

Comparative Study

## Spirituality and Mindfulness: A Comparative Study Among Younger and Older Adults

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### ABSTRACT

The relationship between the ideas of spirituality and mindfulness is revealed by this research. It centres on whether or not people regularly engage in spirituality and mindfulness practices, as well as whether or not these ideas are connected. The objective of this study is to compare the degrees of both conceptions in two age groups: younger adulthood (18–25 years), which is a phase of transition towards becoming an independent adult, and older adulthood (60+ years), which is a time when an individual gains more life experience and approaches the end of their journey. There has already been a lot of discussion regarding spirituality. From a Buddhist perspective, mindfulness is a relatively new idea, yet it has a long history. It has just recently become popular. Previous studies have shown the relationship between spirituality and mindfulness as well as the significance of both. However, they haven't published a comparative analysis of the ideas among younger and older persons in particular. Conversely, it appears that there is a lot of discussion surrounding the relationship between spirituality and aging. This study employs a quantitative research design and the correlational technique of inquiry. The data analysis approach was based on statistical analysis using SPSS, and self-administered questionnaires were used as the data gathering technique. When the participant's responses were analysed, it became clear that while mindfulness had a clear relationship with spiritual support—the perception of having a close relationship with God—it did not have a relationship with spiritual openness, which is the willingness to consider new ideas and alternate approaches to spirituality. Through this research, it was also discovered that older adults have higher degrees of spirituality and mindfulness than younger adults.

**Keywords:** *Spirituality, Mindfulness, Younger Adults, Older Adults*

Spirituality entails acknowledging a realm beyond oneself, recognising a divine aspect in existence. It encompasses broad concepts like empathy, selflessness, and enlightenment, often inspired by role models who embody these qualities. While spirituality is personal, religion adheres to structured beliefs and practices.

Mindfulness, inherent in humans, involves being present and aware, free from distractions. It enhances performance, reduces stress, and fosters empathy. Younger individuals tend to be

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less spiritual but can benefit from mindfulness, which correlates with age and is linked to better attentional management in older adults.

Spirituality and mindfulness synergies for mental well-being, offering strategies for personal growth and tranquility. They provide hope and optimism, guiding individuals towards a fulfilling life.

### *Need of the Study*

This research aims to explore the impact of spirituality and mindfulness on individuals, comparing younger and older adults. While spirituality is highly valued in culturally rich countries like India, mindfulness, rooted in ancient practices like Buddhism, is gaining prominence. Understanding how these concepts vary across age groups is crucial. Young adults transitioning to independence may lean on spirituality for guidance, while older adults draw from their life experiences. This research seeks to uncover if higher spirituality correlates with increased mindfulness and if these concepts differ between life phases, shedding light on their interconnectedness and importance during pivotal life transitions.

**Aim-** To compare the degree of spirituality and mindfulness among younger and older persons in order to see how they relate to one another.

## **METHOD**

### *Objectives of the study*

- To assess the relationship between Spirituality and Mindfulness.
- To compare the levels of Spirituality and Mindfulness among younger adults and older adults.

### *Hypotheses*

- There is a connection between Spirituality and Mindfulness.
- The levels of spirituality and mindfulness are greater among older adults than in younger adults.

### *Participants of the study*

The sample size is 120 people, divided into 60 participants who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years and 60 participants who are beyond 60 years. Both male and female participants were encouraged to take the initiative as part of the purposive sampling method that was chosen.

### *Data collection instrument*

The scales "Spiritual Experience Index - Revised (SEI-R)" and "The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)" were used in this study to collect data, along with a form for demographic data.

### *Data collection procedure*

The Spiritual Experience Index—Revised—which has two sub-scales, the Spiritual Support Sub-scale and the Spiritual Openness Sub-scale, each with 13 and 10 items, for a total of 23—as well as the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, which has 15 items overall, were used to gather the data.

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To include people from a variety of backgrounds, the questionnaires were sent to the participants online.

Participants were given a questionnaire package with information on the study, the researcher's contact information, and other measures after being informed about its objectives and asked to participate. The description of the instruments took ten minutes.

**INCLUSION CRITERIA** - Participants must be within the age group of 18-25 years old and 60 years and above.

**Location of the sample** - Delhi NCR and Guwahati, India

### **Scoring -**

#### **Spiritual Experience Index -**

a 23-item questionnaire that does not mandate respondents' religious affiliation in order to evaluate their spiritual journey or level of faith. The Spiritual Experience Index has been revised and is now a survey. Using component analysis, the original was substantially reduced and split into two sub-scales: Spiritual Support (13 questions) and Spiritual Openness (10 questions).

One needs to indicate in your responses how much you agree or disagree with each of the following claims.

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Somewhat Disagree

4= Somewhat Agree

5= Agree

6= Strongly Agree

Spiritual Openness: Items 1, 3, 7, and 10. Sub-scales have inverse scoring. One must assign a unique score to each sub-scale.

#### **Mindful Attention Awareness Scale -**

A key component of mindfulness, the 15-item MAAS scale was designed to assess receptive mental states, in which attention is simply focused on the present moment under the guidance of a sympathetic awareness of what is happening.

There are several observations about things you come across in your daily life. Participants must use the 1-6 scale below to indicate how frequently or infrequently they now have each event. One should respond by describing their experience as accurately as possible, instead of depending on what you think your experience ought to be. Each object requires a different approach than any other. The differences based on the scale are as follows:

1 - almost always

2 - very frequently

3 - somewhat frequently

4 - somewhat infrequently

5 - very infrequently

6 - almost never

The average of the 15 components is all that is needed to score the scale.

**RESULT**

*Table 1 - Relationship between spirituality and mindfulness*

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Total Score in MAAS	60.46	11.963	120
Total Score Spiritual Support	52.99	15.323	120
Total Score Spiritual Openness	40.03	6.244	120

**Correlations**

		Total Score in MAAS	Total Score Spiritual Support	Total Score Spiritual Openness
<b>Total Score in MAAS</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.209*	.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022	.192
	N	120	120	120
<b>Total Score Spiritual Support</b>	Pearson Correlation	.209*	1	.334**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022		.000
	N	120	120	120
<b>Total Score Spiritual Openness</b>	Pearson Correlation	.120	.334**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.192	.000	
	N	120	120	120

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 2 - Levels of spirituality among younger and older adults*

**Group Statistics**

Age of Respondent		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Total Score in MAAS</b>	Young Adults	60	55.38	10.536	1.349
	Old Adults	60	65.71	11.115	1.447
<b>Total Score Spiritual Support</b>	Young Adults	60	51.05	15.717	2.012
	Old Adults	60	55.00	14.769	1.923
<b>Total Score Spiritual Openness</b>	Young Adults	60	39.64	6.611	.846
	Old Adults	60	40.42	5.870	.764

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of
		F	Sig.	t
<b>Total Score in MAAS</b>	Equal variances assumed	.238	.627	-5.229
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.224
<b>Total Score Spiritual Support</b>	Equal variances assumed	.302	.583	-1.418
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.419
<b>Total Score Spiritual Openness</b>	Equal variances assumed	.917	.340	-.686
	Equal variances not assumed			-.688

## DISCUSSION

The study compared spirituality and mindfulness levels among younger (18-25 years old) and older adults (60 years and above) using purposive sampling. Results showed a correlation between spirituality and mindfulness ( $r = .209$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 found that older adults had higher mindfulness levels ( $M = 65.71$ ,  $SD = 11.115$ ) and greater spirituality, particularly in spiritual support ( $M = 55.00$ ,  $SD = 14.769$ ) and spiritual openness ( $M = 40.42$ ,  $SD = 5.870$ ), compared to younger adults, hence proving Hypothesis 2.

Spirituality involves recognising something greater than oneself, finding purpose, and isn't tied to established rules like religion. It impacts physical and mental health positively. Mindfulness is innate awareness of oneself and surroundings, enhancing insight and present moment experience, reducing distractions.

The study suggests that while spiritual openness and mindfulness aren't strongly linked, there's a connection between spiritual support and mindfulness. Older adults exhibit higher levels of both compared to younger adults. Another study emphasised mindfulness's role in enhancing life satisfaction and spiritual well-being in the elderly.

In conclusion, spirituality and mindfulness intersect in promoting well-being and understanding one's purpose. While they may not be deeply intertwined, they complement each other, with older adults demonstrating higher levels of both qualities.

### *Future Implications*

The study delved into the realms of spirituality and mindfulness, aiming to elucidate their roles in individuals' lives and uncover any interrelationship between the two concepts. Additionally, it sought to compare the levels of spirituality and mindfulness across different age groups, specifically younger and older adults.

By employing established measures such as the Spiritual Experience Index and the Mindful Awareness Attention Scale, this research lays a solid foundation for future investigations. It provides insights into the significance of spirituality and mindfulness, probing whether the emergence of one concept influences the other and exploring potential interrelations.

Moreover, the study sheds light on the spiritual and mindfulness practices of two distinct age cohorts: younger and older individuals. Comparing the levels of these notions offers valuable insights into whether they peak during the transitional phase of younger adulthood or in older adulthood, characterised by accumulated life experiences and nearing the end of one's journey.

Overall, this research serves as a cornerstone for understanding the dynamics between spirituality and mindfulness, paving the way for further exploration into their impact on individuals' well-being across different stages of life.

## CONCLUSION

This study compared spirituality and mindfulness levels between younger and older adults using a sample of 120 individuals. It found a connection between spiritual support and mindfulness but not between spiritual openness and mindfulness. Older adults displayed higher levels of both qualities, suggesting that as individuals age and accumulate life experiences, they tend to exhibit greater mindfulness and spirituality. The findings imply that while being mindful may correlate with spiritual support, it doesn't necessarily translate to openness to diverse spiritual practices or beliefs.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The research was conducted only on the population of Delhi NCR and Guwahati India. The data collected is not dispersed over other different cities.

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