychology in Europe. Movements to embrace the "sacred consciousness" would also yield noteworthy psychological studies on mystical Christianity, such as Christian non-dualism, "The Cloud of Unknowing" (Baker, 1995; Butcher, 2018).

Contemporary spiritual psychology has been further informed by mystical writings of other traditions, such as the Eastern Vedantic and Buddhist philosophies of spiritually guided self-study through meditation or sadhana (Singh & Gupta, 2024; Tripathi, 2025). Freud's reading led him to conclude that the aforementioned theories and approaches were all forms of self-deception and that atheists were the least deluded (Gröller, 2022). This trend has led to further studies of human experience related to spiritual and religious beliefs and practices. The transpersonal movement in the late 1960s grew from the groundwork of humanistic therapies and would, significantly, shape today's intellectual reception of spiritual psychology (Walsh, 1993). Cultural contexts, including social injustices, theological trends, and the abrupt denial of the role of consciousness in scientific exploration, all indirectly, if not directly, influence what we seek to comprehend regarding spirituality in psychology to this day (Paloutzian & Park, 2021). At the very least, they should consider the frameworks we engage with in light of limited historical narratives.

CRITIQUES OF TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

This section presents a critique of traditional spiritual psychology to foster a more intellectually comprehensive psychology that appeals to a broader audience. Any interpretation suggesting that the arguments indicate the spiritual movement is peculiar would misrepresent my intent. My perspective acknowledges the existence of many credible alternatives within the cultural landscape, advocating

CHAPTER 2

Spiritual Self-Management and Organisational Ethics: Indian Psychological Approach

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Abstract: This chapter explores the concepts of self-management and organisational ethics in Indian psychological perspective. Today, materialism prevails over spiritualism. Every sector of society is losing sight of and neglecting the true purpose of work and life, including business and management. The primary objective of business administration, whether in finance or human resources, is to maximise profit at any cost. This indicates that the rate of ethics in the field of management is decreasing daily. This study attempts to examine the field of management through the lens of an Indian/indigenous/spiritual viewpoint. With the introduction of organisational ethics, this chapter first examines the terms 'self' and 'management' from a modern scientific and Indian spiritual perspective and then suggests a simple method to manage oneself in order to gain both health and wealth through spiritual self-management.

Keywords: Self, Ethics, Self-management, Indian psychology, Wealth, Mental health.

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual principles have become a focal point of management in the current era, as organisations prioritise ethical behaviour and holistic wellness. Indian psychology, which is derived from the ancient teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, serves as the foundation for organisational ethics and self-management strategies. The chapter illustrates how conventional philosophies can revolutionise contemporary business practices to create work environments that prioritise personal fulfilment in addition to organisational excellence.

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The Indian Psychological Perspective on the Self

The self is viewed by the framework of Indian psychology as transcending individual definition due to its direct connection to universal interconnected energies. The Indian psychological perspective encapsulates the entirety of human existence into four interconnected components: physical nature, mental state, emotional state, and spiritual state (Bhawuk, 2011). The significance of self-realisation and the pursuance of one's dharma (righteous duty) as pathways to personal and societal harmony is emphasised in the Bhagavad Gita, a seminal text in Indian philosophy (Srilalitha & Supriya, 2019).

Spiritual Self-Management: Insights from the Bhagavad Gita

Karma Yoga, which is described in the Bhagavad Gita, is a technique for executing nonattached tasks with a calm mental state. According to Parthasarathi *et al.* (2017), the practice of Karma Yoga enables employees to realise personal fortitude and emotional equilibrium by reducing their attachment to outcomes. Through the cultivation of self-discipline, mindfulness, and compassion, individuals are able to effectively address workplace challenges, thereby fostering a more harmonious organisational culture (Garg, 2017).

Organisational Ethics from an Indian Perspective

In India, employees should prioritise organisational ethics as the foundation of their practices, as these ethical practices are rooted in dharmic principles that prioritise the welfare of all stakeholders. Actions directed by the Bhagavad Gita must promote social harmony and advance collective goals (Srilalitha & Supriya, 2019). The adoption of these principles within organisational operations results in stronger employee trust and better cooperation and shared purpose, according to Nair and Rao (2016).

Integrating Spiritual Principles into Organisational Practices

Organisations applying Indian spiritual concepts should create shared values that promote ethical conduct alongside self-improvement activities and community accountability. Karma Yoga principles materialise through leadership actions that display altruistic self-service while directing personnel toward productive work connections (Parthasarathi *et al.*, 2017). When leaders implement this culture in an organisation, it results in improved employee health as well as future-oriented organisational success (Garg, 2017). Through the Indian psychological approach, organisations gain deep insights into integrating spiritual principles with ethical conduct within their organisational structures. Organisations succeed in developing productive and spiritually aligned teams through their adoption of

Bhagavad Gita principles. This holistic style of management produces workplaces that combine ethical foundations with spiritual fulfilment.

When modern knowledge runs out, spirituality steps in. Today, materialism and a culture of abrupt endings permeate every corner of the globe. Every sector of society, not just business and management, is losing the true meaning of work and life. The pursuit of financial gain has become the modern world's primary motivation in all spheres of activity, from business management to everyday interactions. It indicates a steady decline in ethical standards in this area of management. This study aims to explore self-management from an Indian perspective. This investigation first explored the relationship between self-management and contemporary scientific and Indian spiritual understandings, and then it took into account Indian psychology and philosophy of spiritual self-management for tangible health and financial gains.

Why Ethics are Necessary in Organisation

Internally, ethical behaviour improves the atmosphere at work, helps motivate employees, sets a positive example for the employees, instils a sense of pride in the company, and improves its image in the eyes of employees. For external customers, ethical conduct enhances the company's public image and contributes to the overall development of ethical conduct. Ethical behaviour requires an environment conducive to its execution. It also requires knowledge of the fundamentals of ethical conduct. It eventually leads to cultural and behavioural enrichment among the organisation's internal employees.

In other words, leaders are expected to exhibit ethical conduct. There is increasing demand from society and other stakeholders for leaders to forsake their limited thinking processes and instead prioritise integrated and inclusive decision-making that considers the interests of stakeholders, including the environment and society. Leadership and management practices have become exponentially more complex, frequently leading to unethical behaviour, as a result of the more dynamic global economic, political, and social structure, as well as the expanding business and technological boundaries. At present, the primary goal of management and leadership is to increase production without consideration for ethics or development. In some ways, the decision-making process that is confined and divisive obscures the wisdom that is inherent in leadership and management practices. In order to effect change in the world that is founded on connectedness, love, trust, and harmony, it is necessary to incorporate spiritual and related dimensions into the development of ethical leadership and management practices.

CHAPTER 3

An Overview of the Relationship between Spirituality and Grit

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Abstract: Recent years have witnessed a tremendous growth in the significance of spirituality and grit, especially in the field of psychology. This chapter aims to present an understanding of the relationship between spirituality and grit, with clear and detailed elaboration on their definitions, theories, and empirical evidence from the literature. Spirituality encompasses a wide range of ideas, practices, and experiences relating to the transcendent, and therefore, it provides people with meaning, purpose, and coping mechanisms. Grit is characterised by perseverance and passion for long-term objectives. The association between spirituality and grit is still understudied despite the abundance of research on each concept separately. This chapter aims to fill this gap by discussing how spiritual beliefs and practices may boost grit, as it is one of the key determinants of success in various spheres. Finally, the suggestions for future research have been put forward based on critical themes, trends, and gaps in the literature.

Keywords: Grit, Passion, Perseverance, Psyschology, Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality has always been considered too ephemeral, mystical, religious, ineffable, or transcendent for scientific inquiry. Over time, it became clear that spirituality, like other internalised phenomena, could be studied using scientific methods. Everything that is considered a spiritual phenomenon today was initially placed under the umbrella of religion. Tovar-Murray (2011) distinguishes between spirituality and religion, with the latter focusing on rituals, institutional dependencies, and social interactions. However, spirituality is one's experience of something that is unseen and larger than oneself. Currently, research tends to treat

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them as separate variables, despite their interconnectedness and overlap (Moberg, 2010). Moreover, grit has primarily been studied in relation to an individual's accomplishments or external successes. People can utilise their passion and tenacity to achieve personal development goals, including developing their self-identities. In other words, grit may be the motivation behind pursuing goals for personal growth. Hence, this overview presents various studies that have previously explored the association between spirituality and grit.

Spirituality

Joseph *et al.*, 2017, define spirituality as "a more general, unstructured, personalised, and naturally occurring phenomenon, where a person seeks closeness and/or connectedness between themselves and a higher power or purpose." According to Woods and Ironson (1999), spirituality is the pursuit of universal truth and the discovery of meaning in one's surroundings. Spirituality can also be seen as an ongoing process of discovering something new within the subject; it can also mean finding out the limits of existence and gaining purpose in life. Hart (1994, p. 23) has referred to spirituality as how people regard the practice of their beliefs in their daily lives and their way of living, with an emphasis on the purpose of living. In this manner, spirituality becomes a multifaceted theoretical construct. In other words, it means the concept of transcendence, which is to move beyond or above ‘the real me’. However, with regard to spirituality, transcendence is realised by adopting internal and external integration and balance, or relationship (Boswell *et al.*, 2006). It has been demonstrated that transcendence can be internal as well as external in nature. According to Heszen-Niejodek and Gruszyńska (2004), "external" transcendence can be directed towards a higher entity or energy, a valued individual, or the universe.

The findings of Hamilton (1964, 1972) and Wilson (1978) indicate that religious feelings give us an emotional tie with people and offer reassurance, peace, purpose, and power, while offering an indirect evolutionary advantage. Wong (1998) and Mascaro (2006) claim that the most significant relationship exists between well-being and spiritual striving, that is, aiming for the sacred. Engaging in spiritual activities can improve one's relationships, sense of self, and connection to God. As Dutta & Singh (2017) mention, spirituality is a perspective and relationship to the world and life that is mostly expressed through beliefs. It influences people’s way of life, their coping ability with stress, and the rate at which they recover from emotional wounds. It provides meaning to existence and may or may not require belief in a higher, supernatural force. Spiritual individuals believe in the eternal hope and higher purpose of existence.

Dimensions of Spirituality

Numerous studies have explored the dimensions of spirituality. For instance, Greenwald and Harder (2003) instructed 147 participants to rate their perceived spirituality using 122 adjectives. Four elements of spirituality were discovered: “loving connection to others”, “self-effacing altruism”, “blissful transcendence”, and “religiosity/sacredness”. In an earlier study, Wheat (1991) reported 3 factors: “meaning in life/connection with others”, “mysticism and inner peace”, and “compassion/empathy”. These elements are consistent with the dimensions of “loving connection”, “blissful transcendence”, and “self-effacing altruism” proposed by Greenwald and Harder (2003). Similarly, two elements were found in Zainuddin's (1993) research on Indian Muslims: “transcendent non-materialistic experiences” and “a sense of purpose and meaning in life (including holiness and benevolence)”. The characteristics of “blissful transcendence”, “self-effacing altruism”, and “religiosity/sacredness” that Greenwald and Harder (2003) discovered are reflected in these elements.

Further, Lindquist (1996) found two factors in a US sample: general spirituality and benevolent optimism. These factors correspond to the four components of spirituality in Greenwald and Harder's (2003) study. In extensive factor-analytic research of spirituality by MacDonald (2000a, 2000b; N= 1,400), five main axes were discovered, three of which are similar to “blissful transcendence”, “loving connection”, and “religiosity/sacredness” in the current study. While his “paranormal” dimension encompassed faith in spirits, witchcraft, reincarnation, predicting the future, and communication with the deceased, his “cognitive orientation towards spirituality” component placed a higher priority on religion and spirituality than spiritual experiences.

A conceptual framework of spirituality was provided by Frey *et al.* (2005), which included two dimensions of spirituality: “life scheme” and “self-efficacy”. The feeling of coherence is described as an optimistic, global appraisal of oneself and the world, together with meaningful components of understanding, control, and importance. This term is said to be related to the idea of a “life scheme,” as postulated by Antonovsky (1987). The second dimension, “self-efficacy," is concerned with a person's belief in his/her capacity to mobilize the resources required to accomplish a specific objective (Bandura, 1997). In the context of spirituality, self-efficacy expectations refer to specific activities for managing difficulties related to global identity. Moreover, Hardt and colleagues (2012) created a multidimensional questionnaire on spirituality comprising four dimensions: “belief in God”, “search for meaning”, “mindfulness”, and “feeling of security”.

CHAPTER 4

Finding Serenity: Spiritual Practices for Healing Stress and Nurturing Emotions

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Abstract: The present chapter highlights the importance of spirituality and its related practices for stress reduction and emotional health. The main aim of the study is to outline and implement the spiritual practices aiming to alleviate stress and improve emotional health. The two interlinked variables are aimed at as they are vital for psychological well-being. After defining stress, spirituality, emotions, and their respective theories are also described. The interventions outlined are aimed at reducing stress, primarily from daily hassles and chronic stress. For emotional health, various spiritual practices are suggested. The interventions are discussed with respect to Indian culture, and stress reduction interventions are designed taking into account factors indigenous to the Indian context.

Keywords: Spirituality, Stress, Emotion, Intervention, Psychological well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a unique aspect of human civilization dating back to ancient times, and there are different variations in its conceptualization, affected by both temporal and cultural factors.

However, one thing is common to all, which is ‘connection to the sacred’, but there is a variation even in that ‘sacred one’. For instance, in Western culture, the sacred one is referred to as ‘God’ and ‘Allah’, whereas in Eastern culture, it is referred to as ‘Krishna’, ‘Vishnu’, and ‘Buddha’. Spirituality is an integral component of the individual (Lee *et al.*, 2012) and has been referred to as a universal, human dimension. The term spirituality is sometimes used synonymously with religiosity. However, religiosity is a devotion to a particular religion that has established beliefs and practices. Spirituality denotes beliefs and experiences involving a relationship with a higher or greater being.

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The wellness model by Adams *et al.* (1997) suggested spirituality as having a positive impact on the sense of living. Moreover, the past literature has shown the effectiveness of spiritual practices as a preventive measure towards mental health issues such as anxiety, substance abuse, and more commonly stress and mood disorders or the emotional regulation of the individual (McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Plante, 2007). Researchers have elaborated on the influence of stress on the affective state of the individual, thus creating a three-way interaction among mental health issues, stress, and emotional health of the individual (Tesser & Beach, 1998).

Numerous studies have outlined the effectiveness of spiritual practices, such as the spiritual beliefs individuals hold, praying, and remembering the 'sacred one', which act as a buffer against the negative life events that cause stress, improving the affective state of the individual. However, the results and effectiveness of such investigations are unreliable due to discrimination, cultural factors, and the methodology applied to answer the research question.

Stress and Spirituality

Stress can be defined as a bodily response to internal or external demands, resulting in biological changes, such as alterations in body temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and other physiological reactions initiated by the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, as well as psychological changes, including shifts in emotions, cognition, and behaviour, which may be expressed through speech patterns, facial expressions, and other observable actions. Stress, if it persists for longer periods or at higher levels, can lead to discomfort at physical, emotional, and behavioural levels, ultimately leading to exhaustion. It can also influence other affective issues and behavioural issues such as anxiety, depression, aggressive tendencies, irritation, and guilt, and in worst-case scenarios, neurotic disorders such as stress-related disorders (Baum *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is vital to identify an effective strategy to alleviate stress. This is where spirituality comes into the picture.

Spirituality is an individual's beliefs and values regarding the ultimate meaning of life (Sinclair & Chochinov, 2012). Spirituality also includes higher-order existential notions such as the purpose and meaning of life (Koenig, 1998). In addition to this, in the present study, spirituality is also linked to the recognition of a greater God-like entity, as described in holy texts and scriptures, which shapes the beliefs of the individual. The literature is filled with evidence of the positive effects of spirituality on the well-being of the individual, life satisfaction, meaning in life, and quality of life. Moreover, it reduces the feelings of dep-

ression, emptiness, and suicide by instilling hope and optimism in an individual (Koeing *et al.*, 2023).

The Role of Spirituality in the Management of Stress

Spirituality plays an important role in stress management (Kim & Seidlitz, 2002). There is even growing empirical support for the role of spirituality in stress management. Two of the most common emotional coping styles are prayer and faith in God, which have also been recognized in the literature (Belavich, 1995). Visiting holy places and speaking with saints or God can help individuals vent their feelings and seek guidance on how to cope with stressful situations (Belavich, 1995). People who are high in spirituality tend to be drawn towards different religious practices and rituals. Spilka *et al.* (1985) suggested three ways in which spirituality acts or influences the coping process;

- It provides and enhances the meaning in life
- It enables the individual to be in control in stressful situations
- It helps develop and increase self-esteem.

Moreover, religion provides a sense of self-identity and helps develop a more integrated self, as it offers individuals certain sets of beliefs, rituals, and practices that define and foster individuality (Hammond, 1988). Although some studies cannot establish a direct relationship between the stress levels and spirituality, the buffering effects of spirituality against stress are being highlighted. For instance, a study highlighted a moderating effect of spirituality on the effect of stress (Kim & Seidlitz, 2002).

Emotional Health and Spirituality

People with high spirituality tend to have high overall subjective well-being (Biswas-Diener *et al.*, 2011). The reason may be that there is a bidirectional relationship between emotions and spirituality. Operationally, emotions are defined as subjective feelings individuals experience at a particular point in time. As emotions play a major role in spiritual experiences, spirituality and religion, in turn, influence both the generation and regulation of emotions. In the literature, various connections have been documented between emotional regulation and spirituality (Vishkin, 2020). Since meaning-making is one of the central processes underlying both emotional regulation and spirituality, these domains are closely intertwined (Gross, 1998; Park, 2005). In addition to meaning construction, both constructs of emotional regulation and spirituality help individuals deal with reality and situations, as well as accept, adapt to, and adjust to them. Various

Section/Part 2: Spiritual / Transpersonal Psychology & its Conventional Approaches

CHAPTER 5

Sufi Spirituality and Mental Health: A Systematic Exploration of the Heart, Mind, and Spirit Relationship

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Abstract: This research explores the relationship between Sufi spirituality and mental health by integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding. This study bases its context on previous research that highlights the benefits of Sufi spirituality in reducing anxiety and depression.However, these studies have methodological limitations and lack the exploration of contextual factors. The objective of this study is to investigate the psychological mechanisms that underlie emotion regulation through tafakkur, dhikr, ‘uzlah, and tawakkal, as well as to investigate the differences in individual experiences that are influenced by demographic factors and spiritual preparedness. Methods included in the study are surveys, in-depth interviews, content analysis, and linear regression to test the relationship between frequency of Sufi practice and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Data were collected from 25 active Sufi practitioners in Indonesia, using a purposive sampling approach. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to examine the psychological experiences of individuals engaged in Sufi practices, concentrating on the phenomenon of spiritual transformation and associated social challenges.This study found that Sufi practice significantly contributes to positive emotion regulation and reduced depression, but these benefits depend heavily on spiritual readiness, practice consistency, and social support. This research is expected to enrich the discourse on spiritual psychology and to offer an integrative model between the practice of the Sufi tradition and modern psychological approaches.

Keywords: Emotion regulation, Heart, Mental health, Mind, Spirituality, Sufi.

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INTRODUCTION

Sufi spirituality has long been recognised as a potentially beneficial practice for mental health, with various studies showing a positive association between it and the reduction of anxiety and depression. However, there are some studies that support this claim; the number of high-quality studies is still limited, and many existing studies have weak methodologies. In addition, there is a lack of understanding of how Sufi practices may interact with other psychological and social factors that influence mental health. Some studies have also shown that not all individuals experience the same benefits from spiritual practices, and in some cases, spiritual experiences can lead to confusion or emotional discomfort. This suggests that there is a downside that needs to be explored further, especially in the context of the diversity of individual experiences of Sufi practice. Consequently, it is crucial to conduct a more in-depth and systematic study of the relationship between Sufi spirituality and mental health, including an in-depth review of the body, mind, and spirit.

While many studies show a positive relationship between Sufi spirituality and mental health, there is also a contrary view that spiritual practices can potentially cause stress or discomfort for some individuals. Unknown information includes how demographic variables, such as age, gender, and cultural background, may influence the effectiveness of Sufi practices in improving mental health. Furthermore, no studies have comprehensively explored the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship, making it difficult to understand why some individuals may not experience the same benefits as others. The fact that many existing studies have weak designs and do not consider contextual factors points to the need for more rigorous and structured research. This research gap includes a lack of understanding of how Sufi practices can be integrated with modern psychological approaches to promote mental well-being more effectively. Therefore, further research is needed to fill this void and provide deeper insights into the complex relationship between Sufi spirituality and mental health.

This research offers an integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the relationship between Sufi spirituality and mental health, which has not been done much in the existing literature. Using a more comprehensive method, this study aims to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of Sufi practices in enhancing mental well-being and to understand the experiences of individuals engaged in such practices. The clue to this research lies in the in-depth analysis of various Sufi practices, such as zikr and muraqabah, and their impact on the psychological state of participants. The main aim of this research is to fill the existing knowledge gap by providing clearer insights into how and why Sufi practices can contribute to mental health, as well as to identify potential

challenges individuals may face when engaging in such practices. As such, the results of this study are expected to provide more informative recommendations for mental health practitioners and individuals interested in Sufi spirituality. This research also has the potential to pave the way for further studies that explore the interaction between spirituality and mental health in a broader context.

Basic Concepts of Sufi Spirituality

History and Development of Sufism in Islam

Taṣawwuf, or *Sufism*, is a part of *Shāri'ah Islāmiyyah* that focuses more on the purification of the soul to achieve closeness, love, and oneness with Allah (Ilham *et al.*, 2023). Sufi spirituality, often known as Sufism, is a branch of the Islamic tradition that emphasises the search for closeness to God through direct and inner experience. Sufism focuses on the development of individual character and morals, calling people to shun materialism and to draw closer to God. This process involves spiritual practices, meditation, and controlling negative traits within the self (Chittick, 2001). *Taṣawwuf*, or *Sufism*, is a part of *Shāri'ah Islāmiyyah* that focuses more on the purification of the soul to achieve closeness, love, and oneness with Allah (Ilham *et al.*, 2023).

Historically, Sufism can be divided into several periods: the formation period, the development period, the consolidation period, the *falsafī* period, and the purification period. At the time of its formation, Sufism was not yet recognised as an independent discipline. However, practices such as fasting, *zuhud*, and other acts of worship have existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the *Khulafā'u al-Rāshidīn* (Syukur, 2022). The development of Sufism in Islam dates back to the 8th and 9th centuries, as the first thinkers and mystics emphasised personal religious experience. Early figures such as Hasan al-Basri and Rabiah al-Adawiyah were highly influential in shaping early Sufism, each with an emphasis on love of God and sincerity in devotion (Schimmel, 1978). Sufism grew rapidly in various parts of the Islamic world, including Persia, Anatolia, and North Africa, often adopting local influences into its practices and teachings.

The development of Sufism occurred in the 9th and 10th centuries, during which two main schools emerged: Sunni Sufism and Falsafī Sufism (Al-Hujwiri, 1999). Important figures in semi-philosophical Sufism include Abu Yazīd al-Busṭāmī and Abu Manṣūr al-Hallāj, who introduced the concepts of *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *ittiḥād,* and *hulūl*. Sunni Sufism was developed by Junaid al-Baghdādi, who combined *shāri'ah* with *haqīqah*. While falsafī Tasawwuf bases its teachings more on ratios and feelings (*dzauq*), the main figure is Ibnu ‘Arabī.

CHAPTER 6

A Narrative Review of the Influence of Specific Afterlife Beliefs on Death Anxiety across Diverse Religious Groups

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Abstract: Through the ages, spirituality and religiosity have influenced the human race in many ways. Religious and spiritual beliefs about the afterlife played a significant role in shaping attitudes towards the life and death cycle. Death anxiety is defined as intense fear and worry about death and its process for oneself or others, and there have been numerous studies on death anxiety and afterlife beliefs. This chapter examines the influence of specific afterlife beliefs on levels of death anxiety. This systematic review gives an in-depth analysis of empirical studies on the influence of afterlife beliefs and death anxiety, specifically in diverse religious groups. In this study, 4 major types of afterlife beliefs, namely reincarnation, divine judgment, materialism, and ancestor and spirit realms, are discussed in relation to death anxiety. The study examines the level of death anxiety and its relationship with specific afterlife beliefs, including at least ten studies in each major type. There are numerous studies that show that spirituality and religious beliefs have a positive influence on attitudes towards life and death, but when a belief is infused with fear, it impacts negatively. This review gives a deeper understanding of the specific afterlife beliefs and their variations associated with death anxiety across diverse religious groups.

Keywords: Afterlife beliefs, Death anxiety, Fear-infused beliefs, Religious groups, Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Religiosity and Spirituality

As of 2010, 84% of people worldwide identify themselves as members of a religious group (Pew Research Center, 2012). Some view religiosity as a complex concept encompassing intellectual and behavioral components tied to personal traits and activities that demonstrate beliefs, conduct, and a sense of belonging

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(Parboteeah *et al.*, 2008). Religiosity is a set of rules and beliefs that govern thoughts, convictions, and actions. Spirituality is how people relate to the transcendent, find meaning and purpose in their lives through thoughts and feelings, and relate to others, society, and the sacred (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

The Influence of Religion and Spirituality on Human Behavior

Many civilizations have seen spirituality and religion significantly influence human behavior, daily life, beliefs in the afterlife, and cultural variations. Most major faiths hold that life after death is a basic belief (Obayashi, 1992), and several studies have shown that references to religion mostly emerged as a means of dealing with mortality (Malinowski, 1954).

The Pew Research Center claims that seventy percent of Indians believe in fate. Hindus (73%), Muslims (63%), and Sikhs (59%) all belief that everything has a purpose. These ideas mirror a larger cultural setting that shapes beliefs about the next world (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Hinduism

Regardless of specific afterlife beliefs, it often emphasizes concepts such as reincarnation and moksha, liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Less than half of Indian Hindus, meanwhile, (40%) believe in reincarnation.

Christianity and Islam

Though it is not a pillar of their faiths, believing in reincarnation is also present among Indian Christians (29%) and Muslims (27%). By contrast, Islamic ideas in India coincide with the idea of Judgment Day, in which people's actions determine their fate, either heaven or hell. According to a 2021 Pew Research Center analysis, 71% of Indian Muslims view Judgment Day as important (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Defining Death and Cultural Perceptions

The President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1981) says that someone is dead when their breathing and circulation stop for good, or when their whole brain, including the brain stem, stops working. Cultural beliefs influence how people view the concept of death.

Different Religious Views of Death

- ***Hinduism:*** Death is perceived as an element in a cyclical process in which an individual dies and is subsequently reborn with a distinct identity, thereby undergoing this cycle multiple times. The Bhagavad Gita asserts, 'Just as a boy wears new garments and relinquishes the old, the soul also acquires new corporeal forms while discarding the previous ones.
- ***Christianity****:* Christianity contradicts this cyclical thinking and perceives death as a singular event. Christianity asserts that the soul endures beyond death and that actions yield consequences: the faithful are granted eternal life in heaven, whereas the condemned are relegated to hell, as articulated in the Bible (Matthew 25:46).
- ***Buddhism:*** Buddhism views life as a "vast process of becoming," implying that people experience death numerous times.
- ***Islam:*** Islam says that the one who adheres to God's will shall directly go to heaven after death. Many verses praise martyrdom and Islam: *"Do not regard those slain in Allah's service as deceased."* (Quran, 3:169).

Death Anxiety and Acceptance

Two intricate attitudes regarding death that may simultaneously exist are death acceptance and death anxiety (Wong, 2008). Some individuals have a profound fear of death while contemplating their mortality, while others engage with similar concepts more acceptingly (Surall & Steppacher, 2020; Wong, 2008).

Death Anxiety

Refers to the anxiety and apprehension that are linked to the awareness of mortality, nonexistence, and dying, as well as the anticipation of these events. It typically includes cognitive, motivational, and emotional components.

Cognitive Dimensions

Include an understanding of the importance of death, along with various concepts, attitudes, imagery, and reflections related to death, dying, and the afterlife (Lehto & Stein, 2009).

The Psychological Impact of Afterlife Beliefs

Psychological research and therapeutic methodologies have extensively examined the relationship between mental health and beliefs regarding the afterlife.

CHAPTER 7

Transcendental Psychology of Sexuality: Evolution of Human Consciousness

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Abstract: The work of David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson in the mid-19th century gave rise to the study of transpersonal psychology, a philosophical tradition that focuses on extraordinary human experiences and practices based on naturally occurring or experimentally induced alterations in consciousness, higher states of being, and spiritual development. Sexual activity is one of the most direct routes to euphoric experiences; however, it has been relatively underexplored in discussions of transpersonal experiences. This chapter explores how an orgasm can go beyond ordinary experiences of time and space, becoming something almost spiritual. It describes this profound moment as a wave of heat, light, and energy that creates a deep, physical, and emotional sense of connection with oneself and others. By looking at sexuality through the lenses of somatic, humanistic, transpersonal, and yoga psychologies, the chapter takes a holistic approach, treating human sexuality as an integral part of the mind, body, and spirit. It invites readers to see erotic embodiment not just as a physical act but as a pathway to deeper self-awareness and a sense of unity. Yoga psychology, with its emphasis on the integration of body, mind, and spirit, plays a critical role in facilitating self-transcendence through practices such as breathwork, meditation, and physical postures, enabling deeper connections with the sexual self and universal consciousness. The convergence of yoga's philosophy of union with the scientific rigour of transpersonal psychology creates a transformative framework for understanding the relationship between sexuality, spirituality, and human identity. This synthesis provides fertile ground for a renewed exploration of transpersonal sexuality that respects the sexual body as an essential participant in psychological development and identity formation. The chapter advocates for an inclusive psychology that bridges spirituality, embodiment, and scientific inquiry, offering a comprehensive and holistic approach to examining the deeper meanings and potentials of human sexuality.

Keywords: Altered states of consciousness, Holistic sexual science, Intimacy, Psychological development, Self-transcendence, Sexuality, Somatic awareness, Spirituality, Transpersonal psychology, Yoga psychology.

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INTRODUCTION

Being able to relate to oneself and the outside world is one of the essential goals of psychology. Transpersonal psychology appeared in the late 1960s and is concerned with spirituality and transcendence of human experience. This way, it expands the area of classic psychoanalytic ideas and leads to a more comprehensive perception of the human psyche. Sexuality and the quest for higher consciousness are the means by which the contemporary discourse approaches this field and demonstrates how the most personal of human encounters can be directed towards the highest self-realisation and, in certain instances, can lead to spiritual consciousness.

The philosophical history of the question begins with the reflections of the nineteenth-century writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, whose literary works vigorously praised seclusion, the bond with nature, and exploration within the self. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers reworked their own work, and their theories rest on the premise that extraordinary moments, when individuals feel intensely alive, intensely connected, or intensely transformed, are accessible to all. The current discussion goes to show that, when undertaken deliberately, sexuality itself can become such a moment. Through it, due to the obliteration of the boundaries of the self, a non-mediated experience of integration into a higher reality can be achieved.

Sexuality is like an entrance to a more ethereal realm where a dance can be applied to access other states of mind that appear to lose the sense of time and space. By applying a methodology such as orgasmic meditation or, as in ancient Eastern traditions, yoga (including breath work, meditation, and physical postures), sexual energy can be directed to the spiritual component of our growth. It is also in this chapter that the healing aspect of the body and the topic of self-knowledge through somatic and humanistic perspectives are explored, demonstrating how mindful movement and touch can bring people closer to themselves and others.

Essentially, this exploration is the domain of all. It also affirms the multiplicity of sexual and spiritual beings and allows everyone to feel visible and loved. This chapter provides the opportunity to think of sexuality as something more than a biological phenomenon; however, combining history, philosophy, and practical world opinions, it brings one closer to realising sexuality as a rich journey to get to know who we are, develop ourselves, and connect with the world in a transformative fashion.

FOUNDATIONS OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS ROLE IN SEXUALITY

Historical Roots and Philosophical Underpinnings

Contributions of David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson to Transpersonal Psychology

Transpersonal psychology is strongly influenced by two prominent figures of the American Transcendentalist movement of the 19th century: Ralph Waldo Emerson and David Thoreau (Emerson, 1841; Thoreau, 1854). The philosophy on which it is founded covers a wide range of mental systems, ranging from ancient eastern and western systems of thought to modern thought systems, existentialism and phenomenology. Both Emerson and Thoreau helped shape the humanistic perspectives of Maslow and Rogers and, at the same time, built the Existential thought perspectives through their efforts.These scholars described positive self-understanding and self-potential as key to achieving peak experiences.

Thoreau expounded on transcendentalist principles by composing his writings and adopting a personal lifestyle that reflected these principles during his tenure as an apprentice to Emerson. The book 'Walden' can be employed to illustrate Thoreau's genuine life experiences in relation to his advocacy for self-discovery and contemplation, as well as his minimalist lifestyle and profound immersion in nature. Throughout his writings, Emerson emphasises the transpersonal understanding that nature serves as a spiritual gateway to the comprehension of human consciousness. Thoreau integrates the moral and personal philosophy of civil disobedience to demonstrate how individuals can facilitate social transformation, as transpersonal psychology investigates personal and collective consciousness.

Evolution of Transpersonal Psychology in Examining Extraordinary Human Experiences

State of psychological practices evolved in the late 1960s, since mainstream methods could not reproduce the spiritual and transcendental essence of human perception. The subject of study considers every phase of human consciousness, with particular concern for extraordinary human experiences (EHEs) that entail mystical experiences, near-death experiences, and other unearthly experiences beyond normal human perception. Transpersonal psychology is a descendant of the humanistic psychology movement and the human potential movement that appeared in the 1960s. Psychologists Abraham Maslow and Stanislav Grof noted the absence of appropriate frameworks that could integrate the spiritual experiences of human beings. The beginning of the official existence of

CHAPTER 8

Faith-Based Stereotypes: The Impact of Religiousness on Gender and Sexual Orientation Prejudice

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Abstract: Faith-based stereotypes significantly influence societal attitudes toward gender and sexual orientation, often perpetuating prejudice and discrimination. This research investigates how religious beliefs interact with both gender identity and sexual orientation to show how religious teachings establish societal standards that result in the exclusion of individuals who do not conform to gender and sexual identity norms. The research demonstrates how faith-based discrimination leads to negative psychological effects, which result in LGBTQ+ individuals and women who defy conventional gender norms developing internalized stigma, depression, and social withdrawal. The research investigates how religious texts, leaders, and institutions create discriminatory practices, and how people can change these views through their progressive religious movements. Marginalized groups use their resilience to fight against the negative effects of faith-based discrimination through various coping methods, including finding welcoming religious spaces, fighting for social change, and using mental health resources. The chapter shows that interfaith dialogues, educational programs, and policy changes create vital pathways that help religious and secular systems achieve better understanding while decreasing discrimination. The research shows how faith-based prejudice works as a complex problem that researchers need to study in order to create effective mental health and social inclusion solutions that will benefit marginalized groups.

Keywords: Faith-based stereotypes, Gender prejudice, Inclusivity, LGBTQ+ rights, Religiousness, Sexual orientation, Social exclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding Faith-Based Stereotypes

Individuals' perceptions of others are frequently shaped by others' religious beliefs. People develop these beliefs because they lack knowledge of different cultures and misinterpret religious teachings. Some of these ideas are not harmful, but many lead to unfair treatment of gender and who people love.

The presented cases provide evidence for this assertion:

- Islam: Lay people have assumptions that Muslim women have no freedom because they wear veils. The fact that women choose to cover themselves for various reasons shows their power within Islamic communities, which exists in balance with their Islamic practices (Abu-Lughod, 2002).
- Christianity: It is a common believe that all Evangelical Christians hate LGBTQ+ people. The statement is false because different groups and individuals hold their own beliefs about this matter (Wilcox 2003).
- Hinduism: It is the general assumption that all Hindus have arranged marriages and give dowries. The customs of arranged marriages and dowries show significant variation across different cultural groups and social classes (Chakravarti, 1993).
- Judaism: People view Orthodox Jewish groups as organizations that favor male authority. This overlooks changes in Judaism that support equal rights and LGBTQ+ inclusion (Greenberg, 2004).
- People who hold fixed beliefs use their ideas to create simplified versions of religious practices because they cannot understand complex religious traditions. The existing traditions of society cause discrimination against female and LGBTQ+ minority groups.

Historical Context of Religious Influences on Societal Norms

Human societies throughout history have relied on religious beliefs to establish their understanding of gender and sexual orientation. The system established social norms that determined the conduct expected from men and women. Throughout history, various religions established ethical standards and social structures that protected patriarchal traditions by designating distinct responsibilities for men and women.

Gender Roles

Christian teachings support patriarchal beliefs through Ephesians 5:22-24, which teaches that wives must follow their husbands. The Middle Ages saw Christianity

establish gender roles that spread through European territories. Women were expected to handle domestic responsibilities while men controlled all aspects of public life (Balmer, 2006).

The Manusmriti established gender roles by assigning women duties based on their status as daughters, wives, and mothers. The Indian society upholds these beliefs, which have changed over time (Chakravarti, 1993).

Islamic religious laws established through Sharia determine that women receive less inheritance than men because their roles are peripheral to those of men. Feminist voices within Islam argue that these views stem from patriarchal traditions, not unchanging religious truths (Mernissi, 1991).

Sexuality

Heteronormativity: Many religions prohibit same-sex relationships, which they view as unnatural and sinful. The Christian faith has historically rejected homosexual relations. Colonial authorities enacted these beliefs through their legal systems and social customs (Herek 2004).

Cultural Reinforcement: Religions established partnerships with governments to promote heterosexual-based family structures. This approach enabled authorities to sustain social order while managing reproductive functions. Christian beliefs during the Victorian period established a framework that extended to every corner of the globe.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research demonstrates that faith-based prejudice brings about mental health issues for gender and sexual minorities, but religious reform movements still need more research because they work to eliminate these prejudices. The research studies religious institutions to determine their effects on societal beliefs and practices. Research on progressive movements within religious organizations shows their impact on policies and individual experiences related to gender and sexual minority rights. Most research studies religious teachings as independent subjects that exist without other influences. Researchers cannot establish connections among religious identity, gender, and sexual orientation because they need to study how these three aspects connect. Researchers need to study how different coping strategies and resilience tools function within faith communities that maintain patriarchal traditions and reject homosexuality. The research will address these gaps by examining how faith-based prejudice reduction efforts operate at both the personal and community levels.

CHAPTER 9

Love and Psychoanalysis: Spiritual Insights into Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract: Love as an element of existence has not only created a fascination in philosophers, artists, musicians, and poets but also in psychoanalysts. Historically, psychology has roots in philosophy and physiology. Love has both a philosophical and a physiological basis. There are some philosophers whose description of love is quite psychoanalytic, and some psychoanalysts who are mesmerized by the philosophical underpinnings of love, even today. One might say that psychoanalysts are philosophers of love. From Freud to Lacan to Winnicott, there have been elucidations of how a psychoanalytic cure requires love as an object, symbol, imagination, "real," and a capacity. In other words, a psychoanalytic cure facilitates the capacity to love in an analysis and precursor, which is the capacity to be alone. This chapter explores the intersection of love, spirituality, and psychoanalysis, emphasizing their significance in mental health and well-being. Recognizing love as a transformative force integral to human experience, the chapter examines its evolution within psychoanalytic theory, from foundational contributions by Freud to contemporary perspectives on relationality, intersubjectivity, and spiritual psychology. Drawing upon interdisciplinary frameworks, the chapter situates love within a broader spiritual and psychological context, highlighting its potential to foster resilience, emotional regulation, and fulfillment. By integrating psychoanalytic constructs with spiritual dimensions, the discussion underscores how love functions as both a therapeutic and existential foundation for mental health. The analysis extends to practical implications, emphasizing strategies for cultivating self-love, relational harmony, and emotional resilience in modern life. This chapter attempts to historicize the uses and abuses of love in psychoanalytic theory, method, and practice. Both love and analytic cure have erotic and thanatotic elements. An analytic encounter, broadly conceptualized, is about accepting personal-social discontents and facilitating love. Love has been an eminent part of psychoanalytic thought, although it is foreclosed in some scenarios. The chapter also addresses the dual nature of love as a source of life-affirming energy (Eros) and existential challenge (Thanatos), exploring its implications for psychological growth and spiritual transcendence. In bridging theoretical insights with practical applications, this chapter contributes to emerging spiritual psychology and psychoanalysis discourses, offering valuable perspectives for enhancing mental health and well-being. It aligns with contemporary efforts to integrate spiritual practices and psychoanalytic

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principles in therapeutic and everyday settings, paving the way for holistic approaches to mental health.

Keywords: Love, Mental health, Psychoanalysis, Resilience, Spiritual psychology, Spirituality, Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Poetic elements are the bridge between love and psychoanalysis. More specifically, they are the "and" between love *and* psychoanalysis. In *Other Inquisitions*, Jorge Luis Borges wrote, "To fall in love is to create a religion that has a fallible god" (Borges, 1964). It cannot be coincidental that lovers are, in fact, artists. A lover makes their love object conscious of the things their love object does not see. The phrasing of love is akin to the greatest poetry, and the tone of love holds a timeless sincerity, just like being "O" in the analytic hour, as Bion says, to be "without memory and desire" (Bion, 1992). It would not be fortuitous if this chapter touches on the center, the periphery, the highest, and the deepest core of human experience. Love "is part of the genealogy of psychoanalysis" (Fradenburg, 2002). It has been so because of its ability to structure work and desire (Marcuse, 1962). Psychoanalysis has played a significant role in the return of love and sexuality as subjects of exploration. The tale continues, spanning from Lacan to Julia Kristeva, Slavoj Žižek, and Deleuze and Guattari.Love, like psychoanalysis, is not a concept but an experience. Certainly, it is necessary to apply and concentrate on psychoanalytical theory and practice to provide access to love. One prominent thing about the projection and introjection of objects is the 'bond' that is created. The bond with the love object is so intricate and intense that it constitutes a person's self. Therefore, the loss of the object is equivalent to the loss of oneself. This treatment is the first of its kind of subtle bonds of love in all their diverse manifestations. To operationalize love in a psychoanalytic setting means to recognize the quiet, often unseen ways love permeates the therapeutic space, not as desire or dependency, but as a steadfast, sacred presence.

Psychoanalysis is as much about a recovery of faith (Eigen, 2014) as it is about a movement toward being love. If we look deep inside the human psyche, no word is more falsely utilized than the word 'love.' Unfortunately, those who have falsified love and blocked the possibility of love are the "direct ancestors of love" (Osho, 2003). Religion talks about love, but all the discourses on love have closed the doors to love. This is true in the East, the West, India, Africa, and America. Psychoanalysis has worked through elements disguised as love (jealousy, anger, hatred, envy, possessiveness) so that the blocked streams of love can be released

and the Ganges of love can flow again (Akhtar, 2005). Society has been fabricated in a way that love, sexuality, family, and relationships can find a safe space on the therapeutic couch. Psychoanalysis of love and love of psychoanalysis both speak to each other in their own ways. The nature of the human psyche and its relation to the ineffable have given rise to numerous theorizations that aim to solve the riddle posed by love, yet cunningly evade generations of philosophers and psychologists.

No exclusive treatment is devoted to suffering disguised as love in psychoanalysis (Green, 2009). Disappointment in love and its corresponding pain are the raison d'être of psychoanalysis, yet somehow, they have escaped the gestalt of what happens in the analytic setting. The theme of love through psychoanalysis can help one understand love's salient characteristics, the intertwining of body and psyche in the 'love affect,' and the loss of ego, similar to a mystic's experience of the divine unison with existence (Kakar, 2007). Love takes one beyond the limits of sense and meaning (Eigen, 2016). In other words, love may be referred to as 'non-sense,' *i.e.*, that which cannot be perceived through the senses and takes one beyond the cerebral meaning-making process. Love is authentic only when it allows freedom. One may say that analytic cure is as much about attaining autonomy, survival, and responsibility as it is about understanding one's freedom. The elements in the psyche and the world are deterministic to such an extent that it allows for free will, and are free to such an extent that it all appears deterministic. Freedom here comes as the first door towards acceptance of oneself, which is the paradox of all metamorphoses. Acceptance opens the door to whatever one wants to become free from. Total acceptance yields change (Rogers, 1996), and without freedom, there is no acceptance and integration of the good and bad parts of the self. The moment of individuation facilitates the flowering of love in its unique ways (Fromm, 2006).

Love is not about "being loving to humans alone; it is a question of being loving" (Osho, 2003). "A person full of hatred treats human beings as lifeless objects; a person full of love imparts a living personality even to lifeless objects" (Osho, 2003). The phrases "hence you should love" and "therefore you should love" are a misinterpretation of the word love. Therapy is not about giving reasons for love; it is about facilitating an environment (Winnicott, 1971) in which a person can be loved. This is the beauty of the analytical setting: verbally expressing one's emotions is like creating a symphony one did not know would satisfy one, even if one heard it every day, unconsciously. Love, like the "capacity to be alone" (Winnicott, 1958), is a quality, a state of being that is a precursor of any relationship.

Section/Part 3: Spiritual Psychology, Mental Health & Well-being

CHAPTER 10

Spiritual Therapy: The Role of Mindfulness, Meditation, and Contemplative Practices

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Abstract: Spirituality, a holistic concept, is considered an invisible force that energizes society and the spirit. It is multidimensional in nature and is operationalized in many ways. It is related to art, culture, and meditation. Gaining resurgence, psycho-spirituality is now becoming part of human personality and development. It is also being considered a prominent force that is pervading nursing, medicine, counselling, and psychotherapy. The goal of spiritual counseling is to cure the soul and to develop a sense of serenity. This process is an integration of action and thought, conscious and unconscious, inner life and external behaviour, and body and soul. Current times perceive spirituality as an integral part of counselling services. In this chapter, focus will be on the origin of spirituality and various spiritual traditions. The chapter will also discuss the value of mental health professionals who use spirituality in counselling settings. In addition, the chapter will provide an overview of contemporary spiritual practices.

Keywords: Meditation, Mental health, Mindfulness, Prayer, Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Transpersonal psychology has discussed the human spectrum as consisting of spiritual aspirations, deeper understanding and appreciation of life, transcendental experiences, and self-actualization. Additionally, Indian psychology is also woven in spirituality, liberation of life, and collective transformation. Each school of Indian psychology offers insights into personality and behavioral paradigms that are highly valuable for mental health professionals.

According to Puchalski and Ferrell (2011), spirituality is defined as "the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose, and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to

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themselves, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred." Since the advent of cultural diversity, the inclusion of spirituality criteria in mental health settings has increased in the late 20th century. Therapy now includes religion as an essential element. However, there are more studies showing that spirituality plays an important role in healing health issues. 500 studies from the decades of 1980, 1990, and 2000 have reported a positive association between spiritual health and patients' mental health, physical well-being, and reduced substance use (Wiggins, 2009).

Freud (1961) repudiated religion entirely and asserted that it was pathological. He was of the opinion that individuals must renounce their religious beliefs in order to pursue more mature lifestyles. Engel (1977) had proposed three dimensions of human behaviour: '*bio-psycho-social'*. Further, Wilber, in 1999, proposed five dimensions of human behaviour: "biological, psychological, social, moral, and spiritual (including religious aspects)."

In addition, humans are not only psychosexual (Freud, 1933) or psychosocial (Erickson, 1963), they are also psycho-spiritual. Jung (1938) emphasized the role of spirituality and collective unconsciousness and stated that religious symbols can be used in the process of growth. Viktor Frankl (1946) introduced Logotherapy, which discusses the power of meaning and purpose of life for psychological healing. Maslow (1969) and Wilber (2000) contributed to transpersonal psychology, integrating the power of spirituality with human processes and experiences. Unfortunately, the spiritual dimension of human behavior has been overlooked for too long.

In the psychology of negativity, dysfunction, abnormalities, and disorders, there is a shift toward positive psychology, which is primarily concerned with the positive. In the mental health paradigm, the focus is on well-being. There is a lot of potential and capacity in the person to change and live a better life. Research states that mainstream psychology and counselling have integrated spirituality in counselling settings (Pargament, 2007). The latest DSM 5 has documented the role of spiritual and religious issues in clinical settings (Lukoff, 1998). Psycho-spiritualism is now becoming a positive force to study personality characteristics and the lives of individuals. The world is rapidly changing, and in this fast-paced world, the meaning of spirituality is changing. Although the tradition is deeply rooted, many variations exist in how the new generation practices spirituality. For example,appreciation of music, food, wine, literature, and travel can also reflect spirituality. Being in contact with nature and admiring the beauty of the world also reflects spirituality. Staying in the moment and finding meaning in whatever one does is also a spiritual phenomenon.

Spiritual psychotherapy has recently gained recognition as a combination of spirituality and psychological healing, and it is increasingly accepted as a practice in clinical settings, supported by research-based methodologies and empirical evidence. Spiritual psychotherapy addresses the undesirable state and transforms it into the client's positive growth potential.

It is stated that individuals can prevent existential suffering and improve their recovery process through practices like yoga, meditation, mindfulness, and reflection. For instance, in India, traditions like Yoga and Vedanta have demonstrated numerous practical applications of spirituality. Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yogic traditions have emphasized intuition and the power of concentration to attain higher forms of consciousness. The Buddhist tradition entails entering a state of nirvana for optimal mental health and a stable emotional life. Thus, integrating spirituality in psychotherapy is a growing trend as therapists are recognizing it as a healing source.

Many practices are now part of therapeutic interventions and treatment. APA recognizes the importance of these practices and encourages culturally sensitive approaches. The theoretical background comprises two main approaches or models.

The Cognitive Behaviour Approach

Thecognitive behaviour approach is the most prominent theory and is now integrating a component of spirituality in counselling settings, especially for the treatment of anxiety and depression. Propst (1988) has extended Beck’s model by incorporating Christian beliefs, which can help clients achieve healthy thinking by replacing negative beliefs with spiritual ones. Cognitive restructuring is used along with other CBT strategies, like relaxation skills training, assertion training, self-awareness, and beneficial homework assignments. It also incorporates the usage of corrective religious beliefs and religious images. In the future, training can be provided to counselors to assimilate various religious and spiritual content according to clients’ traditions to build good relationships. Counseling settings require a great deal of care, and experts recommend appropriate training and supervision. The counsellor also needs to be flexible to include spiritual behaviours that encourage specific client actions on the problems. Counsellors must adhere to their religious convictions.

The Humanistic and Existential Approach

The humanistic and existential approach to counseling also integrates religiosity and spirituality. The humanistic tradition focuses on fully relationship-centered counselling settings and, at the same time, healing the client at all levels. The

CHAPTER 11

Decoding the 'Alchemy' of Life Satisfaction: Investigating the Relationship among Spiritual Psychology, Mental Health, and Well-Being

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Abstract: This chapter examines the complex relationship between spiritual psychology, mental health, and well-being in the broader context of life satisfaction, using a multidisciplinary approach. Starting with the basics, Maslow's hierarchy is employed to relate higher-level needs to meaning and well-being. During a psychological crisis, understanding the role of meaning in resilience is crucial, and to understand this better, Frankl's Logotherapy is examined. A multicultural aspect is also explored. Narratives like Eat, Pray, Love, Ikigai, and The Alchemist are analysed for their role in self-discovery and for critiquing "spiritual bypassing". Continuing along the cultural pathway, Ryan and Deci's hedonia and eudaimonia are examined from a cross-cultural lens in fast and slow-paced cultures. Lastly, completing the circle is Maslow and Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, which investigates how transcendent states contribute to emotional stability from a neuropsychological standpoint.

Keywords: Purpose, Fulfilment, Life satisfaction, Spiritual practices, Deep connections, Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction, a multidimensional concept, is affected by psychological, cultural, and spiritual factors. It boils down to an individual's feeling of fulfilment and purpose (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Traditional psychology has focused on analysing well-being through hedonic and eudaimonic frameworks; however, spiritual psychology's take on it has largely been focused on transcendence, transfiguration, and purpose (Coelho, 1988). This chapter will delve into the interplay among mental health, spiritual psychology, and life satisfaction, using fundamental theories and cultural narratives. The integration of psychological theories, cultural nuances within spirituality, and evidence-based research will

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contribute to the holistic outlook this chapter aims to take. The chapter will offer some beneficial insights into how spiritual psychology impacts life satisfaction and fosters overall well-being, both physical and mental.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs continues to be one of the most renowned psychological concepts for comprehending human motivation and fulfilment (Csikszentmihalyi *et al.*, 2014). He characterised human needs into a five-tiered pyramid, with physiological necessities (for instance, food and shelter) at the base and self-actualization at the apex (Davidson *et al.*, 2008). A few years after his model was developed, Maslow added a sixth stage, transcendence. At this stage, the individual moves from materialistic pleasure to feeling a deeper connection with their soul (Dietrich, 2004).

The upper levels of Maslow's pyramid closely coincide with the idea of spiritual psychology. This is particularly true for self-actualisation and transcendence. Esteem needs include prestige, respect, and feelings of accomplishment. The need for self-actualisation comes above esteem needs. Without esteem needs being met, one would not be able to transcend to self-actualisation, which is the level at which an individual feels the desire to realize their maximum potential. Transcendence lies at the apex of the pyramid. It refers to the feeling of being connected with a higher purpose. This is often cognate with spirituality, altruism, and flow states (Diener *et al.*, 1985).

However, as Maslow himself has already mentioned, without the base state being achieved, one will not be able to progress up the pyramid. For instance, if a person is feeling physically endangered, which means their base physiological needs are not being met, they will not be able to reflect on themselves and achieve any of the top stages like esteem, self-actualisation, and transcendence (Doery *et al.*, 2023). The interplay between the several levels in Maslow's hierarchy underscores the vital role that stability and well-being play in achieving spiritual fulfilment, reinstating the holistic nature of life satisfaction.

Frankl's Logotherapy

Maslow's hierarchy was built upon by Viktor Frankl, a holocaust survivor and psychiatrist. He proposed logotherapy, which is an approach that encompasses a search for meaning. Frankl noticed that individuals in the Nazi concentration camps who found meaning in their suffering displayed more strength and resilience in comparison to those who whined about their pain (Brooks, 2013). The theory that logotherapy derived from this observation is that the human

species' primary drive is not pleasure, as was proposed by Freud, but rather a search for meaning in adversity (Dunkel & Anthis, 2001).

According to this approach, the reason one experiences distress during pain or suffering is not the suffering itself, but rather the perception of it as negative. To explain this, Frankl introduced what he called the "tragic triad," which referred to pain, guilt, and death. He stated that these were unavoidable aspects of life that could be better managed through purposeful engagement (Frankl, 1967). This approach is significant for the field of psychology, as it offers a better way for people to manage their responses to suffering and find solace in it.

The applications of logotherapy are vast, from treating an existential crisis to chronic depression or PTSD. The treatment that logotherapy provides is based on its fundamental principle of changing the individual's perception of suffering (Frankl, 1985). Multiple studies like that by Vos (2018) have indicated that interventions that inculcate meaning-making reduce the feeling of suffering and anxiety related to it, promoting better well-being (Garcia & Miralles, 2016). The theoretical aspect of this approach is applied in psychotherapy, palliative care, and trauma recovery; hence, it is extremely relevant, now more than ever.

POPULAR CULTURAL NARRATIVES

Individuals' pursuit of fulfilment is heavily determined by cultural narratives. Media like art, media, travel, and literature have served as means of self-exploration for ages. The most widely known narrative, 'Eat, Pray, Love', by Elizabeth Gilbert, is a memoir that navigates through indulgence in Italy, devotion in India, and balance in Indonesia. The memoir takes off after Gilbert's divorce, where she travels to explore her purpose and self. A few years ago, this book was adapted into a film that depicted cultural immersion as a solid tool for transformation. Her journey through the various countries contributes to a holistic awakening.

Spiritual tourism has been gaining a lot of traction of late, and Gilbert's narrative closely aligns with it. The foundations of both are similar, in that people seek healing and enlightenment through various religious and cultural immersions at different places (Heelas & Woodhead, 2008). Many studies have found that engaging with other cultures from one's own allows one to transform into a better version of oneself, both physically and psychologically (Helliwell *et al.*, 2015). Opposing this, critics have posited that cultural narratives like this have the possibility of being extremely romanticised, serving as an escape from people's true struggles. They also argue that finding inner fulfilment and life satisfaction simply through external means is over-exaggerated (Huitt, 2017).

CHAPTER 12

Resilience, Well-being, and Coping Strategies for Life's Challenges

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Abstract: This chapter explores the concepts of coping, resilience, and well-being in relation to mental and emotional health. The World Health Organization defines well-being as a comprehensive state that includes social, psychological, and emotional health. Multiple factors influence it, including social relationships, personal attributes, financial status, and environmental conditions, which collectively shape an individual's well-being. Positive psychological attributes, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and strong social networks, help in overcoming adversity. It is not a static ability and can evolve with experience and interpersonal connections. Authors also discuss the impact of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies on stress management and overall well-being. Positive coping may improve resilience and simultaneously mitigate the impact of stressors on an individual's mental health.

When these concepts are explained, the connections are highlighted, showing how resilience can be enhanced through a high level of well-being and how both resilience and well-being can be enhanced through effective coping strategies. In the final section of the chapter, the authors advocate for a shift in the methodology employed to develop mental health interventions to recognise the multifaceted nature of health. This means that a person can be more resilient and cope with life's challenges while also having a good coping mechanism to increase their well-being. This understanding influences the programs designed to improve psychological health and mental health support systems.

Keywords: Coping, Holistic approach, Mental health, Resilience, Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Three interrelated concepts that describe psychological health are well-being, resilience, and coping mechanisms. Learning these terms is extremely useful for the advancement of psychological health and the improvement of quality of life. This chapter explores the nature of concept definitions, their interrelationships, and their implications for managing challenges in life.

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Well-being

The concept of well-being includes several interconnected dimensions that describe different aspects of a person's life, including social, psychological, and emotional. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines well-being as the ability to develop personal capabilities, cope with daily stress, and deliver productive work that benefits society (WHO, 2014). The definition demonstrates that well-being encompasses a state of contentment, meaning, and freedom from illness, as well as the acquisition of positive emotions. Furthermore, physical health, mental health, social attachments, and financial stability comprise the four fundamental components of well-being (Dodge *et al.*, 2012).

Well-being has multiple determinants, which range from individual attributes to broader social and environmental contexts. All determinants fall into four broad categories: personal, social, economic, and environmental factors. Key personal determinants include natural heredity traits, individual personality type, and behavioral decisions regarding physical activity and nutritional choices. Social factors, including familial relationships, friendships, and societal connections, are the means by which an individual attains emotional support and a sense of belonging. Dodge *et al.* (2012) have demonstrated that the level of personal income, together with employment certainty, is of significant importance in the development of well-being opportunities through economic determinants. According to Dodge *et al.* (2012), the overall health of an individual is contingent on environmental factors that encompass health status and the accessibility of medical services.

The Role of Resilience

The human ability to recover from tough periods and adjust positively in the face of unbearable stress and tragic events is known as resilience. The process qualifies as a living mechanism that helps people adapt positively to difficult situations (Luthar *et al.*, 2000). Resilience develops as individuals navigate life experiences, supported by supportive relationships with others. People develop resilience through both internal traits, such as optimism and self-efficacy, and external factors, such as social support and community participation (Masten, 2001). The ability to handle stress effectively makes resilient individuals better able to endure challenging times.

Resilience is associated with better mental health outcomes, including reduced levels of depression and anxiety (Masten, 2001). Having resilience enables people to build stronger stress-coping skills, which results in improved well-being. The characteristics of optimism, self-efficacy, and positive interpersonal relationships present in resilient individuals enable smoother reactions to adverse situations.

Coping Strategies

People who struggle with stress or unwanted emotions utilize both behavioral and cognitive strategies to manage their distress. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping practices exist as problem-focused or emotion-focused methods. People utilize problem-focused coping to address the origins of stress directly, and they practice emotion-focused coping to manage their emotional responses to stress. The methods people use to manage stress include seeking solutions and minimizing stress levels (problem-focused), as well as seeking support and learning relaxation skills (emotion-focused) (Carver *et al.*,1989). The selection of coping strategies significantly affects customer management capabilities and their ability to maintain well-being.

People demonstrate the relationship between their well-being status and resilience level in how they handle stressors in their lives. Resilience receives support from good well-being, which leads to improved problem-management abilities. The ability to cope effectively leads to resilient outcomes, which support better well-being. A combination of mindfulness and supportive social connections leads people to develop higher well-being and resilience (Keng *et al.*, 2011).

The Interconnectedness of Well-being, Resilience, and Coping

Well-being, with its related components, exists in a cycle of dynamic relationships that continually interact with each other. Wealth constitutes the fundamental foundation of resilience, which enables better handling of stressful situations. The positive effects of various development initiatives applied to one system can be experienced by the others as a result of their interconnected nature.

The growth of resilience, along with refined coping abilities, results in enhanced well-being. Life successes become attainable for people who build their capacity to overcome difficulties through positive social relationships, problem-solving skills, and the development of emotional intelligence. Successful coping with adversity benefits people's personal well-being and their connections with others and local communities.

Factors Influencing Well-being, Resilience, and Coping

1. A person’s well-being is shaped by the interaction of their lifestyle, inherent traits, and hereditary factors. Plomin *et al.* (2016) suggest that genetics serves as the leading cause for both temperament development and predisposition to mental diseases. The personality type plays a substantial role because extravert and conscientious individuals develop larger and more positive social networks, which leads to greater happiness (McCrae & Costa, 1991).

CHAPTER 13

Integrating Spirituality Into Addiction Treatment

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Abstract: This chapter explores the evolving role of spirituality in understanding and addressing addictive disorders within a holistic treatment framework. While addiction is widely recognized as a complex, chronic condition influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors, emerging evidence supports the inclusion of spirituality as a fourth dimension, integral to recovery and well-being. Spirituality, distinct from religion, represents an individual's search for meaning, purpose, and connection, and has shown promise in enhancing resilience, reducing relapse, and fostering long-term abstinence. The chapter introduces the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) model of addiction, which views substance use not merely as a behavioural or medical issue but as a manifestation of existential distress and spiritual disconnection. Drawing from spiritual psychology, religious traditions, neuroscientific findings, and clinical research, the chapter illustrates how spiritual practices can facilitate emotional healing, inner transformation, and sustained recovery. Programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous are examined as practical applications of spiritual intervention, highlighting their structure, effectiveness, and growing integration into mainstream care. The chapter also reviews validated tools for assessing spirituality and identifies core spiritual components relevant to addiction recovery, such as meaning-making, transcendence, and relatedness. Through a synthesis of theory, empirical findings, and clinical insight, this chapter advocates for the routine inclusion of spiritual assessments and interventions in addiction treatment. It calls for clinicians to engage with patients' spiritual narratives and leverage spiritually oriented resources to strengthen recovery capital and foster holistic healing. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Addiction recovery, Alcoholics Anonymous, Bio-psycho-social-spiritual model, Holistic treatment, Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a chronic and manageable condition characterized by intricate interactions among neuronal pathways, genetic predispositions, environmental influences, and personal life history. Individuals affected by addiction frequently

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engage in substance use or compulsive behaviours that persist despite experiencing negative outcomes (Tanyi, 2002). Addictive disorders present a huge burden of diseases, injuries, and accidents, with the prevalence of alcohol use disorders reaching up to 100.4 million cases (Degenhardt *et al.*, 2018). Spirituality is a fundamental and multifaceted part of human experience, deeply personal and unique to each individual. Though often used interchangeably, spirituality and religion are distinct concepts. Spirituality generally refers to the personal quest for meaning, purpose, and connection in life, whereas religion typically involves structured beliefs, rituals, and practices centred around a higher power or deity (Weber & Pargament, 2014). Spirituality can help in improving mental health through positive beliefs, religious coping, community, and support. Spiritual peace is a component of mental health that contributes to its preservation. Spiritually developed people deal more easily and better with dangers that can damage mental health (Skoko *et al.*, 2021).

Spirituality, Spiritual Psychology and their Facets

Spirituality encompasses both mental and physical aspects, serving as a vital source of inner strength and guidance in people's lives. It plays a key role in personal growth by promoting the healing of one's inner self. Through self-reflection and introspective practices, individuals are encouraged to evaluate their experiences honestly and learn from them, fostering personal empowerment. This journey is about self-awareness, responsibility, and growth.

Spiritual psychology examines the evolution of human consciousness, drawing on both scientific and philosophical perspectives. It focuses on deep, holistic transformation, aimed at reaching higher levels of awareness and personal excellence. Influential psychologists such as William James, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Jung have incorporated spirituality into their understanding of human behaviour.

The concept of the "spirit" is intrinsic to all humans, though spirituality takes on different meanings depending on time, culture, and individual perspectives. Historically, it has been expressed through religion, art, nature, and architecture. In modern times, these expressions have become more diverse and individualized. The definition of spirituality has evolved over the centuries and is recognized as a multifaceted, complex quality – similar to traits such as personality, temperament, and health. It is shaped by a range of factors, including culture, life experiences, values, relationships, love, transcendence, and the search for meaning.

Spirituality is influenced by culture, experiences, and ideas, as well as development, meaning, transcendence, love, relationships, and existence. Huddleston (1992) described spirituality as a way of understanding our true

human nature. Wong (2006) viewed spirituality as a deeply emotional and motivational force that drives individuals to seek meaningful connections with others, the environment, and a higher power, ultimately contributing to a sense of inner peace, fulfilment, and well-being. In the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred Hindu text, spirituality is portrayed as an inward journey to discover the true essence of the self, or Atman, the inner spirit. It teaches that enlightenment (Kaivalya Jnana) and ultimate liberation (Moksha) are attainable only through spiritual practice, not through ritualistic or purely religious paths.

SPIRITUALITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH "MENTAL HEALTH" AND "MENTAL ILLNESS"

According to the World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease. This definition does not include spiritual well-being. It further clarifies that healthcare providers typically adhere to a medical model that prioritizes pharmacological and surgical interventions, while placing minimal emphasis on patients' spiritual beliefs and faith. However, within the domain of mental health, there is a growing recognition of the significant protective role that religion and spirituality can play.

Religion and spirituality have been found to be beneficial for patients, as they are associated with higher quality of life, lower rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide, and greater standards of well-being. If religion or spirituality is rightly incorporated into mental health assessment and treatment, patients are found to benefit abundantly. Spirituality and religious connection can reduce the likelihood of depression by up to 40%. Even if they are depressed, they recover faster. Adults over 50 years of age who have never been involved in any kind of religious activities are at a fourfold risk of attempting suicide than those who are actively involved in such activities. Religious affiliation among teens was found to significantly reduce the suicidal risk.

Addictive Disorders – An Overview

'Addictive Disorders' is an umbrella term that includes addiction or dependence on substances as well as addictive behaviours (like gambling and gaming). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5th edition Text Revision (DSM-5TR) specifically lists several types of substance addictions within this category (alcohol, caffeine, cannabis, hallucinogens, inhalants, opioids, sedatives, hypnotics, anxiolytics, stimulants, and tobacco). Dependence or addiction is characterised by: Physiologic Symptoms: 1. Development of tolerance, 2. Presence of withdrawal symptoms (excluding substances like inhalants/hallucinogens), 3. Intense urge or compulsion to use the substance, 4. Consuming more than originally planned, 5. Repeated unsuccessful efforts to cut

CHAPTER 14

Exploring the Psychological Impact of Digital Transformation on Spiritual Well-Being and Mental Health

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Abstract: Digital transformation has increasingly shaped the ways in which one engages with both mental health and spiritual practices. Modern technologies like meditation apps, online prayer communities, and virtual support circles have increased access to spiritual tools and psychological support outside the physical environment. Although these innovations provide valuable chances to be more mindful, reflective, and sociable, they also present certain psychological issues, such as digital exhaustion, emotional disconnection, and overuse of screens. The chapter will examine how digital transformation affects people's psychological and spiritual health, drawing on insights from spiritual psychology and mental health research. It examines the impact of digital platforms on spiritual habits, emotional control, and psychological strength critically and also discusses the possible dangers of constant digital engagement. The chapter is based on empirical research and theoretical ideas that highlight the significance of balancing digital engagement and conscious disengagement. This chapter seeks to offer a complex perspective on ways in which technology can be approached responsibly to help sustain spiritual well-being and mental health in the modern digital age.

Keywords: Digital burnout, Digital detox, Digital transformation, Mental health, Mindfulness, Online communities, Psychological impact, Spiritual psychology, Spiritual well-being, Virtual spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital technology into daily life has significantly impacted communication, work, psychological, and spiritual well-being. This change has not just altered social and work spheres, but it has already started to modify indi-

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vidual experiences of meaning, purpose, and inner well-being (Scott Brennen and Kreiss, 2016). Spiritual well-being, as the capacity for a sense of purpose, connectedness, and transcendence, is a significant aspect of holistic health (Koss-Chioino and Hefner, 2006a). With the growing mediation of spiritual life through digital platforms, it is necessary to discuss the impacts of such technological change on spiritual life and mental health.

With the spread of digital platforms, more spiritual materials and communities that were previously inaccessible due to geographic or institutional restrictions are now more accessible (Cheong, 2017a). Headspace and Calm are meditation apps that offer guided sessions that help users to regulate emotions and focus their minds (Howells *et al.*, 2016a), whereas online prayer groups and religious forums allow people to engage in collective worship and contemplation (Campbell and Tsuria, 2021). To most users, these online platforms provide a sense of identity and permanence, especially when in-person participation is limited.

Even with these advantages, there is no increase in dependence on digital platforms as a means of spiritual engagement without psychological concerns. Anxiety, emotional burnout, and digital burnout symptoms have been associated with prolonged screen time, unremitting connectivity, and information overload (Twenge *et al.*, 2018a). Moreover, commercializing spirituality in the form of subscriptions and internet-based services is ethically dubious in terms of authenticity and accessibility, and it might exploit users who may want emotional or spiritual comfort (Fung, 2019a). These issues demonstrate the necessity of critically considering the design and consumption of digital spiritual practices.

Simultaneously, empirical studies indicate that carefully crafted digital spiritual life can add to psychological strength and emotional health in a positive way. Internet-based mindfulness programs have been shown to reduce stress and improve overall mental well-being (Goyal *et al.*, 2014a). Additionally, participating in virtual religious groups is a method of enhancing emotional resilience and social support (Campbell and Tsuria, 2021). More access to online counseling and telehealth services has increased access to psychological and spiritual care, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when interaction was restricted (Wind *et al.*, 2020a).

The crossroads between the digital revolution and the state of spiritual health is thus a delicate and changing psychological phenomenon. Although digital technologies can be used as innovative ways of spiritual development and mental care, their usefulness can be significantly limited by usage patterns, individual limits, and principles of moral design. This balance is very important to develop evidence-based strategies that enhance spiritual well-being without affecting

psychological well-being. This chapter aims to play its role in this debate by looking into the opportunities and challenges posed by digital spiritual practices, with a specific focus on developing mindful and balanced interaction in the digital age.

SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

The concept of psychological health and spiritual well-being in digital transformation entails the understanding of the balance between the advantages of digital technology and potential mental health concerns (Gyöngyössy *et al.*, 2024a). Emotional stability can be improved, and a stronger connection to oneself and others can be established through the positive utilisation of virtual platforms (Howells *et al.*, 2016a). With the advent of digital technology, religious practices are changing and affecting the way human beings deal with their religion, meditation, and emotional support systems. Virtual platforms, mobile apps, and digital communities have gained prominence in present spiritual experiences (Cheong, 2017a). One of the biggest impacts of technology on religious practices is how easily people are able to access it. Guided meditation platforms such as Headspace and Calm allow individuals to manage stress and stay present (Goyal *et al.*, 2014a). Campbell and Tsuria (2021a) assert that religious forums and online prayer groups enable individuals to engage in communal worship and to provide emotional support to fellow group members, irrespective of geographic location. Also, social media are platforms for disseminating inspirational content, following spiritual leaders, and engaging in discussion on spirituality and ethics (Fung, 2019a). Social media are channels by which individuals can learn from diverse spiritual perspectives and build support structures that foster psychological well-being (Van Gordon *et al.*, 2017a). However, the application of technology in building spiritual practice comes with challenges. The commodification of spirituality through subscription-based apps is also ethically questionable in terms of authenticity and exploitation (Gyöngyössy *et al.*, 2024a). In addition, the constant stream of information and digital distractions may hinder deep reflection and spiritual growth (Goyal *et al.*, 2014a). To mitigate these challenges, practitioners must be encouraged to be digitally aware and establish healthy boundaries between their online and offline religious lives (Stanovsek, 2018a). In doing so, they are able to maximize the benefits of digital technology while avoiding the loss of depth and validity in their spiritual experience (Gyöngyössy *et al.*, 2024a). Lastly, technology plays a transformative role in shaping spiritual practice through greater access, the establishment of community support, and the reinforcement of emotional resilience. While this is the case, and with caution, digital tools must be utilized to offset the psychological shortcomings of extended screen time and digital burnout (Bakker *et al.*, 2016). Future research should work towards developing means of balancing virtual

Section/Part 4: Spiritual Psychology and its Modern/Practical Applications

CHAPTER 15

Evaluating the Psychological Effectiveness of a Course on *"Science of Happiness"*: A Classroom-Based Positive Psychology Intervention (PPI) Study on Indian College Students

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Abstract: Indian researchers in the field of positive psychology have been working to revive indigenous teachings and practices that can be employed as positive interventions to enhance happiness. The current study assessed the psychological effectiveness of an ongoing course, "Science of Happiness," offered by the Value Education Center to help college students understand and improve happiness by incorporating teachings from Vedanta, practicing mindfulness meditation, and performing other positive activities. The study included 31 college students (26 men and 5 women; M_{age} = 23.51 years; SD = 3.92) from an engineering institute in Delhi who attended the course on "Science of Happiness" and participated in the study. Lessons from the Upanishads on self-enquiry and consciousness, as well as discussions on core concepts of happiness from multiple perspectives in Vedanta psychology, neuroscience, physiology, and the positive psychology framework, were covered in nine 1.5-hour classes over the course of 40 days in the "Science of Happiness" course. The effectiveness of the course was assessed using pre–post testing on various scales to measure flourishing, positive and negative experiences, peace of mind, harmony in life, and mindfulness. In addition to the self-reported assessments, a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire was incorporated to examine other psychological benefits of this workshop by analyzing the data in ATLAS.ti using content analysis. Some of the course's main highlights included prosocial activities such as micro-kindness and service to the less fortunate, as well as classroom meditational sessions. The results showed a statistically significant improvement, with medium to very large effect sizes (Cohen's d = 0.692–1.368) on flourishing, positive experience, and lesser negative experience, along with higher peace of mind, greater harmony in life, and more mindfulness in everyday life. The study provides support for expanding the potential of positive psychology and the teachings of Vedanta psychology for the participants to understand themselves better and lead a more meaningful and productive life.

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Keywords: College students, Mindfulness, Positive education, Positive psychology intervention, Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Student well-being is a challenging issue for higher education institutions. As students transition from high school to college, they may encounter numerous stressors within the new academic environment, including keeping up with assignments, developing future career plans, and socialising, as well as more significant issues such as homesickness, bullying, or harassment (Albright and Hurd, 2017; Maples *et al.*, 2021). This can not just affect their academic performance but also result in poor mental health (Brar *et al.*, 2012; Le *et al.*, 2021). This further leads to students dropping out or even suicide ideation (Le *et al.*, 2021). It is of utmost importance that students have access to intervention programs that can help them alleviate stress, depression, and anxiety and help them achieve greater well-being and happiness. Students need an effective program that can help them cope with stressors effectively and allow them to flourish in life. This can be achieved through positive psychology interventions that are designed to provide psychological benefits. One approach is to investigate and integrate an Indian knowledge system-based intervention that emphasises meditation and knowledge sessions from ancient Indian wisdom.

Objectives of the Present Study

The present study examines the effectiveness of an ongoing course on the "Science of Happiness" at an engineering institute, which contains various components of theoretical discussions on happiness and related constructs, along with the practice of mindfulness meditation and positive activities to promote prosocial behavior and assignments on acts of micro-kindness and social service. Furthermore, the course includes valuable lessons from Vedanta—one of the world's most ancient spiritual philosophies originating in India and primarily constituting Hindu philosophy. The Vedanta philosophy is based on the Vedas, which are the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. Vedanta affirms the oneness of existence, the divinity of the soul, and the harmony of all religions and beings. The word Vedant is a combination of two words: veda, meaning "knowledge," and ant, meaning "the end of" or "the goal of." Vedanta is therefore the search for self-knowledge and for God (Rao, 2011).

The present study, along with classroom teachings (see details in the section Sessions Description), also required participants to perform tri-weekly acts of micro-kindness by helping others and being kind to strangers or loved ones. Moreover, the course required the participants to practice mindfulness meditation through a guided audio clip three times a week and in class after every third

lecture. Along with this, the course required participants to perform acts of service to the less fortunate by going to an old age home or an NGO for young children and help them by teaching, providing food, and spending quality time. The present study evaluated the psychological impacts of the course on participants, especially their emotional experiences, psychological flourishing, peace of mind, perceived harmony, and mindfulness in everyday life. The study also assessed participants' perceived benefits through semi-structured questionnaires. The present study observed the interventional aspect of such value education courses, which are believed to have positive psychological impacts on college students.

About the Course

The objective of the "Science of Happiness" course was to teach students the theoretical and practical aspects of happiness, such as the various psychological and physiological perspectives from which it is studied, the methods by which it is assessed, the various types of happiness, and the methods by which it can be attained through meditation. The course was taught over a span of three months and was commenced at a premier engineering institute in Delhi as part of value education. Each class lasted for 1.5 hours, twice a week. The course was designed as an audit course with a pass/fail criterion and a compulsory attendance of at least 90%. It was an amalgamation of theory classes and activity-based exercises, such as meditation and acts of kindness, along with practical assignments on positive activities. Each class covered an array of topics related to understanding happiness through the lenses of neuroscience, physiology, psychology, and, most importantly, Vedanta. Emphasis was laid on the concept that happiness lies within us. The participants of the present study learned that one is nothing but pure consciousness and awareness. Participants were made to understand that meditation is a way to realize the happiness already within us. The course highlighted that almost all meditation practices share the principle that God is within us and aim to unite us with the Divine. The approaches are more similar than different. The course also teaches that yoga and meditation are essential to help us unite with the Divine and experience the happiness or bliss that lies within us.

Activities from the Course

The most important aspect of the course was its application-based class content, which focused on positive activities believed to have a positive effect on participants. The course required the participants to perform acts of micro-kindness. For the purpose of this assignment, students were required to perform a small activity on acts of micro-kindness. The activity, as defined, took less than 10 minutes of the participant's time and required them to consciously take their

CHAPTER 16

Soul, Screen, and Spirituality: A Tale of Three Generations

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Abstract: Spirituality in India is deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions, and it reflects the evolving sociocultural landscape. This chapter examines the shifting definitions and practices of spirituality across three generations: Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. Gen X balances traditional rituals with emerging global ideas; Millennials blend traditional wisdom with modern wellness trends; and Gen Z integrates spirituality with technology, activism, and self-expression. These generational perspectives illustrate the transformation of spirituality from traditional practices to personalized and tech-driven approaches, emphasizing mental well-being and global interconnectedness. Despite challenges such as commodification and concerns about authenticity, spirituality continues to adapt, offering insights into India's broader societal transitions. The study underscores the need to explore the impact of digital tools and the role of spirituality in addressing contemporary issues, ensuring its relevance in modern India.

Keywords: Cultural transitions, Digital spirituality, Gen x, Gen z, Generational shifts, India, Mental well-being, Millennials, Modern wellness, Spirituality, Traditional practices.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of spirituality is very complex. It is vague, and to add to the complexity of researching it, it has changed over the years. Spirituality has traditionally been associated with religion. However, the modern understanding of spirituality includes a wide spectrum of experiences. In contemporary society, the concept of spirituality may encompass mental well-being, activism, self-help, environmental consciousness, and a connection with nature. It is a challenge to define spirituality, as many researchers have struggled with its conceptual ambiguity and vagueness. Humphrey (2015) discusses the "exponential growth of spirituality scholarship". He also acknowledges the inconsistencies in definitions.

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Schneiders (1989) describes spirituality as "an obscure construct in need of empirical grounding". Woodhead (2010) studies its widespread yet often ambiguous usage. Despite these challenges, spirituality is a significant element in the human experience, influencing values, behaviours, and worldviews across generations.

This chapter explores the changes in the concept and meaning of spirituality in India across three generations- Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Every generation has had an environment that was unique and that shaped their beliefs about spirituality. And in each generation, there is always a blend between tradition and modernity. This book chapter also discusses how education and psychology relate to spiritual development. The role of media, social influences, and technology in shaping the perspective of different generations is also discussed.

Defining Spirituality

According to Humphrey (2015), defining spirituality is not only a philosophical issue but an academic challenge. Researchers have found it difficult to describe spirituality owing to its conceptual ambiguity. They describe it as fluid, vague, and lacking empirical support (Principe, 1983; Schneiders, 1989; Zinnbauer *et al.*, 1997; De Klerk, 2005). Some researchers argue that the term is so vague that even those who use it struggle to articulate its meaning (Woodhead, 2010). There is widespread criticism of its academic usage for its ambiguity (Cobb *et al.*, 2012). Lately, scholars have come to accept that “spirituality” is inconsistent in contemporary research literature (Piven, 2019).

Despite its ambiguous nature, spirituality is recognized as a universal concept. It includes beliefs about a higher power- often referred to as God- who governs the universe. It is a reflection of the individual’s life purpose, meaning of life, and a connection with the universe. For some people, spirituality is not just about culture and religion. It remains deeply personal and unique to each individual (Verghese, 2008). However, the close association of spirituality with religion does pose problems in defining and conceptualizing it (Dyson, Cobb, & Forman, 1997).

Wuthnow (2011) defines spirituality as either a relationship with a divine being or an awareness of a dimension that transcends ordinary human experience. One’s interest in spirituality is seen in their beliefs about God, but it is not just limited to religious faith. Some people consider spirituality to be an exploration that is not just about what the culture says. There are people who would consider it an all-encompassing concept that includes physical, emotional, and mental dimensions. Researchers have linked the rise of individualism to changes in spiritual perspectives (Luckmann, 1967; Bellah *et al.*, 1985). Some researchers say that the

modern concept of spirituality is different from just religion. Individuals are now turning towards themselves for spiritual fulfilment. However, this perspective is not right, as there are many people who call themselves spiritual but still participate in religious communities. For these people, spirituality has a very personal meaning. However, it also includes interaction with the community and discussions about God.

Spiritual practices may include praying, meditation, chanting, or participating in certain rituals. Spirituality is more a state of being, and spiritual practices are behaviours that lead to spirituality. Some social science theories of religion acknowledge spiritual practices, but they offer few insights into the modern expression of spirituality.

According to Canda (1997), the task of defining spirituality remains intricate, and the present definitions often lack clarity. Spirituality is understood as a relationship with a higher power or a higher self, and is affected by spiritual traditions. It involves fostering meaning, purpose, and values such as altruism, love, and forgiveness (Carroll, 1997; Musick, Koenig, Larson, & Matthews, 1998; Sermabeikian, 1994; Spero, 1990). Spirituality influences a person's connection to themselves, others, and the Universe/Cosmos.

The positive impact of spirituality has been researched. There have been studies that found spirituality to be related to successful aging (Kimble *et al.*, 1995), fulfilling marriages (Kaslow & Robison, 1996), resilience (Haight, 1998), and coping skills (Pargament, 1997). Spirituality is also associated with reduced substance abuse (Benson, 1992) and lower mortality and morbidity rates (Strawbridge *et al.*, 1997; Levin, 1994). Some studies found spirituality to be related to improved recovery from divorce (Nathanson, 1995), homelessness (Montgomery, 1994), and sexual assault (Kennedy, Davis, & Taylor, 1998).

Moberg (1984) found that most Americans struggle to define spiritual well-being but frequently link it with faith and personal growth. Similarly, Harold (2008) notes that spirituality is increasingly studied for its connection with mental and physical health. Traditionally associated with religious individuals, spirituality now includes not just religious people but also religious seekers, well-being advocates, and secular individuals. The modern concept of spirituality includes mental well-being, optimism, gratitude, and a sense of purpose. Research shows that spirituality is strongly correlated with overall mental health.

Research literature has not attempted to construct a precise framework for spirituality (Reisinger, 2024). In the late 1990s, researchers began to distinguish spirituality from religion (Estanek, 2006). There was an effort to refine the concept and to study its role in personal and social life.

CHAPTER 17

Cultivating Workplace Spirituality: Self-Leadership and Well-Being

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Abstract: Spirituality is emerging as a nuanced concept to navigate the turbulent demands and dynamic nature of workplaces across the globe. While different conceptualisations of spirituality exist, drawing from its holistic principles, the authors understand it as a belief in something within and beyond tangible reality. They view an individual as having a physical, emotional, and spiritual body. Integrating this dimension into organisations involves cultivating an ethos synonymous with openness, broader expression, deeper connections, and a sense of holistic community. Spirituality in the workplace has found a recent foothold in organisations in the Western world, where attempts are being made to integrate it into existing individual-centric principles. This remains a challenging task, as spirituality is often seen as an external set of beliefs that has to be worn on top. However, in the Eastern context, such as in India, individuals have been regarded as holistic beings for centuries. Here, integrating spiritual principles with contemporary organisational practices is more akin to weaving together an all-encompassing set of beliefs, creating more avenues to explore spirituality as a free-flowing concept. This chapter discusses embodying spirituality in leadership, where it is not confined to leading others but begins with leading oneself. When leadership starts within, spirituality does not appear as something to be sought externally; it unfolds naturally. The chapter extends an invitation to explore spirituality and reimagine organisational cultures. It offers a thoughtful space to redefine the conventional metrics of organisational growth.

Keywords: Ethics, Holistic principles, Indian context, Leadership, Organisational well-being, Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality, in its true essence, resists definition. There is a need to redefine it, disentangling it from the confines of labels. Spirituality can be defined in different ways and through different models (Hart and Brady, 2005; Carroll, 2001), but it does not fit into these strict reductionist models. Spirituality is a pavement of exp-

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eriences, emotions, and understandings. None of the pieces can represent the entire picture, as each piece is meaningful to the overall composition. Such absence of agreement or realization is what this chapter sets out to search for. Against the backdrop of the physical reality, it is a space within us all that is always moving and changing. Being common to everyone, yet as individual experiences, everyone goes through the spiritual journey in their own unique manner. This chapter seeks to embark on an exploration through the prism of leadership and the workplace.

(Re) Defining Spirituality in the Indian Context

Spirituality is one of the most challenging issues in research (Reisinger, 2024). There is still a debate about its definition among scholars (Reisinger, 2025). Multidisciplinary studies of spirituality have been carried out (MacKenna, 2009). This is a changing landscape that offers a wider perspective on spirituality from several angles. We base our approach on philosophical and archetypal points of view. We have redefined spirituality without leaving it as an undefined zone, nor with a strict meaning. We will attempt to shed light on how reality can be approached differently in this field.

To begin with, we argue that spirituality needs to be understood by balancing the measurable and the immeasurable, based on what can be studied and what can be experienced. The Western approach of inquiry, which is widely agreed upon, commonly referred to as Western Male Hegemony, perceives science as the best way of obtaining knowledge (Krahnke *et al.*, 2003). Anything that cannot be properly quantified, measured, or objectified is likely to be seen as insignificant and is quietly swept away. The integration of a subjective, participatory approach to the study of spirituality literature enhances the understanding of the subject (Krahnke *et al.*, 2003). There are arguments that a highly subjective lens would result in egocentrism, whereas a highly objective approach would reduce spirituality to behavioral and social labels. A balance is aimed at, so that neither extreme exceeds the magnitude of the whole. We examine spirituality in the workplace through a phenomenological methodology, treating it not as a measurable factor but as an experience of organisational ethos. Spiritual ideologies are opened, connected, purposeful, and free values. These dimensions provide space to carry one's entire self. We recognise the indefiniteness of spirituality and explore the quantifiable element of organisational culture that enables it to manifest itself. This method considers spirituality as a continuum that encompasses both the subjective and the objective.

In uncovering the reality of the spiritual world, we would seek to learn how to perceive it through different philosophical lenses. Philosophy takes reality as an

entirety and knowledge as a constantly shifting concept. This makes us realise that theories are only means of explaining the world, and that there is no truth at any given point in time. It is important to be aware of this because we risk forming a simplistic view of the world if we fail to recognize that theories are in a continuous state of development. Indicatively, it restricts our knowledge if we consider spirituality with a fixed definition or indicator, since any form of expression can be ignored. Spiritual understanding is provided through the philosophical questions of the nature of reality. All schools of thought and counter-narratives contribute to the realm of spirituality. Pragmatism aims to create a line between the physical and spiritual worlds. This distinction aims at protecting the dogmatic thinking (Gocen & Ozgan, 2018). Dogmatism, which takes beliefs as unquestioned, promotes compartmentalisation, narrowness, and intolerance toward other beliefs. This autocratic stance does not resonate with spirituality, which aims at universalism (Dwarak and Anuviyan, 2013). Therefore, the Western, practical system of epistemology, which is dichotomous between the inner and the outer worlds, does not reflect the holistic nature of spirituality.

Another dimension of spirituality is introduced by Western and Eastern views of the role of measurement in unraveling reality. The Western perception is based on ancient Greek and Latin philosophy and focuses on measure, including ratios and proportions, understanding reality. In the Eastern view, by contrast, prime reality is seen as immeasurable. The Sanskrit root of Maya is common with the English Maya, which means 'to measure'. This is a representation of how the Eastern philosophy is intertwined with the fluid nature of spirituality. This is vital to note because the repercussions of the colonial discourse can be seen in viewing abstract measures as the best way of knowledge. Orientalism provides the basis for validating Western doctrines as the best. Orientalism, as Edward Said (2001) defined it, is the manner in which the West represents and perceives the East, which is also part of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Orientalism has been used to conquer, rationalize colonisation, and demand cultural and intellectual superiority. Although orientalism has been condemned in postcolonial stories, the inclination to seek inspiration and legitimation from Western ideologies remains common in India. The perpetual submissiveness to Western ideologies in educational institutions, social philosophy, and conversations is an indicator of the aftermath of colonialism (Pun, 2019). Archetypically, however, this phenomenon can be understood as the personification of the wise old man type. This is evident in personality types disposed to be submissive to those in power whom they view as superior (Hart and Brady, 2005). The colonised countries, such as India, tend to give in to an external force seen as superior. This tendency reinforces a structural reliance on Western approval, while ignoring native knowledge.

CHAPTER 18

Religious Narratives and Menopausal Experiences: A Study of Religious Discourse on Aging and Female Health

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between religious narratives and menopause, with a special focus on the impact of religious beliefs and practices on the health and aging experiences of women. It is prevalent in various religious traditions to adopt different kinds of views on menopause. These religious perspectives have a significant influence on how women perceive this stage of life. While some religious traditions offer empowerment and support through spiritual practices, others may perpetuate stigma and negative perceptions of aging and fertility loss. This research examines the roles of faith, spirituality, and religious rituals in coping with menopausal symptoms, emphasizing the importance of community support and the psychological impact of religious beliefs. Furthermore, the study highlights the concerns between modern medical approaches and traditional religious views, identifying the challenges in integrating religious perspectives into menopause-related healthcare. Through a literature review, the study addresses existing research gaps and provides insights into how religious narratives can be leveraged to promote well-being, resilience, and informed decision-making for menopausal women. The findings suggest that religious frameworks, when aligned with healthcare interventions, can enhance women's physical and mental health during menopause. This study recommends that the role of religion in shaping menopausal health practices be further investigated, advocating for a more inclusive approach that incorporates cultural and spiritual perspectives into women's health care.

Keywords: Aging, Community support, Coping mechanisms, Health care, Menopause, Religious narratives, Religious rituals, Spirituality, Stigma, Women's health.

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INTRODUCTION

Menopause is the midlife biological mark that signals the end of a woman's menstrual cycles and reproductive capacity. This stage is significant because it intersects with aging and affects one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Hillard, 2020). Menopause has been studied biologically and culturally, as well as how it affects personal and societal responses. Religions, in particular, establish the framework for female health and provide ways of simultaneously restricting and empowering women. An understanding of these narratives reveals the gaps and intersections in the social and spiritual realities of women's health during menopause.

Menopause is a significant phase in a woman's life, generally marked by specific ailments, including physical symptoms such as hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and joint pain, and psychological effects, including mood swings, depression, and anxiety (Greendale *et al.*, 2019). As she ages, a woman experiences hot flashes, sleep problems, and joint pain exacerbated by declining oestrogen levels, which increase the risk of osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline (Brinton *et al.*, 2015). However, the experience of menopause varies among individuals, as it is deeply influenced by socio-cultural contexts that shape the understanding and management of symptoms. Menopause has been examined in terms of culture and religion, which either stigmatises older women or venerates them for their wisdom and spiritual development. Certain indigenous cultures revere post-menopausal women as significant communal and spiritual leaders, yet in other cultures, the cessation of reproductive capability may result in social exclusion (Lock, 1994). These constructions underscore the blend of cultural and theological elements with biological factors that shape the experience of menopause.

Importance of Studying Religious Narratives in the Context of Female Health

Menopause is one of the many transformative life stages women go through, and has repercussions from both a societal and religious perspective. Different cultures have their own interpretations of the physical body, the changes that occur over time, and overall health in relation to spiritual well-being, often imposing limitations on the activities that women should and should not practice (George, 2019). It is a cultural understanding that menopause marks a transition from caregiving and motherhood to a role of spiritual leadership, wisdom, and guidance.

In Hindu culture, women who have gone through menopause are deemed to be in a realm of higher wisdom and detachment. This is often associated with the

vanaprastha, a phase of life devoted to spiritual pursuits (Chattopadhyay, 2012). Moreover, Christianity also has its own view of this stage, in which menopause is understood in the context of renewal and redemption, emphasizing change and divine grace (Miles, 2008).

This Narrative analysis is essential in these instances, as it helps religion elevate specific individuals by recognising their worth beyond the responsibilities of parenting. At the same time, however, it can also further enforce age-old biases and stigma tied to femininity. This approach emphasizes the need to incorporate spiritual determinants when responding to a healthcare challenge, ensuring that the holistic, physical, and spiritual needs of women are addressed simultaneously (Koenig, 2012).

Health and Aging Theories Related to Menopause

The biological, psychological, and social impacts of menopause can be understood in the context of health and aging theories. These theories underline the difficulties encountered by women undergoing the menopausal stage, especially concerning their physical health, mental wellness, and social obligations.

Biopsychosocial Model: Engel's 'biopsychosocial model' of 1977 pertains to the health and functioning of an individual, offering a comprehensive view that considers the biology, psychology, and social phenomena of the person. The menopause transition is not only a biological event; it is shaped by stress levels, mood, and even sociological factors such as peer groups, society, culture, and other social components. This framework proposes that menopausal changes and symptoms are complex phenomena influenced by biological hormonal fluctuations, an individual's psychological attitude, and the social context (including culturally and religiously driven narratives about menopause and aging). For example, certain religious views could be comforting about aging and menopause, which can alleviate the psychological stress associated with menopause and mitigate negative menopausal symptoms such as irritability or rage. On the other hand, in cultures where menopause is considered a taboo or a stage where one loses value, a woman might undergo a greater psychological burden. In contrast, positive religions that interpret the concept of aging as a source of spiritual growth and wisdom can contribute to emotional well-being and promote a sense of peace.

Role Theory and Aging: Within role theory, aging is understood through the changes in social roles an individual occupies over their lifetime. One such role change that may accompany menopause is the transition from a mother and caregiver to a post-reproductive woman. This role shift can pose a considerable

CHAPTER 19

Spiritual Coping to Phenomenal Existence: Migrant Labourers of Eastern India

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Abstract: There is a grey area full of diverse accounts from society's marginalised groups that are distinct from the mainstream. Narratives of daily experiences, often unheard and unnoticed, emerge with the potential to uncover diverse spiritual practices in dealing with a series of stress and challenges among marginalised urban groups. This chapter explores the concept of spirituality as a means of coping from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. However, spirituality is a less stressed area in the psychological framework; the practice of it in dealing with challenges in everyday life is more common in human behaviour. In general, marginalised individuals are believed to have fewer resources available to them for pursuing good health and wellness. Additionally, in the current era of postmodernity, globalization, and uncertainty, numerous stressors have a detrimental impact on a person's well-being, inspiring an academic interest in discussing and exploring possible ways to ensure a healthy life. So, in this context, dealing with different life conditions through spiritual coping and maintaining resilience are new aspects of one's existence. This chapter is an attempt to establish a connection between the construct of spirituality and the empirical evidence of coping mechanisms in Eastern India. In addition to acknowledging the persistence of marginalised groups in eastern India, the chapter also investigates anecdotes of negotiations, transcendental coping mechanisms, and spiritual pathways that lead to enhanced rootedness and phenomenal existence.

Keywords: Coping, Phenomenal existence, Resilience, Spirituality, Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

According to various research studies, the life satisfaction index does not significantly differ between economically disadvantaged and wealthy countries (Diener & Diener, 1995). There is evidence to suggest that every culture has distinct determinants and philosophical foundations for the concept of well-being.

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In general, subjective experiences related to health conditions are valued over the quantitative aspects of health parameters. In this context, emotional expression and general health screening work together to create a qualitative assessment of how one understands health parameters and responds to them. Thus, the psychological and behavioural aspects of understanding health and well-being are crucial in the comprehension of holistic health and related actions and in making sense of all these into expressions. However, the concepts of health and well-being are shaped differently across demographic groups and sociocultural systems because of a lack of knowledge and cross-cultural agreement regarding their practice. So, to better understand health and wellness, it is vital to grasp cultural specificity and its various layers. Firstly, understanding the concept of health and well-being, along with its traditional and cultural components, is crucial for a broad conceptualization of the subject. Secondly, the various layers of knowledge about health and well-being should be accumulated. Once they mould and transform it into spirituality, as they eventually do, the spirituality of health and well-being becomes an important component in building resilience and innovating coping mechanisms.

The World Health Organization defined health in 1948 as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 1948), expanding it beyond its earlier limited conception as an absence of disease and disability. Additionally, an in-depth and holistic approach to health considers all other factors that significantly influence the existential condition of both the individual and the wider human population. Nowadays, a holistic perspective on health goes beyond psychological and biological well-being and often includes spiritual aspects. A sense of life, a connection to a transcendent force, and a sense of connection with others are the definitions of this new construct. Spiritual health is thought to be promoted by its psychosocial and religious components (Bożek *et al.*, 2020). However, spirituality might be mediated by health-related behaviours that are also connected to better psychological well-being. Additionally, studies have shown that spirituality predicts psychological well-being before behavioural factors (Park *et al.*, 2009; Unterrainer *et al.*, 2014).

Against the backdrop of overwhelming conversation on health and the practice of well-being in contemporary times, its relevance is accompanied by the characteristics of postmodernity, along with the ill effects of globalization and the uncertainty in the present sociopolitical dispensation. Moreover, in today's postmodern world of uncertainty, a new aspect of human existence is understanding how the continuous shaping and reshaping of the human experience affects people's lives. In view of the above phenomenon, sociologist Bauman (2013) states that people in the present time are not loyal to any particular object, which eventually leads to discontent in life. Hence, the sense of

one's existence in relation to other objects and making sense of them ultimately influences one's self as well as one's sense of well-being. Although the concept of subjective well-being varies among cultures and societies, in the Indian cultural context, life satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, environment, socio-religious values, and environmental adjustment are all considered important contributing factors. On the other hand, the transcendental process of explaining life can be viewed as an existential phenomenon that a person encounters in a specific circumstance (Salagame, 2016). It frequently creates a bridge to cope with perceived challenges. A grounded theory analysis demonstrates that spirituality is employed as a tool to maintain well-being and foster resilience when coping with late-life challenges (Manning, 2019). Building resilience and congruence within oneself by making sense of various perceived challenges in life is the cornerstone of preserving well-being. Therefore, traditional and cultural values and practices become instrumentally active while encountering psychosocial challenges. These occur among marginalised urban groups *via* a transcendental process (Saha *et al.*, 2024).

Framework of Spirituality

Since different researchers have different definitions and conceptualizations of spirituality, it is challenging to bring the idea into a shared framework and practice. The holistic approach to comprehending spirituality and its relationship to psychological processes seeks to increase its breadth and seriousness, necessitating a more thorough framework. It is often observed that an individual's psychological processes, behavioural expression, spirituality, and religiosity are separated from one another in everyday practice. In connection with that, the growing incorporation of spirituality and religion into psychological research and clinical practice has provided evidence that the situation is more nuanced and that both positive and negative aspects are integral to a discussion of this subject. With the help of positive psychology concepts like hope, forgiveness, gratitude, humility, resilience, and compassion, the study of religion and spirituality has recently developed a more nuanced and balanced perspective on the impact they can have on people's general functioning and well-being (Falb & Pargament, 2014). However, the interconnectedness of these processes is essential to the everyday experiences of people, which suggests that they are not separate components but rather a fundamental process that strives for inner congruence. Although human cognition is a complex process and that daily thought and action are often purposeful and meaningful, dissonance can arise and impede integration. Nevertheless, the human mind's attempt to maintain equilibrium and integrate ideas and actions is a natural phenomenon, regardless of whether one is cognisant of it or not. A sense of self, meaning, and inner harmony can result from following spiritual principles, which include having a purpose in life, feeling one

CHAPTER 20

From Profit to Purpose: Exploring the Psychosocial Factors Propelling Ayahuasca Use Among Business Leaders in the West

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Abstract: In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of entrepreneurs, particularly those in the technology sector, who are seeking spiritual rejuvenation through ayahuasca retreats. Although this trend could be read as ironic due to the relentless capitalistic pursuits associated with the profession, the key lies in the purpose the retreat fulfils. Ayahuasca, an Amazonian psychoactive plant brew, is said to enable individuals to find and connect to a greater purpose in life, improving subjective well-being and emotional regulation, which is crucial when an individual is vested with the power to regulate the lives of numerous others who work for them. With the recent augmented interest in research on the effects of psychedelics, a pertinent gap emerges in tracing the long-term implications of their use, and more importantly, the underlying causes for the rising trend of consumption. Tracing this phenomenon, this review amalgamated literature from online databases (Sage Journals, ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library) and personal accounts from blogs of such retreats, due to the dearth of established literature in the field. Subsequently, it explores the benefits of ayahuasca, its relation to finding a sense of meaning and purpose, and the significance of purpose within the work context. More relevantly, it highlights the psychological and social underpinnings of this phenomenon. Consequently, the relevance of subtler practices, such as workplace spirituality, is discussed as a potential resolution.

Keywords: Ayahuasca, Psychological profit, Societal collapse, Spirituality, Workplace spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, humans have engaged in practices that explore the vast physical realm, uncovering the depths and unique characteristics of the planet. However, for almost as long, the captivating quest to discover the inner realm of man has

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possessed some. Consciousness, breathing life into the present and dread into the future, exerts an ever-present, palpable force that can consume one entirely. To push the dismaying limits and broaden the horizon of the mind, the postulated beholder of consciousness, many attempt to induce altered states, stepping around that faint line within the mind.

Several iterations to achieve this altered state have been endeavoured, a momentous one being that of entheogenic healing (Goldsmith, 2010). Having its roots in consciousness-expansion, entheogenic healing refers to the practice of using psychoactive substances as a means to spiritual and mystical experiences. Derived from the word entheogen, literally translating to 'the god within', this category of substances includes psychedelic drugs administered in ritualised, spiritual, and religious practices (Bourzat & Hunter, 2019; Tupper, 2009). Anthropological studies have long documented the prevalence and relevance of this practice, most notably across the Amazon basin and within the Native American church. Research has also shown its prevalence among modern Westerners, who describe such experiences as 'existentially meaningful'. An early study revealed that two-thirds of participants believed their entheogenic experience to be among the top five most personally meaningful experiences of their lifetime (Griffiths *et al.*, 2006). Modern research has covered the usage of entheogens for conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, sometimes with single administrations having a lasting impact (Metaxa & Clarke, 2024). Invariably, neurological investigations into the effects of these substances have also been conducted, which predominantly suggested the ability to reset maladaptive neural pathways. Psychedelics have been seen to modulate the activity of brain networks associated with self-referential thought and rumination (Carhart-Harris *et al.*, 2012). Significantly, the ritualistic and communal context within which entheogenic healing is often administered highlights a dimension often overlooked in modern treatments. The experiences induced during entheogenic healing foster a sense of social cohesion and well-being due to their inherent communal bonding. There is a focus on the 'set', *i.e.*, the individual's psychological state, and the 'setting', which refers to the environment of consumption (Leary *et al.*, 2024). An interplay between the set and setting can establish improved self-efficacy and adaptive coping strategies.

Surmounting evidence attests to the value derived from entheogens by various cohorts around the world; however, most of their origins lie within ritualistic contexts, shrouded in taboo and cautious whispers.

In the 1950s, the rise in the use of psychedelics in pharmacological and therapeutic fields was observed, formalising the authenticity of this approach (Tupper *et al.*, 2015). The complex interactivity between the roles of the

pharmacological properties of patients, the internal disposition of the individual, and the experimental variables in controlled settings of treatments was recognised, giving rise to distinct approaches to productively incorporate psychedelics within scientific study (Tupper *et al.*, 2015). The concept of psychedelic medicine hence emerged, which covered four overarching compounds: psilocybin, contained in mushrooms; Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), found in ayahuasca brew; ketamine; and Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) (Goldsmith, 2010). The latter two are non-naturally occurring compounds, with MDMA being largely used within therapeutic settings for the treatment of PTSD, and ketamine being utilised as a supplemental drug during cognitive therapies (Brown & Gould, 2024; Mitchell *et al.*, 2023; Stringer, 2024).

For the purpose of this chapter, a keen focus will be placed on Ayahuasca, given its contemporary relevance. Ayahuasca is a psychotropic beverage prepared by indigenous populations of the Amazon basin. It is considered the most botanically, chemically, and ethnographically complex of the beverages native to this demographic (Domínguez-Clavé *et al.*, 2016). One of the source plants (Banisteriopsis caapi) used is a Quechua term meaning ‘‘vine of the souls.’’ This substance is often consumed under the guidance of shamans, who are spiritual healers believed to have access to the spiritual realm (Labate & Cavnar, 2013). As aforementioned, the psychoactive effects induced by the consumption of ayahuasca can be attributed to DMT, which naturally occurs in plants and animal species and shares molecular similarities with neurotransmitters such as serotonin and melatonin (Domínguez-Clavé *et al.*, 2016; Gable, 2006). A systematic analysis of ayahuasca found consistent evidence regarding its ability to improve inhibitory control and planning (Damásio, 2015), increase introspection and positive mood (Palhano-Fontes *et al.*, 2015), and reveal potential antiaddictive (Fábregas *et al.*, 2010) and antidepressant effects.

Notably, ayahuasca can enable profound changes in perception. Users often report heightened awareness and convoluted thought patterns during the peak DMT levels (Riba *et al.*, 2001). It can lead to an emotional release and take the form of a corrective experience, surfacing the underlying defence mechanisms within the individual (Wolff *et al.*, 2019).

Although, within the past few years, a peculiar trend has been observed: a cohort of CEO’s and businessmen seeking the spiritual experience of shamanic ayahuasca ceremonies (Cunningham, 2025; Forsdick, 2024; Kelly, 2024). For the purpose of this exploration, business leaders could be operationally defined as individuals who hold senior-level positions, such as CEOs, directors, or partners at firms. They may be in start-ups or organisations focused on the innovation or advancement of technology. A juxtaposition may be struck considering that such

CHAPTER 21

Community and Social Applications of Spiritual Psychology

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Abstract: Spiritual Psychology is a growing field that studies the relationship between spiritual practices and psychological theories. It offers insightful methods that help address the increasing mental health challenges and social disintegration that the communities face today. The fundamental qualities at the core of spirituality include empathy, tolerance, and altruism. These traits strengthen relationships and create a nurturing environment where challenges are addressed collectively. Spiritual psychology also aligns with developments in positive psychology. It emphasises that human strength and potential, along with engagement in meaningful activities, can improve well-being and foster deeper connections within communities. Meditation, praying, and communal worship bolster personal resilience and strengthen community behaviour during a crisis. The relationship between spirituality and psychological well-being is profound. Individuals who are grounded in spiritual beliefs often report lower levels of depression and anxiety while demonstrating greater resilience during difficult times. Spiritual practices also play a critical role in emotional regulation and community engagement. Cultural differences, varying belief systems, and the potential for exclusion necessitate a thoughtful approach that respects spiritual diversity while fostering shared values. Practitioners must develop spiritual competency skills that enable them to weave spirituality into therapeutic and community-based practices without alienating individuals from different backgrounds. The chapter emphasises the transformative potential of spiritual psychology across various societal domains, including education, public services, healthcare, and governance. In conclusion, applying spiritual psychology offers a compelling framework for enhancing community-building to address systemic challenges and for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to harness the transformative power of spiritual psychology to create more equitable and harmonious societies.

Keywords: Empathy, Ethical altruism, Holistic governance, Psychospiritual integration, Resilience, Self-actualisation, Spiritual psychology, Spirituality.

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INTRODUCTION

Spiritual psychology is a field that consolidates spiritual dimensions into psychological practices while also acknowledging the importance of non-religious spirituality in human experiences and community well-being (Emmons, 2000). Unlike traditional fields in psychology, which focus solely on cognitive and behavioural aspects of the human mind, spiritual psychology deals with the connection of the mind to a higher self, incorporating concepts such as the soul, self-transcendence, and collective consciousness (Vaughan, 2002). This branch of psychology works on practices such as meditation and mindfulness that assist in creating a route to self-enquiry (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

In the modern era, most psychological theorists integrate elements of spirituality, such as gratitude, compassion, and stability, into humanistic and behavioural psychology theories (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This symbiotic relationship between spirituality and psychology not only assists in achieving a better understanding of the human mind but also assists in applying psychological interventions in groups where individuals were not as open-minded earlier. Incorporating spirituality relates the science to the search for a higher entity or ultimate reality (Hill & Pargament, 2003).

Contemporary life has reflected increased levels of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and social isolation. Spiritual psychology provides integrated solutions to such modern issues by applying spiritual principles in psychological intervention (Koenig, 2012). Studies have demonstrated reduced anxiety and depression in life when one has a sense of meaning and purpose (Steger *et al.*, 2006). Spiritual beliefs and practices also contribute to increased resilience in the occurrence of trauma and stress, and they lead to improved coping mechanisms that diminish reliance on substance abuse and self-destructive behaviour (Pargament, 1997). Social disintegration, causing economic inequality, cultural tensions, and loss of traditional social support, can be combated by fostering communal rituals and shared spiritual practices, as well as inculcating ethical leadership and moral accountability in governance.

Over time, psychology has progressed from the theory-building of behaviourism and cognitive schools of thought to more humanistic and positive paradigms that focus on emotional well-being, personal growth, and social interconnectedness (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961). This transition recognises that the psychological well-being of an individual is closely intertwined with spiritual aspects (Wong, 2012). Thinkers such as Abraham Maslow point towards actualising individual potential while also working for the good of society through his need for hierarchy and theory of self-actualisation.

ROLE OF SPIRITUAL QUALITIES IN STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Spirituality plays a central role in building communities by fostering social bonds and individual qualities such as empathy, tolerance, and altruism. These are significant factors in maintaining social cohesion, resilience, and collective health, thus promoting collaborative working in communities and constructing an atmosphere that prioritises self-development.

One of the core themes of spirituality is empathy, or the capacity to understand and share the sentiments of another. Empathy makes it possible for two people to connect at a deeper level, thus responding to them with compassion. Once this sense of empathy is instilled early in life, intergroup disputes among groups lessen, people get more connected by doing good for each other, and communal mental well-being improves because each member is seen, heard and respected. For instance, in most Buddhist techniques, LKM (Loving-Kindness Meditation) and CM (Compassion Meditation) are coupled, as is true of most psychology studies. These practices help regulate emotions and reduce aggression, creating a more harmonious social interaction. Likewise, Christian and Muslim faiths encourage charity and goodness, reinforcing being polite to others.

Today's world is more globalised than ever before; therefore, our everyday interactions are more heterogeneous, with different belief systems, ideas, and opinions. Tolerance is a necessary tool required to ensure a harmonious coexistence. Tolerance brings about inclusiveness among groups, reduced stereotypical behaviour, and dissipation of social tensions. The concept of universal love and interconnectedness is at the forefront in the Hindu Philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "the world is one family."

Altruism, the activity of having selfless care for others' welfare, is yet another significant factor in spirituality. People who prioritize acts of generosity and service are better at managing crises and more resilient. Altruism aids in building social trust and forms stronger communal bonds. For instance, Sikhism encourages the practice of seva (unselfish service), which unites people and works towards the well-being of society.

These elements of spirituality serve as a pillar of strength during trying times, and adding these to the realm of psychology aids in constructing a society from individual and group development, which does not support violence.

CHAPTER 22

Sustainability Meets Spirituality: A New Paradigm in Depression and Mental Healthcare

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Abstract: *Background:* Sustainability and spirituality are emerging as key concepts in mental health service provision, which need a systematic approach to depression and psychological well-being, and in which the interrelationship between them can be elucidated. It specifically examines eco-spirituality and the biopsychosocial-spiritual approach. It also explores how spiritual and ecological factors affect this integration in clinical practices. *Methods:* This study used a systematic review methodology and was conducted across multiple databases, including articles published between 1902 and 2025. This review entirely focused on eco-spirituality, biopsychosocial-spirituality, and nature-based mental health interventions. On the other hand, studies on religious spirituality or pharmacological treatment were excluded. Data were obtained following the PRISMA framework. *Results:* The study highlights the importance of various kinds of sustainability and spirituality-based mental health interventions like mindfulness, nature-based therapies, and ecotherapy in developing psychological resilience. Additionally, culture plays an important role in accepting this matter, and various socioeconomic factors also affect sustainable mental healthcare. *Conclusions:* To conclude, it can be said that the importance of eco-spirituality and biopsychosocial-spiritual approaches should be emphasized more so that we can identify various other types of mental health issues. Moreover, this study also identified different research gaps and suggests that more culture-friendly intervention approaches and more empirical studies must be conducted in this field to get a complete picture.

Keywords: Depression, Ecospirituality, Mental health, Spirituality, Sustainability, Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The World Mental Health Report has highlighted that mental health is a fundamental human right, which is affected by different stressors that can create distress, various types of mental illnesses, and disabilities in a person's life. There

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are some protective factors as well, such as healthy relationships, education, social skills, jobs, safe neighborhoods, and community bonds, that contribute to building resilience in individuals to deal with mental disorders (World Health Organization, 2022). Mental health can be understood as a state of being that enables individuals to effectively navigate life's obstacles and contribute positively to society. On the other hand, depression can be defined as a mental health condition that is characterized by low mood and loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities most of the time (Khune *et al.*, 2023), and it has been affected by different social issues, age, culture, *etc.* Therefore, it was very hard to explain this disorder as a result of the complexity in its nature and pattern (Safeekh, 2017).

A Sustainable Approach to Depression

Sustainability promotes the long-term peaceful coexistence of all life forms with their environment on Earth across environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Purvis *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, sustainability involves several ideas such as objectives, adaptive capacities, resilience, susceptibility, and environmental concerns in daily living (Assembly, 1987; WCED, 1987). It addresses several ecological challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and has implications at global (national or supranational), national, organizational, and individual levels (Jeronen, 2023). One idea belonging to the concept of sustainability is sustainable development, 1st, the steps taken towards reaching a state of sustainability (UNESCO, 2015) and meeting present needs without compromising those of others in time (Brundtland Commission's report, 1987).

Mental well-being is enhanced by sustainability and by encouraging an attachment to nature, society, and healthy living (Richards *et al.*, 2023). When people spend sufficient time in natural environments, it reduces stress and depressive symptoms, thus enhancing mood (Mofidi *et al.*, 2006; Rajakumar *et al.*, 2008). Social sustainability focuses on some facts like community engagement, strong connections, emotional support, and reducing feelings of isolation by making sustainability an essential part of our overall mental health (Bonelli *et al.*, 2012). In 2018, the European Psychiatric Association and eight mental health organizations released a policy report titled "Moving from words to actions" to address depression. It outlines several areas for improvement: early intervention, joint government accountability, combining digital tools with mental health services, engaging service users, a whole-family-based approach, and creating a positive work environment (Beezhold *et al.*, 2018).

Depression is a concern that is increasing day by day. It has been seen that there was about an 18% increase in depression cases between 2005 and 2015 (World

Health Organization, 2017), and by 2030, this will be the prime cause of disease burden among high-income nations (Mathers & Loncar, 2006). Depression severely impacts a person's quality of life, destroys productivity, and is the cause of more than 30% of strokes. Almost one in five people facing depression end their lives by committing suicide (Olesen *et al.*, 2012), and the government's response to this is not enough. The reason for this is underfunding, inadequate diagnosis, and misinformation. But it has been seen that treatment based on evidence and increased awareness could reduce depression prevalence by 33% and 21% (Cuijpers *et al.*, 2016). The approach focuses on early intervention, targeted care, and prevention in mental health services, especially for depression. It also recognizes stigma, calls for real-world statistics to create lasting change, and supports suicide prevention across different sectors (Beezhold *et al.*, 2018).

A Spiritual Approach to Depression

There is no accepted single definition of spirituality across the world; rather, there are a variety of definitions. There is also a limitation in scholarly research on this matter (Koenig *et al.*, 2012). Contemporary spirituality puts Eastern religions, mystical traditions, and humanistic psychology together, whereas traditional spirituality focuses completely on bringing a person back to his original form, which indicates an image of God (Waaijman, 2000), and on the other hand, modern spirituality focuses on subjective experiences, personal growth, religious experience, belief in a supernatural realm, and deepest values, which can be described as the purpose of an individual to find the ultimate meaning of their life (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006; Wong & Vinsky, 2009; Schuurmans-Stekhoven, 2014; Sheldrake, 2009; Hasyah, 2021).

Depression refers to the disturbances in mood where a person loses his or her willpower and has continuous sadness (Salik & Marwaha, 2022). There are many types of depression, such as major depressive disorder, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, dysthymia, and depressive disorder. Common symptoms include cognitive changes, feelings of irritation, sadness, and a sense of loneliness (Ormel *et al.*, 2019).

In line with this, studies that have investigated the association between religiosity/speciality and depression have increasingly discovered it (Dein, 2006; Koenig *et al.*, 2012). Spirituality has an association with increased odds of depression, social phobia, and manic episodes, while religiousness is inversely associated with depressed mood and panic disorder but not bipolar disorder (Arehart-Treichel, 2006). Spiritual practices, such as prayer and meditation (Assunção *et al.*, 2020), enable individuals to cope with depression through cultivating meaning in life, establishing a sense of social connection, managing

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