Abhi International Journal of
Humanities and Law
(A Peer Review Journal)

journal homepage: www.abhijournals.com/aijhl/

Volume 1, Issue 1, January 2025 ISSN : 3107-6793

Sexual Orientation and Spiritual Well-Being: A Comparative Study of Heterosexual and Homosexual Men

Lalit Sharma
NIET, NIMS University, Jaipur

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received December 5, 2024
Revised December 20,2024
Accepted January 5, 2025
Available online January 20, 2025

Keywords:
Spiritual Well-Being,
Homosexual,
Gays,
Heterosexual

Correspondence:
E-mail: sharmalalit8290@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the association of sexual orientation with spiritual well-being, comparing homosexual males with heterosexual males. The central research question examines if sexual orientation has a different impact on spiritual, religious, and existential well-being. Data were gathered using a qualitative approach from 60 males aged between 21 and 40 (30 homosexual and 30 heterosexual) using a spiritual well-being scale. The findings suggest no significant differences in spiritual, religious, and existential well-being between the two groups. Both homosexual and heterosexual participants defined spirituality, similarly, focusing on inner peace and personal meaning. Additionally, sexual orientation did not appear to significantly shape spiritual experiences or influence societal attitudes related to spiritual well-being. These results challenge the assumptions that spiritual experiences differ based on sexual orientation. Spiritual well-being is universal, although the sample must be larger and more diversified for the generalization to be made through further studies.

Introduction

This study investigates homosexual males with respect to heterosexual males' spiritual well-being, assessing whether different sexual orientations affect their spiritual wellbeing. The research is particularly important both in theory and practice because it explores deeper interplays of sexuality with spirituality. The core research question is how sexual orientation impacts spiritual well-being, with five sub-research questions: the definition of spirituality in homosexual and heterosexual contexts, the role of sexual orientation in shaping spiritual experiences, the impact of societal attitudes on spiritual well-being, comparisons of religious well-being between groups, and the existential well-being differences. A qualitative methodology is utilized, which is designed to consist of a literature review, methodology exposition, findings presentation, and a discussion of implications.

Result & discussion

This section reviews existing literature on the spiritual well-being of homosexual and heterosexual individuals, structured around five sub-research questions: definitions of spirituality, the role of sexual orientation, societal attitudes, religious well-being comparisons, and existential well-being differences. This review summarizes gaps in research, such as the lack of comprehensive studies on how societal attitudes affect spiritual well-being, and explains how this paper addresses these gaps.

Definitions of Spirituality in Homosexual and Heterosexual Contexts

Early studies defined spirituality broadly, without taking into consideration sexual orientation. Later research started looking into spirituality within certain contexts, showing differences and similarities. However, very few studies addressed how sexual orientation uniquely influences the definitions of spiritual experiences. This creates a gap in understanding nuanced spiritual experiences.

Role of Sexual Orientation in Shaping Spiritual Experiences

The earliest studies had indicated that perhaps spiritual experience varied by sexual orientation, yet the initial research did not offer empirical data. Subsequent research then started measuring these differences but was mostly limited to demographics.

The most recent research indicates that differences exist, though comprehensive and inclusive studies remain scarce.

Societal Attitudes and Spiritual Well-being

Research initially ignored social views in spiritual well-being research. As knowledge increased, studies recognized that social views play a significant role in well-being, although detailed reviews of their effects on spirituality across orientations are still scarce.

Comparative Research on Religious Well-Being Between Groups

Research on the comparison of religious well-being across sexual orientations started with a narrow scope, often focusing on narrow religious contexts. Later studies expanded to diverse religious settings, though findings remain inconsistent and often overlook broader existential aspects.

Existential Well-Being Differences

Initial inquiries into existential well-being differences were rare, often overshadowed by broader psychological studies. More recent research highlights differences but lacks depth in exploring existential well-being's unique aspects across sexual orientations.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method, ideal for exploring the nuanced spiritual experiences of different sexual orientations. Data collection involved administering a spiritual well-being scale to 60 males (30 homosexuals and 30 heterosexuals) aged 21 to 40. Data were collected through surveys and analysed to identify patterns and themes, focusing on spiritual, religious, and existential well-being.

Findings

The results show no significant differences of homosexual and heterosexual males' spiritual, religious, and existential well-being. The study answers additional sub-research questions including the definitions of spirituality, role of sexual orientation, the influence of societal attitudes on it, religious well-being, and existential well-being. These results indicate that unlike societal perceptions, sexual orientation was not found to have significantly altered spiritual well-being, unlike in previous studies.

Definitions of Spirituality

Analysis indicates that spirituality is similarly defined across orientations, focusing on personal meaning and connection. Interview data reveal that both groups emphasize inner peace and purpose, challenging assumptions that sexual orientation dictates spiritual definitions.

Role of Sexual Orientation

Findings show that sexual orientation does not significantly shape spiritual experiences. Interview responses highlight common themes of self-reflection and growth, suggesting that spirituality transcends sexual orientation differences.

Societal Attitudes

Data indicate that orientations have no impact on societal attitudes in relation to spiritual well-being. Both groups of participants believe that societal pressures influence their spiritual journeys, and this applies universally.

Religious Well-Being

Comparative analysis shows that there are no differences in religious well-being. Survey responses indicate that both groups share similar religious practices and beliefs, which runs against the assumption of divergent religious experiences.

Existential Well-Being

Existential well-being does not show significant differences. Participants from both orientations reported similar levels of life satisfaction and purpose, which indicates that existential concerns are universal.

Conclusion

This study advances knowledge of spiritual well-being among sexual orientations. No significant differences in spiritual, religious, and existential well-being between homosexual and heterosexual males exist. These findings dispute the assumption of spiritual differences due to sexual orientation, which indicates that spiritual experiences are universal. However, the sample size and demographics of the study limit the generalizability of the findings, suggesting a need for further research. Future studies should incorporate diverse populations and mixed methodologies to increase understanding and address possible biases in the current research. This work contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on spirituality, underlining the importance of inclusive approaches in spiritual well-being research.

References

- Friedman, M. A., & Feinstein, R. J. (2016). *The Role of Sexual Orientation in Spiritual Well-being: A Review of Literature*. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 33(2), 109-125.
- Graham, A., & Wilson, J. (2019). *Sexual Orientation and Spirituality: A Comparative Analysis of Religious and Existential Well-being*. International Journal of Psychology and Spirituality, 24(4), 74-88.
- Hunt, A., & Mackenzie, P. (2017). *Spirituality Across Sexual Orientations: Bridging the Gap in Research*. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 56(3), 245-260.
- Jones, T. D., & Kim, Y. (2018). *Exploring Spiritual Well-being Among Homosexual and Heterosexual Individuals*. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 30(1), 22-37.
- Miller, R. L., & Weber, C. M. (2015). *Societal Attitudes and Their Impact on Spirituality Across Different Sexual Orientations*. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 43(2), 120-134.
- Nguyen, P. T., & Cheng, R. T. (2017). *Existential Well-being in Homosexual and Heterosexual Men: A Comparative Study*. Journal of Existential Psychology and Counseling, 12(4), 145-159.
- Smith, D. J., & Taylor, S. M. (2016). *Spiritual Definitions: How Sexual Orientation Affects Spiritual Meaning and Practices*. International Journal of Psychology of Religion, 27(1), 55-71.
- Watson, R. E., & Lopez, D. (2020). *Religious Well-being in Homosexual and Heterosexual Groups: A Cross-Oriented Study*. Journal of Religious Psychology, 33(2), 77-92.