

# Psychological and Spiritual Condition of COVID-19 Survivors (A Literature Review)

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## ABSTRACT

Spirituality remains an interesting research topic, particularly during this COVID-19 pandemic era. Scholars are concerned about how COVID-19 survivors fight against anxiety and depression whose sources come from outside and from within themselves; how the COVID-19 survivors improve their spirituality during the isolation. This literature review shows that at least there are two available means for COVID-19 survivors to obtain psychological support, and there are two ways to find spiritual comfort when they are surrounded by the escalating number of the COVID-19 death count. Psychological supports could be obtained from themselves and their closest persons by thinking positively and exchanging news with other family members. As with psychological supports, spiritual comfort could be obtained from themselves and their closest persons, e.g. by reading religious literature and performing religious rituals in such a sincere a way that they eventually give them spiritual strength during the isolation.

Keywords: mental, support, and spiritual

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## Introduction

WHO officially declared Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Agung, 2020). The outbreak has abruptly changed many aspects of human life—economy, social life, and health. It is only natural that the pandemic has also influenced the mental health of people who have been infected by COVID-19 because of the stigmatization as virus carriers by their immediate surroundings; the depression they endure during the independent isolation (Sherman et al., 2021); and the fear that they could lose their life anytime (Khanna and Greyson, 2014). Between 1985 and 2020 saw an increasing quality of religious, religiosity, and spirituality studies (Kale, 2015). Some researchers have turned their focus on welfare effects, such as life satisfaction, anxiety, and fear of death. Those said effects are in line with the conditions faced by COVID-19 survivors. When they get more anxious and feel that death is near, how do they seek comfort or, even more so, how do they prepare for death (Khanna and Greyson, 2014)?

Although it is difficult for science to understand spirituality, because the concept is personal and exists in the subconscious realm, few scholars agree that spirituality is the most superior strength every individual possesses (Cotton et al., n.d.). Spirituality becomes a norm and a map of how actions should be conducted. Each individual has their way to actualize

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spirituality, following their thoughts, feelings, and experience (Cotton et al., n.d.). Some individuals can reach spiritual comfort when they do activities that are challenging and seem impossible. Sexton et al. (2018), on research about how mountain climbers feel after they reach the mountaintop, unveils that some participants get the satisfaction that can only be felt but not spoken. An earlier study by Sharpley (2011) argues that travelling to villages as a way of taking a break from work and activities can fulfil the spiritual needs of the participants. To face these difficult times, COVID-19 survivors seek psychological support and improve their spirituality by employing sources from within themselves or outside. Referring to Daryanti et al. (2021), the survivors could get psychological and spiritual support from the medics, when they are being taken care of at the hospital, and from their closest people, when they are at home. Zumstein-shaha, Ferrell, and Economou (2020) assert that thinking positively and performing worship rituals could serve as the sources of ultimate strength for COVID-19 survivors.

The first journal on transpersonal psychology was published in 1969. Thenceforth, this field has gained popularity as both theory and practice (Judy, 2011). The process of religious worship rituals, which combines worship rituals to reach the highest saturation point to experience endless happiness, enriches the advancement of this field. Their condition makes it essential for COVID-19 survivors to worship (Daryanti et al., 2021), and the act, when it is done consistently, leads them to spiritual comfort and peace of mind and soul. Peace of soul and inexpressible satisfaction become double rewards if an individual can challenge one's self to complete the worship ritual that she believes.

The COVID-19 survivors who are unable to pass through this situation will experience anxiety and depression due to their inability to bear stigmas and pains and their disappointment about the fate given to them by God (Sherman et al., 2021). They will wonder why they are the ones who should suffer, and it will lead to psychological disorder and profound disappointment with God. The news spread by the media about the increasing death count of COVID-19 worsens the mental health of the survivors (Agung, 2020). It is ironic that when the survivors need psychological support from their closest person, the information they consume from the media makes it even more difficult for them to struggle and recover.

## **Methods**

This research employs document study for data gathering, using Herzing's Publish or Perish. The software has three search menus, namely Google Scholar, Crossref, and Web of Science. Among others, the following keywords are used to find documents: "COVID-19", "Spirituality Experience", and "Mental Health". The limitation is the documents published

between January 2010 and March 2021. The search leads us to 35 articles that have the keywords. However, only 8 of them fit for this research, as follows:

**Table 1. The list of articles that fit the research**

<b>No</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Journal</b>	<b>Year</b>
1.	The Role of Spiritual Experience, Forgiveness, and Religious Support on the General Well-Being of Older Adults	Kyoung Hag Lee	Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging	2011
2.	Rural Tourism: A Spiritual Experience?	Richard Sharpley Deborah Jepson	Pergamon Annals of Tourism Research	2011
3.	Transpersonal Psychology: Mapping Spiritual Experience	Dwight Judy	Religions	2011
4.	Daily Spiritual Experiences Before and After Near-Death Experiences	Surbhi Khanna and Bruce Greyson	Psychology of Religion and Spirituality	2014
5.	The Persistence Of Spiritual Experience Among Churchgoing and Non-Churchgoing Italians: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives	Giuseppe Giordan, Leslie J. Francis, and Giuseppe Crea	Journal of Contemporary Religion	2018
6.	Absorption and Spiritual Experience: A Review of Evidence and Potential Mechanisms	Michael Lifshitz, Michiel van Elk, T.M. Luhrmann	Consciousness and Cognition	2019
7.	Spiritual Care in Critically Ill Patients during COVID-19 Pandemic	Rocío De Diego-Cordero (1), Lorena López-Gómez (2), Giancarlo Lucchetti (3); Bárbara Badanta (4).	Nursing Outlook	2021
8.	Anxiety, Depressive, and Trauma Symptoms during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evaluating the Role of Disappointment with God	Allen C. Sherman a,*, Crystal L. Park b, John M. Salsman c, Mark L Williams d, Benjamin C Amick e, Teresa J. Hudson f, Erick L. Messias g, Stephanie Simonton-Atchley a	Journal of Affective Disorders	2021

*Title: Paper Formatting (max. 12 words) (First author, et al.)*

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## Result and Discussion

The results of the literature review on spiritual experience, which have been published in previous research, are described in the following table:

Journal	Study Result
The Role of Spiritual Experience, Forgiveness, and Religious Support on the General Well-Being of Older Adults	An elderly with high-level spiritual experience lowers her anxiety and increases her psychological well-being.
Rural Tourism: A Spiritual Experience?	An individual could obtain spiritual experience by going to quiet places, away from the crowd. Such a journey is usually termed the religious tour, which aims to fulfil one's subconscious emotional needs.
Transpersonal Psychology: Mapping Spiritual Experience	Transpersonal psychology answers how human soul can connect to spiritual and mystical experiences. Furthermore, it has become a new field of study to respond to behavioural and humanist paradigms that measure the soul using empirical methods.
Daily Spiritual Experiences Before and After Near-Death Experiences	Many people with near-death experience (NDE) report that their spirituality and connectedness with themselves and their surroundings improved.
The Persistence Of Spiritual Experience Among Churchgoing and Non-Churchgoing Italians: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives	The characteristics and level of the spiritual experience of individuals who go to church are better than those who do not. The differences lie in the worship experience of each individual; the churchgoing individuals will be able to feel the beauty of God's grace.
Absorption and Spiritual Experience: A Review of Evidence and Potential Mechanisms	Peace of mind and soul is an example of spiritual experience; hearing the voice of God during prayer is regarded as a supernatural experience. However, each individual's spiritual and supernatural experiences are different, depending on one's imagination and the worship rituals they practice.
Spiritual Care in Critically Ill Patients during COVID-19 Pandemic	Spiritual care brings positive influence when a patient is dealing with a critical disease such as COVID-19. During the pandemic, nurses give spiritual care to their patients. This study proves the importance of spirituality in critical times.
Anxiety, Depressive, and Trauma Symptoms during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evaluating the Role of Disappointment with God	The objective of this study is to investigate the relations between spirituality and mental health. The result shows a relationship between mental health and God's intervention during the crisis time of COVID-19.

### ***Psychological Support from Within when an Individual Is Diagnosed with COVID-19***

An individual's physical condition strongly affects her physical condition (Hendrickx et al., 2020). To pass the COVID-19 crisis, a survivor could accept the situation and think positively about it. Accepting the situation is a process of self-realization that the individual is infected with COVID-19 and is still struggling to overcome her current condition, using any means at her disposal, which could take the form of physical or mental efforts (Gunawan, 2020). Following the recommendation of the government and experts is an effort (*ikhtiar*) of COVID-19 survivors to recover more quickly from the disease. Convincing one's self that everything is going to be all right is a form of psychological effort. Those efforts above could dispel anxiety and depression. As a result, psychological well-being will improve and happiness will come (Zulkarnain, 2019). Referring to Hendrickx et al. (2020), it could increase the antibody production of COVID-19 survivors.

### ***Psychological Support from Outside when an Individual Is Diagnosed with COVID-19***

The presence of closest persons—husband/wife, children, and relatives—during isolation at home or the medics in the hospital could serve as a mood booster for individuals struggling with COVID-19 (Zumstein-shaha, Ferrel, and Economou, 2020). Asking how they are, what they need, and providing positive affirmation will have significant psychological effects for COVID-19 patients; they will realize that they are not alone and will think no more about the stigma that COVID-19 is a disgrace (Hendrickx et al. 2020). Lee (2011) argues that social support from closest persons could increase COVID-19 survivors' confidence and help them recover and do their activities like they used to be.

### ***Obtaining Spiritual Comfort from Within One's Self when an Individual Is Diagnosed with COVID-19***

The literature review above shows us that COVID-19 survivors could obtain spiritual comfort through reading books or sacred scriptures of any religion they believe. Lee (2011) argues that when one improves her literacy her psychological well-being could as well improve. When they read books, the COVID-19 survivors will reflect on what they read to themselves (Hendrickx et al., 2020), allowing them to dive deep into their subconscious realm and think about what they should do after the crisis.

Performing worship rituals (Giordan et al. 2018) could also help COVID-19 survivors obtain spiritual comfort. The isolation provides COVID-19 survivors with much spare time. During the isolation, they have many opportunities to perform worship rituals. After the obligatory religious act, following the religious teaching they believe, the survivors will feel relaxed and peaceful (Zumstein-shaha, Ferrell, and Economou, 2020). As a result, they will feel

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confident because they know that they do not face these problems themselves as there is a bigger entity to help them overcome the crisis (Benefiel, Fry, and Geigle, 2014). The ritual process will lead them to atonement from their previous misdeeds, which will repent anxiety and guilt from their minds and souls (Cotton et al., n.d.). The connection between the physical and cosmic dimensions will give an individual a transpersonal experience (Judy, 2011), as she will be able to push beyond their self-boundaries and make peace with the misdeeds they have done. Moreover, Lifshitz, Elk, and Luhrmann (2019) argue that they will get supernatural experience, which seems impossible and mystical, which will improve their future lives. As if given a second chance, the COVID-19 survivors will admit their mistakes to God and promise that they will not let Him down again in the future (Sherman et al., 2021).

### ***Obtaining Spiritual Comfort from Outside when an Individual Is Diagnosed with COVID-19***

Unlike asymptomatic COVID-19 patients who can do independent isolation at home, the symptomatic COVID-19 patients must go to the hospital to get better treatment. The uncontrollable situation forces them to follow the government regulation, to be isolated away from people. The exile, as argued by Sharpley (2011), will bring to a different experience. They will wonder who will save them other than the Divine Power, as they believe that whoever created the virus will be the one who cures them; they will be resigned (Sherman et al., 2021). The resignation will make them put more effort into recovery, and they will follow all of the recommendations from the medics (Vieten et al., 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Although exposed to information that the death count of COVID-19 keeps increasing, the COVID-19 survivors could obtain psychological support and spiritual comfort by reading literature, solemnly performing worship rituals, and receiving support from their closest people like wives/husbands, children, and relatives.

### **Acknowledgment**

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