

Research Paper

The Strength of Spirit: A Regression Analysis of Spirituality on Resilience in Indian Adults

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ABSTRACT

From aiding physical and psychological well-being, to providing hope and a sense of meaningfulness, the purpose of spirituality in everyday life is well documented. Studies suggest that spirituality is also an integral part of coping with life threatening diseases as well as overall resilience. Hart (1994) defined spirituality as “a way in which an individual experiences his or her faith in everyday life and the style “in which the individual refers to the final conditions of individual existence.” Resilience is defined as “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands” (American Psychological Association, 2015). According to current literature, there is a strong correlation as well as cause and effect relationship between spirituality and resilience. However, very few studies have been done on Generation Z i.e those born from 1997-2012 concerning the levels of these two variables. This research explores how resilience is predicted by spirituality among Gen-Z. The study was conducted on sample a of 47 [M=24, F=22, TG=1] aged 18-25. The regression analysis revealed that spirituality causes resilience [R²=0.229, F(1, 45)=13.349, p=0.01]. However, it is seen that there is no significant difference between males and females in both variables under study.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Generation Z, Regression, Resilience, Spirituality

“O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.” - Chapter 2/Verse 14 from *Bhagavad-Gita as It Is* by Prabhupada (1990)

Hart (1994) defined spirituality “as a way in which an individual experiences his or her faith in everyday life and the style “in which the individual refers to the final conditions of individual existence.” From aiding physical and psychological well-being, to providing hope and a sense of meaningfulness, the purpose of spirituality in everyday life is well documented. Studies suggest that spirituality is also an integral part of

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The Strength of Spirit: A Regression Analysis of Spirituality on Resilience in Indian Adults

coping with life threatening diseases as well as overall resilience. A research conducted by Xing et al. (2018) & Holt et al. (2011) pointed how spirituality plays an important role in aiding cancer patients. In addition to this, another study by Vasigh et al. (2019) stated how spiritual health is also a predictor of pain acceptance, therefore individuals who were more religious were more likely to tolerate Chronic Pain.

Resilience is defined as "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands" (American Psychological Association, 2015). Abilities such as resilience and hardiness have been documented as essential components in managing stress.

Studies show that spirituality is concerned with the purpose of human existence, which has important consequences for resilience. (Cook & White, 2018) However, very few studies have been done on Generation Z, i.e those born from 1997-2012 concerning the levels of these two variables. Research from the Walton Family Foundation and Murruration, conducted by John Della Volpe and Social Sphere (2021), shows that more members of Generation Z are grappling with mental health issues than people from older generations.

This age group is of particular interest to the authors of this paper as it has seen many life altering events in the past few years. For starters, it is the first generation who is born into the era of modern technology and the World Wide Web. The sheer amount of information that a single person encounters on a daily basis is baffling. Secondly, the advent and popularization of social media has also contributed to the entrenchment of the world view into our daily routine. Seeing the news from around the globe, most of it bad, has led to a decline in the belief that humanity is good. Thirdly, the easy access to scientific studies, opinions of qualified experts and the realization that many social institutions are inherently hierarchical and discriminatory in some way or other has led to a decrease in faith in religion and religious institutions. And lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic took away precious years of the youth and a sense of betrayal set in. These young adults and teenagers now felt as if they have been robbed of once in a life time opportunities like weddings, graduations, and the college/high school experience as a whole.

All these factors have compounded into a universally seen nihilist outlook. Consequently, spirituality has taken a hit as well. According to current literature, there is a strong correlation as well as cause and effect relationship between spirituality and resilience. But is that really the case when it comes to Gen Z? Or is today's youth resilient without being spiritual?

This research explores how resilience is predicted by spirituality among Gen-Z. Firstly, correlation is used to establish the relationship between spirituality and resilience, followed by linear regression to test spirituality as a predictor for resilience in people between the ages of 18-25. Further, we perform an independent sample t-test to check for gender differences.

The regression analysis revealed that spirituality causes resilience [$R^2=0.229$, $F(1, 45)=13.349$, $p=0.01$]. However, it is seen that there is a no significant difference between males and females in both variables under study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Spirituality and institutional religion are often used interchangeably, but the two concepts are different. Institutionalised religion introduces individuals to a tradition of spirituality, provides them with seasoned guidance for living, and comforts them through difficult times and periods of internal unrest. But, it also offers a means for people to appear morally upright and respected in society without ever being truly spiritual, and it frequently undermines individual religion by its own lack of adherence to tradition. Hence it is important to draw a distinction between spirituality and religion.

Current literature about resilience and spirituality clearly shows that there exists a relationship between the two variables. For instance, a meta-analysis and systematic evaluation of observational research done by Schwalm (2021) states how spiritual and religious beliefs may be linked to critical "resilience resources." Results showed a good relationship between Spirituality/Religion and resilience ($r = 0.40$ (95% CI, 0.32-0.48), $p < 0.01$). S/R and resilience were shown to have a somewhat favourable association. Furthermore, a study by Dewi (2019) pointed how spirituality level determined someone's quality of life and resiliency. The findings revealed that spirituality had a strong beneficial link with quality of life as well as resilience in people of different ages, genders, jobs, and diseases. The greater a person's spiritual level, the higher his quality of life and resilience in dealing with life's difficulties.

Several studies also demonstrate the various advantages of resilience in everyday life. Fenzel & Richardson (2021) point that patients who are spiritual and religious are less likely to develop depression or depressed symptoms. Another study by Cook and White (2018) demonstrates how spirituality is a significant aspect of one's own self-understanding, history and culture for many. It can exert a considerable influence on self-identity and systems of meaning at both an individual and communal level. Thus, spirituality can play a significant role in resilient adaptation to adversity.

Research also underlines the importance of spirituality and resilience in battling the catastrophic and unstoppable nature of COVID-19 which produced a series of devastating effects from a psychological point of view at a global level. A research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic addresses how students faced difficulty in transitioning to new styles of learning, emphasising the significance of resilience (Ang et al., 2021).

A considerable amount of literature has been published on role of spirituality and resilience in coping with painful sensory experiences. According to research religiousness and spirituality in trauma victims are primarily dependent on a personal quest for comprehension of life's and meaning's concerns and building narratives from healthy viewpoints. This may aid in the integration of painful incidents into a new cognitive synthesis, hence reducing post-traumatic symptoms (Peres, 2007).

Lastly, it has been conclusively shown by Dewi and Hamzah (2019) found that spirituality had a substantial positive link with quality of life as well as resilience across sexes, ages, vocations, and diseases in a meta-analysis of 20 articles. The association between spirituality and quality of life was discovered largely among older respondents, whereas for those who were still working or students, the relationship was described as weak to moderate.

The Strength of Spirit: A Regression Analysis of Spirituality on Resilience in Indian Adults

It is to be noted that there has been relatively little literature published on spirituality being a predictor of resilience that helps individuals adapt to life challenges. The same has thus been investigated further in this study.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To establish resilience is predicted by spirituality; to check if there are any gender differences in spirituality and resilience.

Hypotheses

H₁ - There is a significant prediction of resilience by spirituality.

H₀₁ - There is no significant difference between males and females in spirituality.

H₀₂ - There is no significant difference between males and females in resilience.

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample (N=47 [M=24, F=22, TG=1]) aged 18-25. The age group was chosen to represent the adult population of Generation Z. All subjects had either completed or were enrolled in an undergraduate programme. The subjects self-selected into the study after an initial request for participation to colleges in 4 colleges in Chandigarh, India.

Inclusion Criteria. Subjects had to be between the ages of 18-25 i.e. emerging adult group of Generation Z. Subjects had to be enrolled in or have completed an undergraduate degree in order to control for any drastic variance in IQ. Subjects were taken from the urban college population of Chandigarh, India to control for any drastic variance in socio-economic status and cultural influences. No restriction on gender was stated in order to fill the questionnaire.

Exclusion Criteria. The rural population was not included in this study. Generation Z population below the age of 18 was not included. Population from other cities of India was not considered. People with benchmark disabilities were not included. People undergoing therapy and counselling were not included.

Informed Consent

After subjects showed interest in the study, they were explained the purpose of the study and consent was taken for collection of data via verbal confirmation. They were then sent the Google form that contained the scales mentioned below.

Collection of Data

Data was collected via Google Forms using the following scales:

- **The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC 25).** It is a 25-item self-rating scale with a 5 point Likert (0-4) given by Connor and Davidson (2003). The responses range from 0 = “not true at all” to 4 = “True nearly all the time”. The total scores range from 0-100. Higher scores suggest higher resilience and vice versa.
- **The Spiritual Attitude and Involvement List (SAIL).** It is a 26-item self-rating scale given by de Jager Meezenbroek and colleagues (2012). The items are scored on a 6-point Likert, with the maximum possible score of 156. Higher scores suggest higher levels of spirituality (spiritual attitude or involvement). The scale can be further bifurcated into subscales to measure the following dimensions: Connectedness to oneself, connectedness to the environment/others, and connectedness to the transcendent.

The Strength of Spirit: A Regression Analysis of Spirituality on Resilience in Indian Adults

Analysis of Data

The subject responses were imported from Google Forms into IBM SPSS Ver. 26. First the data was checked for normality after which linear regression was computed. An Independent sample t-test was used to check for gender differences in spirituality and resilience.

Note: For comparing gender differences, the transgender sample (N=1) was not considered as it was an outlier for classifying the data by gender. If more transgender sample had been present, it would have been subjected to due analysis.

RESULTS

Test of Normality

The first step of analysis was to check the data for normality. The tables below show the skewness, kurtosis, and the Shapiro-Wilk Test results. For both CD-RISC and SAIL scores, the values for skewness and kurtosis fall within the range for normally distributed data (+/- 1.96) as seen in Table 1.

As per the Shapiro Wilk test, the sample was normally distributed for resilience [$W(47)=.969, p=.241 > 0.05$] as well as spirituality [$W(47)=.984, p=.767 > 0.05$].

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Scores of Resilience and Spirituality.

Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error
CD RISC Score	Mean	66.3404	1.22579
	Median	67.0000	
	Variance	70.621	
	Std. Deviation	8.40361	
	Minimum	43.00	
	Maximum	80.00	
	Range	37.00	
	Skewness	-.398	.347
	Kurtosis	-.001	.681
SAIL Total Score	Mean	104.1915	2.19781
	Median	104.0000	
	Variance	227.028	
	Std. Deviation	15.06744	
	Minimum	73.00	
	Maximum	138.00	
	Range	65.00	
	Skewness	.228	.347
	Kurtosis	-.045	.681

Table 2 Test for Normality.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
CD RISC Score	.109	47	.200*	.969	47	.241
SAIL Total Score	.064	47	.200*	.984	47	.767

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Hypothesis Testing

H₁ - There is a significant prediction of resilience by spirituality.

The dependent variable i.e. CD RISC Scores were regressed on the predicting variable i.e. SAIL Total Scores. By inferring Table 3 and 4, the following results are to be noted: R²=0.229, F(1, 45)=13.349, p=0.01. Thus, the above hypothesis is supported and it can be said that resilience (signified by CD RISC Scores) is significantly predicted by spirituality (signified by SAIL scores) with effect size of 22.9%.

Table 3 Regression Model.

Model Summary

Model R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.478a	.229	.212	7.46154	.229	13.349	1	45	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), SAIL Total Score

Table 4 Correlation Coefficients.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	38.545	7.685			5.016	.000
	SAIL Total Score	.267	.073	.478		3.654	.001

a. Dependent Variable: CD RISC Score

H₀₁ - There is no significant difference between males and females in spirituality.

H₀₂ - There is no significant difference between males and females in resilience.

To test this, an independent sample t-test was done for males and females with the dependent variables as SAIL Scores and CD RISC Scores. The results, as seen in Table 5 and 6, show that there is *no significant difference* between males [M=103.125, SD=17.339] and females [M=106.68, SD=10.938] in spirituality [t(39.212)=-.839, p=.406>0.05]. Thus, H₀₁ is supported.

Table 5 Independent Sample t-test to check for gender differences in resilience and spirituality.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						
		F			t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
CD RISC Score	Equal variances assumed	.612	.438	.313	44	.756	.79167	2.52891
	Equal variances not assumed			.310	40.582	.758	.79167	2.55187
SAIL Total Score	Equal variances assumed	5.500	.024	-.823	44	.415	-3.55682	4.32048
	Equal variances not assumed			-.839	39.212	.406	-3.55682	4.23856

Table 6 Group Statistics.

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CD RISC Score	Males	24	66.7917	7.68386	1.56846
	Females	22	66.0000	9.44155	2.01295
SAIL Total Score	Males	24	103.1250	17.33885	3.53928
	Females	22	106.6818	10.93873	2.33215

It can also be seen that there is *no significant difference* between males [M=66.791 SD=7.683] and females [M=66, SD=9.441] in resilience [t(44)=-.313, p=.756>0.05]. Thus, H₀₂ is supported

Additional Analysis

The data was further analysed after the initial hypothesis testing was done to find out if there are any specific dimensions of spirituality - as indicated by dimensional scores in SAIL - that correlate more to resilience than other dimensions. This was done by computing Pearson Correlation.

Table 7 shows the r value for each dimension. Connectedness to the Transcendent has the highest correlation with resilience [r=.666, p=.000<0.01] followed by Connectedness to Oneself [r=.475, p=.001<0.01]. These two dimensions were positively and significantly correlated with resilience at 0.01 level. However, the dimension of Connectedness to the Environment/Others shows the lowest correlation with resilience which was insignificant at 0.05 level [r=.256, p=.082>0.05].

Table 7 Correlation of each dimension of spirituality (as given in SAIL) with resilience.

Correlations		CD RISC Score	Connectedness to oneself	Connectedness to environment/ others	Connectedness to the transcendent
CD RISC Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.475**	.256	.666**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.082	.000
	N		47	47	47

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

According to several studies, researchers have established that spirituality and resilience are interrelated. As stated earlier, there is evidence that spirituality plays an imperative role in an individual’s resilience but this was not satisfactorily proven for Gen-Z population by existing literature according to the authors’ knowledge.

The aim of the current study was to bridge the gap in knowledge and establish spirituality as a predictor of resilience in the age group of 18-25, i.e. the adult population of Gen-Z. The sample (M=24, F=22, TG=1) was taken from 4 colleges in Chandigarh, India. Two scales were used to measure the variables under study - The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC 25) developed by Connor and Davidson (2003); and The Spiritual Attitude and Involvement List (SAIL) developed by de Jager Meezenbroek and colleagues (2012).

The data were first checked for normality and only then further analysis was carried out. The results revealed that spirituality is indeed a predictor for resilience for this age group with an

The Strength of Spirit: A Regression Analysis of Spirituality on Resilience in Indian Adults

effect size of 22.9% [$R^2=0.229$, $F(1, 45)=13.349$, $p=0.01$]. It was further found that there is no significant difference in males and females in spirituality [$t(39.212)=-.839$, $p=.406>0.05$] as well as resilience [$t(44)=-.313$, $p=.756>0.05$]. Additional analysis showed that the dimension of Connectedness to the transcendent (as per The Spiritual Attitude and Involvement List) has the strongest correlation with resilience [$r=.666$, $p=.000<0.01$].

The implications of spirituality as a predictor of resilience can be elucidated by many studies done in the past decade. Roberto (2020) examined the role of spirituality on resilience and coping during the COVID-19 crisis on women. Results found that spirituality has been shown to increase resilience during calamities.

There has been some research on a new construct identified as “spiritual fortitude”, it involves the use of spirituality as a means of coping. Van Tongeren et al., (2019) defined it as “one’s ability to consistently draw upon spiritual resources to face and grow from adversity.” This can be seen as a kind of resilience that stems from spirituality. This construct holds a lot of potential for further research.

The implications in terms of counselling and trauma-informed care are vast. It is certain that spiritual (yet secular) guidance can be inculcated in order to promote spiritual fortitude thus, increasing resilience (Zhang et al., 2021). Kaiwart et. al. (2015) did an intervention study on Indian college students which showed that spiritually guided counseling was effective in reducing levels of stress with 0.01 level significance. This claim is also backed by another study done by Krok (2008) as cited in Gnanaprakash (2013) that shows students who score high on spirituality are better able to cope with pressures, adapt, and maintain a positive attitude in challenging situations. To summarize, it can be stated that highly spiritual individuals have the ability to cope in a way that is adaptive, during adverse times (Coyte et al. 2007)

Limitations

The research results should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. One limitation of this study is related to the question of the reliability of results for the entire population due to the narrowness of the sample size. The sample neither included the Generation Z population below the age of eighteen nor did it comprise the population from other cities of India. Another known limitation of this study is that it did not take into account any significant differences in socioeconomic position and cultural factors, as the subjects belonged to the Urban population. The study is also susceptible to information biases. As the collection of data was done online, there can be errors on the part of the subject in understanding or answering the questionnaire.

Scope for Further Study

While this study offers insights into spirituality being a predictor of resilience, additional longitudinal research is needed to detect developments or changes in the characteristics of the target population. This is because resilience may change over time as a function of development and one's interaction with the environment (Kim-Cohen & Turkewitz, 2012) and current research only measure data at a single point in time due to constraints of the researchers and lack of funding. In addition to this, a more inclusive sample can be taken that allows for the representation of people with disabilities and different socioeconomic backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The current outlook of Gen-Z, at first, seems nihilist and one might be of the view that spirituality is absent in these emerging adults. However, this study shows that this age group is not only spiritual but that their resilience is influenced by it. [$R^2=0.229$, $F(1, 45)=13.349$, $p=0.01$]. Finally, because it offers so many benefits, spirituality as a virtue should not be overlooked. As French philosopher, Teilhard de Chardin emphasized that, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience."

So, we must not forget that within each of us is a light, a wake, encoded in the fibres of our existence and spirituality is nothing but the oil to it.

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The Strength of Spirit: A Regression Analysis of Spirituality on Resilience in Indian Adults

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Conflict of Interest

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