

Religious Factors and Emotional Well-Being Among University Students in Asian Countries

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Abstract

The emotional well-being of a university student is influenced by various factors and they face a unique set of challenges that can impact their overall well-being. The objective of this review is to examine the religious-related factors that contribute to university students' emotional well-being in Asian countries. A comprehensive searching strategy was employed across various databases, including SCOPUS and Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria were studies published in the last five years (2019-2024), focusing on emotional well-being and writing in English, and

qualitative and quantitative studies were considered. Articles were carefully reviewed to assess their relevance and quality. Many studies shed light on the interplay between religiosity, spirituality, and emotional well-being, emphasizing their profound impact on students' lives, including their academic success. This review underscores the importance of external factors such as social support, social media, religious coping, and self-compassion as key contributors to the emotional well-being of university students. Consequently, when examining the determinants of students' emotional well-being, it is crucial to integrate these

influential external factors, given their significant role in shaping students' overall well-being and daily lives.

Keywords: Emotional; Wellbeing; University; Student; Religious

Introduction

University students' well-being is a significant issue since it directly impacts their general well-being and academic achievement. An indicator of a student's productivity is their academic success, and productive people are valuable resources for the nation's advancement (Ghazali et al., 2024). Studies have indicated that various psychological, social, and spiritual elements are important for university students' overall health (Mustafa et al., 2020; Abbasi, 2019; Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2020). However, the likelihood of acquiring psychological distress can be attributed to a wide range of biopsychosocial factors, such as traumatic experiences, bad life events, genetic predispositions, peer pressure, family discord, and neurobiological determinants (Sood et al., 2024).

Emotional well-being is a significant component of university students' general well-being. Research has indicated a strong correlation between university students' psychological well-being and traits including social skills, emotional intelligence, and self-concept. Emotional well-being is a comfortable, healthy, and joyful state of mind. As emotional well-being can affect relationships, academic achievement, physical health, and others, it is a significant element in wellness. Students who participate in a mental intervention program that emphasises emotional intelligence are more likely to manage their aggressive behaviour and deal with life's challenges calmly. It has been found that students with good mental

conditions have positive social environments, particularly with their classmates (Samsiah et al., 2024).

A study by Visser and Wyk (2021) found that social, intellectual, and spiritual elements affect the emotional health of students. Another study by Aulia et al. (2020) discovered that emotional well-being, which includes regulating one's emotions, maintaining psychological equilibrium, and finding fulfillment in life, is a crucial component of general health. According to Islamic teachings, there are strong correlations between spiritual health, religious observance, and emotional well-being (Safara et al., 2020). The foundation of the Islamic understanding of emotional well-being emphasises that a person is a composite of their physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. Islamic scholars affirm that a person's emotional intelligence has a significant role in his/her personality and one can reach eternal and spiritual satisfaction through its development (Wahab, 2022). Islam strongly focuses on emotional control, empathy, and self-awareness since these elements promote a stronger relationship with the divine and a more harmonious existence (Sarnoto & Rahmawati, 2020; Sa'idah, 2023).

Ardiansyah et al. (2022) state that Islamic thought focuses on the harmony and balance of a person's physical, mental, and spiritual elements, thus making emotional health a crucial part of one's life. Developing virtues that support emotional health, like forgiveness, gratitude, and patience, is significant in Islam. According to Mahmud et al. (2022), emotional well-being depends on one's knowledge of regulating emotions, overcoming hardship, and acquiring meaning and purpose in life; these elements are all taught in the Quran and hadith. Additionally, it has been discovered that Islamic rituals like prayer, dhikr (remembering God), and Quran

recitation have a relaxing impact on the body and mind by decreasing anxiety and stress levels (Su et al., 2022).

The combination of spiritual and psychological aspects of well-being is highly valued in Islamic teachings. Current research informs us that Islamic concepts like Shukr (thanks), Sabr (patience), and Taqwa (God-consciousness) are often utilised to define emotional well-being in Islam. Past studies have proven that university students' participation in religious and spiritual practices is positively linked with their emotional well-being; this is indicated by the students' increased resilience, emotional intelligence, and general psychological health (Božek et al., 2020). For example, commitment to beliefs in religion, involvement in religious activities, and practices like prayer and meditation were discovered as crucial factors in the study of the influence of religious views on the spiritual well-being of university students. Reciting the Qur'an and performing regular prayer (Salah) are emphasised as vital practices which support emotional stability and resilience (Borji et al., 2019). These practices are said to improve inner tranquillity and decrease stress. Nonetheless, current studies indicate that other elements also affect the emotional well-being of university students (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

Some articles explain the factors that contribute to university students' emotional well-being. However, studying factors contributing to emotional well-being according to the perspective of religion and spirituality still requires further research to see the relationship with current factors that are significant and relevant among university students (Ziapour et al., 2017; Pong, 2018). In addition, the rapid change of time causes changes, especially how the current situation in the life of university

students affects their emotional well-being. As an example of progress in the field of technology that requires students to deal with the current situation (Deng, 2021). Further research on the factors contributing to students' emotional well-being is urgently needed. While the current study provides valuable insights, it also raises a critical issue: these factors' complexity and multifaceted nature require deeper exploration. Without a more comprehensive understanding, the potential for meaningful interventions may remain limited. Addressing this gap is essential, as it will not only help researchers better understand the significant influences on students' lives but also pave the way for future studies to build upon these findings, leading to more targeted and effective strategies for enhancing emotional well-being.

Methodology

The objective of this review is to examine the religious-related factors that contribute to university students' emotional well-being in Asian countries. The methodology for this review complies with PRISMA guidelines, using the PICO technique to formulate research questions by identifying the Problem or Population ('P'), Interest ('I'), and Context ('C'). Therefore, this review aimed to investigate the religious-related factors that contribute to university students' emotional well-being in Asian countries. Systematic searching can be strategized into three 3 steps: identification, screening, and eligibility (Mohamed Shaffril et al., 2020). At the identification level, the keyword used in the search for articles in the database uses the words emotional well-being, student, religiosity, spirituality, and factors. Screening involved evaluating papers from SCOPUS and Google Scholar databases. In the eligibility phase, criteria were applied through manual examination to ensure the inclusion of

studies relevant to social science and psychology. Only English papers published between 2019 and 2024 were

included. Figure 1 provides a summary of the study selection procedure.

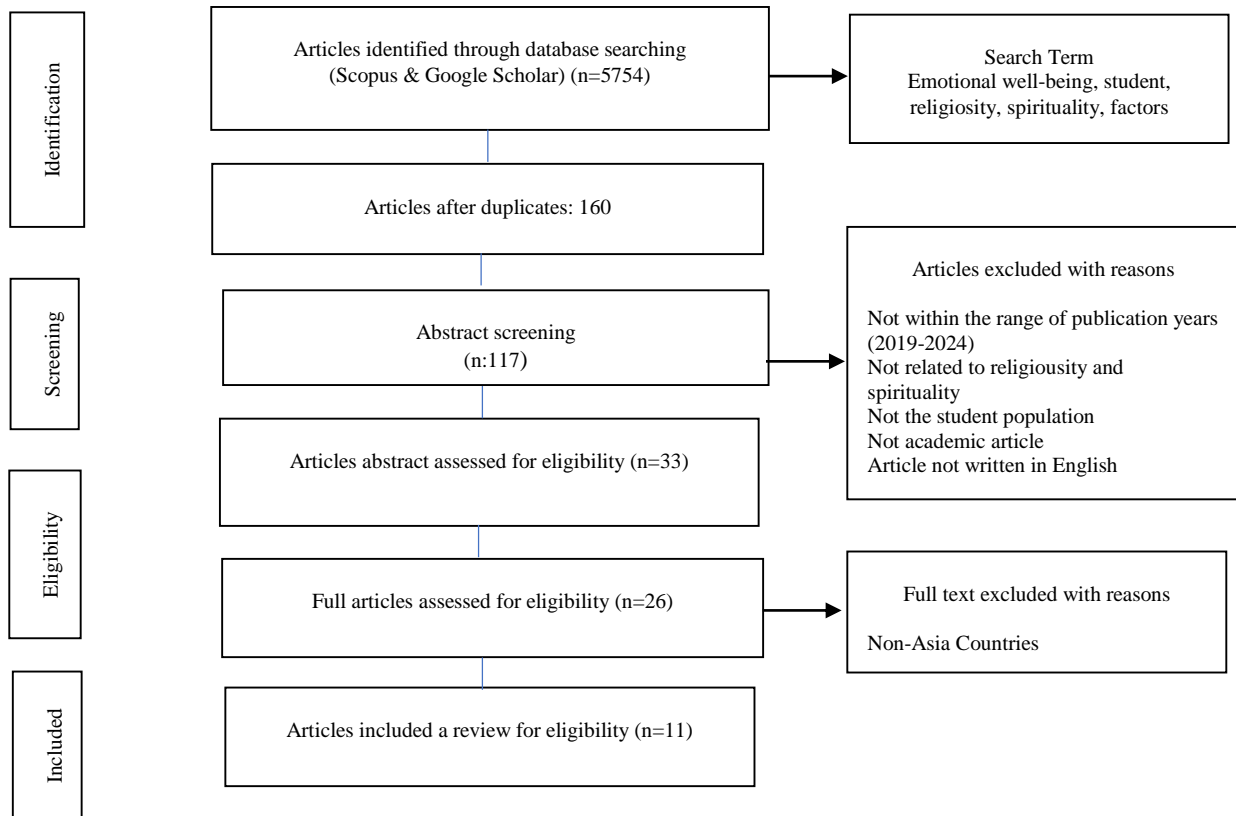


Figure 1: Study selection process

Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides an overview of the 11 included studies in this review. All the

studies were published within the last five years between 2019 and 2024.

Table 1: The list of studies

Authors Publication Years Country	Objective Summary	Emotional Well-being factors
Che Rahimi et al. (2021) Malaysia	To identify the levels of psychological disorders among university students in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic and examine whether these disorders relate to religious coping (RC) to religiosity	Religious practice and spirituality
Arifin et al. (2023). Malaysia	To assess Muslims' spiritual health as well as their levels of stress, anxiety, and depression during the previous MCO; (2) To examine the relationship between Muslims' mental illnesses and spiritual well-being during the last MCO	Religious practice and spirituality
Abbasi (2019) Iran	Examining the moderating effects of spiritual health on adverse life events and psychological distress in freshmen	Social Support and life event

Fathi et al. (2020) Iran	The purpose of this study was to examine how non-medical students used social media and how such usage affected their anxiety connected to COVID-19 and health-promoting behaviours and one of the subscales tested is spirituality.	Social media
Kurniasari et al. (2023) Indonesia	To examine whether students' levels of social anxiety and their usage of social media are correlated.	Social media
Sujarwoto et al. (2021) Indonesia	This study is to investigate the relationship between social media addiction and Indonesian university students' mental health as well as whether familial ties and religious beliefs can lessen the negative impacts of social media on students' mental health at this time	Social media
Pong (2018) China	The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how Chinese students' spiritual growth is impacted by their religious views in terms of religiosity, which includes (1) religious background, (2) religious practices, and (3) involvement in religious activities. This study then went on to examine how religiosity has influenced the growth of college students' spiritual well-being	Religious practice and spirituality
Ningrum et al. (2021) Indonesia	This study aims to investigate the relationship between academic anxiety Islamic spiritual orientation and self-compassion. Students from four public schools in the Semarang area participated.	Self compassion
Wardoyo & Aditya (2022) Indonesia	Researchers are interested in the dynamics of the connection between social support for well-being and religiosity, particularly for college students.	Social support and life event
Reza (2024) Indonesia	This study examines the relationship between final-year students' suicidal intent and their level of Islamic religiosity and spiritual experiences	Religious practice and spirituality
Che Hussin & Abdul Wahab (2023) Malaysia	This research explores how the tafakur technique can serve as a psychospiritual approach to help university students manage emotional stress.	Religious practice and spirituality

This review comprises articles selected from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Some of the factors that influence the emotional well-being of students are religious practices and spirituality. Eleven of the chosen studies focus on how other factors related to religiosity and spirituality influence students' emotional well-being. Students' emotional well-being becomes worse when they are in an urgent situation such as a pandemic. There are several themes identified in this review, including religious coping and religiosity, spiritual well-being, social media and mental health, interventions for emotional well-being, and social support and well-being. Certain measures and interventions focusing on positive religious coping and reducing negative religious coping are suggested to improve a person's psychological well-

being. In a study by Che Rahimi et al. (2021), 450 students participated in this study by responding to the online cross-sectional survey conducted from March to June 2020. The study included sociodemographic data, the Duke University Religious Index (DUREL) for religiosity, the Brief RCOPE Scale for religious coping, and the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) for psychological disorders. Though there were many obstacles to overcome, such as the restriction of spiritual activities in the mosque due to COVID-19 restrictions, spiritual well-being played a part in managing stress, anxiety, and depression. Future researchers should explore this topic further by combining observation and interview techniques, specifically with older participants.

A study related to spirituality by Abbasi (2019) focused on the moderating effects of spiritual health on negative life events and psychological distress in freshmen. A significant moderator of the detrimental effects of students' life experiences on psychological discomfort was their spiritual well-being. The researcher found a correlation between reduced psychological discomfort and higher levels of spirituality. The study sample involved 277 freshmen at Lorestan University, Iran. They were chosen based on a simple random sampling method. Another study involved final-year students at Sriwijaya University and Raden Fatah State Islamic University, Palembang. The sample was selected using a multistage sampling technique, with 412 respondents.

A study by Arifin et al. (2023) was a non-experimental quantitative study that included 133 Muslim respondents who had resided in Terengganu, Malaysia, at the time of the last Movement Control Order (MCO). The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS), the Clinical Scale for Depression, Anxiety, and Stress (DASS-21), and a series of survey questions including demographic data were employed in this study. Correlation analysis was utilised to determine the association between respondents' psychological distress and spiritual well-being, while mean descriptive statistics were utilised to assess respondents' levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Even though there were many obstacles to overcome, such as the restriction of spiritual activities in the mosque, spiritual well-being does play a part in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Future research is advised to look more closely at this topic using a variety of approaches, including interview and observation, particularly when older respondents are involved

Reza (2024) concluded that Islamic religiosity had a significant indirect influence on suicide intentions through

spiritual experiences as a mediator. Positive spiritual experiences were associated with lower suicide intentions, and both factors contributed to decreasing suicide intentions among students. Nonetheless, Islamic religiosity also has a direct influence on suicide intentions, independently of the mediator. Conversely, spiritual experiences also had a direct impact on suicide intentions. Another study found that the tafakur technique was the best alternative mechanism used as a psychospiritual intervention in dealing with emotional stress among university students (Che Hussin & Abdul Wahab, 2023). This quasi-experimental study was conducted on 30 participants (n=30) from university students in the state of Pahang, Malaysia.

The qualitative study by Pong (2018) explores how Chinese students' spiritual growth is impacted by their religious views in terms of religiosity, which includes (1) religious background, (2) religious practices, and (3) involvement in religious activities. A total of twenty-seven university students were interviewed in-depth and the results contributed to the study of how students' religious views may affect their spiritual health. It may also incorporate their religious beliefs, practices, and activities into their everyday lives. Additionally, religious concepts, religious activities, prayers, and meditation all have a favorable impact on university students' spiritual growth in particular areas (personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental).

Social media is also related to the emotional well-being of university students. In the study by Fathi et al. (2020), the Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile (HPLP) was the data collection tool. One of the subscales in this instrument looks at the level of spirituality in addition to 5 other subscales, namely health responsibility, interpersonal relations, stress management, physical activity, and nutrition. The results

indicate that using social media for leisure has a detrimental impact on students' lifestyles during the present COVID-19 pandemic and raises their anxiety levels. In the study by Sujarwoto et al. (2021), students who scored higher on social media addiction were more likely to suffer from mild depression and students who were more religious and had positive relationships with their parents had better mental health than those who were less religious and had bad relationships with their parents. According to this study, minimising social media addiction among college students while promoting familial relationships and religious beliefs throughout the pandemic is necessary to lessen the threats to their emotional well-being. A study by Kurniasari et al. (2023) also showed students' levels of social anxiety are positively correlated with how much they use social media. The accidental sampling technique was used to do the sampling. Kendall's tau_b correlation test was used to analyse the data. The majority of respondents (71%) report moderate levels of social anxiety, while the majority (65%) use social media actively.

A study by Wardoyo and Aditya (2022) explained that social support and religiosity affect students' emotional well-being. However, religiosity showed a stronger influence than social support. The study involved 233 participants who completed the research questionnaire, only 216 of those responses were used in the study since 17 of the responses were provided by participants who did not meet the requirements for participation. Active students between the ages of 18 and 25 who are enrolled in universities in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabo-detabek) and who identify as Muslim or Christian are eligible to participate in this study.

Another factor found in this study is self-compassion. Feelings of compassion and

care for others are closely linked to self-compassion. However, self-compassion does not imply selfishness, self-centeredness, or the prioritization of one's own needs over those of others (Neff, 2003). The study by Ningrum et al. (2021) attempted to analyse the effects of self-compassion and Islamic spiritual orientation on academic anxiety. The study involved students from four public schools in the Semarang population. The findings revealed a negative and significant effect of self-compassion and Islamic spiritual orientation on students' academic anxiety. Additionally, self-compassion and Islamic spiritual orientation on academic anxiety reduction can be understood through changes in positive self-perception.

The study of the article above reveals that religious practice involves using Quranic guidance, Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic ethics as the foundation for addressing emotional and psychological issues. Islamic approach is based on the belief that spiritual and religious aspects are integral to an individual's well-being. As stated by Othman and Mohamad (2019), this approach combines psychological principles with Islamic teachings, aiming to align a person's mental and emotional health with their religious beliefs. Additionally, establishing dedicated prayer spaces and providing access to religious resources on campus can further facilitate the spiritual needs of Muslim students. The role of spirituality and religiosity should be examined in the context of diverse student populations, as the effect may vary across different religious and cultural environments (Daulay, 2020; Yahya et al., 2020). Overall, the literature reviewed suggests that a comprehensive approach to student well-being that integrates spiritual and religious dimensions, in addition to addressing academic, social, and emotional needs, may be more effective in promoting

the overall success and flourishing of the university.

Moreover, the practices of self-reflection and striving for personal growth are encouraged in Islam. Assisting students to involve themselves in self-reflection and establishing personal goals can nurture a sense of achievement and emotional satisfaction among them. Incorporating Islamic values such as honesty, kindness, and justice into the educational environment can help to create a positive and supportive atmosphere for students (Nurbaiti, 2020). This can lead to improved emotional well-being and better overall academic performance. In other contexts, Islam emphasizes '*silaturrahim*' and '*rahmatanlillalamin*' concepts in maintaining positive relationships with family, community, and environment (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023). This also can contribute to student's wellbeing. Encouraging the Muslim community and individuals to establish positive relationships with Allah, other people, and the universe is the aim of Islamic teaching. People will always be entwined with the universe as long as they can realise their full potential (Mohidem & Hashim, 2023) which encompasses their physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects.

In addition, every student at university, especially Muslim students, must be strengthened with the concept of destiny in life (Ardiansyah et al., 2022). One must have faith in Allah, and understand that He is in control of all things and can provide students with sense of purpose and resilience. Encouraging regular prayer (Salah), recitation of the Quran, and remembrance of Allah (Dhikr) can help students find inner peace and solace (Sari & Sutarto, 2023). It is very important to understand the concept of faith and belief for the well-being of students. For example, understanding what has happened as a destiny that has been written is a source of

peace, and it is important to understand that human life is under the control of God and that God is omnipotent over everything (Abd Majid & Alias, 2019). Furthermore, Islam places great emphasis on acquiring knowledge and wisdom. Encouraging students to seek both religious and worldly knowledge helps them develop a well-rounded perspective on life, which can contribute to their emotional stability. By understanding the teachings of Islam, especially the knowledge related to emotional well-being, students can be equipped with the necessary tools to overcome the trials of university life (Kamaluddin et al., 2020). Teaching students the importance of patience and perseverance in the face of difficulties can assist them in managing their stress and challenges more effectively. As stated by Tajab et.al (2019) the Quran and Hadith stipulate numerous examples of patience and reliance on Allah during tough times.

Finally, Islam encourages a balanced approach to life, including one's need for proper rest, nutrition, and physical activity. Encouraging students to take care of their physical health can also support their emotional well-being. Organizing recreational activities and sports programs that are aligned with Islamic principles can help students maintain a healthy lifestyle (Mahmoodi et al., 2020). Islam encourages its followers to take care of their physical health and also their mental health. As stated by Guntur (2021), physical health will affect healthy mental health which, in turn, affects the emotional well-being of students.

Conclusion

To conclude, the review focuses on the importance of combining spiritual and religious dimensions into the understanding and promotion of emotional well-being among university students. Current research has indicated that students who

participate in religious and spiritual practices frequently show higher levels of emotional intelligence and overall psychological well-being. This may be attributed to the emphasis in religious teachings on emotional regulation, self-control, and cultivating positive character traits. Nonetheless, the existing literature is limited in its analysis of the precise mechanisms and contextual factors that underlie this relationship. Future research should explore deeper into the role of religious and spiritual practices in developing emotional well-being, particularly within the context of higher education. This study stresses the importance of recognizing the role of spirituality and religiosity, specifically from an Islamic perspective, in developing the emotional well-being of university students. The findings propose a holistic approach to student development; an approach that recognises how religious practice & spirituality, religious coping, social support, and life events and social media influence the emotional well-being of students. These external factors can affect the emotional well-being of students along with the changes in today's life.

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