



MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL SELF- CARE DURING COVID-19: EXPERIENCES OF MIZO YOUTH DURING LOCKDOWN

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Abstract

Background: Spirituality incorporates healthy practices for the mind and body, which positively effects mental health and emotional wellbeing. Spirituality and religion are helpful in managing stressful life events especially during a pandemic like COVID-19. **Aim:** To assess gender difference and relationship of mental and spiritual self-care activities among Mizo youth during the first and second lockdown across India. **Methods and Materials:** An online survey was conducted through Google documents among Mizo youth aged between 18 to 35 years. Socio-demographic details and multiple response questionnaires were administered and analysis was done through Statistical Package for Social Sciences. **Results:** Overall mental health self-care activities revealed that more than a quarter of Mizo youth watched movies or TV shows. Gender comparison found that females were more involved in mental and spiritual self-care activities than their male counterparts. More males reported not engaging in any mental and spiritual care activities. Majority of the mental and spiritual activity domains had significant relationship with gender. **Conclusion:** Less than a tenth of Mizo youth did not partake in any mental and spiritual self-care activities during lockdown.

Keywords: Mental, Spiritual, self-care, activities, COVID, Lockdown.

Introduction

Mental health and spiritual activities are an ineluctable part of every individual's life. Spirituality expressed in various ways can have positive effects on mental health and emotional wellbeing. During the pandemic situation people are more allied with spiritual and mental self-care activities for coping with psychosocial problems. Studies have shown that coping strategies during COVID pandemic are online learning courses, indoor play, relaxation exercise, yoga & meditation, prayer, creative activities, positive thinking, installation of hope, reading, music and so on. Positive mental health tips include positive thinking, regular/relaxation exercise, stable diet, socialization through online, taking a break from routine work and other health life style procedures (Kar, Yasir Arafat, Kabir, Sharma, & Saxena, 2020).

A study on COVID-19 and mental health found that there is less research from affected countries (Rajkumar, 2020). A recent cross sectional study among 788 youth found significant relationship between personal activity and psychological problems (Harikrishnan, Poika, Antony, & Joseph, 2020). Spirituality helps to reduce psychosocial issues among individuals especially during such a time as COVID-19 pandemic. Continuous spiritual care leads to positive wellbeing for individual, families and society (Roman, Mthembu, & Hoosen, 2020). Being dominantly Christians, the Church plays a major role in the spiritual and religious life of Mizo society. Though several denominations exist, youth groups under the Church organization undertake different religious programmes in their respective churches. Though all Church buildings were closed during the Covid Lockdown and religious activities could no longer be carried out, people in Mizoram continued to partake in various religious activities such as Bible Studies, sermons and Worship service through Social Media and local television. This paper examines the mental and spiritual self-care activities of young Mizos during the nation-wide Lockdown. It provides a gender comparison and relationship of care activities practiced by youth.

Methods and Materials

The study was conducted among 1429 youth respondents from 11 districts of Mizoram, India. Most of the respondents were from Aizawl district (54.1%) and the least from Saitual district (2%). The study design was cross sectional and descriptive in nature and selection of respondents was done through snowball sampling method. An online survey was carried out among youth between 18 to 35 years through Google docs which was started on 19th April 2020 at 17:55:39 IST and terminated on 2nd May 2020 at 23:01:41 IST. Multiple response questionnaire was generated through different online platforms; and for gender comparison, multiple response analysis & correlation was done for the major findings.

Results

Socio-demographic details showed that 63.9% are in the stage of early youth, a little more than half was female (51.9%), majority (86.6%) were Post graduate degree holders, 58.2% are unemployed and most of them (77.5%) belonged to stable socio-economic status.



Table – 1: Mental health self-care activities among Youth: A comparison across gender

Mental health self-care activities	Gender		Overall (%)
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Watching a movie or TV show	442 (64.3)	532 (71.8)	974 (25.9)
Singing or listening to music	317 (46.1)	415 (56)	732 (19.4)
Learning something new	230 (33.5)	246 (33.2)	476 (12.6)
Reading books	215 (31.3)	259 (35)	474 (12.6)
Forgiving oneself	104 (15.1)	171 (23.1)	275 (7.3)
Watching sunrise/sunset	125 (18.2)	150 (20.2)	275 (7.3)
Learning to play a musical instrument	110 (16)	51 (6.9)	161 (4.3)
Making a vision board	57 (8.3)	51 (6.9)	108 (2.9)
Writing a journal	30 (4.4)	53 (7)	82 (2.2)
No mental self-care activities	36 (5.2)	36 (4.9)	72 (1.9)
Writing a letter to self	16 (2.3)	13 (1.8)	29 (0.8)

Overall mental health self-care activities during Covid-19 Lockdown showed that a fifth (25.9%) of Mizo youth watched movies or TV shows where as the least engagement was writing a letter towards self (0.8%). The gender comparison revealed that both male (33.5%) and female youth (33.2%) were engaged in learning something new; while more males were engaged in activities such as learning to play a new musical instrument (16%), made a vision board (8.3%), and wrote a letter to themselves (2.3%). However, more males (5.2%) were not involved in any mental self-care activities as compared to 4.9% of females who reported the same. Female youth accounted for more involvement in activities such as watching movies/TV shows (71.8%), listening to music (56%), reading books (35%), practicing forgiveness of oneself (23.1%), watching a sunrise/sunset (20.2%) and writing a journal (7%) than their male counterparts (table-1).

Praying with near and dear ones (30.4%) was the most common form of spiritual self-care found among Mizo youth and the least common was writing down favourites lines from the Bible and sticking them on the wall (1.5%). A larger number of males (16.5%) were not engaged in any spiritual self-care activities as compared to females (7%). Comparatively, spiritual self-care activities more common among female youth were praying with near and dear ones (69.6%), listening to religious/worship songs (50.2%), Reading the Bible every day (42.5%), Forgiving someone who hurt you (30.8%), listing out 10 things you are grateful for (7.4%), writing down favourites lines from the Bible and sticking them on the wall (4.2%). A common activity found practiced almost equally by both male (16.8%) and female youth (16.8%) was Personal devotion and prayer (table-2).

Table – 2: Spiritual self-care activities among youth: A comparison across gender

Spiritual self-care activities	Gender		Overall
	Male (%)	Female	
Praying with near and dear ones	401 (58.5)	516 (69.6)	917 (30.4)
Listening to religious/worship songs	281 (41)	372 (50.2)	653 (21.6)
Reading the Bible every day	212 (30.9)	315 (42.5)	527 (17.5)
Forgiving someone who hurt you	150 (21.9)	228 (30.8)	378 (12.5)
Personal devotion and prayer	115 (16.8)	125 (16.9)	240 (7.9)
No spiritual self-care activities	113 (16.5)	52 (7)	165 (5.5)
Listing out 10 things you are grateful for	41 (6)	55 (7.4)	96 (3.2)
Writing down favourites lines from the Bible and sticking them on the wall	13 (1.9)	31 (4.2)	44 (1.5)

Table – 3: Correlation between gender with mental health and spiritual self-care activities among youth

Mental and spiritual self-care activities	Gender
Practicing forgiveness of self and others	.100**
Watching a movie or TV show	.079**
Singing/Listening to your favourite music	.098**
Writing a journal	.057*
Reading the Holy Bible everyday	.120**
Forgiving someone who hurt you	.101**
Praying with your near and dear ones	.116**
Listening to religious songs	.093**
Writing down favourites lines from the Holy Bible and sticking them on the wall	.066*

Values



Correlation between gender with mental health and spiritual self-care activities among youth is depicted in table-3. Gender is found to have highly significant relationship with forgiving oneself for one's mistakes ($r=.100^{**}$), watching movies/TV shows ($r=.079^{**}$), listening to music ($r=.098^{**}$) and significant relationship with writing a journal ($r=.057^{*}$). Spiritual care-activities such as reading the Holy Bible ($r=.120^{**}$), forgiving someone who has hurt you ($r=.101^{**}$), praying with near and dear ones ($r=.116^{**}$) and listening to religious/worship songs ($r=.093^{**}$) had a highly significant relationship while writing favourites lines from the Holy Bible and sticking them on the wall ($r=.066^{*}$) had significant relationship with gender.

Discussion

The current study found that majority of Mizo youth was involved in mental and spiritual care-activities. Social distancing interrupts interpersonal communication and it can leads to psychological problems therefore coping mechanisms are the only way to overcome any challenging situation for any individual (Sheroun et al., 2020). Mental health self-care activities help in coping with psychosocial problems and to be maintain health and well-being. The current study found that majority of Mizo youth coped through the Lockdown by watching movies/TV shows. It has been found that watching drama/serials lead to positive energy, increased self-esteem, satisfaction and help in overcoming suicidal tendencies (Till et al., 2011). However, excessive binge-watching may affect unhealthy psychosocial problems such as addiction, lack of control, poor socialization and so on (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Some youth especially males were not engaged in any kind of self-care activities which is indicative of poor mental and emotional health especially during a nation-wide lockdown which is difficult for anyone to cope with.

The gender comparison found that female Mizo youth were more involved in watching movies or TV shows, singing or listening music, reading books, practicing forgiveness, watching sunrise and sunset and writing a journal. Women are expressed their opinion on sophisticated language, thoughtful with social roles, attentive to others' feelings and interpersonal communication. Female writers wrote in uncertain verbs, progressive verbs, reference to emotion, longer mean sentence length (Li, Chen, & Banerjee, 2020). Men were more actively engaged in playing musical instruments and made vision boards. The choice of instrument trends in gender equality and pattern of learning (Hallam, Rogers, & Creech, 2008).

Spiritual or religious activities include sermons, prayer, scriptural reading, philosophical discussions which help to enhance a positive wellbeing among every individual (Zhang, 2010). The current study found that women are more active in spiritual care activities than males. It has also been found by other studies that women are more interested in religion practice but men are likely to weigh the cognitive benefits of religion. Religion institutions also played important role to overcome the COVID-pandemic (del Castillo, Biana, & Joaquin, 2020). Religious practices and beliefs are powerful sources of hope, comfort and reduce psychosocial problems (Koenig, 2009).

Significant relationship was found between gender and mental and spiritual self-care activities such as forgiveness of one's mistakes, watched movies/TV shows, sung/listened to music, wrote in a journal, prayed with near and dear ones, read the Holy Bible and wrote favourites line from Bible and sticking them on the wall. This is clearly showing that female youth are more active in their mental and spiritual self-care in comparison to male Mizo youth. During the COVID-Pandemic period, Mizos are more engaged in spiritual activities through live stream and personal and family prayer at home. It has been recommended that maintaining spiritual and mental health will be useful to overcome COVID-Pandemic situation (Koenig, 2020).

Conclusion

The study concludes that less than one tenth of Mizo youth were not involved in any mental and spiritual activities during the first and second stage of lockdown in India. The rest of youth was engaged in multiple activities and more female youth were active and positive in their coping with the pandemic situation. Youth need to be motivated and opportunities to learn skills which strengthen their coping and resilience will definitely promote productive work and positive health.

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