

Spiritual Intelligence and Resilience among Christian Youth in Kerala

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The present study was an attempt to identify strong predictors of resilience from among a set of factors of spirituality using a sample of 220 adolescents studying in schools and colleges in Ernakulum, Kerala. The age group of the subjects ranged from 16 to 19 years. The Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (ISIS) used to obtain measures of the domains of spiritual intelligence including Consciousness, Grace, Meaning, Transcendence, and Truth. BU Resilience Scale (BURS) was used to obtain measure of resilience. Multiple regression (Stepwise method) was used to analyze the data. Truth, Equanimity, Joy, Synthesis, and Discernment emerged as strong predictors of resilience. Trust that things will work out for the best even during difficult situation, remaining aware of what is happening without getting lost in experience when things are chaotic, ability to bring a feeling of joy to one's activities, ability to integrate seemingly conflicting points of view, having one's actions aligned with his/her values and effortlessly standing firm in my inner truth are found to be predicting resilience.

Keywords: spiritual intelligence, Consciousness, Grace, Transcendence, Resilience

Resilience can be thought of as competence in the face of significant challenges to achievement or development (Masten & Coatsworth, 1995). Resilience is viewed as the outcome of interactions of two sets of components: individual attributes, and external resources such as family, religion, school, peer groups. Holocaust survivors have shown remarkable qualities including belief in the divine (Kempler, 2002).

Spirituality refers to the search for, and the experience of elements of the sacred, meaning, higher-consciousness, and transcendence. Spiritual intelligence entails the abilities that draw on such spiritual themes to predict functioning and adaptation and to produce valuable products or outcomes (Emmons, 1999). Higher levels of religious faith and spirituality are reported to be associated with more adaptive coping responses, higher resilience to stress, a more

optimistic life orientation, greater perceived social support, and lower levels of anxiety among recovering individuals (Kaplan, Marks, & Mertens, 1997; Pardini, Plante, Sherman, & Stumpe, 2000; Pargament, 1997).

Recent studies on coping and spirituality use spirituality and religion as interchangeable concepts. Different aspects of religion, such as religious beliefs, practices, and relationships, are often used to assist individuals in coping with physical and psychosocial stress (Hathaway & Pargament, 1991). A review of researches on religion and spirituality by Cotton et al. (2006) revealed that spiritual coping and religious decision-making were among the most often studied constructs and were generally positively associated with health outcomes (Cotton, Zebracki, Rosenthal, Tsevat, & Drotar, 2006). Singh and Maheshwari (2009) report significant

relationship between spirituality and health, and their relationship is mediated by happiness among *Kalpwas* attending *Ardha-Kumbh Mela* in Allahabad.

Negative religious coping, daily spiritual experiences, religious support, and self-rankings of religious/spiritual intensity significantly predicted mental health status among patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain (Rippentrop et al, 2005). Religion/spirituality was positively associated with functional well-being and overall QOL and was found to be mediated through the use of active coping among women who had just to undergo a course of adjuvant chemotherapy for ovarian cancer (Canada, Parker, de Moor, Basen-Engquist, Ramondetta, & Cohen, 2005). Among individuals with rheumatoid arthritis, those who reported frequent daily spiritual experiences had higher levels of positive mood, lower levels of daily negative mood, and higher levels of social support, and those who reported that religion was very salient in their coping with pain reported much higher levels of instrumental, emotional, arthritis-related, and general social support (Keefe, 2001).

General spiritual beliefs were associated with physical and mental health, trauma-related distress, and posttraumatic symptom severity while resilience was related to health status and posttraumatic symptom severity, among survivors of violent trauma (Connor Jonathan, Davidson, & Lee, 2003). Attachment to God was found to predict spiritual coping which in turn was predictive of adjustment among individuals waiting for a loved one undergoing inpatient surgery (Belavich & Pargament, 2002). Severely mentally ill Puerto Rican women reported that their religious or spiritual beliefs were critical to their coping, had influenced them to reduce risk, and/or provided them with needed social support in the context of HIV risk reduction strategies (Loue & Sajatovic, 2006). Frequency of prayer, importance of faith, and reliance on religion for their coping were

compared were found to be strongly correlated with positive mental health in the elderly (Meisenhelder & Chandler, 2002).

Spirituality was found significantly associated with length of sobriety, contentment and lower stress for women among participants in the Alcoholic Anonymous (Poage, Ketzenberger & Olsen, 2004). Significant association between perceived stress and spirituality was found among women in substance abuse treatment (Valo, Prado & Amaro, 2008). Higher levels of religious faith and spirituality were associated with a more optimistic life orientation, greater perceived social support, higher resilience to stress, and lower levels of anxiety among individuals recovering from substance abuse (Pardinia et al., 2000). Religious activities tended to have a better prognosis among schizophrenic patients (Verghese et al., 1989; 1990). Depression creates a sense of spiritual disconnection where the participant feels disconnected with God, Community, and oneself. Spirituality was found to play an important role in coping with the pain of depression (Sarojjakool et al., 2008). Spiritual Intelligence connotes the ability to apply, exhibit and actualize spiritual resources, values, and qualities to improve daily functioning and wellbeing (Amram & Dryer, 2008). Spiritual people are generally happy, cheerful, at peace most of the time, rarely depressed, have excellent physical health, and are satisfied and find meaning in their life. Spiritual intelligence is related to spiritual resources such as Consciousness, Grace, Meaning, Transcendence and Truth (Amram, 2007).

The objective of the present study is to examine the strong predictors of resilience from among a set of Spiritual Intelligence capabilities among Christian youth.

Method

Participants

220 students including 79 boys and 141 girls, aged 16 to 19 years studying in classes

eleventh to first year of graduation participated in this investigation. All of them belong to Roman Catholic denomination of Christianity. They were drawn from Churches and Schools in Ernakulum District, Kerala.

Measures

BU Resilience Scale (Form A) (Annalakshmi, 2009): It consists of 30 Likert-type statements designed to assess capacity of people to cope with stress and catastrophe, and also used to indicate a characteristic of resistance to future negative events. The seven domains covered in the scale are duration taken to get back to normalcy, reaction to negative events, response to risk factors (specifically disadvantaged environment) in life, perception of effect of past negative events, defining 'Problems', hope/confidence in coping with future, and openness to experience and flexibility. The minimum and maximum possible scores on this scale are 30 and 150 respectively. The Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient of the scale was found to be 0.88 respectively. The concurrent validity of BURS with Resilience Scale for Adults (Friborg, 1995) and Bell's Adjustment Inventory are 0.35 and 0.38 respectively. The Cronbach Alpha for the scale on the present sample was found to be 0.83.

Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (ISIS) (Amram & Dryer, 2007): It is a 45-item self-report measure using a six-point Likert scale. It contains 22 subscales assessing separate Spiritual Intelligence capabilities related to Beauty, Discernment, Egolessness, Equanimity, Freedom, Gratitude, Higher-self, Holism, Immanence, Inner-wholeness, Intuition, Joy, Mindfulness, Openness, Practice, Presence, Purpose, Relatedness, Sacredness, Service, Synthesis, and Trust. These 22 subscales are grouped into 5 domains: Consciousness (that includes Intuition, Mindfulness and Synthesis), Grace (that includes Beauty, Discernment, Freedom, Gratitude, Immanence, Joy),

Meaning (Purpose, Service), Transcendence (Higher-Self, Holism, Practice, Relatedness, Sacredness) and Truth (Egolessness, Equanimity, Inner-wholeness, Openness, Presence, Trust). The internal consistency of the Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale reported by the authors was high with Cronbach Alpha equal to 0.97. The Cronbach Alpha for the scale on the present sample was found to be 0.85.

Results

The relationship between the spiritual intelligence capabilities was tested applying multiple regressions. The scores of the subjects on the integrated spiritual intelligence scale were treated as predictor of resilience among the subjects. The correlation between the resilience scores and the spiritual intelligence scores are given in the following table and the results of the multiple regressions is presented below.

Table 1. Correlation between scores of the subjects on the Integrated Spiritual Intelligence and BU Resilience Scale.

Measures	Pearson's Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Intuition and Resilience	.326**	0.00
Mindfulness and Resilience	.102	0.13
Synthesis and Resilience	.285**	0.00
Beauty and Resilience	.147*	0.03
Discernment and Resilience	.264**	0.00
Freedom and Resilience	-.090	0.18
Gratitude and Resilience	.251**	0.00
Immanence and Resilience	.303**	0.00
Joy and Resilience	.288**	0.00
Purpose and Resilience	.155*	0.02
Service and Resilience	.169*	0.01
Higher Self and Resilience	.199**	0.00
Holism and Resilience	.242**	0.00
Practice and Resilience	.091	0.18
Relatedness and Resilience	.119	0.08
Sacredness and Resilience	.098	0.15
Egolessness and Resilience	.115	0.09
Equanimity and Resilience	.382**	0.00
Inner wholeness and Resilience	.146*	0.03
Openness and Resilience	.198**	0.00
Presence and Resilience	.141*	0.04
Trust and Resilience	.394**	0.00

As may be seen in the table, of the 22 spiritual intelligence (SI) capabilities studied, 16 were significantly correlated with resilience. The 16 SI capabilities having significant correlation with resilience were retained for further analysis. Mindfulness, Freedom, Practice, Relatedness, Sacredness, and Egolessness were not used for further analysis.

Using the stepwise method, five models emerged. A significant model emerged, $F(5, 214) = 20.65$, $p > 0.000$, that explains 57% of the variance (Adjusted R square = 0.31). Table 2 gives information for the predictor variables that are included in the model. Intuition, Beauty, Gratitude, Immanence, Purpose, Service, Higher Self, Holism, Inner Wholeness, Openness and Presence were excluded. The R square was found to be 0.325. A posthoc power analysis carried out revealed that power of the analysis is 1.00. Values of VIF range from 1.1 to 1.2 and the values of tolerance range are 0.9 for the five variables included in the model. This indicates that there is no presence of multicollinearity.

Table 2. The Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients for the variables included in the model.

Variable	B	SE B	$\hat{\alpha}$
Trust	1.49	0.36	0.25
Equanimity	1.85	0.38	0.28
Joy	1.02	0.36	0.16
Synthesis	0.91	0.42	0.13
Discernment	0.84	0.40	0.12

The table above shows the unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients for the variables included in the model. The results show that trust, equanimity, joy, synthesis, and discernment contribute significantly to resilience.

Discussion

Trust, Equanimity, Joy, Synthesis and Discernment are found in the present study to be the few spiritual intelligence capabilities highly related to resilience. Succinctly, the

findings attest to the positive influence of a few selected spiritual intelligence capabilities adds to resilience. A person capable of investing trust, adhering to equanimity, enjoying positive emotional state, capable of synthesizing and discernment seems to be positively resilient. These findings are in line with the findings of studies done in India and elsewhere regarding the general influence of spirituality on well being and mental health.

Trust refers to not being driven and ruled by fears. A resilient trusts that things will work out for the best inspite of apparent paucity of options available for ensuring safety. Resilience is felicitated by remembrance of occasional act of kindness and protection received from strangers (Kempler, 2002). Further, the resilient strongly trusts in the existence of a divine system which will settle everything in a fair manner. This trust in the resilient support an inner sense of control over what happened to oneself (Kempler, 2002).

Equanimity, the sense of awareness of what is happening without getting lost in experience when things are chaotic, requires the perspective in which one does not view anything from personal point of view (Kempler, 2002). Not taking hostility and mistreatment personally thus contributes to resilience. Joy seems to be associated with resilience since as a positive emotion it serves as a fundamental human strength (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions broaden thought-action repertoires and function in building enduring personal resources. This new adaptive significance of positive emotions in turn enhances one's capabilities to bounce back to normalcy after a difficult situation.

Synthesis, looking for and finding connection even in the middle of conflict, drawing on one's ability to stay so as to solve problems, accepting and going beyond paradoxes and ability to integrate seemingly conflicting points of view seem to be logically related to resilience. Maslow's described the Survivors of difficult times have been

described as synergistic personalities who resolve, master and integrate conflicting forces and are motivated to create a good society not just for themselves but also to those around them (Maslow, 1971).

Discernment, believing that one's actions are aligned with his/her soul which is one's essential true nature, being aware of inner truth which is what one knows inside to be true, having one's actions aligned with his/her values and effortlessly standing firm in my inner truth is legitimately related to resilience. This finding is in line with another study done by the present investigator (Annalakshmi, 2010) which reported that those who spoke the truth and presented themselves in a genuine way were more resilient than others.

Magical/spiritual thinking could serve to provide a sense of protection during times of adversity Kempler (2002) and hence are highly related to resilience. The resilient tends to develop a private system of beliefs that he/she was personally protected by a divine power. Kempler, who was born a Jew was believing in the Virgin Mary during his childhood in persecution. Thus religious faith might construe a version of the "just universe" doctrine, namely, that if I behaved and thought properly, and were a good person, I would be watched over and kept safe. It is a kind of contract, and it gives the persecuted an inner sense of control over what happened to him or her. Religiosity might thus protect the resilient from unmanageable anxiety. The findings imply that developing certain spiritually related attributes might enhance resilience individuals.

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