

Spiritual Well-Being and Coping Styles in relation to Psychological Well-being of Adolescents

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The present study investigated the relationship among spiritual well-being, coping styles and psychological well-being of adolescents. A sample of 672 students (336 boys and 336 girls) of 13-19 years from government and private schools / colleges of Lahore was collected through purposive sampling. Three self report instruments: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ, Argyle & Hills, 2002), Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS, Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) and Coping Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ, Kausar & Munir, 2004) were administered in group settings. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient; Regression Analysis; and Independent Sample t test. The results indicated that psychological well-being was predicted by existential or spiritual well-being. The adolescents used more active practical and active-distractive coping and less use of avoidance focused coping. Moreover, adolescent girls showed greater religious well-being and used more active-distractive and avoidance focused coping as compared to adolescent boys. On the basis of the results, it is concluded that coping styles and existential well-being play a pivotal role in adolescents' psychological well-being. On these grounds, it is suggested to devise some counseling program in order to teach adolescents how to handle stress and cope with it.

Keywords: psychological well-being, spiritual well-being, coping styles, adolescents

In today's modern and competitive world, it has been observed that everyone around the globe is facing stress, anxiety and symptoms of depression. Achieving an adequate level of psychological well-being is a challenge for everybody. Youth and adolescents are considered as nation builders are facing the same difficulties in coping with the stressful environment around (Kausar & Munir, 2004). Adolescence is the transitional period which is characterized by rapid physical development, such as attaining sexual maturity and psychosocial changes, seeking independence from parents, finding meaning and purpose in life. All of these challenges make them more vulnerable to emotional and psychological problems (Khan, 2000). Pakistan has approximately 25 million adolescents and youth within the age range 15 to 24 years, however, little research has been conducted on their psychological well-being (Kausar & Munir, 2004), therefore creating the need to conduct research in the subject area.

Psychological well-being has different conceptualizations for different people and it resides within the subjective experience of an individual (Roothman, Kirsten, & Wissing, 2003). According to Vredevelde (2009), psychological well-being is an index of an individual's life satisfaction and is determined by his/her appraisal of his/her life, that's why, in present research, happiness is being taken as a measure of psychological well-being of individuals. Spirituality is an important factor that influences psychological well-being (Betton, 2004; Emmons, 1999). Spiritual well-being is described as purpose of life and is associated with better coping while facing negative life events including socioeconomic problems, health issues and other life challenges (Pargament et al., 1990). There is empirical research evidence which suggests a positive relationship between psychological and spiritual well-being (Betton, 2004; Ramirez, 2007).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) described coping as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person. Coping strategies are broadly categorized as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping encompassing active emotional and avoidant emotional coping (Boyd-Webb, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Their effectiveness is largely dependent on the specific stressful event, however, problem focused coping and emotion focused coping are associated with better psychological outcomes (Compas, et al, 2001) and avoidance focused coping strategies are associated with psychological distress (Braun-Lewensohn, Sagy, & Roth, 2010).

There are mixed findings with respect to gender differences in psychological and spiritual well-being. Some researchers found girls to be happier than boys (Lee, Seccombe & Shehan, 1991), whereas, some studies found otherwise (Okun & George, 1984). At the same time, some studies reported no gender differences in terms of psychological well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Overall girls scored higher on measures of spiritual well-being than boys (Roothman et al., 2003). Studies on coping strategies showed that girls engage in social relationships and adapt themselves more frequently according to the situation, whereas, boys tend to rely on stress reduction activities or diversions (Copeland & Hess, 1995).

Keeping in mind these variables, the present research was conducted to see how existential, spiritual well-being and coping strategies contribute towards the psychological well-being of Pakistani adolescents. In addition, gender differences were also examined to see how boys and girls are different in terms of their spiritual and psychological well-being and in the use of coping strategies.

Method

Participants

Cross sectional research design was used and sample was collected through purposive sampling strategy. A total of 700

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Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=672).

Variable	Boys <i>f</i> (%)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Girls <i>f</i> (%)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Total <i>f</i> (%)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Age		13.4		13.4		13.4
Education						
6 th -10 th grade	192(57.14)		192(57.14)		384(57.14)	
1 st year-4 th year	118(35.12)		118(35.12)		236(35.12)	
School/College Type						
Government	165(49.1)		175(52.1)		340(50.6)	
Private	171(50.9)		161(47.9)		332(49.40)	
Religion						
Islam	329 (97.9)		334(99.4)		663 (98.66)	
Christianity	7 (2.1)		2 (0.6)		9 (1.34)	
Residence						
Urban	309 (92.0)		327 (97.3)		636 (96.64)	
Rural	27 (8.0)		9 (2.7)		36(5.36)	
Family System						
Nuclear	187 (55.7)		202 (60.1)		389(57.89)	
Joint	149 (44.3)		134 (39.9)		283(42.11)	
Socioeconomic Status						
Upper	121 (36.0)		56 (16.7)		177(26.34)	
Middle	165 (49.1)		259 (77.1)		424(63.10)	
Lower	50 (14.9)		21(6.3)		71(10.57)	

Note: Boys = 336; Girls = 336; Total = 672

adolescents of 13-19 years (336 girls & 336 boys including 100 students of 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 & 19 years, respectively) studying in schools (Grade 6 -10) and colleges (1st year to 4th year) were taken from Lahore city, however, 28 students left the questionnaires incomplete so analysis was run of a sample of 672 adolescents.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire: The Demographic questionnaire was devised by the researchers to elicit the demographic details of the participants such as, age, gender, class/grade, religion, religious sect, etc.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ, Argyle & Hills, 2002). Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used to assess psychological well-being of the participants. It consists of 29 items (For example: I feel that life is very rewarding) which are to be rated on 6 point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. For present study, the scale had good internal consistency of .75.

Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). This scale assesses two dimensions: religious and existential well-being. Religious Well-Being (RWB) measures one's perception about his or her relationship with God (For example: I believe that Allah loves me and takes care of me); while Existential Well-Being (EWB) assesses the meaning of life and one's satisfaction with it (For example: I don't feel good about my future) . It has 20 items which are to be rated on 6 point Likert scale. For present research, the scale had good internal consistency of .74.

Note: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Spiritual Well-Being Scale were translated into Urdu language by the researchers through ‘Lexilion Equivalence’ with the permission of the authors.

Coping Strategies Questionnaire CSQ, (Kausar & Munir, 2004). The Coping Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ) was used to measure coping strategies adopted by the adolescents (For example: When

you are under stress then to whom you trust to divert your attention from stress?) . It has 62 items which are to be rated on 5 point Likert scale, ranging from “didn't use at all” to “quite a lot”. It has 4 subscales: Active-Practical Coping (16 items); Active-Distractive Coping (9 items); Avoidance-Focused Coping (24 items) and Religious-Focused Coping (13 items). The cronbach alpha was 0.87.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, a pilot study on 15 adolescents was conducted to check that all the items of the instruments were understood by the participants. After getting satisfactory results from the pilot study, the data for final research was collected.

The permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Principals of the schools and colleges. After which, each student was requested to give his/her consent to participate in the research. The students were assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. They were also assured that information would be used for research purposes only. The students filled the questionnaire in the presence of the teachers to maintain discipline during data collection. The questionnaires were presented in a counterbalanced order (randomized starting order with rotation) so that each could respond individually and don't take help or copy from each other about the responses.

The average time to complete the questionnaires was between 40 to 50 minutes. Debriefing was done after the participants filled the questionnaires.

Results

The results in Table 2 indicate that spiritual well-being and existential well being are related with psychological well-being. In both genders, psychological well-being showed positive relation

Table 2

Intercorrelations among Psychological Well-being, Spiritual Well-Being and Coping styles of the Adolescents (N=672).

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD
1. PWB	-	.36**	.26**	.37**	.09*	.16**	.16**	-.08*	.15**	32.96	14.44
2. SWBS	.36**	-	.88**	.90**	.10*	.13**	.10**	-.06	.18**	87.29	10.59
3. RWB	.26**	.88**	-	.59**	.05	.10**	-.01	-.03	.13**	44.21	5.94
4. EWB	.38**	.90**	.59**	-	.11**	.14**	.17**	-.07	.19**	43.08	6.26
5. CSQ	.10*	.10**	.06	.11**	-	.83**	.56**	.79**	.75**	203.70	21.15
6. CSQ-AP	.16**	.13**	.10*	.14**	.83**	-	.34**	.48**	.56**	178.47	24.67
7. CSQ-AD	.16**	.09**	-.01	.17**	.56**	.34**	-	.31**	.35**	157.67	21.27
8. CSQ-AF	-.08**	-.06	-.04	-.07	.79**	.48**	.31**	-	.39**	152.06	17.88
9. CSQ-R	.15**	.18	.13**	.19**	.75**	.56**	.35**	.39**	-	186.70	26.41
M	33.09	87.85	45.21	42.64	206.68	177.37	161.29	157.32	187.28		
SD	14.99	12.86	6.62	7.48	17.26	22.68	20.76	16.66	20.45		

Note: Intercorrelations for boys (n = 336) are presented above the diagonal; Intercorrelations for girls (n = 336) are presented below the diagonal; M and SD for boys are presented in vertical column; M and SD for girls are presented in horizontal rows; PWB=Psychological Well-being; SWBS=Spiritual Well-Being Scale; RWB= Religious Well-Being; EWB= Existential Well-Being; CSQ= Coping Strategies Questionnaire; CSQ-AP=Active Practical Coping; CSQ-AD= Active Distractive Coping; CSQ-AF = Avoidance Focused Coping; CSQ-R= Religious Coping.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis predicting Psychological Well-Being among Adolescents (n=672)

Variables	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.14***	
Religious Well-Being		.05
Existential Well-Being		.35***
Step 2	.04**	
Active Practical Coping		.14**
Active Distractive Coping		.10**
Avoidance Focused Coping		-.18***
Religious Focused Coping		.05
Total R^2	.18***	

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

with spiritual well-being and religious and existential well-being. Moreover, psychological well-being was found to be positively related with three types of coping strategies: active practical, active distractive and religious focused coping and negatively related with avoidance focused coping.

However, it is important to note that all values related to all variables are reflecting as significant but when we see the effect

size then it is very small (less than .09 is considered to be small effect size) due to which those values would not be considered of much significance.

Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to find the significant predictors of psychological well-being. The types of spiritual well-being: religious and existential well-being were entered in block 1 and types of coping strategies were entered in block 2. Results showed that psychological well-being was predicted by existential well-being. Among coping strategies, psychological well-being was predicted by more use of active practical and active distractive coping and less use of avoidance focused coping strategies.

The results in Table 4 indicate that gender differences in the spiritual well-being and coping styles of adolescents. Findings suggested that girls had more religious well-being and used more active distractive and avoidance focused coping strategies as compared to boys but no such differences were observed in existential well-being, Psychological and active practical, and religious focused coping.

Here, it is important to mention that less than 0.2 value is considered as low so all the values are of low range and the difference between girls and boys on avoidance focused coping strategy is in medium range, as it is in the range of 0.2 - 0.8.

Table 4

Independent sample t test showing Gender differences for Psychological Well-Being, Spiritual Well Being and Coping Styles among Adolescents (N=672).

Variables	Boys (n=336)		Girls (n=336)		$t (670)$		CI (95%)		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
PWB	32.96	14.44	33.09	14.99	.11	.91	-2.1	2.36	-.01
RWB	44.21	5.94	45.21	6.62	2.03	.04	.04	1.95	-.16
EWB	43.08	6.26	42.64	7.48	-.83	.41	-1.49	.60	.06
CSQ-AP	178.47	24.67	177.37	22.68	-.60	.55	-4.69	2.49	-0.04
CSQ-AD	157.67	21.27	161.29	20.76	2.23	.03	.44	6.80	0.17
CSQ-AF	152.06	17.88	157.32	16.66	3.94	.01	2.64	7.88	0.30
CSQ-R	186.70	26.41	187.28	20.45	.32	.75	-2.99	4.16	0.02

Note: PWB= Psychological Well-Being; RWB= Religious Well-Being; EWB= Existential Well-Being; CSQ-AP=Active Practical Coping; CSQ-AD= Active Distractive Coping; CSQ-AF = Avoidance Focused Coping; CSQ-R= Religious Focused Coping.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Discussion

In the present research, spiritual well-being, coping strategies and psychological well-being of adolescents were studied to explore the relationship among them and to see the predictors of psychological well-being as well as to see the gender differences in the above mentioned variables.

The findings of the present study indicated that religious, existential and psychological well-being are related with each other. In addition, existential well-being predicted psychological well-being. These results are consistent with the previous literature indicating that spirituality enhances psychological well-being (Ramirez, Lumadue & Wooten 2007; Ritcher, 2002). Bridges and Moore (2002) also shared that affiliation with religion lessens the risk behaviors and serves as a protecting factor against health compromising behaviors in adolescents. Similarly, Greenwald (1980) Spilka, Shaver, and Kirkpatrick (1985) argued that people who largely conform to religious concepts may deal with life stressors more rationally (God put me in this misery to strengthen my character) and thus likely to have an adequate sense of psychological well-being too. In addition, Maselko, Gilman, and Buka (2009) concluded that spirituality promote mental health after conducting their study in which they found that people with high religiosity and spirituality showed more resilience against depression.

The present results also revealed that psychological well-being has significant positive relationship with coping strategies: active practical and active distractive coping and negative relationship with avoidance focused coping. Moreover, psychological well being was predicted by active practical and active distractive coping and less use of avoidance focused coping strategy. These findings are also consistent with the findings of Braun-Lewensohn, Sagy and Roth, 2010; Zeidner, 2004). Compas et al. (2000) and Braun-Lewensohn, Sagy, and Roth (2010) also found similar results indicating that active coping behaviors are associated with positive functioning and health; whereas, avoidant coping behaviors are linked with poorer adaptation, low self-efficacy and high stress levels.

At last, the present study also highlighted the gender differences in adolescent's spiritual well being and use of coping strategies. Results showed that girls have more religious well-being as compared to boys. These findings are corroborated by many studies supporting the view that women are likely to have greater sense of relatedness and belief in a superior power than their men counterparts (Francis & Wilcox, 1996; John, et al, 2005; Miller & Hoffman, 1995). Apart from this, it was found that girls used more active distractive and avoidance focused coping than boys. According to Frydenberg (1997) gender plays an important role in moderating coping behavior as gender specific self-concepts may lead men and women to behave differently while encountering stress. Copeland and Hess (1995) also found that adolescent girls use more withdrawal related strategies and after puberty, girls are at greater risk of developing depression due to use of emotion focused coping strategies (Stark, et al, 2000). From these results, it can be theorized that girls normally do not take active practical coping measures due to their higher adherence to religious rituals/beliefs and sociocultural background as society expect women to be nurturing, submissive, empathetic and forgiving (Roothman et al., 2003), therefore, they leave everything on the will of greater power and avoid resolving their problems more actively as compared to men - their counterparts.

Conclusion

The present study shows that psychological well-being of adolescents is related with spiritual well-being and coping strategies. Spirituality is one of the sources of support from which one may derive strength, guidance, meaning and purpose of life and active coping behaviors help the individuals to combat life stressors.

Limitations, Suggestions and Implications

The present study was conducted on adolescents studying in government and private schools/colleges of Lahore city. Future researches could be done on adolescents studying in religious institutions (Madrasas) for comparative analysis. However, based on present findings, some counseling programs should be designed for adolescents that could teach them effective ways of coping with stressors and encourage them to adhere with religious concepts/beliefs to lower down the risk of psychopathology. Furthermore, adolescents' gender should be taken into account while counseling them as knowledge regarding their perception of the world may lead to increased efficacy of the program being taught to them.

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