

The Relationship Between Perceived Social Isolation and Spiritual Well-Being Among Older Adults: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults. A sample of 100 participants was selected for the study. Standardized tools including the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) and UCLA Perceived Social Isolation Scale were administered. Descriptive statistics revealed that participants reported a mean spiritual well-being score of 68.87 (SD = 8.153) and a mean perceived social isolation score of 49.15 (SD = 5.480). Pearson's correlation analysis indicated a negative correlation ($r = -0.130$) between the variables; however, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.197$). The null hypothesis was accepted, suggesting no significant relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults. The findings highlight the complexity of psychological and spiritual dimensions in aging and suggest the influence of mediating factors such as coping style, cultural values, and personal beliefs.

Keywords: Perceived social isolation, Spiritual well-being, older adults, Correlational study

Introduction

The global demographic shift toward an aging population has brought the psychosocial health of older adults to the forefront of public health research. While physical health challenges are frequently addressed, the emotional and existential dimensions of aging—specifically social connectedness and spiritual fulfillment—are critical determinants of quality of life. Older adults face a heightened vulnerability to social isolation due to factors such as retirement, bereavement, declining mobility, and the contraction of social networks.

Spiritual well-being is defined as a multidimensional construct comprising existential and religious well-being, which contributes to a person's quality of life. It is characterized by a sense of meaningfulness, purpose in life, inner harmony, and a perceived connection to a higher power, nature, or community, which remains intact despite physical or social losses. It involves finding purpose and hope (existential) and experiencing contentment through faith (religious), serving as a crucial component of holistic mental health in later life.

Definitions of Perceived Social Isolation

Perceived social isolation is defined as the subjective experience of a shortfall in one's social resources,

such as companionship and support. It is often used interchangeably with the feeling of loneliness, representing a cognitive and emotional discrepancy between an individual's desired social relationships and their actual relationships. Unlike objective isolation (e.g., living alone), perceived isolation reflects a painful, distressing feeling of being alone, separated, or misunderstood.

Definitions of Spiritual Well-Being

Spiritual well-being is defined as a multidimensional construct comprising existential and religious well-being, which contributes to a person's quality of life. It is characterized by a sense of meaningfulness, purpose in life, inner harmony, and a perceived connection to a higher power, nature, or community, which remains intact despite physical or social losses.

Review Of Literature:

Zhang et al. (2023) conducted a PRISMA-guided systematic review demonstrating that perceived loneliness significantly predicts adverse mental health outcomes in older adults, including depression, anxiety, cognitive decline, and reduced well-being. Longitudinal findings indicated that loneliness acts as a risk factor rather than merely a consequence of mental health issues. The authors conceptualized loneliness as a subjective experience shaped by cognitive and emotional appraisal, and identified protective factors such as resilience, meaning in life, and spirituality. They emphasized the importance of integrating spiritual well-being into mental health interventions.

morese et al. (2022) highlighted the neurobiological impact of social isolation, showing that chronic loneliness alters brain regions involved in emotional regulation, including the amygdala and prefrontal cortex. These changes increase vulnerability to stress, depression, and cognitive decline. The review further identified spirituality and meaning-making as important internal resources that can buffer the negative psychological and neural effects of loneliness.

Research Methodology:

Research question: The relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual wellbeing among old adults.

Objectives:

- To assess the level of perceived social isolation among older adults aged 55 years and above.
- To assess the level of spiritual well-being among older adults aged 55 years and above.
- To examine the relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults.

H2: Older adults with higher spiritual well-being report lower levels of perceived social isolation compared to those with lower spiritual well-being.

H3: The relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being is moderated by demographic factors (such as living arrangements or marital status).

Research Design:

The present study adopts a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults. The independent variable is perceived social isolation, and the dependent variable is spiritual well-being. The study also considers age categories (55–65 years, 65–75 years, and 75 years and above) to understand variations across different stages of older adulthood.

Sampling Technique:

The sample consists of older adults aged 55 years and above. A total of 120 participants were included in the study, with representation across the following among older adults:

A purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants who meet the inclusion criteria. Participants will be recruited from old age homes, community centers, religious institutions, and residential communitive

Data collection:

- Data will be collected through offline questionnaires distributed to the participants.
- Participants will provide demographic information, followed by responses to the two standardized scales.

Tools Description:**Perceived Social Isolation (UCLA Loneliness Scale)**

The UCLA Loneliness Scale is a self-report instrument used to measure perceived loneliness and social isolation. It consists of 20 items assessing social relationships and connectedness, rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often). Scores are obtained by summing all 20 items after reverse scoring positive items. Total scores range from 20 to 80, with higher scores indicating greater loneliness. The scale shows high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.94. It has strong construct and convergent validity, correlating positively with depression and negatively with social support.

Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS)

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale measures overall spiritual well-being using 20 items divided into Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being (10 items each). Responses are rated on a 6-point Likert scale. Subscale scores range from 10 to 60, and total scores range from 20 to 120 after reverse scoring. Higher scores indicate greater spiritual well-being. The scale demonstrates good reliability, with alpha values around 0.89 for total, 0.87 for RWB, and 0.78–0.82 for EWB. It shows good validity, with positive correlations to well-being and negative correlations to depression and anxiety.

Statistical Analysis:

Data will be analyzed using SPSS software. The following statistical methods will be employed: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) to summarize demographic variables and scale scores. Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being through statistical correlation analysis.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Older adults aged 55 years and above

- Ability to understand and respond to questionnaires
- Willingness to provide informed consent Individuals residing in the community

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals below 55 years of age
- Older adults with severe cognitive impairment or diagnosed neurocognitive disorders
- Individuals with a history of severe psychiatric illness
- Incomplete or invalid questionnaire responses

Result:

This chapter discusses the results and interpretation of the analysis done to understand the relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation of spiritual well-being and perceived social isolation among older adults.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
SWBS (Spiritual Well Being)	68.87	8.153	100
UCLA (Perceived Social Isolation)	49.15	5.480	100

The descriptive table shows the mean and standard deviation for the variables. Spiritual well-being has a sample of N = 100, mean = 68.87 and standard deviation = 8.153. Perceived social isolation has a sample of N = 100, mean = 49.15 and standard deviation = 5.480.

Table2: Correlations

Variables	Pearson’s r value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
SWBS & UCLA	-0.130	0.197	Accepting (H ₀)

Discussion for Correlation table

Correlation is not significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived social isolation among older adults. The obtained correlation coefficient (r = -0.130) indicates a weak negative relationship between the two variables. The significance value (p = 0.197) is greater than the predetermined level of significance (0.05). Since the p-value exceeds 0.05, the relationship between spiritual well-being and perceived social isolation is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀), which states that there is no significant relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults, is accepted.

Discussion:

This study examined the relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults. The results revealed a weak negative correlation between the two variables (r = -0.130, p > 0.05), indicating that the relationship was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Although the direction of the correlation suggests that higher spiritual well-being may be associated with lower perceived social isolation, the strength of this relationship was minimal. This indicates that spiritual well-being does not significantly influence perceived social isolation and that both variables may function independently.

One possible explanation is that spiritual well-being is an internal and personal experience related to meaning, purpose, and inner peace, which may not depend on social interactions. Many older adults engage in individual spiritual practices that provide emotional comfort regardless of their level of social contact.

Additionally, older adults may adapt to reduced social networks over time and may not perceive limited interaction as distressing. Cultural factors may also play a role, as spirituality often remains stable and serves as a coping resource independent of social relationships.

Other factors such as family support, health status, and coping strategies may influence both variables and reduce the strength of their direct relationship. The use of self-report measures and limited sample size may have also contributed to the non-significant findings.

Overall, the study concludes that there is no significant relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults, suggesting that these constructs operate independently.

Summary:

This study is focus on the perceived social isolation is related to the spiritual well-being among older adults, the results shows there is a non-significant and weak negative relationship between the two variables, this study suggests that the level of spiritual well-being may not significantly influence perceived social isolation, if the older adults are experiencing reduced social interaction that may not necessarily affect their inner spiritual state and may continue to maintain emotional balance and personal meaning in life.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that there is no statistically significant relationship between perceived social isolation and spiritual well-being among older adults. Although a weak negative association was observed, it was not meaningful. The findings suggest that spiritual well-being functions as an independent psychological resource, while perceived social isolation relates more to social and interpersonal factors. The study highlights the importance of addressing social isolation through social support and community-based interventions.

Limitations:

- The study was conducted with a relatively small sample size of 200 participants.
- Data was collected using self-report measures, so participants may answer for that all
- The study did not control for other influencing variables such as health status, family support, and coping strategies.
- Limited variability in responses may have affected the results.
- The findings may not be generalizable to all older adult populations due to sample characteristics.

Recommendation:

- Future research may focus on different age groups and include participants from various regions to

improve generalizability.

- Future studies can explore additional psychological variables such as depression, life satisfaction, coping strategies, and perceived social support.
- Researchers may examine the role of family support systems in reducing perceived social isolation among older adults.
- Studies can explore how spiritual practices and coping methods help in maintaining emotional well-being in later life.

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