

## Research Article

# The Relationship Between Anxiety, Stress, Purpose in Life, and Spirituality During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract.

This study aimed to identify the relationship between anxiety, stress, purpose in life and spirituality during the COVID-19 pandemic. This cross-section study involved 384 respondents above 18 years old, who lived in the Gunung Kidul area, and could speak Bahasa Indonesia. They were selected using the purposive sampling method. The assessment included the Anxiety and Stress Scale, The Purpose of Life, and the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale questionnaire. Anxiety was significantly negatively correlated with spirituality, while stress was significantly negatively correlated with spirituality and meaning in life was significantly positively correlated with spirituality. Respondents who had lower anxiety and stress levels during the pandemic tended to have a high spiritual level, or, during the pandemic, their spiritual activities were higher. Likewise, on the meaning in life, respondents who had a high level of purpose in life also tended to have a high spirituality level.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Stress, Meaning in Life, Spirituality, COVID-19

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## 1. Introduction

At the end of 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that the world was facing a global pandemic condition due to the Corona virus which spread very significantly throughout the world at the same time (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). It was recorded that until May 2021, the world population exposed to Covid-19 globally reached 166 million people with 84,000 deaths (WHO, 2021). Indonesia itself reported that 1 million people were confirmed positive for Covid-19 with a death rate of 54 thousand (CFR 2.8%) (Kemenkes RI, 2021).

In Indonesia During the COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 731 respondents indicated 7.6% experienced high anxiety (Rinaldi & Yuniasanti, 2020). In other research in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic, people are very vulnerable to psychological

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disorders (anxiety, stress, irritation and tend to be sensitive) and for the social-spiritual dimension, people are increasingly limited in social interactions and transactions, limitations in earning a living, and also worship activities are increasingly restricted (Razak et al., 2020).

The research of around 280 persons in Malaysia reveals that 60.0% are at a low level of mental health, while 57.5% of respondents had a moderate degree of COVID-19 dread and 60.4% possessed a moderate level of spiritual well-being. Interestingly, persons with a high degree of spirituality will have a lower level of mental health than those with a high degree of fear (Rathakrishnan et al., 2022).

Due of the severe psychological effects of COVID-19, it may be vital to investigate how the pandemic is affecting people's religious and spiritual life, since religion and spirituality play a major part in the lives of many people (Zhang et al., 2021). Research in Turkey says during Covid 19 meaning in life significantly affects religious coping (Yıldırım et al., 2021). Stress during pandemic Covid-19 had a strong predictive influence on meaning-based coping and spiritual well-being, whereas meaning-based coping buffered the detrimental effect of stress on spiritual well-being, according to research conducted in Turkey (Arslan & Yıldırım, 2021).

## 2. Method

This study has used cross – section study design, with 384 respondent. This study using purposive sampling method, with criteria inclusion sample were individuals who are above 18 years, living in Gunung Kidul area, and able to speak Bahasa Indonesia. The data were collected using the survey cake online application started from June – August 2022 by involving community leaders, personal network, and sharing through social media in the distribution of the survey.

This study has received ethical recommendations from the Health Research Ethics Commission STIKes Wira Husada, Yogyakarta no: 182/KEPK/STIKES-WHY/IX/2021. All respondents were assured with anonymity, confidentiality of data, and there was no compensation was paid to respondent for completing the survey. Spirituality was assessed using The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES) spiritual (Underwood, 2011; Rias et al., 2020) with the Cronbach's alpha in Indonesia version was 0.82 (Fauziah et al., 2022). Anxiety and Stress during Covid – 19 was assessed using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) level of anxiety and stress ( Scholten et al., 2017)

with the Cronbach's alpha for Indonesia version was 0.80 for Anxiety and 0.87 for Stress (Sitanggang et al., 2021). Meaning in life was assessed using The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (The MLQ) (Steger et al., 2006; Csabonyi & Phillips, 2020) with the Cronbach's alpha Indonesia version was 0.86 (Rosyad et al., 2019).

In this study examines the relationship anxiety, stress, meaning in life and spirituality, first by calculating the descriptive statistics (mean and SD) and analysing the relationships among the variables using Pearson's  $r$  correlation with 95% confidence interval was used ( $p < 0.05$ ). In this study parametric test can't be applied because the data not normally distributed (skewness value  $> 2$ ), with these considerations analysing the relationships among the variables using Spearman Rank (Bishara & Hittner, 2012; Schober & Schwarte, 2018).

### 3. Results

Table 1 shows respondent demographic characteristic, there were 384 respondent with majority respondent is male (53%), most of the respondent were aged 25 – 44 years old (46.1%), most of the respondent graduate from senior high school (53.1%), most of the respondent working/still have a job during Covid-19 (85.9%), and 48.4% respondent has lower income during Covid-19. Based on descriptive analysis as shown in Table 2, anxiety have median score 4 with range 0 – 21 it can be interpreted the lower score obtained the lower level of anxiety of respondent. Stress have median score 6 with range 0 – 21, it can be interpreted the lower score obtained the lower level of stress of respondent. Meaning in life have median 52 with range 10 – 70, it can be interpreted the higher score obtained the higher meaning in life of respondent. Spirituality have median 75 with range 16 – 96, it can be interpreted the higher score obtained the higher spirituality level of respondent.

As reported in Table 3, anxiety was significantly negatively correlated with spirituality ( $r = - 0.182, p < 0.000$ ), while stress was significantly negatively correlated with spirituality ( $r = - 0.211, p < 0.000$ ) or , and meaning in life was significantly positively correlated with spirituality ( $r = 0.395, p < 0.000$ ).

TABLE 1: Distribution of respondent (n = 384).

Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	204	53.1
	Female	180	46.9
Age group	< 25	108	28.1
	25 – 44	177	46.1
	45 – 60	80	20.8
	60 <	19	4.9
Education	Primary School	15	3.9
	Junior High School	24	6.3
	Senior High School	204	53.1
	University	141	36.7
Job during Covid -19	Working	330	85.9
	Does not have a job	54	14.1
Income during Covid -19	Lower middle income	186	48.4
	Upper middle income	115	29.9
	High income	83	21.6

TABLE 2: Descriptive analysis on Spirituality, Anxiety, Stress and Meaning on Life (n = 384).

Variable	Descriptive analysis	Median	SD	Min	Max
Spirituality	74.38	75	10.3	30	93
Anxiety	4.77	4	4.18	0	21
Stress	6.23	6	5.06	0	21
Meaning on life	51.56	52	8.36	10	70

TABLE 3: Correlation Anxiety, Stress, meaning on life between Spirituality, (n = 384).

Variable	Correlation coefficient	P – value
Anxiety	- 0.182	0.000**
Stress	0.211	0.000**
Meaning in life	0.395	0.000**

\*\* p < 0.01

## 4. Discussion

In this study a decrease in the level of anxiety is accompanied by an increase in spirituality in the respondent, as well as stress, the lower the level of stress in the

respondent indicates an increase in spirituality. The results of this study were also found in a study in Saudi Arabia, where individuals who used spiritual connections to cope with mental health problems caused by the COVID-19 outbreak were significantly lower risk of experiencing stress and anxiety (Algahtani et al., 2022). Someone who has spiritual awareness when faced with a problem will be able to overcome it, when spiritual values have been integrated into their daily lifestyle and believe that everything happens by God's will and humans must be patient, pray and try will not feel hopeless and will face it calmly and steadfastly (Shofiah, 2021).

Spirituality is considered as one of the important elements in forming a complete human being, where health is defined as a prosperous condition that includes four dimensions (physical, mental, social, and spiritual), which is not only free from disease or disability (Dhar et al., 2013). Therefore, spirituality is useful for maintaining self-esteem, increasing meaning and purpose in life, providing emotional comfort and providing life hope which can also relieve the patient's psychological conditions such as fear, shock, hopelessness, anger, anxiety, and depression (Yudhawati, 2020). This is what encourages respondents to always be optimistic and calm in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic situation because of the spiritual beliefs that respondents have.

In this study, increase in the meaning in life would result in an increase in the spiritual level of the respondent. Previous research also showed the same results, including a study in Turkey which found that there was a positive relationship between the meaning in life and positive spiritualist coping (Yıldırım et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning in life was strongly associated with life satisfaction, positive affect, emotional well-being, social well-being, and psychological well-being, and significantly associated with negative affect, somatization, sadness, and anxiety (Arslan & Yıldırım, 2021). Spirituality can increase a person's ability to make life more meaningful when faced with difficult/stressful situations and increase the ability to adapt to stressful situations (Villani et al., 2019). Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic can be a means to deepen spirituality to adapt, be more grateful and understand the purpose of life so that it has the true meaning in life to control oneself from the negative effects caused by the pandemic situation, especially mental health problems.

## 5. Conclusions

The present study it was found that there was a significant relationship between anxiety, stress, meaning in life and spirituality during pandemic COVID-19. Respondents who are have lower anxiety and stress levels during pandemic COVID-19 tend to have a high spiritual level or during pandemic COVID - 19 their spiritual activities are higher. Likewise on the meaning in life, respondents who have a high level of meaning in life tend to have a high spiritual level as well.

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