PHENOMENOLOGY OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S WHOLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS EMERGING SPIRITUALITY
A CASE STUDY OF SHIRAZ, IRAN

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ABSTRACT

Emerging spirituality has a social, cultural nature, and it is consequence of fundamental developments in the contemporary world. In order to investigate the phenomenon, it is necessary to consider cultural, social, and historical contexts and their processes, but paying attention to intentions, thoughts, and mentality of activists is equally important.

Therefore, the present paper seeks to analyze attitude towards emerging spirituality through the lived experience of the youth of today.

Phenomenology as well as an addictive strategy were applied for this qualitative research. A semi-structured interview was done to collect data. Participants were selected by the purposive sampling. They were young people who had experienced emerging spirituality over the past 5 to 15 years. Colaizzi's phenomenological method which consists seven steps was utilized to analyze data and exploit primary and secondary contents. Findings led to identifying two main concepts: cognitive interpretation and family position.

Analyzing experiences of young people suggests that they had three different attitude towards participating in such group, including positive, dubious, and negative. When it comes to their families, some were agreed on the membership of their children, some were disapproved of it, and some of them were neutral about this issue.

Keywords Phenomenology; Lived experience; Emerging spirituality; Young people; Attitude; Shiraz

Introduction

1. Problem statement

Many theorists, such as Tyler, Friz, Marx, and Freud, had warned the collapse of religion in the modern society and believed consistent dominance of science on how the contemporary community think would weaken the religion. According to Count, the religion would disappear in a common, traditional way, and then a modern religion based on scientific, rational foundations may spread around the world. However, several contemporary theorists, namely Bella, strongly disapproved of these ideas, and he argued that religion continues to be part and parcel of the modern society like the past, but some of its certain facets may considerably change. Despite of rationalism and the scientific as well as technological basis of the modern society, the religion continues to preserve its sublime features due to its social functions (Hamilton, 2011: 279-280).

Past decades has witnessed a huge rise in the number of emerging spiritual movements and groups. Some references estimate the number of religious groups at 2000 in the U.S and Europe. In the same way, according to some sources, the number of religious groups in Japan is estimated to be 800-1000. One estimate suggest that there are almost 10 thousand new religions with over 12 million followers in America, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific (Gol Mohammadi, 2010:178). What is called contemporary mystic in the West has spent its most challenging and tough days among the

middle and upper classes in the 70's and 80's in the U.S and Europe.

Growing tendency for Americans to join modern mystical and spiritual movements is considered as the result of a cultural alteration incompatible with governing culture and values in the U.S. It was called a counterculture movement in the 1960's during the Vietnam War. American young people who were bored with pugnacity, butchery, as well as domineering behavior of their government throughout the world, and they also suffered social, sexual, and racial inequalities in the society rebelled against the values of the older generation and tried to seek new cultural, social, and spiritual experiences.

Many people decided to find, propagate, and externalize different kinds of spirituality in the West. A great majority of them followed Hindi and Buddhist mystic, and some of them stand a chance to make a pilgrimage to India, Nepal, and Tibet, in order to experience such mystics. Others sought to explore ancient mystical movements in Judaism or Christianity (Doustdar, 2009: 42).

In recent years, new forms of spirituality, such as Buddhism, Amerind, Christian, and Hindi mystic, have been developed in Iran which are dissimilar from the official one. Activity of emerging spiritual movements began in the early 1950's. Although, there is a little research about this, records prove the strong presence of such movements.

Studying ups and downs in emerging spirituality suggest that they have a considerable potential to become universal, provided that it enjoys freedom of religions. These groups had increasingly developed in Iran until Falun Gong was announced illegal in 1996, publication of Paulo Coelho's works were banned in 2001, and mystic suffered several difficulties.

Indeed, freedom of expression, pushing back traditional boundaries, and increasingly development of communications has encouraged people to seek their essence and nature, being influenced by other disparate references, and to form a patchwork of idea in the modern world.

Consequently, in the absence of traditional interpretation of religions, people would find a part of their desire in emerging spirituality movements which are compatible with the modernity (Rafiei Rad, 2018: 142). Like people in other parts of the world, Iranians adopt different socio-political positions imposed by a variety of forces, like family, governments, institutions, and intellectuals in human sciences with regard to modern religious and spiritual movements.

The sum total of these normality positions are categorized into two groups: pathological and identical tendencies.

However, pathological tendency constitutes the matter of subject of most of Iranian works about modern religious and spiritual movements (Jaberian et al. 2017:531).

There has been a growing development in spiritual and metaphysic courses in Iran, for example, yoga, metaphysic, mystic, reading Mathnavi, relaxation and success courses. Furthermore, there are some place where medical services, like energy therapy, acupuncture, stress therapy, angle therapy, massage, and aroma therapy are provided. The increasing number of such courses and activities indicate higher tendency of the young people to such spiritual sessions. According to an estimate, almost 5000 people attend these courses. Religion plays a pivotal role in studying beliefs and performance of groups in different communities, and it is regarded as a fundamental part of a social life. It not only legitimizes relations, acts, and behavior of activists, but make it easy for people to understand social regularity. Religion is a social product and it is made continuously.

Our real life has been developed in plural fields, and it produces emerging spirituality as well as modern religions. However, everyone is allowed to choose a religion based on their individual experience and demands.

Young people go through different aspects of life, and it has special features for any activist. So, this spiritual formation is changing continuously.

An overwhelming majority of previous studies on spirituality have done with a quantitative method. It is necessary to analyze emerging spirituality through the lived experience of young people. Therefore, lived experience and the life of these activists throughout the world need to be studied in order to find a satisfactory definition or reveal a hidden one, which this would necessitate defining

the definition of lived experience through a phenomenological method.

2. Definition of terms

2.1 spirituality

According Fontana, spirituality indicates how much human knows about his spiritual identity (familiarity with his non-material aspect, spirit). In addition, by the term spirituality is meant trying to experience one's spiritual origin, and sometimes it refers to a kind of mindedness for spiritual instructions of all other religions and ideologies (Fontana, 2006: 36-38).

2.2 Attitude

From Barron, Biren, and Bernskamp's view point, attitude is composed of three main elements: cognition, affection, and readiness to take action. As can be seen from some definitions, it is defined as a permanent system of evaluations or beliefs.

3. Literature review

With respect to sociological study of emerging spirituality, the following research are notable examples.

Table 1. Literature review

Researcher	Title	Result
Azad Aramki & Ghiasvand (2002)	A sociological analysis of today's youth piety by emphasis on its unsystematic approach	A homogenous abnormality in religious attitudes and behavior of the younger generation which reveals a multifaceted diversity
Arvin (2015)	Studying the relationship between personalization and institutionalization of the religion in Iran after the Islamic revolution	Privatization of religion and piety, self-reference and individual attitudes towards religion, instrumental approach to religion, and religious pluralism

Torkaman Dehnavi (2010)	Studying developed aspects of piety among younger students in Tehran	Differentiation and diversity in piety, introduction of personal interpretation into religion, tendency of the young people to follow modern religions, their discontinued presence in religious institutions, as well as self-indulgence
Khosro Khavar (2007)	Appearance of new religions in Iran	Such religions as a renewal of traditional religion, retrospective Islam, secular Islam, and public Islam
Nejati Husseini (2013)	Emerging spirituality and its cultural, social consequences	It is a cultural phenomenon, but it is in the earliest stages due to low followers
Mohammad Reza Anvari (2013)	Cognitive fields with respect to development of emerging spirituality	false claims such as love, happiness, and calmness have replaced piety, kindness and

		having goals
Latifi et al. (2013)	The association between spiritual intelligence and mystical attitudes among university students	There is a meaningful correlation between spiritual intelligence, real mystic, and awareness of mystic
Ali Kiadarband Sari (2013)	Modernity, mass media, and new religious movements	An analysis of the cause and effect relationship between modernity, mass media and new religious movements
Arash Hasan Pour & Soraya Me'mar (2015)	Studying piety among today's youth by emphasis on a basic theory	Diverse, self-reference, and unreliable piety
Baqer Saroukhani et al (2015)	Studying threats of emerging religions among high school students in west Azerbaijan	There is a meaningful link between religious pluralism, political incentives, making investment by colonists deceiving the young people , and an emerging jerky movement.
Ahmad Abolhasani (2015)	Studying thoughts of Iranian emerging movements	A decline in attraction of the formal religion and promulgation of Sufi beliefs in the society caused to spread superstition.
Hadi Vakili (2015)	Pathology of emerging spirituality in Iran	Showing ignorance about Sharia', lack of a theoretical basis, humanism and influential factors like the crisis of religious identity, the crisis of disregard for women's right, the phenomenon of globalization and mass media
Ahamd Rafie Rad (2016)	the situation of religious movements in Iran	An analysis on how these movements affect Iran through studying records, the presence of groups how lack social advantages and suffer relative deprivation

Jaberian et al. (2017)	A sociological look at the spread of emerging spirituality in Tabriz, Iran	Basic elements associated with stress of a religious life in the modern world; cultural unacceptability of a traditional religion, spiritual demands as well as cognitive crisis
Mashayekhi and Hamidiye (2017)	Cultural and social context for tendency to emerging religious movements by emphasis on Halqeh mysticism and Eckankar	Explaining socio-cultural contexts for tendency to emerging movements in Iran; studying influential factors on the modern life style; crisis of identity; moral deprivation; syncretism
Kamal Kouhi (2018)	Sociological description of students' tendency towards quasi-religious emerging movements	
Kheiri & Atashin Sadaf (2018)	Critique and study existentialistic instructions about emerging religion movements	Studying existentialism and its role in the emerging religious movements as well as its effects on contemplation of their leaders
Houshmand Khoei & Hamidiye (2020)	A study on emerging religious movements from the view of globalization by emphasis on the experience of Japan	Studying information technology and globalization in the context of religion
Wilson & Kersol (1989)	The book on emerging religious movements	Discontinuation of people's bonding in a capitalist community, flexibility of emerging religions, happiness and martial successes, lack of religious fanaticism
Chiris Sydes (1996)	Emerging religions and Internet	Emerging religions expanded thanks to Internet
Elizabet (2002)	Women and religious movements	Role of women and their tendency towards such spirituality
Dauctor (2003)	Emerging religious	A tendency among

	movements in European countries	Christians to emerging spiritualties due to their hunger for mystic and cultural justifications
Sarow Gelo (2006)	Bricolage piety	A mixed piety influence by modern values, such as individualism, combines a variety of religious references and cultures
Pousami (2007)	Emerging spirituality	Emerging spirituality refers to a part of the last capitalism cultural logic

4. Theories on emerging spiritualties

Spirituality, over the present era, has been changed into an important concept detached from religion to such an extent that those who consider themselves as devout are also willing to experience spirituality. Despite having a strong link with them, the concept of spirituality seems to be different from religion, mystic, ethic, and suck like. Although religion has mainly to do with subjective matters, spirituality monitors experience.

By and large, spirituality describes one's interior great tendency to pass the earthly, material life in order to achieve a supreme place

To put it simply, spirituality is a dynamic process in which such things as friendship, treating people, animals as well as environment with unconditional kindness, consider yourself as a non-earthly creature, and showing modesty are revealed (Hamidieh, 2016:33).

Pieter Berger is a leading emerging spiritual movement theoretician. The life refers to a reality where an individual lives in. Human being is aware of the meaning of the life and its order. The life is constructed based on a social view. This social constructivism is compatible with the social dialectic. One feature of modern societies is pluralism in life worlds, where people live peacefully together and they are exposed to a thing that Berger calls it cognitive pollution. Traditional societies were integrated in terms of religious definitions. Ancient people live and worked in an integrated world. However, modern people are faced to plural life worlds that are not more often compatible with each other.

The modern life has a lot of parts. It is not only obvious in a socio-cultural balance, but also in one's knowledge. One fundamental aspect of this pluralism is division of the life into private and general fields.

The former involves an integrating regularity which supports human and they choose it in order to foster their life. The general field, namely technological things and bureaucracy) within which people with different cultural origins and worldviews live together.

The latter is characterized as being anonymous and abstract. Being based on one's innovation, the private field seeks to develop instruments which help people to construct a personal home which is aimed to promote the life. Pluralism in life worlds means to search the worlds and different types of life styles.

Trying to find an answer for questions always generates surprising results. A wide range of matters from trans-sexual relations to religious experiences could be find in strange sects. Urbanization not only increases population in urban regions, but also brings about several changes in the life style. Berger's theory of the "homeless mind" refers to "urbanization of awareness". Humans' deep distrust of primary institutions have cause such a return (Talebi Darabi, 2012: 107). From this viewpoint, no matter why one has been made homeless, but it is difficult to tackle. Therefore, people run for a shelter by seeking new homes or secondary institutions. According to Berger, in the new world people further look for reality in themselves

than out (Ibid, 108). Consequently, there are several ideological, moral, and religious options open to the human being these days (Berger, 1979: 3).

"The limited validity of religion patterns of certain institutions in modern communities would not generate a religious gap at all", Thomas Lakman's said about the concept of "hidden religion". Considering religion as the anthropological aspect of them, human being always shares his religious beliefs. However, it is religion that shapes other social forms which are dissimilar to the traditional one. It not only propagate religious pluralism but also competes against the official religion. Lakman emphasizes on the importance of privatization which is constantly on the increase. A great majority of us have a combined attitude of different worldviews to which people join based on their demands (Rasekh, 2015: 187).

Lakman views emergence of new religions in the modern era as well as fundamentalism as sacred responses against religious pluralism, that is, the world market in universal attitudes and fundamental differences introduced by modernity. He emphasizes that these days piety has taken a new personal and verbal form. In other words, religious pluralism has decreased acceptability of common piety and it has develop informal forms (Lakman, 1999).

He has found no common grounds between modern movements and accepted social ones. Take modern philosophy as an example. It consists of several programs regarding people morale.

They are a hybrid form, he said. This emerging philosophy gathers different psychological and psychotherapical methods, as well as miracles and marginal sciences together as dubious, unknown elements for personal application.

Charles Taylor's theory of "becoming" is one of the most well-known theories connected with emerging spirituality. It suggests complete mental revolution in the modern culture strengthens and propagates spirituality based on mental life. This theory considers interior of people the origin of all acts and beliefs. As a result, he considers invalid other religions in which exterior expectations are viewed the reference of all acts and belief (Talebi, Darabi, 2012: 61-62).

5. Research hypotheses

In order to conduct a phenomenological research, author's beliefs and assumptions felt into abeyance, so an expletory approach in an epoche context was done (Landgric, 2007: 88). With regard to qualitative research, on no account should offer any assumption at first but questions are needed to be discussed. The central question in this research asks how the young people represent and interpret spirituality.

6. Methodology

The present research is a qualitative study done by a phenomenological method, and its strategy is a deductive one. Qualitative research is essentially interpretive and it aims to find out a certain social situation, event, role, group, or interaction (Kersol, 1945: 279-301). Housrel defines the term "phenomenology" seeking to describe, explore, and analyze phenomenon (Miler and Beror; 2003: 227). In a phenomenological study, the researcher tries to form meaningful patterns and links by making a close relationship with participants (Kersol, 1945: 41).

Regarding its controversial nature, it seems necessary to take an expletory approach to cover different aspects of emerging spirituality. The research used a purposive sampling based on theoretical saturation. The sample was consisted of 15 young people aged between 18-40 years living in Shiraz, Iran, whom had a valuable experience of membership in emerging spirituality groups (sessions connected with reading Mathnavi, doing mediation, metaphysics, and mysticism) during the last 5-15 years.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. First, data was analyzed by the seven-level Colaizzi's method (1978) in order to extract primary and secondary contents.

Then, interviews were reviewed in detail, and data, namely the first-hand experience of young people of spirituality extracted in the form of phrases and sentences associated with this phenomenon. Next, the phrases were interpreted based on semantically and conceptually similarities between subject matters and they were divided into several groups. The author aimed to

summarize and categorize, and organize statements.

Members of the case study were asked to evaluate validity of data (Flick, 2015: 420). To put it simply, findings were returned back to the participants in order to compare accuracy of results with their experience.

In addition, findings, primary and secondary contents, were studied, judged, and edited by sociological experts in order to increase research reliability.

It should be noted that the initial sample was selected after a reliable reference introduced them to the research team, then they were interviewed at their workplace.

7. Finding

Regarding the approach to spirituality, data were analyzed by Colaizzi's method, and 46 predicates, 6 secondary subjects and two primary ones were extracted. The following discuses everyone in detail.

Table 2. Primary and secondary subjects

Secondary Subject	Primary subject
Having a positive view to join emerging spirituality	Cognitive interpretation
Having a doubtful negative view to join emerging spirituality	
Having a negative view to join emerging spirituality	
A sympathetic family	Position of family
A neutral family	
An opposing family	

Table 3. Demographic features of interviewees

No.	Gender	Age	Level of education	Marital status	Occupation	Membership record
1	Male	38	Bachelor of science	Single	Lecturer	15
2	Female	39	Bachelor of science	Married	House wife	15
3	Male	42	Physician	Married	Physician	15
4	Male	40	Bachelor of science	Married	Clerk	15
5	Male	31	Bachelor of science	Married	Lecturer	5
6	Female	31	Bachelor of science	Married	Lecturer	5
7	Female	29	Bachelor of science	Single	Teacher	5
8	Female	27	Master of science	Single	Lecturer	5
9	Male	27	Bachelor of science	Married	Teacher	5
10	Female	24	University student	Married	student	5
11	Female	27	Bachelor of science	Married	House wife	5
12	Female	28	Master of science	Married	Self-employed	5
13	Male	40	Bachelor of science	Married	Teacher	5
14	Female	28	Bachelor of science	Married	Self-employed	5
15	Female	22	University student	Married	Student	5

7.1 cognitive interpretation

Ones' Information, beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge about a matter determine what position they may adopt. In other words, there is a direct link between one's awareness, attitude, cognitive factors, mental norms and their behavior. The more this cognition is based on reasoning, the stronger relationship it will be. In addition, the effect of this link on people's life depends upon how simple or comprehensive the link may be.

7.1.1 A positive view on emerging spirituality

Young people had different opinions about their membership in aforementioned emerging spirituality groups. In general, their statements categorized into two groups: positive and negative. Having knowledge about it, their attitude generated different emotional modes. In

other words, if they had a positive attitude towards those sessions, it would encouraged them to attend regularly in order to promote their personality. In the same way, some believe that people have different understanding of the same situation. They try to match prior knowledge and assumption, such as religion, interests and such like, to their understanding. On no account should what they probably accept or refuse be the same as what others accept or refuse.

In the same way, their membership in such religious groups showed a significant effect on changing the negative attitude to the positive one and stabilizing it. By achieving good results, they find such spirituality effective to solve their problems. Take the following example.

"In the early days, it found emerging spirituality ineffective. But my opinion changed over time and I realized it usually plays a pivotal role to acquire knowledge about the self", interviewee 6 says.

7.1.2 Having a dubious view towards emerging spirituality

Some young people had a dubious view towards some of the concepts and instructions of aforementioned spirituality. They found prior beliefs incompatible with the new ones. They thought such attitudes may have a negative impact on personality. Take the following comments.

"I more often notice contradictory subjects in such spiritual instructions" interviewee 14 says.

"Some of these instructions give rise to uncertainty" interviewee 10 says.

7.1.3 Having a negative look at emerging spirituality

Some of the participants had underwent an unpleasant experience of attending such courses. From their viewpoint, it is important to make inquiry about the theory of emerging spirituality groups in order to find out which one will lead one to perfection. To do this, enthusiasts are required to carefully evaluate such spirituality in order not to being enslaved to superstitious and deprivation. Because some of these groups in will lead one to believe in superstitious and magic and becoming a member of Satanism.

Take the following example.

"I used to suffer severe financial and mental problems because of attending such false courses.

On no account should people follow such emerging spirituality without making a careful inquiry", interviewee 9 says.

7.2 attitude of family towards emerging spirituality

Family attitude towards attending such groups is among important findings. According to young people, their family position against emerging spirituality greatly affected their decision to join in such group. Findings suggest that some parents reacted very positively to spiritual and mental demands of them, and so they played a pivotal role in supporting their children. On the contrary, some parents disapproved of children's membership in such religious courses due to the possible damaging consequences. There was a third family who was neutral about this issue. Regarding the understanding of parents about emerging spirituality, consider statement of interviewee 2 on good reaction of family: I more often attend such meetings with my family.

Interviewee 5 explain how her/his family totally opposed such emerging spirituality. "My parents disagreed on joining such groups due to possible dangers".

Interviewee 3 had a neutral parents and said "they don't usually like to intervene in such issues.

Conclusion

Having a marked role in studying beliefs and performance of communities around the world, religion is considered as a fundamental component of social life. It is viewed as a social constructive which legalize humans' relations, actions, and behavior. Nowadays, we witness several religions and emerging spirituality. However, it is worth noting that the religion one follows reflects their personal experience and needs. That is to say, an activist is selector, and so what they select opens new religious and spiritual ways for them.

Young people experience spirituality in different ways, and they differing views on the subject. As you know, it is not consistent due to individual and collective changes. Dealing with contents of emerging spirituality is beyond the scope of this research. The present paper sought to study the issue from the lived experience of young people in

order to find out and understand it's all different aspects. As a result, conducting an exploratory study in order to reveal new or missing concepts would necessitate defining lived experience through a phenomenological, deductive approach is. Research paradigms and strategy would serve as exploratory tools in order to offer answers to the research question. And so it make it possible to understand semantic frameworks embracing activities of activists and exploring facts provided with individuals.

According to Edmund Husserl, life world is a matter of personal taste, that is to say, people adopt dissimilar position against it. Lived experience of young people and trying to make it understandable acts as an interpretive approach in the Hermeneutics cycle which it continuously reciprocate between the researcher and participants. The subject and methodology of the current study are consistent with those of Arvin (2002) as well as Hasan Pour and Me'mar (2015) who utilized young people mentality and lived experience.

Findings suggested two main subjects: cognitive interpretation and stance of the family. The former deals with attitude and evaluation of young people towards emerging spirituality. Participates viewed it as a tool leading them to the aim. Indeed, young people would fail to achieve their goals through lack of proper situation. And so they are seeking to find new ways to do so.

This finding corroborates the ideas of Arvin (2005), who suggested emerging spirituality would affirm young people attitude, strengthen their positive view, or change the negative one if they could materialize their objectives through attending such courses.

When it comes to their family attitude toward emerging spirituality, we have three types. One group strongly disapproved of their children's membership in such meetings at first. Because they were afraid of possible mental and religious deviance. However, when they witnessed positive changes in children's behavior or action, parents agreed and some of them joined the meeting along with their children.

On the contrary, some parents never agreed with their children decision about joining in emerging spirituality meetings.

However, the third group adopted a neutral position, and they did not like to intervene in this subject.

Young people has taken different attitudes: positive, dubious, and negative. They joined such group consciously, and so it generated different emotional modes. That is to say, if they has a positive view about these communities, they feel excellent. So they attended regularly until they achieve their goals. Some of them were disappointed to saw other people had unjustly labeled them a deviant. They were those who blindly joined such groups and suffered severe damages. From Manheim's viewpoint (2001), there is a link between behavior and attitude. Furthermore, he urges that ideas and attitudes originate from the family and affected by one's socio-economical position. Paying much more attention to emerging spirituality and seeking to solve its problems would decrease individual and social damages that may affect its proponents. Although it seems challenging to conduct scientific and field research, it could be effective to develop spiritual goals and considering deep spiritual aspects and understand needs of its followers.

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