



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### SPIRITUAL WELLNESS AND HOLISTIC PERSONAL GROWTH

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objectives of the Study:** The 'spiritual wellness' and its role in holistic personal growth is attempted to discuss in this research. Spiritual wellness is state of existence where the manifestation of complete consciousness is attained.

**Significance:** Spiritual wellness has implications on physical, mental and socio-emotional growth and could be answerable to all personal social issues, health issues or disorders.

**Methodology:** Researchers displayed the role of spiritual wellbeing in the development of physical, cognitive and socio-emotional growth and empowerment. It helps the person understand personal commitments, accept individual differences, improve personal relationships, develop leadership abilities, and making the person composed in crisis situations, besides it develops discerning mind by eliminating socio-cultural filters and generates the feelings of serene and blissfulness. It equips people for civic as well as for personal life. People with greater spiritual wellness can contribute to changing deeply-entrenched social transgression.

**Results:** The Spiritual wellness is helpful for developing positive mind-set. It demonstrates the power and personal growth of an individual, which further influence the society through example. Such examples can become powerful driving force for others.

**Conclusions:** Spiritual wellness enriches holistic personal growth, internal and outer empowerment. In future, 'spiritual wellness' could be used, especially for the welfare of the people to maximize – positivity, coping up skills and happiness, which in turn can improve the achievements of an individual towards life objectives and life satisfaction. This serves to empower personal growth of the people and to establish ideal civilization.

**Key words:** Empowerment, Health, Holistic, Personal Growth, Positivity, Spiritual Wellness.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Psychology has always been in a continuous pursuit of finding the best tool to predict the qualities of an individual and its suitability in the given surroundings. In present research an attempt was therefore made to identify the connection between holistic health issues with spiritual wellbeing. This potential is to be developed and / or stabilized as a result of one's search for meaning of life. Spiritual practice has been described as the development and training of one's mental states, gradually removing destructive mental states and replacing them with constructive state of mind such as kindness, tolerance and forgiveness (Dalai Lama, Cutler, 1998). Spiritual Intelligence hypothesizes that the predictability quotient of success of an individual goes beyond the mere brain area. Chin, Anantharaman and Tong (2011) studied the roles of emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence at the workplace and concluded that with both these intelligences happening in the workplace, the environment will be more conducive. A better working environment relates to a higher level of productivity.

'Spirituality' is a multi-layered concept, deriving from the Latin word 'spirare', 'to breathe'. The concept of spirituality is to be applauded because it captures the essence of what individual need to know for being more self awarded, satisfied, empathetic, authentic, fearless and happy. In a survey of spirituality, Forman (1997) found that people from many different traditions tended to view spirituality as being experiential rather than conceptual and clearly trans-rational. To describe this experiential aspect, spirituality was coined as a way of enabling the recognition and identification of what really matters in life (Schwartz 1995). Spiritual experience like inspiration (Hart, 1998), is commonly associated with feelings of clarity, connection, opening and energy. According to the Dalai Lama (1999), "spirituality is concerned with those qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony – which brings happiness to both self and others i.e. it relates with basic human qualities of goodness, kindness, compassion and caring". Spirituality involves not only faith, prayer and values but also obligations to and support from others (Khavari, 2000). Humanistic theories have defined it as living authenticable i.e. finding the truth and meaning of existing life and attain the full

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possibilities of being 'Human' (Elkins, 2015), Wilber (1997). It explains that although many people have had peak experiences that access expanded status of transpersonal consciousness, individuals can, with practice, evolve into having constant access to the witness of pure awareness that is available at all levels of consciousness.

### Significance and Relevance of the Research

- Spiritual Wellbeing is concentrated primarily redeeming ourselves and our holistic health. So there is need to be alert and keep the window of consciousness open. Spiritual analysis of human potential is related to holistic personal growth viz.; physical, cognitive, socio-emotional and spiritual growth.
- It also implies aesthetic sensitivity and appreciation of beauty.
- It fuses the qualities of head and heart. Vision, values, goals and self actualization are never attained by reason alone. Reason is a facilitator; it tells us, why to go, but it is the heart that tells us, where to go and how to go.
- It has wide individual and social implications for the welfare of the individual and society.
- It is associated with the absence of defensiveness and hostility. The person can use spiritual wellbeing to transform self and others, heal relationships, recognise the power of forgiveness, enhance the capacity to give and receive love, cope with grief and go beyond.
- Spiritual wellbeing is concerned with the 'Well Being' of the whole – the whole person, the whole human family, the whole planet, the whole web of life. If any individual lives in a spiritually dumb culture, which is characterized by self centeredness, consumerism, individualism, lack of commitment and responsibility, then person starts get affecting by the environment. S/he too keep criticising the system and still remain the point of problem, and at the end of the day, s/he feel bored and frustrated. The central question that arises in one's life seems to be our inability to find an 'Identity' and a 'Positive Meaning' in life. Spiritual wellbeing addresses this fundamental human dilemma.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Researchers reviewed various research studies by various scholars and displayed the role of spiritual wellbeing in the development of self growth and empowerment. The prime consequence of leading spiritual life is making the individual free from false values and self doubts. Spiritual wellbeing helps the person to understand his personal commitments and responsibilities, accepting individual differences, improving personal relationships and making the person composed in crisis situations. Spiritually oriented people cultivate the power of discerning mind by eliminating socio-emotional and cultural filters. This in turn generates the feelings of peace and blissfulness, and develops perfect mental and emotional health.

## RESULTS

Review of literature, shows that the spiritual wellbeing is helpful for developing positive mind-set. It results simplicity of lifestyle. Since 1960s, the extensive researches conducted in therapeutic modalities, have found psychological and spiritual solutions of many of today's personal and social problems, including many violent crimes. Offenders were educated in

skills of spiritual wellbeing; they learnt spiritual practices and meditation, through which their inner hurt feeling was gradually healed. They were reminded of their higher qualities and original spiritual wellbeing. They were inspired to understand their accountability towards self and work, towards changing their pattern of thoughts and behaviour. Some theorists such as Carl Jung (1973) and Victor Frankl (1969), emphasised that an increasing interest in exploring the role of psycho-spiritual factors in understanding and addressing psychological disturbances. They integrated spirituality/religion into clinical practice.

### Implications for the Individual (Personal Growth)

Spiritual wellbeing enriches our personality. Internal empowerment removes the neediness that fuels consumerism. The resulting simplicity of lifestyle, protects a person from being tempted to add to their possessions through unfair means. When there is no self-deception, there are no double standards, no conflict in mind and at individual level; the person demonstrates the inner power to influence the society through self example. Such examples can give powerful inspiration and motivation. The saying goes, "actions speak louder than words", and the words of such person / guru / teacher are transformative.

### Meaning of Life

Evidence of cognitive operations and adaptive applications, including problem-solving, coping, and stress-reduction, was reviewed in detail by many researchers. Existential aspect and mental health have been linked to spirituality in a number of theoretical writings and empirical studies. For instance, King (2008) defined personal meaning production as the ability to construct personal meaning and purpose in all physical and mental experiences, while Berg and Makola (2008) discussed the construct of meaning in life and its relationship to four constructs that enhance psychological well-being; namely, sense of coherence, emotional intelligence, hardy personality and self-efficacy. Debats (1999), in his research, investigated the sources of meaning in life of young adult patients and non-patients by combining qualitative and quantitative research methods.

### Physical Health

Some researchers have proved that spirituality has positive impact on physical health, as research conducted by Dalmida, Holstad, DiIorio and Laderman (2009) showed the process of "humanising" healthcare involved the consideration of individuals' unique psychosocial resources, including their spirituality during illness. Besides researchers also observed the significant relationship between spiritual practices (prayer/meditation and reading spiritual/religious material) and physical ailment's symptoms. In another study, Khan Ahmad, Beg, Wasmal, Abd Alla and Nubli (2009) proposed yoga and prayer, are helpful in controlling epilepsy and also giving physical, mental and spiritual relaxation.

### Mental / Psychological Growth

Modern researches continued to highlight concerns of spirituality within a therapeutic setting. Jackson, Firtko & Edenborough (2007) explored the concept of personal resilience as a strategy, for responding to workplace adversity.

Crossley and Salter (2005) investigated, in which clinical psychologists understood and addressed spirituality within therapy. They were suggested recommendations for developing spirituality as a more coherent and accessible concept, both within professional dialogue and the therapeutic context. In another study, conducted by Davis, Kerr & Kurpius (2003) investigated the relationship between spiritual well-being and anxiety in at-risk adolescents (Male). Their research found that the higher the spiritual well-being, the higher is the existential well-being, and lower the anxiety level among males. Worthington and Sandage (2001) defined religion and spirituality and discussed five scenarios in which they emerged in psychotherapy. In another study, Worthington, Hook, Davis and McDaniel (2011) examined the outcomes of religious accommodative therapies and non-religious spirituality therapies, where patients in religious / spiritual psychotherapies showed greater improvement than others.

### ***Socio-Emotional Growth / Conflict Resolution***

Spirituality is the fine-tuning of intellectual faculty and is inspirational in nature. The study by Biswajit Satpathy (2010) discussed the introduction and the development of spirituality by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita (a holy scripture of Hindus) thousands of years ago. The text had discussed about the spirituality that was used to resolve the conflict arising in the mind of Arjuna, the disciple of Lord Krishna.

### ***Change in perception***

As perception changes so do person's priorities. The quality and nature of perception change as spirituality develops. In one study, Paloutzian & Emmons (2003) assessed the relationship between individual spirituality and perceptions of unethical business activities. Most people believe that they interpret objectively what the five senses tell them about external reality. In fact, perception is greatly affected, and limited by socio-emotional and cultural filters. Through practising meditation, one may gradually reduce these filters and become more tolerant and accommodating and begin to look at people internally as they were and become less inclined to judge them by their external characteristics. Courageous and innovative thinkers have responded to the extreme social problems of today's world with completely new perception and solutions, often inspired by deep spiritual experiences and insights.

### ***Improving family or personal relationships***

People around us have their unique personalities, idiosyncrasies and character defects. This is certainly a challenge and all are facing this issue. In spiritual wellbeing, the focus is to accept each other and learn how to harmonise personalities. It is short-sighted to wish for ideal conditions, even it limits our development. Family values vary, but closer they come to spiritual values the better and happier the family becomes. Family values support the quality of family life. Loyalty, being lovable and caring, being supportive and protective, being available for one another, especially during the time of special needs, are very important for a healthier family. In another study, Perrone, Webb, Wright, Jackson and Ksiazak (2006) explored the relationship of spirituality to work and family roles and life satisfaction and indicated that existential well-being and marital satisfaction contributed significantly to life satisfaction. Research evidence clearly demonstrated that addressing the spiritual dimension of care makes a considerable

difference in physical and psychosocial outcomes. Findings by Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt and King (2009) showed that individuals who were more aware of their true self – the traits, qualities, interests, preferences, tendencies, and flaws, are more likely to experience meaning in life.

### ***Coping***

Spiritual wellbeing people become more courageous and mentally strong. They develop spiritual powers, gain power to go within, and become 'silent'. They cultivate the power of discerning mind. They are ready to face challenges and hardship of life because of internal strength. They are not bound by any bondage and are open-minded. They have self direction and purity of mind. They avoid the occult, being aware of its traps and limitations. Today hundreds of articles exist on Religious / Spiritual coping, covering an array of life stressors including physical illness (Pargament et al. 2004), childhood trauma (Gall et al. 2007), bereavement (McIntosh et al. 1993), divorce (Shortz & Worthington 1994) and natural or man-made disasters (Maton 1989). Research conducted on the subject of spiritual issues and therapeutic implications by Brotherson and Soderquist (2002) proved that research in Religious / Spiritual coping has broad implications for the physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being of individuals, families and communities.

### ***Enhancement of Caring***

Diana (2006) studied nurses' attitudes towards spirituality of self and meeting the spiritual needs of patient as a desirable goal for nursing care. The purpose of her exploratory survey was to determine how the spirituality of acute care by registered nurses influenced spiritual care delivery, and to identify barriers which inhibit providing spiritual care.

### ***Spirituality leads to blissfulness***

One of the prime consequences of leading a spiritual life is profound self-acceptance. People free themselves from false values and live in a state of serenity. This in turn generates feelings of peace and happiness. Initially these feelings may be fleeting, but gradually they exercise their will to experience 'positivity'. It became the universal truth that spirituality generates feelings of peace and happiness that are not based on anything external worldly power such as fame, position or ostentation. A significant effect was found between meditative prayer and forgiveness in a study conducted by Jankowski, Sandage and Steven (2011). They tested a theoretical model of the relationship between meditative prayer and interpersonal forgiveness with hope and promoting interpersonal forgiveness in counselling. In general, it was concluded that spiritual people report more happiness and life satisfaction than do non-spiritual people.

### ***Leadership***

Leadership is the expression of deeply held values that are worthy of emulation. Good leadership cannot separate from spirituality. It is for empowerment and relationship. There was a growing body of material that supports the idea of a spiritual approach to matters of leadership. Wigglesworth (2006) argued that mature leadership required spiritual development, who leads from the inside out. Reave (2005) reviewed over 150 studies and showed that there was a clear consistency between

spiritual values and practices and effective leadership. Values that have long been considered spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, have been demonstrated to have an effect on leadership success. David and Cowan (2005) studied an exploration of the meaning of transformational leadership in education in K-12 settings. Research study conducted by Cindy Wigglesworth (2005) demonstrated that the mature leadership i.e. 'Tier- 2' leadership, which embodies an advanced stage of personal development, required spiritual intelligence development.

## Conclusion

This research has provided greater insight about the concept of spiritual wellbeing and its relationship with holistic personal growth (physical, socio-emotional and existential growth) of an individual. Spiritual wellness not only equips the person for personal life, but for civic life as well. People with greater spiritual awareness, are taking personal responsibility, improving personal relationships and becoming dispassionate in the face of challenges. They can further contribute to changing deeply-entrenched social misdemeanours including corruption, bribery, nepotism and antagonism against weaker sections, by showing inner empowerment i.e. the person demonstrates inner power to influence or transform the society. In future, the research findings could have important implications for extending the study for welfare of the society / social groups by making skill development programmes based on personal qualities, leadership qualities, civic qualities and so on.

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