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SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP?

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Abstract: Numerous literary works highlight the relevance of Religiosity and Spirituality (R/S). Aiming to broaden the understanding of these concepts, a study used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) in 2009, identifying specific brain regions that are associated with social cognition related to R/S. This study aims to evaluate the influence of human interactions on spirituality. To achieve this objective, the following steps were taken: (1) approval by the Ethics Committee; (2) data collection; (3) analysis. Data collection involved the use of a questionnaire for sociodemographic characterization and the adapted Schedule for Meaning in Life Evaluation (SMiLE) through Google Forms, together with the Informed Consent Form (TCLE). 105 participants aged 18 years or older completed the questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using statistics, descriptive measures and graphs. The sample consisted of participants aged between 18 and 24 years (53.4%), with incomplete higher education (41.7%) and belief in God (68.9%). The most selected areas were the personal area (93.2%) and the social area (78.6%), although a higher percentage was expected in the social area. When discussing the results, three factors were considered: (1) the age of the sample, which corresponds to an age group that promotes awareness and internal reflection; (2) the Dunning-Kruger Effect, which broadens self-perception; (3) the notion that interpersonal interaction based on belief in God is an imaginary construct. The sample analysis indicates that the influence of human relationships on spirituality is lower than the influence of the personal area. Given the complexity of the subject, the limitations of the sample and the interviewees' difficulties in understanding the subject, it is suggested that further research be carried out to elucidate obscure points.

Keywords: Spirituality; Human relationship;

God.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality, one of the ways to search for the meaning of life, is inherent to human nature (ARRIEIRA et al., 2017), bringing with it a series of health benefits (CASTILLO, 2020; FORTI et al., 2018; KOENIG, 2005; TUASON, GÜSS, BOYD, 2021). The present time witnesses the manifestation of symptoms of spiritual distress, resulting from the lack of spirituality, called by Frankl (1963) as noogenic neurosis (AQUINO et al., 2015; NIGORIKAWA, 2016).

Aiming to deepen the understanding of spirituality, a research conducted in 2009 used fMRI, identifying areas of the brain related to social cognition activated during Personal Prayer (SCHJOEDT et al., 2009). Several authors also observed similarities between spiritual pain and loneliness, highlighting, above all, Henri Nouwen, mentioned by Van Der Merwe (2016) (LINHARES et al., 2020; NIGORIKAWA, 2016).

The potential relationship between loneliness and the onset of diseases is justified by human nature itself, which considers it a social being (ADOLPHS, 2009). Ignoring this characteristic can have several health implications (SADOCK, 2017), particularly for mental health, which can lead to the development of psychiatric disorders (WANG et al., 2020).

The relevance of spirituality to the psychic aspect of human beings is so expressive that the World Psychiatric Association (AMP) incorporated "religion and spirituality" into the "Basic Training Curriculum for Psychiatry" (MOREIRA-ALMEIDA et al., 2016; VERHAGEN, 2018), although conceptualizations and recommendations based on scientific research are still lacking (HOENDERS, BRAAM, 2020).

In the context of the above, the lack of

spirituality can give rise to noogenic neurosis (AQUINO et al., 2015; NIGORIKAWA, 2016), with a strong association with loneliness (LINHARES et al., 2020; NIGORIKAWA, 2016; VAN, 2016), this being a relevant predictor of mental health (WANG et al., 2020). This finding suggests an interconnection between spirituality and mental health, with studies that demonstrate this relationship still lacking (HOENDERS, BRAAM, 2020). Thus, the hypothesis arises that the human relationship can function as a connecting link between both (SCHJOEDT et al., 2009).

Considering the possibility that loneliness is intrinsically related to spirituality, which may influence health and mental disorders, and given the growing concern in this area (BRAZIL, 2018; OMS, 2017; OPAS, BRAZIL, 2017), this study aims to investigate the influence of human interactions on spirituality.

DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- Evaluate the influence of human relationships on spirituality.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

- Characterize sociodemographic aspects.
- Identify pillars of the meaning of life.
- Analyze the influence of human relationships on spirituality.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an exploratory, descriptive, quantitative and qualitative population-based approach.

The sample design was random, selecting adults aged 18 years or older and excluding incompletely completed questionnaires.

Participation was voluntary, subject to the electronic signature of the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE).

Participants' responses were coded to ensure anonymity.

The results were treated, inferred and interpreted based on the answers to the questionnaire, being presented in descriptive charts, tables and graphs using Microsoft Excel software. The analysis of the results was performed using descriptive statistics, graphs and descriptive measures, accompanied by specific inferences based on the literature relevant to the topic (FERREIRA, PATINO, 2015).

The project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Higher Education Center of Maringá (Unicesumar) under opinion number 4,764,100. Before the interviews, the participants received clarifications about the research objectives and their rights, according to the guidelines of Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council and complementary ones, and proceeded to electronically sign the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE).

MATERIALS

Data collection took place in a single step in September and October 2021, through the Google Forms online platform, using a direct link (<https://forms.gle/cKK3xGBdhrYK3aor8>) distributed through social networks. A semi-structured instrument was used, containing questions to assess mental suffering and achieve the specific objectives:

1. Questionnaire for sociodemographic characterization. (Appendix A)
2. SMiLE - Schedule for Meaning in Life Evaluation: Divided into three sections, in the first one, the individual writes what gives meaning to his life, in the others, he evaluates the satisfaction and importance

of the corresponding areas (FEGG, 2016; PEREIRA, 2012). (Appendix B)

RESULTS

3 sociodemographic data and the areas that give meaning to life were collected according to the SMiLe questionnaire from a population of 105 participants over 18 years of age who signed the TCLE, according to the inclusion criteria. By the exclusion criteria, 2 participants were excluded because they did not fill out the form correctly, so the sample resulted in 103 participants.

The vast majority of the sample consisted of young people aged 18-24, people with incomplete higher education and also those who believe in God (Graphs 1, 2, 3).

The 3 most voted areas, in descending order, were: personal, social and professional (Graphs 4,5,6).

SUPPORT ELEMENTS FOR ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Graphics

The percentages of the respective ages were: 18-24 years old (53.4%), 25-29 years old (14.5%), 30-39 years old (7.7%), 40-49 years old (2.9%), 50-59 years old (2.9%), 60-69 years old (1.9%), 70-79 years old (12.6%), 80 years old or older (3.8%).

The percentages of the respective levels of education were: incomplete elementary school (13.6%), complete elementary school (0.0%), incomplete high school (5.8%), complete high school (16.5%), incomplete higher education (41.7%), complete higher education (12.6%), incomplete postgraduate studies (0.9%), complete postgraduate studies (8.7%).

The percentage of religious/spiritual activity level was: The person believes in God (68.9%), The person believes in a higher power, not necessarily in "God(s)" (21.3%), The person does not believe in any of the

above models (8.7%), Agnostic (0.9%)

In the item represented by graph 4, there was an option to mark more than one answer, which resulted in N=260.

The percentages of the level of the respective areas that give meaning to life according to the number of participants were: Personal (93.2%), Social (78.6%), Professional (59.2%), Spiritual (11.6%), Nothing (5.8%), Hope (1.9%), Nature (1.9%), Just Alive (1%), Truth (1%).

Satisfaction in the areas that give meaning to life had a more homogeneous distribution among the 3 highest scores in the personal area (27% in point 3; 27% in point 2; 21.8% in point 1), while in the area social, had a more heterogeneous satisfaction (28.4% in point 3; 40.7% in point 2; 14.8% in point 1).

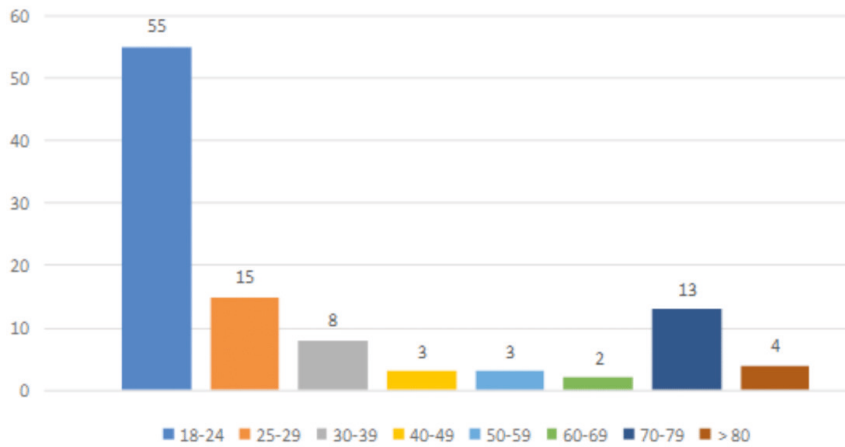
In terms of importance, a more heterogeneous distribution was identified in the two areas. In the personal area: 63.5% point 3; 17.7% point 2; 7.3% point 1. In the social area: 54.3% point 3; 22.2% point 2; 9.9% point 1.

As a result of the areas that give meaning to life and the degree of importance they give to each of these areas, the personal area was the area that was most chosen with 93.2% of participants choosing it and the most importance was given with 63, 5% of people scoring 7, even with a relatively lower degree of satisfaction than in other areas according to the result of the degree of satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

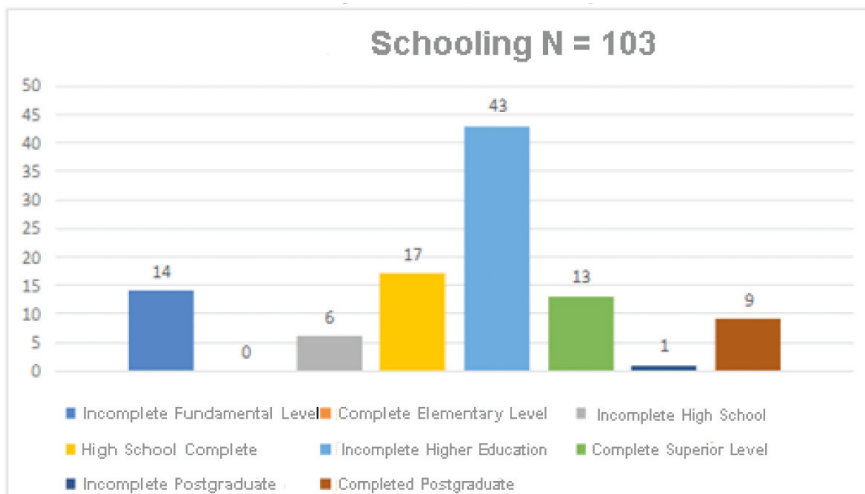
In view of the results above, it can be understood that in the present sample, most people gave more consideration to the personal side (93.2% - graph 4), while what was expected, according to the research hypothesis, was that the majority opted for social area, which was 78.6% (graph 4).

Age N=103



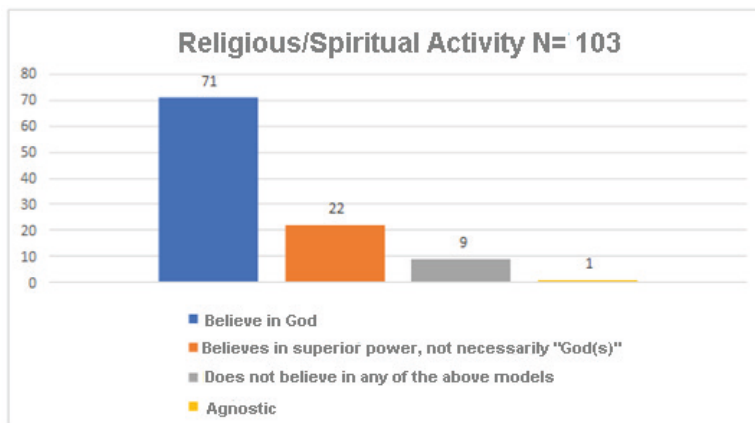
Graphic 1- Sample Age

Source: Produced by the author based on the data collected.



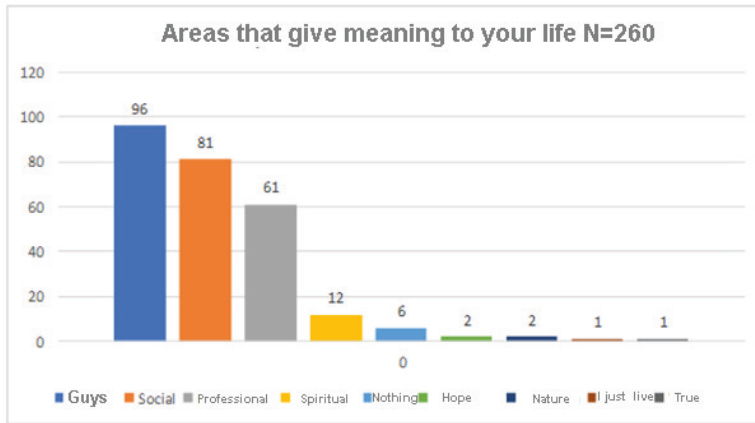
Graph 2- Sample schooling

Source: Produced by the author based on the data collected



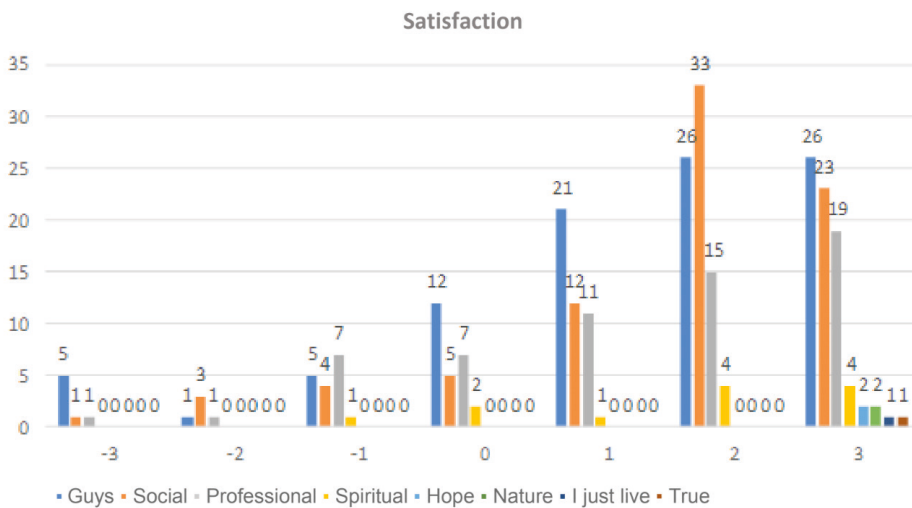
Graph 3- Religious/Spiritual Activity of the sample

Source: Produced by the author based on the data collected



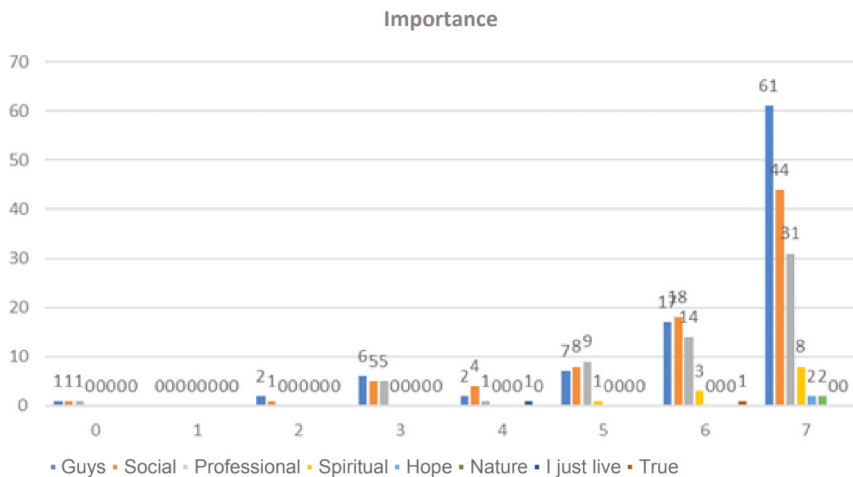
Graph 4– Areas that give meaning to your life

Source: Produced by the author based on the data collected



Graph 5– Satisfying the areas that give meaning to your life

Source: Produced by the author based on the data collected



Graph 6– Importance of areas that give meaning to your life

Source: Produced by the author based on the data collected

AGE VS AREAS THAT GIVE MEANING TO LIFE

Considering that all participants are over 18 years old (graph 1), it can be deduced that the choice made for the personal area (graph 4) is due to the beginning of the awakening of consciousness (called self-transcendence by Victor Frankl) which made realizing that the individual exists in the world (called self-distancing by Victor Frankl) and that along with this, the will to make sense makes the importance of self-observation and, therefore, greater importance to oneself (FIUZA, 2011; SANTOS, 2016).

Fiuzza (2011) points out that Archimedes, the greatest scientist and mathematician of ancient Greece, said: "Give me a long enough lever and a support point, and I will move the world". The same author points out that according to Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, many of the laws are altered according to the observer. These concepts are not limited to the realm of physics. Our experience can be experienced by a relative and subjective brain, that is, "reality" is nothing more than the relative understanding that our brain makes of the world based on how we observe the world.

Thus, due to the self-awareness highlighted by Victor Frankl, it may be that they realized that the responsibility lies with each one and that, however much they feel the need to relate to human beings, they felt that it is more important to focus on the way they see the world (FIUZA, 2011; SANTOS, 2016).

However, according to Cloninger (2013), there are 4 stages of self-awareness of consciousness and most people are in stage 1 (common cognition) which is the stage where people blame the external condition for the problems they have. That is, it avoids reflecting on whether it is not the person who must move to get a better life situation, precisely because they think they deserve a

better situation. Which would justify, once again, the choice for the personal area (graph 4).

SCHOOLING VS AREAS THAT GIVE MEANING TO LIFE

The Dunning-Krueger Effect or also called the Illusory Superiority Effect, happens when a person is incapable, is devoid of the ability to recognize his own incompetence, ignorance and mistakes. It applies regardless of the level of education, but tends to happen the lower the level of education (COSTA, 2019). As seen in the result, 77.6% have less than complete higher education. Taking into account the Dunning-Krueger Effect, it can be induced that when negatively affected, they tend to have a superiority complex and this makes them feel more important in front of others. When positively affected, in cases where the person is aware of the effect, the inferior self-perception in relation to others reflects the importance of always questioning oneself. Thus, regardless of the positive or negative effect, the Dunning-Krueger Effect may have made the individual feel the personal side as important.

RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY VS AREAS THAT GIVE MEANING TO LIFE

In Graph 3, 90.3% of respondents said they believed in God or a higher power. According to Pereira (2016) most of the time, this idea of "God" refers to something perfect precisely because it cannot prove either the existence or non-existence, that is, it remains in the fictional imagination of the individual. Thus, it can be hypothesized that the idea of interpersonal interaction that participants in Schjoedt's research (2009) had while imagining "God", was something created by themselves because they had the idea of perfection of the divine, thus, it would not fit

in everyday human relationships, which was the case of this research (in practice, people take much more into account the personal than the social).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The development of the research made it possible to assess the areas that give meaning to a person's life and analyze it according to sociodemographic data, such as age group, education and religious/spiritual activity (R/S). This helped to understand how spirituality changes according to sociodemographic variables.

105 participants participated in the survey, of which 2 were excluded for not fully responding to the questionnaire, thus resulting in a sample of 103 participants. The sample consisted of 70 participants aged 18 to 29 years (53.4%), 43 with incomplete higher education (41.7%), of these 71 who believe in God (68.9%). Of the areas that give meaning

to life, the 3 most chosen areas were: Personal (93.2%), Social (78.6%), Professional (59.2%).

Thus, it is observed that the objectives of characterizing sociodemographic aspects, identifying pillars of the meaning of life and analyzing the influence of human relationships on spirituality and analyzing the influence of human relationships on spirituality were achieved.

The interpretation of words such as meaning of life, R/S, personal, social and professional area depends on the individual, so it is suggested to apply the questionnaire personally to clarify doubts and collect data according to the concept used in the research or to use another methodology.

Because it is a highly complex topic that involves several fields of study, it is proposed to analyze the influence of spirituality on human relationships through the eyes of other knowledge, complementing and elucidating obscure points of the research.

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APPENDIX A - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERIZATION

PERSONAL CHARACTERIZATION

- 1 **Age:** 18-24 years 25-29 years 30-39 years 40-49 years
 50-59 years 60-69 years 70-79 years > 80 years

- 2 **Schooling:** Elementary School:(Incomplete Complete
High school : (Incomplete Complete
University education: (Incomplete Complete
Postgraduate: (Incomplete Complete

- 3 **Religious/Spiritual Activity – What do you consider yourself to be:** The person believes in “God(s)”
 The person believes in superior force, not necessarily “God(s)”
 The person does not believe in any of the above models
 Other

APÊNDICE B: SMILE - SCHEDULE FOR MEANING IN LIFE EVALUATION

The search for **SENSE OF LIFE** it is important to most people. This question arises at different stages of life, including happy and unhappy situations.

In the following section, we ask you to indicate the areas of life that, in **YOUR OPINION, give meaning to your life.** These areas can be characterized as those that give you “**BASE**” in life and give **IMPORTANCE** to her. In short, things “in which **WORTH LIVING**”

These **areas** obviously **DIFFER** from person to person. Therefore, **THERE ARE NO “RIGHT” OR “WRONG” ANSWERS** to this question. The best way to answer this is to be as **TRUTHFUL** as possible and think exactly about your individual areas. Check your **CURRENT** situation.

First, name the areas that give your life meaning, regardless of how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with those areas at the moment. The number and order of your answers is not important.

Área 1: _____

Área 2: _____

Área 3: _____

Área 4: _____

Área 5: _____

Área 6: _____

Área 7: _____

Make sure the order of the following areas is identical to the numbers on the previous page. Evaluate all named areas. Consult your current situation.

Rate how **satisfied or dissatisfied** you are with each indicated area. That is, how much - **POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY** - the area affects your total meaning in life.

How satisfied are you with...	Very unsatisfied		In between			Very satisfied	
Area 1	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)
Area 2	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)
Area 3	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)
Area 4	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)
Area 5	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)
Area 6	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)
Area 7	(-3)	(-2)	(-1)	(0)	(+1)	(+2)	(+3)

Rate the **IMPORTANCE** of each area to the overall meaning of your life. Try to distinguish between the areas as best you can, considering all the numbers.

How important is...	It's not important		Important			Very important	Extremely important
Area 1	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)
Area 2	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)
Area 3	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)
Area 4	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)
Area 5	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)
Area 6	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)
Area 7	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) (7)