Spirituality as a Coping Strategy among Practitioners

and Non Practitioners

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ABSTRACT

Taking the path less travelled by exploring your spirituality can lead to a clearer life purpose, better personal relationships and enhanced stress management skills. This study explores the role played by spirituality in coping and presents the relationships between spiritual dimensions and coping styles. Spirituality has been considered as an important buffer against stressful events which may help people to overcome their distress and difficulties. Some stress relief tools are very tangible: exercising more, eating healthy foods and talking with friends. A less tangible — but no less useful — way to find stress relief is through spirituality. Spirituality has many definitions, but at its core spirituality helps to give our lives context. It's not necessarily connected to a specific belief system or even religious worship. Instead, it arises from your connection with yourself and with others, the development of your personal value system, and your search for meaning in life. For many, spirituality takes the form of religious observance, prayer, meditation or a belief in a higher power. For others, it can be found in nature, music, art or a secular community. Spirituality is different for everyone. ***Methods:*** One hundred individuals completed questionnaires which included the *Expressions of Spirituality Inventory Douglas A. MacDonald 1997* and the *Coping Strategies Assessment by DJ, 2008*. The results suggest that five spiritual dimensions, i.e., Experiential/ Phenomenological Dimensions (EPD), Cognitive Orientation towards Spirituality (COS), Existential Well- Being (EWB), Paranormal Beliefs (PAR), and Religiousness (REL) play an important role in coping processes. The dimensions have a different impact on particular styles depending on their internal structure. Overall spirituality was associated with Task-oriented and Social Diversion coping. It means that people characterized by a high level of spirituality will try to solve problems through efforts aimed at solving the problem and seeking out social support. There was no statistically significant relationship between Religious attitudes and coping styles. Ethical sensitivity was positively connected with using Task-oriented, Avoidance-oriented, and Social Diversion coping. Harmony was associated positively with Task-oriented, but negatively with Avoidance-oriented, coping. The relationships between spirituality dimensions and coping styles confirmed the assumption that people's reactions to stress relate to the configuration of their spiritual qualities. ***Results and Implications:*** The study reported that there is significant relationship between spirituality and coping. Individuals high on spirituality have positive coping strategies whereas individuals low on spirituality has negative coping strategies. Also it adds to the already existing data pool with equivocal studies.

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*"A set of strategies used by **individuals** to attain meaning, hope, comfort and inner peace"* ~
Steven D. Ehrlich, NMD

Spirituality is a process of personal transformation, either in accordance with traditional religious ideals, or, increasingly, oriented on subjective experience and psychological growth independently of any specific religious context. In a more general sense, it may refer to almost any kind of meaningful activity or blissful experience. There is no single, widely-agreed definition for the concept.

Spirituality can also motivate a person toward the use of effective coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed to manage external or internal demands that exceed the resources of the person. They proposed two types of coping strategies, emotion-focused coping strategies aimed at alleviating negative emotions, and problem-focused coping strategies that include efforts to deal with stressful situations directly. There have been a range of suggestions for how spirituality affects coping strategies. For instance, Barbarin (1993) suggested that, in stressful situations, spirituality enhances resilience and optimism. Similarly, Hefti (2011) was of the view that spirituality increases personal empowerment in the face of stressors with the sense of being secured by God. It was also postulated that spirituality increases reliance on problem-solving strategies (Pargament et al., 1992), a sanguine choice, compared to surrendering to the stressors (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

REVIEW

- *Cashwell and Young 2011,* The authors make a clear distinction between spiritual–religious counseling and integrating spirituality–religion into the practice of counseling. The aim of the study was to inform practitioners of the value of integrating spirituality and religion into the practice of counseling.
- *Briggs and Rayle 2005,* The demonstrated need to address spirituality in counselor education and clinical settings has recently become evident. Issues such as spiritual and religious diversity, the desire of many clients to address spiritual concerns in counseling, and recently developed guidelines for implementing spirituality in counseling create a unique call.
- *Hook 2013,* The research shows that religious counseling approaches consistently outperformed control conditions. On a basic level, religious counseling approaches seem to work. When comparing religious counseling approaches to similar secular counseling approaches, there were no differences on psychological outcomes such as depression or anxiety.

- *Koenig 2009,* Religious and spiritual factors are increasingly being examined in psychiatric research. Religious beliefs and practices have long been linked to hysteria, neurosis, and psychotic delusions. However, recent studies have identified another side of religion that may serve as a psychological and social resource for coping with stress. After defining the terms religion and spirituality, this paper reviews research on the relation between religion and (or) spirituality, and mental health, focusing on depression, suicide, anxiety, psychosis, and substance abuse.

METHODS:

Aim:
- To study spirituality as a coping strategy among practitioners and non practitioners.

Objectives:
- To study spiritualism as a coping strategy among individuals with high spiritual level.
- To study spiritualism as a coping strategy among individuals with low spiritual level.
- To study spiritualism as a coping strategy among both females and males at an individual level.

Hypothesis
- There would be statistically significant positive effect of coping strategies among practitioners and non practitioners.
- There would be statistically significant negative effect of coping strategies among practitioners and non practitioners.
- There would be statistically correlation in levels of spirituality between the male and the female.

Sample and Participants

Sample :	Age:	Location:	Occupation:
100 -50 males -50 females	35-50	Online	Any

Research Design
- The research design of the particular study will be ex post facto research design.
- Ex-post-facto is a type of research design where in studies has already been done in the selected field and hence the aim stands out to work on new findings.
- Studies have been done on spiritualism so far, hence this study aims to understand spiritualism as a coping strategy.

Tools

Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (1997)

ESI was developed by Douglas A MacDonald in 1997, it is a 100 item paper and pencil self report instrument that utilises a five point response scale which is designed to measure a five dimensional descriptive model of the expressions of spirituality. The five dimensions are Experiential/ Phenomenological Dimensions (EPD), Cognitive Orientation towards Spirituality (COS), Existential Well- Being (EWB), Paranormal Beliefs (PAR), and Religiousness (REL). These dimensions can be seen as encompassing five broad and somewhat intercorrelated content areas which reflects the expressive modalities of spirituality. In its totality ESI takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Coping Strategies Assessment (2009)

Coping Strategies Assessment was developed by Anspaugh DJ, et al. in 2009 to assess a broad range of coping responses, several of which had an explicit basis in theory. The inventory includes some responses that are expected to be dysfunctional, as well as some that are expected to be functional. The assessment includes 44 items including positive coping and negative coping.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study conducted reveals that practitioners show higher level of positive coping strategies as compared to non practitioners. When there is higher level of positive coping strategy there is higher level of spirituality among individuals and when there is higher level of negative coping strategy there is lower level of spirituality among individuals.

CONCLUSION

The relationships between spirituality dimensions and coping styles confirmed the assumption that people's reactions to stress relate to the configuration of their spiritual qualities.

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