

Boosting resilience through spiritual well-being: COVID-19 Example

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual well-being is the affirmation of one's life in a relation to external world, one's own self and a transcendental power like God. It reflects positive feelings, attitudes, and perceptions leading to a sense of identity, wholeness, peace, harmony, and purpose in life. Spirituality gives a holistic perspective to the life of the individual and helps to make sense of life more comfortably. This holistic view gives the person the power to cope with difficult situations. This power, also known as psychological resilience, makes the individual stronger and more resistant to difficulties. In this study, resilience has been defined as the individual endurance against difficulties and the ability to bounce back and even get better. It provides more comfortable solutions to problems and troubles. In this study, it is predicted that individuals with high spiritual well-being will be more spiritually resistant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is one of the most noteworthy periods when people need to be psychologically strong and resilient. Hence, we hypothesized that spiritual well-being of individuals will be effective on their resilience. We conducted our study in Turkey among adults older than 20 years old. We used online surveys for conducting the field study. We obtained 384 usable data and we analyzed our data by using SPSS 20.0 statistics program. Results confirmed the assumption of this study, regarding the relationship between spiritual well-being and resilience relationship. It is revealed that when individuals have greater spiritual well-being they tend to be more resilient during the covid-19 pandemic.

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Introduction

During pandemics like COVID-19 people feel more anxious and they become more precautious for lowering the risk of being infected (Park et al., 2020). The rapid spread of COVID-19 has given way to panic and anxiety creating many social and psychological burdens like obligatory social distance, border shutdowns and quarantine (Van Bavel et al., 2020). Moreover, mandatory health measures made it more difficult to maintain daily life leading to excessive anxiety and making people vulnerable to many mental problems (Trzebiński et al., 2020). In fact, possible long-term results of the illness are unpredictable, effecting perceptions convictions and even creating irrational and exaggerated perceptions about the process (Trzebiński et al., 2020).

As Affleck et al. (2001) suggest when individuals are anxious tend to angrier and more depressed and this this lowers their resistance to disease. In fact, it is quite significant to understand the reason behind the fact that some individuals survive and go beyond in the face of adversities while some others live considerable problems and even lose their lives (Baykal, 2018). In this point, resistance, a psychological power to bounce back from adversities is quite explanatory. Without doubt, there are many factors effecting one's resistance and spirituality can be accepted one of these factors. In fact, there is a constant interaction between individual's biological needs and psychosocial needs.

A physically occurring problem can also affect the social and psychological field, and the effects in the emotional and spiritual areas may cause some physically pathological changes. On the one hand, the meaning that individuals load to life also affects their lives and decisions at many points. For this reason, in the field of medicine, the idea that patients should go beyond the evaluation of patients only with a medical approach and that the individual in the treatment process should be addressed with a holistic approach,

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that is, physical, social, emotional, economic, cultural and spiritual aspects, is gaining importance (Boztilkı ve Ardıç, 2017). Hence in this study, it is assumed that during COVID-19 pandemic, individuals' spiritual well-being will positively affect their resilience and help them struggle with the difficulties of the process.

In this study, it is predicted that individuals with high spiritual well-being will be more spiritually resistant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is one of the most noteworthy periods when people need to be psychologically strong and resilient. Hence, we hypothesized that spiritual well-being of individuals will be effective on their resilience.

We conducted our study in Turkey among adults older than 20 years old. We used online surveys for conducting the field study. We obtained 384 usable data and we analyzed our data by using SPSS 20.0 statistics program.

Literature Review

Conceptual Background

Spirituality

Underlying the increasing interest in spirituality, there are some important social and economic developments and trends that have been seen effective on people especially in America and have spread all over the world. Financial failures, bankruptcies and economic and social crises have demoralized people. Changing social conditions, and the decreased levels of attendance to sacred places, congregations and societies where people used to socialize and feed themselves spiritually have contributed to the increased need for spirituality and increased the popularity of religious and spiritual teachings that place emphasis on meditation and the serenity of the soul (Duchon and Plowman, 2005). In the extant literature religiosity and spirituality are seen as frequently confused concepts. Religiosity is the extent to which individuals believe, follow, and practice a specific religion. Even though spirituality and religiosity are two resembling concepts, religion is a clear system of worship doctrine shared within a certain group (Panzini et al., 2017) whereas spirituality, with its common use; can be considered as individual's inner world and relations with other people, their place in the universe, the meaning of life; The effort to understand and accept is a connection established with a higher level of power that affects an individual's behavior and outlook on life. In fact, it appears as a broader concept than an ordinary religion, doctrine or dogma (Fry, 2003).

Hill et al. (2000) argued that it is wrong to view spirituality and religiosity as two distinct concepts that have nothing in common with each other, and polarizing these concepts as individual-institutional or good-bad will lead future research to erroneous points. They also did not find the overly broad definitions meaningful. Hill et al. (2000) reviewed recent research empirically on individuals to define themselves as "religious" or "spiritual" and found that a large proportion of people identify themselves as both religious and spiritual. While religion is largely about structured belief systems, spirituality is more often defined as closeness to God or a similar supreme power and interdependence with the outside world and of her beings (Narcıkara, 2017).

Religion and spirituality overlap significantly on certain fundamental issues. For example; in both religion and spirituality the search for the sacred is central. Both involve the search for meaning. In other words, the search for meaning is a voluntary activity, many religious traditions and spiritual contemporary approaches emphasize the individual's leading role in seeking the sacred (Hill et al., 2000). Searching for meaning, or the search for the sacred, as Hill et al. (2000) put it, involves some major processes; first, it is the recognition of the sacred and what is worth seeing and dedication and commitment because it is sacred; secondly, the adoption of the sacred by the seeker, and lastly, the individual's effort to maintain the sacred in his religious or spiritual experience. Indeed, both spirituality and religion include subjective emotions, experiences, thoughts, and behaviours that result from the search for the sacred (Hill et al., 2000).

Spirituality is a psychological pattern in which a meaningfulness, integrity, and interconnectedness are combined giving way to a more fruitful life (Baykal and Zehir, 2018). Spirituality is a highly individual and intensely personal awareness creating a state of existence leading to greater connectedness with both the external world and with one's own self (Baykal, 2019). Actually, it is an expression of meaning in life, affiliation and joy (Dreyer and Hermans, 2014). In this point, understanding spiritual well-being is also important. Spiritual well-being is understanding and enjoying life in a relationship with God, self, and external world in a way nurturing and celebrating wholeness (Ellison, 1983). According to Ellison (1983) spiritual well-being encompasses both a religious and a social-psychological component. Brooks et al. (2018) also claimed that spiritual "well-being" includes two dimensions; one is existential well-being, referring to the "earthly" aspect of spirituality, such as the purpose of life and life satisfaction. The second, earthly dimension of spirituality explains the connection with a higher being.

Resilience

In daily life, many people are confronted with many painful, traumatic and stressful events. Fortunately, although the number of these traumatic events is quite high, only a relatively small number of people experience severe mental problems (Zehir and Narcıkara, 2018) and a merely small part of people end up with psychological problems and disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). In this point, the concept of resilience gains importance in understanding individuals inclination to recover and bounce back from adversities. Generally,

resilience is an indicator of self-efficacy, development, and ability to manage oneself and one's environment. It is the ability to overcome unexpected situations, crises and disadvantageous conditions (Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003). Resilience is a significant concept in understanding how people successfully handle adversity. In fact, resilience is one of the core concepts of positive organizational behavior explaining the positive adaptation (Luthans, 2002), the ability of reconditioning and rebuilding a steady psychological and physical state in times of adversity (Seiler and Jenewein, 2019).

Individual resilience is an important topic that has been covered by positive organizational scholars. Positive organizational behavior, which focuses on human power and development, has opened a new era in organizational behavior research, bringing to the agenda a new type of capital namely, positive psychological capital consisting of psychological resilience, self-efficacy, hope and optimism. Psychological capital is a special mechanism that brings these four capacities together on a common ground and works in harmony with each other (Narcikara, 2017).

In this paper, we focused on individual resilience, the kind of resilience explaining a healthy functioning in the face of adversities (Bonanno, 2004). It is significant owing to its direct impact on the ability of effectively responding to sudden changes (Kimhi et al., 2020:2). Individual resilience is considered as a stable trait, a state-like developable capacity, or a process. Resilient people are often better in withstanding adversities. According to Positive organizational behavior researcher's resilience is a state-like attribute, of individuals that is stable over certain periods but developable and changable in the long run (Luthans, 2002).

Resilience-promoting factors explain personal or environmental properties that exist irrespective of an individual's experience of adversity. These factors can buffer the negative impacts of adversities (Hartmann et al., 2020:919). Resilience is not merely commonplace adaptation. It can be explained as a reservoir increasing possibility of adaptation. Moreover, resilience in a certain period of life gives way to higher levels of resilience in another time period in the future (Baykal, 2018:35). That means, when the individual replenishes his/her resilience capacity now, it becomes greater in the future and unfortunately the opposite is also true. So we assume that individuals that have increased their resilience capacity previously can be more successful in dealing with discomfort of COVID-19 during the pandemic.

Spirituality and COVID-19

Conservation of resources theory suggest that health is a precious asset that culminates overall psychological well-being of individuals (Godinic, Obrenovic and Khudaykulov, 2020: 63). During the pandemic many people has come across the risk of losing their individual resources including their psychological well-being, physical health and even their money. Unfortunately, people experienced the risk of losing their resources in both material and non-material sense (Silahataroğlu, Baykal and Canbolat, 2020: 295). Similarly, Kimhi et al.'s (2020) empirical study conducted during the pandemic revealed that ndividual resilience is one of the most important factors decreasing COVID-19 anxiety.

Baykal (2020) assumed that the anxiety experienced during the COVID-19 outbreak will have a positive effect on the endurance levels of individuals, and this will affect their life satisfaction and her results revealed that higher anxiety levels led to lower levels of psychological resilience, which in turn led to lower levels of life satisfaction.

Actually, there is a possibility that the moral values of individuals will increase the benefits of interventions applied to them (Boztilki and Ardiç, 2017:40). In fact, during illnesses hope gains great importance. Hope is the engine of motivation. If there is no hope, patients can give up the struggle. Therefore, spiritual beliefs, which are an important source of hope, are very important in the treatment process. As in the case with COVID-19 pandemic, illnesses that increase the perception of uncertainty and contagiousness reduce the morale of individuals and spirituality can be used as an important tool to combat uncertainty in such processes.

During the pandemic many organizations and projects utilized spirituality to support and increase people's morale and motivations. For example, in their article Ribeiro et al., (2020) explained Spiritual Hotline Project, which is designed by Brazilian authorities to give spiritual and religious support to individuals that created spiritual comfort and care during the pandemic. In his review article, Fardin (2020) suggested that paying attention attention to the spirituality and religiosity of COVID-19-infected patients can improve their well-being. Lastly, Prieto-Ursúa and Jódar (2020) also showed the importance of meaning, religiosity and spirituality in posttraumatic growth during COVID-19.

Resilience and COVID-19

In fact, resilience is not only the ability to cope with negative events, but also the ability to react in the most reasonable way when faced with extreme positive events (Luthans et al., 2008). Studies on psychological resilience focus on three main factors: risk, predisposition and protective factors (Kutanis & Yıldız, 2014). While examining the risk factor for the problem and the vehicle that causes negative consequences of the problem in terms of all kinds of structures and processes (for example: being a minority, stressful events, difficult temperament, etc.), On the other hand, susceptibility is the tendency to conduct psycho-social research against all kinds of factors and risk factors that affect the exaggeration of a negative situation or risky factors. Examples include chronic illness, poverty, adverse environmental conditions, and excessive exposure to negative discourses. Protective factors are all kinds of factors that will positively change the risky and negative situation. For example; internal control, good friendship, intelligence, positive perspective, family support, etc. (Kutanis and Yıldız, 2014).

During COVID-19 pandemic individuals had to embrace many preventive measures making life difficult for them (Jovančević and Miličević, 2020). People changed their lifestyles profoundly and became more hesitant in socializing. Many organizations and individuals embraced flexible working styles like teleworking for increasing their resilience in the face of the pandemic (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020). Unfortunately, unpredictable course of the disease created intolerance among individuals (Nicola et al., 2020). In this period, governments compelled people to stay at home in order to prevent dispersion of the illness making more important for maintaining one's mental health in quarantine (Yamaguchi et al., 2020). Actually, throughout the pandemic, prevention techniques like social isolation and teleworking deprived individuals of their critic psychological assets such as self-esteem, self-efficacy and social support utilized for lowering stress (Jesus et al., 2016). Moreover, economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic created anxiety about money and has given way to negative effects on peoples' mental health (Godinic, Obrenovic and Khudaykulov, 2020:61). That is why, a resistant and flexible attitude gained importance for adopting to the new way of life which is limiting individuals both psychologically and physically in many domains of life. According to Kimhi et al. (2020) COVID-19 is an important opportunity in terms of its scope and impact on examining effect of resilience on individuals facing serious crises.

COVID-19 pandemic is a period in which individuals' psychological resilience should be high and at the same time nurture the resilience of individuals. The relevant literature has also shown that the disasters experienced by individuals have positive effects on psychological resilience, showing that resistance to difficulties becomes more confident, compassionate, dedicated and goal-oriented (Baykal, 2018; Prayag et al., 2020).

Effect of Spirituality on Resilience during COVID-19

In his review regarding the association between religiosity and human flourishing, Myers (2008) revealed that individuals engaging in religion, enjoy greater happiness and life satisfaction, they tend to be less depressive, and they tend to recover much faster after loss and adversities when compared to nonreligious individuals. In fact, spiritual perspectives contribute to better tolerance to stress, and a better ability to cope with serious diseases and social isolation (Sharma et al., 2017). According to Roberto et al. (2020) religion and spirituality are important factors that make individuals reframe the crisis and perceive event more positively. Individuals having connectedness with their environment and with their inner world are better at finding solutions to their problems and they are better at making sense of events (Narcikara, 2017). In fact, spirituality and religiosity create shortcuts to solve both worldly problems and concerns regarding afterlife.

We can also come across empirical studies showing the positive effect of spirituality on individuals during the pandemic. For instance, Smith, Webber and DeFrain's (2013) study revealed that spiritual well-being and resilience are interrelated among young people. Later, Roberto et al. (2020) showed the positive effect of spirituality on women during the pandemic. In another study conducted in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rias et al. (2020) showed that spirituality is effective in combating diseases and leads to lower levels of anxiety and higher positive emotions. Del Castillo (2020) also examined the possible benefits of spiritual well-being in recovering from adversities and its effect on dealing with major life stressors.

Being inspired from the related literature, in this study, it is assumed that during the COVID-19 pandemic individuals' spiritual well-being will have a positive effect on their resilience levels. Thus, we hypothesized;

H1: During the COVID-19 pandemic, spiritual well-being of individuals will have a positive effect on their resilience levels.

Research and Methodology

Sampling and Measurement Tools

Random sampling method has been adopted in collecting data in the relevant field study of this research. Individuals older than 20 years old and living in Turkey composed our universe. Related data have been collected during COVID-19 pandemic between the time period 14 May 2020 to 20 November 2020. In the related field research, we have sent 1535 online surveys via LinkedIn and 384 usable answers have been obtained. For measuring spiritual well-being, we used 12-item FACIT-sp scale version 4 scale of Peterman et al. (2002) consisted of three dimensions, that are belief, peace and meaning. The 6 items used for measuring individual resilience have been taken from the psychological capital scale adapted to Turkish by Luthans et al. (2005) Çetin and Basım (2012). Responses have been collected with five-point Likert Scale. In the related sample. %42 of the participants were female, % 13 had high school degree, % 55 of the participants had university degree, % 27 had master's degree and % 5 had PhD degree. Among our participants %42 was between the ages of 20-30, % 28 between the ages of 30-40 and %22 between the ages of 40-50 and the others were older than 50 years old.

Analyzes and Hypothesis Testing

Before starting with standard statistical tests normality of our data has been examined. For this goal first of all skewness of the data has been examined. Statistically, skewness can be explained as the measure of the symmetry of a distribution; in comparison to a normal distribution. Skewness values falling inside the range of -1 to +1 designates an acceptable normal distribution in social sciences (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2013). In our study answers had a skewness of 0.769 which makes it a proper value for moving on with the analysis. On the other hand, a kurtosis value between ± 1.0 is accepted as excellent for most psychometric purposes (George and Mallery, 2012). Moreover, a kurtosis score of 0.881 has made the sample a plausible data set for tests. Moreover, Kaiser-

Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy analysis has been conducted in order to examine if the data was sufficient for moving on to factor analysis. The sufficiency coefficient of the sample has been found to be 0,911 and Barlett score was under 0,001 that can be accepted as plausible scores to continue with factor analysis.

In this study, factor analysis has been conducted in order to see whether the items have been loaded in the assumed dimensions and Cronbach's alpha coefficients have been computed for examining internal consistency of the variables. Results of factor analysis and Cronbach Alfa values have been summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1: Factor Analysis

Component		Cronbach Alfa
SpiritualWell-being9	0,973	0.863
SpiritualWell-being10	0,949	
SpiritualWell-being1	0,969	
SpiritualWell-being2	0,903	
SpiritualWell-being1	0,73	
SpiritualWell-being2	0,769	
SpiritualWell-being3	0,73	
SpiritualWell-being5	0,711	
SpiritualWell-being7	0,738	
SpiritualWell-being8	-0,614	
Resilience1	0,713	0.805
Resilience2	0,634	
Resilience4	0,789	
Resilience5	0,829	
Resilience6	0,82	

Later, dyadic correlations between the research variables have been examined as seen in Table 2. correlation results revealed that in all dyadic relationships there are statistically significant and positive relationships. In other words, in each dyadic relationships the two variables are correlated with each other and are moving in the same direction. Hence, we can say that subdimensions of spiritual well-being are correlated with resilience ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$ level).

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		Resilience	Faith	Meaning& Peace
Resilience	Pearson Correlation	1		
Faith	Pearson Correlation	,214**	1	
Meaning& Peace	Pearson Correlation	,504**	,468**	1

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

Lastly, in order to examine the assumed positive effect of spiritual well-being on resilience, we continued with regression analysis. As it is shown in Table 3 below, results of the regression analysis (Adjusted R Square:251, Sig:000, t:65.187***) revealed that spiritual well-being has a positive effect on resilience of individuals. According to the regression results both faith dimension (t:4.272, sign: 0,000) and Meaning & Peace dimension (t: 5, 962, sign: 0.000) have a positive effect on resilience of individuals. Results confirm the assumption in this study, regarding the possible effect of spiritual well-being on resilience and this positive effect occurred through both dimensions of spiritual well-being that makes it a stronger relationship.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Beta	t
Constant	1.770	9.152***
Faith	0.160	4.272***
Meaning & Peace	0,26	5,962***
F	65.187	
Adjusted R Square	0.251	
Sign.	0.000	

Conclusion

Experiences such as illness, suffering, and death are among challenging life events. In the postmodern age, individuals and organizations frequently encounter chaotic situations and suffer from adversities and traumas (Baykal, 2019). COVID-19 has been one of the most challenging and unexpected traumas of the 21st century. The fear of getting sick and the discomfort caused by social isolation, experienced during the pandemic period, made individuals restless and nervous in both domains of life, namely at work and at home. On this disturbing environment spirituality can be beneficial for both psychological and physical well-beings of individuals (Wild et al., 2020) and is important to gain awareness about spirituality to cope with stress, and to provide support to individuals (Boztilki and Ardiç, 2017).

Previous studies have proved the effect of spiritual well-being on resilience (Legada, Madrigal and Maravilla, 2020; Duran, Avcı and Esim, 2020) However, there are only a few studies confirming this relationship during COVID-19 pandemic. Among these scarce studies, Roberto et al. (2020) also examined spirituality-resilience during relationship during COVID-19 and their qualitative study revealed the impact of spirituality on resilience in the context of the COVID-19. Similarly, Maraj, Gülerce, Rana and Meraj (2020) explored the relationship between resilience and hopelessness and showed the mediator role of spirituality in this relationship. These results including the outputs of this study confirms the assumptions regarding the importance of investing in spiritual well-being in order to better cope with crises and traumas like Covid-19 pandemic.

This study is significant in explaining importance of individuals' spiritual well-being in their inclinations to struggle with life events. The covid-19 outbreak has been an important test for our individual resilience, and individuals with high strength to cope with difficulties individually can overcome this test more easily. It is a kind of experience for those people with high resilience. They use this resilience to learn up to which point they can manage their mental health and they can adopt to the new situation.

In this study, the impact of spiritual well-being on the psychological resistance level of Turkish people during the COVID-19 pandemic has been examined, and the assumption of research has been confirmed. Research results have proven the importance of investing in individuals' spirituality. Individuals with high spirituality become more flexible in difficult and traumatic times such as the COVID-19 process and can adapt to the new situation more easily. Results revealed that building better coping mechanisms we should have higher resilience and higher resilience is possible through higher spiritual well-being. Hence, both individuals and authorities can give importance to spiritual well-being of individuals and embrace a more holistic approach encompassing both scientific and spiritual coping methods to struggle with the pandemic.

In further studies the effect of religiosity can be tested besides spiritual well-being. By this way, the differences between the effects of spirituality and religiosity can be seen regarding their effects on resilience. Since these are frequently confused concepts, by comparing results of these two studies we can understand whether people really perceive these concepts as different phenomenon or not.

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