

EXPLORING GEN Z PERSPECTIVE FOR SPIRITUALITY

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in spirituality, particularly among younger generations. Generation Z (Gen Z), typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is the first cohort to have grown up with digital technology as an integral part of their daily lives. As this generation transitions into adulthood, their perceptions and attitudes toward spirituality appear to diverge from those of previous generations. The aim of this study is to examine the spiritual practices of Gen Z, focusing on the techniques employed, the frequency of engagement, and the factors influencing their practice. Additionally, the study seeks to explore gender differences in the perceived importance of spirituality and to investigate the relationship between belief in spirituality and mental well-being. A total of 100 respondents were selected through convenience sampling, and data were collected using a self-constructed questionnaire. The findings indicate that Gen Z increasingly utilizes practices such as meditation, mindfulness, and yoga as tools for managing stress, anxiety, and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the results suggest that females place greater importance on

spirituality in their lives compared to males. A significant positive correlation was found between belief in spirituality and mental well-being, suggesting that a stronger belief in spirituality is associated with improved mental health among the respondents.

Key words: Indian Knowledge, Mental well-being, Spirituality,

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality, as a concept, has evolved significantly over the centuries. Traditionally, spirituality was largely tied to organized religions and institutions, providing structured practices, beliefs, and community rituals. In modern times, however, the concept of spirituality has undergone a transformation, becoming more personalized, diverse, and often detached from traditional religious frameworks. This shift reflects broader cultural changes, including the rise of individualism, secularization, and globalization, as well as the influence of new technologies and increased awareness of mental health and well-being.

At its core, spirituality is about seeking a deeper sense of purpose, connection, and

meaning in life. While religious practices are often considered a form of spirituality, the term itself has expanded to encompass a wide range of practices and beliefs that may or may not involve formal religious structures. For many, spirituality involves an inner journey or quest for personal transformation, self-discovery, and a deeper connection to oneself, others, and the universe.

Spirituality today is often viewed as an individual and evolving experience that can manifest through meditation, mindfulness, self-reflection, personal rituals, or participation in various practices that promote emotional, physical, and mental well-being. In modern times, spirituality is increasingly flexible and can be tailored to fit individual needs, beliefs, and lifestyles.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF SPIRITUALITY

In the past, spirituality was primarily experienced through religious institutions such as churches, temples, and synagogues, where collective worship and community were central. However, the 20th and 21st centuries have seen significant shifts in how people approach spirituality:

Decline of Traditional Religious Affiliation: There has been a noticeable decline in religious affiliation, especially in Western societies, where younger generations are moving away from organized religions. This has led to a rise in spiritual but not religious (SBNR) individuals, who seek personal, non-institutionalized spiritual practices.

Rise of Individualized Spirituality: With greater access to information, individuals now have the freedom to explore various spiritual paths, including those outside traditional religious systems. This has led to the rise of individualized spiritual practices, often blending elements of different traditions, such as yoga, meditation, astrology, and Eastern philosophies, to create personalized spiritual experiences.

Secularization and Spiritual but Not Religious (SBNR): Many people today identify as “spiritual but not religious,” embracing spiritual practices without committing to a specific religious doctrine. This shift reflects a broader trend toward secularization, where spirituality is separated from the institutionalized structures of religion.

FACTORS INFLUENCING MODERN SPIRITUALITY

Several social, cultural, and technological factors have contributed to the transformation of spirituality in modern times:

Technology: The digital age has dramatically altered the way spirituality is accessed and practiced. Online platforms, social media, apps, and digital communities provide opportunities for individuals to explore a wide variety of spiritual practices. Spirituality has become more decentralized, with influencers and digital content creators shaping spiritual beliefs and practices.

Mental Health Awareness: In recent years, there has been an increased focus on mental health and well-being, and spirituality is often viewed as an important tool for emotional regulation,

stress management, and self-care. Practices like meditation, mindfulness, and yoga have gained popularity as people seek ways to improve their mental and emotional health.

Social Change and Globalization: The increasing interconnectedness of the world through globalization has exposed individuals to a broader spectrum of spiritual beliefs and practices. People are more likely to engage with spiritual traditions that were once distant or unfamiliar, leading to greater diversity in spiritual practices and a blending of cultural influences.

Environmental and Social Responsibility: Many people, particularly younger generations, view spirituality as a means of fostering social responsibility, environmental activism, and personal ethics. Spiritual practices are increasingly intertwined with social justice movements, and spirituality is often seen as a tool for contributing to the collective well-being of society.

Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z, represents the cohort born between 1997 and 2012, following the Millennial generation (born 1981-1996). As the first generation to grow up with the internet, smartphones, and social media, Gen Z is deeply influenced by technology and the digital world. Their values, behaviors, and attitudes are shaped by the rapid advancements in technology, social change, and global events that have defined their formative years.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1.To find the techniques for practicing spiritualism by Gen Z.

2.To find the common causes and frequency of practicing spiritualism by Gen Z.

3.To study the difference in the opinion of male and female respondents with regard to the importance of spiritualism in life.

4.To find out the correlation between belief in spirituality and mental well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the factors that influence Gen Z's approach to spirituality. It will highlight the key themes of digital influence, mental health, social justice, personal values, and religion, based on existing research and studies that discuss spiritual tendencies among the Gen Z cohort. One of the most striking characteristics of Gen Z is the decline in traditional religious affiliation. According to a study by the Pew Research Center (2020), Gen Z is less likely to identify with organized religions compared to previous generations, with many identifying as spiritual but not religious (SBNR). This shift suggests a move away from institutionalized religious structures towards more personalized forms of spirituality.

Gen Z often seeks spirituality outside the confines of traditional religious practices. For example, the Pew Research Center found that 40% of Gen Z adults (18-22) in the U.S. considered themselves religiously unaffiliated, a significant increase from older generations at the same age. This trend points to a rise in spirituality that is eclectic and individualized, with younger people picking and choosing spiritual practices that resonate with them personally (Kinnaman, 2019).

Mental health is a significant factor influencing Gen Z's spirituality. Research consistently shows that Gen Z is more open about discussing mental health issues and seeking help than previous generations. A study by the American Psychological Association (2020) found that Gen Z is more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and stress, with mental health struggles being cited as one of the most pressing issues among this generation.

Spiritual practices such as meditation, mindfulness, and yoga are increasingly being used by Gen Z to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional well-being. Studies indicate that practices like mindfulness meditation can have positive effects on emotional regulation and mental clarity (Zeidan et al., 2010). Gen Z's adoption of these practices reflects a broader trend where spirituality is increasingly viewed not as a religious doctrine but as a tool for self-care and personal growth (Snyder et al., 2018).

According to Smith and McCullough (2019), Gen Z tends to emphasize spiritual practices that promote compassion, empathy, and community. The integration of social justice into spiritual life is a reflection of Gen Z's desire to live authentically and contribute meaningfully to societal change. This generation increasingly seeks to align its spiritual beliefs with its commitment to fighting injustice and inequality.

As Gen Z continues to mature, its relationship with spirituality will likely evolve further. Studies predict that spirituality will become even more personalized, with a focus on holistic well-being, mind-body connection,

and mental health. The blending of technology and spirituality is expected to grow, as digital spaces offer new opportunities for engagement, guidance, and community-building.

Further research by Hoge (2021) suggests that Gen Z's spirituality will increasingly be shaped by globalization, where cross-cultural spiritual influences become more prominent. As Gen Z navigates its personal and collective journeys, it is likely to adopt an even more global and inclusive view of spirituality that transcends traditional boundaries.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that women tend to report higher levels of spirituality and religious involvement compared to men (Francis & Penny, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2016). Women are more likely to attend religious services, engage in prayer, and express belief in a personal God. Explanations for this phenomenon range from socialization theories, which suggest women are taught to be more nurturing and relational (traits associated with spiritual openness), to structural arguments highlighting the role of traditional gender roles in shaping spiritual engagement (Walter & Davie, 1998).

Conversely, men are often found to be more skeptical or secular, and when they do engage with spirituality, it often aligns with more hierarchical or structured systems, such as organized religion, rather than personal spiritual expression (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). However, some scholars argue that these patterns may reflect socially constructed norms around masculinity rather than inherent spiritual differences (Mahalik et al., 2003).

IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT DISCUSSION, THE RESEARCHER PROPOSES THE FOLLOWING HYPOTHESIS:

H1: Female respondents find spirituality more important in their life compared to male respondents.

Spirituality is often associated with a sense of purpose, inner peace, and connection to something greater than oneself. Numerous studies have shown that individuals who engage in spiritual practices or identify as spiritual often report higher levels of mental well-being. This includes lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as greater emotional resilience and life satisfaction.

H2: THERE EXISTS A POSITIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL WELL-BEING.NG.

Research Methodology

In this empirical study, a descriptive research design is used. It enables researchers to precisely and methodically describe a population, circumstance, or phenomenon. As the name suggests, descriptive research describes the characteristics of the group, situation, or phenomenon being studied without manipulating variables or testing hypotheses. All the Gen Z people in India are the population of the study. However, the researcher has selected 100 respondents through non-probability sampling as a

sample. For the purpose of this study, data is collected through a primary source by a self-designed questionnaire constructed through Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of 18 questions, out of which 2 questions are related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and the remaining questions, framed on MCQ and Likert scale, are related to the factors towards spirituality. The reliability of the scale is checked through a pilot study on 30 respondents, and the value of α is found to be 0.07. The data is analyzed through the MS-Excel tool, and the results are summarized.

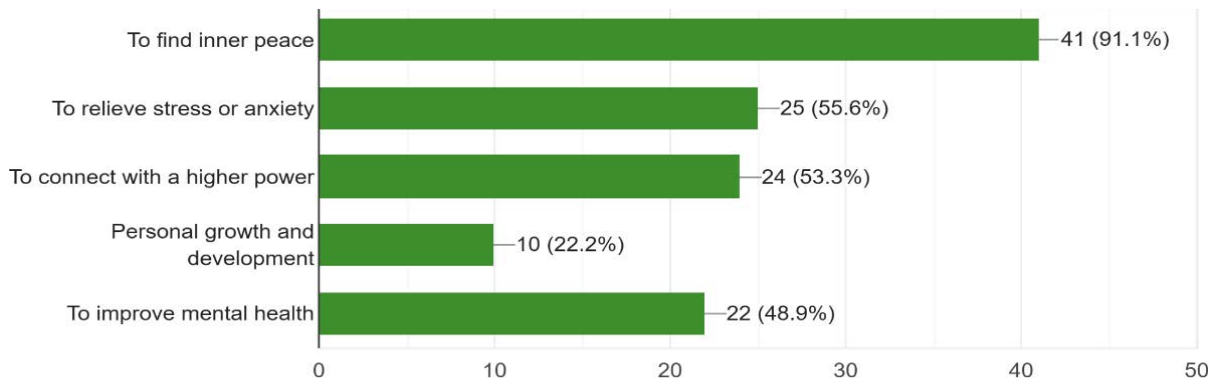
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Gender	Number	%
Male	30	31.4
Female	70	68.6
Education Level	Number	%
High school	20	19.6
Graduation	56	56.9
Post Graduation	24	23.9

The majority of respondents are female (68.6%), accounting for almost two-thirds of the total survey participants. Males make up a smaller proportion (31.4%). Most respondents have completed their graduation (56.9%). A smaller portion has postgraduate degrees (23.5%), and the rest have completed high school (19.6%). This suggests that the survey participants tend to have advanced educational qualifications, with a significant portion still in the undergraduate category.

The respondents were asked about the type of spiritual practice they are engaged in. It was observed from the survey that Meditation

(73.3%) and Prayer (71.1%) are the most common spiritual activities. Yoga (42.2%) is also quite popular. Chanting (37.8%) and



Nature Connection (31.1%) have moderate engagement. Art/Music/Creative Expression (24.4%) is the least common spiritual activity among respondents.

The respondents were also asked about the causes that motivate them to engage in spiritual practices. The dominant reason for spiritual practice is achieving inner peace, followed closely by stress relief and a connection with a higher power. Personal development, while relevant, is not a primary motivator.

The respondents were also asked how often they engage in spiritual or religious practices. It was observed that the majority of respondents (over 75%) engage in spiritual practices either daily or weekly, reinforcing the idea that spirituality plays a consistent role in their lives. The highest percentage (42.2%) of participants engages in spiritual practices regularly, and a significant portion (33.3%) practices spirituality once a week. Everyone practices spirituality to some extent.

To test the difference in the opinions of male and female respondents regarding the importance of spiritualism in life, an Independent Sample t-test is applied in Excel, with gender as the independent variable and the respondents' opinion regarding the importance of spirituality in life as the dependent variable. The result is displayed in Table 2.

Based on the data in Table 2, it is observed that Group 2 (females) has a higher mean score compared to Group 1 (males), indicating that females place greater importance on spirituality in life than males. The p-value of the test is 0.009, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the difference in the importance placed on spirituality between male and female respondents is statistically significant. The result of the study is consistent with the study conducted at Aligarh Muslim University by Akhtar and Tiwari (2013), which involved 60

Table 2: -Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.867	4.391
Variance	1.154	0.653
Observations	30.000	69.000
Pooled Variance	0.803	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.000	
df	97.000	
t Stat	-2.677	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.004	
t Critical one-tail	1.661	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.009	
t Critical two-tail	1.985	

Source: Primary Data

college students (30 males and 30 females) and found that females scored significantly higher on the experiential dimension of spirituality. This suggests a stronger personal spiritual experience and engagement among women. In a study conducted by Büssing, A., et al. (2021) of 352 cancer patients in Austria, 57% of women identified as spiritual/religious, compared to only 45% of men. Women also reported greater use of spiritual beliefs to cope with illness and showed higher levels of psychological benefit through spirituality.

To establish the relationship between belief in spirituality and mental well-being of the respondents, correlation analysis is performed in Excel by selecting belief in spirituality and mental well-being of the respondents as two variables, and the results are displayed in the following table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

	Belief in Spirituality	Mental well-being
Belief in Spirituality	1	0.711
Mental well-being	0.711	1

Source: Primary Data

It is observed from Table 3 that there exists a positive and strong correlation ($r = 0.71$) between belief in spirituality and mental well-being. This result is consistent with multiple research findings across different populations and contexts. A study conducted by Thakur & Thakur in 2022 on 110 college students in India found a significant positive relationship between spirituality and subjective well-being. The results demonstrated that

individuals with higher spiritual beliefs tended to report better emotional and psychological well-being. Pandey and Gupta (2019) found a significant positive correlation between spirituality and psychological well-being among 200 Indian young adults aged 18–25. Specifically, spirituality was positively associated with psychological capital ($r = 0.644$) and psychological well-being ($r = 0.555$), supporting the assertion that belief in spirituality enhances mental wellness.

In a study by Yuen et al. (2021) involving 500 university students, spiritual well-being showed strong negative correlations with depression ($r = -0.80$), anxiety ($r = -0.77$), and stress ($r = -0.70$), suggesting a robust protective effect of spirituality on mental health. The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.71$) between belief in spirituality and mental well-being is supported by a growing body of empirical research. These studies confirm that spiritual beliefs and practices can significantly enhance psychological health across various age groups and cultural settings.

FINDINGS

The study highlights that meditation and prayer are the most commonly practiced spiritual activities, indicating a strong preference of Gen Z for mindfulness and reflective practices. The primary reason for engaging in spirituality is **inner peace, stress relief, and mental health improvement**, highlighting its role in emotional and psychological well-being. It is also observed from the study that females considered spirituality more important in their lives

compared to the male respondents. It is also found that there exists a positive correlation between the respondents' belief in spirituality and their mental well-being.

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