



Impact of Spirituality on Mental Health among 'Gen Z' College Students

Prof. Viresh S. Hachade

Assistant Professor

Sangameshwar College, Solapur

Email-viresh.hachade@gmail.com

Mo. No. -8999573042

Abstract: -

Generation Z has grown up in a rapidly changing technological and social environment, making the promotion of mental health an important concern in contemporary psychology. Rapid urbanization, digitalization, academic pressure, changing lifestyles, and increasing social expectations have contributed to various psychological challenges among young adults. At the same time, spirituality has emerged as an important psychological resource that promotes resilience, emotional regulation, optimism, purpose in life, and overall well-being. Although previous studies have reported a positive association between spirituality and mental health, most of the available evidence originates from Western countries, with limited research focusing on Indian Generation Z college students. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the impact of spirituality on the mental health of Generation Z college students aged 18–25 years in Solapur

Keywords: -*Spirituality, Mental Health, Gen Z, Positive Psychology, Psychological Well-being.*

• **Introduction: -**

Historically India has emphasized spiritual traditions through diverse philosophical schools of thought, cultural practices, and communal living. Consequently, people from various religious and spiritual traditions coexist in the country today. But in the current scenario rapid urbanization, digitalization, changing lifestyles, and the mounting pressure associated with education are bringing about profound changes in the experiences of the youth. Today's college students are seen striving to strike a balance between traditional cultural values and a modern technology-driven lifestyle. Therefore, in these changing circumstances it is important from both theoretical and practical perspectives to understand whether spirituality continues to serve as a protective factor for mental health. Over the past few decades 'spirituality' has emerged as a significant subject in interdisciplinary research spanning fields such as psychology, psychiatry, education, medicine, and public health (Koenig, 2012). Spirituality helps strengthen qualities such as resilience, optimism, a sense of purpose in life, a positive outlook, emotional regulation, and the capacity for psychological adaptation (Pargament, 2011). While modern psychology has developed various therapeutic methods to improve mental health, increasing attention is now being paid to 'positive psychological resources' that help individuals cope with adversity. Spirituality is one such crucial resource—a potential protective factor that researchers need to focus on.



Although spirituality encompasses certain religious beliefs and traditions, it is not limited to any specific religion or faith tradition. In fact, there are many individuals who embrace spirituality without identifying with any particular religion. Consequently, spirituality is widely accepted as a universal concept. From this perspective, spirituality is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond religion, signifying a quest for the meaning and purpose of life, a sense of connection, inner peace, self-actualization, and a relationship with a power greater than oneself.

In positive psychology today spirituality is viewed as a 'mental strength' (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The focus lies not merely on alleviating mental health issues but also on fostering positive emotions, personal strengths, a sense of life's meaning and purpose, gratitude, forgiveness, hope, and resilience (Diener et al., 2018). This enables individuals to derive greater meaning from life experiences and navigate stressful situations with increased emotional stability. Spirituality often facilitates these complex psychological processes.

In the current century, 'mental health' is considered one of the most critical aspects of health. Factors such as rapid progress, globalization, changing family structures, academic competition, economic uncertainty, and increasing reliance on digital communication are observed to have a profound impact on the mental health and well-being of young people. While technological advancements appear to improve the standard of living, they have simultaneously created new mental health challenges, particularly for adolescents and young adults. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness; rather, it is a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being" that enables an individual to realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to society. Thus, mental health has become an integral component of holistic health today. Against this backdrop, the World Health Organization has consistently emphasized the need to promote mental health throughout the lifespan by adopting an integrated and person-centered approach. (World Health Organization, 2022)

Today the World Health Organization regards access to accessible, acceptable, and quality mental health services as a fundamental human right for every individual. Adopting a holistic approach to health the organization emphasizes that the promotion of mental health must be integrated with physical health, brain health, and community-based support systems. (World Health Organization, 2022)

Today the attention of psychologists, educationists, and policymakers is focused on 'Generation Z' (Gen Z), as this is a distinct generation that has grown up in a unique social and technological environment. Generally, individuals born between 1997 and 2012 are classified as belonging to 'Generation Z' (Twenge, 2017). From a very young age, this generation has been exposed to smartphones, social media, artificial intelligence (AI), online education, and digital communication. They are often characterized as being digitally connected, tech-savvy, globally aware, and socially conscious. However, conversely, constant digital connectivity has also increased the risk of issues such as stress, anxiety, loneliness, cyberbullying, sleep disturbances, the 'fear of missing out' (FOMO), social comparison with others, and emotional exhaustion.

Today college students belonging to Generation Z are characterized by the fact that "they face multiple developmental challenges simultaneously". They are expected to achieve academic success, prepare for future careers, build interpersonal relationships, establish their own identities, and adapt to rapidly changing social expectations. These developmental tasks often coincide with financial concerns, uncertainty regarding employment opportunities, and intensifying academic competition. Consequently, elevated levels of mental stress and emotional instability are observed among many young people today. Recent international and regional reports have identified youth as a priority group for strengthening mental health



services, as many mental health issues emerge during adolescence or early adulthood, yet timely access to support remains limited. (World Health Organization, 2022)

Previous research indicates that high levels of spirituality are associated with better psychological adjustment, greater life satisfaction, resilience in the face of adversity, lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and overall improved well-being (Koenig, 2012; Pargament, 2011). However, most available studies have been conducted in Western countries, where cultural values, educational systems, family structures, and the nature of spirituality differ significantly from the situation in India. Moreover, there has been limited empirical research focusing on students from semi-urban and rural areas, such as the Solapur district in Maharashtra. This gap underscores the need for context-specific research to determine whether spirituality remains a useful psychological tool for maintaining mental health among Indian youth today.

The present study focuses on Generation Z college students aged 18–25 years in Solapur District, Maharashtra. This age group represents an important developmental period characterized by identity formation, emotional maturity, career planning, and increasing independence (Arnett, 2000). Examining the relationship between spirituality and mental health in this population may provide valuable evidence for educators, psychologists, counsellors, mental health professionals, and policymakers. The findings may also contribute to designing preventive mental health programmes that incorporate culturally relevant psychological strengths such as spirituality alongside conventional mental health interventions. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the impact of spirituality on the mental health of Generation Z college students in Solapur District, Maharashtra, and contribute to the existing body of knowledge within the Indian socio-cultural context.

• **Review of Literature**

Koenig (2009) reviewed research on the relationship between religion, spirituality, and mental health, with particular emphasis on depression, anxiety, substance misuse, psychosis, and suicide-related outcomes. The review found that religious and spiritual involvement was generally associated with better psychological adjustment, greater hope, effective coping strategies, and lower levels of psychological distress. However, the author emphasized that the psychological impact of spirituality depends on the quality and nature of an individual's religious or spiritual experiences.

Tahan et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to assess the level of spiritual health among Iranian university students. The review included 20 studies comprising a total sample of 4,805 students. The findings revealed an overall spiritual health level of 80.50%, although considerable variation was observed across individual studies.

Maraldi et al. (2020) reviewed the possibility of response bias in studies examining religion, spirituality, and mental health. The authors concluded that although many studies have reported positive psychological outcomes associated with spirituality, these findings may be influenced by social desirability, confounding variables, and other methodological limitations. They recommended more rigorous research designs to strengthen the validity of future findings.

Cowden et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between religious or spiritual struggles and psychological distress by testing alternative causal models. The findings suggested that spiritual struggles and psychological distress influence one another in a reciprocal manner, indicating that the relationship is complex rather than unidirectional.

Park et al. (2023) examined the use of a spiritual self-care mobile application among Generation Z and young millennial participants. The study explored participants' experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding digitally delivered spiritual self-care. The findings



indicated that participants considered accessible digital spiritual resources beneficial for enhancing both spiritual well-being and mental health.

Park et al. (2024) conducted a scoping review titled Digital Methods for the Spiritual and Mental Health of Generation Z. More than 400 publications were initially identified; however, only five studies satisfied the inclusion criteria. The review concluded that empirical research integrating Generation Z, spirituality, mental health, and digital interventions remains limited, highlighting the need for further investigation in this emerging area.

- **Problem of the Study: -**

"To study the impact of spirituality on the mental health of Generation Z college students in Solapur District."

- **Objectives:-**

To study the impact of spirituality on the mental health of 'Gen Z' college students in Solapur district.

- **Hypotheses: -**

Spirituality has a significant impact on the mental health of 'Generation Z' college students in Solapur district.

- **Methodology:-**

- **SAMPLE: -**

The present study employed a purposive sampling technique. A total of 60 Generation Z college students (30 males and 30 females), aged 18–25 years, were selected from various colleges in Solapur District, Maharashtra. The sample included participants from both urban and rural backgrounds.

To assess spirituality, the Spirituality Attitude Scale (SAS) developed by Akbar Husain, M. Jahan, A. Nishat, R. N. Siddiqui, and M. Akram (2011) was administered. The scale measures individuals' attitudes toward spirituality, with higher scores indicating a more positive spiritual attitude.

Mental health was assessed using the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) developed by Jagdish and A. K. Srivastava (1983). The inventory consists of 56 items measuring six dimensions of mental health. Higher scores on the inventory indicate better mental health.

- **Research Deign: -**

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the impact of spirituality on the mental health of Generation Z college students. Spirituality was considered the independent variable, while mental health was treated as the dependent variable. Data were collected using standardized psychological instruments, and the proposed hypothesis was tested through Simple Linear Regression Analysis to determine the predictive effect of spirituality on mental health.

Predictor Variable	Outcome Variable	Statistical Technique
Spirituality	Mental Health	Simple Linear Regression



- **Results: -**

Table 1*Simple Linear Regression Predicting Mental Health from Spirituality*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	55.377	27.064	—	2.046	.045
Spirituality	1.161	0.239	.538	4.861	< .001

Note: $N = 60$, $R = .538$, $R^2 = .289$, Adjusted $R^2 = .277$, $F(1, 58) = 23.63$, $p < .001$.

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of spirituality on the mental health of Generation Z college students. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 58) = 23.63$, $p < .001$, explaining 28.9% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = .289$). Spirituality emerged as a significant positive predictor of mental health ($B = 1.161$, $SE = 0.239$, $\beta = .538$, $t = 4.861$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that higher levels of spirituality are associated with better mental health among Generation Z college students.

- **Results and Interpretation: -**

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of spirituality on the mental health of 'Generation Z' college students. The overall regression model was statistically significant [$F(1, 58) = 23.63$, $p < .001$], indicating that spirituality is a significant predictor of mental health. The model explained 28.9% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = .289$; Adjusted $R^2 = .277$), suggesting that spirituality is a crucial factor for the mental health of 'Generation Z' college students.

The regression coefficient revealed a significant positive effect of spirituality on mental health ($B = 1.161$, $SE = 0.239$, $\beta = .538$, $t = 4.861$, $p < .001$). This finding implies that for every one-unit increase in spirituality, the mental health score increased by approximately 1.16 units. The positive standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .538$) indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between spirituality and mental health.

The findings support the research hypothesis that spirituality has a significant positive impact on the mental health of Generation Z college students. The results suggest that students with higher levels of spirituality exhibit better mental health. Therefore, spirituality can be viewed as a vital psychological resource for fostering positive mental health among 'Generation Z' college students.

- **Conclusion: -**

This study examined the impact of spirituality on the mental health of 'Generation Z' college students in the Solapur district of Maharashtra. Simple linear regression analysis revealed that spirituality is a significant positive determinant of mental health. The findings indicate a correlation between high levels of spirituality and better mental health; furthermore, spirituality accounts for approximately 28.9% of the variance in mental health scores. These results suggest that spirituality serves as a vital psychological resource, helping to enhance emotional well-being, resilience, optimism, and the capacity to cope effectively with challenges among young people. This study highlights the importance of integrating spirituality into mental health promotion programs, counseling services, and educational initiatives for college students. Although spirituality does not explain every aspect of mental health, it plays a significant role as a meaningful protective factor that enhances mental well-being. The findings of this study contribute valuable evidence confirming that spirituality is



beneficial for the positive mental health of 'Generation Z' within the Indian socio-cultural context.

• **Limitations: -**

1. This study was conducted using a small sample.
2. The study was limited to Solapur district, Maharashtra.
3. Only spirituality was examined as a predictor of mental health.
4. A cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study.
5. The findings were based on self-report psychological measures, which may be susceptible to response bias, such as social desirability.

• **Suggestions: -**

1. Mental health promotion programs should incorporate spirituality-based activities in colleges.
2. Counselling services should include spirituality as a positive psychological resource.
3. Future studies should use larger and more diverse samples.
4. Similar research should be conducted across different age groups and geographical regions.
5. Future research should examine additional psychological and social factors influencing mental health.

• **References: -**

1. Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
2. Cowden, R. G., Davis, E. B., Aten, J. D., & Worthington, E. L. (2022). Religious and spiritual struggles and psychological distress: A systematic review. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Advance online publication.
3. Husain, A., Jahan, M., Nishat, A., Siddiqui, R. N., & Akram, M. (2011). *Spirituality Attitude Scale (SAS): Manual*. Aligarh, India: Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University.
4. Jagdish, & Srivastava, A. K. (1983). *Mental Health Inventory (MHI): Manual*. Agra, India: National Psychological Corporation.
5. Koenig, H. G. (2009). Research on religion, spirituality, and mental health: A review. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54(5), 283–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674370905400502>
6. Maraldi, E. O., Martins, M. C. F., & Zangari, W. (2020). Response bias in research on religion, spirituality, and mental health: A critical review. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 42(3), 249–270.
7. Park, S. Y., Huberty, J., Yourell, J., McAlister, K. L., & Beatty, C. C. (2023). A spiritual self-care mobile app (Skylight) for mental health, sleep, and spiritual well-being among Generation Z and young millennials: Cross-sectional survey. *JMIR Formative Research*, 7, e50239. <https://doi.org/10.2196/50239>
8. Park, S. Y., Huberty, J., Yourell, J., McAlister, K. L., & Beatty, C. C. (2024). Digital methods for the spiritual and mental health of Generation Z: Scoping review. *Interactive Journal of Medical Research*, 13, e48929. <https://doi.org/10.2196/48929>
9. Pargament, K. I. (2011). *Spiritually integrated psychotherapy: Understanding and addressing the sacred*. Guilford Press.
10. Tahan, M., & Azari, F. (2022). Spiritual health in Iranian university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Neuropsychopharmacologia Hungarica*, 24(2), 78–84.
11. Twenge, J. M. (2017). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy—and completely unprepared for adulthood*. Atria Books.