

# IMPACT OF SPIRITUALITY ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND ITS POSITIVE OUTCOMES

**Dr. Ejaz Ahmed Khan<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Hussain<sup>2</sup>, Mian Muhammad Ali Awais<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Khadija Murtaza<sup>4</sup>, Shama Naz<sup>5</sup>, Hafiza Hafsa Majeed<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Government Graduate College Samanabad Faisalabad, Pakistan Email: [ejaz.psychologist@gmail.com](mailto:ejaz.psychologist@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Govt. College University Faisalabad, Pakistan Email: [hussainbaloch890@gmail.com](mailto:hussainbaloch890@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> PhD Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, The University of Faisalabad, Pakistan Email: [mianaliawais154@gmail.com](mailto:mianaliawais154@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Western Punjab College of Law, Faisalabad, Pakistan Email: [Khadijamurtaza12@yahoo.com](mailto:Khadijamurtaza12@yahoo.com)

<sup>5</sup> PhD Research Scholar, Department of Islamic studies, Government College, University Faisalabad, Pakistan

<sup>6</sup> Lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies, Government College Women University, Faisalabad, Pakistan Email: [hafsamajeed@gcwuf.edu.pk](mailto:hafsamajeed@gcwuf.edu.pk)

## ABSTRACT

Conflict resolution is a universal phenomenon and an inseparable part of our life. After the tragic incident of September 11, conflict resolution has gained high profile attention through worldwide. The main purpose of this study was to determine the role of spirituality in conflict resolution and positive attributes of life among university students. This is a cross-sectional design and purposive sampling method was used for data collection. The findings revealed that spirituality has significant positive correlation with conflict resolution, life satisfaction, self-esteem and psychological well-being. Moreover, from the gender perspective, female students were high on overall psychological well-being as compare to the male counterparts. These results shared valuable insights regarding the key role of spirituality in conflict resolution and positive attributes of life. It was recommended that academicians, faith healers and educational psychologists should develop and promote the distinctive courses fostering the importance of spirituality and well-being.

**Key Words:** Spirituality, Conflict Resolution, Life Satisfaction, Self-esteem, Well-being

## Introduction

From the last three decades there is a mountainous effort to establish the role of spirituality in conflict resolution. The terrible incidents of September 11, 2001, raise the importance of spirituality for peace and conflict studies. The significance of peace and conflict resolution is considered and acknowledged worldwide for stability, growth, prosperity, mutual respect and dignity of all human beings without any discrimination of gender, race, ethnicity, religion and belief. After the process of conflict resolution, the different segments of society provide the opportunities to an individual for his/her social reintegration, reinstatement and revitalization, existential security, personal perfection and revolution.

## Literature review

Fetzer Institute (1999) described that “religiousness or religiosity has precise behavioral, social, doctrinal, and denominational features because it comprises a classification of worship and faith that is shared within a group. Spirituality is concerned with the transcendent, addressing vital questions

These benefits have a deep rooted connection with spirituality and help out to make a close contact with divine or God (Said, Lerche & Lerche, 1995; Bateson & Bateson 1987). There is general sensitivity about spirituality that it has been embedded from religion and this connection between these two concepts keenly discussed over the past more than two decades (Dent, Higgins & Wharff, 2005). The outcome of this inspiring discussion has opened the doors for social researchers to investigate the role of spirituality in all walks of life like leadership, workplace settings, business, marriage conflicts, health care, mental health as well as conflict resolution (Piedmont et al., 2009; Fernando, 2007; Catanzaro, 2001; Curtis & Ellison, 2002).

about life’s meaning, with the statement that there is more to life than what we see or fully understand. While religions aim to raise and sustain the spiritual life and spirituality is often a prominent characteristic of religious participation. It is possible to adopt the outward forms of religious worship and doctrine without

having a strong relationship to the transcendent”.

In the previous literature there are many numerous bountiful exploration and discussion about these terms. Spirituality has been considered the significant measure of religiosity and a journey for dedication, while religiosity has been discussed a strong association with a systematized and institutional conviction. Spirituality is frequently exposed extra specific and internalized perception as compare to religiosity (Daaleman & VandeCreek, 2000; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Koenig, McCullough & Larson, 2001; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005; Paragament, Cole, VandeCreek, Belavich, Brant & Perez, 1999; Zinnbauer, Paragament & Scott, 1999). Principally religion is well-defined in these words that it a planned structure of way of life and devotion that somebody follow. On the other side spirituality universally discussed a supreme affiliation with God or divinity as a staple of personal life which stimulates the individual for carefulness (Emblen, 1992). So the main difference between religion and

spirituality is the amount of relationship with traditional or organized belief. Spirituality has a wide-ranging tendency of disassociation from religion in its context and framework because it is defined basically as personal connections and experiences, whereas religiosity progressively intended to refer with existing religious actions and involvement.

Although these terms have similar implications but latest characterizations clearly make a difference among these. Concerning the association between spirituality and religion, Miller and Thoresen (2003) described that spirituality is an interpersonal and transcendent sacred affiliation in life with divine or God beyond the self. Spirituality has humble, multidimensional and vibrant features of well-being, peace, love and health (Levin, 2001; Oman & Thoresen, 2002).

Religion is a comprehensive concept as compare to spirituality and continuously emphasis the pursuit for significant relation with sacred or God (Pargament et al., 2004).

## Spirituality and Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a worldwide phenomenon and unavoidable part of our levies. Conflict occurs at all levels of society in all types of settings. When there are gaps among the respects of others opinions, needs, interests, beliefs and views, conflict fills this gap obviously. Algert and Watson (2002) described conflict as a

struggle between individuals with contradictory needs, values, goals, beliefs and ideas. Conflict resolution is a systematic process of deciding the disagreements or conflicts by considering the needs and interests of both parties so that they can achieve the acceptable solution of their conflicts. Negotiation, mediation, arbitration

and conciliation are the most widely accepted used techniques for conflict resolution process successfully. Its main aims are to find diverse solutions which are acceptable to both parties to achieve peaceful coexistence.

Spirituality and conflict resolution is a rising and significant research area for social scientists, peace lovers and faith healers around the world. This new field has attained much consideration for resolving the conflict at micro and macro level. In the renovation of personal and social domains of life spirituality is playing a dynamic role for the well-being of human beings. It has a magnetic impact on findings the new meanings of life (Powell, 2003).

The concept of Conflict resolution in Islam has started in the opening days of the Islamic movement. In Mecca, the holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) accomplished non-violent conflict resolution exclusively (Abu-Nimer, 2003). The Prophet of Islam embraced the way of pacifism or nonaggression throughout his time at Mecca. One of the most famous mediation of Prophet was a peaceful solution of the sacred stone placement to the desired height among the honorable tribes of Mecca. This is the first example of win-win solution without any violence (Abu-Nimer, 2003). Islam propagates two styles of conflict resolution from the first day of its appearance (Said et al., 2001).

### **1. Tahkim (Arbitration).**

The Prophet was acknowledged as an arbitrator by the Islamic and non-Islamic people

throughout his life due to his aptitude to catch the win-win solutions (Said et al., 2001).

### **2. Sulh (Conciliation).**

This is a community based manner for resolving conflict. The aggrieved parties agreed upon to continue communication and sought out the real factors of grievances, promise not to use violent activities, and recognize the significance of their unending relationship. Compensation made to the grieved party by the aggressor. Subsequently the two parties come together for a ritual of forgiveness and reconciliation, involving sharing bread, sharing coffee and shaking hands (Said et al., 2001).

From more than three decades and in recent years there was a growing interest of research on psychological well-being along its impact on the overall growth of an individual. Social and clinical psychologists have given more attention and importance, and studied psychological well-being comprehensively (Campbell, 1981; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Diener & Diener, 2002). Well-being is considered as the comprehensive quality of life that an individual has. Peace, happiness, life satisfaction and gratification are the basic components of well-being. These components are functional psychological features and are the principal magnitudes of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1991). The concept of well-being primarily has been determined by hedonic and eudemonic approaches. The first hedonic approach concentrates on happiness, pleasure and avoidance from the pain, while the eudemonic

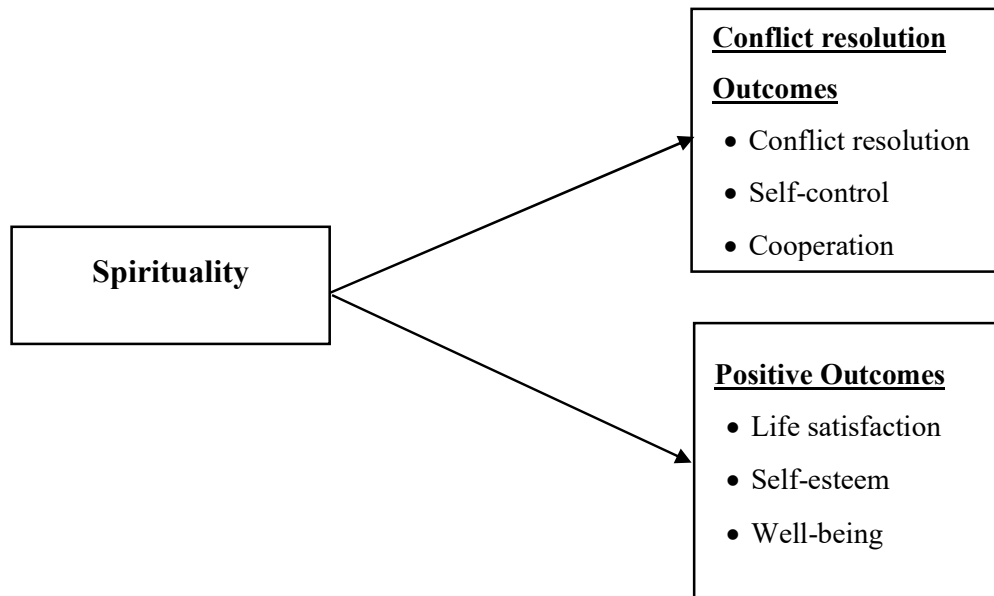
approach emphasis on the positive meaning of life and struggle for achieving the decisive goal of self-actualization (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Generally well-being refers to the maximum psychological functions and capabilities of an individual. Huppert (2009) comprehend this term as "Psychological well-being is about lives going well. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively".

Life satisfaction is the optimistic reflection about the feelings and attitudes about one's life. Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) described as it is a wide-ranging evaluation on one's life towards a progressive footing. In other words, life satisfaction is an encouraging approach in the direction of an individual life as a whole. It is considered as a main indicator of well-being. Beutell (2006) stated that desire to change one's life, satisfaction with past, satisfaction with future, and the significance of other's views about one's life are also the chunks of life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is the reflection of experiences which have positive impact on one's life and have the abilities to encourage the individual to chase and grasp the objectives (Bailey, Eng, Frisch & Snyder, 2007). The

cognitive processes of life satisfaction like hope and optimism are the main tracks towards achieving these objectives (Chang & Sanna, 2001).

In the context of social psychology, the term self-esteem is generally referring to an individual's insight about his / her own value. Rosenberg (1986) defines as "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object". Self-esteem largely theorized as the persistent characteristics of a person. Comprehensively, self-esteem comprises on the feelings of general happiness, satisfaction, self-worth and self-acceptance. While self-concept refers to one's own point of view about self which is formed by the response from others and some environmental factors and personal experiences (Shavelson et al., 1976). Although these two terms use similarly and frequently but Harter (1999), Marsh and Hattie (1996) argued that they have distinct meanings. Self-concept represents a multidimensional rather than unidirectional construct (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh et al., 2006; Wang, 2006; Brunner et al., 2008). Self-esteem is the distinctive dimension of the self-concept.

## Conceptual Framework



## Objectives

1. To examine relationship between spirituality, conflict resolution and positive outcomes among university students.
2. To investigate gender differences in spirituality, conflict resolution and positive outcomes among university students.

## Hypothesis

On the basis of past literature review the following hypotheses have formulated:

**H1:** There is positive relationship between spirituality, conflict resolution and positive outcomes among university students.

**H2:** There is gender differences in spirituality, conflict resolution and positive outcomes among university students.

## Method

### Sample

The sample for this study was drawn of 200 students ( $N= 200$ ) from the different higher degree programs and faculties of International Islamic University Islamabad.

Both male ( $n=100$ ) and female ( $n=100$ ) have included using the convenient sample method. The age range was from 25 to 40 years.

### Measures

For the purpose of data collection from the participants the following measures were administered in this current study. These scales are Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (Underwood & Teresi, 2002), Conflict Resolution Scale (Phillips & Springer, 1992), Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener, et al., 1985), Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Psychological Well-Being (Ryff's, 1995). The response category is 5-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In this current study the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of these scales are 0.73, 0.70, 0.81, 0.72, and 0.80 respectively.

### **Procedure**

The current study was a cross sectional survey design. The data were collected from the students of international Islamic university Islamabad Pakistan through self-administered questionnaires. For personal demographic information of the participants a separate information sheet have used. The all participants were approached personally during their free periods and rest time after getting approval from higher authorities of this university. During the whole data collection process the ethical standards have adopted firmly.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Psychometric Properties and Pearson Correlation on Spirituality, Conflict Resolution and Positive Outcomes*

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Actual range	Potential range	Skew	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Spirituality	200	60.00	6.83	43-65	14-70	.23	.73	--	.19*	.84**	.92**	.64**	.72**	.23**
2.Conflict resolution	200	40.84	5.52	33-55	12-60	.23	.70	--	.87**	.48**	.34**	.39**	.23**	
3.Self-control	200	16.20	4.84	8-27	6-30	.23	.78	--		.03	.43**	.26**	.16*	
4.Cooperation	200	11.36	2.66	6-18	6-30	.25	.71	--			.60**	.19*	.00	
5.Life satisfaction	200	17.2	6.28	6-21	5-25	.23	.81	--				.74**	.22*	
6.Self-esteem	200	35.00	4.05	24-46	10-50	.23	.72	--					.19*	
7.Well-being	200	40.12	5.46	31-46	12-60	.24	.80	--						--

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Results show that all the scales have satisfactory alpha reliability i.e. .70 to .81, therefore the scales are reliable and internally consistent measures. Pearson correlation shows that spirituality has significant positive correlation with conflict resolution  $r(198) = .19, p < .05$ , self-control  $r(198) = .84, p < .01$ , cooperation  $r(198) = .92, p < .01$ , life satisfaction  $r(198) = .64, p < .01$ , self-esteem  $r(198) = .72, p < .01$  and well-being  $r(198) = .64, p < .01$ . Conflict resolution has significant positive correlation with self-control  $r(198) = .87, p < .01$ , cooperation  $r(198) = .48, p < .01$ , life satisfaction  $r(198) = .34, p < .01$ , self-esteem  $r(198) = .39, p < .01$  and well-being  $r(198) = .23, p < .01$ .



Self-control has significant positive correlation with life satisfaction  $r(198) = .43, p < .01$ , self-esteem  $r(198) = .26, p < .01$  and well-being  $r(198) = .16, p < .01$  and has non-significant relationship with cooperation  $r(198) = .03, p > .05$ . Cooperation has significant positive correlation with life satisfaction  $r(198) = .60, p < .01$  and self-esteem  $r(198) = .19, p < .01$  and has non-significant relationship with cooperation  $r(198) = .00, p > .05$ . Life satisfaction has significant positive correlation with self-esteem  $r(198) = .74, p < .01$  and cooperation  $r(198) = .22, p < .01$ . Self-esteem has significant positive correlation with well-being  $r(198) = .74, p < .01$ .

**Table 2**

*Gender Differences in Spirituality, Conflict Resolution and Positive Outcomes*

Variables	Male		Female		$t(198)$	$p$	95% CI		Cohen's $d$
	$(n = 100)$		$(n = 100)$				$LL$	$UL$	
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$					
Spirituality	55.14	6.36	61.25	6.40	3.90	.00	-9.22	-3.00	.95
Conflict resolution	39.14	4.26	41.28	5.74	1.95	.04	4.80	.52	.42
Self-control	16.19	3.18	16.20	5.20	2.20	.02	2.38	2.34	.02
Cooperation	13.04	2.61	10.92	2.51	3.44	.00	.88	3.35	.82
Life satisfaction	16.71	2.72	17.41	6.91	5.45	.00	3.76	2.35	.13
Self-esteem	34.61	3.82	35.09	4.13	2.19	.02	2.45	1.49	.12
Well-being	39.47	2.90	40.30	5.95	2.50	.01	3.48	1.84	.17

Results show that males were significantly higher on conflict resolution  $t(198) = 3.90, p < .01$  and cooperation  $t(198) = 1.95, p < .05$  whereas females were significantly higher on

spirituality  $t(198) = 3.90, p < .01$ , self-control  $t(198) = 2.20, p < .05$ , life satisfaction  $t(198) = 5.45, p < .01$ , self-esteem  $t(198) = 2.19, p < .05$  and well-being  $t(198) = 2.50, p < .01$ .

## Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between spirituality and conflict resolution.

The finding of this study indicated the positive relationship of spirituality with conflict resolution. Due to this significant positive relationship there has been a prized enrichment in the volume of personal and life positive aspects. These finding has proved by the previous researches. An increasing frame of empirical research which describes that spirituality contributes a major inspiration on the other dimensions of mental and physical health also.

Spirituality enriches the positive feelings and behavior, cognitions of relationship with oneself and others. In turn, this phenomenon provides an individual with sense of identity, wholeness, satisfaction and joy with life, contentment, beauty, respect, love, inner peace and harmony, purposiveness and meaningfulness in life (Gomez & Fisher, 2002; Kinnier et al, 2001; Fabricatore, 2000). Impact of spirituality and wellbeing has significant impact with gender and age

also. Individuals who have high level of spirituality have higher levels of self-esteem, self-actualization and satisfaction with life (Kaldor, Hughes, Castle, & Bellam, 2004).

The founder of positive psychology Seligman (1998) has discussed the most essential benefits like psychological well-being, satisfaction of life, self-esteem, positive self-image and self-actualization stemming from the spiritual context of life. In previous researches there are common inferences about the significant positive relationship among spirituality, mental and personal health issues like psychological well-being, life satisfaction, self-esteem and self-actualization (Curtis & Ellison, 2002; Dollahite & Marks, 2005; Hackney & Sanders, 2003). Litwinczuk and Groh (2007) also noted the relationship of spirituality and well-being is significantly high correlated. Tacey (2003) examined the dynamic role of participation and practicing in religious practices and having a strong belief in religion has significant positive relation with all mental health characteristics of an individual. It is evident that the hypothetical role of spirituality has optimistic impression on the overall positive outcomes of life both for individuals and for humanity at large. Many empirical researches have verified this significant relation (Koenig et al., 2000; Diener, 1994). The positive relationship

between spirituality and wellbeing is vital for a healthy and nonviolent society (Eckersley, 1998; Hamilton, 2004). From the gender perspective the current findings are also consistent with the previous findings that females tend to be more spiritual than males (Hammermeister, Flint, El-Alayli, Ridnour, & Peterson, 2005). Bryant (2007) and Buchko (2004) also described that females have high scores on spirituality as compared to their counterparts.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The current study is not the first and last step to investigate the effect of spirituality on conflict resolution and the positive outcomes of life. The results of this study are in line with the results of previous researches and has a valuable contribution in the existing frame of knowledge. The existing findings backing earlier research that displays spirituality to be a beneficial element in health and well-being. Due to some limitations these findings cannot be generalized to other cultures. To avoid the issues of small sample size, it is suggested for further study that sample should be larger and diverse to establish the current findings. It is also recommended that longitudinal study design should be used to simplify the relationship between spirituality

and conflict resolution. This would be useful for future research to add other variables in the context of I/O psychology.

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