

SPIRITUALITY AND HAPPINESS AMONG YOUTH: A CORRELATIVE STUDY

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Abstract — Spirituality and happiness are two very important aspects of human life. After defining happiness, an attempt has been made in this paper to review research on the relationship between happiness and spirituality, and then to experimentally study their correlation among students aged between 18-24 years. The relation was assessed in 200 students from IIT Kharagpur, who rated their own spirituality, and happiness using the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) developed by Underwood, and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper, respectively. Students who were more spiritual in general, were happier as well, and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient method gave a high positive correlation between happiness and spirituality.

Index Terms — Happiness, Spirituality, Depression, Religion, Virtues, Well-Being, Youth, Correlation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Happiness is defined as a subjective mental or emotional state of well-being which can be defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to immense joy. According to Martin Seligman, an individual seems happiest when he/she has achieved wholesome combination of positive emotions and coined the acronym PERMA (Pleasure, Engagement, Relations, Meaning, and Accomplishment) to describe them.

Spirituality is a state of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to physical or material things. It is a broad philosophical concept, but in general includes a sense of connection to the transcendental, and typically involves a search for meaning in life beyond the depths of tangible reality. According to Wajzman, the traditional meaning of spirituality is the process of reformation of man to the image of God. In modern times however, spirituality is considered to be extremely subjective and can be felt through any blissful or meaningful activity.

Happiness research undoubtedly tops the chart in psychology related studies of well-being, owing to the majority of the world's population's desire to be happy. Hence, it is important to determine the factors that influence this state.

II. RELEVANCE OF SPIRITUALITY

Martin Seligman asserts that happiness has three dimensions, viz.- 1) pleasure and gratification, 2) embodiment of strengths and virtues and 3) meaning and purpose. Spirituality comes into picture as soon as we talk about virtues and meaning. Thus, even though spiritual and religious factors have long been linked with hysteria and delusion, in recent times more and more people have been turning to them to find inner peace and long term happiness.

Unfortunately, India holds the record for most cases of depression and suicide rates according to a WHO report, with the condition getting worse year by year. Since India is also the land of religion, it would be extremely helpful in understanding the benefits of religion in achieving happiness in order to try and reduce depression rates.

A study of the existing research papers on spirituality indicated its following benefits which eventually lead to an increase in overall happiness among students-

1. Being spiritual is associated with reduced smoking, alcohol, and drug use.
2. Students who are engaged in religion are likely to get good grades.
3. People who actively participate in religious activities tend to experience less conflict in their relationships.
4. Spiritual beliefs and practices are predictive of other virtues such as altruism, empathy, volunteerism, forgiveness, etc.
5. Social support from like-minded people in the spiritual community plays a strong role in positive coping and socializing.
6. Religion and spirituality may provide meaning, coherence and purpose to life of students burdened by the crisis of existentialism.

In a 2014 study conducted by Mark D. Holder, 320 children aged between 8-12 years were given well-being questionnaires assessing the correlation between happiness and spirituality, which came out to be positive, i.e. the more spiritual the child was, the happier he/she was.

A review research paper on spirituality and mental health presented by the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry (2008) too concluded that religious and spiritual involvement is related to

better coping with stress and less depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

III. EXPERIMENTAL OBJECTIVE

The objective of the experiment is to find out the correlation between spirituality and happiness, as for the students of IIT Kharagpur.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL HYPOTHESIS

The following propositions are possible-

1. A positive correlation would be observed between happiness and spirituality.
2. No correlation would be observed between happiness and spirituality.
3. A negative correlation would be observed between happiness and spirituality.

An educated guess however tells us that negative correlation won't be observed between happiness and spirituality.

The proposition selected as the hypothesis is-

A positive correlation would be observed between happiness and spirituality.

V. EXPERIMENTAL TOOLS

A. Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES)

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale was developed by Lynn Underwood and Jeanne Teresi in 2002. It is a 16 items self-report measure designed to investigate and measure the connection of ordinary experiences with the transcendent in daily life. By ordinary we mean to say that ethereal experiences such as near death accidents, hallucinations, etc. aren't included. The DSES has been consciously constructed to have deep relevance for both, those comfortable as well as uncomfortable with religious theistic views.

For the first fifteen items, 1 is the minimum score and 6 is the maximum score, whereas for the last item, the maximum score is 4. The lower an individual scores, the more spiritual he/she is.

B. Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

The Subjective Happiness Scale is a 4 items scale that was developed by Sonja Lyubormisky and Heidi S. Lepper. It is designed to measure subjective happiness from a global perspective. It is a measure of happiness, and shows convergent and discriminant validity. Each item is completed by choosing a number on a scale of 1-7 depending on the extent up to which the statement in the item describes the respondent.

The first two items ask the respondent to characterize his/her happiness in an absolute and relative sense, whereas the next two items describe an unhappy and happy person to the respondents and ask them the extent to which the situation characterizes them.

C. Pearson Correlation Coefficient (PCC)

In statistics, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient is used to measure the linear correlation between two variables, which in this case are, X= DSES value and Y= SHS value. PCC is 1 for total positive linear correlation, 0 for no linear correlation, and -1 for total negative linear correlation.

VI. EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

The DSES and SHS questionnaires were distributed within the IIT Kharagpur community in the form of online questionnaires, interviews, and pen and paper questionnaires and A response of 200 people was collected.

The mean and standard deviations of each item in the questionnaires was studied, and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated. Linear regression was done on the two variables and the results were observed.

VII. EXPERIMENTAL OBSERVATIONS & CALCULATIONS

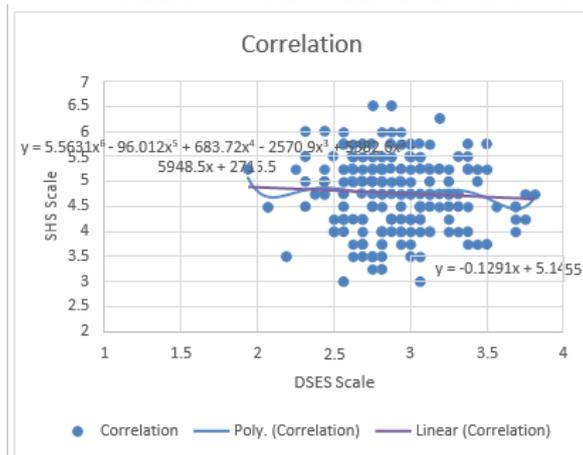
TABLE 1
DSES ITEM MEANS & STANDARD DEVIATIONS

| Item Content | Mean | SD |
|---|-------|-------|
| I feel God's presence | 2.895 | 1.454 |
| I experience a connection to all life | 2.975 | 1.511 |
| During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns. | 3.230 | 1.469 |
| I find strength in my religion or spirituality. | 2.935 | 1.371 |
| I find comfort in my religion or spirituality. | 3.020 | 1.483 |
| I feel deep inner peace or harmony. | 2.785 | 1.303 |
| I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities. | 2.930 | 1.391 |
| I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities. | 3.255 | 1.421 |
| I feel God's love for me, directly. | 3.235 | 1.356 |
| I feel God's love for me, through others. | 3.385 | 1.599 |
| I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation. | 2.915 | 1.272 |
| I feel thankful for my blessings. | 2.070 | 1.065 |
| I feel a selfless caring for others. | 3.000 | 1.425 |
| I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong. | 3.060 | 1.381 |
| I desire to be closer to God or in union with the divine. | 2.490 | 1.292 |
| In general, how close do you feel to God? | 2.34 | 1.002 |

TABLE 2
SHS ITEM MEANS & STANDARD DEVIATIONS

| Item Content | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| Absolute Happiness | 5.010 | 1.375 |
| Relative Happiness | 4.065 | 1.400 |
| Situational Happiness | 4.975 | 1.494 |
| Situational Sadness | 5.025 | 1.518 |

GRAPH
CORRELATION BETWEEN DSES AND SHS



Let $E[A]$ be mean and $SD[A]$ be standard deviation, of matrix A:-

$$E[X] = 2.9075, E[\text{Mean } Y] = 4.77$$

$Cov(X, Y) = -0.015$, $Cov = \text{Covariance}$ $SD(X) = 0.335$, $SD = \text{Standard Deviation}$ $SD(Y) = 0.712$

Therefore, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, $PCC = Cov(X, Y) / [SD(X)SD(Y)] = -0.061$

This calculation was confirmed by finding the correlation in Excel using the `correl(array1, array2)` function.

VIII. RESULTS

After getting the data from the sample, correlation coefficient was computed. Pearson Product Moment Correlation method was used to compute the correlation.

Our variables which are the DSES value and the SHS value are negatively correlated with a Pearson Co-efficient magnitude of 0.061. However the DSES value is negatively correlated with the spirituality level whereas the SHS value is positively correlated with the happiness level, therefore, according to our calculations, for the students of IIT Kharagpur, happiness and spirituality have a positive correlation of 0.061.

The best fitting linear equation describing the correlation between the two scales is $y = -0.1291x + 5.1455$ and the polynomial equation fitting the equation is $y = 5.5631x^6 - 96.012x^5 + 683.72x^4 - 2570.9x^3 + 5382.6x^2 - 5948.5x + 2715.5$.

The aim of this study was to find out the correlation between spirituality and happiness- the people who are spiritual are happy also.

TABLE 3
CORRELATION BETWEEN HAPPINESS & SPIRITUALITY

| VARIABLES | CORRELATION | INTERPRETATION |
|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Happiness | 0.061 | Mild Positive Correlation |
| Spirituality | | |

IX. DISCUSSION

With the Pearson Product Moment correlation method the correlation coefficient between spirituality and happiness was computed and came out to be 0.061 which indicates mild positive correlation between these two aspects of life. On the basis of result above table was prepared which shows the results of a mild positive correlation between spirituality and happiness. The research hypothesis, that there would be positive correlation between spirituality and happiness, is therefore proved, and the importance of spirituality in the lives of students at IIT Kharagpur has been confirmed. The null hypotheses of this study have been rejected. The best fitting equations describing the relationship between the two variables have been found out.

In general, a person who was more spiritual was found to be happier based on self-reports, and probably was, because he/she feels more connected with people and satisfied with life, and inherently tries to find peace and harmony in everything he/she does. According to all renowned scholars in the domain of philosophy, people who believe in a higher power beyond the realms of our physical world and believe in an elevated consciousness that looks after mankind, find it easier to be happier in life.

The positive relation between spirituality and happiness reported here for young adults is similar to that reported in studies of children, adolescents, and old adults.

Research reports that the relation between spirituality and happiness increases with age for adults, according to which the search for spirituality among our college students may tend to increase in the future.

X. FUTURE SCOPE

It is interesting to note that Spirituality has quite an effect on an individual's happiness. India is a country that was born out of a spiritual and religious era and until this day has innumerable believers of all faith. Therefore, teaching religion and spirituality to children and young adults might actually help them, when they are in a country where sources of such knowledge are abundant and pristine.

We can also determine other factors that can be correlated with happiness and then use a multivariate regression analysis to find out the extent of dependency of happiness on each individual factor.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion of this study we can say that a person who is spiritual is generally, happy and satisfied irrespective of who he/she is. A spiritual person has purpose and meaning in his/her life, feels connected to a broader eternal power, believes in equality and believes to have a moral obligation towards society along with the self. Spirituality makes a person highly insusceptible to negative emotions and feelings. Therefore, spirituality is positively correlated with happiness.

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