

Effect of Spiritual Experiences and Self Consciousness on Quality of Life: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: The purpose of the research is to study the difference in the level of spiritual experiences and the levels of self consciousness among young adults and middle adults, and to assess the relationship between spiritual experiences and self consciousness on the quality of life. **Method:** A purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants. Data was collected from 120 individuals (60 young adults and 60 middle adults) using standardised questionnaires: Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES), Self- Consciousness Scale (SCS-R) and WHO Quality of Life (WHOQOL-BREF). Result was analysed using SPSS v20 and MS Excel. **Results:** Significant correlation was found between Spiritual Experiences and few domains of both, Self Consciousness and Quality of Life at 0.01, 0.05 and 0.02 level. There exists a significant difference in the spiritual experiences and Self Consciousness among young adults and middle age adults. **Conclusion:** The spiritual experiences and self consciousness have a varying/significant effect on the quality of life in both young and middle adults. It is important for researchers to be aware of how their impact may differ in different conditions.

Keywords: *Spiritual Well-Being, Self-Consciousness, Quality of Life, Young Adults; Middle Adults.*

Spiritual experiences, self consciousness and quality of life have been studied individually in the past decade extensively but the association between these three variables has not been explored in depth. It can be observed that spiritual involvement increases in the adult life cycle, moreover, it increases with age, as spiritual involvement helps predicting religious involvement, personality character, and subsequent negative life impacts. As for self consciousness, it decreases with age as conscious emotions such as shame, guilt, pride and embarrassment are highly prominent among younger adults.

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Spiritual experiences, self consciousness and quality of life have been studied individually in the past decade extensively but the association between these three variables has not been explored in depth. So to understand the effect these 3 variables on each other, the present research paper aims to: (a) study the difference in the level of spiritual experiences among young adults and middle adults, (b) to study the difference in the level of self consciousness among young adults and middle adults, (c) to study the relationship between spiritual experiences and self consciousness on the quality of life.

World Health Organisation (WHO) defined Quality of Life (QOL) as “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live, and relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.” This definition includes four major domains: (1) Physical Health, (2) Psychological Status, (3) Social Relationships and (4) Environmental Characteristics. The QOL depends on the inherent and extraneous factors which vary from individual to individual. Furthermore, elaborating the domains, (1) Physical Health incorporates the individual’s daily living activities, their dependence on any kind of medication, the amount of pain or fatigue experienced by them, and their amount of sleep as compared to their work capacity. (2) Psychological Status includes how the individual sees their body, ability to assess positive and negative feelings, the amount of self esteem within them and their cognitive abilities. (3) Social Relationship emphasises on the individual's relationship with their close ones, the support they get from society and their sex activities. (4) Environmental Characteristics involves the individuals finances, their freedom and security, their accessibility and availability to habitable living and opportunities to increase the growth of their skills (Kagan, 2020).

There are a number of factors that impact the QOL of an individual, one of them is per se, their spiritual experiences. Spirituality is the quest of a person for his/her purpose in life and getting to know the nature and soul better. It is mainly to answer the question about ‘who am I?’. The dimension of spirituality is fundamental in one’s life to give meaning and to deal with the different adversities/challenges in life. The level of spirituality/spiritual experiences differs from one age group to another (spiritual experiences: middle adults > younger adults). (Sasson, ND).

Another domain that affects the QOL is Self Consciousness (SC) which is defined as “ the knowledge of one’s own presence and the how we think others perceive us.” There are many categories of self consciousness, the three main categories discussed are (1) Private SC, (2) Public SC, and (3) Social Anxiety.

Public SC basically involves an individual's tendency to assess themselves in terms of group/society or the standards set by the public. Whereas, Private SC talks about an individual’s inwardly reaction of their inner thoughts and feelings which are not expressed in a public setting. Lastly, Social Anxiety refers to the fear of extreme judgement passed by near and dear ones (family, peers, colleagues, etc). (Franzoi, Davis & Young, 1985)

As per past studies conducted by: Khodadadi Sangdeh, Haghani, Taheri, Rezaiee Ahbanuee & Ranjgar (2017) conducted a research to investigate the relationship between hopefulness, spiritual experiences and student’s QOL. Data was collected on 350 students using random sampling, World Health Organisation Quality of Life Scale, Snyder’s Hopefulness Scale and Daily Spiritual Experience Scale was used to collect the data. Results indicated that there exists a relationship between hopefulness and spiritual experiences on student's QOL. Another study conducted by Jacob, Jovic & Brinkerhoff (2009) assessed data from 829

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samples to understand the association between ecologically sustainable behaviour (ESB), and subjective well-being (SWB) in spiritual practices and the quality of life (QOL). The findings suggest that the relationship between SWB, ESB and spiritual practices did have a positive association between a person's responsible environmental lifestyle and their quality of life. From past studies, it can be seen that there is a difference between younger (18-35 years) and middle adults (36-55 years), in both spiritual experiences and self consciousness. It has been observed that the level of spiritual experiences tend to be higher in middle adults than that in younger adults, while on the contrary, self consciousness and its three categories are leveled higher in younger adults as compared to middle adults. This in turn exhibits significant differences in the quality of life in both young and middle adults. From this, it can be assumed that higher the spiritual experiences, more will be the quality of life and more the self consciousness (all three domains), lower will be the quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: The effect of spiritual experiences and self consciousness on quality of life.

Objective

1. To study the difference in the level of spiritual experiences among young adults and middle adults.
2. To study the difference in the level of self consciousness among young adults and middle adults.
3. To study the relationship between spiritual experiences and self consciousness on the quality of life.

Independent Variable: Spiritual Experiences and Self consciousness

Dependent Variable: Quality of Life

Hypotheses:

- H1 - There would be a significant difference between spiritual experiences, self consciousness and quality of life between young adults and middle adults.
- H2 - There would be a significant relationship between spiritual experiences, self consciousness and quality of life between young adults and middle adults.

Sample/Participants

Using purposive sampling, 120 adults, 60 young adults (18-35 years), and 60 middle adults (36-55 years), wherein each group had 30 males and 30 females respectively.

Tools

The instruments used for Spiritual Experiences, Self Consciousness and Quality of Life respectively, were:

1. **The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES)** [Underwood & Teresi, 2002] consisted of 16 items out of which first 15 questions were on a 6 point scale (1= many times a day - 6= never or almost never), and the 16th question was on a 4 point scale (1= not close at all - 4= as close as possible) which was not considered during scoring. The maximum score obtainable on this questionnaire is 90, higher scores indicating higher level of spiritual experiences and visa versa.
2. **Self Consciousness Scale (SCS-R)** [Scheier, Carver & Buss, 1985] is a 22 item self report questionnaire divided into 3 subscales: Private SC (9 items), Public SC (7 items), and Social Anxiety (6 items). All the questions were on a 5 point likert scale ranging from 0-4 (0 = extremely uncharacteristic - 4 = extremely characteristic). The

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maximum score obtainable on the first domain is 27, for the second domain it is 21, and for the third domain it is 18.

- WHO Quality of Life [WHOQOL-BREF, 1996]** is a 26 item questionnaire categorised into 4 subdomains, namely: (1) Physical Health, (2) Psychological Status, (3) Social Relationships, and (4) Environmental Characteristics. All the items were scored on a 5 point likert scale, with the maximum score attainable being 120.

Statistical Analysis: SPSS v20 and MS excel was used to analyse data. Results were analysed using Pearson’ Correlation Coefficient.

RESULT

Table 1: Age, Sample Size, Mean, Std. Deviation & Std. Error Mean

Group Statistics	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Spiritual_Experience	Young adults	60	53.0833	17.30219	2.2337
	Middle adults	60	60.1	15.39943	1.98806
SC_PR	Young adults	60	18.45	3.19122	0.41198
	Middle adults	60	15.95	4.0018	0.51663
SC_PU	Young adults	60	14.4333	4.28781	0.55355
	Middle adults	60	11.6667	4.57949	0.59121
SC_SA	Young adults	60	10.6833	4.7781	0.61685
	Middle adults	60	8.4667	4.13118	0.53333

Table 2: Signifies the t value of spiritual experiences and self consciousness

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Spiritual_Experience	1.506	0.222	-2.346	118	0.021	-7.01667	2.99028	-12.93824	-1.09509
			-2.346	116.434	0.021	-7.01667	2.99028	-12.93907	-1.09426
SC_PR	2.817	0.096	3.783	118	0	2.5	0.66079	1.19146	3.80854
			3.783	112.431	0	2.5	0.66079	1.19079	3.80921
SC_PU	0.385	0.536	3.416	118	0.001	2.76667	0.80991	1.16283	4.37051
			3.416	117.493	0.001	2.76667	0.80991	1.16276	4.37058
SC_SA	1.687	0.197	2.718	118	0.008	2.21667	0.81544	0.60187	3.83147
			2.718	115.588	0.008	2.21667	0.81544	0.60152	3.83182

Table 3: Correlation between Spiritual Experiences and Self Consciousness on QOL

Correlations*		Spiritual_Experience	SC_PR	SC_PU	SC_SA	QOL_PHY	QOL_PSY	QOL_SR	QOL_ENV
Spiritual_Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	0.033	-0.052	-.223*	.282**	.416**	.355**	0.099
SC_PR	Pearson Correlation	0.033	1	.622**	.343**	-.214*	-.210*	-.298**	-0.16
SC_PU	Pearson Correlation	-0.052	.622**	1	.617**	-.304**	-.419**	-.255**	-.185*
SC_SA	Pearson Correlation	-.223*	.343**	.617**	1	-.391**	-.479**	-.408**	-.205*
QOL_PHY	Pearson Correlation	.282**	-.214*	-.304**	-.391**	1	.645**	.599**	.494**
QOL_PSY	Pearson Correlation	.416**	-.210*	-.419**	-.479**	.645**	1	.581**	.408**
QOL_SR	Pearson Correlation	.355**	-.298**	-.255**	-.408**	.599**	.581**	1	.450**
QOL_ENV	Pearson Correlation	0.099	-0.16	-.185*	-.205*	.494**	.408**	.450**	1

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

DISCUSSION

The objective of the current study is to analyse the difference in the levels of spiritual experiences, difference in the level of self consciousness (SC), and relationship between spiritual experiences and self consciousness on the quality of life of young and middle adults. The results of the study shows that in a sample of 120 individuals (60 young adults and 60 middle adults), there was significant difference found in the level of spiritual experiences and self consciousness respectively. For both spiritual experiences and self consciousness, the results were significant at 0.02 level, from the result table it can be observed that the level of significance on spiritual experiences was 0.222 (>0.02 level). For self consciousness, since it was further categorized into 3 subdivisions, it has been seen that for (a) Private SC: level of significance was 0.096 (>0.02 level), (b) Public SC: level of significance was 0.536 (>0.02 level), and lastly (c) Social Anxiety: level of significance was 0.197 (>0.02 level). [Refer to Table no. 2 & 3]

From the final result table [Table no. 3], it can be analysed that higher the level of spiritual experiences, higher will be the quality of life (on few domains). There is a significant correlation of spiritual experiences on the (a) physical health domain of QOL (0.282 at 0.01 level), (b) psychological status (0.416 at 0.01 level), (c) social relationships (0.355 at 0.01 level) and (d) there was no significant relationship found between spiritual experiences and the last domain, environmental characteristics.

It was also observed that higher levels of self consciousness leads to lower levels of quality of life. There is a significant correlation between self consciousness and QOL. There exists a negative correlation between the domains of self-consciousness and few domains of QOL. (a) Correlation between Private SC and Physical Health domain is -0.214 (significant at 0.05 level), for psychological status the correlation is at -0.210 (significant at 0.05 level), for social relationship domain the correlation is at -0.298 (significant at 0.01 level), and there exists no significant relationship between Private SC and environmental characteristics domain; (b) Correlation between Public SC and Physical Health domain is -0.304 (significant at 0.01 level), for psychological status the correlation is at -0.419 (significant at 0.01 level), for the social relationship domain, the correlation is at -0.255 (significant at 0.01 level).

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level) and for environmental characteristics domain the correlation is -0.185 (significant at 0.05 level); (c) Correlation between Social Anxiety and Physical Health domain is -0.391 (significant at 0.01 level), for psychological status the correlation is at -0.479 (significant at 0.01 level), for the social relationship domain, the correlation is at -0.408 (significant at 0.01 level) and for environmental characteristics domain the correlation is -0.205 (significant at 0.05 level). This proves H1, i.e., there is no significant difference between spiritual experiences, self consciousness and quality of life between young and middle adults. This study also proves H2, i.e., there is a significant relationship between spiritual experiences, self consciousness and quality of life between young adults and middle adults.

This result can be supported by another study:

Moreira & Canavarró (2012) presented a study to examine the association between self consciousness about appearance and psychological adjustment (depression, anxiety, psychological QOL) among newly diagnosed breast cancer patients and survivors. The data was collected on 134 breast cancer patients (68 newly diagnosed and 66 survivors). Results indicated that no significant relationship was found between groups on body image variables, although among survivors the association between self consciousness about appearance and the outcome variables were significantly high and moderate in depression and psychological QOL.

Henry, Hippel, Nangle & Waters (2018) studied the effect of age and experience on self consciousness. They used a sample size of 90 individuals belonging to all age groups of adulthood. Along with standardized tests, interview method was also used for evaluation. The results showed that the 3 age groups did not differ in their odds of reporting a situation that strongly brought out positive self conscious emotion of pride. And it was also seen that younger adults experienced more negative self conscious emotions (e.g., shame) than older adults.

Wink & Dillon (2002) researched about the spiritual development in adult life. The sample size consisted of young adults who were aged in their 30s and older adults who were aged in late 60s and early 70s. It included both male and female genders. The results indicated that involvement in spiritual practices in older ages was due to the increased prevalence of religious activities and high personality characteristics in their early years that stemmed due to the negative and unforeseen circumstances.

Franzoi, Davis & Young (1985) conducted a study to understand the effects of self consciousness (private) on the role of satisfaction in intimate relationships. This study was conducted on 131 students aged between 17 to 32 years, out of which 10 students were married. Data was collected using a self administered questionnaire on self consciousness. The results indicated that differences in individuals in the private self consciousness was significantly related to satisfaction in the intimate relationships as there was a heightened increase in self-disclosure due to the increased levels of self-attention. It was further observed that differences in an individual had no impact on red relationships in terms of self-disclosure.

CONCLUSION

Previously, there have been a number of studies on the three variables: spiritual experiences, self consciousness, and quality of life, which have been researched individually. So, to assess the relationship between the variables this study was conducted. From the findings, it

can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between spiritual experiences and self consciousness on the quality of life in young and middle adults.

Although, it is important for future researchers to be aware of how these three variables that are studied can vary in different situations or among different categories (race, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.). Furthermore, future researchers should also analyse the relationship between the three variables in context to different employment status.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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