

**PREDICTIVE RELATIONSHIP OF SPIRITUALITY WITH  
NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL STATES IN MOTHERS  
OF CHILDREN WITH THALASSEMIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study aimed to examine the predictive relationship of spirituality with negative emotional states (Depression, Anxiety and Stress) among mothers of children with thalassemia. The sample of this study consisted of 150 mothers of children who were suffering with thalassemia with age range of 35 years to 50 years (Mean age = 37.71, SD = 3.69). Data was gathered from different centers of thalassemia of Karachi, Pakistan. The Demographic Form, Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (Underwood & Teresi, 2002) and Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (Habib, 2010) were administered on all participants. Linear Regression Analysis revealed spirituality a strong predictor of negative emotional states. A significant positive relationship between spirituality and negative emotional states among mothers of children with thalassemia is shown. Further directions and implications for future researches are proposed.*

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**Keywords:** Mothers, Spirituality, Negative Emotional States, Thalassemia Major

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Thalassemia is an inherited disorder in which the development of defective hemoglobin is the major source. Children with thalassemia appear normal at birth. But later on in life, they face numerous general health problems, i.e. high fever, blood loss, and body aches mostly. This ongoing medical issue not only affects child's mental health but their mothers too. Management of the chronic medical conditions demands consistent attention with adequate resources. Mothers being the primary caregiver in our culture are the one who usually performs this task. These mothers when involve themselves to fulfill ill child's daily routine tasks including medical checkup, blood transfusion, special diet and so on, also have responsibility of other family members too, this hectic daily routine of mothers not only affect them physically but mentally as well (Baiee, Ameer, Hadi, Kamel & Alaa, 2015; Widayanti, 2011).

Health related necessities of child with thalassemia, maintaining balance with her other children, managing financial budget and household responsibilities are the other contributing factors that affect mothers' mental health. During the treatment procedure mothers have to perform caregiver duties which affect their psychological health (Anum & Dusti, 2016). With the passage of time while managing and dealing with these stressors, mothers' coping get affected and they become prone to experience negative emotional states i.e. depression, anxiety and stress (Churchill et al., 2010).

These mothers try to cope up with negative emotional states while adopting numerous strategies. Among those is spirituality "which means to explore and find the meaning of their existence", spirituality also helps to create a bond between Creator and individuals. It helps individuals to release their pain and feel satisfaction. This satisfaction with life develops feelings of trust to face and deal with numerous challenges of life and leads to healthy living pattern of family with an ill child (Worthington et al., 2011).

Negative spiritual practices have been associated with psychological distress (i.e. anxiety, depression, and negative mood), low quality of life, panic and suicide. Contrary to this, positive spiritual struggles have been associated with stress-related growth, spiritual growth, open-mindedness, self-actualization, and lower levels of bias (Hill & Pargament, 2003). Positive spiritual strategies explained a spiritual faith, a positive connection with Creator, a belief that life has some meaning, a spiritual relationship with one another and analyze the situation

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with objectivity. These types of positive strategies contribute to enhance self-esteem, strong standard of lives, and ways of adopting psychological and emotional sustainability. Developing connection with spirituality helps to minimize negative emotional states (Wachholtz & Pearce, 2009). Spiritual coping serves to enhance hope and emotional ease, capability to uphold self-esteem, ability to have a purpose and sense of meaning, provision of social support, reframing of difficult circumstances, and yield a sense of control (Hildenbrand & Marsac, 2011).

In the light of above mentioned researches, it is speculated that there exist a link between spirituality and negative emotional states among mothers of children with thalassemia. In addition, a large data available on this topic few researches has been conducted in Pakistan. Present study is thus designed to study the predictive relationship between spirituality and negative emotional states of mothers of children with thalassemia.

Considering literature review, following research hypotheses was established:

1. Spirituality would predict negative emotional states (i.e. depression, anxiety, and stress) among mothers of children with Thalassemia

## **METHOD**

### ***Participants***

In this research study 150 mothers of children with thalassemia major participated from different thalassemia major centers. The age range of mothers was 35 to 50 years with the mean age of 37.71 years. Children's age range was 6 to 10 year old. Sample was controlled on marital status, single, divorced and widowed mothers were excluded. Only those mothers were included who had only one child with Thalassemia.

### ***Measures***

#### **Personal Information Form**

For this study a demographic form was developed to gather personal and illness related details. Personal details included age, education of child and ages,

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socioeconomic status, educational status, nature of job and designation of parents were also included.

### **Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES)**

The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale is based on 16 items. First 15 items have 6 point Likert type, ranging from 1 to 6 and for last item i.e. item no. 16 ranging from 1 to 4. The Cronbach's alpha is .89. Test-retest reliability is reported to be .85 (Underwood and Teresi, 2002).

### **Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS)**

The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (Habib, 2010) is a 42 items scale. Score ranges are from 0 to 42 on each sub-scale. Over 20, 14 and 25 scores on depression, anxiety and stress sub-scales, respectively indicate severity level. It has good internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values are as such: .97 for depression, .92 for anxiety, .95 for stress.

### ***Procedure***

For this study participants were selected from thalassemia centers in Karachi while utilizing convenient and purposive sampling. They were provided assurance regarding confidentiality and motive of this study was explained. Informed consent was signed by participants. Demographic information form, Daily Spiritual Experience Scale and Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale were then administered. After administration of scales scores were obtained and statistical analysis of the results was done.

### ***Statistical Analysis***

Statistical analysis of obtained data was processed by using SPSS, version.23. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis under investigation.

## RESULTS

Table 1  
*Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=150)*

Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
35-40	135	90.1
41-45	07	4.8
46-50	08	5.3
SES		
Middle	41	27.3
Lower Middle	89	59.3
Lower	20	13.3
Family Structure		
Nuclear	100	66.7
Joint	50	33.3
Qualification		
None	73	48.7
Primary	25	16.7
Middle	10	6.7
Matric	26	17.3
Intermediate	11	7.3
Graduation	04	2.7
Master	01	0.7
Age		
35-40	135	90.1
41-45	07	4.8
46-50	08	4.8
SES		
Middle	41	27.3
Lower Middle	89	59.3
Lower	20	13.3
Family Structure		
Nuclear	100	66.7
Joint	50	33.3

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Table 2  
*Demographic Characteristics of Children*

Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
6 years	28	18.7
7 years	25	16.7
8 years	35	23.4
9 years	18	12
10 years	44	27.4
Gender		
Male	81	54
Female	69	46

Table 3  
*Linear Regression Analysis with Spirituality as Predictor of Depression, Anxiety and Stress among Mothers of Children with Thalassemia Major*

Outcome Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Depression	1.98	5.22	-.19	.04	5.67	.02*
Anxiety	1.92	.62	-.24	.06	9.51	.00*
Stress	2.05	.82	-.19	.04	6.12	.01*

\* $p < .05$

## **DISCUSSION**

The present study investigated the predictive association between spirituality and negative emotional states in mothers of children with Thalassemia. The results (Table 3) indicate spirituality a significant predictor of negative emotional states. The spirituality explained 4% variance in the score of depression, 6% in the scores of anxiety and 4% in the scores of stress. Thus, these studies suggest spirituality a protective factor in relation to negative emotional states. Studies indicate that spiritual beliefs and practice in Creator help mother of children with thalassemia when it comes to take medical decision for ill child (Knapp et al., 2011). Mothers utilize spirituality as a coping mechanism as they prefer more to believe in God, this belief system help them to stay strong in difficult time. Mothers believe in this phenomenon if medical care is not giving them any hope regarding their child's health then spiritual practices might be the only way to get comfort. Wachholtz and Pearce (2009) reported that spirituality does not reduce the intensity of pain but it helps to tolerate the pain.

Mothers of children with thalassemia have understanding that believing in God can help them to motivate themselves to fight with difficult time rather than flight. In this regard mothers prefer to make their connection strong with the Creator and help other people. Helping other people lowers the intensity of their pain and challenging life events. Additionally, it plays a positive role into mothers' life and enhances mental peace among mothers which make them able to face daily stressors. One more aspect of spirituality is, it provides moral guidance to individuals. It guide people to connect with other and serve into community, people understand effectiveness of empathetic listening, make others happy, supporting each other financially and providing moral support to others can help them to cope with their pain and adversities which came into their life in the shape of chronic health condition of their child. Hexem (2011) suggested that by practicing spirituality mothers of children with thalassemia can deal with day to day stressor and are less prone to psychological problems.

According to Wachholtz and Pearce (2009) mothers try to deal with stress and anxiety symptoms via making secure connection with the Creator in order to consider each blessing of God and be thankful of them. Moreover, when they are able to make a secure connection with God they feel happy and calm which help them decrease the intensity of stress and anxiety (Benore, Pargament, & Pendleton, 2008; Krok, 2008). Children and their family members suffering with life long

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illness help others and try to make strong connection with the Creator in order to minimize intensity of depression and anxiety (Benore et al., 2008).

Krok (2008) suggested that spirituality is a natural aspect which helps to reduce intensity of stress and negative circumstance from individuals' life. It is also highlighted by Hill and Pargament (2003) that spiritual practices and belief in God can help to make medical decision making. During this period of chronic illness parents of children over the period of time undergo multiple times for medical decision making. Within this period they rely more on believe in their Creator and spiritual practices as coping mechanism from stressors. Wachholtz and Pearce (2009) suggested that mothers of children with thalassemia constantly striving for a healthy life and dealing with difficult situations, integrate spiritual practices into care plan of children. Additionally, if they cannot get cure, spiritual practices contribute to gain comfort. Spirituality cannot entirely reduce agony however it helps to tolerate the pain.

Chronic illness like thalassemia effects not only ill child but the whole family. The person who gets more affected is mother. This study was designed for Pakistani culture where mothers are playing vital role in sick child's life. Mothers are facing numerous challenges in day to day routine for maintaining equilibrium. Results of this research are suggested that this chronic illness is affecting mothers' life emotionally and psychologically.

This study included sample from lower and lower middle class, future researches need to cater all socioeconomic status. Sample was collected from few Thalassemia centers who voluntarily allowed for data collection. Further surveys should be including all thalassemia centers. Only those mothers were taken who had one child with thalassemia, mothers who have more than one child with chronic illness should be included.

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