STRESZCZENIE W JĘZYKU ANGIELSKIM

Religious and Non-Religious Forms of Spiritual Practices and Their Relationship with Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms and Conspiracy Thinking in the Population of Young Adults (18–25) in Poland

In recent decades, significant transformations in religiosity and spirituality have been observed in European societies, particularly among young adults. Processes of secularization and the individualization of belief systems have led to the emergence of diverse forms of spirituality, including practices developed outside institutional religious structures. At the same time, an increasing prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms has been reported among young adults, along with a growing spread of conspiracy beliefs. These phenomena highlight the need to examine potential relationships between spirituality, mental health, and interpretations of social reality.

The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between spirituality, symptoms of anxiety and depression, and conspiratorial thinking among young adults in Poland, taking into account both institutional religiosity and individualized forms of spirituality.

The study was conducted among young adults aged 18–25 years. Participants included individuals identifying as Catholics as well as those declaring atheism. Spirituality was assessed using the Interfaith Spirituality Scale (IFS). Symptoms of anxiety and depression were measured using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), and conspiratorial beliefs were assessed using the Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale (GCBS). In the study examining the relationship between conspiracy thinking and spirituality, 1100 participants took part. In the study investigating the relationship between the severity of depressive and anxiety symptoms and spirituality, 1240 participants were included. Engagement in individualized spiritual practices outside institutional religion was operationalized as Nonreligious Forms of Spiritual Practice (NFSP). Non-parametric statistical methods and Spearman correlation analyses were applied.

The findings indicate that spirituality is a multidimensional construct whose psychological significance depends on the form in which it is experienced. Higher levels of spirituality were associated with lower depressive symptom severity regardless of religious affiliation. In contrast, the relationship between spirituality and anxiety symptoms was more complex and varied between worldview groups. The highest anxiety levels were observed among individuals engaging in individualized spiritual practices. Moreover, engagement in Nonreligious Forms of Spiritual Practice was associated with higher levels of conspiratorial thinking among both religious and non-religious participants. Spirituality among young adults represents a diverse and multidimensional phenomenon whose psychological significance depends on its form and on the individual's worldview configuration. Spirituality may function as a psychological resource in relation to depressive symptoms, whereas its associations with anxiety and conspiratorial thinking appear more complex and context-dependent. The findings also suggest that worldview coherence may represent an important factor contributing to cognitive and emotional stability among young adults.