

# The Moderating Effect of Spirituality on The Association Between Psychological Well-Being and Parental Efficacy Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

**Carmel Glory C. Sotomayor**

carmelglory.sotomayor@bisu.edu.ph  
Bohol Island State University – Main Campus  
CPG North Avenue, Tagbilaran City, 6300, Bohol, Philippines

## ABSTRACT

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major negative effect globally, especially on the psychological well-being of the general population. With the current post – COVID-19, most aspects of life have continued to be affected. Thus, there is an increasing study on the impact of the pandemic. While most of the study explores the psychological burden on the elderly, the vulnerable, and parents, little is known on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parenting efficacy and coping among single parents. Hence, the present study in the Philippine context, particularly in Bohol, investigates spirituality and psychological well-being as possible factors that may impact single parents' efficacy positively amid of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings of the study based on moderated regression analysis show spirituality and psychological well-being significantly impact parenting efficacy  $p < .001$ . It confirms that spirituality moderates the relationship between psychological well-being and parenting efficacy. There was also a significant interaction effect  $p < .001$  and a significant correlation among the variables  $p < .01$ . Overall implications of the study and direction for future research are examined and discussed.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Psychological Well-being, Parenting Efficacy, COVID-19 Pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

The surge of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its overwhelming impact globally have raised concern to medical experts and mental health professionals. Thus, the World Health Organization labeled COVID-19 a global public health emergency (WHO, 2020). The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to overcrowded hospitals, an increase in the number of infected patients, and negative experiences associated with the loss of a loved one due to the impact of the COVID-19. Consequently, it has created fear, anxiety, and enormous health-related problems. The impact has had a major effect on the psychological well-being of the general population, particularly parents.

Psychological stress, depression, and anxiety have been documented as the common issues related to COVID-19 (Wang et al., 2020). The psychological effects and other related mental health problems have disrupted normal performance and incapacitated individuals' capabilities, especially parents. The effect is not only on the parents but may also have a negative impact on the well-being of their children. The psychological effect of the pandemic on parents, alongside their children, has raised concern on the premise that it has an overwhelming effect that may lead to complex psychological issues (Wang et al., 2020; Wu, Chen & Chan, 2020). Such issues have been documented as trauma, depression, hopelessness, anxiety, and unnecessary fear (Ho, Chee, & Ho, 2020). Consequently, there have been growing works of literature on the impact of COVID-19 on parents. Some of this literature explored the psychological effect of COVID-19 on parents, especially pregnant women (Mappa, Distefano, & Rizzo, 2020), the negative consequences on parents, and the general population (Serapini, 2020). While these works of literature may have had a significant contribution to the extent to which COVID-19 impacts the psychological burden on parents, little is known about their parenting efficacy in relation to the pandemic, importantly, coping

mechanism. Although there has been literature on coping among the vulnerable population, especially the elderly and the young (Jiao et al. 2020), adherence to health policy such as social distancing, wearing face shields and face masks (Adams & Walls, 2020), the literature is inadequate since salient issues on parenting efficacy and coping were not explored.

To date, there is no empirical study on how COVID-19 may have impacted parents' efficacy and their psychological well-being, especially among single parents in relation to their coping. Although a recent study in the Philippines context examines the psychological effect of COVID-19 (Tee et al. 2020), the study explores the effect on academicians and professionals; hence, no data for single parents. Thus, the present study examines the role of spirituality in mitigating the effect of COVID-19 among single parents in the Philippine context. Spirituality has played a significant impact in coping with health-related issues and psychological burdens (Koenig, King, & Carson, 2012). In light of the positive impact, spirituality may also play a fundamental role in lessening the burden associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the present study explores spirituality as an important variable by investigating whether spirituality is a possible factor that might positively impact single parents' parenting efficacy and psychological well-being despite the depressing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a correlation research design in answering the research problem. Through a survey questionnaire, random sampling was used to investigate if spirituality moderates the link between psychological well-being and parental self-efficacy.

The research focuses on respondents who are single parents and are residence in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Only respondents who agreed to participate in the study were allowed to participate. The sample size of respondents is 158, while the age range is 20 – 60 years old. The educational level of respondents is high school graduate and/or college level. Only those with no medical condition or serious health issues, exposed to COVID-19 and within the age range 20 – 60, who agreed to participate, were allowed to participate in the study.

To evaluate a person's spirituality level, this study adopted the Spirituality Scale by Colleen Delaney, 2005. The cronbach alpha is = .90 which indicates that it is statistically adequate. Meanwhile, the parents' psychological well-being was investigated using the Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff et al. 2010) with its Cronbach alpha = .87. To assess parents' self-efficacy, the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale was used developed by (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978). Lastly, an ad hoc index was used to assess risks related factors to the COVID-19. The present study adopts a similar procedure as used by Spinelli et al. (2020) and Morelli et al. (2020) to determine the impact of COVID-19 on respondents by focusing on the number of contact parents had directly or indirectly with people affected by the COVID-19. It was based on the assumption; the greater the contacts with those affected with COVID-19, the greater the negative impact on the parent's psychological well-being.

In determining the outcome of the variables for this study, moderation analysis was used to assess if moderator (spirituality) moderates the relationship between the independent variable (psychological well-being) and dependent variable (parental self-efficacy).

### RESULTS

The present study investigates the role of spirituality in the relationship between psychological well-being and parental efficacy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The mean and standard deviation of participants on the variables for the study were obtained and reported in the below table.

**Table 1**  
**Mean and Standard Deviations of the Variables**

**Variables (N = 158)**

	<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
(n = 158)	Psychological Well-being	81.65	10.03
	Parental Efficacy	66.60	9.94
	Spirituality	112.39	25.79
	COVID-19 CR Index	1.06	1.36

The respondents' mean scores in all dimensions of psychological well-being were obtained as a composite mean score, indicating respondents' overall psychological well-being was high ( $M = 81.65$ ,  $SD = 10.03$ ). Similarly, respondents' mean scores on parental efficacy were relatively high ( $M = 66.60$ ,  $SD = 9.94$ ). However, respondents' mean scores for spirituality was higher ( $M = 112.39$ ,  $SD = 25.79$ ), which corroborates previous studies on Filipinos having a high level of spirituality (Batara, 2015; Ocampo, Mansuhani, Mangrobang, & Juan, 2013). For the COVID-19 contact risk index, respondents exhibit low mean scores ( $M = 1.06$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ), indicating minimal exposure or contact to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine if there is an interrelationship between the variables for this study, and the results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Bivariate Correlations between Variables**

<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>(1) PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING</b>	<b>(2) PARENTAL EFFICACY</b>	<b>(3) SPIRITUALITY</b>	<b>COVID-19 CR INDEX</b>
1. Psychological Well-being	-	.362**	.273**	-.009
2. Parental Efficacy	-	-	.333**	.106
3. Spirituality			-	.179*
4. COVID-19 CR Index				-

\* $P < .05$ ; \*\*  $P < .01$

From the above table 2, the variable, psychological well-being showed significant positive correlation with the variables; parental efficacy and spirituality ( $r = .362$ ;  $r = .273$   $p < .01$ ). This indicates an increase in psychological well-being was correlated to an increase in parental efficacy. However, there was no correlation between the COVID-19 contact risk index and psychological well-being ( $r = -.009$   $p > .01$ ). Spirituality showed a moderately significant positive correlation with parental efficacy ( $r = .333$   $p < .01$ ), which implies higher spirituality was correlated with higher parental efficacy. On the other hand, COVID-19 contact risk index shows weak positive correlation with the variable parental efficacy ( $r = .106$   $p < .01$ ), however, there was a significant weak positive correlation with spirituality ( $r = .179$   $p < .01$ ), this connotes the relationship was not strong.

To investigate whether the relationship between spirituality and psychological well-being depends on parental efficacy, a hierarchical regression model was used. Moderation occurs when the relationship

between an independent variables and dependent variables changes as a role of the moderation variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). To avoid multicollinearity problems with the interaction term, the variables spirituality and psychological well-being were mean-centered prior to analysis. Afterwards, an interaction term was created. Table 3 shows the summary of the moderated regression analysis.

**TABLE 3**  
**Moderation Regression Analysis**

PREDICTORS VARIABLE	PARENTAL EFFICACY					
	$\Delta R^2$	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Step 1: Psychological Well-being (PWB)	.131	.359	.074	.362	.486	.000
COVID-19 CR Index	.011	.776	.582	.106	1.33	.184
Step 2: Psychological Well-being (PWB)	.059	.291	.074	.293	3.90	.000
Spirituality		.097	.029	.253	3.67	.001
Step 3: Spirituality/Psychological Well-being						
S x PWB	.061	.010	.003	2.56	3.91	.000

*Note:  $\Delta R^2$  change in  $R^2$ ; SE = Standard Error, B = Unstandardized Regression Weight;  $\beta$  Standardized Beta.  $P < .001$*

From the above table 3, the hierarchical regression analysis shows that at step one, the variable psychological well-being significantly predicted parental efficacy ( $\beta = .359$ ,  $p < .000$ ). COVID-19 contact risk index was later added to the model, revealing no statistically significant effect on parental efficacy ( $\beta = .776$ ,  $p > .001$ ). In step two, psychological well-being ( $\beta = .291$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and spirituality ( $\beta = .097$ ,  $p < .001$ ) significantly predicted parental efficacy. This second model suggests that both psychological well-being and spirituality are significant predictors of parental self-efficacy.

While in step three, the interaction term between spirituality and psychological well-being was added to the regression model, which accounted for a statistically significant proportion of the variance in parental efficacy  $R^2 = .061$ ,  $F(1, 154) = 15.289$ ,  $p < .000$ . This indicates that there was a potential significant main interaction effect between spirituality and psychological well-being on parental efficacy. In other words, spirituality does influence the relationship between psychological well-being and parental self-efficacy. The interaction effects have a positive impact on parental self-efficacy since it increases the strength of parental self-efficacy. The results confirm the research hypothesis.

## DISCUSSION

The present study examines the role of spirituality in the relationship between psychological well-being and parental self-efficacy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The result of the study showed moderated regression analysis on the role of spirituality between psychological well-being, and parental self-efficacy was significant. The moderated regression yielded the main interaction effect with parental self-efficacy. Among the variables, there was a significant correlation. These indicate that the effects of spirituality and psychological well-being on parental self-efficacy are interrelated. The overall findings of the study are examined and discussed.

### Exposure to COVID-19

Based on the findings in this study, respondents' exposure to COVID-19 was low. As observed in this present study, the minimal exposure may suggest that the negative effect associated with COVID-19 may have had a low effect on respondents. Given that respondents' contact with COVID-19 related issues was low, they were more likely not greatly affected by the pandemic. In other words, respondents are not heavily affected by the psychological burdens linked to the COVID-19 pandemic due to minimal exposure to the health risk associated with the pandemic. Hence, exposure to COVID-19 does not significantly affect parents' self-efficacy. The findings are consistent with previous studies that document the low effect of COVID-19 on parents' well-being (Spinelli et al. 2020; Jiao et al. 2020). The low effect of the COVID-19 on parents' may be attributed to several factors. In part, it could be that most respondents adhered to the health protocols policy set forth to contain the virus, thus, reducing the likelihood of being affected.

A plausible consideration is that respondents may have utilized their intrinsic traits such as resilience and other essential aspects of psychological well-being like autonomy, environmental mastery, and connectedness with the self and the other. These underlying features of psychological well-being and spirituality are congruent to post-traumatic growth (Olson, Shanafelt, & Soutwick, 2020), which provides adjustment in dealing with life-related difficulties that are connected to the COVID-19 and the ability to handle emerging psychological problems amid post-COVID-19. In light of those available resources that help mitigate the psychological risk connected to COVID-19 among the respondents, other factors may have had a positive impact. One of these factors is the respondents' geographical location. Respondents' environment and location appear to have a low rate of COVID-19 infected individuals than other Philippines' regions like Cebu and Manila, which recorded a high rate of COVID-19 during the pandemic surge, with stringent lockdown and curfew. Given that the geographical region of the respondent had low-rate incidences of COVID-19 pandemic, the negative impact will also likely be low. The implication is that respondents' anxiety and psychological distress that may jeopardize their parental efficacy could be manageable, thus, experiencing less effect of the psychological burdens related to the COVID-19. Importantly, in light of the findings of the study, the different dimensions of psychological well-being and spirituality may have significantly contributed to the overall positive disposition of respondents towards the COVID-19.

### Psychological Well-being and Parental Self-efficacy

The six dimensions of psychological well-being, which are autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and purpose in life, to a certain degree, each of these dimensions plays an important role in parental self-efficacy. Although the present study presents the mean composite scores of psychological well-being, based on the mean of each of the dimensions, positive relationship with others, personal growth and self-acceptance had higher scores than other dimensions. This may suggest the positive correlation of psychological well-being and parental self-efficacy was due to the dimensions that had higher mean scores. It underscores participants' parental self-efficacy was likely not much disrupted nor weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The reason can be inferred on the basis respondents exhibit a certain amount of positive relationship with others and the self, have personal growth, and a disposition of self-acceptance; consequently, their self-efficacy was not beleaguered by the negative

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As evidenced in this study, the emerging psychological well-being domains are somewhat embedded in Filipino values. Particularly, the domain, positive relationship with others and the self, which can be viewed in terms of cohesion, is typical among Filipinos. This domain in the Philippine context is up to term as *loób* and *kapwa* (Reyes, 2015). It provides a framework for protective factors that support families during difficulties, thus safeguarding parents' self-efficacy during stressful moments. Accordingly, the results of the present study support and extend existing findings by highlighting important domains of psychological well-being that positively impact parental self-efficacy.

In line with the existing finding, empirical study shows psychological well-being correlates with parental self-efficacy (Lee & Park, 2016). This relationship between psychological well-being and parental self-efficacy largely depends on a parent's psychological well-being degree. In other words, the degree of parental self-efficacy depends on whether the parent's level of psychological well-being was high or low. The higher the psychological well-being, the higher the parental self-efficacy, while low psychological well-being will indicate low parental self-efficacy. In this study, respondents demonstrated considerable psychological well-being, which may be why the outcome accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in parental self-efficacy. In other words, an increase in psychological well-being resulted in increases in parental self-efficacy of the study participants. On the contrary, a decrease in psychological well-being will connote parenting efficacy was negatively impacted thus, resulting in a low parenting efficacy, but this was not the case in the present study since the psychological well-being of the participants was high. In a nutshell, the influencing factors from both variables on parental efficacy may overlap; these include but are not limited to self-awareness, meaning-making and purpose, and healthy relationship with the self, others and transcendental being. The perceived psychological well-being underscores the potential attributes of parents in making the most of their inherent resources in providing care and support to their children such that their efforts are not jeopardized by the COVID-19 pandemic. Simply put, the higher the level of psychological well-being of parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, the much better is their parental self-efficacy. This positive impact on parenting is not limited to psychological well-being but to the moderating role of spirituality.

### **Spirituality as Moderator**

As indicated in the findings of this study, the imperative function of spirituality provides insight into the role of spirituality in both challenging times and normal times. This is because the role of spirituality is evidence-informed and has shown to offer better coping in challenging times (Koenig, 2012; Fisher, 2011). Consequently, spiritually ingrained people are more likely to be strong and resilient either during a pandemic or without a pandemic. Consistent with previous studies, spirituality is linked to better health outcomes which contribute to better performance in dealing with life stressful events (de Campus et al., 2020; Koenig, 2012). Respondents' level of spirituality, as shown in this study, was very high. This suggests that they could thrive better despite the negative impact of the COVID-19, as long as their spirituality remains unaltered.

Given that respondents exhibited a high level of spirituality when compared to psychological well-being, it shows that spirituality plays a vital role in their daily life. Beyond this finding, one possible explanation is that respondent's geographical region is famous for its spirituality. Thus, the high level of spirituality may be attributed to the interplay of spirituality that is common to the Boholanos community. This is consistent with a previous study that shows a high level of spirituality among Boholano people regarding how spirituality affects their service quality (Bucar & Magallen, 2016). This may also explain the positive impact of spirituality among the respondents of this study in terms of COVID-19 and their parental efficacy.

Theoretically, transpersonal theory (Kaspro & Scotton, 1999; Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986) and psycho-spiritual model (Lin & Bauer, 2003) confirm individuals with high spirituality are more likely to demonstrate better capability, unlike those with low spirituality. This suggests that a high level of spirituality is associated with a positive outcome. The basis is that spiritual individuals usually exhibit greater self-awareness, better intrapersonal/interpersonal relationships, and in some instances, are able to cope better amid life challenges (Fishers, 2011). This ability to cope supports extant literature on family resilience, which

underscores parents' capability to handle stressful events amid adversity (Patterson, 2002; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996). The intrinsic values that relate to spirituality are associated with Filipino spirituality. Beliefs and practices ingrained in the Christian faith, especially the Catholic faith, are strongly rooted in the Philippine society, which builds up Filipino spirituality. The beliefs and practices that are linked to Filipino spirituality are multifaceted. However, there are salient underlying dimensions that informed Filipino spirituality. A study documented three themes that highlight Filipino spirituality: connectedness with the others and the sacred being, meaning-making and purpose, and the expression of spirituality in various forms (Yabut, 2017). Based on the emerging themes, connectedness with the Supreme Being or the Sacred Being had a higher score, while the remaining scores were attributed to the remaining themes. This indicates Filipino have a strong sense of spirituality, which supports the present study and may have positively impacted their parental efficacy.

### **Spirituality and Parental Self-efficacy**

The extent to which spirituality impacts parental self-efficacy depends on the level of parents' spirituality. From the findings, the results revealed a direct positive relationship between spirituality and parental self-efficacy. This suggests that participants' level of spirituality could determine their parental self-efficacy. Based on the results, spirituality positively predicts parenting self-efficacy. As evidenced in this study, this relationship between spirituality and parental self-efficacy highlights the indispensable role of spirituality not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but in all stressful events. Spirituality provides protective factors amid life-threatening and stressful circumstances; consequently, individuals that are spiritual are more likely to experience better coping and positive parenting.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively impacted parents, such as emotional disturbance, job loss, unemployment, caregiving burden, and health-related problems. Nevertheless, to some extent, the impacts of these adversities are minimal, especially among individuals whose spirituality was high. Thus, it may be a contributing factor that supports parental self-efficacy, as evidenced in this study. In other words, parental efficacy amid the COVID-19 pandemic depends on parents' level of spirituality and psychological well-being. The impact of these variables may have strengthened parents' capability to make the most of their time and resources to care for their children and themselves, despite the adverse psychological burden brought by the pandemic. In line with the present study, extant literature shows that individuals with a high level of spirituality amid life-threatening events such as the COVID-19 pandemic are likely not affected. Thus, it demonstrates better coping when compared to those without spirituality (Pirutinsky, Cherniak, & Rosmarin, 2020). This connotes a high level of spirituality not only provides a mechanism for better coping but also offers various ways of adjusting to life upheaval that leads to optimizing one's potential in dealing with challenging events. Furthermore, contextual factors of the study participants may have played a unique role in the outcome of the study. The cultural context of Filipino families and religious context are but a few examples. Both contexts have an underlying contributing effect on the role of spirituality on parental self-efficacy.

Cohesiveness and a sense of connectedness to immediate and extended relatives are typical factors embedded within the Filipino family. As it reflects Filipino values, these contextual factors play a vital role in a moment of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. With the sense of support and connectedness, an important feature of spirituality, the burden associated with the COVID-19 pandemic may not be overwhelming to parents; hence, parents' capabilities as it pertains to executing their roles are likely not undermined heavily due to the presence of those values. In other words, the absence of support and connectedness may heighten the effect of the psychological burdens that are linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, it may have had an adverse effect on parental self-efficacy. On the contrary, given the inherent values ingrained in the Filipino society, the effect of the pandemic on parental self-efficacy to some degree may not be much devastating but manageable due to the role of spirituality.

Spirituality has been commonly associated with better health outcomes and coping (Oman & Riley, 2018; Koenig, 2012). This positive effect of spirituality on health and the ability to manage overwhelming life

phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic could be attributed to the intrinsic make-up of spirituality. These include but are not limited to hope, beliefs, connectedness with a higher being or the transcendence, meaning-making, faith, and personal conviction. This is consistent with the four domains of spirituality, including the relationship with the self, others, environment, and supreme being (Fishers, 2011). The interplay of these intrinsic constructs could be a plausible explanation that contributes to respondents' high level of spirituality, thus, influencing their self-efficacy positively. This may have impacted respondents experienced during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, consequently, provides sustainable approaches in dealing with the challenging time and care for their children. Consistent with the present findings, a study in the Philippine context shows a strong positive relationship between spirituality and parental warmth (Jocson & Garcia, 2021). In other words, spirituality positively impacts parenting, which also plays an important role in parental self-efficacy. Beyond the impact of spirituality on parental self-efficacy, a higher level of spirituality optimizes self-efficacy. It contributes to low psychological distress, which serves as a buffering effect against the psychological burden linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. This buffering effect against the negative impact of COVID-19, in light of parental self-efficacy, is not limited to the role of spirituality but psychological well-being.

### CONCLUSION

Understanding the role of spirituality in the relationship between psychological well-being and parental self-efficacy as documented in this study provides insights into the emerging dimensions of spirituality that have the utmost impact on parental self-efficacy. These understanding highlights relevant underlying mechanisms of spirituality that interplays to provide better coping and optimize one's intrinsic and extrinsic resources in dealing with challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the context upon which this study was conducted, the general findings show that spirituality remains an integral aspect of Philippine society. Thus, spirituality plays a vital role in navigating the stressor associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to a most favorable way of dealing with the challenging times among Filipino single parents. The implication is, despite single parents' ability to cope during the normal time, their high level of spirituality could stand for them in good stead amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, the present study's findings add and extend the existing literature on the impact of spirituality on one's well-being and parents' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. In that light, the study provides informed evidence for counselors and other mental health professionals to tailor in their professional practices, especially during challenging times such as the COVID-19.

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