

The Role of Spiritual Coping in Processing Grief among Younger Adults

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual coping plays an important function in influencing reactions of grief, specifically during youth, a stage of construction marked by individuality development, reorganizing of relations and strengthening of career. This review integrates present studies on the role of spiritual coping in processing grief among younger adults, showcasing its multifaceted view and mental impacts. Research envisions spiritual coping as including both positive coping, such as making sense of loss, finding solace in spiritualism, sustaining symbolic connection with the person who passed away, and negative coping, such as spiritual challenges, rage towards the divine and understanding of loss as suffering or leaving. Data indicates that participation in spiritual exercises may increase during periods of intense grief as younger adults try to restore their shaken outlook on life. Whilst, positive spiritual coping has been linked with adaptability, adversarial growth and accommodation, challenges with spirituality have been associated with increased mental stress and indications of depression. Constructive factors, capacity to emotionally regulate oneself and cultural background seem to influence the ways in which spiritual coping connects with grief during this period of life. However, there are important gaps in the literature, including restricted studies emphasizing particularly on the emerging adults, overdependence on prevalence studies, inadequate difference between positive and negative spiritual coping strategies and absence of multicultural cohort studies. Bridging these gaps is important for progression of conceptual precision and improvement. From a clinical perspective, the results highlight the necessity of evaluating spiritual coping in a subtle and culturally respectful way to promote flexible making sense of loss while also recognizing and dealing with stress about spirituality. In general, this review showcases the intricacy of spiritual coping in grieving in younger adults and emphasizes on the necessity for future research that is development-suitable and strict in its approach.

Keywords: *Spiritual Coping, Grief, Mourning, Youth, Making Sense of Loss, Bereavement*

Grief is a multidimensional emotional reaction when one loses a loved or a close one, which affects multiple domains, like emotions, thought process, behavior, interpersonal relationships and existence. Even though grief is experienced by everyone, its severity, manifestation and course show up in different ways in people and in their formative years. Emerging adulthood, approximately from the age of 18-40 years

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signifies a crucial formative period in life indicated by development of identity, empowerment, building of career and interpersonal connections. During this period, young adults are diligently building their identity, future and ideology. Losing someone significant to death during this life-changing period can be unsettling, as it may shake beliefs about balance, control and purpose of life. Thus, loss during this period may not only create anguish but also trigger doubts about one's existence and identity.

In recent years, spirituality has garnered a lot of focus in research in the field of psychology as an important factor impacting coping and adaptability in distressing times. Spirituality in wide terms refers to the seek for significance, aim and bond to the holy or supreme, which religion may or may not communicate. To be more precise, spiritual coping means using spiritual thoughts, strategies or concepts to interpret and control uncertainty or distress. Frameworks of theory, especially those given by Pargament, envision spiritual coping as a multifaceted measure that involves the use of both, positive and negative coping. Positive coping means looking for spiritual assistance, involving oneself in devotion and introspection, making sense of loss and sustaining a symbolic connection with the one who has passed away. On the other hand, negative spiritual coping, also known as spiritual challenges, may involve feeling left out by the divine, rage towards the higher power, remorse or seeing loss as suffering.

Current studies indicate that spirituality can operate dual roles, as a means as well as a threat in mourning. While spiritual interpretation has been linked with grit, affect management and adversarial adaptability, at the same time unsettled challenges in spirituality have been associated with indications that resemble depression, complex grief and emotional distress. These varied results showcase the necessity of differentiating between healthy and unhealthy spiritual coping instead of just viewing spirituality as a shield. Moreover, the inclusion of spirituality into the processes of managing may be different in different formative periods. The young population, whose ideologies and individualities are still forming, may start to question the existence of spirituality or unsteadiness when faced with loss, while others may strengthen their belief in distressing times.

Even though there is increasing literature on spirituality and grief, less focus has been given especially to the younger population as a separate formative group. The current studies main focus was either on older adults or on overall adults with not much differences in age. Given the features of emerging adulthood, such as uncommon issues information and significant life changes, it is imperative to assess how spiritual coping operates in this background. A distinct interpretation of this association has significant consequences in terms of clinical application, therapeutic mediations and respectful of culture grief assistance programs.

Thus, the present review's purpose is to combine and carefully evaluate the current studies on the function of spirituality as a coping mechanism in grieving among youth, with specific focus on its multifaceted type, formative factors and consequences for emotional adaptability.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Grief in Emerging Adults

Grief is a worldwide experience, endured by every individual, yet its expressions differ significantly during the period of development, with the emerging adults demonstrating a particularly significant yet underexplored populace. Tarazi (2024) investigated complex grief in emerging adults aged 18-24 who are different in their ethnicity. Using varied

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approaches with theme-based interview findings, the results implied that intensity of signs before the loss occurred, stigma, nature and type of bonding with the person who has passed away, and ignorance related to grief were all associated with complex grief. Furthermore, the interviews showed three more aspects: repercussions of the death, methods of grieving that are culture and religion sensitive and techniques to cope varying between ignorance to facing the grief directly. Johnsen and Tømmeraas (2022) evaluated grief in friends who were mourning the passing away of their friends due to the fire in Norway in 2011. The authors investigated how emotional bonding moulded grief. The results revealed that friends held an important place and their passing away impacted the subjects' overall well-being, connections and formation of their individuality. A lot of them stated severe yearning, agony and experiencing being neglected in relation to members of the family, underscoring that friends who are mourning can feel complex grief responses and need acknowledgement and assistance as a different category. Pop-Jordanova (2021) evaluated grief in various circumstances, utilising more than 50 issued research. The results showed that females particularly, before suffering from persistent sadness, having a fragile affection and no assistance socially elevate their susceptibility to persistent grieving, with frequency varying between 10-15% in common people who are mourning to 40-50% in incidents of calamity, with the conclusion that effective and on time clinical mediations are important to deal with persistent or complex grief. Tan and Andriessen (2021) performed a qualitative analysis investigating how students who are in university and mourning go through grief and individual progress. The authors recognized four aspects: sympathizing with friends over therapy to cope, maneuvering grief while moving on in life, individual progress like elevated wisdom and gratitude for bonds, taking on principles of the one who has passed away and sustaining connection through traditions and memoirs. The results showed that on one hand, grief impacts functioning in terms of general and academics in a negative way, on the other hand, it facilitates progress, showing the significance of social connections and customised assistance for students who are grieving. Thai and Moore (2018) gave a traditional review of literature on grief and mourning in college going younger adults, a group often neglected in studies on grief despite the population being at a developing period of psychological, social and intellectual formation. The results underscored that grief in emerging adults can shake the development of individuality, conduct in studies and interpersonal connections with complex grief being more expected when the deaths are sudden, traumatic or not acknowledged socially. Lovgren et al. (2018) performed a global study evaluating unsettled grief in 174 brothers and sisters whose siblings aged 12-25 passed away due to paediatric cancer. The primary results revealed that views of passing away in a tragic way, limited or delayed conversation about the ailment, death being at the door, non-availability of clinicians and miscommunication with family and friends elevated the susceptibility to mostly unsettled grief. Indications of persistent sadness and less time since the death also played a role, with these reasons in totality describing more than half of the difference in the result of grief, showing the significance of knowledge shared on time, transparent conversation with the family and assistance in care. Bruinsma et al. (2015) performed an integrated comparative study as part of the Rotterdam study to evaluate the reasons for susceptibility for complex grief and individuals grieving the passing away of their life partner. The primary result was that persistent sadness existed before expected complex grief, with spouses with persistent sadness being at more than three times risk. Signs of ailment, palliative concern and type of passing away were not linked, implying that individual susceptibility, specifically persistent sadness, is the main indicator of complex grief.

Role of Spiritual Coping in Emerging Adults

Spirituality operates as a multidimensional resource in various groups of people serving as an important concept through which people find significance, search for solace and maneuver the difficulties of life. Martins et al. (2024) performed a structured literature review on spirituality in terms of bereavement. The overview consisted of people in their younger adulthood (20-40 years) who had lost a loved one recently. The results showed that spirituality is an important aspect while grieving for many individuals, operating as both a means to cope and a challenge. The focus areas consisted of spiritual exercises, a feeling of association with the one who has passed away and a change in their faith about spirituality after their loss, with many people expressing that spirituality has assisted them in developing significance, accepting their loss and feeling progress spiritually and personally. The review gave the conclusion that spirituality should be acknowledged as a transformational process, which evolves through mourning rather than an ingrained attribute, focusing on the requirement for practitioners to make space for discovering clients' divine stories. Eames and O'Connor (2022) explored how spirituality and various types of rumination have to do with progress after a shock and trauma-related disorder due to possible incidents that were traumatic in nature, including death. The results revealed that a greater use of spiritual coping was linked to more progress followed by the shock, aligning with the thought that concepts of spirituality and spiritual exercises assist individuals infer an optimistic shift from shocking experiences, involving death. Various forms of rumination revealed that different connections with specific productive, intentional types of pondering were linked to progress after a shock, while pessimistic, invasive pondering was linked to having trauma-related disorder symptomatology.

Dill (2017) investigated the function of spirituality as a coping mechanism in 20 younger adults of Africa America who were between the age of 12-20 years through interviews that were ethnically suitable. It was qualitative cultural research, evaluating the role of spiritual coping when going through difficulties in social and health aspects. The results showed that the role of spirituality in these younger adults is multifaceted, consisting of devotion as the main form, deep belief in the divine and a social responsibility towards their community. This awareness highlights the significance of the role of spiritual coping in moulding grit and well-being. The study shows how spirituality is not just a means to cope but is ingrained into cultural identification and traditions of community, specifically for minorized young adults, maneuvering issues in terms of social life and health. Wortmann and Park (2009) explores how spirituality modifies the concept of significance while grieving, using the concept of significance-making of grief. The results revealed that the people who were mourning utilized the concepts of spirituality to get a re-understanding of their loss, revise their interpretation of existence and passing away and restore their faith about the world. Some subjects stated that their faith on spirituality strengthened, whereas others felt a dispute in the middle of their earlier assumptions and the truth of passing away, producing a spiritual fog and questioning. In various instances, sustaining bonds with the person who has passed away were looked at from a spiritual lens, like feeling the existence of their loved ones or having faith that they were still looking after the life of the person who is mourning. This study gives assistance for concepts of significance making, revealing how spirituality serves as the primary resource for developing significance after death and can intervene between loss that was shocking and gradual adjustment or progress after trauma.

Spiritual Coping and Grief: A Combined Viewpoint

Studies particularly evaluating the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism in terms of grief show its important yet complicated function in adaptation to mourning in the emerging

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adults. Čepulienė and Skruibis (2022) performed longitudinal research employing 11 women whose life partner had died by suicide in order to investigate the function of spirituality in mourning following suicide. The primary results showed three aspects: spirituality could be an encouraging means; spirituality gave purposeful pathways to manage loss; and spirituality could also make the process of grieving complex. In general, the research determined that spirituality, when important individually and assisted by others, may promote adaptation and progress post loss by suicide but it may also present stress when challenges with spirituality or unaddressed queries about one's existence become involved with grieving. Biancalani (2022) evaluated how spirituality assisted individuals whose loved one passed away in the coronavirus disease. The results revealed that greater dependency on spiritual exercises were linked to less indications of distress due to shock and enhanced adaptation to mourning. Subjects reported faith in spirituality as important to cope with the abruptness and seclusion due to deaths because of the coronavirus disease. Spiritual exercises also assisted in sustaining relationships with their loved one who has passed away, although few subjects stated about their challenges with spirituality which was associated with greater stress. Joseph (2021) evaluated the function of spirituality in mourning during teens. The emphasis was on teenagers who were mourning at that time using an approach of traditional overview of literature combined with the previous studies. The results revealed that spirituality is used to cope with emphasis on making sense of loss individually. Studies on grown-up people showed varied results – few found solace and strength due to spirituality, whereas some felt a feeling of rage and being left out. The findings indicated that spiritual exercises could help sustain a bond with the person who has passed away. Several analyses showed that many researchers found at the very least few optimistic impact of spirituality on mourning, even though discrepancies in the method made summaries challenging, with studies emphasizing mostly on older-age adults who are grieving the death of their life partner or child, leaving the category of teenagers being understudied. Reynolds (2021) explored the role of spirituality to manage emotions in terms of grief counselling in emerging adults between the age of 20-35 years. The research used an experimental approach in a lab setting in which the subjects were asked to remember their grief with an intention to trigger reactions about their loss. The results suggested that people stating more usage of spirituality showed less activation physically and less emotional depth at the time of remembering their grief in comparison with those people who depended less on spirituality. These findings indicate that spirituality may operate as a cushion, promoting affect management at the time of disturbing memories of loss, giving proof which supports the function of spiritual coping in managing grief in emerging adults. Hanna (2021) explored spirituality to cope and progress after trauma in reaction to the 47 younger adults' shocking grief and loss who were between the age of 17-24 years. The results revealed that greater usage of spiritual exercises expected more progress after the trauma, suggesting that means of spirituality assist in optimistic change after experiencing shocking loss in emerging adults. Significantly, using spiritual exercises, particularly in everyday significance, intervened in the association between shocking loss and psychological well-being, such that spirituality based on significance was linked to enhanced results in terms of psychological well-being. This indicates that using spirituality to cope in emerging adulthood does not lessen stress but may assist in understanding grief in forms that fosters grit and progress. Lovgren et al. (2019) performed global research evaluating how teenagers and emerging adults handle the death of their brother or sister to paediatric cancer. The results recognized four ways of managing loss: showing pain through remembrance, diverting attention, being involved in spiritual practices and waiting it out and letting time do its work. The primary result was that only spirituality as a coping mechanism was linked to the siblings stating that they had processed their loss, showing the possible function of spiritual

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coping in lasting adaptation to grief. Harper et al. (2019) evaluated the association between spirituality to cope and progress after shock in younger adults whose siblings passed away. The results implied that more involvement in using spirituality as a means to cope in a positive way, like searching for assistance spiritually and finding purpose through belief, was linked to greater progress following trauma. On the other hand, using spirituality as a means to cope in a negative way, like challenges with spirituality and feeling being left out by the divine was associated with more agony and less progress, indicating that spirituality may operate as a significant means in promoting flexible making sense of loss after facing the death of their sibling during their youth. Hai et al. (2018) performed the first organized overview assessing the association between spirituality and mourning in college going students. The results implied that spirituality was linked to supportive results in terms of adaptation while mourning, consisting of individual progress, spiritual welfare and emotional welfare. However, data in terms of negative results were varied, like stress, indicating that spirituality can operate both as an encouraging means and as a complexity in loss. Walsh et al. (2002) performed longitudinal research to evaluate the function of faith in spirituality at the time of mourning. The research investigated the severity of grief at 1, 9 and 14 months after the death of their loved one. The results revealed that subjects who had deep faith in spirituality settled their grief consistently and gradually, whereas subjects with no faith in spirituality had persistent challenges in processing their loss even after 14 months of death. People with less faith showed lingering adaptation at the start but gradually came in par with those who had more powerful faith, with power of faith in spirituality being an important indicator of closure and acceptance in bereavement.

All these research in amalgamation give coinciding proof that spiritual coping plays a multidimensional function in managing loss in the emerging adults, operating as a means of emotional regulation and making sense of loss, provider of solace and sustaining connections and a stimulus for progress after trauma. However, the association is complicated and two ways with spiritual coping sometimes acting as a shield which promotes adaptation and other times involving challenge that makes grief more complex, specifically when assumptions are questioned, assistance is inadequate or death involves stigmatisation. The success of spirituality as a coping mechanism depends on whether participation involves optimistic forms (searching for solace, shared spiritual coping, reconstruction of the idea of spirituality) in contrast to pessimistic forms (challenges with spirituality, sense of being left out, understanding death as divine retribution) highlighting the importance of subtle evaluation and mediation that acknowledges spirituality's double capacity as both a means and susceptibility in emerging adults who are grieving.

CONCLUSION

Grief is a complicated reaction to loss that impacts the affect, thinking, interpersonal relationships and existence of self. While mourning is an experience felt by every person, the way a person grieves is subjective in different periods of life. Emerging adulthood, marked by development of one's individuality, solidification of career, changing interpersonal connections, illustrates a specific period of vulnerability. Undergoing loss during this period may increase emotional agony. In the last few years, spirituality has surfaced as a significant factor in interpreting how people manage their grief. Spiritual coping means using spiritual faith, strategies or sense-making to deal with distress. It is acknowledged as a multifaceted measure, involving both positive coping and negative coping. Studies imply that spirituality can both assist in accommodation and searching meaning and purpose and add to suffering, which depends on its experience and integration. However, when evaluating the circulation of this study in different age cohorts, very less

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focus has been provided to the youth especially. Interpreting how spiritual coping plays a role in this age group is important for both theoretical progress and therapeutic use.

The current review combined the previous proof on the function of spirituality as a coping mechanism in management of grief emerging adults aged 21 to 40 years, a populace that has been given restricted focus in studies on mourning, despite being at an important point of construction. This review aimed to recognise mannerisms, discrepancies, and voids in the present knowledge concerning how assumptions and traditions of spirituality, shape adaptation to grief during youth. Specific focus was provided in interpreting if spirituality as a coping mechanism acts as a shield in a standardised way or shows complicated, situation-based impacts that may either promote or make the management of grief more complex. In addition, the review investigates differences in cultures in the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism, variations in construction within the scope of emerging adulthood and the distinguishment between coping spiritually in an optimistic way and coping spiritually in a pessimistic way with the final purpose of acquainting mediations that are culture and development suitable for the emerging adults who are mourning, underscoring the important guidelines for upcoming studies in this underexplored but an important aspect for clinical application.

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Conflict of Interest

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