Introduction

Spiritual well-being and flow are important religious constructs, one reflecting Christian and the other Buddhist perspectives. Moberg (1971) theorized that spiritual well-being involves a vertical dimension with God and a horizontal dimension with other humans and the physical world. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) developed the concept of flow as a state of optimal human functioning and hypothesized a relationship between flow and spiritual well-being. Following Csikszentmihalyi’s (2005), we suspected flow and spiritual well-being are somewhat related constructs despite their disparate origins. While research has explored the relationship between spirituality and flow within particular experiences (Phillips, 2007; Purkey & Dopyo, 2005), our study examined how experiences of flow may become generalized into a global sense of spiritual well-being. Our study investigated: (a) the relationship between spiritual well-being and flow, and (b) convergent and divergent validity for measures of spiritual well-being and flow, (c) possible predictors of spiritual well-being and flow.

Methods

Participants

Total N = 120. Convenience sample of undergraduate and graduate students at George Fox University (N = 77; Response Rate = 22%) and yoga practitioners from Los Angeles yoga teachers’ email lists (N = 43; Response Rate 22%) and students at George Fox University (N = 77; 22%).

Age Mean = 25.5; Standard Deviation = 8.5; Range = 17 – 56

Ethnicity = .8% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 10.8% Asian, 1.7% Black/African-American, 8% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 70.8% White/European-American, 12.5% multiple races, 2.5% undisclosed

Response Rate

Age Mean = 25.5; Standard Deviation = 8.5; Range = 17 – 56

Measures

Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS), Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982

Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS), Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982

Concentration on the Task at Hand

Clear Goals

Loss of Self-Consciousness

Transformation of Time

Concentration on the Task at Hand

Clear Goals

Loss of Self-Consciousness

Construction of Time

Autotelic Experience

Concentration on the Task at Hand

Clear Goals

Loss of Self-Consciousness

Transformation of Time

Autotelic Experience

Procedures

Recruited participants to complete online versions of the SWBS, DFS-2, and demographic information through www.surveymonkey.com.

Results

Group Comparisons

Religious affiliation of the 2 samples significantly differed (X²(9) = 29.79, p < .001). 77.3% of the Christian academic sample identified as Christian; 32.4% of the yoga sample identified as Christian.

Demographics: Yoga (Y) and Christian (C) Sample Significant Differences

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Note: “Difference” indicates significant differences between groups.

Scales: Yoga (Y) and Christian (C) Sample Comparison

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Note: “Difference” indicates significant differences between groups.

Discussion

Spiritual Well-being

This study did not provide support for the expected positive relationship between religious activities and spiritual well-being.

This study provided support for the positive relationship between existential and religious well-being and their predictive value.

Flow

This study did not provide support for Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) hypothesized positive relationship between yoga practice and flow experiences.

These results suggested that flow is negatively related to established indicators of life satisfaction and raised questions about the DFS-2 and the construct of flow.

Spiritual Well-being and Flow

This research suggested that flow and spiritual well-being are somewhat different constructs.

Flow was negatively, rather than positively, related to SWB, EWB, RWB, and life satisfaction in this sample.

McNulty and Fincham’s (2012) recent suggestion that positive psychology traits are not always positive, but rather are contextually bound, may pertain to our study.

Generalization to other populations should be done cautiously due to the nature of this study’s sample.

References


Contact

Joel Simons
422 N. Mendon St., #2B61
Nextegg, OR 97132
jsimons10@georgefox.edu

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Christian Association for Psychological Studies