

Spiritual Well-being and Flow

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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 spirituality. Following Csikszentmihalyi (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; Purdey & Dupey, 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, (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 ≈ 6%)
 - * Age Mean = 25.5; Standard Deviation = 8.5; Range = 17 – 56
 - * Gender = 27 Male (22.5%); 92 Female (76.7%)
 - * 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
- Measures**
- * Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS, Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982)
20 questions assess relationship with God and the physical world.
 - * Religious Well-being (RWB)
 - * Existential Well-being (EWB)
 - * Dispositional Flow Scale-2 (DFS-2, Jackson & Eklund, 2002)
36 questions assess disposition toward flow states along 9 dimensions.
 - * Challenge-Skill Balance
 - * Merging of Action and Awareness
 - * Clear Goals
 - * Unambiguous Feedback
 - * Concentration on the Task at Hand
 - * Sense of Control
 - * 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 ($X^2(6) = 29.79$, $p < .001$). 77.3% of the Christian academic sample identified as Christian; 32.4% of the yoga sample identified as Christian.						
Demographics: Yoga (Y) and Christian (†) Sample Significant Differences						
Variable	Mean	SD	df	F	Sig.	Cohen's d
Y Age	30.61	6.88				
† Age	22.83	8.12				
All Age	25.56	8.53	1, 115	27.12	< .001	1.03
Y Education	4.84	0.95				
† Education	3.29	1.32				
All Education	3.84	1.41	1, 118	46.22	< .001	1.35
Y Giving	3.28	2.11				
† Giving	2.48	2.04				
All Giving	2.77	2.09	1, 118	4.12	.05	.39
Y Religious Attendance	3.69	1.88				
† Religious Attendance	4.37	1.47				
All Religious Activities	4.12	1.66	1, 117	4.82	.03	-.40
Y Yoga Frequency	3.30	1.71				
† Yoga Frequency	2.14	1.38				
All Yoga Frequency	2.56	1.60	1, 118	16.30	< .001	.74
Y Consider Yoga Spiritual	2.35	1.54				
† Consider Yoga Spiritual	3.56	1.37				
All Consider Yoga Spiritual	3.13	1.54	1, 118	19.62	< .001	-.83
Y Life Satisfaction	1.95	1.01				
† Life Satisfaction	2.40	1.12				
All Life Satisfaction	2.24	1.10	1, 117	4.72	.03	-.42

Scales: Yoga (Y) and Christian (†) Sample Comparison						
Scale	Reliability	Y Mean	Y SD	† Mean	† SD	Difference*
SWB	.93	49.96	16.24	44.88	17.46	NS
RWB	.96	28.31	12.79	22.14	11.86	NS
EWB	.74	21.65	6.20	22.74	7.81	NS
DFS-2	.95	125.81	11.76	126.32	19.88	NS
Balance	.83	15.27	1.69	15.12	2.66	NS
Merging	.77	12.65	2.42	13.63	2.40	NS
Goals	.74	14.88	2.64	14.67	3.07	NS
Feedback	.79	14.27	2.03	14.21	2.96	NS
Concentration	.87	13.88	1.97	13.68	2.95	NS
Control	.86	13.88	2.36	14.39	2.81	NS
Consciousness	.83	11.92	2.80	11.93	3.14	NS
Time	.80	13.38	2.98	13.21	3.02	NS
Autotelic	.90	15.65	2.23	15.47	2.94	NS

Note. *Significance measured at $p \leq .05$.

Results

Selected Correlations								
	DFS-2	SWB	RWB	EWB	Yoga Freq.	Religious Attend.	Gives to Charity	Educ.
SWB	-.40**							
RWB	-.25*	.92**						
EWB	-.53**	.74**	.42**					
Yoga Freq.	.07	.29**	.43**	-.05				
Religious Attend.	.12	-.55**	-.66**	-.13	-.44**			
Gives to Charity	.21	-.06	-.02	-.11	.11	.16		
Educ.	.10	.22*	.36**	-.10	.43**	-.44**	.14	
Life Satis.	-.40**	.56**	.33**	.73**	-.11	-.26**	.001	-.07

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Regressions

- * Stage 1: Demographics entered stepwise.
- * Stage 2: DFS-2, EWB, and RWB entered stepwise.

DFS-2 predicted by				
	df	R	R ²	ΔR ²
Life Satisfaction	1, 74	.392	.153	
Charitable Giving	1, 73	.480	.231	.078
EWB	1, 72	.581	.337	.106

- * Stage 1: Age, education, income, religious attendance, personal devotions, yoga practice, non-yoga exercise, view of yoga, and religious belief importance did not contribute additional significant variance.
- * Stage 2: RWB did not contribute additional significant variance.

EWB predicted by				
	df	R	R ²	ΔR ²
Life Satisfaction	1, 74	.719	.517	
Charitable Giving	1, 73	.743	.552	.035
RWB	1, 72	.791	.625	.063
DFS-2	1, 71	.818	.670	.045

- * Stage 1: Age, education, income, religious attendance, personal devotions, yoga practice, non-yoga exercise, view of yoga, and religious belief importance did not contribute additional significant variance.

RWB predicted by				
	df	R	R ²	ΔR ²
Religious Belief Imp.	1, 74	.749	.561	
Devotional Freq.	1, 73	.797	.634	.073
EWB	1, 72	.855	.731	.097

- * Stage 1: Age, education, income, charitable giving, religious attendance, yoga practice, non-yoga exercise, and view of yoga, and life satisfaction did not contribute additional significant variance.
- * Stage 2: DFS-2 did not contribute additional significant variance.

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.

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