

**SPIRITUAL INSTABILITY AND FORGIVENESS IN MUSLIM YOUNG ADULTS:
MEDIATING EFFECTS OF DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF
AND SELF-REGULATION**

By:

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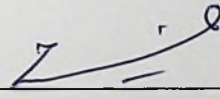
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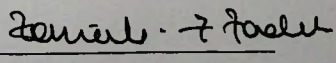
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ABSTRACT

There has been extensive research concerning religion, spirituality, and the effects these domains have on mental health and well-being. Research has usually centered on how the presence or absence of spirituality or a religious orientation can impact psychological functioning. However, there has been little research exploring the presence of spirituality that suffers from instability or dysfunction. Even fewer research exists on the impact this troubled form of spirituality may have on mental health.

This research therefore aims to explore the presence of spiritual instability in the local population, as well the effects it may have on forgiveness, which is an important interpersonal indicator of psychological well-being. The current literature demonstrates that there might be an inverse relationship between the two concepts. However, because of the complex nature of the variable of spiritual instability, mediating variables were also added to the relationship to test for intervening effects of other psychological areas. Differentiation of self and self-regulation were therefore added to the equation.

Two hundred thirty four Muslim university students aged between 18 – 24 years old were selected as participants for this research. Spiritual Instability was measured using the Instability subscale from the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; Hall & Edwards, 2002), while Forgiveness was tapped through the Transgressions Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale- 12 (TRIM-12; McCullough et al., 1998). Differentiation of Self was measured using the Level of Differentiation of Self Scale (LDSS; Haber, 1993) and the Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ; Neal & Carey, 2005) assessed Self-Regulation.

The research hypothesized a significant relationship between spiritual instability and forgiveness, with differentiation of self and self-regulation acting as mediating variables. The findings of the study offer support for a direct significant relationship between spiritual instability and forgiveness ($p = <.001$), as well as a significant indirect relationship with self-regulation as mediating variable ($p = <.001$). Support was not found for differentiation of self as a mediating variable, neither were both differentiation of self and self-regulation significant as multiple mediators in the relationship between spiritual instability and forgiveness.

The results offer new dimensions for current conceptualizations of spirituality, along with its implications for well-being and inter-personal happiness. The importance of the role of mediating variables is also highlighted, particularly linked to self-regulation, as well as the importance of studying variables in the context of culture and religion to gain a more accurate understanding of local psychological concerns. Recommendations for broadening the sample and integrating newer variables into the aforementioned relationships are also discussed.