

Spiritual support and resilience among bereaved mothers

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Abstract

In the times of turmoil, only those who are resilient enough to bounce back are able to survive. In Kashmir, the ongoing conflict has left thousands of mothers wailing for their sons. But many of them have indeed bounced back and are well adjusted. In most of the cases, adjustment becomes possible because of spiritual help. The present study was designed to examine the resilience in women who have lost their sons in the ongoing conflict in Kashmir and to examine the relation of resilience with spiritual support. The participants consist of forty women who were successfully adjusted up to a greater extent in life after facing the loss in 2008 & 2010 uprisings. The Resilience Scale (Wagnild and Young, 1993) was used to assess resilience trait. A comparative analysis was done to compare the resilience of women having a spiritual guide to those not having such guide. An independent samples t-test was conducted and a significant difference [$t(3.079) = 28.19; p=.00$] was found in the resilience scores of mothers with and without spiritual support.

Keywords: resilience, spiritual support, women

Introduction

Since 1989, thousands of people lost their life in Kashmir. From the year 2010, conflict in Kashmir gained a new server and hundreds of Kashmiris especially young boys lost their lives. The families of these boys were left in disdain and despair. Women being the vulnerable part on account of conflict have suffered more than men. But as life goes on, most of the mothers of these boys have managed to move on. This ability to move on after adversity is resilience. The opportunity in adversity is nothing but resilience. It is the power to bounce back. Resilience is also defined as a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Bechur, 2000, p. 543) [3]. Arthur Foundation Network on Successful Aging defined Resilience as the ability to recover swiftly from any misfortune and challenge. Ryff and Singer (2003) define Resilience as “maintenance, recovery or improvement in mental or physical health following challenge”. According to Coutu (2002) resilient individuals possess a staunch acceptance of reality, a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful and an uncanny ability to improvise (Shahnawaz M.G. and Jafri H., 2009) [5]. As James, the 19th Century philosophy and psychologist writes that the happiest people are those who have gone through an intense period of suffering, marked by the search for a deeper meaning in their lives.

Being resilient depends upon so many factors at individual, familial and societal levels. One of the factors is support available to the individual under distress. Support may be tangible, emotional, moral or spiritual. Spiritual support is a kind of emotional support which is above other types of support. Spiritual support can help a person to find value, meaning, trust, and strength during difficult times. It helps a person under distress to feel a connection with Greater Power. Spiritual Wellbeing has been accepted as one of the

determinants of health by WHO (World Health Organization) keeping in view the importance of this dimension of life. Likewise, spiritual support is crucial in the life of those who believe in it.

In Kashmir, the land of Sufis and saints, the major population being Muslims are strongly tied to the knot of Sufism. In this connection, many people have a spiritual guide in their lives who is believed to show the path towards Ultimate and facilitate the connection between a person and Beloved. Though having such spiritual guide usually called as Peer in the local language is not so prominent in youth but in the older population, the trend still continues. In numerous Kashmiri Sufi writings it is said that to have a spiritual guide in life is essential otherwise a person is bound to go astray. Such a guide provides moral and spiritual support to a person who follows that path. It is believed that such a guide reflects the true nature of the moral character of the world to a person thereby strengthening the bond with spiritual being and weakening the bond with a mortal being.

Procedure

The participants comprised of forty women who have lost their sons since 2008. The inclusion criterion was a successful adjustment after the loss of son which was evidenced by social involvement. This information was gained by family members and self-reports. The participants were bifurcated into two groups- those having spiritual guide comprised the first group and the second group included those not having such guide.

Spiritual support was assessed by asking two questions

Whether you have a spiritual guide in your life?

Are you satisfied with the support you get from him/her?

Besides only those women were included in the first group who were satisfied with the spiritual support they get from their guides.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Spiritual Support	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Resilience	Present	20	4.5250	.40923
	Absent	20	1.6417	.20430

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations. As can be seen from the table the mean values for participants with

spiritual support (mean=4.52) is higher than that of participants without spiritual support (mean=1.64).

Table 2: Independent Samples Test

Leven's test for equality of variances			T-Test for equality of means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig(two-tailed)	Mean diff	Std error diff	95% Confidence interval	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variances assumed	3.079	.000	28.191	38	.000	2.88	.10	2.67	3.09

Table 2 shows the results of the independent samples t-test.

As observed from the table, a significant difference was found in resilience between mothers with and without spiritual support, indicating that mothers with spiritual support in their lives have greater resilience as compared to those who were lacking such support.

Discussion

Being a valley of Sufis and saints, in Kashmir, the thread of spirituality has run through decades. Spiritual support has a significant contribution to people's lives. Whether a person gains spiritual support through a person or by visiting shrines, or by any other means, this kind of support surpasses all other supports.

Women in Kashmir have suffered the most in ongoing turmoil. But the resilience they have shown from time to time is commendable. Women who have lost their sons during conflict could be considered as the most affected of all. But these bereaved mothers also adjust to life and some do so with a positive approach. Many factors play role in keeping them resilient amidst stressful situations. In the present study, one such factor was taken into consideration i.e. Spiritual Support. As indicated by results, mothers who had spiritual support in their lives were more resilient than those who were lacking such support. Thus it can be said that Spiritual support can heal the deepest wounds.

Implications

While addressing affected women in Kashmir, the health professionals, therapists, counselors, and psychologists should take spiritual aspect into account. Spiritual support can be included in therapies by visits to shrines etc.

Conclusion

Spirituality can help to inculcate positive psychological strengths such as hope, resilience, etc. Spiritual practices and spiritual experiences should be a part of our daily activities.

Limitations

The present study was carried with a limited number of participants. Besides, only women were taken into account. Future researchers can conduct this study with a larger sample

including both males and females.

References

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