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Social Support, Spirituality and Psychological Wellbeing of Working Students

Syvil B. Mediante¹ and Vicky C. Mergal²
Adventist University of the Philippines
vcmergal@aup.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Some people have better psychological wellbeing than others; thus, they are more functioning individuals. On the other hand, working students are confronted with a variety of challenges that may affect their psychological wellbeing. The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship of social support and spirituality to the psychological wellbeing of working students. This descriptive-correlational research utilized 302 conveniently sampled college working students from three Seventh-Day Adventist higher education institutions in Luzon, Philippines. An expert-validated four-part questionnaire was used to gather data. Based on the findings, the respondents had a low social support yet, they were highly spiritual. They also had a moderately high psychological wellbeing. Social support and spirituality were significantly related to all the dimensions of the psychological wellbeing of the respondents. On the other hand, there was no significant difference on all the dimensions of psychological wellbeing when age, sex, and length of stay were considered. Moreover, dormitory dean's support was a significant predictor of the respondents' psychological well-being in terms of self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others while support from friends/peers was a significant predictor of the respondents' psychological wellbeing in terms of purpose in life. Finally, spirituality was a significant predictor of the respondents' psychological wellbeing in terms of self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations with others regardless of age, sex, and length of stay. It is recommended that a replicate study be done among non-working students and/or non-SDA institutions.

Keywords: Social Support, Spirituality, Psychological Well-Being, Working Students

INTRODUCTION

A number of people have better psychological wellbeing than others. Thus, they are more functioning individuals. However, for those who are studying in college while working to support themselves through school, they are confronted with a variety of challenges in life. If they do not have a sound psychological wellbeing, chances are, they may suffer from emotional pain which, in turn, may affect their work, studies, and interpersonal relationship. Globally, students who are engaged in violent thinking showed fluctuating psychological

wellbeing. Dysfunctional psychological wellbeing is a risk factor for a broad range of psychological and behavioral problems (Ryff, 2008). Walker (2009) reported that students who had low psychological wellbeing were frequently drunk, had poorer health habits, and had weaker spirituality.

Lederman (2009) stated that working students who work for more than 20 hours a week experience negative effect not only on their academic performance but also on their psychological wellbeing. Working students who had difficulty in dealing with their work and studies found low level of environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, and self-concept. Hence, working students' social support, spirituality, and psychological wellbeing affect their everyday life.

Social Support

Stek (2010) mentioned that social support contributes strongly to the strengthening of attitudes and coping skills. Creating and maintaining a supportive, caring, and encouraging environment goes along to enhancing and strengthening personal hardiness. Moreover, social support sustains people and helps their mental health and wellbeing. Isolation, on the other hand, is linked with mental illness, anxiety, and poor health condition (Northam, 2010).

Social support from someone's parents in early life and/or living in a stable supportive environment as a child has long effect on coping and on health (Marticio, 2011). A study by Kumar (2011) found that parental support is significantly related to academic outcome and students' success. Perceived social support coming from both parents appears crucial to the academic achievement of students. Accordingly, Chu, Saucier, and Hafner (2010) suggested that creating school settings that support the students' psychological wellbeing is linked to work environments that foster the teachers.

Spirituality

Spirituality encompasses all aspects of being human and is a means of experiencing life. Young and Koopsen (2011) argued that people who are committed to a personal relationship with God have the opportunity to experience transcendence they live out the kingdom of God on earth. Furthermore, Fife (2011) considers spirituality as an inner belief system that a person relies on for strength and comfort. Johansen (2010) further said that spirituality is more than tasks that has to be dealt with, rather than as aspect of human condition. The spiritual concepts of trust, harmony, and values must integrate with prayers and worship. It is

only through this integration that spiritual needs of people are fulfilled. The recognition of this spiritual concepts enhances the individual's responsibility for common good, and allows a person to understand the deep meaning of interconnectedness of all life, through service to humanity and the planet.

Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing is a concept that encompasses a well-rounded, balanced, and comprehensive experience of life. It includes health in social, physical, mental, emotional, career, and spiritual domains. There is nothing more important than having caring, trusting, and loving relationships in life (Wilner, 2008).

Center for Bhutan Studies (2009) stated that psychological wellbeing refers to how people evaluate their lives. These evaluations may be in the form of cognition or in the form of affect. The cognitive part, an information-based appraisal of one's life, is when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about one's satisfaction with life as a whole. The affective part is a hedonic evaluation guided by emotions and feelings such as the frequency with which people experience both pleasant and unpleasant moods in reaction to their lives.

As working students are always challenged with diversified problems both at work and with their studies, their psychological wellbeing is at risk to deteriorate and a means of support to sustain their wellbeing is needed. Hence, this study determined the relationship of social support and spirituality to the psychological wellbeing of working students of three sectarian colleges in Luzon, Philippines.

METHODS

This quantitative study is descriptive-correlational in nature to determine the relationship of social support and spirituality with psychological wellbeing. A total of 302 working students from three sectarian tertiary education institutions were conveniently sampled. The four-part questionnaires were distributed and retrieved by the researchers, encoded through Microsoft Excel, and analyzed using the Predictive Analysis Software (PASW). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze, interpret, and determine the implications of the gathered data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from Table 1 revealed that the respondents had moderate level of social support from their parents ($m = 3.35$; $SD = 1.04$), siblings ($m = 2.57$; $SD = 1.17$), and friends/peers ($m = 2.92$; $SD = 0.88$). They received low support from teachers ($m = 1.92$; $SD = 0.75$), work supervisors ($m = 2.16$; $SD = 0.85$), dormitory deans ($m = 1.87$; $SD = 0.80$), and relatives ($m = 2.09$; $SD = 0.88$).

Table 1. Level of Social Support of the Respondents (N = 302)

Items	Mean	SD	Scaled Responses	Verbal Interpretations
Parental Support	3.35	1.04	Sometimes	Moderate
Fiends/Peers	2.92	0.88	Sometimes	Moderate
Siblings	2.57	1.17	Sometimes	Moderate
Work Supervisor	2.16	0.85	Rarely	Low
Relatives	2.09	0.88	Rarely	Low
Teachers	1.92	0.75	Rarely	Low
Dormitory Dean	1.87	0.80	Rarely	Low
Overall Social Support	2.18	0.92	Rarely	Low

Legend: 4.50-5.00 = Always (Very High), 3.50-4.49 = Often (High), 2.50-3.49 = Sometimes (Moderate), 1.50-2.49 = Rarely (Low), 1.00-1.49 = Never (Very Low)

The findings of the study showed that the respondents' overall level of social support is low. Ramos (2005) postulated that the low level of social support decreases the ability of young Filipino working students to cope with life hence resulting in a poorer psychological wellbeing. On the other hand, high levels of social support may allow the working students to experience less stress when faced with a stressful experience, coping with it more successfully (Taylor, 2006).

Table 2 presents the individual items that assess the spirituality of the respondents followed by the overall mean to determine its extent. The table shows that the extent of the respondents' spirituality is high ($m = 4.14$; $SD = 1.07$). The item "When I examined my life, I recognized my great need of God to work in me" gained the highest mean ($m = 4.50$; $SD = 0.87$) and it was the only item with the response always. On the other hand, the respondents sometimes have a hard time perceiving God's voice through religious music which gained the lowest mean ($m = 3.25$; $SD = 1.45$).

Table 2. Level of Spirituality of the Respondents (N = 302)

Items	Mean	SD	Scaled Responses	Verbal Interpretations
1. When I examined my life, I recognized my great need of God to work in me.	4.50	0.87	Always	Very High
2. When I confess and repent of my sins, I experience the assurance of God's forgiveness.	4.48	0.93	Often	High
3. Even though evil seems to be so powerful and so pervasive, I feel confident that God will ultimately provide justice.	4.44	0.91	Often	High
4. When I pray, I am confident that God will answer my prayer.	4.44	0.84	Often	High
5. I experience great love in helping other people with their problems.	4.40	0.91	Often	High
6. I experience God's leading in joining outreach activities.	4.28	1.05	Often	High
7. I experience profound inner peace when I read the Bible and reflect the passages thoughtfully.	4.26	1.00	Often	High
8. I experience complete joy in participating in church ministries.	4.19	1.08	Often	High
9. I cannot sense that God guides my decisions in life.	3.88	1.31	Often	High
10. I cannot feel the presence of God when I attend church services.	3.81	1.15	Often	High
11. I doubt if God will help me to accomplish the work He calls me to do.	3.75	1.33	Often	High
12. I find it hard to perceive God's voice through religious music.	3.25	1.45	Sometimes	Moderate
Spirituality	4.14	1.07	Often	High

Legend: 4.50-5.00 = Always (Very High), 3.50-4.49 = Often (High), 2.50-3.49 = Sometimes (Moderate), 1.50-2.49 = Rarely (Low), 1.00-1.49 = Never (Very Low)

Overall, the result indicated that the respondents have a high extent of spirituality. According to them, they always recognize the great need of God to work with them and oftentimes they experience the assurance of God's forgiveness, feel confident that God would ultimately provide justice, and confident that God would answer their prayers. Fowler as cited in Mendez (2008) mentioned that those who are spiritually mature are aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in life. Through daily Bible study and prayer, they maintain that walk by the Spirit. They spend their lives helping others to also mature spiritually. Spiritual activities include prayer or meditation, various rituals, mystical experience, and support groups. Furthermore,

Top and Chadwick (2006) found in their study that the young people who regularly pray and study the scriptures on their own feel the Spirit more often in their lives and reported stronger feelings of individual worth and confidence.

The respondents are moderately high in all components of psychological wellbeing such as personal growth ($m = 4.19$; $SD = 0.65$), purpose in life ($m = 4.09$; $SD = 0.70$), self-acceptance ($m = 4.03$; $SD = 0.60$), positive relations to others ($m = 3.94$; $SD = 0.56$), environmental mastery ($m = 3.89$; $SD = 0.60$), and autonomy ($m = 3.58$; $SD = 0.49$). Table 3 shows that the overall level of the respondents' psychological wellbeing is moderately high with a grand mean of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 0.60.

Table 3. Respondent's Overall Level of Psychological Wellbeing (N = 302)

Components	Mean	SD	Scaled Responses	Verbal Interpretation
Personal Growth	4.19	0.65	Slightly Agree	Moderately High
Purpose in Life	4.09	0.70	Slightly Agree	Moderately High
Self-Acceptance	4.03	0.60	Slightly Agree	Moderately High
Positive Relations to Others	3.94	0.56	Slightly Agree	Moderately High
Environmental Mastery	3.89	0.60	Slightly Agree	Moderately High
Autonomy	3.58	0.49	Slightly Agree	Moderately High
Overall Psychological Wellbeing	3.95	0.60	Slightly Agree	Moderately High

Legend: 5.50-6.00 = Strongly Agree (Very High), 4.50-5.49 = Moderately Agree (High), 3.50-4.49 = Slightly Agree (Moderately High), 2.50-3.49 = Slightly Disagree (Moderately Low), 1.50-2.49 = Moderately Disagree (Low), 1.00-1.49 = Strongly Disagree (Very Low)

The results indicated that the respondents, in general, see themselves growing and expanding, open to welcome new experiences, and realize their potentials as indicated in their score in personal growth. The respondents have goals, sense of direction, and finding meaning in life as manifested in their score in purpose in life. They also possess positive attitudes toward self and have good interpersonal relationship as revealed in their scores in self-acceptance and positive relations to others. Their scores in environmental mastery and autonomy showed that the respondents have mastery and competence in managing their environment; they are also independent and self-determined.

Ryff (2008), whose concept of psychological wellbeing is derived from "eudonomia" or happiness perspective, listed six components namely: autonomy, environmental mastery,

personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life and acceptance. Therefore, students who exhibit strength in each of these components are considered to be in a state of good psychological wellbeing, while adolescents who struggle in these areas manifested a low state of psychological wellbeing.

Relationship Between Social Support and Spirituality to Self-Acceptance

Table 4 presents that the dimensions of social support such as parental support, siblings, friends, teachers, work supervisor, and dormitory dean are significantly related to self-acceptance. However, relatives' support is not significantly related to self-acceptance. On the other hand, spirituality is correlated to self-acceptance with correlation coefficient of .499 with an associated probability of .000 and was significant at .01 level.

Table 4. Correlations of the Respondents' Social Support and Spirituality to Self-Acceptance

Sources of Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Descriptive Interpretation
Parental Support	.141	.014	Significant
Siblings	.192	.001	Significant
Friends/Peers	.131	.023	Significant
Teachers	.119	.039	Significant
Work Supervisor	.151	.009	Significant
Dormitory Dean	.193	.001	Significant
Relatives	.112	.052	Not Significant
Spirituality	.499	.000	Significant

The findings implied that the respondents' self-acceptance was facilitated by the social support coming from a network of people who have direct contacts with them. Results also revealed that the respondents who have high social support and high spirituality are more likely having high level of self-acceptance. When individuals are able to accept themselves fully, including all their limitations and good or bad experiences in the past, they can grow as fully actualized persons, and thus able to dedicate themselves fully to their commitment in spiritual life. In other words, individual's deeper trust in God and deeper awareness of God's unconditional love that continues to develop through prayers reflect their positive attitudes toward self (Ariastuti, 2011).

Relationship Between Social Support and Spirituality to Personal Growth

Out of the eight sources of social support of the respondents, four came out to be statistically related to personal growth as presented in Table 5. The supports from parents ($r = .130$; p -value = .024), siblings ($r = .572$; p -value = .007), friends/peers ($r = .115$; p -value = .047), and dormitory deans ($r = .114$; p -value = .049) are *significantly related* to the personal growth of the respondents. The relationship of supports from parents, siblings, friends/peers, and dormitory deans is *positive* though the correlation coefficients are *low*. Likewise, spirituality is *highly related* to the personal growth of the respondents with *positive* correlation coefficient of .453 and *significant* at .01 level.

Table 5. Correlations of the Respondents' Social Support and Spirituality to Personal Growth

Sources of Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	p -value	Descriptive Interpretation
Parental Support	.130	.024	Significant
Siblings	.157	.007	Significant
Friends/Peers	.115	.047	Significant
Teachers	.069	.230	Not Significant
Work Supervisor	.068	.242	Not Significant
Dormitory Dean	.114	.049	Significant
Relatives	.094	.104	Not Significant
Spirituality	.453	.000	Significant

The results implied that having highly supportive parents, siblings, friends/peers, and dormitory deans can lead to higher level of personal growth. In addition, the respondents who have high extent in spirituality are open to be open to welcome new experiences and are willing to improve themselves to be fully functioning. Obst and Stafurik (2010) stated that moral support and personal advice from parents, family, and friends are positively associated to psychological wellbeing in the area of personal relations and personal growth. Moreover, spirituality and personal growth is a powerful combination in seeking opportunities to develop as an individual (Obst & Stafurik, 2010; Wilner, 2008).

Relationship Between Social Support and Spirituality to Purpose in Life

Table 6 shows that the social support coming from parents, siblings, teachers, and dormitory deans are *significantly related* to the respondents' purpose in life. Other sources of social support such as friends/peers, work supervisor, relatives, and sponsor are *not significantly*

related to the respondents' purpose in life. Furthermore, the respondents' spirituality is *highly related* to their purpose in life with a correlation coefficient of .720 which is *significant* at .01 level.

Table 6. Correlations of the Respondents' Social Support and Spirituality to Purpose in Life

Sources of Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Descriptive Interpretation
Parental Support	.117	.042	Significant
Siblings	.118	.041	Significant
Friends/Peers	.067	.248	Not Significant
Teachers	.141	.015	Significant
Work Supervisor	.088	.127	Not Significant
Dormitory Dean	.189	.001	Significant
Relatives	.109	.058	Not Significant
Spirituality	.720	.000	Significant

The results revealed that the workings students receive more moral support from their parents, siblings, teachers, and dormitory deans, the more they find their life to be purposive and meaningful; and that state of life is further enhanced by their spirituality giving them a sense of psychological wellbeing. This result agreed to Gockel (2009) who found out that spirituality helps a person to find meaning and purpose in life despite the challenges they experience.

Relationship Between Social Support and Spirituality to Environmental Mastery

Among all the sources of social support, the support coming from the dormitory deans is the only one to be *significantly related* to the respondents' psychological wellbeing in terms of environmental mastery as presented in Table 7. In the same way, spirituality indicates a *significant relationship* with environmental mastery with correlation coefficient of .442 and *significant* at 0.1 level.

Table 7. Correlations of the Respondents' Social Support and Spirituality to Environmental Mastery

Sources of Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Descriptive Interpretation
Parental Support	.072	.211	Not Significant
Siblings	.108	.062	Not Significant
Friends/Peers	.111	.055	Not Significant
Teachers	.068	.238	Not Significant
Work Supervisor	.067	.247	Not Significant

Dormitory Dean	.138	.017	Significant
Relatives	.072	.209	Not Significant
Spirituality	.442	.000	Significant

The findings of the study revealed that the respondents who are highly supported by their dormitory deans are competent in managing complexities of life especially dormitory life. Likewise, the respondents who are highly spiritual are effective in handling life's difficulties. The result was supported by the study of Ong (2007) which found out that clinical sample of college students who perceived themselves to receive adequate support from their significant social support providers are less stressful and can cope better with their stresses.

Relationship Between Social Support and Spirituality to Autonomy

Table 8 reveals that social support is not statistically related to autonomy. However, spirituality has a *significant* relationship to autonomy. The relationship is *moderate* and positive with a correlation coefficient of .254 and *significant* at 0.1 level. The finding showed that the respondents who have high extent of spirituality tend to be more autonomous, hence can regulate their own behaviors and evaluate themselves by personal standards to fully function.

Table 8. Correlations of the Respondents' Social Support and Spirituality to Autonomy

Sources of Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Descriptive Interpretation
Parental Support	.067	.244	Not Significant
Siblings	.058	.321	Not Significant
Friends/Peers	.033	.571	Not Significant
Teachers	.050	.383	Not Significant
Work Supervisor	.000	.999	Not Significant
Dormitory Dean	.091	.116	Not Significant
Relatives	.005	.345	Not Significant
Spirituality	.264	.000	Significant

According to Ariastuti (2011) an individual's spirituality holds the first responsibility in her decision to follow the "call" and accepts all consequences. This requires the individual's autonomy or inner freedom. When people are able to exercise inner freedom, they can live their lives more fully and wholeheartedly.

Kumar (2011) found out that spirituality has a significant relationship with autonomy which seems to indicate that if a person practices frequent meditation and contemplation, the higher is his or her sense of autonomy.

Relationship Between Social Support and Spirituality to Positive Relation with Others

Table 9. shows that the respondents’ social supports coming from their parents, siblings, and dormitory deans are statistically related to their positive relations with others. The correlation coefficient is .131, .164, and .152, respectively. Likewise, spirituality is *highly* related to positive relations with others with correlation coefficient of .450 and *significant* at 0.1 level.

Table 9. Correlations of the Respondents’ Social Support and Spirituality to Positive Relations with Others

Sources of Social Support	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	Descriptive Interpretation
Parental Support	.131	.023	Significant
Siblings	.164	.004	Significant
Friends/Peers	.081	.161	Not Significant
Teachers	.028	.622	Not Significant
Work Supervisor	.075	.194	Not Significant
Dormitory Dean	.152	.008	Significant
Relatives	.039	.495	Not Significant
Spirituality	.450	.000	Significant

The result implied that the respondents who have highly supportive parents, siblings, and dormitory deans and have high spirituality are more likely to develop positive relations with other people. The more people get along well with others, the better they are at collaborating and working together (Psychology and Self-Improvement, 2011). On the other hand, because one of the elements of spirituality is the relationship with the community, it is also necessary for each member of the community to maintain a positive relationship with one another to have a healthy community (Ariastuti, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings, the respondents in general had low social support, yet they are highly spiritual and have moderately high psychological wellbeing. Social support and spirituality were significantly related to psychological wellbeing of the respondents.

Based on the findings and conclusion, it is recommended that (a) guidance counselors extend a more personalized guidance program such as information, counseling, and follow-up services to the working students which will reinforce their social support network and thus enhance their psychological wellbeing; (b) dormitory deans become more aware of and supportive to the needs of working students especially in their emotional and spiritual aspects; (c) parents, siblings, and relatives be more supportive to their children who are working and student at the same time; and (d) future researchers consider other variables that could also be significant predictors of psychological wellbeing and replicate the study among non-working students for comparison.

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