

## Understanding the Nexus of Spirituality, Coping Mechanisms and Wellbeing through the Lens of Ethnicity

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### Abstract

This research looks into the complex relationships among coping strategies, spirituality, and the personal well-being of Tripura's B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) trainees in light of their professional and academic backgrounds and demographic variables. This Ex-Post-Facto research design is based on a quantitative survey that collects data using standardised instruments. The data was gathered using a stratified random sampling technique from three B.Ed. colleges in Agartala (S=300). GHQ-12 was utilised to screen for any psychiatric issues among the participants, with the Coping Scale by Hambar, Grych & Banyard (2013) and the Spiritual Experience Index-Revised (SEI-R) by Genia (1997). The information regarding respondents' well-being was gathered using Carol Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. Descriptive statistics, like standard deviation and mean, are employed, and the descriptive data is interpreted using inferential statistics like regression, correlation, and T-test. Research indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between spirituality, coping mechanisms & well-being. Thus, the results show that people with stronger spiritual inclinations typically use more adaptive coping mechanisms when faced with life's stressors. The results show tribal trainees score more in all variables than non-tribals. The result also manifests that tribal females are more spiritually inclined and have better subjective well-being when compared to tribal males. Furthermore, it was evident that the non-tribal females scored better in all the variables as compared to their counterparts.

**Keywords:** spirituality, coping mechanism, Well-being, B.Ed. Trainees.

### INTRODUCTION

Tripura consists of 19 major tribal communities based on their culture, tradition and language and the majority of the nontribal population is named, *Bengalis*. According to the census of 2011, the tribal community consists of 31.05 % of the state's population while 69.95 % are non-tribal. Tripura is one of the fastest-growing literacies among northeastern states. It is an upward trend of 87.22%. The psychological well-being of the teacher trainees is important amid their training programs, academic pressures, commercialization of education, and daily stress in the school. It is best to integrate during their training period.

The development and progress of a democratic country like India are based on the quality of its teachers. Teachers play a vital role in informing, moulding, motivating, and inspiring the young. Since the B.Ed. training envisions making qualitative and effective teachers with professionalism. So, the B.Ed. training needs to look into a teacher candidate's psychological, professional, mental and holistic development. The Indian Education Commission (1964-1966) recommended a solid educational Programme to make teachers professional and

effective. This will bring about a qualitative improvement in education. India's National Policy of Education (1986) pointed out that "no people can rise above the level of its teachers." (Santanu Bhattacharya, 2020)

Teachers who feel connected to their spirituality can find a sense of inner peace and fulfilment that can help them manage stress and burnout. Additionally, it can help teachers develop empathy and compassion for their students, leading to a more positive and supportive learning environment. It is important to note that spiritual well-being does not necessarily have to be linked to religion. While religion can be an important aspect of spirituality for some people, others may find spirituality through nature, art, music, or other means. Thus, educators should strive to create an inclusive environment that respects and supports diverse spiritual beliefs and practices. Recommendations were made to the governing bodies of teachers and counsellors to recognize this challenge as an ethical dilemma, provide education and training to develop their understanding of spiritual well-being and encourage them to reflect on their own beliefs within the frame.

This study explores the complex interrelationships among coping strategies, spirituality, and the general well-being of B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) candidates in Tripura in the context of tribal and non-tribal populations of the state within the framework of professional and educational background and demographic variables.

## Literature Review

**Spirituality:** Spirituality is a feeling, sense, or belief that there is something more than oneself, that there is more to being human, and that the larger system of which we are a part is cosmic or divine and considered spiritual. The cultural norms, social interactions, and personal identities of Tripurians are shaped by their strong spiritual ties. There has been a strong connection to the customs and beliefs of the indigenous and non-indigenous tribes of Tripura for centuries. Together with encouraging cultural pride and unity between tribal and non-tribal communities, these spiritual practices are employed to ask for divine blessings in any personal or community issues.

For centuries, Tripura's indigenous tribes have remained deeply connected to their ancestral beliefs and rituals, which frequently revolve around nature worship, ancestor veneration, and communal ceremonies. Tripura's indigenous and non-indigenous tribes have maintained a strong connection to their ancestral beliefs and rituals, which frequently centre on nature worship, ancestor veneration, and communal ceremonies. These spiritual practices are used not only to seek divine blessings but also to foster cultural pride and solidarity between tribal and non-tribal communities. Understanding Tripura's spiritual dimensions is critical for understanding its inhabitants' overall well-being and the complex web of factors that influence their mental health outcomes. Research recognizes the critical role that spirituality plays in the lives of Tripura residents, as well as the potential implications for addressing the region's pressing issue of high suicide rates. By delving into Tripura's spiritual fabric, we hope to discover valuable insights that can inform culturally sensitive interventions and promote mental health resilience among its diverse population. Self-forgiveness and psych aches were discovered to be mediators of the link between existential spirituality and suicidal behaviour. (Hall, B. et. al., 2018).

Self-forgiveness and psych aches were discovered to be mediators of the link between existential spirituality and suicidal behaviour (Hall, B et.al 2018). After meta-analysis, it was evident that religion can play a protective role against suicidal behaviours though it was found that religion and spirituality contain both social and psychological domains that should be considered in future interventions and suicide prevention strategies in PTSD populations. (Poorolajal et.al., 2023). The mental health of the teachers and B.Ed. Trainees, who are aspiring teachers are crucial for improving the teaching and learning process as well as their ability to handle stressful situations since they will shape the youth of the coming generations. The study conducted by Behera on 'School teachers' spirituality and stress' in connection to several demographic factors, including gender, age, place of employment and residence, duration of employment, and kind of school they work for. Significant variations in overall stress levels and spirituality were found in one-way analyses of variances based on school type and location. There is a suggestion that teachers use spirituality as a coping strategy when they are under stress, which lowers their stress levels. (Behera, 2015). Yet another study Hok-Ko Pong examines the relationship between spiritual well-being and burnout symptoms in Hong Kong secondary school teachers, such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. According to the study, all facets of

spiritual well-being were associated with lower levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, while the transcendental, personal, and communal domains were linked to higher levels of personal accomplishment. (Hok-Ko Pong, 2022)

**Coping Mechanisms** are understood about stress in the context of the demands of the environment and the capacity of a person to use his /her resources to reduce tension. Stress refers to any changes that cause physical and psychological strain. (Jiayu He, 2023). The studies show there is a relationship between coping style and psychological well-being with the help of the coping strategies the Bed students had a beneficial effect on the symptoms of depression, phobic anxiety, and overall level of psychological distress. Cognitive avoidance coping and behavioural avoidance were associated with negative psychological Well-being and psychological symptoms indicating distress. (Josep Gustems-Carnicer &Calderon,2013). The most popularly accepted definition of coping mechanism is that of Lazarus and Folkman who define it as an adaptive response to a specific stressor. (Lazarus and Folkman, 1986). The coping mechanism is a process in which the individual uses both, cognitive and behavioural strategies to reduce, minimise, tolerate and control the stress and maintain their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. (Josep Gustems-Carnicer &Calderon, 2013). An individual can experience a stressful situation or an event that threatens or harms the equilibrium of a person's health and alters or interferes with his or her physical and psychological well-being. (Vaughn and Roesch, 2003). Coping includes both the transformation of the external and internal worlds, so it has two functions: one is targeted at the task or demand to solve the problem which is called approach coping while the other aims at the individual's emotions or experience of the situation to reduce the tension or emotional reaction that is called avoidance coping. (Josep Gustems-Carnicer &Calderon, 2013)

**Psychological well-being:** The students encounter a lot of stressors in their pursuit of academic pursuit and the B.Ed students too encounter academic pressures as well as personal and family adjustment problems. The scientific study suggests that psychological well-being is pivotal in favouring adaptive coping strategies for academic stress. (Carlos Freire, 2016). Carol Ryff's model of psychological well-being, encompassing six dimensions such as self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, personal growth, positive social relations and life purpose has been instrumental in developing a well-being enhancing psychotherapeutic strategy. Thus, Psychological well-being is built from a series of personal and social factors or dimensions. How well one is doing in each of the aspects or domains is an indicator of one's psychological well-being (M. Dhanabhakyaam and Sarath M, 2023). Though Ryff emphasizes the importance of positive emotions for well-being, she also considers the integration of negative emotions in one's life according to one's culture. The literature reviews on psychological well-being focus on different dimensions of well-being such as physical well-being, mental well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being and spiritual well-being.

Well-being is a comprehensive and dynamic concept that touches every aspect of life. By understanding and promoting the various dimensions of well-being, individuals and communities can enhance their overall quality of life, leading to greater happiness, fulfilment, and societal harmony. Enhancing well-being requires a holistic approach that addresses all dimensions of life promoting healthy lifestyles, balanced nutrition, mental health support, social connections, meaning and purposeful life and spiritual practices. Well-being is crucial not only for individuals but also for communities and societies. Higher levels of well-being are associated with numerous positive outcomes, including better physical health, increased productivity, stronger social relationships, and greater life satisfaction. Conversely, low well-being is linked to mental health issues, chronic stress, and reduced quality of life.

## Objectives

To assess the levels of spirituality, subjective well-being, and coping mechanisms among tribal and non-tribal B.Ed. Students.

To differentiate between tribal and non-tribal B.Ed. Students in terms of spirituality, coping strategies, and overall well-being.

1. To analyse the spirituality, coping strategies, and general well-being of B.Ed. Students in Tripura differ by gender.

2. To Compare the well-being, coping strategies, and spirituality of male and female B.Ed. Students from tribal and non-tribal backgrounds.
3. To Examine the connections between coping strategies, spirituality, and well-being in B.Ed. Students.
4. To determine the effect of spirituality on coping strategies and general well-being in Tripura B.Ed. Students.

### Hypothesis

(H<sub>01</sub>): There is no significant difference in levels of spirituality, subjective well-being, and coping mechanisms between tribal and non-tribal B.Ed. Students.

(H<sub>02</sub>): There is no significant difference in levels of spirituality, coping mechanisms, and well-being between male and female B.Ed. Students in Tripura.

(H<sub>03</sub>): There is no significant difference in spirituality, coping mechanisms, and well-being between tribal and non-tribal male students, and between tribal and non-tribal female students.

(H<sub>04</sub>): There is no significant correlation between spirituality and coping mechanisms, spirituality and well-being, and coping mechanisms and well-being among B.Ed. Students.

(H<sub>05</sub>): Spirituality does not have a significant impact on coping mechanisms and well-being among B.Ed. Students in Tripura.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research, which uses an Ex-Post-Facto methodology, examines the connections between spirituality, coping strategies, and the well-being of trainees pursuing a B.Ed. in Tripura. Since it allows for the examination of current relationships and differences without modifying the independent variables. The study uses standardized instruments to collect data through a quantitative survey approach.

### Sample & Sample technique

The study has a total of 300 participants, who are B.Ed. Trainees of Tripura. The age range for participants will be limited to 22-30 years. A stratified random sampling technique ensures a representative sample across different demographics, specifically focusing on gender (male and female) and ethnicity (tribal and non-tribal).

### Procedure

Though 350 Participants were given the questionnaire from different B. Ed colleges in Tripura and belong to 22-30 years of age. After screening the forms, only 300 forms were selected for the study purpose. The researcher has taken permission from the institutions' competitive authority and the survey's date and time were fixed.

**Informed Consent:** Before participation, all individuals received detailed information about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. Data was collected anonymously and they were free to withdraw from the research at any time.

**Surveys:** Participants were provided with printed standardised questionnaires. They were instructed to respond honestly and thoroughly to each question. The data collection was done on a one-to-one basis.

### Tools Used

Data were collected using printed questionnaires distributed to the participants. The participants were instructed to respond honestly and thoroughly to each question. The following standardised instruments were utilized:

**1. Personal Information Questionnaire:** This gathered demographic variables such as name, gender, age, academic qualification, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

**2. General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12):** This questionnaire is used to screen for psychiatric issues among the participants. It included questions about general health problems and Mental health. It comprises 12 items.

**3. Spiritual Experience Index-Revised (SEI-R) by Genia (1997):** This measured the participants' spirituality. It has a 23-item scale that measures faith and spirituality. The questionnaire contained 13 questions about

spiritual support and 10 questions on spiritual openness. It is a 6-point Likert scale. The questions in the scale numbering 1, 3, 7 and 10 of the spiritual openness sub-scale have a reverse score.

**4. Coping Scale by Hamby, Grych, & Banyard (2013):** This questionnaire assessed the coping mechanisms employed by the participants in the level of cognitive, emotional and behavioural methods of dealing with problems. The scale has 13 item factors reflecting both appraisal and behavioural methods of coping. The scale is a four-point Likert Scale and the total score is the sum of all the items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of coping.

**5. Carol Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale:** This measured the subjective well-being of the participants and has a total of 42 statements that indicate one's degree of agreement using a score ranging from 1-6 of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale measures the 6 dimensions of well-being: Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, Purpose in life and Self-acceptance. Out of a total of 42 statements 20 statements have reverse scoring.

### Inclusion Criteria

Participants must be between 22 and 30 years of age.

Individuals must be students of B.Ed. Colleges in Tripura.

Individuals must be a student of B.Ed. Teachers training course.

Belonging to the middle socio-economic Class.

Having the knowledge of English.

Participants must reside in Tripura for more than 2 years.

### Exclusion Criteria

Having Psychiatric problems.

Not knowing English.

Individuals identifying themselves either as a member of the Transgender or from the LGBT community.

Belonging from higher or lower socio-economic class.

Not a resident of Tripura for the last 2 year

## DATA & RESULTS

**Table 1: Presents the demographic distribution which provides an insight into the sample.**

Group	Gender	Ethnicity	Age Range	Number of Students
Male	Male	Tribal	22-30	75
		Non-Tribal	22-30	75
Female	Female	Tribal	22-30	75
		Non-Tribal	22-30	75

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and T-Test for Spirituality, Coping Mechanisms, and Subjective Well-being**

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Level of Significance
Subjective Well-Being	Tribal Girls	96.3200	8.2500	3.125	p < 0.01
	Tribal Boys	92.8450	8.4000		
	Non-Tribal Girls	94.1350	9.1100		
	Non-Tribal Boys	91.4800	9.7500		

Coping Strategies	Coping				
	Tribal Girls	7.3200	2.1200	5.540	p < 0.01
	Tribal Boys	6.6200	2.3100		
	Non-Tribal Girls	6.5200	2.1800		
	Non-Tribal Boys	5.7500	2.3500		
<b>Spirituality</b>	Tribal Girls	60.7500	6.9800	3.284	p < 0.01
	Tribal Boys	56.1500	7.2700		
	Non-Tribal Girls	55.6400	7.8800		
	Non-Tribal Boys	53.4800	8.1200		

Table 3: Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Spirituality	Coping Mechanisms	Subjective Well-being
Spirituality	1.00	0.45*	0.55**
Coping Mechanisms	0.45*	1.00	0.60**
Subjective Well-being	0.55**	0.60**	1.00

p &lt; 0.05 \*\* p &lt; 0.01

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Coping Mechanisms

Predictor	Beta Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Spirituality	0.45	0.012	Significant positive relationship(p<0.05)

Dependent variable: subjective wellbeing

Predictor	Beta Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Spirituality	0.55	0.003	Significant positive relationship (p < 0.01)

## DISCUSSION

Table -1, gives us an insight into the demographic details of the participants. The table clearly shows the groups, gender (male and female) ethnicity, (tribal and non-tribal), age range and the respective number of students. A total of 300 B.Ed. trainees of the colleges of Tripura were the respondents.

If we look at the data in Table no-2, we can see there is a difference in the level of spirituality, subjective well-being and coping mechanism. The data indicates that Tribal individuals have higher scores across all three measures (spirituality, coping mechanisms, and subjective well-being) compared to non-tribal individuals. The higher levels of spirituality among Tribal individuals may contribute to their enhanced coping mechanisms and, consequently, greater subjective well-being. Therefore ( $H_{01}$ ) i.e., there is no significant difference in levels of spirituality, subjective well-being, and coping mechanisms between tribal and non-tribal B.Ed. Students are rejected. An alternative hypothesis is accepted as there is a significant difference in the level of spirituality, subjective well-being and coping mechanisms among the tribal and non-tribal B.Ed. trainees.

It is also noted that tribal females have higher spirituality, subjective well-being and coping scores when compared to other groups (tribal males, non-tribal females and males). Therefore, it can be further said that in the light of the above discussion ( $H_{02}$ ): There is no significant difference in levels of spirituality, coping



mechanisms, and well-being between male and female B.Ed. Students in Tripura are rejected and there is a significant gender difference concerning these three variables under study.

The null hypothesis, (**H<sub>0</sub>3**): There is no significant difference in spirituality, coping mechanisms, and well-being between tribal and non-tribal male students, and between tribal and non-tribal female students, are also rejected. The alternative hypothesis of significant difference between the tribal and non-tribal males and tribal and non-tribal female students is accepted.

If we look at the results of table no-3, we can understand that there is a positive correlation of 0.45 indicating a moderate relationship between spirituality and coping mechanisms. Individuals with higher levels of spirituality are more likely to engage in effective coping strategies. This suggests that spirituality may enhance one's ability to manage stress and navigate challenges effectively. A correlation of 0.55 signifies a moderate to strong positive relationship between spirituality and subjective well-being. Higher spirituality is associated with greater subjective well-being, meaning that individuals who identify as more spiritual tend to report higher satisfaction with their lives and overall happiness. This underscores the potential importance of spirituality as a factor in enhancing mental health and quality of life. The strong positive correlation of 0.60 between coping mechanisms and subjective well-being suggests a significant relationship. Individuals who employ effective coping strategies are likely to experience higher levels of subjective well-being. This indicates that coping mechanisms play a crucial role in an individual's mental health, as effective coping can lead to improved life satisfaction and emotional well-being. Therefore, the Null hypothesis (**H<sub>0</sub>4**) i.e., there is no significant correlation between spirituality and coping mechanisms, spirituality and well-being, and coping mechanisms and well-being among B.Ed. Students are rejected and a substantial statistical correlation among the variables is found in this study.

If we look at the results of **table no 4**, we can see that the beta coefficient of 0.45 indicates a significant positive relationship between spirituality and coping mechanisms. This means that higher levels of spirituality are associated with more effective coping strategies. In practical terms, more spiritual individuals tend to utilize better-coping mechanisms when facing stressors or challenges. The p-value of 0.012 shows that this relationship is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that the association is unlikely to be due to random chance. Thus, spirituality plays an important role in enhancing coping mechanisms. The beta coefficient of 0.55 reflects a strong positive relationship between spirituality and subjective well-being. This indicates that as spirituality increases, individuals enjoy greater levels of life satisfaction and emotional well-being. Specifically, for each unit increase in spirituality, subjective well-being increases by 0.55 units. The p-value of 0.003 indicates that this relationship is highly statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), confirming that the association is strong and reliable. So, it can be said that spirituality is a critical factor influencing how individuals perceive their overall happiness and life satisfaction. Therefore (**H<sub>0</sub>5**) i.e. Spirituality does not have a significant impact on coping mechanisms and well-being among B.Ed. Students in Tripura are rejected. Spirituality has indeed a vital role to play in coping mechanisms and well-being among the B.Ed. Students.

### Limitations and suggestions

- a) The Study uses a limited sample size.
- c) The study is only confined to the B. Ed. Students of Tripura state and not to other disciplines of education.
- d) Only participants who knew English were selected.

### Implication

Acknowledges the profound influence of spirituality on B.Ed. Students' coping strategies and general well-being.

Draws attention to the need for specialized treatments that include spirituality in mental health support initiatives.

Stresses the importance of how crucial it is to address gender differences in spirituality and subjective well-being.

Promotes holistic strategies that take traditional coping mechanisms into account as well as spiritual well-being. The study has implications for Govt. policymakers, mental health professionals, counsellors, and teachers to

recognise the significance of spirituality and integrate it into therapeutic interventions and educational curricula. Encourage more studies on how spirituality affects B.Ed. Trainees' resilience and mental health and their future impact on students.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the study are in line with previously published research. For example, in a study of gay and lesbian people in the Philippines, Ramos et al. (2023) discovered a negative relationship between suicidal ideation and spirituality and well-being. In a similar vein, Kyle (2013) pointed out that spiritual beliefs may act as a mediator in the negotiation of social support, strengthening coping strategies.

This study illuminates the complex nexus between spirituality, coping mechanisms, and well-being of trainees pursuing a B.Ed. in Tripura. The results highlight how important spirituality is for developing healthy coping strategies and improving general well-being. There were clear gender differences in the areas of spirituality and well-being, with female students scoring higher than male students in both categories. Bhattacharjee and Ghosh (2023) also found a positive correlation between the spirituality and coping of young adults of Tripura.

The study has broad implications that emphasize how important it is for educators, counsellors, and mental health specialists to include spirituality in their interventions and include spirituality as part of the school and higher educational curricula. By awareness programmes and encouraging holistic mental health strategies that incorporate conventional coping mechanisms and spiritual well-being, such an indigenous approach can address the particular needs of B.Ed. Trainees who will be impacting the lives of future students and the nation.

To improve the generalizability of the results, future studies should investigate the underlying mechanisms by which spirituality affects coping and well-being and think about enlarging the sample size and geographic scope. Furthermore, looking into how spirituality affects various student populations may shed more light on its significance for resilience and mental health.

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## Authors' contribution

All four authors have contributed equally to the planning, data collection, analysis of the data, preparation and revision of the reports and agreed to be responsible for all aspects of this research.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## Declaration

The authors declare works of this research are original and this manuscript has not been published in any other journal.

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