A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON POSITIVE LIFE ORIENTATION AND RESILIENCE BETWEEN THE BANK EMPLOYEES FOLLOWERS AND NON-FOLLOWERS OF SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATIONS

Shweta Srivastava[1]* Anindya S Nag[2]

[1]*Visiting Faculty , University of Lucknow
[2]Counselling Psychologist

*Corresponding author: Shweta Srivastava
Visiting Faculty , University of Lucknow

ABSTRACT:-
Present study was conducted on 60 bank employees, between the age of 28 years to 40 years, out of which 30 were those who follow any spiritual group (Art of living, Brahmakumaris, Shiv Yog etc.) and rest who don't follow any such group. Data of non-follower employee group has been collected from various offices after a short interview with the subjects, while data of followers has been collected from various satsang and meditation centers. Their resilience and positive life orientation were compared. Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire has been used to measure resilience. To measure positive life orientation, Scale of Positive Life Orientation has been used, which is developed by Dr. Manju Agarwal and Ajit K. Dalal. t-test has been used to calculate the significance of difference between the groups for both the variables. Findings suggest that there is significantly more resilience and PLO in followers than in non-followers of spiritual community or religious group. This highlights the importance of community and group support that seems to be essential in spiritual or religious coping during adversity.

Key Words:- Spiritual Groups, Resilience, Positive Life Orientation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Spirituality or "Ahyatatman" is a combination of two words "Adhi" means over/upon/concerning, and "Atman" means self / soul. So literally spirituality is something that is concerning to self or soul. Bhagwat Geeta says "**परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते**" (Chapter 8.3) which means "Indwelling into core self or in our own nature." This allows us to flow in accordance to our own consciousness (SvaaBhaav). Thus a Spiritual Organization is any organization which facilitates this process, have a spiritual Master or Guru, follow some specific Spiritual Ideology and have followers. Every spiritual organization is united by a specific belief system and philosophy unique to itself. Most of the times these spiritual organizations advocate for a philosophy propounded by the founder who is an accomplished spiritual person. Under the founder's tutelage, the followers practice spirituality focusing on specific to broad range of psycho-spiritual dimensions of life. In essence, spirituality is the process of gaining self-realization and in activities of spiritual groups are aimed at facilitating the process of self-realization through various means. This present study includes participants from Shiv Yog, Brahma Kumari, Art of Living, Satsang and meditation groups who incorporate specific branch of Sanatan Dharm (Hinduism). Even though Hinduism is a religion, the inherent processes in the some of the

communities are spiritual in nature and doesn't follow God, rather seeks to have a connection to the spirit. Due to the complex intricacies of Yog practices that have gained universal acceptance in many other religions and considering its physical and emotional benefits, the researchers are refraining from ascertaining a difference between religiosity and spirituality and taking both of these term together. Spirituality rests on five key themes that are relying on relationships, coping through spirituality, using the power of beliefs, commitment to spiritual values and spiritual transformation. This allows spiritual practitioners to have a complementary view of their circumstances and life, helping them to shift perspectives and access substantial social and psychological resources based on which their resilience is built (Ramsey, 2012). Religiosity is similar to spirituality in providing resources to resolve issues, provide meaning and purpose to life so that coping to stress is possible and that includes forming a relationship with a higher authority or being. It has a larger community and the practices are more organized than spiritual organizations (Austin et al., 2018). The religious coping is linked to cognitive reappraisal as an emotional regulation strategy where the events are reframed to extract a positive value (Thomas & Savoy 2014). This provides positive control over the tragic situation and protects from generating anxiety, PTSD and depression (Llewellyn et al., 2013). Furthermore, religious coping helps to gain positive mental outcomes (Cornish et al., 2017).

Both in spirituality and religiosity, the emphasis is laid more on self-improvement and growth rather than on the cause of the events. There is a value-based growth achieved by emotional regulation strategies and positive reappraisals. In benevolent religious and spiritual communities the social capital is high. As a positive outcome, both spirituality and religiosity in organizations help build resilience. Resilience is the ability to cope with adverse situation and bounce back efficiently especially after trauma and the ability to adapt to the debilitating after effects of stress. Life as a process is fraught with tragedy, adversity and trauma that requires dynamic adjustments to the self-concept, mental, physical and emotional capacities. Resilience, hence, is the significant attribute that allows this dynamic adjustment to pave way to leading life even after adversity. This includes the ability to cope, build self-efficacy in the process, use optimism and receive social support so that flexibility of the mindset is maintained after a strong conditioning circumstance like a tragedy. This further leads to harboring positive emotions and fostering of self-esteem by ascribing a meaning or purpose to the life circumstance (Helmreich et al., 2017).

Hinging on this new meaning that justifies its purpose in the trajectory of life, the individual generates the strength to move forward with life. This further leads to development of a positive outlook towards life in general which is also known as Positive Life Orientation. Positive Life Orientation is the positive attitude towards life events that includes making a positive meaning of any situation. This positivity bias seems to be a predisposition of focusing in the positive side of experience despite their negative or deterring quality. Precisely, the PLO (Positive Life Orientation) is the ability to reflect on the brighter side of a situation and maintain this attitude throughout (Caprara et al., 2010). It is associated with optimism and life satisfaction. This accentuates the meaning of PLO as an attitude that includes optimism directly and leads to life satisfaction due to the selective focus on the positive aspects of life events. However, optimism is a positive apprehension of pertaining to an event, while PLO is more of a cognitive reappraisal and reconstruction of the event mentally. In essence, this positive attitude towards crisis provides precedent to optimism to build a future course of action. Hope and optimism hence, seem to be a consequence of PLO. With high optimism there are chances of negative outcomes if there is lack of PLO. PLO, hence, proves to be coping strategy to offset the negative consequences of life events that has relatively good self-efficacy than simply having optimism.

It is evident that resilience and positive life orientation seem to be connected. Spiritual or religious communities use various strategies to inculcate resilience and promote life satisfaction. However, spirituality and religiosity, both can be practiced in isolation i.e. independently from an organization. This prompts the researchers to assess the difference in the resilience and positive life orientation in followers and non-followers. The spiritual and religious communities indulge in organized methods of self and community improvement that seeks consistent and deep involvement. In contrary, someone

practicing a religion or spirituality may not be actively involved in the greater aspects of the belief system or engaging in the activities or practices. Due to this distinction, the sample population has been segregated into followers and non-followers of a religious/ spiritual organization.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between spirituality and resilience shows positive correlation in several studies (Lucchetti & Lucchetti, 2014). It has been associated with lower stress level, decreasing suicidal thoughts, anxiety reduction and depression along with decrease in drug use (Moreira-Almeida et al., 2014). When spirituality is integrated in medical treatment, patients tend to rate 28% higher than average score for end-of-life quality (Balboni & Peteet, 2017). Studies have maintained the notion that spirituality predicts resilience along with purpose and optimism (Manning, 2013). In a study where the nurses were attending religious services on regular basis, they reported lower death rates than the ones who were not engaged in religious activities. The nurses who attended frequented religious activities more than once a week have shown even lower rates of mortality (Li et al., 2016). Spirituality has also helped cancer patients gain a sense of life and spiritual roles have helped them cope with the disease, there by fostering resilience. (Hunter-Hernández et al., 2015).

The correlation of Spirituality and Resilience seems to be 0.53 in a study conducted on sample of 343 people belonging to 3 different ethnicities (Fangauf, 2014). Similar studies for earthquake survivors have been reported to have 0.40 as the correlation between the two factors (Han et al., 2016). The correlation seems to be 0.38 in American Students who were childhood violence victims (Howel & Miller-Graff, 2014). This moderate correlation is based on the understanding that spirituality bestows comfort and consolation during and after crisis that paves the way for hope and recovery in future. However, further studies expound on the complex and didactic relationship between spirituality and resilience (Tuck & Anderson, 2014). This relationship also fosters leader resilience and brings life satisfaction, as noted in a study where 101 executives participated out of which 25 executives were interviewed. They mentioned how the meditative practices help build resilience that is higher than the non-meditators. It suggests that spirituality can curb organisational burnout as well. (Shelton et al., 2019).

In the past, spirituality and religiousness has been noticed to promote increase in happiness, life satisfaction and overall wellbeing that leads to resilience (Pickard &King, 2011; Faigin & Pargament, 2011). Finding meaning and purpose in the loss and debilitating events, reframing the narratives and being part of a community is the modus operandi of spirituality to reinforce resilience (Ramsey & Blieszner, 2013). Furthermore, it was found that spirituality is instrumental in building resilience by establishing trustworthy relationships, getting support in the religious organizations, fostering a value system that reinforces creativity, self-awareness, perseverance, hope and problem-solving (Vinueza, 2017). These qualities curiously define spirituality (Puchalski, 2014).

Resilience and Positive life orientation has multi-facet relationship. Spiritual practices are known to enhance resilience where self-efficacy is increased by cognitive re-construction of the narrative that helps in alleviating the emotional distress. Spiritual practitioners view their life events as universal experiences thereby promoting realistic optimism and adaptability. (Davis & Asliturk, 2011). Spiritual coping leads to high levels of hope and compassion as well. (Lassi & Mugnainai, 2015). This further leads to fostering of a sense of purpose and meaningfulness of the events bringing life satisfaction and improving overall well-being. The psychological strengths like forgiveness and gratitude are inculcated by the spiritual or religious practitioners. (Falb & Pargament, 2014). Even though the psychological benefits are evident, rigidity in religious beliefs may harm fostering of resilience in some cases (Falb & Pargament, 2014). Notable researches have been conducted to understand the religious/ spiritual practice and its influence on resilience and coping, however, no direct relationship has been established with positive life orientation. The several psychological

benefits explained in above researches indicate a plausible relationship between the two.

Research gap

The literature review indicates that resilience has similar features as positive life orientation as they are in a multi-faceted association. There has been studies on spirituality and religiosity in relation with resilience but significant work on Positive life orientation has been lacking. Furthermore, the sample population of religiosity and spirituality has not been distinguished from community or group based followers to individual practitioners. This is why this paper aims to highlight the difference between followers and non-followers of a community, organization or group and check their attitudes in resilience and positive life orientation.

2. METHODOLOGY

Considering the literature review that highlights the established association of resilience with spirituality/ religiosity and positive life orientation, this paper includes both as variables. For sample population of spirituality/ religiosity, distinction based on community/ group followers and non-followers have been made. The following objective and hypotheses has been drawn from the literature review summary.

2.1 **Objective of the study***: **To compare positive life orientation and resilience between employees followers and non followers of Spiritual Organization.***

2.2 Hypothesis of the study:

H1:- There will be no significant difference in Resilience between followers and non-followers of Spiritual Organization.

H2: There will be no significant difference in Positive Life Orientation between followers and non-followers of Spiritual Organization.

2.3 Method

2.3.1 Participants*:* participants included 60 bank employees. Out of which 30 were those who actively following any spiritual organization (like Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris etc), while rest 30 participants are those who are not following any such organization. Tools were administered on 40+40 employees (followers + non-followers), out of which 30+30(followers + non-followers) had been randomly selected for the study.

2.3.2 Tools :

1)   **SCALE OF POSITIVE LIFE ORIENTATION (SPLO)** To asses positive life orientation "**SCALE OF POSITIVE LIFE ORIENTATION (SPLO)**" has been used, which is developed by **Prof. Manju Agarwal** and **Dr Ajit K. Dalal**. This test contains 11 items. 2,4 and 5 number items are reversed scored. The participant has to respond on 1-4 rating scale, where one is the least and 4 is the most. Than all the scores are added and then total score is obtained. This further classifies gained score in to three categories

a)   Low positive life orientation (Scores 11-22)

b)   Average or normal positive life orientation (Score 22-33)

c)   High positive life orientation (Score 34-44)

2) **NICHOLSON Mc BRIDE RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE:-** To asses Resilience "**NICHOLSON Mc BRIDE RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE**" has been used, which is developed by Nicholson Mc Bride firm. This test contains 12 items. Further, classifies gained score in to four categories;

a) Developing level of resilience (Scores 0-37)

b) An established level of resilience (Scores 38-43)

c) A strong level of resilience (Scores 44-48)

d) An exceptional level of resilience (49-60)

2.4 Data collection and Analysis

Data of non followers, included those, who were employees of banking sector, aged between 28 to 40. While Data of follower was collected from Satsang and Meditation Centers of various spiritual organizations like Art of living, Brahm Kumaris, Sahaj Samadhi etc. This needs to be clarified at this point, that, followers were active participants and volunteers of such spiritual organizations. It is to ensure that data has been collected from those participants who were regularly practicing meditation and pranayama and visiting satsang.

Table 1-COMPARISON OF RESILIENCE BETWEEN FOLLOWERS AND NON FOLLOWERS

	Mean	SD	t- score
Follower employees	49 .3582	6.23	3.158
Non- follower employees	40.8360	5.98	

Significant at 0.05 level of confidence

It is evident from the table 1, that mean score of follower group is 49 .3582which means employees following any spiritual group fall under the category "**A strong level of resilience**" of the scale. While mean of Non follower group is 45.8360, which falls under "**An established level of resilience**" category of the scale. Table also indicates that t-value is 3.158 which is greater than t at 0.05, making it significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Thus Null Hypothesis is *rejected*. On the basis of which we can conclude that employees, follow spiritual groups are more resilient than the employees who do not follow any such group.

Table 2- COMPARISON OF POSTIVE LIFE ORIENTATION BETWEEN FOLLOWERS AND NON FOLLOWERS:

	Mean	SD	t- score
follower employees	48.80	5.848	2.643
Non- follower employees	32.26	4.679	

Significant at 0.05 level of confidence

Table 2 depicts that mean score of follower group is 48.80which means employees following any spiritual group fall under the category "**High positive life orientation**" of the scale. While, the mean of Non follower group is46.26, which falls under "**Average or normal positive life orientation**" category of the scale. Table also indicates that t-value is 2.643. which is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. Thus Null Hypothesis is *rejected*. On the basis of which we can conclude that employees, follow spiritual groups have more positive orientation towards life than the employees who do not follow any spiritual group.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spirituality and religiosity provides a framework to satisfy the existential needs of an individual. There is a difference in practicing in solitude and being a member or follower of a spiritual community. The sense of belongingness helps thrive during difficult times and thereby provides social support. The results of this study show that followers of a spiritual/ religious community, in fact show significantly greater resilience than non-followers. It is to be noted that there is an established level of resilience in the non-follower sample which is offset by the followers sample. This added resilience may be coming from being part of a group that carries the same vision and purpose. The PLO also shows a similar trend. The results show that there is a significant difference in resilience of followers and non-followers as depicted in table no 1. Similar results are indicated in table no. 2, for Positive Life Orientation which shows significant difference for followers and non-followers.

The exact factors that contribute to the difference was not assessed in this study, however it is evident

that resilience and PLO are higher in followers than in non-followers. The early researches have indicated the same, especially the researches that revolved around special circumstances (Seidmahmoodi, 2011; Jones et al., 2016). Spirituality and Indian philosophies shape the emotional experiences of individuals by bringing them to an equilibrium through spiritual methods. They foster the sense of security and bestow tryst upon a "Supreme being" that seems to transcend the emotional vacillation and adversity. Hence, an affiliation with a God or "Supreme being" helps optimize emotions paving way for resilience. One of the significant aspects of resilience is that people with inherent resilience often seek outside help and use healthy resources to cultivate a better mindset over adversity. Furthermore, resilient people often are self-aware, allowing them to make positive narratives out of their tragic circumstances.

Conversely, spirituality uses the same mechanisms to achieve resilience. In case of religiosity, there is faith on the benevolence of the God which ensures the followers of well-being and provides a bigger lens to make meaning out of the circumstance. However, religious communities are subject to individual difference due to heavy influence of culture and context affecting the coping style of the individual. Considering the aspect of following a religious or spiritual group, it suffices to mention that the key element of an opportunity to build social capital and promote solidarity sets the foundation for faith, optimism, hope and other resilient functions to be expressed in a healthy way (Shapiro, 2022). The Spiritual and Religious communities that followers were affiliate with have distinct visions that come under Hinduism. This is why researchers have not attempted to distinguish between religiosity and spirituality in this study. The factors that lead to developing of resilience and PLO can be part of future researches as it will shed light on the activities and aspects of Spiritual or religious practices that are key to healthy coping mechanism development. This will further aid mental health practitioners to create space for spirituality and religious practices as an active aspect of mental, psychological, emotional and social coping.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the Resilience and PLO as strengths of individuals who are followers of a spiritual or religious community and makes a distinction between resilience and PLO of non-followers who do not practice their religion or spirituality ardently. The results show an added increase in the resilience and PLO due to affiliation to a group or community that shares the common spiritual vision emphasizing the importance of participation in a community and building social capital to overcome trials of life. It can be derived from this paper that there is a need for greater spiritual and social support in times of adversity along with the protective assurance provided by spirituality or religion to far well in life. Following a religious group or spiritual community allows for consistent fulfillment of these needs.

References

1. Andrade Vinueza, M. A. (2017). The role of spirituality in building up the resilience of migrant children in Central America: Bridging the gap between needs and responses. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, *22*(1), 84-101.
2. Austin, P., Macdonald, J., & MacLeod, R. (2018). Measuring spirituality and religiosity in clinical settings: A scoping review of available instruments. *Religions*, *9*(3), 70.
3. Balboni, M., & Peteet, J. (Eds.). (2017). *Spirituality and religion within the culture of medicine: From evidence to practice*. Oxford University Press.
4. Caprara, G. V., Steca, P., Alessandri, G., Abela, J. R., & McWhinnie, C. M. (2010). Positive orientation: Explorations on what is common to life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, *19*(1), 63-71.
5. Cornish, M. A., Lannin, D. G., Wade, N. G., & Martinez, M. (2017). Can use of positive religious coping predict greater distress? An examination of Army soldiers on deployment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *64*(3), 302.
6. Davis, C. G., & Asliturk, E. (2011). Toward a positive psychology of coping with anticipated

events. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, *52*(2), 101.

7. Falb, M. D., & Pargament, K. I. (2014). Religion, spirituality, and positive psychology: Strengthening well-being. In *Perspectives on the intersection of multiculturalism and positive psychology* (pp. 143-157). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

8. Fangauf, S. V. (2014). Spirituality and resilience: New insights into their relation with life satisfaction and depression. *Maastricht Student Journal of Psychology and Neuroscience*, *3*.

9. Han, L., Berry, J. W., & Zheng, Y. (2016). The relationship of acculturation strategies to resilience: The moderating impact of social support among Qiang ethnicity following the 2008 Chinese earthquake. *PloS one*, *11*(10), e0164484.

10. Helmreich, I., Kunzler, A., Chmitorz, A., König, J., Binder, H., Wessa, M., & Lieb, K. (2017). Psychological interventions for resilience enhancement in adults. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, *2017*(2).

11. Howell, K. H., & Miller-Graff, L. E. (2014). Protective factors associated with resilient functioning in young adulthood after childhood exposure to violence. *Child abuse & neglect*, *38*(12), 1985-1994.

12. Hunter-Hernández, M., Costas-Muñíz, R., & Gany, F. (2015). Missed opportunity: spirituality as a bridge to resilience in Latinos with cancer. *Journal of religion and health*, *54*, 2367-2375.

13. Jones, K., Simpson, G., Briggs, L., & Dorsett, P. (2016). Does spirituality facilitate adjustment and resilience among individuals and families after SCI?. *Disability and Rehabilitation,* 38, 921 - 935. https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2015.1066884.

14. Lassi, S., & Mugnaini, D. (2015). Role of religion and spirituality on mental health and resilience: There is enough evidence. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, *17*(3), 661-663.

15. Li, S., Stampfer, M. J., Williams, D. R., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2016). Association of religious service attendance with mortality among women. *JAMA internal medicine*, *176*(6), 777-785.

16. Llewellyn, N., Dolcos, S., Iordan, A. D., Rudolph, K. D., & Dolcos, F. (2013). Reappraisal and suppression mediate the contribution of regulatory focus to anxiety in healthy adults. *Emotion*, *13*(4), 610.

17. Lucchetti, G., & Lucchetti, A. L. G. (2014). Spirituality, religion, and health: Over the last

18. 15 years of field research (1999–2013). *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, *48*(3), 199-215.

19. Manning, L. K. (2013). Navigating hardships in old age: Exploring the relationship between spirituality and resilience in later life. *Qualitative health research*, *23*(4), 568- 575.

20. Manning, L., Ferris, M., Rosario, C., Prues, M., & Bouchard, L. (2018). Spiritual resilience: Understanding the protection and promotion of well-being in the later life. Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging, 31, 168 - 186. https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2018.1532859.

21. Moreira-Almeida, A., Koenig, H. G., & Lucchetti, G. (2014). Clinical implications of spirituality to mental health: review of evidence and practical guidelines. *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry*, *36*, 176-182.

22. Pedhu, Y. (2023). Psychological Resilience In The Religious Life: Conceptual Framework And Efforts To Develop It. *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture.* https://doi.org/10.59670/jns.v34i.1938.

23. Pickard, J. G., & King, M. D. (2011). African American caregivers finding resilience through faith. *Resilience in aging: Concepts, research, and outcomes*, 261-271.

24. Puchalski, C., Ferrell, B., Virani, R., Otis-Green, S., Baird, P., Bull, J., Chochinov, H., & Handzo, G. (2009). Improving the Quality of Spiritual Care as a Dimension of Palliative Care: The Report of the Consensus Conference. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, *12*(10), 885–904. https://doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2009.0142

25. Ramsey, J. L. (2012). Spirituality and aging: Cognitive, affective, and relational pathways to resiliency. *Annual Review of Gerontology & Geriatrics*, *32*(1), 131.

26. Ramsey, J., & Blieszner, R. (2016). *Spiritual resiliency and aging: Hope, relationality, and the creative self*. Routledge.
27. Seidmahmoodi, J., Rahimi, C., & Mohamadi, N. (2011). Resiliency and religious orientation: Factors contributing to posttraumatic growth in Iranian subjects. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, *6*(4), 145.
28. Shapiro, E. (2022). A Protective Canopy: Religious and social capital as elements of a theory of religion and health. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *61*(6), 4466-4480.
29. Shelton, C., Hein, S., & Phipps, K. (2019). Resilience and spirituality: a mixed methods exploration of executive stress. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis,* 28, 399-416. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijoa-08-2019-1848.
30. Thomas, E., & Savoy, S. (2014). Relationships between traumatic events, religious coping style, and posttraumatic outcomes. *Traumatology: An International Journal*, *20*(2), 84.
31. Tuck, I., & Anderson, L. (2014). Forgiveness, flourishing, and resilience: The influences of expressions of spirituality on mental health recovery. *Issues in mental health nursing*, *35*(4), 277-282.