Spirituality Leads to Quality of Life: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract

Aim: The main purpose of this article is to examine the views of different researchers on spirituality and religion and draw a conceptual model which throws light on the true "innerself" Subject and methods: In the realm of previous literature on spirituality the main theme are connection with self, others and higher self has emerged as the main theme. This connection will further cultivate love, faith and hope among people. This state of connection binds a person to lead a committed life with meaning and purpose. This commitment helps a person to contribute for the well-being of society. Result: When a person recognizes the influence of inner connection, they experiences that there is a complete pureness, filled with hope, faith and compassionate love, which provide them a sense of meaning and purpose in their life. In this state of self-realization a person has sense no apprehension, no external conflict, and no forceful control on external circumstances. Conclusion: This moment of spiritual wellness is effective for spawning the quality of life that enhances contentment in the life of human beings.

Keyword: Spiritual Wellness, Self-Realization, True-Self, Quality Of Life

Introduction

"Spirituality is a way of accepting the fact that there is a spiritual force in the universe larger than all of mankind". (John clarke).

Spirituality is the science of self-realization. It is a profound innate ability that is unique to all human beings. It teaches how to connect with one's true self and ultimately to the "higher power" or "God". Aristotle and Plato have suggested that human beings are always seeking to lead a good life (McMahon 2006). A person experiences spiritual well-ness in the state of happiness, peace, satisfaction and accomplishment. Spirituality coined from a latin word "Spiritus", which means life energy full of vigor and courage (Hill, Pargament, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson and Zinnbauer 2000). Cook (2000) "expounded spirituality as an inner, personal entity that alive in one's heart". It is also manifest as the state of "internal experiences and well-being" (Legere 1984). Spirituality expresses as "one's ability totap the deepest resources within oneself and embrace the unseen and mysterious resources of the entire universe"; spiritual intelligence is "an ability to consciously seek the divine knowledge, conscious of

every moment and consciously navigate one's inner resources to the fullest" (Negi, Khanna and Aggarwal 2019).

Spirituality and religion

Before continuing, it is important to note that theorists and researchers have defined spirituality in many different ways (Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott 1999). Although no single definition is likely to satisfy everyone, we would like to make explicit the definition of spirituality that guides this research. Spirituality is defined here as a "search for the sacred" (Pargament 1999). There are two key terms in this definition: "search" and "sacred". The term "search" indicates that spirituality is a process to discover the sanctified and regulate the sacred once it is experienced. The term "sacred" refers to things that are set apart from the ordinary, worthy of veneration and respect. The "sacred" includes the "God", the "divine", and the "transcendent", also includes other objects that take on extraordinary power by virtue of their association with the supreme divinity(Pargament 1999). The richness of spirituality is a reflection of the variety of pathways people take to find and conserve the "sacred", as well as the variety of forms the "sacred" can take in people's lives. Although the term "religion" is also used occasionally in this paper in reference to established measures of coping. These measures are not restricted to a narrow set of religious beliefs, practices, or institutions. They cover a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices i.e. "individual and institutional", "subjective and objective", "traditional and non-traditional" that is oriented in some way to the "sacred". Different people have different ways to get peace and comfort in their life. Religion is the path to attain spirituality in one's life. Holy scriptures as "Srimad Bhagavadgita", "Quran", "Bible" direct us to realize the path of supreme consciousness. Some religious/spiritual people experiences contentment, low frustration in difficult situations of life by reading spiritual books, attending religious ceremonies and daily prayer (Meraviglia 1999).

Researchers have diverse views on spirituality. Generally, spirituality is that wisdom which connects with the 'God' or 'Higher power' the ultimate being. "Religious" or "Theistic" views on spirituality are concerned with the specific category of religion. The "Existential" view on spirituality is an indispensable concept because it means to search for the authentic "Meaning and Purpose" of life (Krishna kumar and neck 2002). Ellison (1983) proposed a "Vertical-Horizontal" model of spirituality. These are two interrelated but different dimensions which intersect each other. The vertical dimension is directly related to "God" or "Transcendent" whereas, the second horizontal dimension

is directly related to "Self", "Others" and "Environment". Vertical dimension indicates that "God" or "higher power" is beyond the realm of "Self" and hence a guiding strength for all human beings. Horizontal dimension indicates our connection with "Self" and "Others". These dimensions enhance spiritual well-being and also give a sense of meaning and purpose to our life. The core spiritual qualities like meaning, hope, love and faith are the driving force which transcend experience of fulfillment and dispose stability in one's life (Rovers and Kocum 2010).

Shift from Religion to Spirituality

Whereas religiousness historically included both individual and institutional elements, spirituality is now commonly regarded as an individual phenomenon and identified with such things as personal transcendence, supraconscious sensitivity, and meaningfulness (Spilka and McIntosh 1996). Religiousness is often described as organized and recognized with religious institutions and prescribed theology and rituals. Additionally, both terms now differ according to how they are evaluated. It is elucidated that the interest in spirituality has greatly increased in the past 25 years and American religious life has moved to embrace more elements of spirituality (Roof 1993; Turner et. al. 1995). There has been a severe decline in public confidence in religion and religious leadership. According to Lambert (2004) the number of people in Europe today who attend church and believe in a personal God is dropping steadily, whereas more and more people are looking for meaning and purpose in their lives and in spiritual experiences outside or across religious traditions (Brown 2007; Heelas 2005). Spirituality has been variously defined, but the definition and operationalization of spirituality seem to encompass two approaches. One is a "religious", often "theistic" approach. The other approach is often based on secular, humanistic, and existential elements (McSherry and Cash 2004). Spirituality is the "One's striving for and experience of connection with the essence of life" which incorporates three main dimensions: "Connectedness with oneself", "Connectedness with others and nature" and "Connectedness with the transcendent".

Methods

In recent years, many scholars, sociologists, journalists, historians have raised their concerns over the accelerated changes in the society as comparison to the past generation. Futurist Alvin Toffler in his contemporary classic "Future Shock" proposed that "Too much change in too short period of time" is a distressing situation. These frequent changes of modern life bring uncertainty, burnout, anxiety, depression, insecurity, sense of helplessness and despair.

Exploration of spiritual dimensions is the only way to get rid of these turbulent circumstances. This instinctive ability gives meaning in life, connectedness, peace, hope, wellness and a wisdom of completeness. A person who is spiritually depleted generally involved in immoral practices or performs action against true inner self. Either they are not aware of the consequences of spiritual laws. Regular spiritual practices help and empower an individual to listen the voice of inner consciousness and act virtuously. This stage is also known as inner soul consciousness.

Current article is an endeavor to elucidate the conceptual realm of spirituality that propels its essential dimensions and leads to quality of life. A complete understanding of these dimensions is essential to insight life and also benefit in the negative consequences of life.

Result and discussion

A conceptual understanding of Spirituality

A conceptual understanding of the concept of spirituality is developed after an extensive literature review.

Conceptualize theme
? Spirituality is the realization of true inner-self i.e. "soul"
? Inner-self connects with the self, others, nature and higher self
? Connection enhances basic human qualities most important q ualities are meaning and purpose, Faith, Hope and Compassionate love
? These qualities connect with the virtuous life with meaning and purpose
? Spiritual well-being leads to quality of life and contentment in human-beings

Spirituality is the Science of Soul". (Swami Vivekananda)

All human beings have an exceptional relationship with their trueself i.e. "soul". However, it a challenging task to revive one's true consciousness. Sometimes due to our past mistakes we are unable to realize our true self which is aware of everything. Therefore, spirituality is a comprehensive and universal concept. Its truthful essence is same for different people, at different period of time and in all places. True self can be experienced by regular spiritual practices. Spiritual intelligence is the inner journey of human beings. It is the quality of self-realization that can be analyzed effectively by an individual. "Spiritual intelligence" is the inter-relation of mind and spirit that is exists in all human beings. Spiritual intelligence can be foster and increases with the help of regular mindful training and practice (Vaughan 2002). "Spiritual intelligence" can be enhances by integrating the various yogic exercises, practice of deep meditation, self-introspection. The capacity to experience the spirituality vary from person to person because it is highly "Individualistic". This innate power moves a person towards positive direction in life such as love, peace, hope, connectedness, compassion, wellness and completeness. Spiritual power comes from inner resources of an individual that enhances resilience and encourage a sense

of meaning from the comprehensive experiences of life.

Proclamation 1.There is a positive connection between spirituality and true inner self i.e. "soul".

Connection

According to King (2009), Myers et al. (2000), spirituality is an individual self-belief that goes beyond the physical aspect of being and creates a sense of connectedness to the higher self. Interconnectedness of self, others and god are the three key elements of spirituality and also known as "heart of spirituality" (Hungelmann et al. 1985). Spirituality is the state to connect with "God" to one's "inner self" (Ley and corless 1988). Fish and Shelly (1988) proposes a deep connection arises from unconditional acceptance and love, also highlighted the importance of connection between these three components. The harmony between these three aspects self, others and a sense of relatedness and closeness to "god" is essential for humanity (Burkhardt 1989). An Individual can experience a sense of completeness or wholeness when they utilizes their power of connectedness to the self, others and supreme consciousness. National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA 1975) has proposed that "The positive assertion of life is connected with personal, communal and environment and supreme divinity that encourages and rejoices completeness". It is examined that in the previous

studies of spirituality that these four themes have been discussed in many studies (Ellison 1983; Burkhardt 1989).These four major dimensions assimilated the other sub-dimensions as personal, psychological, emotional and communal. The personal domain emanates the intra-personal qualities within an individual for example meaning and purpose, virtues and ethics in life, self-awareness, self-worth etc. Some of the inter-personal qualities that incorporate in communal domain are as follows love, forgiveness, trust, acceptance etc. The environmental domain preserves the harmonious relationship and cultivates a sense of reverence. Transcendental domain involves faith on the "higher-self" or "master of the universe". In all definitions of spirituality "connectedness" is one of the major dimension (Chiu, Emblen, Van Hofwegen, Sawatzky, & Meyerhoff 2004; Dyson, Cobb, & Forman 1997). Characteristics such as genuineness, inner harmony/inner peace, realization, self-knowledge, meaning in life are being included within"oneself" (Chiu et al. 2004; Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders 1988; Howden 1992). Characteristics related to empathy, forgiveness, gratitude, and feelings are being connectedness with others and with nature. Transcendent embraces connectedness with something or someone beyond the human level, such as the "universal" reality, "transcendent" reality, "higher power", or "God".

Proclamation 2: There is a positive connection between Spirituality and Self, Others &Higher-Self

Cultivation

Vaughan (2002) suggested that spiritual knowledge can be expressed and cultivated by regular training and practice. Various spiritual traits emanates when a person is connected to his/her inner self. Spiritual traits such as acceptance, forgiveness, honesty, purpose, intuition etc. are embraced within three main dimensionsas "faith", "hope", and "compassionate love".

Faith

There is a strong "connection of faith with religion and spirituality that is grounded on the existence of transcendental aspect of life" (Peterson & Seligman 2004). It is believed that higher purpose in the big scheme of the universe that gives an Individual a new direction, comfort in a manifold ways. In this manner a person can accept the power of existence in a significant way. It is also assumed that higher power has a greater scheme for the entire universe. In spite of enormous developments in science and technology, ninety percent of the world population is engaged in some form of religious/spiritual practices (Barrett , Johnson 2001). Across the entire world it is rare to

find people who don't believe in any ultimate power. Survey predicts that there is no person who is atheist in more than thirty countries around the world. Roughly there are only five percent atheists in 12 out of 238 countries (Smart, Denny 2007). Less than 0.1% of the population in many eastern and african countries. Non-religious population in Canada is 12.5% whereas 1.9% are atheist (Smart, Denny 2007). Koenig (2008) defined spirituality in terms of religion. He suggested using religion/spirituality (SR) simultaneously because of their identical nature that is related to the faith of human beings. It is difficult to remove the faith of people on their "God" or "Higher power". Thus, "theistic" spiritual approach is aptly explicated by 'faith'. Connection between spirituality and faith has been recognized by Miller and Martin (1988). According to their philosophy, human beings make an intentional effort to align themselves with the "sacred" or "ultimate" or "transcendental" reality. There are several benefits in daily life by being connected to "sacred" or "ultimate power". The universal power is discerning in the life of all human beings whether "theist" or "atheist". This ultimate power is the guiding force which stabilizes and facilitates daily life. Connection with the ultimate power contributes in giving meaning and purpose to one's life (Harmon 1985). The reasoning behind the meaning of existence, suffering of life, health and ailment can be influence or expounded by religious faith. It has been reasoned that without these intentions an individual begin to perish (Oldnall 1996).

When an individual is involved in a spiritual activity, it is imagined as a unifying energy that provides a context for principles, codes of conduct, and customs encouraging all aspects of an individual's life (Granstrom 1985). Religious viewpoint of "theistic" spirituality embraces the belief on "god" that increases the lives of individual and encompasses the meaning to the transcendental reality (High field & Cason 1983; Labun 1988).This dimension expresses the 'sacredness' (a sense of ultimate reality) in the life of human beings (Hill et al. 1998). Faith can best be elucidated by the association with "god" or "divine" or "ultimate power" (Martin Rover & Lucie Kocum 2010).

Proclamation 3 (a): Faith is positively related to Spirituality.

Hope

Hope is associated with the future. "Nothing stops me" (Synder, Lapointe, Crowson, and Early 1998), an optimistic attitude about the future. Hope is a cognitive, emotional and motivational drive present in an individual which explains existential reality that drives meaning and purpose in one's life (Seligman 1991). Hope gives us power to work hard to achieve best in life and also encourages a

strong belief about an optimistic future. Hope originates from one's core belief that there is an existence of greater power which empowers and spread goodness across the humanity an "ultimate concerns" (Emmons 1999). Many studies have suggested that hope is an integral part of spirituality. It is the common need of everyone (Nowotny 1989). Hope has astounding effect to recover people (Gardner 1983). Scientific techniques are only effective when people are willing to recover from within themselves. A study conducted on the relationship between hope and will to live propose a significant positive result of hope on the patients (Ross 1994). Hope can be advantageous in a number of ways. It helps in exchanging a positive energy in the environment and in the process of interpersonal relationship. Hope emerges from a positive sense of association with self and with the community. Positive psychological functioning is positively related to hope, religion and spirituality (Hill and Pargament 2003). Positive Youth development is also positively related to hope (e.g., Snyder et al. 2003). Hope increases goal-directed thinking (Snyder et al. 1991). Overall Hope scores are interconnected with worldwide life fulfillment (Valle et al. 2004), individual adjustment (Gilman et al. 2006) and conceptual well-being (Snyder 2002). Life satisfaction is significantly predicted by hope, spirituality and religious practices (Gilman et al. 2006). Future expectation, positive feelings, imagination all are positively interconnected with hope (Dehbashi et al. 2015). Sense of meaningful life is positively related to hopefulness of an Individual (Halama and Dedova 2007). Hope is significantly identified with the serious illness (Folkman 2013), improved quality of life, mental and psychological distress (Baljani et al. 2011). Hope as a coping mechanism for people who are suffering from acute and chronic conditions (Baljani et al. 2013). People have hope for meaning and purposeful life (existential spirituality) and it is also true that existence of people is meaningful when it is attached to hope. Integration of faith and hope is termed as "winged" spirituality (Wuthrow 1998).

Proclamation 3 (b): Hope is positively related to Spirituality.

Compassionate love

True spirituality is a mental attitude that you can practice at any time. There are religious beliefs that form one level of spirituality. But there are another level of spirituality called "basic spirituality also known as basic human qualities of goodness, kindness, compassion, caring" (Dalai Lama).Compassionate love is a quality of positive thoughts and emotions which drives an individual to serve others in need without any expectation. It enhances faith, courage, will-power, and inner strength which gives ultimate

meaning and purpose in life. A compassionate person can spread love by extending helping hand to others in need for the growth of humanity. Serving, helping, caring others are some of the traits which are connected to most definitions of love such as "unconditional love", "giving love", "'altruistic love", "compassionate love" (Fehr and Russell 1991). "The ability to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation" is known as spiritual intelligence(Cindy Wigglesworth 2006). Wisdom and compassion best explained by "head" and "heart". Unconditional loving behavior is created by the qualities incorporated by head and heart. Love lies at the foundation of our nature (Dalai Lama). The utmost point of inner serenity comes from the expansion of love and compassion. The more we take care for the contentment of others, the greater our own wisdom of well-being becomes. Cultivating a close, warm-hearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. These benefits eliminate uncertainties or anxieties and provide us the strength to deal with any obstructions that come across in the journey of life. "Community spirituality" or "Compassion and Love"termed as "Rooted spirituality" (Wuthrow, 1998)

Proclamation 3 (c): Compassionate love is positively related to spirituality.

Commitment

Highest excellence is accomplished in the form of self-realization and self-satisfaction by incessantly performing one's duty with commitment and devotion. Meaning and purpose spawned commitment in one's life. This is one of the critical dimensions of spirituality that was cited in all the published research papers. Many authors have noticed that meaning and purpose is the core dimension of spirituality (Highfieldand Cason 1983; Burkhardt and Nagai-Jacobson 1985, Fish and Shelly 1988). All domains of life may be affected, if an individual lack meaning and purpose in life. "Man's principal concern is not to gain pleasure and elude pain but to comprehend a meaning and purpose in life" (Frankl 1959).

There are many studies conducted in the field of clinical psychology and Psychiatry which correlate meaning and purpose with mental well-being. Meaning and purpose of life is significantly correlated with communal contribution, internal locus of control, self-esteem and self-concept (Chamberlain and Zika 1988), well-being and positive life changes (Edwards and Holden 2001), resistance to pressure and managing efficacious aging and appreciation of death (Debats and Drost1995). Thus, we can state that the spirituality leads to a virtuous way of life with meaning

and purpose. Daily practice of spiritual discourse like prayer, yogic exercises, meditation, chanting holy mantras etc. can be helpful in leading a principle life with meaning and purpose. It can be said that religion and spirituality are linked but not identical concept.Therefore, both are significantly helpful in giving meaning and purpose in daily life.

Proclamation 4: There is a positive relationship between spirituality and virtuous life with meaning and purpose in life.

Contribution

There is a positive correlation between spirituality /religiosity and health such as physical, mental, emotional. Spiritual/Religious practices like meditation and prayer stimulate a moderating reaction by lowering the blood pressure, balancing the activities of nervous system and ultimately contributing to a good health. There is a positive correlation between intrinsic religiosity and high self-esteem which progressively help in reducing the level of deleterious impact of stress, anxiety and depression on human body (Pargament 1997). Spiritual/religious practices also act as a coping mechanism against daily stress (Ellison, Boardman, Williamsand Jackson 2001). Spiritual/religious practices help inrejecting the unproductive behavior like smoking, alcohol and drug abuse (Strawbridge et al. 2001), improving social support which lead to preserve a positive mental and psychological health (Strawbridge et al. 2001). A spiritual dimension like meaning and purpose in life, connectedness with oneself, others, environment and the higher power, create a strong impact in the life of an individual and therefore, enhances overall well-being in all sphere of life (Greenberg 1985; Egbert 1980). Psychological distress can be recovered by religious and spiritual practices(Koenig 2007). Spirituality act as resilience against the stressful events of life (Southwick, Vythilingam and Charney2005) and also minimizes the level of psychological and mental distress (Carmody, Reed, Kristeller and Merriam 2008; Johannessen-Henry, Deltour, Bidstrup, Dalton and Johansen2013). Faribors et al. (2010) state that there is a significant association between spiritual intelligence and happiness of nurses in Iran. Spirituality acts as a coping mechanism against stress and is also beneficial in the reduction of mental distress(Koenig 2010)

Manifestation of spirituality is viewed in the perspective of belief, meaning, hope, and connectedness. According to McSherry et al. (2004) nature of "god" has many forms precisely it depends on an individual to contemplate it as a highest value in his/her life. Spirituality is considered as one of the imperative holistic development of the whole

person rather than isolated parts. All religious scriptures of the world believe in spirituality and indicating the finest technique to make improvement in life threatening conditions which may give positive results in all sufferings. According to Indian philosophy there are three gunas (satva, rajas and tamas) present in all individuals and it is the predominance of one over the other that decided the personality trait of an individual as "saatvic", "rajasic" and "taamasic" (kiran kumar 2006). Spiritual traits of human beings that are related to saatvic qualities are brightness, illumination, transparency etc. A "saatvic" person is exemplified as one who has discriminative intellect, self-controlled, serene, equanamous, virtuous, generous, detached and duty bound without much expectation, a seeker of self and awareness of the unity underlying all diversities. A "rajasic" person is agitated and under stress and has an additional need for a strong likes and dislikes, sensory pleasures and self-centered. The principles of enlightenment, energy and inertia symbolize as "tamas". Unterrainer et al. (2010) examined that the different dimensions of R/S significantly predict personality traits and psychological well-being. It is also said that healthy development is the consequence of spiritual well-being (Vaughan 2002). It is elucidating that a spiritually healthy person cannot only take of self but also contribute in the progress of society as a large.

Proclamation 5: Spirituality is positively related to quality of life.

Conclusion

"Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science become convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe- a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble"(Albert Einstein)."Bible" the holy scripture of christians, "Quran" the holy scripture of muslim's and "Bhagavad gita" the holy scripture of hindu's. In Christianity the holy spirit is known as "god"; in islam the holy spirit is known as "allaha", in hinduism it is known as "paramatman". All religious teachings of the world spread the message of compassionate love, peace and non-violence in the society. These scriptures teach us a significant lesson in life such as effective ways to control on one's senses and also to lead a contended life in this materialistic world. Except physical body all other entities are subtle, invisible but their power is recognized. The reality of life is hidden in the power of true self i.e. "soul". To control the speed of thought, one needs to control the mind. It is a well-known example in bhagavad gita that the master of the chariot is atman (soul) and chariot as a body; Intellect (buddhi) a charioteer (driver), regulating the command mind and five sense organs. A wise person can

integrate atman (soul) with the senses, the mind and the body and this is the state as an enjoyer. If a person is not able to control his senses then he/she lost the meaning and direction of life in pursuit of materialistic pleasure. The presence of eternal atman or soul in every human being is the part of 'God' or 'higher power'. The soul of a person is perpetual. An individual inner soul is connected with all the energy permeated by the "universal soul". The soul is the foundation of genuine awareness which is full of imagination and innovation. Thus, human beings are stronger with the sacred soul. Consequently, our life experiences oscillate between dualities love-hate, etc. human beings have little control on external happenings. Thus, we can definitely regulate our emotional outcomes evolve due to external triggers, provided we can control over our mind. A person who thrives in regulating the mind and creating a state of inner silence, ultimate peace, contentment, wisdom and bliss. Thus, spirituality gives direction to a person to lead a virtuous life with true meaning and purpose.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval

This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent

Additional informed consent was obtained from all individual participants for whom identifying information is included in this article.

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Fig 1: Conceptual diagramme on spirituality leads to quality of life

Abbreviation used in the fig 1.

Rws: Relationship with self

Rwo/n; Relationship with others/nature

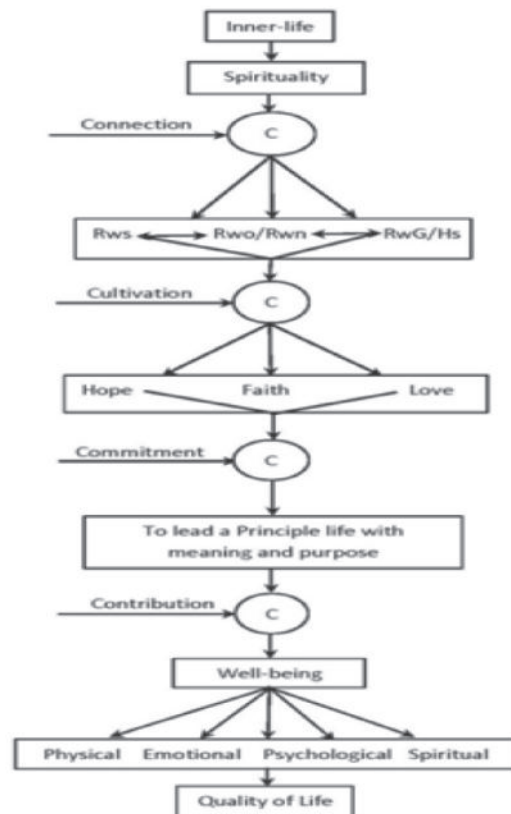RwG/Hs: Relationship with God/Higher-self

Figure 1: Spirituality Leads to Quality of Life

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