

## SPIRITUAL SELF-REALISATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS: STRONG PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DEVELOPMENTAL FEATURES

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### Summary

The article explores the phenomenon of spiritual self-realization among students pursuing a degree in psychology. Spiritual self-realization is viewed as an essential aspect of their personal and professional development. The study examines the features of the formation and development of spiritual self-realization and analyzes key personal characteristics that may contribute to this process, particularly character strengths.

The article presents the results of an empirical study on the relationship between spiritual self-realization (transcendence) and the personal traits of psychology students. The methodological basis of the study included the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) by K. Peterson and M. Seligman, and the Dispositional Hope Scale by C. Snyder (ukrainian adaptation by H. Laptieva and O. Vlasova). Transcendence is interpreted as a manifestation of spiritual self-realization and includes such character strengths as appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, optimism, humor, and a sense of meaning in life.

Among the majority of respondents, transcendence was formed at a medium or low level (61,3%) and at a high level in 38,7%. Correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between spiritual self-realization and several personal traits, particularly dispositional hope ( $r = 0,613$ ), wisdom ( $r = 0,593$ ), creativity ( $r = 0,475$ ), leadership ( $r = 0,451$ ), and Justice ( $r = 0,452$ ), all at the level of significance ( $p < 0,01$ ). Additionally, other significant correlations were identified, which are discussed in detail in the article and represent valuable empirical findings that offer prospects for further research into the phenomenon of spiritual self-realization among youth in the context of professional training.

**Key words:** spirituality, self-realization, personal traits, character strengths, development, professional formation, positive psychology.

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### 1. Introduction

Modern higher education imposes new requirements on the training of professionals in the field of psychology. One of the key conditions for a psychologist's professional development is spiritual self-realization, understood as the process of actualizing inner virtues – particularly spiritual virtues – that guide the individual toward a life filled with meaning, harmony, inner growth, and well-being. Spiritual self-realization is seen as the embodiment of the virtue of transcendence through its active expression in personal life, education, and professional activity.

Within the framework of positive psychology, which emphasizes personal strengths, the capacity for self-growth, and the pursuit of a fulfilling life, spiritual self-realization is considered an important factor in both subjective well-being and professional effectiveness. One of the core concepts that reflects the spiritual dimension of personality in the VIA (Values

in Action) model by M. Seligman is transcendence. It is identified as one of the 24 character strengths grouped into six core virtues, and is associated with the appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope (optimism), spirituality/religiousness (sense of meaning), and humor (playfulness).

Transcendence is viewed not only as a stable personality trait but also as a dynamic process that ensures: the connection of future psychologists with higher meaning, spiritual values, and sources of inspiration; the activation of internal resources that support well-being, resilience, and life integrity; and the development of character strengths expressed in life attitudes, professional practice, and interpersonal relationships. This process is a fundamental aspect of spiritual self-realization and is understood as the integration of spiritual, moral, and personal dimensions, guiding individuals toward a meaningful and spiritually enriched life (Seligman, 2011).

Indicators of transcendence as a process of spiritual self-realization include: the presence of a spiritual orientation and belief in the meaning of life, a sense of belonging to something greater (through the power of spirituality); the ability to make sense of life experiences – both positive and negative (through hope and inspiration); emotional and value-based engagement expressed through feelings of gratitude, elevation, and appreciation of beauty; and motivation for moral development that activates the desire to live according to higher moral ideals.

Thus, within the framework of positive psychology, transcendence functions as a mechanism of spiritual self-realization, as it contributes to the growth of subjective well-being through meaning-making, integrates spiritual qualities into everyday practices, and supports the pursuit of a life that holds significance not only for oneself but also for others. It lies in the psychology student's ability to open up to higher spiritual values, search for meaning in life, experience spiritual elevation, and realize themselves through moral, emotional, and meaningful resources. This process is part of subjective well-being and a vital condition for spiritual growth.

This study hypothesizes that spiritual self-realization is connected to the personal characteristics of future psychologists, which manifest as character strengths. These strengths may be used to support further empirical exploration of the phenomenon of spiritual self-realization in psychological science.

*The aim of this article* is to empirically study the process of spiritual self-realization and to identify its connections with the character strengths of psychology students. These strengths may influence the realization of spiritual self-actualization in the context of educational and professional socialization and serve as valuable, scientifically grounded results for the further development of this research area in psychological science.

## 2. Theoretical background

The problem of spiritual self-realization of the individual is addressed in the works of many psychological researchers. In global psychology, this issue is explored by representatives of various scientific schools, including humanistic, existential, cognitive-behavioral, positive, and transpersonal psychology.

Representatives of the humanistic approach viewed spiritual self-realization as a higher human need, manifested in the pursuit of personal and spiritual growth, authenticity, freedom of choice, and the realization of spiritual potential. The search for life meaning and spiritual values is considered an essential component of complete spiritual self-disclosure of the personality (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961; Allport, 1955).

Within existential psychology, the idea of life meaning plays a key role as the foundation for spiritual development and self-realization. The striving for meaning is seen as the primary human motivation, and spiritual self-realization is possible only through overcoming internal and external challenges and achieving existential maturity (*Frankl, 2006*).

In positive psychology, spiritual self-realization is regarded as one of the core virtues of transcendence, which contributes to subjective well-being, optimism, and resilience. It is closely connected with spiritual growth, as it enables a person to integrate their values, goals, and higher meanings into their spiritual development (*Peterson & Seligman, 2004*). The virtue of transcendence focuses on the connection with something greater than oneself, and on looking beyond personal needs to generate a sense of purpose or meaning (*Peterson & Seligman, 2004*).

Transpersonal psychology places particular emphasis on the spiritual dimension of being, mystical experience, and meditative practices, which facilitate going beyond the ego and foster self-disclosure. In this approach, spiritual self-realization is associated with spiritual awakening and the integration of the personality at a deeper level of consciousness (*Grof, 1985; Wilber, 2000*).

Each of the 24 character strengths can be viewed as spiritual or sacred and can support the individual on their spiritual journey. Every strength is a capacity to express goodness, to be good, to do good for others, and to convey a sense of meaning or purpose in the world (*Niemiec, Russo-Netzer & Pargament, 2020*).

Character strengths are understood as mechanisms that enable the behavioral expression of moral virtues in daily life, benefiting not only the individuals who practice them but also others in their social environment (*Peterson & Seligman, 2004*).

As the methodological basis of this study, the post-nonclassical paradigm was chosen, which provides a holistic and multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon of spirituality, the inner world of the individual, and the process of self-realization in the context of their temporal dynamics. This approach also opens the way for interdisciplinary analysis, allowing the integration of methodological approaches and scientific tools from various fields of knowledge such as religious studies, philosophy, cultural studies, ethics, aesthetics, sociology, history, pedagogy, and psychology. Through such an integrative approach, it becomes possible to develop a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of spirituality and self-realization in young individuals (*Vlasova, Vashchenko, Danyliuk, Shcherbyna, 2016*).

This topic is also actively discussed within the framework of the integrative approach, which combines elements of different psychological schools to achieve a deeper and more grounded understanding of spiritual self-realization and its role in spiritual development.

Thus, within various psychological paradigms, spiritual self-realization is considered a process that ensures the integrity of personal development, as well as the individual's adaptation, resilience, and inner harmony.

### 3. Methodology

The empirical study was conducted with the participation of 217 students enrolled in institutions of higher education in Ukraine, majoring in psychology and practical psychology in the cities of Kyiv and Ternopil. The participants ranged in age from 16 to 25 years ( $M = 19,35$ ;  $SD = 1,84$ ). Among them, 32 (14,7%) were male and 185 (85,3%) were female.

In terms of professional characteristics, 64,5% of the sample were students at a classical university, while 35,5% were studying at a pedagogical university. A majority of the participants (78,8%) were pursuing a Bachelor's degree, while 10,6% were working toward a Specialist

and another 10,6% toward a Master's degree. Regarding the program of study, 19,4% of the respondents specialized in practical psychology, and 80,6% in general psychology. Social and demographic data show that 35,5% studied in a large city, while 64,5% were based in a metropolis.

The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) by K. Peterson and M. Seligman, adapted into ukrainian by O. Vlasova and H. Laptieva (2024), was used as the main research tool. This questionnaire is designed to assess 24 character strengths, which are grouped into six core virtue categories: Wisdom and Knowledge: 1) curiosity; 2) love of learning; 3) judgment; 4) creativity; 5) Perspective Courage: 6) bravery; 7) persistence; 8) integrity (honesty); 9) zest; Humanity and Love: 10) kindness; 11) capacity to love; 12) social intelligence; Justice: 13) teamwork; 14) fairness; 15) leadership; Temperance: 16) self-regulation; 17) prudence; 18) humility/modesty; 19) forgiveness; Transcendence: 20) appreciation of beauty and excellence; 21) gratitude; 22) hope (optimism); 23) spirituality (sense of purpose); 24) humor. The overall score on the Transcendence scale was treated as a key variable, as it reflects the process of spiritual self-realization among future psychologists.

The empirical study also utilized the Dispositional Hope Scale by C. Snyder, adapted into ukrainian by O. Vlasova and H. Laptieva. This test is designed to measure dispositional hope by assessing the presence and intensity of two components: willpower and wayfinding ability.

Dispositional (stable, personal) hope, according to C. Snyder's concept, is a cognitive construct. The willpower component reveals the motivational aspect, reflecting a person's confidence in their ability to achieve goals despite difficulties. It acts as an internal drive that pushes an individual forward. The wayfinding ability is the cognitive component that characterizes a person's capacity to generate effective pathways to reach goals, especially under challenging or unpredictable life circumstances.

## **4. Results**

Using the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) by K. Peterson and M. Seligman, it was possible to identify the relationships between spiritual self-realization (transcendence) and the personality traits of psychology students.

Let us begin with the transcendence scale, which, according to our research logic, represents a manifestation of the spiritual self-realization of the individual. The score ranges on this scale can be conventionally divided as follows: high: 40-50 points, medium: 20-39 points, low: 0-19 points. The minimum score on the subscales is 1 point, and the maximum is 10 points. These subscale scores can be conditionally divided as: high: 8-10 points, medium: 4-7 points, low: 0-3 points. Auxiliary scales clarify the essence of the main scale, where each response A or B scores 5 points.

Most respondents (61,3%) demonstrated a medium level of transcendence with an average score of 34,88 points; 38,7% showed a high level with an average score of 44,44 points. This indicates that the formation of the transcendence component, in this variation, is at a medium to low level for the majority of students.

The correlation analysis of spiritual self-realization with the character strengths of future psychologists reveals weak, moderate, and strong positive relationships between the overall transcendence score and many character strengths, as well as with the overall dispositional hope score and its components – willpower and the ability to find pathways for goal attainment among psychology students (Table 1).

Table 1

**Correlations of Spiritual Self-Realization (Transcendence) with Personality Traits  
of Future Psychologists**

Virtues (Strengths) and Personality Traits	Spiritual Self-Realization (Transcendence)	
	r (Pearson correlation coefficient)	p (Significance level)
Curiosity	,331**	p<0,01
Love of Learning	,369**	p<0,01
Ingenuity	,475**	p<0,01
Perspective	,434**	p<0,01
Wisdom and Knowledge	,593**	p<0,01
Courage	,344**	p<0,01
Perseverance (Persistence)	,317**	p<0,01
Enthusiasm	,410 **	p<0,01
Bravery	,393**	p<0,01
Kindness	,152*	p<0,05
Ability to Love	,336**	p<0,01
Humanism and Love	,322**	p<0,01
Social Intelligence	,220**	p<0,01
Collectivism	,169*	p<0,05
Fairness	,238**	p<0,01
Justice	,452**	p<0,01
Leadership Qualities	,451**	p<0,01
Self-Control	,146*	p<0,05
Forgiveness	,149*	p<0,05
Moderation	,164*	p<0,05
Ability to Find Pathways to Goal Achievement	,499**	p<0,01
Willpower	,551**	p<0,01
Dispositional Hope	,613**	p<0,01

\*\* p<0,01; \* p<0,05

A qualitative analysis of the correlation results indicates the presence of a statistically significant relationship between spiritual self-realization (transcendence) and a number of personality traits reflecting the spiritual and value sphere of future psychologists. The highest correlation coefficients were found for the following variables: dispositional hope, which may be a key factor in spiritual self-realization ( $r = 0,613$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); high wisdom scores ( $r = 0,593$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); willpower as the motivational component of hope ( $r = 0,551$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); the ability to find pathways to goal achievement as the cognitive component of hope ( $r = 0,499$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); ingenuity, which as creativity helps to see new meanings and broad pathways of spiritual life ( $r = 0,475$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); leadership qualities, as a manifestation of responsibility and influence ( $r = 0,451$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); and justice (overall score) as the moral foundation of spiritual self-realization ( $r = 0,452$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ).

The closest links with spiritual self-realization (transcendence) are associated with the cognitive-motivational traits of dispositional hope, wisdom, willpower, creativity, as well as

moral and ethical attitudes of justice and leadership. These findings are important for further research into the phenomenon of spiritual self-realization and the identification of factors that may influence this process.

Moderate positive correlations were also found between spiritual self-realization (transcendence) and the following character strengths: perspective-taking ( $r = 0,434$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), enthusiasm as emotional engagement that can enhance spiritual aspirations ( $r = 0,410$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), bravery as an expression of determination ( $r = 0,393$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), love of learning as a path to understanding the world, oneself, and one's higher values ( $r = 0,369$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), courage which supports inner integrity and value consistency ( $r = 0,344$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), capacity to love as an unconditional expression of love for others ( $r = 0,336$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), curiosity as a desire for knowledge and self-discovery, foundational to the search for meaning in life ( $r = 0,331$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), humanity and love as a basis for transcendent values (humaneness) ( $r = 0,322$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), and perseverance, which aids in achieving spiritual goals ( $r = 0,317$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ).

There were also weaker but statistically significant correlations with the following traits: social intelligence, which facilitates effective interaction and interpersonal relationships ( $r = 0,220$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); fairness as an individual trait ( $r = 0,238$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ); teamwork as a sense of unity and belonging ( $r = 0,169$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ); self-regulation as the internal management of emotional states ( $r = 0,146$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ); forgiveness as the ability to let go and reconcile ( $r = 0,149$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ); temperance as a form of restraint and a supporting ethical trait ( $r = 0,164$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ); and kindness as the capacity to act with goodness ( $r = 0,152$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). These traits may be important indicators for further study of the spiritual growth and self-realization of young individuals.

Thus, the spiritual self-realization of a future psychologist is a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon, grounded in the interconnection of cognitive-motivational resources of the individual through personal traits such as hope, wisdom, willpower, and creativity; through moral and ethical traits such as fairness, leadership, and humanity; and through affective traits such as enthusiasm, capacity to love, and perseverance. These findings indicate coherence and integration of cognitive, emotional, and moral qualities within the spiritual self-realization of a psychology student.

## 5. Conclusions

The obtained results confirmed the existence of statistically significant positive correlations between spiritual self-realization (measured through transcendence) and the personal characteristics of psychology students. The spiritual self-realization of future specialists in psychology was found to be closely associated with such personal traits as dispositional hope, wisdom, willpower, creativity, leadership qualities, and fairness. This indicates that the spiritual dimension of personality is activated through cognitive-motivational, moral-ethical, and emotional-value resources, which form the foundation for the professional development of a psychologist.

Most respondents demonstrated a medium to high level of transcendence, reflecting the potential for further spiritual growth during the process of education and self-realization. High scores on such strengths as appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humor, and sense of meaning in life serve as evidence of internal resources capable of supporting students in their spiritual self-realization.

The statistically significant results confirm that the development and expression of these personal qualities are fundamental for effective spiritual self-realization among psychology



students. In turn, this contributes to their professional maturity and the formation of a spiritually meaningful life. The findings highlight the potential for integrating positive psychology into the training system of psychologists, emphasizing the development of inner personal resources.

The prospects for future research lie in a deeper exploration of the multifaceted phenomenon of spiritual self-realization, particularly through the lens of positive psychology and the practical application of the findings in the educational process, which will foster the development of a harmonious and spiritually grounded future professional.

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