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Maturity in Self and Psycho-spiritual Well-being

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Abstract

Using Jungian model of human development, the question of emotional maturity in relation to psycho-spiritual well-being was explored in the sample of 500 adult population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sample was composed of 262 men (52.4%) and 238 women (47.6%), whose age ranged from 17 to 47 with the mean age of 26.05 ± 6.381 . Two main measures were utilized in this study, the Pearson-Marr Archetypal Indicator (to measure the degree of maturity in self) and Spiritual Well-being Scale (to measure existential and religious well-being). The results were discussed in terms of hypotheses involving the meditating role of the archetypes in psychological maturity and psycho-spiritual well-being. The evidence implicating psychological maturity in determining religiosity, spirituality and well-being was compelling. Most of the secondary predictions were confirmed. As predicted, psychologically mature respondents obtained higher scores on all measures of spiritual well-being. Spiritual poverty apparently resulted when a respondent's major identification was with the lower levels of personal growth. Moreover, neurotic tendencies significantly reduced with psychological maturity and religious participation. These results confirm the importance of psychological maturity for psycho-spiritual health.

Keywords: Personal growth, Spirituality, Maturity, Religiosity, Ego, Soul, Spirit, Archetypes

Introduction

Spiritual health and maturity are different goals but are closely related. There is sufficient consensus among counselors and health care providers that maturity in self is significant to optimal human functioning. Maturity in self is important, and it seems likely that absence of it may contribute to a variety of psychological maladies. Various researchers (e.g. Westenberg & Block, 1993; Loevinger, 1997; Frankl, 1962) argued for much stronger conclusion-that development in self is essential to realize spiritual aspects of human nature. Ivtzan, Chan, Gardner & Prashar (2011) who equated psychological maturity with sense of completeness or wholeness in personality which is required to integrate social, psychological, and spiritual aspects of human development.

Although therapeutic utility of religion has been extensively documented yet very few studies recognize the risk factors associated to practicing religion without psychological maturity (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). Practicing religion without maturity can harm the great cause of religions. Although, reviews conclude that religiousness has been found to be related to positive traits such as kindness, compassion, forgiveness (Peterson & Seigman, 2004) and hope that provides buffer against depression and anxiety but a religions demeanor of immature individuals is associated with intolerance, prejudice towards members of out-groups, torture and extremism. Therefore, in the present research, it is argued with merit that maturity in 'Self' is necessary for practicing religion as without it one cannot achieve the same level of well-being as those who practice religion with considerable self maturity.

The recognition of personality for both religious and spiritual well-being is less documented in literature. Qualities associated to maturity in self provide individuals with a greater repertoire of skills and enhance behavioral flexibility due to which they can successfully draw benefits from personal, cultural and even religious recourses.

An extensive review, however, is available on a variety of mechanisms through which religion is favorable on psychological health (Hill & Pargament, 2003). Latest researchers (e.g., Dambrun & Ricard, 2011; Plotkin, 2008; Seaward, 2011) have clearly delineated the importance of spiritual experiences for well being. In support to this various clinical studies (e.g., Johnson et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2001; Greenberg, 2000) explained that lack of spiritual experiences may lead to social and psychological abnormality. Thus, today therapists and other mental health professional advocate incorporating religion and spirituality in their patients' treatment (Pargament, 2013). Unfortunately, this aspect of human development is less evident in the new paradigms. Without addressing the spiritual aspects, human

development theories provide incomplete knowledge of humanity. Therefore, the present research seeks to ensure that this oversight does not persist.

Further, this topic has great academic and applied significance because one cannot side step religion and its importance in today's world and the ways religion can support the development of maturity and ego strength. The links between self-development, psychological wellbeing and religiousness offer new ideas for helping people who are suffering emotionally and psychologically such as those living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or anywhere in the world.

Method

Sample

A total number of 500 participants took part consisting of Pakhtun attendees of ten representative of government and non government educational institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sample was made up of 262 men (52.4%) and 238 women (47.6%), whose age ranged from 17 to 47 with the mean age of 26.05 ± 6.381 . Mean age of the men was higher (26.94 ± 6.00) than women (25.07 ± 6.64). All the participants belonged to Pakhtun and Muslim community.

Measures

The study was based on the primary data collected through standardized scales measuring the level of personal growth, and spiritual wellbeing. The Pearson-Marr Archetypal Indicator (PMAI) gauged the personal growth (Pearson & Marr, 2002). The average test-retest reliability of the twelve subscales of PMAI is .72 with coefficient averaging .68 (Pearson & Marr, 2002).

The Spiritual Well-being Scale by Paloutzian and Ellison (1991) was supplemented with PMAI. It is a self-report instrument that measure Existential (meaning and purpose in life) and Religious (connectedness with God) Well-being. It has a test-retest reliability of .93; the internal consistency coefficients ranged from .94 to .89 in 7 different studies (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991).

Sampling Procedure

Initially, the population was contacted through the offices of their respective heads of the institutions. Later, a systematic sampling procedure was adopted to take on the participants for the present study. Young adult participants were enlisted from B.A./B.Sc./M.A./M.Sc. programs while, older adults were recruited from the M.Phil/PhD programs.

Hypotheses of the study

1. Subjects with less psychological maturity tend to experience existential crisis that can bring scores of existential and religious well-being to their lowest.
2. Subjects with high psychological maturity tend to score high on subjective psychological well-being.
3. Subjects who would neglect their spiritual growth and well being would more likely to suffer depression, anxiety, and stress.

Data analysis

For the purpose of comparing psychological maturity and well-being, Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) which was supported by McPeck (2008), was used that allowed modeling the values of multiple dependent scale variables (personal growth levels), based on their relationship to categorical predictor (spiritual wellbeing). Cohen (1977) suggested the effect size of .20 as a small, .50 as moderate, and .50-.80 as greater difference in group means. In addition, mean scores (as was directed by the PAMI manual) were computed to determine the level of personal growth.

Results

Using a causal comparative research design, the present study attempted to determine the plausible relationship between the personal growth level and psycho-spiritual well-being among the adult population of age 18-45 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Table 1

Mean Age of Respondents by Personal growth for N=500

	Level of Identification	Mean Age	N	Std. Deviation
↑ High	Ego (Preparatory stage)	27.1790	162	6.49597
	Soul (Exploratory stage)	20.6818	154	2.79754
	Spirit (Self-realization Stage)	29.5489	184	5.44800
Low	Total	26.0500	500	6.38130

F (2, n=500), 127.686, $p < .01$ (2-tailed) with Eta = 0.583

The finding suggests that psychological maturity is age dependent factor. Age was found a significant variable determining the level of personal growth, $F(2, n=500)$, 127.686, $p < .01$. Mean age was higher (29.5489 ± 5.44) for those who identified with higher level of personal growth (Spirit) than those who shown lower levels of personal growth i.e., Soul and Ego (20.681 ± 2.79 and 27.179 ± 6.495 respectively). These statistics indicate that spirit level of identifications tend to increase with an increase in age.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution Matrix of Personal growth level according to Gender

Gender	Ego	Soul	Spirit	Total
Women	71	102	65	238
Men	91	52	119	262
Total	162	154	184	500

Pearson Chi-Square, $X^2(2, n=500)$ 33.476, $p < .01$.

Approximately, 32.4% of the respondents were at the preparatory stage of personal growth, with 30.8% at Soul level development, indicating they were in the process of exploring possibilities to develop a true Self. On the other hand, 36.8% showed signs of developed true Self. Gender-wise, results showed a significant difference between the distribution of personal growth levels for men vs. women, ($X^2(2, n=500)$ 33.476, $p < .01$). A majority of the men identified archetypal energies at Spirit level of development which is a sign of psychological maturity. On the other hand, women showed less psychological maturity.

In general, 35.6% of the subjects exhibited weak religious involvement, 38% of them showing neutral involvement whereas 24.4% high religious involvement. Majority of the individuals (78.39%) at Ego level of development reported neutral level of religious activity. Among those who were preoccupied in the process of self discovery, a majority (96.7%) reported weaker level of religious activity; however, the majority of the self-actualizers (61.41%) had shown strong religiousness. With $df = 4$ and $\alpha .01$, the obtained chi-square value exceeded the critical value (13.28). Thus, a significant difference between the distribution of religious involvement for individuals with Ego, Soul, and Spirit level of development were confirmed, $X^2(4, n= 500)$ 508.6, $p < .01$.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution Matrix showing the Amount of Religious Activity depending on Personal growth Level

Level of Identification	Religious Activity			
	Weak	Neutral	Strong	Total
Ego	20	127	15	162
Soul	149	5	-	154
Spirit	9	58	113	184
Total	178	190	132	500

$\chi^2(4, n= 500) 508.6, p < .01$

Table 4 presents the potential relationship between psychological maturity (level of personal growth) and spiritual well-being (religious & existential). Individuals at Spirit level were more religious and scored high on Religious Well-being ($M=39.85$ and $SD=10.436$). Individuals at preparatory stage (Ego) were moderately religious with moderate level of Religious Well-being ($M=30.93$ and $SD=8.863$). However, individuals at Soul level of development, preoccupied with their personal inadequacies were found less religious. The mean score for this group fell well below the range of 30, which reflects low level of Religious Well-being in them.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Spiritual Well-being by Level of Personal growth

	Level of Identification	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Religious Well-being	Ego	30.93	8.863	162
	Soul	24.64	5.750	154
	Spirit	39.85	10.436	184
Existential Well-being	Ego	38.36	9.330	162
	Soul	21.09	5.518	154
	Spirit	43.25	8.658	184
Spiritual Well-being	Ego	69.43	16.172	162
	Soul	46.14	6.026	154
	Spirit	83.38	16.949	184

Mean score on Existential well-being was found higher at Spirit level of self growth ($M=43.250$ and $SD=8.658$). Existential well-being was found moderate at Ego

development level with the mean of 38.364 and standard deviation of 9.330. It was also noticed that the existential well-being considerably reduced at Soul level of development ($M=21.10$ and $SD=5.518$).

Altogether similar trend was noticed in the case of Spiritual Well-being. The mean scores on Spiritual well-being by level of personal growths were 69.43 for Ego, 46.14 for Soul, and 83.38 for Spirit level of development which indicated that Spiritual well-being increased with an increase self maturity.

Table 5

Post Hoc Multiple Comparison of Spiritual Well-being by Level of Personal growth

Dependent Variable	Level of Identification			Std. Error	Sig.
	(I)	(J)	(I-J)		
Religious Well-being	Ego	Soul	6.28*	.979	.000
		Spirit	-8.93*	.938	.000
	Soul	Ego	-6.28*	.979	.000
		Spirit	-15.21*	.950	.000
	Spirit	Ego	8.93*	.938	.000
		Soul	15.21*	.950	.000
Existential Well-being	Ego	Soul	17.2668*	.90866	.000
		Spirit	-4.8858*	.86986	.000
	Soul	Ego	-17.2668*	.90866	.000
		Spirit	-22.1526*	.88179	.000
	Spirit	Ego	4.8858*	.86986	.000
		Soul	22.1526*	.88179	.000
Spiritual Well-being	Ego	Soul	23.30*	1.598	.000
		Spirit	-13.95*	1.530	.000
	Soul	Ego	-23.30*	1.598	.000
		Spirit	-37.24*	1.551	.000
	Spirit	Ego	13.95*	1.530	.000
		Soul	37.24*	1.551	.000

*. Mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 5 shows multiple comparisons supporting the hypothesis that the level of personal growth tend to influence religious, existential, and spiritual well-being. According to Post Hoc test, the scores on Religious, Existential and Spiritual Well-being scales varied at three levels of personal growths. The pair-wise comparisons revealed that all groups were significantly different from each other at the significance level of .05.

Table 6

Multivariate Test

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's trace	.622	34.960	4.000	728.000	.000	.307
Wilks' lambda	.378	38.968	4.000	726.000	.000	.377
Hotelling's trace	1.475	43.032	4.000	724.000	.000	.440
Roy's largest root	1.475	86.536	2.000	364.000	.000	.611

The four Multivariate Tests of significance indicate effects of personal growth level on indicators of Spiritual Well-being (SWB). Since Pillai's trace was found robust therefore, a strong effect of independent variable (maturity in self) on the dependent variable (SWB) was confirmed.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix

	Life Satisfaction	RWB	EWB	SWB	Depression	Anxiety	Stress
RWB	.439**	1					
EWB	.662**	.668**	1				
SWB	.602**	.898**	.918**	1			
Depression	-.608**	-.664**	-.736**	-.771**	1		
Anxiety	-.639**	-.629**	-.680**	-.717**	.831**	1	
Stress	-.652**	-.560**	-.714**	-.700**	.815**	.847**	1

The correlation matrix in Table 7 indicates that Life satisfaction significantly correlated with the factor components of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) and Spiritual Well being (SWB). Factor components of DASS negatively correlated with Life satisfaction suggesting that life satisfaction increases with decrease in depression, anxiety and stress. On the other hand, factor components of SWB positively correlated with Life Satisfaction. These statistics confirmed the hypothesis that high scores on Spiritual Well-being tend to increase the level of scores on scale measuring Life Satisfaction. Similarly, among the other predictive variables, Religious well-being negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, and stress, $r = -.664$, $-.629$, and $-.560$ respectively. It seems that religious contents provide meaning which is reflected in the subjective feelings of the respondents and is translated into their psychological wellbeing.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine whether psychological maturity would be a predictor of psycho-spiritual well-being. The results support the long argued assertion for the benefits of psychological maturity on religious well-being and vice versa. The findings support that successful moral advancement can be made with increased psychological maturity. Further, based on the facts, there is evidence that age can play an important mediating role in psychological maturity. It seems that psychological maturity comes with age. Consequently, religious involvement also increases with age leading to psychological maturity.

Personal growth and spiritual well-being

Most aspects of wellbeing are affected by personal growth. Awakening inner resources (powers of the mind) tend to perk up general well being. The evidence implicating psychological maturity in the determining of psycho-spiritual wellbeing is compelling. In relation to PMAI scores, group exhibiting psychological maturity showed higher levels of psychological and spiritual well-being. Personal growth is related to religion for two reasons. First, psychological maturity causes “openness to experience” because realization of the powers of the mind can give access to understand physical and meta physical realities with little resistance. Second, meaning of life derived in religious context are more stable which can produce long lasting wellness. It is interesting to note that the psychological maturity not only provides helpful approximations of interior insights but help people to transform a mundane self into a spiritual self, to develop strong affinity with God for meaning in life, hope, health and well being.

Similarly, to understand the complexities of religious and spiritual matters, considerable psychological maturity is needed. In fact, a mature self recognizes the need to transcend which further encourages one to seek out existential spiritual connections. In this way personal growth tends to accompany spiritual growth in a person. It is the point in life where an ionized person (psychologically mature individual who is ready to ascend) tend to form a bond with religion to identify his spiritual self, parameters of life and purpose of life. If this spiritual quest is directed outward, the ultimate goal becomes to make the world a better place.

The above mentioned relationships help to conclude that the psychological maturity (conscious sense of self) tend to positively improve religious involvement. Self-awareness congregates the significance for both personal and spiritual growth. Self improvement and positive thinking tend to increase psychological wellness. While immaturity develops egotism, a mental state where self is the focal point.

With this psychological landscape, practicing religion could become detrimental to individuals and societies.

In Jungian literature, our specie has an innate predisposition in the form of Super-Ego to learn rules and social norms. It is important to note that this aspect of self serves society more than it serves individuals. It is, this tendency that creates religious impulse and if this religious impulse is not satisfied or acknowledged, it may produce psychological distress and unhappiness which may in turn lead to moral complex manifested as neurosis (psychological crisis due to psychic disintegration). Moreover, it is also possible that personal growth without religion would also create moral complex. This psychic disintegration would trigger unconscious impulse of soul to respond violently and irritability. Under these conditions, understanding of psychic motives and powers expands consciousness which is required to control ID and moral complexes.

Religion and Mental Health

Strong association of religion and mental health is not surprising because spiritually-based coping and practices provide beneficial effects for depressive symptoms, mood states, self-esteem (Simoni, Martone, Kervin, 2002). All religions intend to strengthen morality and existential wellness that are the hallmarks of well-being. Prayers and concept-oriented life may help people develop positive attitudes towards the life and improve the quality of life by reducing the risk of mental disorders. To account for this finding, it may be that when religiousness increases people enjoy prayers and follow clear goals in life. Such a sense of unity and goal-orientation in life maintains the inner psychological balance by reducing the risk of existential anxiety.

Since existential issues are related to personal worth, the failure may result in neurotic anxiety (Parry et al, 2007; Azimirad & Jalilvand, 2012; Tankink, 2007; Wortmann & Park, 2009; Peres, et al., 2007; Vis & Boynton. 2008). Many other studies (e.g, Koenig & Larson, 2001; Sawatzky et al, 2005; Ehsan & Pournaghash-Tehrani, 2012) do also support the role of religious association in improving the quality of life. For Bloom (2010), the religious activities are a major source of everyday pleasure. Spiritual, religious and concept-oriented life may help individuals have positive attitude toward self and others and improve mental health by lowering the incidence of neurotic anxiety, depression and stress. Contrary to this, some studies (e.g., Johnson et al., 1989; Maltby, 1999) were with the view that spiritual practices and beliefs sidestep or avoid unresolved emotional issues or unfinished developmental tasks. It is argued that such kind of practices keep people stuck at higher level that is only higher in conceptual sense.

In fact, the real danger lies when religions aim to Divine powers and encourage humans to be passive and grovel. This approach exerts harmful effects on the health of an individual and society. Without synergetic relationship of individual with God, the religion's role can mere be of regulatory. However to establish such a synergetic relationship considerable psychological maturity is required. For this happen a systematic educational campaign is needed such a campaign of course would be extremely complicated to implement under incredibly stressful circumstances in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Conclusion

In sum, the results of this study suggest that (a) a relationship does exist between psychological maturity level and psychological well-being. (b) Personal growth level is the best predictor of religiosity in this sample. (c) psychological maturity significantly reduce the risk of neurosis, and (d) Spiritual beliefs as coping mechanism are consistently related to psychological wellness.

Recommendations

The author suggests that social workers, educators, and mental health professionals should highlight the importance of psychological maturity for religion, personal health and wellbeing of the society. The researcher proposes academic attitude towards the religion because the implications of sidestepping religion could be dangerous. What is required is the need to respect this legitimate claim in educational setup because students already have religious speculations. Similarly, the academic world should try to develop tolerance for religions in their students as a marker of psychological maturity. It is recommended to weigh further the importance of religion which is most consistent and omnipresent element of human life. Therefore, future developments are awaited with eager anticipation.

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