

Research Paper

Spiritual Coping, Materialism, and Existential Crisis in Young Adults: Unveiling the Connection

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the connections between spiritual coping, materialism, and existential crises experienced by young adults. The study was conducted on participants between the ages of 18 and 25. A convenience sample strategy was used, and information was gathered by distributing a questionnaire over social media. The main instruments were the Spiritual Coping Questionnaire (SCQ), the Material Values Scale, and the Existential Concerns Questionnaire (ECQ). The findings of the study revealed intriguing insights into the relationships between materialism, spiritual coping strategies, and existential crises among young adults. While the hypothesized correlation between materialism and existential crisis was supported, indicating a significant positive association, other hypotheses were either partially or wholly rejected based on the results. The study utilized a correlational research design, focusing on discerning patterns of correlation among the variables without establishing causation.

Keywords: *Existential crisis, Positive spiritual coping, Materialism, Negative spiritual coping*

From the moment we come into existence, societal expectations surround us, shaping our behaviors and defining our roles. We learn to navigate these expectations by assuming specific societal roles, engaging in work to meet our needs, striving for success, building connections, and adhering to daily routines. Essentially, we become the central figures, or protagonists, in the unfolding narrative of our lives.

However, as we progress through life, moments of introspection arise. During these instances, we step back and view our lives from an external perspective, akin to being part of an audience observing a theatrical performance. Questions emerge: 'Is there more to my existence? Is my birth solely intended to fulfill societal roles? Do my everyday actions and pursuits truly hold significance in the broader context of my life?' This reflective contemplation marks the initiation of what is commonly known as an existential crisis.

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Received: September 19, 2024; Revision Received: October 13, 2024; Accepted: October 17, 2024

1. Existential crisis:

The period of existential crisis involves an examination of the roles we have played and the routines we have adopted. We question the profound meaning underlying our choices and actions. The existential crisis evolves into a journey of self-discovery—a quest to explore our innermost selves, seeking authenticity and a profound connection to our purpose. It offers an opportunity to reassess our roles in life's overarching narrative and realign our actions with a heightened sense of purpose and fulfillment. Navigating an existential crisis in pursuit of the true meaning of life is far from straightforward. It involves a deep and often arduous exploration accompanied by restlessness. Routines that once provided comfort may now feel restrictive, prompting us to scrutinize our decisions.

An existential crisis has not been precisely defined yet, although according to APA An internal conflict is referred to as an 'existential crisis'. The feeling that life is meaningless and a host of unpleasant emotions, including tension, anxiety, hopelessness, and sadness, are its defining characteristics. (Psychology APA Dictionary, n.d.)

Existential crises are generally seen as a complex phenomenon that can be acknowledged as consisting of various components. Certain methods differentiate between three categories of elements that fall within the domains of behavior, cognition, and emotion.

Emotional dimensions align with the experience of an existential crisis. It is generally associated with emotional anxiety, pain, helplessness, despair, guilt, and loneliness. Emotional dimensions align with the experience of an existential crisis. Emotional suffering, hopelessness, powerlessness, guilt, worry, and loneliness are typically linked to it. On the cognitive side, individuals impacted frequently experience a loss of purpose and meaning in addition to realizing their own mortality. Addictions and antisocial conduct are two behavioral ways that existential crises can manifest themselves. Ritualistic behavior, relationship breakup, and health decline are other common combinations. Even while these three elements are often present in every occurrence of an existential crisis, there are frequently notable variations in how they show themselves. However, others have proposed that these elements might be combined to provide a more comprehensive description of existential crises. (Buténaité et al., n.d.)

In the current study, “existential crisis refers to a form of anxiety that arises from contemplating the fundamental aspects of human existence, such as death, meaninglessness, freedom, and isolation. It is a deep-seated fear or unease about the nature of existence, the purpose of life, and the inevitability of death. The existential crisis goes beyond immediate or concrete threats and is more concerned with the broader questions and uncertainties surrounding existence itself” (Vos & Van Bruggen, 2017).

Neupane in her study found out eight themes generated from seven participants and each of the determinants either fell under the psychological, emotional, and sociocultural determinants or the natural causes that lead to an existential crisis. According to the above study factors which lead to existential crises among young adults are: Personality Traits, Family Conflicts, Loss of close ones, Unstable childhood, Future Uncertainty, Conflicting Real and Ideal Self, Physical Infirmary, and Relationship with Partner (Neupane, 2022). Another study suggests that among the three areas namely- Personal, Family, and Social; the Family plays a vital role in the development of existential crisis amongst youth followed by the Personal area and then the Social area. The study also revealed that relative gender differences were present in existential crises among the youth (Ruhela & Tiwari, 2013).

Existential crises, which arise from the search for meaning in life, can be caused by various factors. For example, fear of mortality, and the knowledge that death is inevitable, can lead to a deep sense of insecurity. Existential anxiety is heightened when we are uncertain about the future, especially during major life changes such as entering college. Personal losses, such as the death of a family member or the breakdown of relationships, can also lead to existential questioning. Dissatisfaction in relationships and careers can also contribute to feelings of insecurity and dissatisfaction. Societal pressures and cultural norms play a major role in these complex emotional landscapes. Material wealth and status driven by societal expectations can distract us from dealing with deeper existential concerns.

When material possessions do not provide the fulfillment we desire, we become overly focused on external recognition, leading to a sense of emptiness. In the midst of these intricate emotional landscapes, social pressure and cultural norms play an important role. The constant pursuit of material possessions and status, fueled by social expectations, distracts us from dealing with deeper existential issues. Excessive attention to external validation can leave us feeling empty when material possessions don't meet our needs.

2. Materialism

Materialism is defined as the way in which people seek to build and maintain their self-identity by acquiring and utilizing products, services, experiences, or relationships that are thought to have desirable symbolic value. Materialism is broadly defined as the importance placed on acquiring material objects. It is the belief that possessions and material goods play a crucial role in improving one's well-being. Those with materialistic tendencies frequently prioritize acquiring and possessing material objects, believing that they contribute significantly to their happiness and satisfaction. Materialism can also be defined as a set of core beliefs about the importance of possessions in one's life. It serves as a guiding value that influences actions and decisions in a variety of situations, reflecting the belief that one's relationship with material objects can improve one's well-being.

Materialism, as defined by various scholars, represents a group of deeply held beliefs and orientations emphasizing the value of material possessions and interests in guiding actions and shaping life values. Rokeach's concept of value (Rokeach, 1968, p. 161), extended by Richins and Dawson, characterizes materialism as a central belief system regarding the significance of possessions in one's life trajectory (Richins and Dawson 1992). This notion aligns with broader definitions like the Oxford English Dictionary's description of materialism as a devotion to material needs and desires over spiritual matters. Similarly, Rassuli & Hollander, and Belk highlight materialism as a mindset oriented towards acquiring and valuing worldly possessions (Rassuli and Hollander, 1986-, p. 10; Belk, 1984, p. 291). Mukerji underscores the cultural aspect, framing materialism as a societal orientation where material interests often take lead over other social goals (Mukerji, 1983, p. 8). Together, these perspectives elucidate materialism as a pervasive ideology that prioritizes material pursuits, potentially overshadowing non-material or spiritual dimensions of existence within individual and collective contexts.

Referring to Richins and Dawson's view on materialism for research purposes; materialism as a value but attempted to obtain greater depth by measuring beliefs relevant to the value. Thus, we considered materialism to be a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one's life (cf. Rokeach's definition of value) and measured the three belief domains described below: acquisition centrality, the role of acquisition in happiness, and the role of possessions in defining success. (Richins & Dawson, 1992)

Materialism, or the pursuit of tangible possessions and achievements, is frequently regarded as a driving force behind an individual's goals and motivation. The premise is that establishing and achieving material goals provides a clear path for one's life. However, this viewpoint recognizes the inherent transience of such activities. Material goals, once achieved, can provide a sense of contentment and pleasure, but this joy is often fleeting. (Sharda & Bhat, 2018)

As discussed above, the fleeting nature of satisfaction derived from material accomplishments raises serious questions about the quest for meaning in life. Individuals who struggle through a lack of long-term purpose may find the impermanence of material gains difficult to accept. Realizing that material achievements does not provide a long-term sense of fulfillment can lead to disillusionment and existential questions.

3. Materialism and existential crisis

Numerous investigations have examined the complex relationship between materialism and existential crises. These investigations look into how an excessive focus on material pursuits can lead to a sense of emptiness and the inability to find profound and lasting meaning in one's life. While material goals provide short-term motivation, they may leave people yearning for a deeper and longer-lasting sense of purpose.

In terms of the role of meaning in life in materialism, past research has denoted that a sense of purpose or meaning in life is strongly but negatively associated with materialistic values. It appears that individuals who place a high value on materialistic gains tend to report a diminished sense of meaning and purpose in life. For instance, Kashdan and Breen (2007) discovered that individuals with high materialism scores typically had less significance in their lives. Similarly, high materialistic values were negatively associated with meaning in life among medical students in China (Tang, Xiao, & Zhang, 2019). A person's persistent pursuit of material possessions may leave them very susceptible to annoyance and discontent when their demands are not satisfied (Kashdan & Breen, 2007), which may ultimately result in a loss of purpose in life (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). This was corroborated by recent research, which revealed that those who expressed a great deal of worry about extrinsic objectives typically experienced a decrease in meaning, whereas those driven by intrinsic goals tend to have a greater sense of meaning in life (Zhang, Chen, Chen, & Schlegel, 2018). In brief, research evidence suggests that excessive importance placed on materialistic possessions has a detrimental impact on meaning in life (Zhang, Chen, Chen, & Schlegel, 2018).

Up to this point, we have discussed what existential crises are and how various factors, particularly materialism, encourage the development of the crisis. People who are stressed or uncomfortable are more likely to find ways to deal with it. People in stressful situations or who are dissatisfied with their lives, daily functioning, and livelihoods frequently find a way to cope with the uncomfortable situation. Different people use various techniques to get out of the uncomfortable situation. These strategies are known as coping mechanisms. Coping refers to conscious strategies for reducing unpleasant emotions. Coping strategies can be cognitive or behavioral, and they can be both individual and social.

4. Coping

Coping can be defined as overcoming life's struggles and difficulties. APA defines coping as “any conscious or nonconscious adjustment or adaptation that decreases tension and anxiety in a stressful experience or situation” (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.-b) Coping is a

behavioral response to aversive situations that trigger physiological stress responses, Cannon's (1929) such as fight/escape response, which activates the sympathetic-adrenomedullary system, and Selye's (1950) distress response, which activates the pituitary adrenocortical system and other neuroendocrine systems (reviews by Henry and Stephens, 1977; Von Holst and Scherer, 1988; Ladewig et al., 1993).

Individuals use different coping strategies to manage stress. For example, Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping, Social Support, Avoidance Coping, Cognitive Restructuring, Expressive Writing or Art, Religious or Spiritual Coping, Humor as Coping, Physical Exercise, Time Management, Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques, Seeking Professional Help. Shaikh and colleagues (2004) reviewed that some people cope with the aid of drugs, alcohol, over-eating, and smoking which are counterproductive while some cope by exercising, meditating, and It has been proven that listening to music can assist in lowering stress. Among the various coping styles listed above, spiritual coping emerges as particularly significant. It's a method frequently embraced by individuals facing challenging circumstances, who often turn to spiritual practices as a means of finding solace and resilience.

5. Spiritual coping

Spiritual typically refers to the personal, subjective element of religious experience, emphasizing individual interpretations and introspection. On the other hand, religious denotes a structured system of spiritual ideas, rituals, and accumulated traditions connected with a community. (Hill et al., 2000). Spiritual coping is a technique that people use to navigate and find solace in the face of life's difficulties by drawing on their spiritual or religious beliefs. This coping mechanism entails seeking meaning, purpose, and support through one's faith or spiritual practices. Individuals may turn to prayer, meditation, religious services, or other spiritual rituals for comfort, strength, and a sense of connection to something bigger than themselves. Spiritual coping not only provides a framework for understanding adversity, but it also serves as a source of hope and resilience during difficult times.

Baldacchino and Draper defined spiritual coping as a response to illness and/or stressful situations that allow humans to find meaning and purpose in life, which results in an increased adaptive response (Baldacchino & Draper, 2001). In a similar way to Pargament's (1997) definition of religious coping, spiritual coping with stress can be characterized as an effort to transcend the stressor in order to overcome it. Developing oneself, strengthening bonds with others, creating a sense of oneness with nature, or developing an attachment to and faith in the Divine Being are some of the various paths that transcendence can take (Miller and Thoresen 2003; Hill et al. 2000). The definition highlights the multifaceted nature of spirituality while acknowledging transcendence as its central idea, for the research purpose spiritual coping measures at two dimensions positive and negative. It is not required to divide spirituality into 'positive' and 'negative' categories, though. Though it is supported by trends in parallax trend, the idea of negative spirituality appears to be taboo in scientific discourse because it is hard to operationalize and has unclear definitions. Therefore, treating spirituality as a whole, whose manifestations can take on various forms, seems more appropriate. That is the situation with both constructive and destructive spiritual coping. (Charzyńska, 2014).

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According to research on religious coping (Pargament et al. 2011), it is assumed that The two types of spiritual coping are thought to be mostly independent of one another :Positive and negative religious coping can be used concurrently by an individual. Charzyńska (2014). Within the scope of this study, we consider the definition of negative and positive spiritual coping provided by Charzyńska (2014). According to him, Positive spiritual coping would then involve taking cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed at solving a difficult situation, which—depending on the domain—are manifested in:

1. The search for inner peace and harmony, the pursuit of a purpose, meaning, and sense, the focus on one's inner existence, the endeavor to overcome one's weaknesses and acquire an increasing amount of self-awareness (the personal domain).
2. Demonstrating and maintaining deep and valuable relations with other people, heeding moral values, treating people fairly, caring about others, willingness to help, displaying love, empathy, and compassion (the social domain).
3. Focusing on the sense of connection and belonging to nature, perceiving harmony and order in it, treating nature as friendly to humans, openness to noticing miracles in nature (the environmental domain)
4. Preserving solid connections based on presence, love, and trust with the Divine Power (the religious domain).

Negative spiritual coping makes it difficult for an individual to draw competency from spiritual resources, blocks the pursuit of sense and meaning in life, and hinders its growth, “upward movement” and going beyond what is material. It may manifest itself in various forms:

1. Negating the goal and meaning of one's life, emphasizing one's weaknesses and limitations, concentrating on one's transgressions (the personal domain)
2. Perceiving people as inherently egoistic and caring only about their interests, which results in hostility, aversion, or envy toward others, blocking the possibility of establishing and maintaining deep, valuable interpersonal relations (the social domain)
3. Treating nature as hostile to humans and posing a threat, emphasizing human helplessness and insignificance in the face of the laws of nature (the environmental domain)
4. Religious conflict is shown in holding resentment toward the Supreme Being, attributing personal shortcomings to Him/Her, and discounting Their compassion and love for humanity.

After investigating coping, its many kinds, and conceptualizations, Let's examine the dynamic interplay between materialism and spiritual coping, assessing their reciprocal effects and interactions.

6. Spiritual coping and materialism

Spiritual coping refers to a variety of strategies people use based on their spiritual practices and beliefs to deal with life's obstacles. On the other hand, materialism represents a way of thinking that sees obtaining riches and material goods as the path to contentment and pleasure. We want to understand how people's dependence on spiritual coping strategies may coincide with or differ from their materialistic tendencies as we explore the complex relationships between these ideas.

Research exploring the intersection of spirituality and materialism is scant, yet some reseraches offer insights into their relationship. For example, a study named ‘The material

and immaterial in conflict: Spirituality reduces conspicuous consumption' conducted two studies; and Study 1 (correlational study), and found that individuals who reported having spiritual experiences reported a decreased desire to spend lavishly for visible consumer goods, such as cell phones. Study 2 (experimental study), and found that participants assigned to recall spiritual events also demonstrated a decreased desire to consume conspicuously, relative to participants assigned to recall an enjoyable event. (Stillman et al., 2012). One Research indicates that fundamentally religious people are less likely to view money as a means of attaining power and prestige (Watson et al., 2004).

Expanding on our previous discussion of the complex relationship between spiritual coping and materialism, let's now explore the relationship between spiritual coping and existential crises.

7. Spiritual coping and existential crisis

The relationship between spirituality and existential crises is a complex and important aspect of the human experience. Spirituality is frequently an essential coping strategy that people turn to when they are struggling with existential issues about the purpose and meaning of life. Individuals can traverse the turbulent landscape of existential uncertainty using a framework provided by their spiritual beliefs, practices, and experiences. Spirituality is a comforting light during difficult times, offering opportunities for reflection, transcendence, and a closer relationship with other people, oneself, and the cosmos. This investigation explores the mutually beneficial connection between spiritual coping strategies and existential crises, clarifying how spirituality may provide resiliency, understanding, and transformational development in the midst of existential upheaval in human existence.

As we discussed above, people use various coping strategies to deal with life stress, we will review how previous researchers connect spirituality as a coping strategy to deal with negative events. Spirituality can help trauma survivors heal, recover, and build resilience. The study titled- The use of spiritual resources to cope with trauma in daily existence subsequently argues for an integrated approach to working through trauma, which brings spirituality into the psychotherapeutic dialogue (Magezi & Manda, 2016). William Breitbart and colleagues investigate spiritual and existential concerns through this meaning-oriented method that enables dying patients to discover meaning and purpose in life until their death. (Breitbart et al., 2004). The study by Ahmadi aimed to explore the use of meaning-making coping (existential, spiritual, and religious coping) among cancer patients in Korea and to investigate the impact of culture on their choice of coping methods. Thirty-three people with different types of cancer underwent interviews. Analyzing the interview transcripts demonstrated four distinct types of coping resources: (1) belief in nature's healing ability; (2) mind-body connection; (3) reliance on transcendent power; and (4) finding oneself in interactions with others. The findings of this study highlight the necessity of analyzing cultural context when studying the usage of meaning-making coping techniques in various nations. (Ahmadi et al. 2016).

After a careful review of the literature on all the relevant variables, it is evident that a complete comprehension of these components is still elusive. Even with earlier research, there is still a discernible knowledge vacuum about these factors. This knowledge gap emphasizes how important and fascinating it is to carry out more study in this field. Our goal in exploring this topic is to bridge these gaps and add significant new knowledge to the area.

8. Research gap

Understanding any phenomenon comprehensively requires exploring its potential relationships across various related domains. Previous research has identified a gap in understanding the interplay between spiritual coping mechanisms, materialism, and existential crises. Surprisingly, there has been a lack of research simultaneously studying these three variables. Specifically, within the Indian population, investigations into the relationship between spiritual coping mechanisms, materialism, and existential crises are notably scarce. Moreover, studies examining the influence of materialism on spiritual coping strategies have been limited. Most existing research on materialism has focused on clinical populations dealing with chronic illnesses, rather than the general populace. Furthermore, there is a conspicuous absence of literature addressing negative spiritual coping strategies within the context of materialism and existential crises. Closing these gaps through empirical research can offer crucial insights into these complex interactions and their implications for individuals' well-being.

9. Rationale

The rationale for this research lies in the contemporary socio-cultural shifts impacting young adults, particularly concerning spiritual practices, materialism, and existential crises. In today's fast-paced world, there is a noticeable decline in spiritual engagement among individuals, especially among the younger generation, coinciding with the rise of social media and heightened materialistic values. This increasing emphasis on material possessions and comparison-driven lifestyles may contribute to the emergence of existential crises among young adults, as materialistic pursuits often fail to provide lasting fulfillment due to the transient nature of material objects.

Conversely, spiritual practices offer individuals a potential safeguard against existential crises by providing a sense of meaning, purpose, and inner fulfillment that transcends material possessions. Exploring the interplay between spiritual coping mechanisms, materialism, and existential crises among young adults is therefore important for understanding how these factors influence psychological well-being and resilience in the face of contemporary societal pressures.

By unveiling the connections between spiritual coping, materialism, and existential crises, this research seeks to shed light on the importance of spiritual practices as a protective factor against existential angst in an increasingly materialistic world. Additionally, it aims to inform interventions and support systems tailored to young adults, promoting holistic well-being and resilience amidst societal and cultural shifts.

Objectives

- To explore the relationship between materialism and young adults' levels of existential crisis.
- To investigate the connection between positive spiritual coping and young adults' levels of existential crisis.
- To examine the interplay of negative spiritual coping and existential crisis among young adults.
- To analyze the dynamics of positive spiritual coping and materialism among young adults.
- To delve into the correlation between negative spiritual coping and materialism among young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study employs a correlational research design, which involves investigating the relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them. In this study, questionnaires were utilized as the primary data collection method to gather information on these variables. This approach enabled us to analyze the extent to which the variables are linked with each other. However, it is crucial to emphasize that correlational research does not demonstrate causality; rather, it seeks to find patterns of correlation between variables.

Variables

- **Criterion variable:** Spiritual coping, Materialism
- **Predictor variable:** Existential crisis

Hypothesis

- There is a significant positive correlation between materialism and young adults' levels of existential crisis.
- There is a significant negative correlation between positive spiritual coping and young adults' levels of existential crisis.
- There is no significant correlation between negative spiritual coping and existential crisis among young adults.
- There is a significant negative correlation between positive spiritual coping and materialism among young adults.
- There is no significant correlation between negative spiritual coping and materialism among young adults.

Sample

Participants, ranging from 18 to 25 years old, were recruited for the study. The questionnaire, disseminated via social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, collected responses from 304 individuals using Google Forms. The participant pool comprised 115 men, 176 women, and 13 non-binary individuals. All participants were asked to provide basic demographic data, such as their name, gender, age, and qualifications. More than 50% of the sample had an educational level of graduation. To ensure that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw or withhold their responses at any time during the trial, a consent form was included with the questionnaire.

Sampling method

The Convenience sampling method was used in the study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on their easy accessibility and availability to the researcher. Rather than employing random selection techniques, convenience sampling relies on the convenience and practicality of recruiting individuals who are readily accessible and willing to participate in the study. For this study, convenience sampling was used mainly because it is a feasible and simple method to use. Using social media to distribute the questionnaire allowed for quick and accessible data collection across multiple locations, especially considering the target population of young adults (aged 18 to 25) and the research setting at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, along with additional data collection in Vadodara, Jamnagar, and Indore. With the use of this technique, researchers were able to effectively contact a huge number of possible volunteers who fell within the designated age range and various geographic areas. Furthermore, convenience sampling is suitable when the primary focus is on obtaining a sample that is readily available

and accessible, rather than ensuring strict random selection or representativeness of the entire population. In this case, the aim was to gather insights specifically from young adults at the university and other cities, making convenience sampling a practical choice to achieve this objective within the study's resource and time constraints. Despite its limitations in generalizability, convenience sampling served as a viable approach to gather relevant data for exploring the relationships between spiritual coping, materialism, and existential crises among the target demographic in multiple locations. The criteria for the sampling are listed below.

Inclusion criteria

Participants involved in this study are required to hold Indian citizenship, fall within the age bracket of 18 to 25 years, and possess proficiency in reading and comprehending the English language. These criteria are implemented to ensure that participants align with a specific demographic range pertinent to the research topic. The stipulation of the age range from 18 to 25 years aims to capture a cohort representative of young adults transitioning into adulthood—a phase often associated with distinct social, psychological, and economic dynamics. The citizenship requirement facilitates a cohesive analysis of findings by maintaining consistency in participants' backgrounds and experiences within the Indian context. Proficiency in the English language is imperative to enable participants to fully engage in the research process through effective communication and understanding of study materials.

Exclusion criteria

The study's exclusion criteria encompass individuals who submit incomplete forms or those lacking consent. Ensuring participants' voluntary engagement in the study and their awareness of its procedures, objectives, potential risks, and benefits is essential for upholding ethical research standards. Consent is integral to respecting human autonomy and maintaining ethical principles. Therefore, participation will be restricted to individuals who provide consent. Incomplete forms pose a risk to the accuracy and consistency of the collected data, consequently impacting the validity and interpretation of the study. To uphold the integrity of the data and the rigor of the research, individuals failing to complete all required sections of the form will similarly not be considered for participation in the study.

Tools

1. Existential Concern Questionnaire (ECQ)

The Existential Concerns Questionnaire (ECQ) is a valuable tool for assessing existential anxiety related to core threats to human existence. The ECQ was developed by Vincent van Bruggen and colleagues in 2017. It consists of a total of 25 items in its initial version, which were later refined to a shortened version with 22 items. The questionnaire is designed to measure fears and concerns related to existential issues such as death, meaninglessness, guilt, social isolation, and identity. The reliability of the scale was 0.94. The scale has shown good internal consistency and test-retest reliability, indicating that it consistently measures existential concerns over time. Additionally, the ECQ has exhibited construct validity by showing expected correlations with other measures related to anxiety, distress, neuroticism, and experienced meaning. The incremental validity of the ECQ has been supported by its ability to capture unique aspects of existential anxiety beyond general distress or personality traits like neuroticism.

2. The Material Values Scale

The materialism value scale developed by Richins and Dawson is a measurement tool designed to assess individuals' beliefs and attitudes regarding material possessions. Constructed in the early 1990s, the scale consists of 18 items that capture three belief domains related to materialism: acquisition centrality, the role of acquisition in happiness, and the role of possessions in defining success. These domains reflect the central importance of possessions in individuals' lives and their perceived impact on personal well-being and success.

Validity and reliability assessments of the materialism value scale have been conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurements. The scale has shown high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.88 for the 18 items collectively. Test-retest reliability, measured over a three-week interval, yielded high correlations ranging from 0.82 to 0.87 for the individual belief domains (acquisition centrality, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness, possession-defined success) and the combined scale.

Preliminary assessments of scale validity were also successful, suggesting that the scale effectively measures the intended constructs related to materialism.

The initial version of the materialism value scale included 30 items, which were subjected to exploratory factor analysis, reliability assessments, and social desirability tests. Through these analyses, a refined version of the scale was derived, consisting of 18 items that demonstrated consistent behavior across multiple survey data collections and exhibited adequate reliability.

3. Spiritual Coping Questionnaire (SCQ)

In 2015, Edyta Charzyńska developed the robust Spiritual Coping Questionnaire (SCQ) as a tool to assess spiritual coping strategies. Initially, the questionnaire consisted of 120 items categorized into positive and negative spiritual coping scales within four domains: personal, social, environmental, and religious. However, through a rigorous validation process, the SCQ underwent refinement, resulting in its current form with 32 items, offering a more focused and streamlined assessment of spiritual coping strategies. This evolution underscores continuous efforts to enhance the SCQ's psychometric properties and its relevance in measuring spiritual coping across diverse contexts.

The SCQ encompasses four domains: personal, social, environmental, and religious, with items divided into positive and negative spiritual coping scales. Notably, all scales and subscales of the SCQ demonstrate good or satisfactory reliability, measured with the internal consistency coefficient Cronbach's α (alpha), ranging from 0.67 to 0.95. Specifically, the positive spiritual coping scale exhibited a high reliability of $\alpha = 0.92$, while the negative spiritual coping scale showed a commendable α of 0.82.

Additionally, the stability of the SCQ, assessed through the test-retest method over a 6-week interval, proved satisfactory. The correlation coefficient for the positive spiritual coping scale was $r = 0.78$, and for the negative spiritual coping scale, it was $r = 0.72$. These findings affirm the questionnaire's reliability and stability, emphasizing its effectiveness in measuring spiritual coping strategies over time.

Procedure

The study conduction was carried out in the following phases.

Phase - I - Building theoretical framework

During this initial phase, efforts were made to construct the theoretical underpinning of the study. A meticulous examination of the literature was conducted, with a specific focus on research concerning existential crises among young adults and their potential correlation with materialism. Additionally, considerable attention was directed toward identifying studies investigating the relationship between various coping employed during existential crises; specifically spiritual coping.

Following a thorough review, it was observed that there was a lack of conclusive evidence establishing a correlation between the three variables under investigation: existential crises, Materialism, and Spiritual coping mechanisms. Despite extensive exploration, no definitive relationship between these variables was identified in the existing body of literature.

This absence of a clear relationship among the variables highlighted a significant gap in current understanding. Consequently, the primary objective of the study emerged as an endeavor to unravel the intricate relationship between existential crises, materialism among young adults, and the use of spiritual coping during such crises. By addressing this gap, the researchers aimed to contribute to the advancement of theoretical frameworks and practical interventions aimed at better supporting individuals navigating existential challenges during this crucial developmental stage.

Phase - II - Data collection

After conducting a thorough review of the existing literature, the process of identifying standardized tools that align with our study's objectives commenced. These scales were chosen based on their relevance to the domains we aimed to explore, such as existential crises, Materialism, and spiritual coping. To ensure the integrity of our data collection process, essential measures were taken to seek permission from the authors of these scales. This involved contacting them via email to request authorization for their use in our research.

Following the acquisition of permissions, we proceeded to design a Google document that served as our data collection tool. This document was carefully crafted to include fields where participants could provide demographic information, including details about their family background, educational attainment, and age. This demographic data was crucial for gaining insights into the environmental factors that might influence individuals' experiences with existential crises and their coping mechanisms.

To make it convenient for participants to provide their responses, we created a user-friendly Google Form, which we then shared across various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. This enabled us to reach a diverse range of participants and gather a comprehensive dataset.

Phase - III - Data coding & analysis

Upon receiving responses from participants, the data was carefully screened for each submission to ensure it met our predetermined inclusion criteria. Entries that didn't meet these criteria were excluded from further analysis to uphold the integrity of our dataset.

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Once the dataset was refined, the data was assigned numerical values based on the scoring system of the relevant scale used. The coding process enabled us to organize the data systematically and prepare it for statistical analysis. Subsequently, we conducted statistical analyses using JASP. JASP is a statistical software program that provides a user-friendly interface for conducting various types of statistical analyses. It is designed to be accessible to researchers and students, offering a range of features to perform both basic and advanced statistical procedures. JASP supports frequentist and Bayesian analyses, making it a versatile tool for data analysis and interpretation in research settings.

Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess the normal distribution of the data, ensuring the validity of our statistical analyses. Additionally, the Pearson r correlation test was employed to explore the relationships between variables such as existential crises, materialism, and spiritual coping among young adults.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics:

Table 1 Descriptive statistics table

	Materialism	Existential crisis	Positive spiritual coping	Negative spiritual coping
Valid	309	309	309	309
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	67.534	67.152	71.447	32.803
Std. Error of Mean	0.488	1.035	0.971	0.575
95% CI Mean Upper	68.495	69.188	73.357	33.935
95% CI Mean Lower	66.573	65.116	69.536	31.670
Std. Deviation	8.583	18.187	17.071	10.116
95% CI Std. Dev. Upper	9.553	19.446	18.336	10.644
95% CI Std. Dev. Lower	7.715	16.871	15.784	9.475
95% CI Variance Upper	91.255	381.144	336.218	113.292
95% CI Variance Lower	59.519	284.622	249.145	89.768
Shapiro-Wilk	0.971	0.980	0.982	0.973
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001

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The descriptive statistics reveal key insights into the four variables under scrutiny: Positive Spirituality, Materialism, Existential Crisis, and Negative Spirituality. On average, participants scored 71.447 in Positive Spirituality, indicating a moderate level of engagement in spiritual practices. Materialism scores averaged 67.534, suggesting a notable inclination towards materialistic values among the respondents. Meanwhile, the mean score for Existential Crisis stood at 67.152, indicating a moderate level of existential concern within the sample. Conversely, participants scored an average of 32.803 in Negative Spirituality, reflecting a relatively lower engagement in negative spiritual behaviors. The standard deviations across all variables varied, signifying the degree of dispersion of scores around the mean. Importantly, the Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated non-normal distributions for all variables, suggesting potential skewness or outliers within the data. Overall, these statistics offer a comprehensive understanding of the participants' spiritual coping mechanisms, materialistic tendencies, and existential concerns, laying the groundwork for further analysis and interpretation.

Spearman's Correlations

Table 2 Correlation table between the variables

Variable		Materialism	Existential crisis	Negative spirituality	Positive spirituality
Materialism	Spearman's rho	-			
	p-value	-			
Existential crisis	Spearman's rho	0.247	-		
	p-value	< .001	-		
Negative spirituality	Spearman's rho	0.199	0.340	-	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	-	
Positive spirituality	Spearman's rho	-0.084	0.057	0.496	-
	p-value	0.139	0.316	< .001	-

Table 2 presents Spearman's rank correlation coefficients (Spearman's rho) for pairs of variables, namely Materialism, Existential Crisis, Negative Spirituality, and Positive Spirituality. These coefficients elucidate the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between the variables, while the accompanying p-values indicate the statistical significance of these correlations, with a threshold of 0.05 typically considered significant. Materialism demonstrates a weak positive correlation with Existential Crisis, as evidenced by a Spearman's rho of 0.247, with a p-value of less than 0.001, denoting statistical significance. Similarly, Materialism displays a weak positive correlation with Negative Spirituality, supported by a Spearman's rho of 0.199 and a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.001. Conversely, the correlation between Materialism and Positive Spirituality

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appears to be very weak, if any, with a Spearman's rho of -0.084, and a p-value of 0.139, indicating a lack of statistical significance. Moving on to the relationship between Existential Crisis and Negative Spirituality, a moderate positive correlation is observed, reflected in a Spearman's rho of 0.340, alongside a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.001. Meanwhile, the correlation between Existential Crisis and Positive Spirituality is found to be very weak, with a Spearman's rho of 0.057, and a non-significant p-value of 0.316. In summary, the study uncovers statistically significant weakly positive associations between Materialism and both Negative Spirituality and Existential Crisis. Additionally, there exists a somewhat positive statistically significant association between Negative Spirituality and Existential Crisis, as well as between Negative and Positive Spirituality. Conversely, no statistically significant relationship is identified between Materialism and Positive Spirituality or between Existential Crisis and Positive Spirituality.

DISCUSSION

In examining the intricate connections among materialism, positive and negative spiritual coping mechanisms, and existential crises among young adults, we initially hypothesized that there would be a significant positive correlation between materialism and existential crisis. This hypothesis was partially supported by the data, revealing a weak positive correlation between these variables ($\rho = 0.247$, $p < 0.001$). This finding aligns with previous research by Kashdan and Breen (2007) and Tang et al. (2019), who observed that individuals with high materialistic values tend to experience a diminished sense of meaning in life, contributing to existential crisis.

Another hypothesis anticipated a significant negative correlation between positive spiritual coping and existential crisis. However, contrary to our expectations, the data showed a very weak positive correlation between these variables ($\rho = 0.057$, $p = 0.316$). Thus, this hypothesis was not supported. This contradicts the anticipated negative correlation between positive spiritual coping and existential crisis, as proposed by Miller and Thoresen (2003) and Hill et al. (2000).

Furthermore, we hypothesized that there would be no significant correlation between negative spiritual coping and existential crisis among young adults. However, the data revealed a moderate positive correlation between these variables ($\rho = 0.340$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of this hypothesis. This finding supports the argument put forth by Magezi & Manda (2016) and Breitbart et al. (2004) that the use of spiritual resources to cope with trauma can contribute to existential crisis, particularly when individuals struggle with negative spiritual coping mechanisms.

Another hypothesis proposed was a significant negative correlation between positive spiritual coping and materialism among young adults. However, no statistically significant correlation was found between these variables ($\rho = -0.084$, $p = 0.139$), resulting in the rejection of this hypothesis. This contradicts the anticipated negative correlation between positive spiritual coping and materialism, as suggested by Watson et al. (2004).

Lastly, the study hypothesized that there would be no significant correlation between negative spiritual coping and materialism among young adults. Nonetheless, the data revealed a weak positive correlation between these variables ($\rho = 0.199$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of this hypothesis. This finding contradicts the expectation that intrinsically religious individuals, who may engage in negative spiritual coping, are less

likely to view money as a means of attaining power and prestige, as proposed by Watson et al. (2004).

CONCLUSION

In summary, our study suggests that as materialistic values become more prominent in an individual's life, there is a tendency for an increase in existential crisis and negative spirituality. Conversely, there seems to be little to no effect of positive spirituality on materialism. Furthermore, negative spirituality appears to moderately contribute to an individual's existential crisis, while positive spirituality does not seem to have a significant impact on the level of existential crisis experienced. These findings underscore the intricate interplay between materialism, existential concerns, and spiritual orientations in shaping individuals' psychological experiences.

Implications

The study's findings suggest several promising directions for future research to advance our comprehension of materialism, existential crises, and spiritual coping strategies across various demographic groups and life stages.

Broadening the age demographic beyond young adults (18 to 25 years old) could provide a more comprehensive perspective on how materialism, existential crises, and spiritual coping strategies manifest across various life stages. Investigating these phenomena among older or middle-aged individuals may reveal unique trends, challenges, and coping mechanisms that differ from those observed in younger populations. Understanding age-related variations can contribute to developing age-specific intervention strategies and support systems.

Future investigations should consider integrating a broader array of variables to deepen our understanding of factors influencing existential crises. Variables such as personality traits, social connections, cultural contexts, and life experiences play crucial roles in shaping individuals' responses to existential questions and crises. Exploring these dimensions along with materialism and spiritual coping can provide a more nuanced understanding of their interrelationships and impacts on psychological well-being.

Embracing interdisciplinary methodologies drawn from psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and other relevant disciplines can enrich research on existential crises. By employing diverse assessment tools and methodologies, researchers can uncover additional insights and complexities associated with these existential phenomena.

Advancing our understanding of existential crises through interdisciplinary research can inform the development of more tailored intervention strategies and support mechanisms. By identifying key predictors and moderators of existential distress across different demographic backgrounds and life phases, researchers can design interventions that address specific needs and challenges faced by diverse populations. Tailored approaches are essential for promoting psychological resilience and well-being in the face of existential uncertainties.

Expanding the scope of research beyond university settings and embracing community-based studies can enhance the external validity and generalizability of findings. Engaging diverse participant groups from various socio-economic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds can provide a more holistic understanding of how existential concerns unfold in real-world contexts.

Limitation

The research was conducted exclusively among university students, which restricts the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other populations. University students often represent a specific demographic characterized by higher education, potentially different socio-economic backgrounds, and age groups, which may not be reflective of the broader population.

The unequal ratio of male to female participants in the study introduces potential biases in the interpretation of results. Gender differences can significantly influence responses to variables such as materialism, existential crises, and spiritual coping strategies. The overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a specific gender may skew the findings and limit the applicability of the results across diverse populations.

Data collection relied on a non-probability sampling method, such as convenience sampling. This method raises concerns about the representativeness of the sample. Non-probability sampling techniques do not ensure that every member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, leading to potential selection bias. As a result, the findings may not accurately reflect the broader population from which the sample was drawn.

The absence of a normal probability curve in the distribution of data suggests that the data may not follow the expected pattern of distribution. This deviation can impact the reliability and validity of statistical analyses conducted on the data. Skewed or non-normal distributions can affect the accuracy of inferential statistics and may require alternative analytical approaches.

These limitations underscore the importance of exercising caution when extrapolating the study's findings beyond the scope of the specific sample and context. Additionally, they highlight opportunities for future research to address these shortcomings by adopting more diverse and representative sampling methods, including broader participant demographics beyond university students. By addressing these limitations, researchers can enhance the validity, generalizability, and robustness of their findings, thereby contributing more effectively to the understanding of the studied phenomena.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Bhatt, H. & Jain, H. (2024). Spiritual Coping, Materialism, and Existential Crisis in Young Adults: Unveiling the Connection. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(4), 410-428. DIP:18.01.039.20241204, DOI:10.25215/1204.039