SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS WHO ENGAGE IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP: AN IPA APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is defined as a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, starting from the early teenage years extending into the early twenties. It is often associated with challenges as it is a time when teenagers strive to discover their identity. In this context, spirituality can serve as a crucial tool in helping to address various adolescent developmental issues. Therefore, this research conducts an in-depth examination of spiritual well-being (SWB) dimensions in terms of religious well-being (RWB) and existential well-being (EWB) among adolescents who engage in religious worship, while also identifying multiple factors that drive adolescents to engage in worship. This study was conducted with three participants from different religious backgrounds using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a qualitative research approach focused on detailed exploration of the subjects' life experiences. Four themes were reviewed in the research findings, including worship, perceptions of God, social relationships, and personal life. Based on these findings, it is concluded that two research participants had a positive relationship with God and were able to find meaning in their worship routine, which enables them to better understand themselves, have clear life purposes, and experience a relatively high overall life satisfaction. However, one of the participants showed a strong sense of meaning of life, such as having a clear life purpose and life satisfaction in alternatives to a positive perception of God. Nonetheless, this participant did not find deep meaning in the practice of religious worship.

Keywords: Spiritual well-being, adolescence, religious worship, interpretative phenomenological analysis

1. PREFACE

Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood which is synonymous with a period full of challenges and crises. In Erikson's psychosocial theory, the search for identity is one such challenge. This self-identity is influenced by spiritual concepts formed from previous life experiences (Sejati, 2019). Research has shown that adolescents can use their spiritual beliefs, teachings and experiences as a source of control to cope with stress and crisis and give meaning to life (Hekmati Pour et al., 2020).

Spirituality is how a person connects with a higher existence to find meaning in life, fostering a sense of connection to the present, oneself, others, and nature. (Puchalski et al., 2014; Lepherd, 2014; Ahmad & Khan, 2015). Individual spirituality can be driven by internal and external factors. Internal factors include the influence of heredity (Fajri, 2009, in Sejati, 2019). Then, external factors can come from the family environment, institutions, and society (Gunarsa, 2007, in Sejati, 2019). According to Maslow (1970), spirituality remains a natural human trait and has

a close relationship with religion (Amir & Lesmawati, 2017). The two are inseparable and interrelated, and have a positive impact on adolescent's well-being (Supriyadi et al., 2020; Arung & Aditya, 2021).

Religiosity and spirituality carried an important role in the lives of Indonesians, they prioritize spirituality in their daily lives (Pew Research Center, 2020; Damarjati, 2020). This is in line with the first principle of ideological value in Pancasila stating "Belief in the One and Only God" which is manifested in worshiping according to their respective religions (Putri, 2022). In line with The Great Indonesian Dictionary, worship entails "physical and spiritual efforts following God's commands for happiness and balance in life, for oneself, family, society, and the universe." In this research, worship primarily refers to the ritualistic dimension, involving routine rituals aligned with one's religion. A qualitative study found that religious beliefs, including worship, contribute to a person's spiritual well-being (Hok-Ko Pong, 2018). According to The National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA) in 1975, spiritual well-being is "Affirmation of life in relationship with oneself, others, nature, and God." Individuals experience positive relationships with the transcendent (God), self, others, and nature to realize the meaning and purpose of life (Tumanggor, 2019). Spiritual well-being, according to Ellison (1983), includes two dimensions namely Existential Well-Being (EWB) and Religious Well-Being (RWB), which represent vertical (RWB) and horizontal (EWB) relationships.

Seeing the role of spirituality and religious practices in the lives of adolescents in facing various changes and challenges, as well as the strong religious culture in Indonesia, a deeper exploration was carried out into the spiritual well-being of adolescents who worship. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore and describe the spiritual well-being of adolescents who worship as well as the factors that encourage adolescents to worship using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. With this approach, a person's personal experience can be explored in depth regarding the particular phenomenon in question (Howitt, 2016), so that the spiritual experience experienced by adolescents who worship can be understood more clearly and more deeply.

This research involved adolescents aged 11-20 years with the following criteria: (a) Regularly carrying out worship rituals in accordance with their religious beliefs; (b) Being physically and mentally healthy; and (c) Willing to be involved in research. Three participants with different religions ranged from 14-20 years old and were currently pursuing their studies. Before starting the interview, each participant agreed to carry out the interview by signing informed consent.

This research was conducted over 3 months from April to July 2023 by six researchers along with a supervisor. The research team consisting of 6 people conducted online interviews via Zoom at different times. In the interview process, which lasted 30-60 minutes, the research team developed rapport and observed the participants to get the information needed to support the research. The questions asked to each participant did not fully comply with the interview guidelines because a semi-structured interview approach was used to adjust to the participant's answers. In accordance with the agreed informed consent, the interview process was then recorded for the purpose of writing verbatim, and minimizing the occurrence of misinformation by the research team. Next, qualitative data was collected by the research team using a semi-structured interview method in accordance with guidelines based on psychological

literature theory to measure objectivity and by conducting in-depth observations of the three research participants from the start of developing rapport until the end of the interview process.

Several stages were taken by researchers in analyzing, synthesizing, and concluding the data that had been obtained: (a) research team collected and saved data in the form of recording files; (b) prepared a comprehensive verbatim transcript; (c) determined and redefined participant demographics; (d) based on the answers from interviews, research team coded themes related to the participants' answers into a series of sub-themes; (e) research team reaffirmed the terms of theme categorization and drew major themes from the coding results; (f) research team did a comparison between the results of the theme categorization in participants' perceptions and experiences with theoretical studies as the basis of interview objectivity; and (g) research team analyzes and draws research conclusions in fulfillment of the aims and benefits of the research.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION.
Table 1
Participants Description

	Participant 1 (MAI)	Participant 2 (FX)	Participant 3 (ND)
Age (years)	14	19	20
Daily Activities/Activities	School and place of worship.	Do assignments and if I have time, play games.	Lectures and communities outside campus.
Current Education	Grade 2 Junior High School, even semester.	Bachelor Degree of Pharmacy, 4th semester.	Bachelor Degree of Sociology Anthropology, 4th semester.
Hobby	Singing and playing football.	Playing chess.	Watching, reading, and handicraft.

All three participants worship according to their respective religions on a regular basis. Participants MAI and ND also practiced daily worship, such as praying to God. It was found that this discipline was the result of upbringing from the family when they were young. "Well that's a teaching that really impressed me and he also taught me worship, praying, leading prayers in fact every.. night… Well, yes, my uncle is one of the factors that changed my life to believe in God" (MAI, 22/5/23, 317-343). Although at first the worship performed by the two participants was driven by external factors, such as family and friends, the participants' meaning of worship began to change the participants' motivation to worship.

This happens because participants interpret worship as closeness to God the Creator which brings relief, peace and tranquility. Participant ND explained, "What I feel is, maybe it's calmer. Like there is a calmness in my heart. If for example I don't worship, it's like something is missing". (ND, 26/5/23, 114-116). This is also supported by previous research which reveals that by praying, the individual's soul will find perfect spaciousness, so that it will be far from feeling tense and depressed and can control emotions well (Wadji & Rahmani, 2009, in Wardani et al., 2016).

The researcher observed that there was emotional involvement in the worship that the two participants carried out. However, there are also participants who consider weekly worship as an ordinary activity that is carried out. This was conveyed by participant FX, "Now I just do it like a formality." (FX, 16/5/2023, 154-155). Thus, the worship performed by each participant has a different role in the participant's life, including social relations, personal life, and perception of God.

Perception means "receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, and apprehension with the mind or senses" (Ou, 2017). Therefore, an individual's perception of God can be viewed as an interpretation owned by the individual towards a divine figure or God in accordance with the level of ability of the individual to manage information about God. The perception that each person has of God is different, one of which is as expressed by participant ND, "God is ehm...Good, really good... it is described as loving and merciful and forgiving." (ND, 26/5/23, 128-130)

MAI also has similar perceptions to ND despite having different religions. God is described by MAI as a very kind figure and a friend. Both participants have a good perception of God that is built from worship and personal experiences, such as experiencing good and unexpected little things when they are in trouble, facing fears or weaknesses, and so on. For them, God is a figure who is always there in their lives and plays a role in everything that is being lived. The positive perception of God that both participants believed, enabled them to face various problems in life.

This phenomenon is also supported by research that reveals that positive perceptions of God contribute to participants' sense of ability, hope, assurance, calmness, satisfaction, and motivation, regardless of the challenges faced (Parker et al., 2022). Another perception was found in participant FX, who said "if God exists, he must see me doing my best, if he doesn't exist then I still do my best". FX also stated that "Yes, (God) seems to know which one is wrong. (God) doesn't need to be pleased either, (God) will still be judging." After being reconfirmed by the researcher, participant FX considered God as a judge and neutral. Thus, the presence or absence of God's existence does not affect FX in running their lives, because participants do not feel any benefit or meaning of worship to their personal lives.

FX's perception represents one of the attitudes towards the existence of God in the current development. Because God is considered to have no concrete evidence of existence in life, it cannot be explained from a cognitive perspective, so God's existence is questioned. Like J. Paul Sartre's view (in Hartaka et al., 2020) which considers human existence as absolute freedom, FX participants also show this freedom in their various thoughts and life choices, where the participant's personal effort is the factor that will determine his life, not God.

In this study, it was also found that the role of social relations encouraged participants to carry out worship and affecting their daily lives, such as the presence of friends at the place of worship, as expressed by participant FX, "going to place of worship to meet friends" (FX, 23/5/2023, 32-33). Participant MAI revealed that he was involved in worship services and joined a community, which encouraged him to be more active in the place of worship and also gained development in himself. This is in line with what was stated by Asyari (2022), that peers can have positive and negative impacts, where peers learn about reciprocal and equal relationship patterns. If the friendship environment shows positive behavior, it will have a good impact, and vice versa.

> *"... it's one of the communities that makes me grow, makes me excited to live my life, because of course I meet friends of the same faith, meet friends who are connected to me, who are good to me, who care about me, who love me. And that's what makes me, my life, also more colorful, more valuable, from the commencement. (MAI, 22/5/2023, 522-540)"*

Another social relation that plays a role is the family. This was expressed by participant FX "If I worship every week, it's just to accompany my mom." Participant ND also had the same reason

behind her doing worship, because she was encouraged by her parents. "Maybe initially it was because... because of the demands of parents" (ND, 26/5/23, 258-268). To sum up, these points are in line with research conducted by Narmiyati (2021), that one of the factors that can influence spirituality is the environment, especially the family environment.

Personal life in the research theme further examines how the activities, activities, and behaviors that participants have in their daily lives as one of the manifestations of EWB that can be reflected through the participants' daily activity patterns. In the personal life of the first participant, the researcher found that relationships are important to MAI, ranging from friendships at school and place of worship to family. Various daily activities are more oriented towards academics and activities with friends. In the interview, MAI revealed that he was not too satisfied with the life he was living. However, the participant has goals and plans for his future.

In the second participant's interview, the researcher concluded that the life experience that FX interpreted was "achievement". For him, experience is interpreted as something valuable when he achieves something, as he said in the following quote:

> "When I was in college, when I found out that I got a scholarship because I had the highest GPA in semester 2, even though I didn't pursue it before, I was happy. After that, in the third semester I got it again because I also had the highest GPA. (FX, 16/5/2023, 198 - 203)"

The research team also found that FX had clear future expectations, expressed in the sentence "Actually, it's more of a hope, but I want to be a professor, get a professor title." For the third participant, the researcher found ND's consistency in her future expectations, although ND was not fully satisfied with the life she was living. Participant ND has the enthusiasm and motivation to achieve her hopes, where ND revealed that in the future she wants to become a teacher. This is supported by her currently focusing on this goal by majoring in education and also participating in activities that focus on education. ND does this without fear of failure because of previous life lessons and believes in God's best destiny for her, "God gave me this because there are other things that I don't know." (ND, 26/5/23, 195-206).

All three participants are in adolescence stages, which according to Erikson (1968) is in search of identity. In this stage, adolescents will try to "become someone", namely "I" through various experiences and recognitions. When individuals obtain their identity, they will realize the characteristics of themselves, such as strengths, weaknesses, future goals, and can manage their life orientation (Ramdhanu, 2019).

In James Marcia's (1967) identity status, there are four identity statuses, one of which is identity achievement, which is characterized by individuals who have passed the crisis and have made commitments. If aligned with the theory, then the three participants have acquired an identity, in other words, the three participants have completed important things in their developmental stages. This can be seen from the three participants no longer experiencing confusion about themselves and having life goals supported by current plans. By knowing the direction and purpose of life, individuals show satisfaction with their lives, as shown by participant FX.

Table 2

Spiritual Well-Being Overview

Theme	Subtheme	Participant MAI	Participant FX	Participant ND
Worship	**Reason for worship**	Service, giving thanks, meeting friends.	Accompanying family	Obligation.
	Worship routine	Weekly worship, serving, praying, singing hymns, reading holy scriptures.	Weekly *online* worship, prayer, and former organist.	Obligatory and recommended worship.
	The role of the family	A family that teaches worship.	Mom invites to worship.	The family encourages worship.
	Understanding of worship	It can be done anywhere.	Formality.	Reminder of God.
	The meaning of worship	Relief and tranquility.	No idea.	Closeness and tranquility.
Perception of God	**Perception of God**	The kindest, the best friend, and the one who is always there.	If there is, then God is all-knowing and all-just.	Creator, great, kind, loving, merciful, forgiving, and always there.
Social Relationship	**Relationship with friends**	Support and help each other	Learn together.	Always there and as God's intermediary.
	Life satisfaction	Not too satisfied yet.	Happy.	Not quite satisfied.
	Pros	Humble and trustworthy with friends.	Playing musical instruments.	Knowing your inner limits.
	Disadvantages	Naughty and stubborn.	It's a bit lazy.	A little sensitive.
	Valuable experience	Spiritual *camping*, 14th anniversary.	Highest GPA and performing in extracurricular activities.	Unexpected little things and family gatherings.

Regarding the research objectives, MAI and ND exhibit a pronounced inclination towards both Religious Well-being and Existential Well-being dimensions, characterized by a positive perception of God, well-defined life objectives, the capacity to acknowledge personal strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to interpret meaningful life experiences. Other results show that participants who fulfilled only the Existential Well-Being dimension can experience an ardent sense of life purpose and gratification, excellent capability to interpret personal life, in correspondence to those who can comprehend worship (Chesser et al., 2018). Based on the research findings, internal and external orientations play a significant role in participants' worship routines that can encourage individual enthusiasm (Herzberg, 2009).

Internal motivation drives participants to worship due to a sense of gratitude, sincere desire to praise God, and the desire to gain peace. Meta-analytic studies revealed that understanding and living worship can increase gratitude, adaptability, and coping skills, therefore having better mental health standards (Srisantyorini, 2022). Whereas externally, it is noteworthy that the first encouragement and invitation to worship comes from family and closest people. Rifai (2018) specified that family is a pre-eminence placeholder to foster children's spiritual intelligence, that provides proper guidance in an environment that accommodates them.

4.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, it is concluded that Spiritual Well-being is not only determined by the ritualistic worship that is carried out, but is also influenced by social relations, the meaning of worship that is carried out, perceptions of God, and also personal life. It can be seen that participants who have good Spiritual Well-being are the result of a series of processes in their lives, rooted from religious education in the family that teaches worship. Then the motivation to worship can be

driven by factors of social relations or the community where individuals are and carry out their worship, plus meaning and emotional involvement which then fosters internal motivation while building a positive perception of God. Then the meaning and perception again have an impact on individual life, such as finding a sense of togetherness and support in the community, feeling calmer inside, and so on.

However, worship cannot serve as the sole determinant of adolescent life satisfaction. Apart from the Religious Well-being dimension, Spiritual Well-being encompasses another dimension, namely Existential Well-being. The study also found that participants can have low Religious Well-being but excelled in Existential Well-being, and vice versa. While religious factors can help enhance one's overall well-being, it is minded that without these supporting factors, participants can still gain meaning and purpose in life from their surroundings and themselves.

For better results, the research team suggests involving more participants with a longer interview duration in order to find out the issue of Spiritual Well-being in adolescents who worship more deeply. Due to the limitations of the topic discussion and coinciding with the culture of Indonesia which upholds aspects of spirituality, the existence of further research topics that have similar interests and goals with research on Spiritual Well-being in adolescents who worship can be a high ideal to be researched according to the demographics of society.

Acknowledgement

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