


Chapter 15


Spiritual Well–Being Index for Incarcerated Populations: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the spiritual well-being of incarcerated individuals, a topic less examined compared to the relationship between criminality and religiosity. Data were collected from 259 inmates in Tamil Nadu's Central Prisons, Special Prisons for Women, and Open Air Prisons, using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale. This tool encompasses five dimensions: Divine Connectedness (DC), Self Connectedness (SC), Other Connectedness (OC), Nature Connectedness (NC), and the Spirituality Rating Index (SRI). Employing a descriptive research design, the study combined qualitative and quantitative methods, with SPSS version 23 used for analysis. Statistical

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techniques included descriptive and multivariate methods such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and correlation, focusing on the Spiritual Rating Scale across dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

Thus, spirituality is a response to the Divine Spirit, and a spiritual person is one who is led by the Divine Spirit, transforming oneself and one's relationship to day-to-day life and concrete human contexts (Parameshwar, 2005; Srinivasan & Rajavel, 2025). Recent studies have highlighted the positive role of spirituality in promoting the general well-being of individuals and communities (Siddiqui, 2025). Spirituality represents a specific form of work-related feeling that energizes action (Appiah, 2022). Research studies have also revealed the important implications of spirituality on mental health, psychological problem, and substance abuse, parenting condition, marital life, and coping with stress, morbidity, and mortality (Dev et al., 2025; Srinivasan & Rajavel, 2025; Mahmoudi-Dehak et al., 2025). Thus, there are many reasons for psychologists to pay attention to the spiritual dimension of people's lives during therapeutic interventions (Snyder et al., 2011). Another analysis of spiritual striving proposes that spirituality leads to purpose and meaning in life. A higher level of spirituality is also found to result in optimism and hope (Snyder et al., 2011).

Understanding Spirituality

Derived from the Latin *Spiritualitas*, spirituality relates to *Pneuma* (spirit) and is seen as a response to the Divine. A spiritual person is guided by the Divine, leading to personal transformation and meaningful living (Martin, 2002). Unlike religion, which is organizational and ritualistic, spirituality is personal, experiential, and reflective (Dougall, 2024; Siddiqui, 2025).

Gandhi and Spiritual Strength in Prison

Mahatma Gandhi, seen as a political offender by the British, was imprisoned multiple times. He used incarceration as a period of reflection and spiritual growth, writing *Search for Truth* in prison. He equated centralized power with violence and upheld *sarvodaya* (welfare of all) as true religion (Pratt, 2013; Raju, 2010; Valmiki, 2015).

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