



The Relationship between Spiritual Well-Being and Death Anxiety among Muslims

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ABSTRACT

The present research determined the relationship between Spiritual well-being and death anxiety among adults who were Muslims. The participants are selected through convenience sampling with a total of 200 Muslims, aged 18-38 years. The data were collected through standardized questionnaires including the demographic information, Spiritual Well-being scale and the Death anxiety scale. Statistical analyses, including correlation, frequency distribution, regression, and descriptive analysis, were conducted using IBM SPSS 21. The finding indicated a significant relationship between spiritual well-being and death anxiety ($r = -0.230$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals with higher spiritual well-being experience lower death anxiety. Regression analysis further confirm that spirituality is a strong predictor of reduced death anxiety, with factors such as age, marital status also contributing to variation in anxiety levels. These results highlight the protective role of Spirituality in managing existential distress and death anxiety. Spiritual well-being should be integrated into clinical and Psychological interventions to support mental health among Muslim adults.



Introduction

Spiritual well-being is a vital aspect of human life, providing individuals with inner strength, stability, a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and faith in themselves (Rovers & Kocum, 2010). Existential and religious dimension are the two most important aspect which are needed to create the sense of purpose in life and it also play important role by creating a connection with God and in result responsible for creating life satisfaction and holistic well-being for individuals. (Rovers

& Kocum, 2010). Spirituality is closely tied to both health and society, and it is deeply intertwined with an individual's religious beliefs and practices.

Spirituality is commonly understood as acceptance of the supreme power as well as an awareness of life's deeper meaning and purpose. It includes relationships with others, oneself, and the larger world. In research, spirituality is often evaluated through religious practices or by examining positive psychological, social, or character traits. It is increasingly acknowledged as a significant factor influencing an individual's overall health. Spirituality appears in various forms across different cultures and societies, with individuals finding meaning through religious engagement, belief in God, family connections, naturalism, rationalism, humanism, and the arts. These diverse expressions of spirituality influence how individuals and healthcare professionals view health, illness, and their interactions with others (AAMC, 1999)

At its core, spirituality involves a person's degree of religious identification and faith in a power beyond oneself. It is through acts of worship and service that individuals seek to fulfill life's demands (Ansari et al., 2008). Previous research has explored the impact of religion and spirituality on psychological adaptation and general health, highlighting their relevance to an individual's overall well-being. Spirituality is often viewed as a vital part of maintaining a balanced relationship with oneself and the world (Kaiser, 2002). Many who acknowledge a link between physical health and spiritual growth recognize the presence of "the divine within"—the belief that an element of the supreme being resides in every human (Dossey, 1993).

It is suggested that spirituality motivates individuals to search for meaning and purpose in life. It integrates the total personality, providing a sense of direction, energy, and order. Furthermore, spirituality is not isolated from the mind and body, as it is influenced by physical states, emotions, thoughts, and relationships (Culliford, 2002). This relationship between spiritual well-being and health is vital when addressing concerns such as health anxiety, as spirituality may offer a source of support and coping mechanisms for managing stress and anxiety related to health concerns.

There is another researcher Anandarahah and Hight (2001) held the view that Spirituality is a complicated and multidimensional parts of the human experiences. According to them, it has three different aspects i.e. Cognitive, experimental, and behavioral aspects. The cognitive aspects is for searching the purpose and the motive of life and the religious and societal belief in which an individual live. The experimental aspect involves feelings of hope, self-satisfaction, feeling of belongingness and support. These qualities are express in individual inner resources for instance by having these qualities an individual can have the ability to share and make relationship with self and with his environment in much better way.

Spirituality helps individual to seek purpose and express the meanings of life and as well as how will they connect him with nature environment and with their society (puchalski et al., 2009). Spiritual intelligence is a basic element of the Islamic Spirituality which guides an individual to the sense of higher purpose, and show virtues like self-control and forgiveness. It provides a right path to judge their meaning of life and react adversity in a constructive way (Kadkhoda & Jahani, 2012).

The Spirituality in Islam is deeply rotted in religious deed and faith which provide a path to achieve a meaningful life. In Islam, the believers happy to have a deep relationship with god, following the morals and performing charity and kindness with others. This helps us to understand that Spiritual Well-being is more important than materialistic possessions (Amiruddin, Qorib, & Zailani, 2021). Religiosity and spirituality are interconnected through a

shared focus on the sacred, which is often considered the most important aspect for individuals who are religious or spiritual (Hill & Pargament, 2003).

Death anxiety, or the fear of death, encompasses a range of emotions, including the fear of physical and mental decline, feelings of isolation, intense separation anxiety, sadness about the inevitable loss of self, and feelings of anger and despair regarding a situation over which individuals has no control (Firestone et al., 2016). It is a deep fear linked to the apprehension about death and the uncertainty of what happens after death (Rice et al., 2009). This condition is also known as thanatophobia, the fear of death, and can be distinguished from necrophobia, which is the fear of dead individuals or death itself (Peter et al., 2013).

Reality of death has to face by every human but few human are most anxious about the death. Death Anxiety is a negative feeling of person experiences about death and dying. Strength of an individual belief and Spiritual Well-being has a major role on an individual level of Death Anxiety (Leming, 1980). Death Anxiety is a fear and apprehension of person own death. It a state of neurotic fear having loss of intense state of parallel fearing feeling of helplessness and depression. Awareness of person' own death produce anxiety and can only be dealt by analyzing one's individuality. Death is a personal, biological and socio cultural phenomenon. Biological death can be use to differentiate between process of aging and death. Apart from age person's reaction to imminent death has five phases like Depression, bargaining, anger and acceptance. Different factors are responsible for a person's Death Anxiety state such as age (Suhail et al.,2002). Negative attitude (depaola et al., 2003) living circumstances (Madnawant et al., 2007 low self-esteem with low mental well-being.

Death Anxiety is a major topic in mental health because death is considered as an abnormal and anxiety provoking element. Death Anxiety is a primary source of anxiety which lead to be positive anxiety under existential approach (Yalom, 1999). Death anxiety is a form of anxiety triggered by thoughts of death. It involves feelings of fearful anticipation, distress, or concern when contemplating one's mortality or the prospect of dying. Often referred to as thanatophobia, it differs from necrophobia, which is a specific fear of dead or dying individuals (Peter et al., 2013). Robert Langs, in his work, developed a revised approach to psychoanalytic psychotherapy, known as the "adaptive paradigm," which presents a unique model of the unconscious mind, distinguishing it from other forms of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic therapy (Langs, 2004).

Death Anxiety effect different individual differently even its present in everyone life.its define the people attitude toward the life ending event which are happening in daily life. The Death Anxiety fear is not culturally inherited or taught or not present in some one genes but its present in in our daily life. (Jong et al., 2019). It has an effect on our behavior and also on our life and death decisions Dadfar, M., & Lester, D. (2017).

Religious orientation has a significant impact on death anxiety. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated by their religious beliefs tend to experience less fear of death compared to those with extrinsic religious motivation, which plays a crucial role in mental health. Spiritual well-being offers individuals a sense of purpose, hope, and existential comfort, helping them manage the fear of death. People with strong spiritual support are more likely to view death not as an end, but as a transition, which can reduce their anxiety about dying (Mansurnejad & Kajbaf, 2012).

Research indicates that engaging in spiritual activities, such as prayer, meditation, or religious rituals, enhances emotional stability, helping individuals better manage existential issues. Roshani et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between spiritual well-being and death anxiety in the

elderly, finding that those with higher spiritual well-being experienced significantly lower death anxiety. The study suggested that spiritual beliefs foster a more positive outlook on both life and death, thereby reducing anxiety. Similarly, Rahmani et al. (2021) found a significant negative correlation between spiritual well-being and death anxiety in cancer patients, with those having higher spiritual well-being experiencing less distress and anxiety.

These findings highlight the importance of spirituality in everyday life. For example, Heidari et al. (2022) conducted a study on Muslim patients with chronic illnesses and found that Islamic spirituality played a significant role in managing death anxiety. Faith in the afterlife, belief in God's mercy, and religious practices like prayer and Quran recitation provided comfort to those facing end-of-life challenges. Additionally, Arslan et al. (2020) conducted a study among young adults, revealing that spiritual well-being acted as a protective factor against death anxiety. The research showed that adolescents practicing religion or spirituality exhibited greater psychological resilience and were more accepting of death.

Literature review

The association between Spiritual Well-being and Death Anxiety has been extensively researched in different cultural and religious populations. In Muslims, Spirituality and religion are key in influencing death attitudes, determining that how peoples deal with existential issues. Death as a transition and not an end is a major Islamic theme, and a Muslims belief in afterlife has been found to decrease fear and anxiety related to morality. This literature review investigate previous studies looking into the interrelation between religious well-being and Death Anxiety among Muslims, highlighting key finding and theoretical perspective.

Spiritual Well-being is the inner peace, satisfaction and connection to higher power. In Islamic context it is deeply rooted in faith (iman), worship (Ibadah) and trust in divine decree (tawakal). Most of the studies suggested that the strong foundation of Spirituality reduce anxiety related to death and stress enhance the psychological resilience. Islamic teaching show the reality of this worldly life which encourage believers to prepare for after life which encourage toward acceptance rather that the fear of death.

According to a research conducted by (Heidari et al., 2022) Spiritual Well-being in Muslims is closely linked with the religious practices like the daily prayers, Quran recitation, and acts of charity which provide a self-satisfaction. These practices reinforce an individual belief in divine justice and mercy reducing uncertainty about death and the afterlife. The study investigated that the individual with higher level of Spirituality having lower level of Death Anxiety as their faith help in accepting the reality and morality. Similarly a study by (Ali et al., 2021) emphasized that there is a positively relationship between the Spiritual Well-being and mental health which particularly help in reducing the existential distress among practicing Muslims.

Suhail and Akram (2002) suggested that individuals with intrinsic religious motivation tend to experience lower levels of various forms of death anxiety compared to those with extrinsic religious motivation. Christine (1994) examined the relationship between spirituality, religiosity, and death anxiety, finding that spirituality had a negative correlation with death anxiety. Pierce, Cohen, Chamber, and Meader (2007) reported that women in high schools and colleges generally exhibited higher levels of death anxiety than men. Similarly, Duff and Hong (1995) found that individuals with intrinsic religious motivation experienced lower levels of death anxiety, with a strong belief in the afterlife being associated with reduced anxiety. The fear of dying often triggers negative emotions such as distress, grief, and anxiety (Duff & Hong, 1995).

Death anxiety refers to the fear and concern about dying. In Islam, death is seen as a gateway to the afterlife, not as an end. Believers are encouraged to prepare for death by performing good deeds and following the righteous path. Several studies have explored how Islamic beliefs influence death anxiety among Muslims. For instance, Rahmani et al. (2021) conducted a study on Muslim cancer patients and found a negative correlation between spiritual well-being and death anxiety. Patients who practiced spirituality experienced less fear and distress related to death. The study emphasized that belief in the afterlife and divine justice helped individuals cope with terminal illness. Additionally, research by Ahmed and Saleh (2020) among young Muslim adults revealed that those who had strong belief in God experienced less death anxiety compared to those with weaker spiritual beliefs.

Fear of death in general population that there women have higher fair of death, elders have less fear of death then youth, higher educational economic social level are associated with lower fear of death (Kastebbaum, 2000).

Similarly a research conducted by (Al Qureshi et al.2020) investigated the Death Anxiety among elderly Muslims and found those having higher level of Spiritual Well-being having less Death Anxiety with respect to those having lower level of Spiritual Well-being. The researches suggested that the Spiritual Well-being serve as a protective cover against Death Anxiety among Muslims. Another study by (malek et al.2022) found that the individual who actively engaged in spiritual and religious gathering having a great sense of self-satisfaction when reflecting on death.

A study by (Hassan et al.2019) investigated that the individuals who actively practice gratitude and sought comfort in prayers having less fear of Death Anxiety. Similarly the research conducted by (khan & Yousaf,2021) indicated that the individual who are engaging in prayers and religious event have a positive outlook toward death and reported a great sense of Spiritual Well-being.

In Conclusion the literature suggest that there is a negative correlation between the Spiritual Well-being and Death Anxiety. The Individuals who are practicing Muslim and connected with God through prayers having lower level of Death Anxiety. Further researches is need to explore the comparative studies to examine the relationship between Death Anxiety and Spiritual Well-being among different religious and spiritual tradition.

Methods

Objectives

- To find out the relationship between Spiritual Well-being and Death Anxiety among adults.
- To find out the impact of Spiritual Well-being on Death anxiety among adults.

Hypotheses

1. There is a negative relationship between Spiritual Well-being and Death Anxiety among adults.
2. There is a significant impact of Spiritual Well-being and Death Anxiety among adults.

Research design

The present research employe a correlation research strategy to investigate the impact of Spiritual Well-being on Death Anxiety among Muslim adults.

Sample

The data was collected from 200 participants out of which 63 men and 137 women from Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the convenient sampling technique is used to gather data.

Inclusion criteria

Participant who are Muslim by birth or converted to Islam and fall within the age of 18-38.

Exclusion criteria

Participant who are non-Muslims or under 18 will be excluded from the research.

Instruments

Spiritual Well-being scale

The Spiritual Well-being test is developed by Ellison & lori (2006) which comprises the 20 items with six-point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The SWBS evaluate both religious well-being and existential well-being.

Death Anxiety scale

Templer Death Anxiety scale (Apendix 2) consist 15 statement with five point likert scale from completely disagree to completely agree. The test is developed by Templer in 1970.

Procedure

The study followed the quantitative research design to find the relationship between death anxiety and Spiritual Well-being among Muslims. Sample was collected through convenient sampling in which we use two instrument, Spiritual Well-being scale and Death Anxiety scale. We followed the APA guidelines as participant were chosen voluntary and informed consent were granted. At the end, IBM SPSS software was used for further statistical analysis of variables.

Results

Table 1: Frequency Distribution in terms of Demographic Variables (N = 200)

Variable	N	%
Age		
18-23	173	86.5
24-28	22	11.0
29-33	5	2.5
Gender		
Men	63	31.5
Women	137	68.5
Marital Status		
Single	171	85.5
Married	29	14.5
How often do you pray Salah?		
Never	9	4.5
Sometimes	103	51.5
Regularly	88	44.0
How often do you read the Quran?		
Rarely	26	13.0
Once a week	41	20.5
Few times a week	82	41.0
Daily	51	25.5

How often do you engage in religious and spiritual activities?

Never	6	3.0
Occasionally	84	42.0
Weekly	50	25.0
Daily	60	30.0

Do you participate in religious gatherings?

Never	19	9.5
Occasionally	122	61.0
Frequently	59	29.5

The sample population is comprised of young adults, the majority of whom are in early adulthood. The women participant were more in number than men; and the majority of the participants were unmarried and few were married. Regarding religious practices, most participants offer prayer on a daily basis, but there are some who pray occasionally or never. Recitation of the Quran was subjected to variation that some of them did so on a daily basis, while others did so a few times a week or less frequently. Most of the participants practice religiosity and spirituality daily or occasionally while very few indicated participation never in their lives. Also, most of the participants attended religious gatherings occasionally, while some attend frequently and others never.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of all the scales and their subscales (N=200)

Scales	K	α	M	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
DA	15	.84	47.82	11.28	75-23	15-45	.74	.14
SW	20	.62	63.88	11.31	40-120	20-100	1.5	5.4

Note: K=No. of items, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, DA=Death Anxiety, SW=Spiritual Well-being

Descriptive statistics show the measures' variability and reliability. The 15-item Death Anxiety scale was found to be highly reliable. The mean score was moderate with reliability. The distribution was slightly skewed, indicating that more participants exhibited lower Death Anxiety, while kurtosis suggested a relatively normal spread.

The 20-item spiritual well-being scale was not as reliable as the Death anxiety scale. It contains a high mean and similar standard deviation. The distribution was positively skewed, reflecting that the majority of the participants were higher in spiritual well-being with the score clustered around the mean. Both variables were reliably measured, with participants varying on death anxiety and spiritual well-being.

Table 3: Correlation coefficients of study variables (N=200).

Variables	1	2
1. DA	-	-.234**
2. SW	.234**	-

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Correlation between variables

The research examines the relationship between Spiritual well-being and death anxiety. The results show a significant negative correlation between (r = -0.234, p < .01), where greater spiritual well-being correlates with lower death anxiety.

This finding support the idea that spiritual well-being act as a buffer against death anxiety. Its may enhance purpose, acceptance, and coping mechanisms, the small effect size suggests that other factors also contribute to death anxiety.

Table 4: Linear Regression analysis predicting Death Anxiety (N=200)

Variable	95%CI			
	B	SE	LL	UL
Constant	64.62***	5.02	54.70	74.53
SW	-.26**	.07	-.42	-.11
R ²	.05**			
ΔR ²	.05**			
F	11.45**			
ΔF	11.45**			

Note: SW=Spiritual Well-being

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

A linear regression test showed that spiritual well-being significantly predicts Death Anxiety (B = -0.26, SE = 0.07, $p < .01$), indicated that the greater Spiritual Well-being is associated with lower Death Anxiety. The negative coefficient (-0.26) confirm the inverse relationship. The model for 5% of the variance in death anxiety (R² = 0.05, $p < .01$), indicating that other factors also contribute to the death anxiety. The F-Statistics F=11.45, $p < .01$) confirm that the model significantly predicts Death Anxiety. The confidence interval (-0.42 to -0.11) does not include zero, which reinforce the reliability of the negative association. The results were in line with the notion that spiritual well-being serve as a buffer against death anxiety by providing meaning and coping mechanism for life’s challenges.

Discussion

The study showed a strongly inverse association between spiritual wellbeing and death anxiety in Muslims. This meant that higher spiritual well-being is linked to lower death anxiety. This finding is consistent with the literature, which emphasize that spirituality provides a sense of peace, purpose and emotional resilience. Spirituality as essential component of Islamic principle, provide an effective response to existential question by ensuring the faith in the afterlife, believe in divine justice, and the meaningfulness of life. Exciting studies confirm that the people with high Spiritual Well-being experience a lower level of Death Anxiety, as their belief in God, religious rituals, and faith in God’s will are a psychological protection.

The studies of Heidari et al.(2022) and Ali et al.(2021) confirm that spiritual practice such as prayer, Quran reading, and charitable deeds reduce the level of fear and anxiety about death and as a result increase emotional stability. Besides, Suhail and Akram (2002)and Christine (1994) have demonstrated that intrinsic religious motivation help to reduce the level of fear of death in various forms. The finding of others researcher are consistent with this. According to these researcher, the belief in existence of life after death and participation in spiritual ritual contribute to a person’s acceptance the fact of death.

Conclusion

There is a negative relationship between SWB & DA among Muslims. Higher spiritual well-being deeply rooted in faith, belief in after life and also the religious practices, help to reduce existential distress. The individual who engaging in spiritual activates foster inner peace, acceptance behavior

and mitigating fear related to the morality. The previous researches shows that spirituality serve as a gate keeper against death anxiety across different age groups and circumstances. Further studies should explore the relationship across diverse culture and different religious context to develop holistic mental health intervention.

Implications

The study emphasizes the importance of Spiritual well-being in reducing the death anxiety, can integrated into psychological therapies and clinical interventions. It highlights the need to incorporate religious and spiritual practicing in counseling's to enhance mental resilience. It also valuable in develop faith based support programs for peoples dealing with existential distress.

Limitation

The mainly focus of this research were Muslims, limiting its generalizability to other religious or cultural groups. It also relies on self-reported data, which introduces the potential for response bias. The cross-sectional design of this research prevent the establishment of casual relationship between death anxiety and Spiritual Well-being. Further research should include longitudinal studies and comparative analyses of death anxiety across different faith tradition.

Recommendation

The study proposes incorporating spiritual well-being into mental health programs to reduce Death Anxiety. It suggest future research different religious groups and also culture of different states for broader generalization. Additionally, it recommends longitudinal studies to determine whether Spiritual well-being directly reduce death anxiety.

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