



Impact Of Spiritual Counseling On Enhanced Wellbeing Among The Elderly

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Abstract

Background: Aging brings physical and cognitive changes, leading to reduced strength, flexibility, and memory. Elderly individuals often face increased health concerns and emotional challenges, leading to the need for adaptations in daily living most suited to their culture and society.

Objective: The aim of this study is to explore the impact of spiritual counseling on enhanced wellbeing among the elderly in India who consistently practicing spiritual counseling and using it as daily practice.

Methods: A cross-sectional correlational design was used. A Total of 200 older adults who underwent spiritual counseling (100 men and 100 women) through convenience sampling from the Brahmakumaris World School of Spirituality all over India.

Result: The findings illuminated a statistically significant positive and linear relationship ($r_{198} = 0.741$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that daily spiritual practices could predict 54.9% of the variance in wellbeing. The regression equation indicated that for each unit increase in daily spiritual practice, there was a corresponding increase of approximately 1.8 to 2.5 points in wellbeing. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics unveiled intriguing insights, with the elderly participants exhibiting a moderate level of wellbeing (mean = 15.44, SD = 5.707) and a high level of engagement in spiritual activities (mean = 67.07, SD = 23.768). The robust positive correlation between daily spiritual practices and wellbeing underscores the profound significance of spiritual activities in enhancing the quality of life for the elderly.

Conclusion: Strong positive correlation and significant predictive value of regular spiritual activities on wellbeing highlight the potential of including spiritual counseling and practices in programs for elderly care.

Keywords: Spiritual Counseling, Wellbeing, Geriatric Care, Spiritual Practice

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indian culture, spiritual counseling is deeply enriching practice that blends ancient wisdom with modern therapeutic techniques. Rooted in yoga, meditation, and holistic wellness, it nurtures the mind, body, and soul of the elderly. This form of counseling fosters inner peace, purpose, and a connection to the divine. Amidst the rapid changes of our times, spiritual counseling in India remains a timeless source of guidance, enhancing well-being and promoting graceful aging. It is more than just therapy, it's a sacred journey deeply entwined with the country's rich spiritual heritage. By integrating teachings from the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and modern psychological principles, it rekindles a sense of purpose, and spiritual fulfillment. This holistic approach helps the elderly face the challenges of aging with grace and dignity, providing a profound connection to their inner selves.

The elderly population in India, characterized by its rich cultural and spiritual heritage, faces unique challenges as they age. With the traditional joint family system gradually eroding and the increasing prevalence of nuclear families, many elderly individuals experience a sense of isolation and diminished support networks. In this context, spiritual counseling has emerged as a vital tool for enhancing the well-being of the elderly. Spiritual counseling, grounded in the principles of empathy, compassion, and holistic well-being, provides a sanctuary for the elderly to explore their inner selves, address existential questions, and find meaning and purpose in their later years. This form

of counseling is particularly resonant in India, where spirituality and religion play a central role in daily life and cultural practices.

The present study delves into the impact of spiritual counseling on the well-being of the elderly in India, employing survey analysis to uncover the nuanced ways in which spiritual support can enhance mental, emotional, and even physical health. By examining data collected from various regions across the country, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how spiritual counseling can serve as a beacon of hope and resilience for the aging population

Literature Review

I. Introduction

In contemporary research on aging and mental health, the intersection between spirituality and well-being has garnered significant attention. Spirituality, often conceptualized as a personal connection to a higher power or a broader existential framework, has been hypothesized to influence various aspects of well-being among elderly adults. As individuals age, they frequently encounter challenges that impact their overall sense of life satisfaction, including physical health issues, social isolation, and diminished cognitive function. Within this context, daily spiritual practices—such as prayer, meditation, or religious rituals—may offer a source of comfort, purpose, and psychological resilience.

This study aims to explore the relationship between daily spiritual practices and well-being among elderly adults, with a particular focus on gender differences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial, as it could provide insights into how spiritual engagement might serve as a mitigating factor against the negative effects of aging and enhance overall life satisfaction.

The research seeks to achieve several objectives:

- To determine the significant difference in daily spiritual practices between male and female elderly adults.
This objective addresses whether gender influences the extent or nature of spiritual practices among the elderly.
- To assess the significant difference in well-being between male and female elderly adults.
This involves investigating whether there are gender disparities in how well-being is experienced and reported by elderly individuals.
- To examine the significant relationship between well-being and daily spiritual practice among elderly adults.
This explores whether a connection exists between the frequency or intensity of spiritual practices and the reported well-being of elderly individuals.

II. Gender Differences in Spiritual Practices and Wellbeing

The research question that motivates this study is:

To find out the significant difference in daily spiritual practice and wellbeing among male and female elderly adults?

To respond to this question, the study hypothesizes:

H1: There will be no significant difference in daily spiritual practice among male and female elderly adults.

H2: There will be no significant difference in daily wellbeing among male and female elderly adults

Understanding differences in gender is critical to developing spiritual care and counseling approaches which satisfy the needs of both men and women. In cultures where spirituality is strongly embedded, the findings of this study could be useful for practitioners working with the elderly. This comprehension would allow them to design therapies that honor and enhance the spiritual lives of all elderly people, regardless of gender. Recent studies on gender differences in spirituality highlight the complex ways in which men, women, engage with spiritual practices. According to (Fedele & Knibbe, 2022)

Women generally report higher levels of spiritual involvement, including prayer, meditation, and participation in religious services. This trend is attributed to socialization processes encouraging women to adopt nurturing and community-oriented roles that align with spiritual activities. An intersectional approach to studying spirituality and gender considers the overlapping influences of education, political ideology, age, and occupation. This perspective helps explain varying levels of spiritual engagement, highlighting how gender intersects with other aspects of identity to shape spiritual practices and experiences (Berkowitz et al., 2023). Overall, the relationship between gender and spirituality is complex, reflecting broader social and cultural dynamics while providing diverse expressions and challenges across different identities. This study aims to look into the differences in everyday spiritual activities between old men and women in India. By investigating these disparities, the research intends to find out whether gender plays a crucial influence in how elderly people engage in spiritual practices and how these habits enhance their overall well-being.

III. Relationship Between Regular Spiritual Activities And Wellbeing

The research question that motivates this study is:

To examine the significant influence of daily spiritual practice on wellbeing among elderly adults?

To respond to this question, the study hypothesizes:

H3: There will be no significant influence of daily spiritual practice on wellbeing among elderly adults.

Spirituality with regard to aging is very important. A growing body of research has linked spirituality to good health (Kumari & Sharma, 2018). Spiritual counseling can be easily integrated into traditional therapy through the infusion of spiritual content into the counseling session. This might involve a deep discussion of a client's spiritual beliefs, values, or practices and how they are used as a resource for healing and personal development. As Many cross-sectional studies are indicating that most people look towards spirituality for healing (Rippentrop et al., 2005). Spirituality brings a real meaning to life among people practicing it. As Some spiritual values that come in with this type of counseling are such as transformation, compassion, gratitude, and non-judgment are really a boon to old age people as these improve their values and give some meaning to life which they have been searching.

Aging decreases physical and physiological strength and raises the likelihood for developing chronic mental and physical illnesses, decreasing quality of life (QoL). (Faraji et al., 2023) Spiritual well-being is believed to influence life satisfaction and hope in the elderly. (Özdemir et al., 2022) Spirituality can help older people find meaning in their life and cope with hardship Society (1984) a journal on the anthropology revealed depression and suicidal behavior in the elderly estimated that the overall prevalence rate of mental illness in the population aged 60 years and above was about 89 per 1,000 or about 4 million people across the country. Most mental problems increase with the age of an individual. The overall prevalence rate increased from 71.5% at the age of 60 years to more than 124% at the age of 70 years, then to 155% at the age of 80 years.

IV. Impact of Spiritual Practicing on Wellness

This current study is an attempt to find the impact on spiritual counseling on enhanced well-being among elderly people who underwent spiritual Counseling and indulge in its daily practiced.

Indian Approach of Counseling or Spiritual counseling in India typically combines Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous spiritual traditions. Meditation, yoga, prayer, etc. are numerous instances of such practices. Such counseling not only tackles spiritual difficulties, but also fosters emotional, mental well-being. And promotes social connectedness. (Bhaskarananda, 2021) indicates that combining Vedantic values with counseling sessions can assist older people find serenity and purpose, decreasing emotions of loneliness and worry. Extensive research is yet to be conducted in this area. However, the available literature strongly indicates a beneficial link between spiritual counseling and enhanced well-being among India's elderly. Spiritual counseling not only meets persons' entire needs. Future research should look into these benefits further, particularly through longitudinal studies with greater sample sizes to corroborate these findings

Methodology

Research Design: This study aims to understand the impact of spiritual counseling enhanced wellbeing among the elderly in India who consistently practicing spiritual counseling and using it as daily practice. The researcher utilized a cross-sectional correlational approach, gathering data from 200 older adults (100 men and 100 women) selected through convenience sampling from various centers affiliated with the Brahmakumaris World School of Spirituality across India. Participants were aged between 60 and 69 (58.5%) and 70 and 75 (40%) The majority of participants were Hindu's (28.1%), followed by Christians (20.9%), Roman Catholics (17.4%), Muslims (16.5%), Buddhists (5.0%), atheists (1.5%). Regarding employment, 45.6% were full-time spiritual teachers, 44.9% were full-time employees, and 9.5% were others. Regarding household income, most respondents, (61.1%) had a medium income, followed by a lower income (29.6%), and 9.3% had an upper income. In terms of marital status, the majority were single (50.2%), followed by married (27.5%), in-relationship (15.6%), cohabiting (5.1%), and divorced (1.7%). In terms of state of origin, the majority of respondents were from Kerala (43.1%), followed by the Bangalore (20.2%), Delhi (13.9%), UP (12.9%), and finally Rajasthan (9.9%). These participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to partake in the study. Each participant was engaged in spiritual counseling provided by the Brahmakumaris, incorporating daily practices such as prayer, meditation, and yoga.

Inclusion Criteria

The study focused on older adults aged 60-75 who had been consistently participating in spiritual counseling for at least a year and were proficient in English to comprehend and complete the survey. And well-adjusted to the ongoing illness. **Exclusion Criteria:** Geriatric individuals with serious medical illnesses, those unwilling to consent, and those lacking belief in practicing spirituality were excluded. Furthermore, individuals younger than 60 or older than 75 years of age were not considered for this study.

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Geriatric individuals with serious medical illnesses, those unwilling to consent, and those lacking belief in practicing spirituality were excluded. Furthermore, individuals younger than 60 or older than 75 years of age were not considered for this study.

II. Procedure

Participants needed to be comfortable with technology since the survey was administered online. Participants received an email invitation containing a brief overview of the study along with a link to the survey. The survey included demographic questions and the World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5), a self-reported tool for assessing psychological wellbeing. We absorbed data from case registry and practice book to check participants spiritual wellness and practice consistency. The entire survey took about 20 minutes to complete, and participation was both voluntary and anonymous. The data collection phase spanned from January to May 2024, and the research was conducted following ethical standards approved by the institutional ethics committee.

III. Instruments:

Questionnaires were designed and utilized to extract demographic data information regarding the age, gender, ethnicity, Religion, marital status, current health status, and daily spiritual activities of the participants along with the World Health Organization- Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) scale, which is a short self-reported measure, which measured the dimensions of psychological general well-being. The questionnaire comprised 6 Likert scaled questions.

IV. Analysis

T-test of independence of the means was carried out between males and females as it sought to find out if there were differences in the gender of the daily spiritual practices on well-being among the elderly. The test was used in determining or not these variables had or did not have significant differences depending on the gender. A Pearson correlation was computed to identify whether there existed a linear strength and the direction of the relationship between daily spiritual practices and wellbeing. This analysis helped to identify whether better wellbeing is experienced with higher levels of daily spiritual practices. Finally, the influence of daily spiritual practices on wellbeing was evaluated using a simple linear regression analysis. In other words, this entailed fitting a regression model for wellbeing as a function of the frequency of daily spiritual practices and enabled us to test how much variance in wellbeing may be accounted for by those practices. An evaluation was also made regarding whether this predictor was statistically significant. These analyses will give us a clear idea of the importance of the role of daily spiritual practices among elderly adults, considering possible gender differences and its overall impact on the quality of life of an individual.

Findings/Results

Spirituality among elderly people has a vast significance on their health and recovery from illness. In Figure 1, it indicates that 80% of males are spiritually confident and, at the same time, have lower stress; for females, the percentage is 73%. Spiritual resources are to be derived in gaining strength and direction in one's life. Spiritual health is through these resources that offer resilience in times of crisis (Wills, 2007) Spiritual health is the quest for meaning and inner peace in relationships with supreme beings, community energy, and nature. Lastly, 75% of the adults accounted to experience mental illness.

The results of the present study are outlined below in accordance with the objectives of the study

Table 1: Shows Descriptive statistics of participants

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Well being	200	15.44	5.707
Daily spiritual practice	200	67.07	23.768

The table1 shows the descriptive statistics of wellbeing among elderly adults. The mean value of wellbeing among elderly adults was found to be 15.44 with the standard deviation of 5.707. Total 200 elderly adults are taken in this study. Among them 100 males and 100 females. According to table1, the descriptive statistics of Daily spiritual practice among elderly adults. The mean value of Daily spiritual practice among elderly adults was found to be 67.07 with the standard deviation of 23.768.

I.1 Difference between daily spiritual practice and wellbeing among elderly adults**Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and obtained t-value of Daily spiritual practice among elderly adults**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Daily spiritual practice	Male	100	67.08	18.153	.536	198	.700
	Female	100	67.07	25.931			

The mean value of daily spiritual practice among male elderly adults was found to be 67.08 with standard deviation of 18.153 and mean value of daily spiritual practice of female elderly adults was found to be 67.07 with the standard deviation of 25.931.

The obtained t-value of daily spiritual practice between male and female elderly adults was found to be .536 t-value with 198 degree of freedom is +/- 1.984 which is greater than calculated t-value and the p value found to be .700 which is not significant 0.05 level.

These hints indicate that there is no significant difference in daily spiritual practice between male and female elderly adults ($t = .5366$, $p > 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis which states that “*There will be no significant difference in daily spiritual practice among male and female elderly adults*” is accepted.

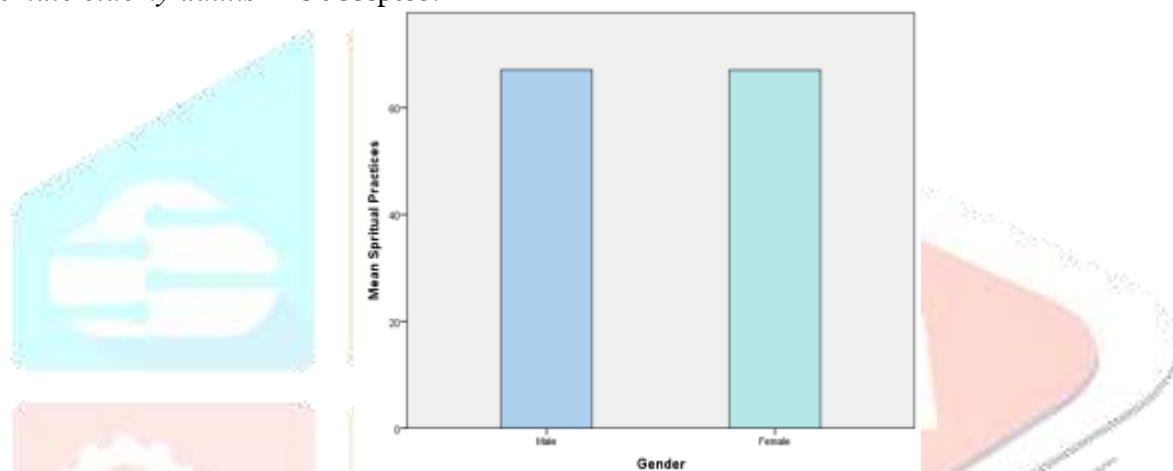


Figure 1: mean of daily spiritual practice among elderly adults

II. Difference between wellbeing among elderly adults**Table 3: Mean, standard deviation and obtained t-value of Wellbeing among elderly adults**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Well being	Male	100	16.23	4.727	.846	198	.400
	Female	100	15.10	6.082			

The mean value of wellbeing among male elderly adults was found to be 67.08 with standard deviation of 18.153 and mean value of wellbeing of female elderly adults was found to be 67.07 with the standard deviation of 25.931.

The obtained t-value of wellbeing between male and female elderly adults was found to be .846. Table 3 t-value with 198 degree of freedom is +/- 1.984 which is greater than calculated t-value and the p value found to be .400 which is not significant 0.05 level. These hints indicate that there is no significant difference in wellbeing between male and female elderly adults ($t = .846$, $p > 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis which states that “*there will be no significant difference in well being among male and female elderly adults*” is accepted.

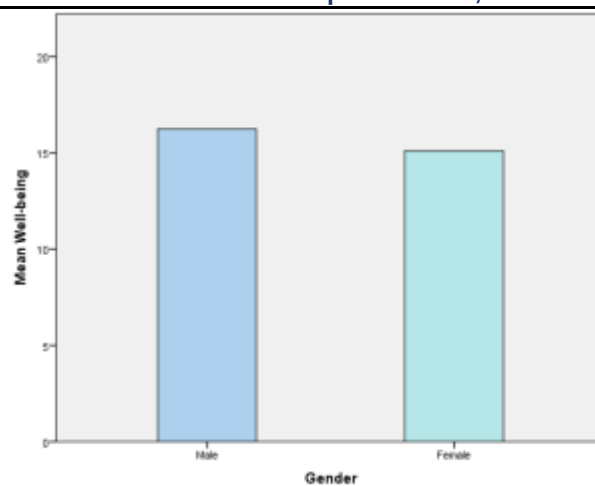


Figure 2: mean of wellbeing among elderly adults

III.Relationship between daily spiritual practice and wellbeing among elderly adults

Table 4: The Pearson correlation coefficient value between daily spiritual practice and wellbeing among elderly adults

Correlations

		Well-being	Spiritual Practices
Well-being	Pearson Correlation	1	.741**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Spiritual Practices	Pearson Correlation	.741**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

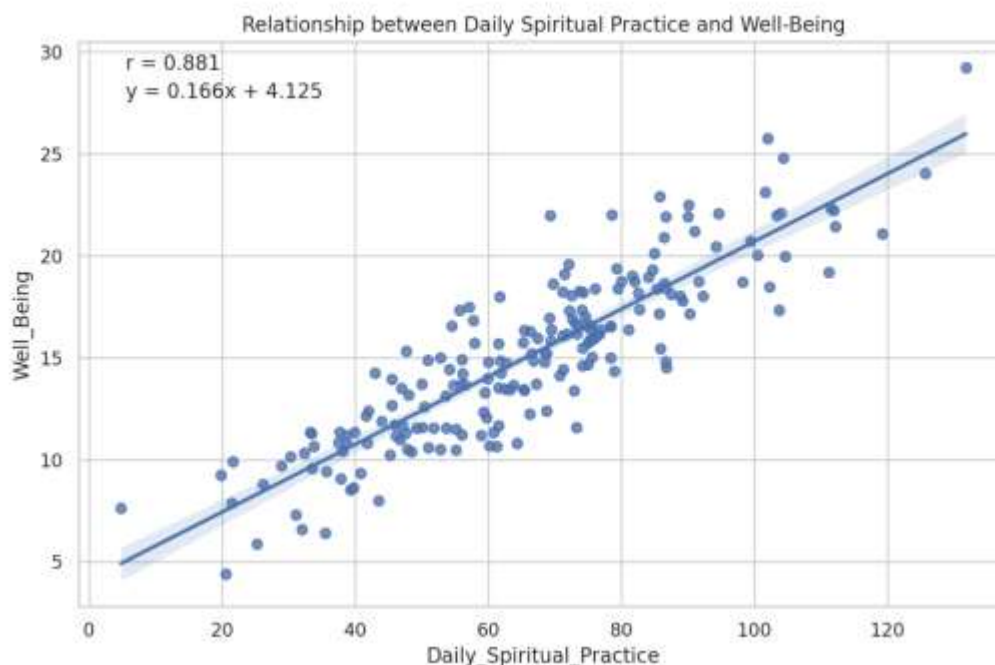


Figure 3

The table 4 result shows that the correlation between Daily spiritual practice and Wellbeing among elderly adults was (.741). This indicates that there is a very high-level positive correlation between Daily spiritual practice and Wellbeing among elderly adults. The significance value was found to be below $p < 0.05$. This means the correlation is significant at .05 significant level. So, there is a significant positive correlation between Daily spiritual practice and Wellbeing among elders. The scatter plot (Figure 3) shows the relationship between daily spiritual practice and overall wellbeing among elderly people was positive and linear. Thus, the hypothesis which states that “There will no significant relationship between wellbeing and daily spiritual practice among elderly adults” is rejected.

IV. Influence of daily spiritual practice on well being among elderly adults**Table 5 : Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.741 ^a	.549	.544	3.854	2.218

a. Predictors: (Constant), Spritual Practices

b. Dependent Variable: Well-being

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum Squares	of df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1539.145	1	1539.145	103.645	.000 ^b
	Residual	1262.258	198	14.850		
	Total	2801.402	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Well-being

b. Predictors: (Constant), Spritual Practices

Table7: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.499	1.243		2.815	.006	1.77	2.55
	Spiritual Practices	.178	.017	.741	10.181	.000	.143	.213

a. Dependent Variable: Well-being

A bivariate regression was conducted to examine how well the spiritual practices could influence or predicts the overall wellbeing among elderly adults. The correlation between daily spiritual practice and overall wellbeing among elderly people was statistically significant, $r_{198} = 0.741$, $p < 0.001$. The regression equation for predicting wellbeing from daily spiritual practice was $\hat{Y} = 3.499 + 0.178X$. The r^2 for this equation was 0.549. which means, 54.9% of the variance in wellbeing was predictable from daily spiritual practices among elderly adults. This is a moderately strong relationship (Cohen, 1988). The bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for the slop to predict wellbeing from daily spiritual practices ranges from 2.55 to 1.77. Thus, for each unit of increased daily spiritual practice, wellbeing also increased about 1.8 to 2.5 points. Thus, the hypothesis which states that “*There will be no significant influence of daily spiritual practice on well-being among elderly adults*” is rejected.

Discussion

The current research aimed to explore the relationship between Spiritual Counseling and enhanced wellbeing among older individuals in India, the subsequent sections discuss the findings based on the objectives of the study.

I. Characteristics of Participants

The statistical data provided insights into the wellbeing and regular spiritual activities of the participants. The average wellbeing score for the 200 older participants was 15.44, with a standard deviation of 5.707. Similarly, the average score for regular spiritual activities was 67.07, with a standard deviation of 23.768. These numbers reveal a moderate level of wellbeing and a high level of engagement in regular spiritual activities among the studied older population.

II. Gender Differences in Regular Spiritual Activities

The data in Table 2 indicated that the average scores for regular spiritual activities among male and female older adults were 67.08 and 67.07, respectively, with standard deviations of 18.153 and 25.931. The obtained

t-value (.536) and the p-value (.700) suggested no significant difference in regular spiritual activities between male and female participants. Therefore, the hypothesis suggesting no significant difference in regular spiritual activities between male and female older adults was supported. This discovery indicates that both genders equally participate in regular spiritual activities, indicating a consistent pattern of spiritual behavior among older adults regardless of gender.

III. Gender Differences in Wellbeing

Table 3 displayed the average wellbeing scores for male and female older adults as 16.23 and 15.10, respectively, with standard deviations of 4.727 and 6.082. The obtained t-value (.846) and the p-value (.400) indicated no significant difference in wellbeing between male and female participants. Thus, the hypothesis suggesting no significant difference in wellbeing between male and female older adults was supported. This finding suggests that gender is not a significant factor in the overall wellbeing of older adults, implying that other factors such as social support and physical health might carry more weight.

Correlation Between Regular Spiritual Activities and Wellbeing

Table 5 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of .741 between regular spiritual activities and wellbeing, indicating a highly positive correlation. This substantial correlation ($p < .001$) indicates that higher engagement in regular spiritual activities is linked to greater wellbeing among older adults. The hypothesis suggesting no significant relationship between regular spiritual activities and wellbeing was rejected. This result is consistent with prior research indicating that spiritual practices can improve mental and emotional health, leading to overall improved wellbeing (Sharma & Raj, 2022).

IV. Impact of Regular Spiritual Activities on Wellbeing

The results of the regression analysis presented in Tables 4, 5, 4, 6, and 7 indicate that regular spiritual activities predict wellbeing significantly among older adults. The model summary revealed an R^2 value of .549, suggesting that 54.9% of the variance in wellbeing could be explained by regular spiritual activities. The regression equation ($Y = 3.499 + 0.178 * \text{Spiritual Activities}$) further supports this, indicating that each unit increase in regular spiritual activities corresponds to an increase of approximately 1.8 to 2.5 points in wellbeing. The bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for the slope ranged from 1.77 to 2.55, reinforcing the reliability of this finding. Thus, the hypothesis suggesting no significant influence of regular spiritual activities on wellbeing among older adults was rejected. This significant impact underscores the crucial role of spiritual practices in improving the quality of life for older individuals, providing

The findings of the study emphasize the significance of spiritual counseling which has emerged in India centuries ago is still significant in today's context because of its high influence on enhancing the wellbeing especially on older adults. The absence of significant gender differences in regular spiritual activities and wellbeing suggests that these benefits apply universally across genders. The strong positive correlation and significant predictive value of regular spiritual activities on wellbeing highlight the potential of including spiritual counseling and its practices in programs for elderly care. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to further validate these findings and explore the mechanisms through which spiritual practices affect wellbeing.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between spirituality, emotional intelligence (EI), and psychological well-being in elderly individuals. The findings confirm that spirituality plays a significant role in enhancing emotional intelligence, which in turn mediates the positive effects of spirituality on psychological well-being. Specifically, spiritual practices such as mindfulness and prayer were found to be the most effective in improving emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness, which are critical dimensions of EI. Additionally, participation in religious communities fostered social connections, further contributing to emotional well-being.

However, the study also revealed weak positive and negative correlations, indicating that spirituality does not uniformly impact well-being and emotional intelligence in all contexts. In particular, participants with lower levels of engagement in spiritual practices exhibited a weak negative correlation between spirituality and emotional intelligence, suggesting that the benefits of spirituality may depend on the depth and consistency of engagement.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating spiritual practices into emotional intelligence development programs for the elderly. Such holistic approaches have the potential to improve emotional resilience, reduce feelings of isolation, and enhance overall quality of life for older adults. Future research should explore longitudinal effects, as well as specific interventions tailored to varying levels of spiritual engagement, to further understand the long-term benefits of spirituality on emotional and psychological well-being in aging populations.

Limitations

For research studies that have older adults as participants, several difficulties will arise, like reluctance to participate (citing privacy concerns), and not aware of internet usage, Religious barriers etc. The findings of this study are limited by 200 participants because of above cited reasons.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are suggesting

1. Integration of Spiritual Counseling in Elderly Care Programs
2. Training for Caregivers

Ethics Statements

1. Informed Consent:

- All participants provided with detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, and any potential risks. Participants required to sign an informed consent form prior to participation, indicating their voluntary agreement to take part in both the survey and interview components of the study.

2. Confidentiality:

- Participant confidentiality was strictly maintained. All personal identifiers removed from the data, and pseudonyms were used during the qualitative analysis to ensure that participants remain anonymous. The data stored securely and only accessible to the research team.

3. Right to Withdraw:

Participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences

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Conflict of Interest

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