

## Religious Practices, Age and Gender as Determinants of Psychological Well-Being

Alpna Agarwal\* Nishu Chaudhary\*\*

### Abstract

*The purpose of the present investigation was to study the effect of religious practices on psychological well-being. For this purpose psychological well-being was measured with the help of psychological well-being scale constructed by Prof S.N Rai & Mrs. Deepika Gupta (Hindi Adaptation of Ruff's psychological well-being scale). The sample consisted of 240 subjects. A 3×2×2 factorial design was used. There were three independent variables. The first independent variable was religious practices varied at three levels i.e. at home, in any institution and no religious practices. The second independent variable was age varied at two levels i.e. 25 to 35 years and 45 to 55 years. The third independent variable was gender also varied at two levels i.e. male and female. Three way ANOVA, Mean and Newman Keul's multiple comparison test was applied for analyzing the data. On the basis of obtained results it was found that religious practices and age have significant effect on psychological well-being whereas gender has no significant effect on psychological well-being.*

**Keywords:** *Psychological well-being, Religious and non-religious practices and Age group*

---

**About Authors:** \*Assistant Professor, Psychology Department, Ch. Charan Singh University, Meerut.

\*\*M.Phil., Psychology Department, Ch. Charan Singh University, Meerut.

Psychological well-being is about live long well. It refers to how people evaluate their lives; these evaluations may be in the form of cognitions or in the form of affect. It can be define in terms of internal experience of the respondent and their own perception of their lives. Psychological well-being is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively.

An increased interest in the effects of religion or religious practices on mental health and psychological well-being is apparent in psychological literature. Psychologists have long been interested in studying the role of religious practices on psychological well-being. It had been well-accepted that religious beliefs can shape a person's psychological perception of pain or disability as it creates a mindset that enables the person to relax and allows healing on

its own. When it comes to articulating the basic structure of psychological well-being, discussions nearly always center on the distinction between positive and negative affect and life-satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976, Bradburn, 1969; Bryant & Veroff, 1982; Liang 1984, 1985).

Within the psychology of health, an important contribution made by researcher in psychology of religion is the significant relationship between religiosity and mental well-being. A large number of studies show positive effects of religiosity on well-being. According to Moberg (1979) happiness is greater and psychological stress is lower for those who attend religious services regularly. The regular practice of religion encourages such beneficial effects on mental health such as less depression, higher self-esteem and greater

family and marital happiness. There had been always a positive association between religion & mental well-being which eventually enhances general psychological functioning.

There are various types of religious practices, such as prayer, fasting, yoga & meditation, which have a significant effect on psychological well-being and over all functioning of the body. As Poloma & Pendleton (1991) suggested that colloquial prayers were associated with higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction. Similarly, meditation may have a number of health benefits, (Domino, 1977; Solberg, et. al. 1996), by decreasing anxiety, depression, irritability and moodiness, and improving learning abilities, memory, self-actualization, feelings of vitality and rejuvenation, and emotional stability (Astin, 1997, Astin et.al. 2003; Solberg et al 1996; Walton et al, 1995).

Religious Practices has great influence on the lives of human beings for thousands of years and it is found in all known human societies. Most religions provide their members a set of precepts or norms to guide their behavior (Smelser, 1981). In eastern countries like India, religious activities are generally found as an intimate part of the life of local community, Dwivedi (2006) found that religion offers a unique set of moral values and rules to guide human being in their relationship with the environment Banth and Talwar (2012) also found high correlation between anasakti yoga and well-being.

Additionally, religious practices offer rich social resources with a strong sense of ethics. As Idler (2008) highlights many of the positive benefits that religious practices can have on one's health and well-being.

Religiosity plays a major part in the life of an individual. It can provide hope in despair. In daily life, people report that they are able to

experience deep peace even in the midst of mental distress (Underwood & Teresi, 2002)

### **Objective-**

The purpose of the present study was to study the effect of religious practices on psychological well-being.

### **Hypotheses-**

The following hypotheses have been formulated in the present study-

1. There will be significant effect of religious practices on psychological well-being.
2. There will be significant effect of age on psychological well-being.
3. There will be significant effect of gender on psychological well-being.

## **METHOD**

### **Experimental design-**

3×2×2 Factorial design was used in this study. It contained three independent variables that was religious practices (at home, in any institution, no religious practices), age (25 to 35 years & 45 to 55 years) and gender (male & female).

**Sample-** In the present study 240 subjects were finally selected from Meerut city. There were equal number of male and female of 25 to 35 and 45 to 55 years age group.

**Tool-** The psychological well-being scale is a reliable and valid measure of psychological well-being. This test is constructed by Rai & Gupta. The present measure of psychological well-being comprises 54 items, to be rated on six-point scale. The reliability was found to be .77 and the validity was found to be .75 statistically significant at .01 level.

### **Procedure:**

A very cooperative and healthy environment was created. For collecting the data, the investigator approached individually to all subjects. Psychological well-being scale was

given to the subjects. When subjects fill up the scale, these were collected. The scoring was done according to the manual.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data ANOVA, Mean scores and Newman keuls were calculated. Results are shown in table- I, II, and III.

The findings of the present study clearly show significant effect of religious practices and age on psychological well-being. Religious practices plays a positive role in providing a sense of identity, a network of social support, and a coherent frame-work for responding to existential questions. People who do religious

**Table-I**  
**Summary Table of ANOVA for Psychological well-being**

| Source of Variance      | SS       | Df  | MS      | F       |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|---------|---------|
| A(Religious Practices)  | 4117.97  | 2   | 2058.99 | 9.927** |
| B(Age)                  | 1016.81  | 1   | 1016.81 | 4.902*  |
| C(Gender)               | 734.99   | 1   | 734.99  | 3.543   |
| AB                      | 40.78    | 2   | 20.39   | 0.098   |
| BC                      | 552.09   | 1   | 552.09  | 2.66    |
| AC                      | 141.95   | 2   | 70.975  | 0.34    |
| ABC                     | 175.46   | 2   | 87.73   | 0.423   |
| With treatments (Error) | 47286.6  | 228 | 207.397 |         |
| Total                   | 54066.65 | 239 |         |         |

\*\*F.99 (2,228) = 4.71

\*F.95 (1,228) = 3.89

**Table- II**  
Mean scores of psychological well-being for Factor A (Religious practices)  
Factor B (Age) and Factor C (Gender).

|                | Factor-A (Religious Practices) |                               |                                   | Factor- B (Age)        |               | Factor C (Gender) |                |
|----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
|                | A1<br>(At home)                | A2<br>(In any<br>Institution) | A3<br>(No religious<br>Practices) | B1<br>(25-35<br>years) | B2<br>(45-55) | C1<br>(Male)      | C2<br>(Female) |
| Mean<br>Scores | 213.76                         | 211.61                        | 204.1                             | 211.88                 | 207.77        | 208.07            | 211.57         |

**Table- III**  
**Summary Table of Newman keul's Comparison test for factor-A(Religious Procticies)**

| Ordered Mean             | Ordered Mean            |                        |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
|                          | 204.1 (A <sub>3</sub> ) | 204.1(A <sub>3</sub> ) | 211.61(A <sub>2</sub> ) |
| 211.61 (A <sub>2</sub> ) |                         | 7.51**                 | 9.66**                  |
|                          |                         |                        | 2.15                    |

practices can cope with negative life events and lead to a sense of shared understanding of a loss or a trauma. It can also lead to protective efforts against suicide or substance misuse. According to Green and Ellitt (2010) people who identify as religious tend to report better health, happiness and psychological well-being. It is evident from mean scores that people who do religious practices at home have high level of psychological well-being in comparison of other two groups. The observed cause is that, they are free to do religious practices whenever they want there is not any kind of social and intuitional pressure. They know how to achieve their goal and devoted to their work, family, society and God. Some researchers like Juyal & Dandona (2011) found that people with an intrinsic religious orientation, exhibited less physiological reactivity towards stress than people with an extrinsic religious orientation or attached to any institution. They had also less fear of death and greater feelings of well-being. Joshi, Kumar and Jain (2008) found that psychological well-being is deeply related to the individual's religious beliefs.

Some religious practices like yoga develops the physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual components, thus building up a well-round organic personality (Melhotra et.al., 2002). They handle all the responsibilities with good time management as they know their strengths and weaknesses. Religious practices can help to maintain mental

health and prevent mental diseases. They help to cope with anxiety, fears, frustrations, anger, anomie, inferiority feelings despondency and isolation (Scheff, 1979). Thus it is evident that religious practices enhance psychological well-being.

Results also suggest that 25-35 years age group have high level of psychological well-being in comparison of 45-55 years age group. The reason may be that they are mentally & physically fit and give adequate time to their religious practices, work and family which make them satisfied. Rathore (1991) investigated the well-being of middle-aged and older men, using measure of quality of life, well-being, self esteem, positive negative effect. Older men were found to have poorer quality of life, poor subjective well-being and self esteem compared to middle aged men. Kirby and Coleman (2004) also conducted a study on spirituality and well-being they indicated that marital status, age, education other health problems, gender, degree of frailty had a negative effect on subjective well-being.

Young age groups have high level of psychological well-being because they are conscious about their health and follows religious practices, which develop their inner life through yoga, meditation, prayer and contemplation. They also have large social networks which help in enhancing an individual's psychological well-being.

The third variable was gender (male &

female) have no significant effect on psychological well-being because in the present time both male and female are equally participating in religious activities. No gender differences were found in the aspects of positive effect, negative effect, mother relationship, teacher relationship, environmental mastery, personal growth and self acceptance (Perez 2012). Every individual in the society (male or female) wants to enhance their well-being and they get equal social involvement, that's why they equally participate in religious practices.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the obtained result of the present study that people who do religious practices at home have high level of psychological well-being in comparison of those who do religious practice in any institution and those who are not involve in any kind of religious practices. These findings indicate that religious practices positively affect the level of psychological well-being.

The study also supports that people of 25-35 years age group have high level of psychological well-being in comparison to 45-55 years age group.

## REFERENCES

- Andrews, F. M. & Withey, S. B. (1976). Social indicators of well-being: America's perception of life quality. New York: Plenum Press.
- Astin, J.A. (1997). Stress reduction through mindfulness meditation: Effects on psychological symptomatology, sense of control, and spiritual experiences. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 66, 97-106.
- Astin, J. A., Berman, B. M., Bausell, B., Lee, W. L., Hochberg, M., & Forys, K. L. (2003). The treatment efficacy of mindfulness meditation plus qigong movement therapy in the treatment of fibromyalgia: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Rheumatology*, 30, 2257-2262.
- Banth, S. and Talwar, C. (2012). Anasakti, the Hindu Ideal, and its Relationship to well-being and Orientations to Happiness, *Journal of Religion and Health*, 51 (3) 934-946.
- Bradburn, N. M. (1969). The structure-of psychological well-being. Chicago: Aldine.
- Bryant, E B., & Veroff, J. (1982). The structure of psychological well-being: A sociohistorical analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43, 653-673.
- Domino, G. (1977). Transcendental meditation and creativity: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62, 358-362.
- Dwivedi, O.P. (2006). Hindu Religion and Environmental well-being. *The oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*.
- Green, M. and Elliott, M. (2010). "Religion, health and Psychological well-being." *Journal of Religion and Health*, 49 (2) 149-163.
- Idler, E. (2008). The Psychological and Physical Benefits of spiritual/Religious Practices. *Spirituality in Higher Education Newsletter*, 4(2).
- Joshi, S; Kumari, S. & Jain, M. (2008). Religious Belief and its relations to psychological well-being. *Journal of the India Academy of Applied Psychology*, 34 (2), 345-354.
- Juyal & Dondna (2011). *Spirituality and well-being Positive Psychological Global Vision Publishing House, New Dalhi*.
- Kirby, S.E.; Coleman, (2004). Spirituality and well-being in frail and non-frail older adults. *The Journals of Gerontology*

- series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 598, (3), 123-129.
- Liang, J. (1984). Dimensions of the Life satisfaction Index A: A structure formulation. *Journal of Gerontology*, 39, 613-612.
- Liang, J. (1985). A structural integration of the affect balance scale and the life satisfaction Index A. *Journal of Gerontology*, 40, 552-561.
- Malhotra, V.; Singh, S.; Singh, K.P.; Gupta, P. & Sharma S.B. (2002). Study of yoga asanas in assessment of pulmonary function in NIDDM patients. *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*. 46, 313-320.
- Moberg, D.O. (1979). The development of social indicators of spiritual well-being for quality of life research. In David O. Moberg (Ed.) *Spiritual well-being: Sociological perspectives*, Washington DC: University Press of America.
- Perez, J.A. (2012). "Gender difference in psychological well-being among Filipino college student samples." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2, (13).
- Poloma, M. & Pendleton, B. (1991). The effects of prayer and prayer experience on measures of general well-being. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 10, 71-83.
- Rathore, (1991). A Comparative study of emotional problems in old and middle aged men, *Indian Journal of Gerontology*, 5, 97-101.
- Scheff, T.J. (1979). *Catharsis in healing ritual and drama*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Smelser, N.J. (1981). *Sociology*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Solberg, E.E., Berglund, K.A., Engen O., Ekeberg, O., & Loeb, M. (1996). The effect of meditation on shooting performance. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 30, 342-346.
- Underwood, C.G. & Teresi, J. (2002). The daily spiritual experience scale: Development, theoretical description, reliability exploratory factor analysis and preliminary construct.
- Walton, K. G., Pugh, N.D., Gelderloos, P., & Macrae, P. (1995). Stress reduction and preventing hypertension: Preliminary support.

