

Role of Joining Religious Groups or Spiritual Groups on Spiritual Quotient of Middle Aged Adults

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ABSTRACT

People join Spiritual or Religious groups to work on a common objective collectively, while others don't join any groups to consciously work towards their own spirituality or becoming religious. Previously, few researches were conducted on impact of spirituality or religiosity on various parameters of mental health. Furthermore, few researches measured neurological or psychological benefits through tests before and after short meditation programs. The purpose of this paper is to understand the role of joining a spiritual/ religious group on Spiritual Quotient (SQ) of a middle aged individual aged 35-65 years. The objective is to understand whether being a regular member of religious or spiritual group is better for SQ of a person than a non member. For this study, a total sample population of 75 people were taken for the study, out of which 60 were selected using purposive sampling to obtain the data in each group of 30; matched by membership with group and educational qualification. In total sample size of 60, 30 people belonged to age category of early middle age (35-45) and 30 belonged to age category of late middle age (45-65). The findings revealed a significant difference in SQ of spiritual/ religious group members and the non members. SQ of members was found to be higher than non members.

Keywords: Spiritual Quotient, Spiritual Group, Religious Group, Meditation, Meditation Course, Middle Aged, Spirituality, Religiousity, SI, IQ, SQ, KING'S, SISRI-24

Pursuit for the meaning of life, lead people to take introspective journeys gravitating them towards spirituality. Meaning of life is defined as "the moral path, the center from which understanding and the inner peace flows" (Richard Wolman, 2001). Most people have formulated their own concept of spirituality; still, many are following an organized religion which imposes a set of rules to its members and promotes faith. Religion is defined as, "a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs" (Thesaurus). The objective of spirituality/ religiosity remains to connect deeper within and get the feeling of well-being. Researches conducted in several countries have proved positive relationships between religiousness and well-being of a

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person (Hart P.M; Wearing, A. J., Delbridge, J., Headey, B., 1994; Green, Elliott 2010; Silberman, 2005).

To measure mental well-being of a person, Spiritual Intelligence is considered a reliable indicator. Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2000) researched on Spiritual intelligence as neurologically being the spiritual centre in human brain that integrates the function of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Quotient (EQ). Machines have high IQ, animals operate from feelings and have high EQ but only humans have SQ. Only humans can change the situations and rule, test the boundaries and attempt to understand the infinite. SQ gives humans the capacity to be creative, to discern, to be compassionate and comprehend the meaning of our experiences (Goran Sucic Dragana Radosavljevic, Polona Sprajc, 2017)

Spiritual/ Religious Groups

India is a land of diverse religions which is host to different ways of life and religions. Religion being an important aspect of culture is influenced by social and cultural norms that govern a society (Laura R. Olson, 2011). Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain, Jews, Zoroastrians are some of the religions born in India and others were brought in by trade contracts and the successive political and cultural invasions.

Wigglesworth & Cindy define spirituality as “the innate human need to be connected to something larger than ourselves, something we consider to be divine or of exceptional nobility. This innate desire for that connection transcends any particular faith or tradition. It does not require a belief in a divinity by any description, nor does it preclude belief in God or Spirit or the divine” (Wigglesworth, 2012, Pg. 8).

Good, Willoughby (2005) pointed out the key difference between religious belief and spirituality; the religious beliefs are external aspects of behavior, cognitive and rituals based on someone else's experiences. On the other hand, the spirituality aspects are internalized, universal, personal and spontaneous and are based on one's own experiences.

Hill, 1990 defined group as “A group must have a clear goal, motivation, and reciprocal interaction among the members and engage in interaction, structure, goals, groupings, and unity”. Hence, spiritual group can be understood as group supporting our spiritual goals to connect us within. A religious group can be understood as a group promoting religious beliefs.

However, it has also been construed that seeking spiritual rewards like being close to god, belief in supernatural is unidimensional with regards to religious rewards and consequently not different. (Miran Levric & Sergej Flere. 2011). For the same reason, “*joined spiritual and religious groups*” are placed under the same independent variable heading whose effect is studied on the dependent variable SQ.

Operational definition: Religious Group or spiritual group: Individuals associated with a religious or spiritual organization/gathering/ practice/ group and follow its propagated practices or rituals or belief. Example Vippasana, Raj Yog-Brahmakumaris, Art of living. (Gilat Levy & Rony Razin, 2007)

As discussed by Shobhna Joshi, Shilpa Kumari (2011) Organizational religiosity or being part of religious group refers to social dimension of religion including participation in temple, mosque or church. Also, it includes attending religious services, chanting groups;

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scripture study group, or prayer groups. Non organizational religiosity implies that the individual does not have to comply by rules of the organization/ group for engaging in religious pursuits. Everyday privately praying or meditating is deemed as few of the personal religious activities. Other non- organizational religious activities include following spiritual YouTube channels, reading religious scripture/ literature, listening to religious radio and television programs as such activities do not require interaction with others and can be done in privacy of our home.

Spiritual Quotient

Spiritual Intelligence or Spiritual Quotient are used interchangeably by all researchers and it is our innate human intelligence which needs to be developed like any other intelligence. It is the most fundamental of the three intelligences including IQ and EQ as its serves as a guide/compass for right decision making. Spiritual intelligence helps to address existential questions and increases awareness of connections between people and the universe (Maryam Safara, M.S.Bhatia, 2013). SQ can be developed by training oneself to detach from mundane things. SQ is high when we think through our vision, sense of purpose and universal unity.

From the perspective of the King (2008), Spiritual Intelligence is a capacity which integrates tangible and transcendental aspects of life, provides mastery over multiple levels of awareness and expands one's consciousness. There are four proposed basic dimensions of SQ proposed by King: "1- Critical Existential Thinking, 2- Personal Meaning Production, 3- Transcendental Awareness 4- Ultimate of consciousness"

Zohar and Marshall (2004) define "spiritual quotient as an ability to access our deepest meanings, values, purposes and motivations"

Cindy, Wigglesworth (2012) defined SQ as the ability to maintain equilibrium and balance in face of any situation, meanwhile being to cultivate wisdom, compassion and maintaining peace. She advocated that SQ comprises of 21 skills.

Operational definition: SQ in this study refers to the ability to find meaning in life through one's own experiences, feeling the deeper connection with people around, expand one's awareness and contemplate on existential reality." (King,2008)

Donnah and Marshall have discussed 12 qualities that are prerequisite in developing SQ: 1. Self- awareness: being keenly aware of one's motivations, values, 2. Being values and vision led: acting from core values and long-term goals instead of being impulsive and indulgent, 3. Positive attitude and patience in difficult times, growing from your mistakes 4. Being holistic and making larger connections feeling sense of belonging, 5. Celebrating diversity: acknowledging differences in people, 6. Being independent and standing against the crowd if needed to support one's convictions, 7 Asking fundamental why questions and courage to find their answers, 8. Reframing: Ability to understand the situation from another scenario, looking at wider context 9. Spontaneity: being present and responding to the moment, 10. Compassion: feeling unconditional understanding and love 11. Humbleness: seeing oneself as a contributor in a bigger scheme of things, 12. Feeling the need to give something back, serving attitude.

Further Robert Emmons proposed 5 features of SI: 1.The ability to go beyond material and physical, 2. To be able to voluntarily enter higher altered states of conscious, 3.The ability to

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understand deeper meaning behind everyday situations, 4. The skill to use SQ to solve day to day problems, 5. Being virtuous.

Historical Background. The concept of spiritual intelligence started to come up as Gardner (1993,1997) was exploring the concepts of existential Intelligence for his theory of multiple intelligence. Maslow conceptualized SI as self-actualization and need to attain best of oneself, in his “hierarchy of needs” model. Building on Gardner's work, Bowling (1999) and Emmons (2000) presented his concept of spiritual intelligence to APA and formulated five components of Spiritual Intelligence. The word “Spiritual Intelligence” was coined by Zohar Danah along with Ian Marshall, in their book published in 2000, ‘SQ: Spiritual intelligence, The Ultimate intelligence’. Gardener wasn't supportive the term SI till late as it could not be psychologically tested or psychometrically studied. Still the ability to conceptualize SQ as higher order above EQ and IQ further studies came up by Wigglesworth and King as the measure of perceiving depth, seeing a bigger picture and adaptive decision making.

Relationship of SQ, EQ and Spiritual group membership

Study by Muhammad F. Alqudah, Adel S. Abduljabbar, Salaheldin F. Bakhet, Ismael S. Albursan, Ahmad M. Alzoubi & Michaeel A. Alghamdi, 2016 “Religious orientation and its relationship with spiritual intelligence” showed that extrinsic religious orientation had positive effect on SQ. Since EQ is positively related to SQ, EQ and SQ individually are positively related to extrinsic religious orientations hence it is implied that both EQ and SQ are positively related to spiritual group/ practices.

Defining middle age

Moira A. Stewart & Mark J. Yaffe, in their featured research article on the concerns and problems in Middle Age in 1984 have construed middle age to affected by combination of psychological, biological and social factors. The traditionally defined chronological age range of midlife, 45-65 has been broadened to 35-65 based on researches. He referred to work on Age by Gould RL,1975, and Birren JE,1968.

Besides, several researches have been done on middle age group aged 35-65, for example by Stradling JR, Crosby JH, Predictors and Schenkman ML, Hearty TM, Cress ME, Kohrt WM, 2007. Middle age has been further divided into “early middle age” (35-44) and “late middle age” (45-64) referring to work by Morris L. Medley, 1980.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Religion plays a crucial role in shaping individual and societal culture in India. Religious motives often influence spiritual experiences, individual values, meaning/ purpose of life (Park, 2005; Roccas & Elster, 2013). There is a crucial specification regards religious orientations, or the different ways of being religious. The most used distinction concerns intrinsic orientation and extrinsic orientations (Ross & Allport, 1967). Intrinsic orientation is described as an internalized form of religiosity, not meant for serving the need for socialization rather subscribing to living life based on one's own religious experience. It refers to a mature form of religiosity, characterized by a rich, profound, and critical reflection on religious issues (Allport, 1950). Extrinsic religiosity is characterized by utilitarian values and extrinsic orientation of individuals where religion is used for socialization and self-gratification.

Bursan, Ismael & Qudah, Mohammad & Bakhet, Salaheldin & Alzoubi, Ahmad & Abduljabbar, Adel & A. Alghamdi, Michaeel. (2016), investigated the association of

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religious orientation with spiritual intelligence (SI) and explored if there is any difference in SI with respect to achievement levels of students, type of schools, and grade level. Sample size of 142 students were randomly selected from grade 7 and grade 10 from “Al-Taif schools” in Saudi Arabia. “Al-Ruwaitea's Religious Orientation Scale” was used for data collection. This scale has four dimensions for measuring religiosity; “personal extrinsic, social extrinsic, intrinsic, and quest”, and a SI scale was also developed for conducting the research.

Significant difference in SI was found by school type, religious schools students reported to have higher mean SI.

No difference was found in Spiritual intelligence by grade.

Multiple regressions revealed that extrinsically oriented religiosity could significantly predict SI.

The research by Saeedi, Nasrin Rafaee, Matina Yekta, and Shahed Masoudi. in 2019 aimed to understand if religious orientation of students is related to their spiritual intelligence. Sample size of 115 female students of Mashhad Azad University were selected by the sample formula and spiritual intelligence and religious orientation questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient were used for data analysis. Findings reveal that SI is significantly and positively correlated with religious orientation ($p = 0.05$). In addition, based on age groups, no significant difference was found between SI and religious orientation of the students ($p > 0.05$).

Basant Ballabh Pandey, Rita Pande, 2017, conducted an experimental study to investigate the impact of Self Realisation Meditative Sadhana (SRMS) on spiritual intelligence. Especially the study was conducted with a group of Young Students which are preparing for UPSC exam at a reputed private institute at Rajkot. The exposure of SRMS for 30 days given to the experimental group only. Independent t –test was done to analyze data. It was concluded that SRMS has significant impact on the Spiritual intelligence. Hence SRMS appear here as promising methods to enhance spiritual intelligence.

Lakshmi T, Shashikala L, studied the effect of meditation and yoga on EQ. Sample size of 60 subjects including both male and female filled the questionnaire before and after the yoga training for 2 weeks. The results showed that all the EQ dimensions were increased after training of 2 weeks. Regular yoga has been said to bring balance in mind, body and spirit, thus it was recommended in study to practice yoga for overall well-being.

Critical analysis of review of literature

After careful reviewing, following limitations in the literature have been found:

Most of the researches and studies, conducted yet for finding the effect of religion on various factors such as physical health, psychological health, social, emotional health, mental health; have been based on “Allport’s concept of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation. “However, there is high vagueness on how the intrinsic or extrinsic motivation has been measured (Lee A. Kirkpatrick & Ralph W. Hood, Jr., 1990), how they are related; how religiousness is studied irrespective of belief content are the key questions which are left unanswered. Based on Rodney Stark’s “Theory of Religion”, utilitarian motives are the core to any religious motivation and that religion is chosen after evaluating cost/ reward ratio. It was been proved that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are unidimensional in terms of similarity with few of the rewards sought in both for example closeness with God and

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belief in supernatural agency (Miran Levric, Sergej Flere. 2011). Alport concept seems very simplistic and needs revision to include sophistication that religiosity entails. The very concept of Intrinsic and Extrinsic orientation seems dubious and contrary hence the studies conducted based on this concept stand unjustified.

In few of the other studies measuring QoL, the statistical tools used were very simplistic like simple means to understand data.

Another study had very small sample size of 68 only for the results to be generalized on larger population.

Rationale

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of joining religious/ spiritual group on SQ of middle aged people. The study is undertaken keeping in mind the following considerations:

The literature on this topic is particularly scarce. This researcher aims to through light on the effects of the membership with religious or spiritual group on spiritual and emotional quotient based on King's (2008) questionnaire which measures four aspects of spirituality. There are few literature reviews on defining religion, religiosity in western and Indian context which were very helpful in understanding that spirituality in some cultures is integral part of religion and is inseparable. Hence this study integrates the spiritual and religious groups under same independent variable.

Previous researches had been conducted mostly in Islamic countries like Iran, Afghanistan or else Intrinsic/ Extrinsic orientation were tested on Christians. This study focuses on Indian population in and around Delhi hence it provides new perspectives in understanding SQ.

Many people are gravitating towards spirituality these days hence this research will facilitate to understand if spirituality helps them in achieving spiritualistic and emotional goals. (Richard Wolman, 2001). Due to hectic lifestyle, various stresses have taken a toll on body and mind. People seek security and peace in religion and spirituality which help them to self soothe and reduce stress; Koenig, Larson and Larson (2001). With the help of this study, it can be observed whether memberships with religious/ spiritual communities will help individual to attain peace, reach their higher potential. As based several researches, high SI leads to high EQ (Van Leeuwen and Cusveller; 2004) which in turn leads to better mental health (McCullough & Larson, Koenig, 2001; Ratner & Chiu, Sawatzky 2005). This research examines the role of spiritual groups or organizations in developing SQ, and based on findings can motivate people in moving towards benefiting direction. The results of this research can be particularly helpful to psychologist, medical doctors, spiritual/ religious groups to promote mental health. Membership with the religious and spiritual groups can become a part of lifestyle by being promoted in corporate culture, considering that high SQ and EQ improves people's productivity significantly (Khandan, Mohammad & Eyni, Zeinab & Koohpaei, Alireza. 2017)

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised of 75 persons. Out of the total sample population of 75, the sample size of 60 is selected for the first three hypotheses by purposive sampling to obtain the data

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in each group of 30; matched by membership with group and educational qualification. In total sample size of 60, 30 people belonged to age category of early middle age (35-45) and 30 belonged to age category of late middle age (45-65).

There were two groups of children between the ages of 7 and 13 years and their mothers. Group I consisted of 75 chronically ill children and their mothers 75 and Group II consisted of 75 normal healthy children and their mothers (75). Group II served as a control group. In Group I; children who were suffering from some type of chronic illness like TB, epilepsy, kidney trouble, rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease, sickle cell anemia and asthma were included. In both groups children from different socioeconomic classes – low, medium, and high were interviewed.

Instruments

In this research, the tool used was the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, by D.King (2008) to measure SQ

“The SISRI-24 questionnaire (The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory – King, 2008)”: SISRI-24 is a self-report questionnaire with 24 items where items are answered on the basis on five point likert scale ranging from 0-4. “0 – Not at all true of me, 1 – Not very true of me, 2 – Somewhat true of me, 3 – Very true of me, 4 – Completely true of me.” This inventory is assessed on the basis of four factors/ dimensions of SQ proposed by King: “Critical existential thinking (CET), Personal meaning production (PMP), transcendental consciousness (TC) and Consciousness state expansion (CSE).

Total score of 24 items ranges from 0 to 96. Reverse coding is applicable to item 6. The scoring is done by adding up scores of each item.”

The instrument validity and reliability: Properties of the instrument

Test-Retest Reliability for n = 25 is .89 (for total SI score) and Cronbach’s Alpha = .920 Split-Half Reliability = .91. For validation of the SISRI-30, various psychological measures were used like Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006), Meta personal Self-Construal Scale (MSC; DeCicco & Stroink, 2003), Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS; Schutte et al., 1998). Construct validity, divergent validity, and convergent validity were well-supported overall.

Procedure

The majority of data for this study was collected online while few subjects were sent physical questionnaires. The tools used in the study were EIQ NHS and SISRI-24 for measuring EQ and SQ of middle aged people. Initially few demographic details-based questions were asked from the subject then the subjects were requested to fill both EQ and SQ questionnaires. All the questions were uploaded on google drive and the link was sent to various online and offline groups with request to fill up the questionnaire in Delhi, NCR. Subjects were informed about this study as ‘behavioral study to assess SQ of people’ instead of stating original topic of the study to reduce biases.

Before collecting data, a pilot study on four people was conducted (aged 20 to 24 years), randomly to understand any limitations of study. Changes were incorporated after the pilot study, for example; few words from the thesis title were changed: ‘Religious or spiritual organization’ to ‘religious or spiritual groups’.

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During the data collection, a journal was maintained to record all qualitative responses to assist with data analysis.

Statistical tools by SPSS version 17.0 were used to analyze data. All the data from 75 subjects was imported from google drive/ physical questionnaires to excel and then further to SPSS and coded numerically (categorical data). T-test was used in hypothesis if there were any significant differences in means of SQ of people who have joined religious or spiritual groups with respect to who have not joined any.

RESULTS

Table 1 tabulating descriptive statistics for our hypothesis for testing equality of means between groups

	Not Joined group		Joined group		t-test	p value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Total SQ	36.93	17.19	63.13	16.87	-5.95**	.000

Note: ** $p < .01$, $df = 58$

SQ = Spiritual Quotient, SD = Standard Deviation

An independent sample T-test was conducted to determine if statistically significant difference existed between SQ scores in people who have joined religious or spiritual group and those who have not joined. (Table 4.1) The results showed $t(60) = -5.95$, significant to 99% confidence levels ($p=.000$), $df = 58$, $n = 60$ showing significant differences in mean SQ between those who have joined religious and spiritual groups and those who have not joined religious and spiritual groups. The mean SQ of people who have joined religious or spiritual group is 63.13, $SD = 16.87$ whereas of people who have not joined is 36.93, $SD = 17.19$.

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis states that there is a significant difference in total SQ of middle aged people who have joined a religious or spiritual group. The results confirmed the research hypothesis 1 as $t(60) = -5.95$, is significant to 99% confidence levels. The mean SQ of people who have joined religious or spiritual group [$M = 63.13$, $SD = 16.87$] is found to be greater than the people who have not joined any group [$M = 36.93$, $SD = 17.19$]. This implies that SQ is significantly higher in members of a religious or spiritual group than in non-members.

The results are in line with previous researches done on a similar topic. SQ was found to be positively correlated to extrinsic religious orientation (Ismael S. et all, 2016). SQ, EQ was seen to be positively correlated with attending spiritual courses and programs according to studies by Shrivastave, Prem, 2017. Basant Ballabh et all, 2017 established a positive impact of self realization meditative sadhana on SQ.

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Conflict of Interest

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