



## MENTAL HEALTH AND PARANORMAL BELIEF OF GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: EXPLORING THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SPIRITUALITY

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** Mental health of University students is a global concern issue increasing day by day. On behalf of this determination mental health was tested through variables with paranormal beliefs and spirituality. This study will assess the level of mental illness in university students. **Material & methods:** N=302 sample size of Govt sector university PUMHS students with an age range of 18-30. To collect the sample, a simple random sampling technique was used. Consistent tools such as the scale Inventory of Mental Health, Revised Paranormal Belief Scale, and spirituality scale was used to measure the specified variables. **Results:** Correlation that there is a positive correlation between Mental Health and Spirituality ( $r= 0.92^{**}$ ) although negative relation with Paranormal Beliefs ( $r= 0-.82^{**}$ ). PB also has negatively connected with spirituality ( $r=-0.87^{**}$ ). The mediating effect shows that 0.66 direct effect on Mental Health and the indirect over a mediator was -0.26. **Conclusion:** Current study, it might be contended that it will provide an excessive deal of release to individuals who dearth to present spirituality, improve mental health, and diminish abnormal beliefs.

**Key Words:** Mental Health, Spirituality, Paranormal Beliefs. University students.

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## 1: Introduction

This study is specially conducted for Muslim countries like Pakistan, where beliefs are checked, with the variables of paranormal beliefs, mental health, and spirituality. In few ages ago, university students' mental health is increasing day by day and concern globally. The lives of university students are full of innumerable cultural and social contexts for example living in a new setting or facing educational or cost-effective difficulties (Alorani & Alradaydeh, 2018). There have been several issues that have adversely affected mental health, a recent study found to be one of the hottest unusual beliefs that checked how it affects the Muslim youth, is the paranormal belief. In response to growing mental health issues, counseling, and treatment programs establishing day by day globally. Mental health issues are diagnosed according to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and DSM because it helps to diagnose and then recover if one of them has a psychiatric problem (Buysse et al., 1997). But the study not only focused on mental health issues but also on mental health recovery with spirituality. A new pattern for treatment will be found in this study, which will help to conduct other treatment interventions with the help of spirituality, and also to research to overcome the current problem. In Pakistan, Mental health has sustained a subject of discussion for the last few years. Pakistan is suffering. This has become a problem. (Gadit & Mugford, 2007). According to a national epidemic report, about half of the students had become psychiatric in the past years, even though many students needed treatment. Some researchers in the United States have suggested that university students have a crisis in their mental health (Macaskill, 2013).

There are a lot of changes from college to university, challenging and demanding periods because students face stress and psychological difficulties in achieving one's future goals in life. Students' mental health problems can be educational and psychological (Butt, 2014). Beliefs, mostly paranormal beliefs, remain dominant motivators and managers of individuals besides communal behaviors. A basic principle rejects the notion that a mental event cannot directly affect a physical experience, except for one of the mental faculties of the experimenter. The word paranormal is used interchangeably to describe phenomena that, if credible, disrupt the basic theories of science (Rice, 2003). While there is a dispute over the supernatural nature of



traditional religious opinions, many obvious manifestations of traditional religion (e.g., miracles, resurrection, the resurrection of the soul, physical death) disrupt the undeveloped limited science values. And that's why they appreciate unwavering praise (Tobacyk&Pirttilä-Backman, 1992). This description of the paranormal includes beliefs concerning: traditional faith, psi, witchcraft, spiritualism, unusual life forms, and precognition (Tobayck, 2004). Associate hint for the association between the concepts represented by (Hillstrom& Strachan, 2000) that described negative associations between religiosity or spirituality and views in precognition, PK, telepathy, psychic healing, UFOs, re-creation, and communication with the state of mind. It seems realistic to think it's a risk that these outwardly ambitious social disturbances may have caused psychological distresses like stress and anxiety that is against to loss of self-control as predicted by the US studies (Utinans et al., 2015).

Quite a few readings are constant through the motivational-control exemplary at equally different and cooperative stages, and display how pressure may be linked with amplified magical philosophy with paranormal belief (Beutler et al., 1988). So many students' mental health can be improved through spirituality. Spirituality is often seen as a way to deal with traumatic events. There are many variables like mental health explanations and good effects of spirituality Gülerce and Maraj (2021). Spirituality also enhances not only students' life satisfaction but others too with mental health increasing. Researchers have extensively studied the effects of spirituality on psychological adaptation and mental health in various investigations. Previous research has shown that spiritual struggle has direct and indirect effects. It has a positive effect on mental health symptoms. (Pérez et al., 2009). An Australian study shows that spirituality as a treatment has yet to discover whether belief in God or not and higher control, influence related to mental health, particularly in the context of good mental health-related patients and outcomes of psychiatric treatment, appear that spirituality management can be vital, prevalent, appropriate and related with mental health care surroundings (Snider & McPhedran, 2014). A person must be able to identify the experience of distress or resentment, relate it to some aspect of the situation, and be effective in the face of adversity (Hayes, 2016). These efforts have shaped widespread the research literature on this field and pointed out that there is a substantial link between mental



health and spirituality, where a range of mental health have signs decrease such as anxiety reduction, depression, tolerance and can increase their self-esteem and self-control also(Jafari et al., 2010).While some students may be able to cope well with these challenges, others may practice higher levels of stress in their lives, and less satisfaction with life, which increases the negative response to these challenges. (Waithaka & Fortunato, 2017).Therefore, spirituality can be defined as the feeling of communicating with others, that helps in improving mental health and low level of abnormal beliefs which means that it has a purpose in life. Spirituality is a belief and connection with a higher power.(Hsiao et al., 2010).

## **2: Material and methods**

### **2.1) Research design and sample**

The current research includes students from Govt sector universities of PUMHS who were studying in the 2019-2022 academic year. A sample of 302 students was selected by a simple random sampling technique that involved an equal range of males (50%) and females (50%). Subjects were taken among ranges of 18 to 30 years old, youngsters 18-24 years, and adults 25-30 years old. All contributors completed the form anonymously as personal. The members were educated about the purpose of the study. Members can leave the study in some way. Utterly information provided by the sample was reserved confidential, they were assured that this data will use for research purposes only not personally or in anyways.

### **2.2) Measurements**

Participants were selected from the population through designated scales provided for age range and gender. Using the quantitative method, question mark sheets consisting of different instruments were specially developed by authoritative authors.

#### **2.2.1) Mental health inventory**

38 items of Mental health inventory were used for Mental Health (Khan et al., 2015). This inventory was assessed on a 6-points rating scale reaching from 1-to 6 which was 1 = all of the time to 6 = none of the time. The minimum range of score is 38-228.



### 2.2.2) Revised Paranormal Believes Scale

The revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS) is a 26 objectself-report scale, that dealswith the exclusiveforms of paranormal beliefs. Replies to every item are recorded on a seven-point Likert scaleof 1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree with anadvanced ranking representingbetter-qualityconfirmation. The score range was 26-182.The expansion of this scale can stay used to inspect supernatural and natural beliefs, allowing the researcher to take a look at the nature of these beliefs and their inferences for spirituality(Tobayck, 2004).

### 2.2.3) Spiritual strivings subscale

This scale is established by (Krauss et al., 2005), with 13 items. spiritual striving scale is 6 Likert scale that's responses 1-6. Where 1=never almost and 6=always or nearly. The score range is 13-78.

## 3: Data analysis

The attained data were estimated by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). In 1<sup>st</sup> step to define participant demographics, Descriptive statistics and a frequency table keep on used. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase shows reliability and descriptive statistics that were designed for the major variables were paranormal beliefs, mental health, and spirituality, and means and standard deviations were also included for variables.In the examination of the collecting data in the 3rd step, Pearson`s product correlation coefficient was presently used to study the correlation between mental health and paranormal beliefs.in the last and 4<sup>th</sup> Phase regression analysis method was used to consider how much effects of spirituality on mental health and paranormal beliefs.

## 4: Results

Table (1) showed descriptive statistics where F(female) and M(male) were used on behalf of data analysis, gender frequency was checked which appears the number of gender orientations of 50 % of each gender was taken equally with the mean of 1.4 and SD 0.50. Age ranges in the 1<sup>st</sup> group that was 18-24 showed 54.6% of the data and age ranges within the 25-30 that is 45.4% of



the entire data. That is a mean of 1.4 and SD with 0.49. 1st group has participated as larger in the required data shown in presenting table.

**Table 1**

**Demographic Frequency table**

Variables	Frequency	%	Means±SD
Gender			1.4±0.50
F	151	50%	1.4±0.49
M	151	50%	
Age			
18-24	155	54.6%	
25-30	129	45.4%	

**Table (2)**

**Reliability and descriptive analysis of (MH) mental health, paranormal beliefs (PB), and spirituality striving scale:**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Means±SD	No of Items
<b>MH</b>	0.88	148±23	38
<b>RPBS</b>	0.82	102±14	26
<b>Spirituality striving</b>	0.96	52±23	13

Table 2) indicates the descriptive statistics and reliability of dimensional scales. The mental health scale is used to check the mental health level of students with 38 items. High Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of MH showed with the range of (0.88), and with a Mean and SD of 148/23. High Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of MH showed that students filled their forms with high consistency, and they were also interested to participate in the current study. It also showed that the RPBS has 26 items and Cronbach's alpha determined that it has a good internal consistency of 0.82. The Mean



and SD of RPBS were 102/14. Internal consistency of spirituality striving subscale showed as determined by its Cronbach's alpha that was 0.96 with Means and SD of 52/23. The table showed that Data was reliable for statistical analysis. The spirituality striving scale had 13 items. Spirituality's Cronbach's alpha showed that students filled their form full of motions, as they want to know about their spirituality and level of beliefs.

**Table 3**

**Correlation matrix among Mental Health (MH), Paranormal Beliefs(PB), and, spirituality striving subscale**

Mental Health	Paranormal beliefs	spirituality	
1). Mental Health	1	-0.82**	0.92**
2). Paranormal Beliefs	1		-0.87**
3). Spirituality			1

\*\* Correlation indicate significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*p <0.05, \*\*p <0.01

Table 3) showed the relationship among three variables by Pearson product correlation of the current study. The Significance level of correlation is 0.01. Results show a correlation between two variables that present positive and negative correlations with each variable. there is a more positive and strong correlation shows with Mental health with spirituality (r=0.92) at a 0.01 level as compared to a study where it said that spirituality could make available defense in times of catastrophe on the condition that another standpoint affects the meaning of life and has a direct relationship with the mental health (Snider & McPhedran, 2014a). Mental health negatively correlated with Paranormal beliefs (r= -0.82) as opposed to the previous study of the US where this scale has positively significant correlations among the 7 paranormal belief subscales that show that these have positive effects on one's personality with mental health (Tobacyk & Pirttilä-Backman, 1992a). There was a negative correlation between Paranormal beliefs and





spirituality ( $r = -0.87$ ). mental health and spirituality represent the strongest correlation that is helpful to predict that spirituality has positive effects on mental health and can be improved mental health also (Hsiao et al., 2010a).

**Table 4**

**Effects of Spirituality on Mental Health with Paranormal Belief**

Effect	B	CI 95%	
		Upper	Lower
Total	0.92***	1.59	0.66
Direct	-0.66***	-1.12	-0.62
Indirect	-0.26***	-0.47	-0.04
R <sup>2</sup>	0.76		
F	(1.22)		
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.97		
ΔF	1.43		

: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total effect} &= D E + I E \\ &= -0.66 + -0.26 \\ &= 0.92 \end{aligned}$$

The table shows that the *direct effect* of paranormal beliefs on (Mental Health) with (-0.66) then (-0.26) was the *indirect effects* of PB with M on Mental Health which means spirituality effects on subscales of PB that affect the mental health or mental fitness, through mediator these effects on MH become low. The table shows that the effects after mediating effect  $R^2 = 0.97$  which predicts 97% of the combined effect of (PB) Paranormal Beliefs and Spirituality on (MH) Mental Health, that shows through the previous study, spirituality has positive significant effects on mental health issues and as coping effect also (Snider & McPhedran, 2014b), using the variance of  $F (1,43) p < 0.000$ , and  $R^2 = 0.76$  which predict 76% of (M to X) with a variance of (1,22). Direct effects of paranormal beliefs predicted higher levels of effect on mental health ( $\beta = -0.66$ ) of those students who have low spirituality, higher altitudes of mediation spirituality through PB was ( $\beta$  for indirect effect = -0.26).





Indirect effects show the association between spiritual striving and paranormal beliefs on mental health, which shows that paranormal belief has a direct strong effect on mental health but became low when mediator effect on PB that has poor effects on mental health, through mediator the outcome of paranormal beliefs on mental health becomes low. The total effects of the (direct + indirect) effects of PB and spiritual striving on mental health were  $\beta = 0.92$ .

## 5: Discussion

Using cross-sectional approaches, the present study initiates that there is an actual little work in Pakistani research that investigate possible relations among spirituality, paranormal beliefs, and mental health where spirituality works as a mediator or has a positive effect on mental health also. Spirituality shows that it has been described to have constructive effects on mental health, attaining spiritual well-being means a sense of congruence, inner freedom, and harmony in one's connection with a superior being, such as God, communal, nature, the situation, or the universe. Overall, the results show that spirituality affects health as positively. Significantly more than half of the sample size (54.6%) who participated in the current study were aged (18-to 24 years). Less than half (45.4%) of the students who participated in this study were aged (24-to 30). The results show that ordinary students measured themselves to have a higher or equal level of spirituality and their level of mental health. Numerous readings have found a positive connection between mental health and spiritual practice, using spiritual meditation, magazines of spirituality, chatting spiritual materials with others, and also in different seniors. People especially students who are involved in spirituality are normally less involved in prone to stress, madness, despair, worry, are more fulfilled and pleased with their survives, and have good mental health (Snider & McPhedran, 2014c). Studies have set up and found that those who practice spirituality regularly have good mental health and low level of psychological factors, Besides, the conditions of previous study shows have a particularly extraordinary level of spiritual faith have fewer mental issues (Jafari et al., 2010). This may be a fact that students have lower levels of PB and high levels of spirituality in Pakistan. Previous studies show that paranormal beliefs increase self-control, having significant positive relations with personality adjustment (Utinans et al., 2015) that also have a positive effect on mental health, wherein Pakistani students or strengths who have a high level of paranormal beliefs such as all 6 subscale beliefs from 7 subscales, have



low mental health as far from religion, that's why it increases psychological problems in youths. Spirituality also overcomes the false beliefs as paranormal like to recover illness also. So the students with good spiritual level outcomes experience a low level of paranormal beliefs compared to those with low spiritual believers. Regarding the overall level of spiritual well-being in the students, respondents have a very great level of mental health which also represents that spirituality plays an important role as a coping strategy also represents in the previous studies (Pérez et al., 2009). In Muslim students, results presented that When the level of paranormal beliefs upturns, the level of mental health decreases whereas the Latvian study (Utinans et al., 2015b) concludes that in non-Muslims it has a positive effect and enhances self-control and adjusts with the environment also, where Muslim students with PB cannot adjust with the environment and it affects their mental health. It is worth that a high level of spirituality, will higher the level of mental health. Then, paranormal beliefs have negatively correlated with spirituality which shows those who have a high level of paranormal beliefs have low spirituality.

### **Limitations and Strengths**

Spirituality is the main resilient point of current research. The findings of the study highlighted that spirituality is a strong correlate with mental health in Pakistan. Paranormal beliefs are a new variable that is checked the level of mental health. This study only presents the theory of a limited collection of student contributors, various were self-selected as their special interests in the field of the medical field. Further revisions can use experimental design to assess the correlations among mental health, spirituality, and paranormal beliefs. Upcoming studies could expand the area and can add new variables to increase the impact of spirituality on further variables.

### **Ethical considerations**

The ethical criteria concerning this research are justified.

### **Conflict of Interest**

This statement was made by all the writers that there is no conflict of interest on their part.



## Conclusion

Spirituality and practices, provide strategies for human behaviors that decrease self-destructive trends and obsessive forms of coping. This is mainly evident from the research that has examined the relationship between spiritual participants and mental health. Spirituality must be respected and valued in psychological matters for the improvement of mental health, and the extraordinary beliefs of the students must be overcome. As the results show, the undesirable effect of superstitious beliefs has a detrimental effect on mental health, but the mediator of spirituality has a significant effect on both variables controlling the negative effects on mental health. Mental health professionals in psychiatric departments also have an important tool for raising the level of spirituality with DSM and APA (American psychiatric association) therapy and general practices.

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