

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE, RESILIENCE AND COVID-RELATED ANXIETY

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## Abstract

*The present study assesses the relationship between spiritual intelligence, resilience, and COVID-related anxiety. Additionally, the study also measures that COVID-related anxiety can be predicted by spiritual intelligence and resilience. Since December 2019, the 'Coronavirus' has affected all of humanity in one way or another. As a result, there has been a considerable rise in the mental health issues people face across the globe. As a result, there was an upsurge in demand for mental health professionals in India due to more people asking for help, particularly in the last two years. Anxiety, explicitly about COVID, was seen on an unbridled rise. This study was conducted to identify means to combat the anxiety brought down by COVID. The study was conducted on adults between the age range of 18-60 years. The data was collected using convenient (snowball) sampling. The sample size of the present study is (N=205). The measures used to assess these variables were The Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory by David King (King, 2008), COVID Anxiety Scale (Kumar, 2020), and The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). The results from the study imply a significant relationship among all the variables. Moreover, spiritual intelligence and resilience are statistically significant predictors of COVID-related anxiety.*

**Keywords:** spiritual intelligence, resilience, COVID related anxiety, pandemic, mental health

## INTRODUCTION

As per the APA, spirituality has been defined as a “concern for or sensitivity to things of the spirit or soul, especially as opposed to materialistic concerns” (APA). Spirituality is an amalgamation of “Adhi” and “Atman.” “Adhi” pertains to the subject, and “Atman” refers to the spirit. The spirit is our actual identity and is the divine component inside us. Since the spirit is eternally in a joyful condition, it is unfettered by life’s challenges (including pleasure and misery). Our basic nature is happiness (the essence of the spirit inside us), and we all have an innate desire to be in it. We all seek joy in life and pursue numerous tasks that we think will help us be content.

Spiritual intelligence is a deeper level of intelligence that stimulates the real self’s (or spirit’s) characteristics and skills, like intellect, empathy, morality, happiness, love, originality, and tranquility. Spiritual intelligence propels one to a greater effect of direction and significance and accomplishments in a host of critical life and job abilities (King et al., 2012). Spiritual intelligence is described as the ability of humans to ponder the fundamental essence and the interconnection of our lives with the rest of humanity (Vaughan, 2002).

Spiritual intelligence appears to be one of the numerous aspects of intelligence that can be cultivated autonomously, as per the current scientific literature. Spiritual intelligence necessitates the synthesis of one’s inner world of intellect and soul with one’s exterior life of activity in the world and specific techniques of understanding.

Resilience, as per the APA, has been defined as “The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats and even significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stresses” (American Psychological Association, 2014). Resilient people, according to researchers, are better equipped to deal with tragedy and reconstruct their life after a setback. It is an unavoidable aspect of dealing with new challenges or bereavement. Everyone faces adversities to varying degrees at certain stages. A few of these issues may be trivial, and others may be catastrophic on a far broader scope. Resilient people can better endure and recuperate from crises and hardships by utilizing their abilities and strengths. This does not imply that they are free of anguish, regret, or concern. It implies they employ effective coping strategies to deal with adversity in manners that help them succeed and become stronger.

According to empirical findings, resilience appears to be based on genetic, biochemical, behavioral, and contextual elements (Manning et al., 2019). Ahangar looked at the impact of psychological adjustment and intellectual perseverance on resilience in response to life adversity. Overall, the findings are backed by a direct effects model of the association between life stress and psychological health. The findings revealed that

intellectual toughness, features of psychological adjustment, and emotional problems substantially influenced mental and physical pain metrics. As a result, resilience is a multifaceted concept that fluctuates depending on the context, period, maturity, and life circumstances.

With more than four crore COVID cases and 5.14 lakh COVID-related deaths in the past two years, there has been a drastic increase in the number of people dealing with anxiety, depression, and survivor's guilt as other mental health issues. Switching back and engaging in conversation can be a terrifying prospect for some people. According to experts, despite immunization and a drop in incidence rates, many people suffer from COVID-19 anxiety syndrome. The indicators of this syndrome are similar to that of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The virus and allied elements appear to be the root of the problem. The reluctance to carry out specific tasks due to COVID-19 worries repeated testing for indicators while not being in a high-risk situation, and avoidance of places or company are all indications of this syndrome. According to the researchers, individuals with this syndrome had higher post-traumatic stress, emotional exhaustion, panic, health anxiety, and suicidal tendencies (King & DeCicco, 2009).

Amidst this, the community, exhibiting resilience and exceptional adaptive capacity skills, quickly utilized reparative coping mechanisms with the disconnectedness into which they were obligated: in fact, a slew of online initiatives offering cohesion- physiological, emotional, and spiritual were launched.

Moreover, various scholars have maintained that hope and spirituality can be viewed as a generator of resilience on multiple levels, including physiological, behavioral, and cognitive. Spiritual anguish among those experiencing adversity, such as that produced by COVID-19, must not be overlooked. People, particularly the Indian population, look up to certain spiritual leaders or "gurus" like Satguru, Baba Ramdev, and Bharamakumari in the hope of finding semblance and clarity. As a result, resilience and spirituality are especially significant and deserving of research in this tumultuous epoch: COVID-19 and its physiological, societal, and behavioral ramifications threaten the world's well-being.

## SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As per the researcher's knowledge, there is a paucity of research. Therefore, this study is being conducted to act as a catalyst for further research and development in the areas of spiritual intelligence, anxiety, and resilience, particularly during the pandemic.

Given the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented rise in cases during the 3rd wave in India, there is a dire need to address its consequences. Mental health issues like depression, stress, as well as anxiety regarding life and survival have become dominant. Therefore, it is crucial to better understand the coping mechanisms employed by individuals when faced with adversities such as hospitalization and deaths associated with COVID-19.

There is a bifurcation between mainstream religiosity and spirituality and between resilience and simply being strong. Therefore, it is essential to research the specific domain of spirituality and resilience rather than mix them with religiosity and the notion of being strong.

There are multiple positives associated with resilience. Therefore, this study aimed to explore if high levels of spiritual intelligence correlate with high levels of resilience to promote spirituality and spiritual intelligence to foster resilience among the population to help them deal better with adversities like COVID. In addition, the research studies the statistical prevalence of resilience, COVID-related anxiety, and spirituality in the Indian population and takes appropriate steps to inculcate these virtues among the population.

Being aware of the health crisis that the world is currently facing, it is crucial to spread awareness about spirituality to foster resilience, create acceptance for one's life events, and learn to move ahead with life.

## METHODOLOGY

### Rationale of the study

The pandemic has resulted from human choices, and it will be their choices only that will help deal with the difficulties brought about by COVID-19. 5.25 lakh deaths, and 7.2% of hospitalizations have occurred in these past two years in India alone. It is the responsibility of the citizens of the country to foster means and resources to overcome such tragedies now and in the future. Resilience as a virtue has been studied quite extensively, and through rigorous research, it has been proven that being resilient does help in dealing with the harsh realities of life. Spirituality, particularly spiritual intelligence, has been known to be one of the factors that help inculcate resilience as a virtue.

### Purpose

To study the relationship between spiritual intelligence, resilience, and COVID-related anxiety among the Indian population during the pandemic.

## OBJECTIVE

1. To assess the relationship between spiritual intelligence and COVID-related anxiety.

2. To assess the relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience.
3. To assess the relationship between COVID-related anxiety and resilience.
4. To check if a high level of spiritual intelligence correlates with a high level of resilience.
5. To check if a high level of COVID-related anxiety correlates with a low level of resilience.
6. To gauge if spiritual intelligence and resilience predict COVID-related anxiety.

## HYPOTHESIS

- H1: There is a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence, resilience, and COVID related anxiety  
H2: High levels of spiritual intelligence co-relate with high levels of resilience  
H3: High levels of COVID related anxiety co-relate with low levels of resilience  
H4: Spiritual Intelligence and Resilience predict COVID Related Anxiety

### Sample and Research Design

In total, there were 210 participants involved in the study. The sample comprised of individuals between the age group of 18 to 60 whom COVID-19 had infected or knew someone who had been infected by the virus and was not suffering from any diagnosed mental health issue. A convenient sampling technique was adopted for the purpose of this study. Participants were categorized as such that they comprised individuals with low and high levels of spiritual intelligence, COVID-related anxiety, and resilience.

**Inclusion criteria:** Individuals between the ages of 18 to 60 who have been infected by COVID-19 or know someone whom the virus had infected.

**Exclusion criteria:** Individuals diagnosed with any mental health disorder were excluded from the study sample for the study.

### Procedure :

Data collection.

This is a descriptive, cross-sectional study with a quantitative conceptual foundation. The survey was administered online because the data was obtained during the lockdown. The study was proposed via an email link with accessibility to the form through WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and social media sites like Instagram. Google Forms was used to create the survey. Participants reviewed the study's goals, intended concepts, reconstruction approaches, and informed consent, which stated that "participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point by closing the web page." The participants had to be at least 18 years old and be residents of India, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

The snowball convenient sampling technique was employed, which began with certain individuals who were already familiar to the investigator. The research, which is exploratory in nature, does not seek to recreate a symbolic image of the Indian community but rather to portray the public's opinions of their spiritual and mental health during the lockdown. The protocol synthesis took an average of 15 minutes per subject.

The data collection process involved obtaining informed consent from the participants before beginning the study. Participants were given a questionnaire comprising of 3 sub-scales: Spiritual Intelligence Scale (King, D.), Brief Resilience Scale, and COVID Anxiety Scale (Kumar, 2020). As per ethical norms, participants were debriefed about the study post completion of the questionnaire.

### Tools:

#### Spiritual Intelligence Scale (King, D.)

This questionnaire was developed by David King based on the spiritual intelligence model (King, 2008; King & DeCicco, 2009). Validation and reliability were carried out by King (2008) from the original item of the 84-item questionnaire, which was reduced to 24 items of study on 305 university students, which consisted of 231 females and 74 males, and obtained an alpha of 0.92. (King, D., 2008)

#### Brief Resilience Scale

The Brief Resilience Scale was created to assess the perceived ability to bounce back or recover from stress. The scale was developed to assess a unitary construct of resilience, including both positively and negatively worded items.

#### COVID Anxiety Scale (Kumar, V.V., 2020).

The COVID-19 Pandemic Anxiety Scale (COVID-19 PAS; Kumar et al., 2020) is a 10-item measure of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic anxiety (Kumar et al., 2020). Developed to fulfill the need for such a scale in the Indian context, the COVID-19 PAS began as a 94-item pool constructed after reviewing the relevant literature regarding health anxiety and pandemics. Following expert review, a reduced 34-item version was subjected to pilot testing to check the items' language (English) and understanding. Psychometric evaluation was carried out using a sample of Indian adults.

### Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used for understanding and analyzing the data. Data analysis was done using SPSS. Pearson correlation was used to analyze the correlation between the three variables. Finally, multiple linear regression was used to understand if spirituality and resilience could predict COVID-related anxiety.

### Ethical Considerations

The participants were briefly informed about the study, and informed consent was taken from all the participants. Debriefing was done following data collection, wherein the study's aims were explained to the participants. Since sensitive information was collected in the study, ethical approval was requested from the internal research body. Personal details and responses of all participants were kept confidential. The data collected was used solely for research purposes. The participants were granted the right to withdraw from the study at any point of time of the study duration. No ethical violations were made in the process of the research. Utmost care was taken to ensure the originality of this paper and that no harm is done to the quality of the content.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

For the study, a total of 210 responses were collected. During data cleansing, five responses were removed, and 205 were considered for the final data analysis comprising 114 females and 91 males. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for study variables**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Spiritual Intelligence	205	41	120	88.31	18.062
COVID-19 Anxiety	205	0	30	8.57	6.912
Resilience	205	7	30	20.83	5.643

For the scale on Spiritual Intelligence, participants were found to obtain a minimum score of 41 and a maximum score of 120, with a mean score of 88.31 and a standard deviation of 18.06. The highest possible score on the scale was 120.

For the COVID Related, Anxiety scale, participants were found to obtain a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 30, with a mean score of 8.57 and a standard deviation of 6.91. Therefore, the highest possible score on the scale was 30.

For the scale on resilience, participants were found to obtain a minimum score of 7 and a maximum score of 30, with a mean score of 20.83 and a standard deviation of 5.64. The highest possible score on the scale was 30.

### Hypothesis 1:

Pearson's correlation was used as the data was found to be normally distributed. Total Spiritual Intelligence was found to be significantly correlated with Total Resilience and Total COVID Anxiety at a significance level of 0.01 with a mild positive correlation of 0.44 and a negative correlation of -0.23, respectively. Total resilience was found to be significantly correlated with Total COVID Related Anxiety at a significance level of 0.01 with a negative correlation of -0.53. Therefore, H1, which states that there is a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence, resilience, and COVID-related anxiety will be accepted.

**Table 2: Bivariate correlation for the study variables**

Var	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. AGE										
2. GN	-0.004									
3. CET	0.049	0.041								
4. PMP	0.137	.204**	.601**							
5. TA	0.112	0.012	.726**	.721**						
6. CSE	0.078	0.126	.590**	.662**	.655**					
7. SI	0.106	0.101	.866**	.847**	.904**	.831**				
8. F	-0.063	-.144*	-.166*	-.264**	-.239**	-.207**	-.250**			
9. SC	-.139*	-0.042	-0.067	-.200**	-.173*	-.137*	-.162*	.646**		
10. CA	-0.105	-0.11	-0.136	-.260**	-.232**	-.195**	-.233**	.933**	.878**	
11. R	.300**	.238**	.334**	.476**	.356**	.392**	.444**	-.498**	-.464**	-.531**

\* p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; N=205

Note: CET- Critical Existential Thinking; PMP- Personal Meaning Production; TA- Transcendental Awareness; CSE- Conscious State Expansion; SI- Spiritual Intelligence; F- Fear; SC- Somatic Concern; CA- Covid Anxiety; R- Resilience



**Hypothesis 2:**

Total Spiritual Intelligence, along with its sub-factors, was found to be highly correlated with Total Resilience at the 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, H2, which states that high levels of spiritual intelligence correlate with high levels of resilience, was accepted.

**Hypothesis 3:**

Total COVID Related Anxiety was found to have a significantly negative correlation with Total Resilience at a significance level of 0.01, with a negative correlation of -0.53. Therefore, H3, which states that high levels of COVID-related anxiety correlate with low levels of resilience, will be accepted.

**Table 3:** Reliability statistics for constructs

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Critical Existential Thinking	07	0.845
Personal Meaning Production	05	0.870
Transcendental Awareness	07	0.843
Conscious State Expansion	05	0.883
Total Spiritual Intelligence	24	0.831
Fear	06	0.837
Somatic Concern	04	0.867
Total COVID Related Anxiety	10	0.894
Total Resilience	06	0.851

Table 3 presents the reliability statistics using Cronbach's alpha for each construct. The Cronbach's alpha for the total spiritual intelligence scale was found to be 0.831. The COVID-19 scale was found to be highly reliable (10 items;  $\alpha = .89$ ). The fear subscale consisted of 6 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and somatic concern subscale consisted of 4 items ( $\alpha = .86$ ). The scale measuring resilience had reliability of 0.851.

**Hypothesis 4:**

Multiple linear regression analysis reflects that COVID-related anxiety is significantly predicted by spiritual intelligence and resilience. Thus, H4, which states that spiritual intelligence and resilience predict COVID-related anxiety, will be accepted.

**Table 4:** Prediction Models for COVID Related Anxiety

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup> Square	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	F	df
1	.531	0.282	0.275	39.761	39.761	2
2	.153	0.23	0.14	2.405	2.405	2

M1 Predictors: Spiritual Intelligence, Resilience (Constant), COVID Related Anxiety

M2 Predictors: Gender, Age (Constant), COVID Related Anxiety

Table 4 presents the regression analysis results for the two models examining spiritual intelligence, resilience, as well as age, and gender as predictors of COVID-related anxiety. In the first step, spiritual intelligence and resilience were entered. The resulting model (M1) was significant, indicating that 27.5% of the variance in total COVID-related anxiety was explained by spiritual intelligence and resilience. The beta coefficient was significant. This finding indicates that total resilience has a statistically significant effect on the total COVID related anxiety of the sample.

**DISCUSSION**

For the purpose of the study, a total of 210 responses were collected. During data cleansing, 5 responses were removed, and 205 were considered for the final data analysis comprising 114 females and 91 males. The average age of the participants was 30 years, with a diversity in terms of occupation. A huge portion of the population is comprised of students. Some were homemakers, some had their own business, some were employed under MNC's, and others catered to different occupations.

Given the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented rise in cases during the 3rd wave in India, there is a dire need to address its consequences. Mental health issues like depression, stress, as well as anxiety regarding life and survival have become dominant. It is important to understand the coping mechanisms employed by individuals when faced with adversities such as hospitalization and deaths associated with COVID-19.

Given the paucity of literature available on COVID-related issues, the current research helped explore the links between spiritual intelligence, resilience, and COVID-related anxiety. It helped determine the extent to which COVID-related anxiety is determined by spiritual intelligence and resilience (27.5%). Statistical analysis

indicated a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence, resilience, and COVID-related anxiety at the 0.01 level. Thus, H1 was accepted.

The spiritual intelligence scale consists of 4 subscales (CET, PMP, TA, and CSE). All the subscales were found to be significantly correlated with resilience at the 0.01 level of significance. The correlation between CET and total resilience was found to be 0.33; between PMP and resilience, the correlation was 0.47; TA and resilience had a correlation of 0.35, and CSE and resilience had a correlation of 0.39. Total spiritual intelligence and total resilience had a mild positive correlation of 0.44 at the 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, H2, which states that high levels of spiritual intelligence correlate with high levels of resilience, will be accepted.

Resilience as a virtue has been found to comprise a number of factors like competence, connectedness, character, temperament, financial stability, peer group, familial support, and spirituality, to name a few. Individuals with a higher spiritual orientation tend to be more resilient, it does not reflect, a lack or absence of feelings of anxiety; people who are resilient can also feel anxious; their ability to bounce back and cope with the tragedy will be better and more effective as compared to others, as per research.

Having a spiritual orientation, specifically having higher spiritual intelligence, has been linked with high levels of resilience, and has been studied time and again by scholars, and has also been established by this research. Spiritual intelligence is a means to foster and inculcate the virtue of resilience among individuals.

The scale on COVID-related anxiety consists of two subscales, namely, 1) somatic concern and 2) fear. Both the subscales were found to be significantly correlated with resilience at the 0.01 level of significance. The correlation between somatic concern and resilience was found to be -0.46, and that between fear and resilience was found to be -0.49. Total COVID-related anxiety was found to have a significantly negative correlation with total resilience at a significance level of 0.01, with a mild negative correlation of -0.53. Therefore, H3, which states that high a high level of COVID-related anxiety correlates with a low level of resilience, will be accepted.

As established by stated research, resilience has been inversely associated with conditions like anxiety, stress, fear, and the like. It has been proven that individuals who have a higher level of resilience will find it easy to bounce back to normal levels of functioning more readily than the population who have lower levels of resilience. COVID-related anxiety is also a byproduct of anxiety. As has been observed and reported by reputed news agencies, COVID has assumed the role and impact of a serious and harsh tragedy plaguing humankind. In times like these, when stressors are on the rise, leading to higher anxiety levels in the population, it has become imperative to identify means to inculcate the virtue of resilience among the people to make coping with such tragedies relatively easier. Resilient people find it easy to battle anxiety, stressors, and irrational or rational fears; they are better able to make judgments and decisions that require quick, solution-focused thinking, don't quit easily, and are better able to look at the positive side of situations.

The scales on spiritual intelligence (along with sub-factors) and resilience, have been found to predict COVID-related anxiety. 27.5% of variance in total COVID related anxiety was explained by total spiritual intelligence and total resilience. The beta coefficient was significant, which indicates that total resilience has a significant effect on the total COVID-related anxiety of the sample. Thus, H4, which states that spiritual intelligence and resilience predict COVID-related anxiety, will be accepted.

Regression analysis was also done to check if age and gender had any role in predicting COVID-related anxiety. No significant relation was established, meaning any person, irrespective of their gender or age can be prone to developing anxiety. Therefore, it can be concluded that age and gender do not contribute to the prediction of COVID-related anxiety.

With the help of the current research, it has been established that individuals who have high spiritual intelligence and a high level of resilience will be less prone to develop COVID-related anxiety and anxiety in general vice-versa. Since pre-historic times, it has been proven that spirituality and resilience have helped men bounce back from the most disturbing situations. "Viktor Frankl," a renowned contributor in "existential psychology," stated the example of Jews, who suffered on an unprecedented scale during the holocaust. But, Frankl said that in such harsh and challenging times, those who fostered the virtue of resilience were among the majority who were alive in the end. Similarly, the floods in Kedarnath Valley, India, in 2013, which led to more than 6000 deaths, can also be seen as an example of how inculcating resilience and spirituality can effectively deal with such calamities.

Creating awareness about and rousing spirituality and specific spiritual intelligence has been proven to be an effective means of fostering resilience, consequently lowering the probability of anxiety manifestations in the general population.

## CONCLUSION

Being the only species empowered with consciousness, human beings can choose for themselves. The pandemic has resulted from human choices, and it will be their choices only that will help deal with the difficulties brought about by COVID-19. 5.25 lakh deaths, and 7.2% of hospitalizations have occurred in these past two years in India. With rapid urbanization and globalization, there has been a massive shift towards a fast-paced life, resulting in negligence towards the values and morals that have been dominant in the Indian culture. This can be witnessed through the immense increase in reports of mental health issues, suicide rates, marital conflicts, family disputes, lack of happiness and satisfaction in life, excessive drug use among young adults, and a rise in the feeling of

hopelessness. Moreover, as the pandemic is crippling the world, these issues have become more predominant. Therefore, making it is critical to address these issues by going back to the historical roots of Indian culture. Resilience is a virtue that has been prevalent in India since pre-historic times, as seen through tragedies like Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the loss of life and loved ones during the partition of India, as well as the Nirbhaya rape case. Moreover, the cohesive community spirit in India of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” has brought the community together multiple times to fight for their rights, like the Narmada Bachao Andolan and Chipko movement. Therefore, India has the potential to practice resilience as a means of coping with grief and bereavement, especially during COVID-19, by simply going back to their grassroots. Considering the rate at which deaths and hospitalizations are occurring due to COVID, it is time to move beyond awareness and take concrete steps and measures to protect and help people deal more effectively.

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