

Belief in Karma and Subjective Well-being among Adults

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ABSTRACT

India, a country known for its religious and cultural traditions, has undergone changes influenced by Westernization, particularly among the younger generation. One of the unique aspects of Indian religions has been the belief in karma. Despite its significance, there is limited research on the relationship between belief in karma and psychological well-being across different age groups. This study aims to explore this correlation by comparing young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults with a total of 179 participants using measures of Beliefs in Karma, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences. The results revealed significant differences among the three age groups, older adults exhibited a higher belief in karma and its impact on subjective well-being. Moreover, the study found a positive correlation suggesting that belief in karma can provide individuals with a sense of meaning, purpose, and comfort, thereby enhancing their subjective well-being.

Keywords: *Karma, Subjective Well-Being, Life Satisfaction, Positive Affect, Negative Affect*

Good works are rewarded with good, evil with evil, this is the most common belief passed down from generation to generation. Karma is often defined as the power of "morality" that governs the "invisible" world, such that people are punished or rewarded for their sins or good deeds in this or the next life (Kulow & Kramer, 2016). According to the logic of karma theory, those who believe in the metaphysics of karma like to invest in "good" karma by acting in social and good relationships. Vigilance, diligence, and resourcefulness should be rewarded and otherwise punished. Also, bad behavior should be punished in some way and bad events in one's life should be interpreted as punishment for some bad behavior in the past. Similarly good behavior should be rewarded, and the result of good events should be punished awards for past performance.

Despite their profound insights, studies that directly investigate karmic beliefs are underrepresented in psychological research. Most Indians of all religions believe in karma, the idea that people reap the rewards of good deeds and often pay for their bad deeds in the afterlife. Rani (2021) explores the relationship between karmic beliefs and mental health in a sample of Indian adults stating that karmic beliefs were positively associated with life satisfaction, meaningfulness, and meaning in life, and negatively associated with affective and depressive symptoms. Additionally, White, Norenzayan, and Schaller (2019) examine

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the content and consequences of cross-cultural karmic beliefs and revealed that belief in karma was associated with theoretical constructs, including belief in a just world, belief in a moral god, religious commitment, and social order. Also, belief in karma is not a very useful indicator of harm.

Belief in karma has many effects on people of different ages. Xu et al. (2019) suggest that belief in karma can provide meaning and purpose in life, which in turn leads to mental health. A study by Chen and Kim (2017) examines the impact of religious beliefs on the relationship between social support and consumer health in middle-aged adults, focusing on gender differences. The analysis state that belief in karma will lead to order and justice in the world, which can increase the effectiveness of health promotion, especially for women who may experience a lot of stress in social and cultural life in the middle of life. Song and Lee (2015) investigated the relationship between religious beliefs and health among Korean adults stating that belief in karma was positively associated with the health of Korean seniors, which can lead to peace and fulfillment in life.

Developing karmic beliefs is ingrained in Indian culture, and cultural boundaries developed with the impact of modernization and meeting body and security needs is the goal of most people in this age. Therefore, research on the relationship between karmic beliefs and subjective well-being in young, middle-aged, and older people will allow one to examine People's beliefs, thoughts, and influence development, and help identify various influences for solving problems. Make good. And develop your belief in many good and good thinking ideas.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the belief in karma and subjective well-being among young adults, middle adults, and older adults.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant difference among young adults, middle adults, and older adults on belief in karma and subjective well-being.

H2: There would be a significant positive correlation between karma and subjective well-being.

Sample

A purposive sampling method was used to collect the data. Data is collected from participants to understand their belief in karma and subjective well-being concerning their age. The study population consisted of young adults (20-39), middle adults (40-59), and older adults (60 & above). For the quantitative research, a total sample of 180 (both males and females) with religiously diverse backgrounds participated.

Data Collection Instruments

Demographics

Demographic questions included the participant's gender and age.

Belief in Karma (White, Norenzayan & Schaller, 2017): This is a 16-item self-report measure that defines the concept of Karma doctrine. It examines a person's belief in reincarnation, the belief that human actions cause valence, a phenomenon in the afterlife, the

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integration of these beliefs, and their belief in the concept of "karma." It has good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

Measures of Subjective Well-being (Diener et.al, 1985; Diener et.al, 2009)

Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) developed by Diener (1985) was used to measure participants' life satisfaction. The scale does not measure satisfaction with areas of life such as health or money but allows people to participate and evaluate these areas as they wish. This is a 5-item scale designed to assess a person's overall experience in making decisions (not positive or negative) about life satisfaction.

Diener's (2009) Positive and Negative Experiences Scale is a short 12-item scale that asks respondents to rate how well they have experienced various situations. It uses certain emotions such as "good", "happy" and "bad". This allows SPANE to reflect a variety of thoughts and feelings of respondents, both negative and positive, considering the diversity of positive and negative emotions.

Research design

The type of research design used to achieve these goals is a cross-sectional study. The design is suitable for identifying the relationship between variables and for identifying differences between groups at a given time.

Procedure

Samples were collected from young, middle-aged, and elderly. Participants were informed about the ethical procedures and decisions of the research and their confidentiality was guaranteed. The nature and purpose of the study were discussed with the participants. Data analysis was performed using SPSS. The research is conducted following ethical considerations such as informed consent, protection of participant rights, and procedures for obtaining ethical and institutional approval, qualifications, or dealing with the ethics committee.

RESULTS

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between belief in karma and subjective well-being using non-parametric ANOVA (Kruskal-Wallis) and Spearman's rho correlation analysis. The study will examine the potential moderating effects of age on the relationship between belief in karma and subjective well-being.

Descriptive analysis

Table 1. Age-wise descriptive

Age Range	Age Group	N
18-39	Young Adults	59
40-59	Middle Adults	61
60 & above	Older Adults	59
Total		179

The table represents the distribution of participants based on their age. The study included a total of 179 participants. The participants were categorized into three age groups: young adults (18-39 years), middle adults (40-59 years), and older adults (60 years and above). The participants in each age group were 59, 61, and 59, respectively.

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Inferential Analysis

Table 2: Age-wise mean ranks for karma and subjective well-being.

Kruskal Wallis H Test (Ranks)			
	AGE	N	Mean Rank
Karma	Young Adults	59	40.39
	Middle Adults	61	88.66
	Older Adults	59	141.00
	Total	179	
Satisfaction	Young Adults	59	50.65
	Middle Adults	61	88.27
	Older Adults	59	131.14
	Total	179	
Positive emotions	Young Adults	59	67.53
	Middle Adults	61	86.73
	Older Adults	59	115.86
	Total	179	
Negative emotions	Young Adults	59	112.81
	Middle Adults	61	66.65
	Older Adults	59	91.33
	Total	179	
Affect balance	Young Adults	59	64.58
	Middle Adults	61	103.16
	Older Adults	59	101.81
	Total	179	

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to examine if there were significant differences in ranks of karma, satisfaction, positive emotions, and negative emotions, and affect the balance between young adults, middle adults, and older adults. The results showed that there were significant differences in ranks for karma across age groups. The mean ranks for karma and subjective well-being were highest for older adults followed by middle adults and young adults. These findings suggest that age groups have a significant effect on the ranks of these variables.

Table 3: Test statistics for karma and subjective well-being.

Test Statistics					
	Karma	Satisfaction	Positive Emotions	Negative Emotions	Affect balance
Kruskal-Wallis H	120.940	71.644	26.322	24.121	21.290
Df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymptotic Sig.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: AGE

Table 3. provides the results of Kruskal-Wallis tests conducted on five different variables: karma, satisfaction, positive emotions, negative emotions, and affect balance. According to the Kruskal-Wallis H test results, there are significant differences in the distribution of karma ranks across the three age groups. These results suggest that age group is a significant factor in predicting differences in these variables.

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Table 4 Spearman rho correlation between karma and subjective well-being.

		Satisfaction	Karma	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Affect balance
Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.722**	.493**	-.445**	.531**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	179	179	179	179	179
Karma	Correlation Coefficient	.722**	1.000	.493**	-.333**	.447**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	179	179	179	179	179
Positive emotions	Correlation Coefficient	.493**	.493**	1.000	-.508**	.827**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	<.001
	N	179	179	179	179	179
Negative emotions	Correlation Coefficient	-.445**	-.333**	-.508**	1.000	-.863**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	.	<.001
	N	179	179	179	179	179
Affect balance	Correlation Coefficient	.531**	.447**	.827**	-.863**	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.
	N	179	179	179	179	179

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 4 provides the results of Spearman's rank correlation analysis for five different variables: satisfaction, karma, positive emotions, negative emotions, and affect balance. All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between belief in karma and subjective well-being among young adults, middle adults, and older adults. The study also explored the differences in belief in karma and subjective well-being across these age groups. The results of the study provide valuable insights into the impact of belief in karma on subjective well-being across different age groups. Karma and variables of subjective well-being were analyzed using the Kruskal Wallis H Test suggesting that age group is a significant factor in predicting differences in these variables and Spearman's Rho correlation suggestive of a significant relationship between all five variables. Satisfaction, karma, and affect balance have positive correlations with each other, while negative emotions have negative correlations with all other variables. Positive emotions have positive correlations with all other variables except negative emotions.

The first hypothesis of the study was that there would be a significant difference among young adults, middle adults, and older adults on belief in karma and subjective well-being. The results of the study revealed a significant difference in belief in karma and subjective well-being among the three age groups. Specifically, older adults had a significantly higher belief in karma than middle and young adults. This finding is consistent with previous research that has found an increase in religiosity and spirituality with age. Older Hindus are somewhat more likely than younger Hindus to believe in concepts of moksha and kaivalya. In general, men, younger adults, and those who have a college education are less likely to hold these beliefs (Sahgal et.al, 2021).

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Belief in karma can have different impacts on individuals of different age groups. Here are some potential impacts that support our study.

Young adults: A study by Xu et al. (2019) found that belief in karma was positively associated with mental health outcomes among college students in China. The authors suggested that belief in karma may provide a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which can contribute to psychological well-being. Another study by White et al. (2019) found that belief in karma was associated with greater life satisfaction among adults in multiple cultures.

Middle-aged adults: A study by Chen and Kim (2017) found that social support was positively associated with subjective well-being among middle-aged adults, but this relationship was stronger for women who believed in karma. The authors suggested that belief in karma may provide a sense of order and justice in the world, which can enhance the positive effects of social support.

Older adults: Kim and Kim (2019) explored the relationship between belief in karma and mental health among Korean older adults indicating that belief in karma was positively associated with mental health among Korean older adults, suggesting that belief in karma may serve as a protective factor against mental health problems in later life.

The second hypothesis of the study was that there would be a significant positive correlation between belief in karma and subjective well-being. The results of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between belief in karma and subjective well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research that has found that belief in karma is associated with better mental health outcomes. The findings suggest that interventions that promote belief in karma may have a positive impact on mental health and well-being. A 2017, study found that belief in karma was positively associated with life satisfaction and subjective happiness, and negatively associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression (Kang & Gray, 2017). Another study from 2019 examined the relationship between karma beliefs and mental health outcomes in a sample of Chinese college students. The results showed that karma beliefs were positively associated with life satisfaction and happiness, and negatively associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression (Xu, Lu, Zhang, & Chen, 2019). These findings are consistent with previous research that has found that belief in karma is positively associated with well-being and that older adults tend to report higher levels of subjective well-being than younger adults. Additionally, research has consistently shown that subjective well-being tends to increase with age.

The present study's findings have important implications for promoting mental health and well-being across different age groups. Specifically, the findings suggest that interventions that promote belief in karma may positively impact subjective well-being. Such interventions may be particularly relevant for older adults who have a higher belief in karma than other age groups.

The research on the relationship between belief in karma and subjective well-being has important implications for individuals, mental health professionals, and policymakers. The findings suggest that belief in karma may be a protective factor against mental health problems and depression among adults. Further, this highlights the importance of encouraging positive beliefs and attitudes among adults to build their well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study explored the relationship between belief in karma and subjective well-being among young adults, middle adults, and older adults. It is suggestive of the fact that the actions a person takes in one's life will influence their future experiences, either positively or negatively impacting their subjective well-being, suggesting that individuals who hold a stronger belief in karma may experience higher levels of subjective well-being as one's belief brings consciousness to one's actions.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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