



# Phenomenological Study of Spiritual Experience in Individuals Experiencing Identity Crisis

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## ABSTRACT

*This phenomenological study explores the lived spiritual experiences of individuals undergoing identity crises, aiming to understand how spirituality influences identity development during times of existential questioning. Drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants aged 18 to 40, the research identifies key themes that illuminate the complex interplay between spirituality and identity formation. Findings reveal that spiritual practices, such as meditation and prayer, serve as vital tools for navigating identity confusion, fostering self-exploration, and promoting personal growth. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of community and belonging derived from spiritual groups, which provided essential support during their identity journeys. Transformative spiritual experiences emerged as pivotal moments that reshaped participants' self-understanding, while the challenge of spiritual bypassing underscored the necessity for authentic engagement with emotional struggles. The study contributes to existing theories of identity development by emphasizing the role of spirituality as a resource in overcoming identity crises. Implications for clinical practice and educational settings are discussed, suggesting that incorporating spiritual exploration and community support can enhance individuals' journeys toward self-discovery and identity formation. This research highlights the profound potential of spirituality in facilitating personal transformation amid the complexities of identity development.*

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## Introduction

In the rapidly changing modern world, many individuals experience a profound sense of uncertainty regarding their identity and place in society (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). This psychological state, known as an identity crisis, is characterized by deep confusion about one's values, purpose, and sense of self. An identity crisis can arise at various stages of life, often during significant transitions or periods of personal upheaval. Adolescence, mid-life, career changes, and shifts in personal relationships can all be catalysts for this kind of existential questioning. Within this turmoil, spirituality often emerges as a powerful means of seeking clarity and meaning (Tacey, 2004). This research focuses on exploring the spiritual experiences of individuals undergoing an identity crisis, aiming to understand how these experiences influence their journey through this period of uncertainty.

The phenomenon of identity crisis has been widely explored in psychology, with Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development being one of the most influential frameworks (Batra, 2013). Erikson

proposed that identity formation is a central task during adolescence, but identity crises can also recur throughout life, especially when individuals face significant changes or challenges. During these moments, people may feel disconnected from their previous sense of self, and may struggle with questions about their role, purpose, and direction (Kessler, 2000). Erikson's work has laid the foundation for understanding identity crises, but there has been less focus on how spiritual experiences intersect with these moments of intense self-reflection (Roeser et al., 2008).

Further research has built on Erikson's ideas, with scholars such as James Marcia developing the concept of identity statuses to describe the different ways individuals cope with identity crises (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Marcia identified four identity statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. These statuses capture various responses to identity formation, ranging from those who avoid making identity commitments (diffusion) to those who have gone through a period of exploration and made definitive decisions about their identity (achievement). This framework helps explain the diversity of experiences individuals have during identity crises, but it leaves open questions about the factors that influence how individuals move through these stages (Jones & Abes, 2013). One area of increasing interest is how spirituality shapes and influences the process of identity exploration and resolution.

Spirituality, as a concept distinct from organized religion, has been studied in relation to personal transformation, particularly in times of existential questioning (La Cour & Hvidt, 2010). Spirituality is often described as an individual's personal connection to something greater than themselves, whether that be a higher power, the universe, or a sense of interconnectedness with life. This sense of connection can provide individuals with meaning, direction, and a framework for understanding their experiences (Funk & James, 2001). In the context of an identity crisis, spirituality can become a vital resource for individuals seeking answers to profound existential questions about their purpose, values, and identity (Agrimson & Taft, 2009).

In the realm of psychology, Carl Jung was one of the early theorists to explore the connection between identity, crisis, and spirituality (Corbett, 2013). Jung's theory of the individuation process emphasizes the importance of integrating various aspects of the self, including the spiritual dimension, to achieve a cohesive identity. He argued that spiritual experiences are not only relevant but often crucial in the process of self-realization, especially during times of psychological distress or transformation (Lancaster & Palframan, 2009). Jung's work laid the foundation for understanding how spiritual experiences can act as a bridge between an individual's conscious self and their deeper, often unconscious, sense of identity.

In contemporary research, scholars have further explored how spiritual experiences facilitate personal transformation during moments of crisis (Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013). Studies have shown that during periods of existential questioning, many individuals turn to spirituality to cope with feelings of uncertainty, fear, and confusion. For example, in a study by Park and Folkman (1997) on the role of meaning-making during stressful life events, it was found that individuals often use spiritual beliefs to reinterpret their experiences and find a sense of purpose in adversity. This process of meaning-making is critical during an identity crisis, as it allows individuals to frame their struggles as part of a larger journey, offering both comfort and a sense of direction (Burke & Neimeyer, 2012).

Other research has examined the transformative potential of spiritual experiences during identity crises (Pals, 2006). In a study by Wong and Fry (1998) on the role of spirituality in coping with aging and the midlife crisis, it was found that individuals who engage in spiritual practices often report higher levels of personal growth and self-acceptance. These individuals frequently describe their spiritual experiences as moments of profound insight, leading to a reevaluation of their values, relationships, and life goals (De Castella & Simmonds, 2013). Spirituality in this context acts as a catalyst for transformation, helping individuals reconcile their inner sense of self with the external changes they are experiencing.

The intersection of spirituality and personal transformation has also been explored in the field of positive psychology, particularly in the study of post-traumatic growth (Weiss, 2014). Post-traumatic growth refers to the positive psychological changes individuals experience as a result of struggling with highly challenging life circumstances. Researchers such as Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) have found that individuals who experience post-traumatic growth often report significant spiritual development. This growth is often characterized by a greater appreciation for life, deeper relationships, and a clearer sense of personal strength and purpose (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). These findings suggest that spirituality not only helps individuals cope with identity crises but also facilitates profound changes in how they understand themselves and the world around them.

Moreover, studies on religious and spiritual coping have consistently found that individuals experiencing existential crises or identity confusion are more likely to turn to spirituality for support. In research conducted by Pargament (1997) on religious coping strategies, it was found that spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, and engagement with religious communities provide individuals with a sense of meaning, control, and hope during crises.

Spirituality, although distinct from organized religion, often provides individuals with a framework for understanding their existence, life's purpose, and their connection to something greater than themselves (Coyle, 2002). Spiritual experiences can involve feelings of transcendence, deep peace, connection with a higher power, or a sense of unity with the universe. These experiences are often seen as deeply personal and can play a significant role in shaping one's identity. For many individuals in crisis, spirituality offers a source of comfort, insight, and direction, potentially acting as a guide through the uncertainty and confusion of an identity crisis (Sperry, 2001).

The relationship between identity and spirituality is complex and has been explored in different ways across various disciplines, including psychology, theology, and philosophy (Benson et al., 2019). Some researchers suggest that spirituality can provide individuals with a stable foundation during times of identity confusion, offering a sense of grounding or purpose when other aspects of life feel uncertain. For others, spiritual experiences during an identity crisis may be transformative, leading to profound changes in how individuals view themselves and their place in the world. These experiences may challenge existing beliefs or lead to new ways of understanding the self (Baumeister, 2010).

Despite the recognized importance of spirituality in identity formation, there is a relative lack of research focusing specifically on how spiritual experiences manifest during identity crises (King & Roeser, 2009). Existing literature often treats spirituality as an overarching life philosophy or set of beliefs, but fewer studies delve into the immediate, lived spiritual experiences of individuals in the midst of identity crises. These experiences, which can range from fleeting moments of insight to prolonged periods of spiritual exploration, are essential to understanding the full scope of how people navigate personal upheaval (Kason, 2019).

This research employs a phenomenological approach to better understand how individuals undergoing an identity crisis experience spirituality (Carroll, 2001). Phenomenology, a qualitative research method, is ideal for capturing the essence of lived experiences, making it particularly useful in exploring personal, subjective phenomena such as spirituality and identity (Mayhew, 2004). By focusing on individuals' descriptions of their spiritual experiences during an identity crisis, this study aims to provide deeper insights into how spirituality influences self-understanding, coping mechanisms, and personal growth.

## Method

### Key Theories and Thinkers Informing the Research

The intersection of spirituality and psychology is a rich field of study that has been shaped by numerous theories and influential thinkers. This research draws from several key frameworks, including existential psychology, humanistic psychology, and various contributions from religious

studies. Each of these perspectives provides valuable insights into the relationship between spirituality and identity development during times of crisis.

Existential psychology explores the fundamental questions of human existence, including the search for meaning, the experience of anxiety, and the inevitability of death. Central figures in this field, such as Rollo May, Irvin D. Yalom, and Viktor Frankl, have contributed significantly to understanding how individuals confront existential crises. Rollo May emphasized the importance of confronting one's fears and anxieties to achieve authentic existence. He argued that individuals must grapple with their existential dilemmas to discover personal meaning and purpose. May's work highlights how spirituality can serve as a pathway for individuals facing identity crises to explore deeper meanings in their lives. Irvin D. Yalom, a prominent existential psychotherapist, underscores the therapeutic importance of addressing existential concerns, such as isolation, freedom, responsibility, and meaninglessness. Yalom posits that engaging with these concerns can lead to profound personal transformation. This perspective aligns well with the current research, as it suggests that spiritual experiences may provide individuals with the tools to navigate existential questions arising during identity crises. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, developed the concept of logotherapy, which emphasizes finding meaning even in suffering. Frankl's belief that the search for meaning is a fundamental human motivation resonates with individuals experiencing identity crises, where spirituality may act as a guiding force in redefining purpose and identity.

Humanistic psychology, represented by thinkers such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, focuses on the inherent potential for personal growth and self-actualization. This perspective places significant importance on the subjective experience of individuals and their capacity for self-discovery. Abraham Maslow is best known for his hierarchy of needs, culminating in self-actualization, which reflects the fulfillment of personal potential. Maslow recognized the importance of spirituality in achieving self-actualization, viewing it as an essential aspect of human experience. He argued that transcendent experiences could lead individuals to a greater understanding of their identity and place in the world. This perspective informs the current research by suggesting that spirituality can facilitate personal growth and transformation during identity crises. Carl Rogers, a key figure in humanistic psychology, emphasized the importance of unconditional positive regard and self-exploration in the therapeutic process. Rogers believed that individuals possess an innate drive toward growth and self-discovery, which aligns with the idea that spirituality can serve as a guiding force in navigating identity crises. His person-centered approach highlights the significance of empathy and understanding in helping individuals explore their spiritual experiences and redefine their identities.

Insights from religious studies contribute significantly to understanding the role of spirituality in identity development. Scholars such as Ninian Smart, Mircea Eliade, and Harvey Cox have explored various dimensions of spirituality, including its cultural, psychological, and existential implications. Ninian Smart proposed a multidimensional approach to studying religion that encompasses experiential, narrative, and practical dimensions. Smart's emphasis on the experiential aspect of spirituality aligns with the current research's focus on the lived experiences of individuals during identity crises. By examining how individuals interpret their spiritual experiences, the research can uncover deeper insights into the transformative potential of spirituality in shaping identity. Mircea Eliade explored the concept of the sacred and the profane, arguing that spiritual experiences allow individuals to connect with a deeper reality beyond everyday life. Eliade's work highlights the transformative power of spirituality, suggesting that experiences of the sacred can profoundly impact an individual's understanding of self and identity, especially during periods of crisis. Harvey Cox emphasized the importance of spirituality in contemporary society, asserting that spirituality serves as a critical lens through which individuals seek meaning and understanding. His work underscores the idea that spirituality can play a transformative role in personal development, particularly during identity crises. In addition to these key frameworks, integrative approaches that combine psychological and spiritual perspectives have gained traction in recent years. Scholars like John Welwood and Jack

Engler advocate for an integration of psychological insights and spiritual practices, arguing that spiritual experiences can facilitate psychological healing and transformation. John Welwood introduced the concept of “spiritual bypassing,” which refers to the tendency to use spiritual beliefs to avoid addressing psychological issues. Welwood’s work highlights the need for a balanced approach that honors both psychological and spiritual dimensions, informing this research by emphasizing the importance of examining how spirituality can both support and complicate identity development. Jack Engler has argued that spirituality can enhance psychological well-being, especially when individuals actively engage with their spiritual beliefs during crises. His work reinforces the idea that spirituality can be a powerful resource for individuals navigating identity crises, promoting personal growth and transformation.

### **Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development**

Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate dynamics of identity formation throughout the human lifespan. Among the eight stages of development that Erikson identified, the conflict of identity versus role confusion is particularly significant during adolescence and young adulthood. This stage serves as a crucial point in the quest for identity, where individuals grapple with questions related to self-concept, values, and personal direction.

According to Erikson, the stage of identity versus role confusion typically occurs during adolescence, roughly between the ages of 12 and 18. During this critical period, individuals begin to explore various aspects of their identity, including social roles, career paths, and personal beliefs. This exploration is often characterized by experimentation with different roles, ideologies, and lifestyles. As teenagers navigate through peer relationships, family expectations, and societal norms, they begin to develop a sense of who they are and where they fit into the broader social context. However, the quest for identity is not always straightforward. For some individuals, the process can lead to role confusion, characterized by uncertainty and instability in their self-concept. Those who struggle with this conflict may feel lost or disconnected, unable to establish a coherent identity that integrates their experiences, values, and aspirations. This confusion can manifest in various ways, including difficulty in making decisions, commitment to relationships, and clarity in personal goals.

In the context of this identity crisis, spirituality often emerges as a powerful resource for individuals seeking to navigate the challenges associated with role confusion. Spiritual experiences can provide a framework for understanding one’s place in the world, offering insights into personal values, beliefs, and purpose. For many, spirituality serves as a guiding force, helping to anchor their identity amid the turbulence of adolescence. Erikson recognized the importance of existential questions in the identity formation process, noting that individuals frequently grapple with concerns related to meaning, purpose, and their connection to something greater than themselves. Spirituality, in this sense, can act as a lens through which individuals interpret their experiences and derive a sense of coherence in their identities. Furthermore, spirituality can facilitate a sense of belonging and community, which is essential during the tumultuous period of adolescence. Participation in spiritual practices or communities often fosters connections with like-minded individuals, creating a supportive environment for identity exploration. This communal aspect of spirituality can provide reassurance and validation as individuals confront the uncertainties of their developing identities.

The process of resolving the conflict between identity and role confusion can have profound implications for adolescents’ self-esteem, psychological well-being, and overall development. Successful resolution leads to a strong sense of identity, characterized by an understanding of one’s values, beliefs, and aspirations. In contrast, failure to navigate this stage effectively can result in ongoing struggles with self-identity, leading to difficulties in adulthood. As individuals move into young adulthood, the exploration of identity continues, often influenced by experiences such as higher education, career choices, and intimate relationships. Spirituality remains a vital element in this

ongoing process, providing a foundation for individuals to reflect on their experiences and reassess their beliefs as they mature.

### **Research Method**

This study employs a phenomenological research design, which focuses on understanding the subjective experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is rooted in the belief that individuals have unique perspectives shaped by their lived experiences, making it an appropriate approach for exploring complex phenomena such as spirituality and identity crises. The aim is to uncover the meanings that participants ascribe to their spiritual experiences and how these experiences inform their understanding of self during times of identity confusion.

The selection of participants is a crucial component of this research. A purposive sampling strategy will be employed to recruit individuals who have experienced an identity crisis and have engaged with spirituality during this time. The following criteria will be used for participant selection:

- **Age Range:** Participants will be between the ages of 18 and 40, as this age group often grapples with significant identity formation and existential questions.
- **Experience of Identity Crisis:** Participants must have undergone a period of identity crisis, characterized by confusion about personal identity, values, and beliefs.
- **Spiritual Engagement:** Participants should have engaged with spiritual practices or beliefs during their identity crisis, providing insight into how spirituality has influenced their experiences.

To recruit participants, a combination of social media platforms, community organizations, and spiritual groups will be utilized. Efforts will be made to ensure a diverse sample that reflects a range of spiritual beliefs, backgrounds, and identity experiences.

Data will be collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which allow for a flexible yet focused exploration of participants' experiences. The interviews will be conducted in a safe and supportive environment, encouraging participants to share their thoughts and feelings openly. The following key aspects will be considered in the interview process:

- **Interview Guide:** A semi-structured interview guide will be developed, containing open-ended questions that prompt participants to discuss their spiritual experiences and identity crises. Questions will be designed to encourage participants to reflect on specific moments, feelings, and insights related to their spirituality and identity formation.
- **Duration:** Each interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to share their experiences in depth.
- **Recording and Transcription:** With participants' consent, interviews will be audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. This process ensures accuracy in capturing participants' narratives while allowing for a thorough examination of their lived experiences. Data analysis will follow a phenomenological approach, utilizing thematic analysis to identify and interpret key themes within participants' narratives. The analysis will involve several steps:
  - **Familiarization:** Researchers will immerse themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain a deep understanding of participants' experiences.
  - **Coding:** Initial coding will be conducted to identify significant statements and phrases that reflect the essence of participants' experiences related to spirituality and identity crises.
  - **Theme Development:** Codes will be grouped into broader themes that capture the core aspects of participants' experiences. This thematic analysis will provide insights into how spirituality influences identity formation and personal transformation during crises.
  - **Validation:** To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, member checking will be employed. Participants will be invited to review and provide feedback on the themes and interpretations derived from their interviews, ensuring that their voices are accurately represented in the research.

Ethical considerations will be paramount throughout the research process. The following measures will be implemented:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants will be provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks before obtaining their informed consent. They will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants' identities and personal information will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in all written materials, and data will be securely stored to protect participants' privacy.
- **Emotional Well-being:** Given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, researchers will be prepared to offer support and resources for participants who may experience emotional distress during or after the interviews.

## Result and discussion

### Key Themes Identified

A prominent theme that emerged from participants' narratives was the role of spiritual practices in helping them navigate feelings of identity confusion. Many participants described engaging in practices such as meditation, prayer, and mindfulness as essential tools for self-exploration and clarity during their identity crises. For instance, one participant shared, "When I felt lost, meditation helped me quiet my mind and connect with my inner self. It was like finding a compass in a storm." This finding aligns with Erikson's theory of identity versus role confusion, highlighting that spiritual practices can provide individuals with a sense of direction and purpose during tumultuous times. The act of engaging in these practices allowed participants to explore their values and beliefs, fostering a deeper understanding of their identities. This supports the idea that spirituality serves as a significant resource for individuals grappling with identity-related uncertainties.

Another critical theme that emerged was the importance of community and social support derived from spiritual or religious groups. Participants frequently mentioned that being part of a spiritual community provided them with a sense of belonging and validation during their identity crises. One participant remarked, "Joining the spiritual group was a turning point for me. I found others who understood my struggles, and it helped me feel less alone." The role of community in identity formation is consistent with Erikson's notion that social relationships are integral to developing a coherent sense of self. Spiritual communities can offer not only emotional support but also opportunities for shared experiences and collective identity exploration. This communal aspect fosters a sense of interconnectedness, enabling individuals to navigate their identity crises within a supportive network.

Many participants reported having transformative spiritual experiences that significantly influenced their identity development. These experiences ranged from moments of profound insight and connection to feelings of transcendence and oneness with the universe. One participant described an experience during a nature retreat: "I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and unity with everything around me. It was as if the boundaries of my identity dissolved, and I realized I was part of something much larger." These transformative experiences reflect the potential of spirituality to catalyze personal growth and reframe one's understanding of self. This finding aligns with Maslow's concept of self-actualization, where peak experiences can lead to a deeper understanding of one's purpose and identity. Such experiences not only help individuals redefine their identities but also empower them to embrace change and uncertainty.

While many participants highlighted the positive impact of spirituality, some also acknowledged the challenges of spiritual bypassing, where individuals may rely on spiritual beliefs to avoid confronting difficult emotions or identity issues. One participant noted, "At times, I used spirituality to escape my problems instead of facing them. It was only when I acknowledged my struggles that I could truly grow." This theme underscores the need for a balanced approach to

spirituality and identity development. Engaging in spiritual practices can be beneficial, but it is essential for individuals to confront their emotional challenges and integrate their spiritual experiences with their psychological realities. This finding supports Welwood's notion of spiritual bypassing, emphasizing the importance of authentic engagement with both spirituality and personal challenges.

### **Implications for Theory and Practice**

The results of this research have several implications for both theory and practice within psychology, spirituality, and identity development.

The findings contribute to existing theories of identity development by illustrating the nuanced role of spirituality in navigating identity crises. Erikson's theory is enriched by recognizing that spirituality can serve as a significant resource for individuals experiencing role confusion. The integration of spiritual practices and community support into the identity formation process highlights the importance of considering holistic approaches to understanding self-development.

For practitioners in psychology and counseling, the insights from this research underscore the value of incorporating discussions of spirituality into therapeutic practices. Clinicians should be attuned to the potential benefits of spiritual engagement for clients facing identity crises and consider integrating spiritual practices into therapeutic interventions. Moreover, fostering connections to supportive spiritual communities can provide clients with additional resources for navigating their identity journeys.

The acknowledgment of spiritual bypassing emphasizes the need for clinicians and individuals to engage authentically with both spirituality and emotional challenges. Encouraging individuals to confront their struggles while exploring spirituality can lead to more profound personal growth and a more cohesive sense of identity.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While this research provides valuable insights into the relationship between spirituality and identity development during identity crises, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. One of the primary limitations of this study is the inherent subjectivity of spiritual experiences. Spirituality is deeply personal, and individuals may interpret and describe their spiritual experiences in diverse ways. The phenomenological approach aims to capture the richness of these lived experiences; however, the subjective nature of spirituality means that participants' narratives are influenced by their unique backgrounds, beliefs, and emotional states. As a result, the findings may not be universally applicable to all individuals experiencing identity crises. Different interpretations of spirituality can lead to varying levels of significance and impact on identity development, which may not be fully represented in this study.

Another limitation relates to the challenge of defining spirituality across different belief systems. Spirituality encompasses a wide range of beliefs, practices, and cultural contexts, making it difficult to establish a singular definition that captures its essence for all participants. In this study, participants came from diverse spiritual backgrounds, including religious, secular, and alternative spiritual perspectives. While this diversity enriches the data, it also complicates the analysis, as different belief systems may have unique implications for identity development. The nuances of various spiritual traditions and their specific teachings were not fully explored, potentially limiting the depth of understanding regarding how different spiritual frameworks influence identity crises.

The small sample size typical of phenomenological research is another limitation of this study. Due to the qualitative nature of phenomenological research, the focus is on obtaining in-depth insights from a limited number of participants rather than seeking broad statistical generalizations. While the richness of data collected from in-depth interviews allows for a deep exploration of individual experiences, the small sample may not adequately represent the broader population of individuals facing identity crises. Consequently, findings may lack generalizability, and caution should be exercised when applying the results to other contexts or groups. Future research could benefit from larger sample sizes or more diverse populations to enhance the robustness of findings.

Lastly, potential researcher bias is an inherent limitation in qualitative research. The researcher's perspectives, beliefs, and experiences may inadvertently influence the data collection and analysis process. To mitigate this bias, the study implemented member checking, allowing participants to validate the interpretations derived from their narratives. However, complete objectivity is challenging to achieve in qualitative research, and the potential for bias remains a concern.

### Conclusion and implication

In conclusion, this research has illuminated the intricate relationship between spirituality and identity development during periods of identity crises. By employing a phenomenological approach, the study has captured the lived experiences of individuals who navigate the complexities of identity formation while engaging with spirituality. The findings reveal several key themes, including the role of spiritual practices in navigating identity confusion, the significance of community and belonging, the impact of transformative spiritual experiences, and the potential challenges of spiritual bypassing. The participants in this study reported that spiritual practices served as vital tools for self-exploration and clarity amid the turmoil of identity crises. Engaging in meditation, prayer, and mindfulness allowed individuals to connect with their inner selves and facilitate personal growth. Additionally, the sense of community provided by spiritual groups played a crucial role in fostering belonging and support during difficult times. Transformative spiritual experiences emerged as pivotal moments that reshaped participants' understandings of themselves and their identities. However, the phenomenon of spiritual bypassing highlighted the need for individuals to confront their emotional challenges authentically rather than using spirituality as an escape. This research contributes to existing theories of identity development by highlighting the nuanced role of spirituality in navigating identity crises. It enriches Erikson's theory of identity versus role confusion by emphasizing the potential of spirituality as a resource for individuals grappling with their sense of self. Future research could build on these findings by exploring how different cultural and spiritual contexts influence identity development. For mental health practitioners and counselors, the insights gained from this study underline the importance of incorporating spirituality into therapeutic practices. Clinicians should consider the role of spiritual practices and community support in their clients' journeys toward identity formation. By fostering open discussions about spirituality and encouraging authentic engagement with both spiritual and emotional challenges, practitioners can better support individuals navigating identity crises. The implications of this research extend to educational environments, where students often grapple with questions of identity. Educational institutions could benefit from incorporating programs that encourage spiritual exploration and community-building among students. By fostering a supportive environment that recognizes the significance of spirituality in identity development, educators can help students navigate their personal growth during formative years. The acknowledgment of spiritual bypassing as a potential challenge emphasizes the need for individuals and practitioners to cultivate awareness of their emotional struggles. Encouraging individuals to confront their issues alongside their spiritual practices can lead to more meaningful personal growth and a coherent sense of identity. Ultimately, this study highlights the transformative potential of spirituality in identity development during crises. While spirituality can provide comfort, clarity, and community, it is essential for individuals to engage authentically with their experiences and confront the complexities of their emotions.

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