



# From Arjuna's crisis to self-resilience: Psychological capital in the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Vedanta*

Relin Denayu Ekawati<sup>1</sup>, Ni Kadek Surpi<sup>2,\*</sup>, Aditya Ansu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Postgraduate Program, Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar, Denpasar, Bali 80236, Indonesia;

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Brahma Widya, Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar, Denpasar, Bali 80236, Indonesia;

<sup>3</sup> Abu Dhabi University, Abu Dhabi 59911, United Arab Emirates.

\*Correspondence: nikadeksurpi@uhnsugriwa.ac.id

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Psychological capital, comprising hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience, provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals remain purposeful during crises. However, its performance-oriented formulation insufficiently addresses the ethical, metaphysical, and spiritual foundations of human strength. This study examines Arjuna's transformation from psychological and moral crisis to inner resilience in the *Bhagavad Gita* and reconstructs psychological capital through *Vedanta*. **Methods:** A qualitative textual-interpretive design combining directed content analysis and hermeneutic inquiry was employed. Selected passages from Chapters I, II, III, VI, XII, XIV, and XVIII were coded deductively according to the four dimensions of psychological capital and inductively through the Vedantic concepts of *ātman*, *dharma*, *buddhi*, *karma-yoga*, *samatva*, *abhyāsa*, and *vairāgya*. The interpretations were compared with contemporary literature on psychological capital, resilience, Hindu psychology, and psychotherapy. **Findings:** Arjuna's crisis reflects the simultaneous collapse of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience through moral disorientation, identity fragmentation, emotional dysregulation, and loss of meaningful agency. *Kṛṣṇa*'s teachings reconstruct hope as dharma-oriented purpose, self-efficacy as agency governed by *buddhi*, optimism as confidence in the intrinsic value of right action, and resilience as transformative equanimity grounded in non-attachment. Together, these dimensions form a circular process from value conflict and identity fragmentation to self-clarification, dharmic purpose, disciplined action, inner balance, and transformative resilience. **Conclusion:** The *Bhagavad Gita* extends psychological capital beyond adaptation and performance by grounding psychological strength in ethical responsibility, spiritual awareness, and transformation of consciousness. Arjuna's recovery represents not merely a return to previous functioning but the formation of more integrated, reflective, and morally responsible agency. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This study proposes ethical-spiritual psychological capital and transformative resilience by systematically reconstructing all four dimensions through Vedantic categories rather than merely identifying parallels with modern psychotherapy.

**KEYWORDS:** arjuna; *bhagavad gita*; psychological capital; self-resilience; *vedanta*.

## 1. Introduction

Rapid social change, economic uncertainty, professional competition, identity conflicts, and increasing psychological pressure have made personal resilience one of the key issues in contemporary psychological research. Individuals are not only required to possess intellectual abilities and technical competencies but also need psychological resources that

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enable them to continue functioning adaptively when facing failure, moral conflicts, a loss of direction, and existential pressures. In positive psychology, these resources are conceptualized through the concept of psychological capital, which encompasses hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). These four dimensions are understood as psychological capacities that can be developed and that influence an individual's ability to set goals, maintain self-confidence, interpret the future constructively, and bounce back from adversity.

Although psychological capital has emerged within the tradition of modern positive psychology, issues concerning hope, self-confidence, mental fortitude, and the ability to cope with suffering have long been a focus of Indian philosophical and spiritual traditions. The *Bhagavad Gita* is one of the texts that deeply explores human psychological crises, conflicts of duty, mind control, self-knowledge, action without attachment, and the transformation of consciousness. The dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* and Arjuna does not take place in a contemplative state detached from life, but rather in the midst of a battlefield where Arjuna is experiencing physical, emotional, moral, and existential collapse. He has lost clarity of purpose, doubts his abilities, views the future negatively, and is unable to act in accordance with his role and responsibilities. This condition makes Arjuna's crisis relevant as an illustration of the collapse of psychological resources when an individual faces a situation perceived as exceeding their capacity.

A number of mental health studies have interpreted the dialogues in the *Bhagavad Gita* as an early form of counseling and psychotherapy. Rao (1980) demonstrated a connection between the teachings of the *Gita* and the mental health sciences, while Balodhi & Keshavan (2011) placed the *Kṛṣṇa–Arjuna* dialogue in a psychotherapeutic context. Pandurangi et al. (2014) argue that the *Bhagavad Gita* encompasses the processes of problem identification, reframing of thought patterns, strengthening of motivation, and restoration of the capacity for action. More recent literature expands on this interpretation through studies on the relevance of psychotherapy, the *Gita*'s intersection with modern psychology, and various interventions that can be functionally compared to the *Kṛṣṇa–Arjuna* dialogue (Dhillon, 2023; Mishra et al., 2023; Risal, 2024). Keshavan (2023) even uses the term “Arjuna syndrome” to describe a psychological crisis characterized by anxiety, confusion, doubt, and impaired functioning before an individual receives therapeutic guidance. This series of studies demonstrates that Arjuna's transformation can be understood as a process of recovery from a debilitating psychological state toward a more integrated mental state, without disregarding the text's philosophical and religious context.

However, drawing a direct parallel between the *Bhagavad Gita* and modern psychotherapy raises epistemological issues. The *Bhagavad Gita* is not merely a therapeutic text in the clinical sense, but rather a philosophical-religious text that operates within the framework of Hindu metaphysics, ethics, soteriology, and theology. The purpose of *Kṛṣṇa*'s dialogue is not limited to reducing Arjuna's symptoms of anxiety or restoring his psychological functioning, but encompasses a transformation in how one understands the self, action, the world, duty, and ultimate reality. Aggarwal (2026) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between mental health interpretations and religious commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, particularly because both are based on assumptions about the nature of the self and the goals of human transformation that are not always the same. Contemporary psychological approaches commonly examine the self in relation to functional coherence, adaptation, and personal agency. *Vedānta* begins from a different ontological question: whether the empirical identity associated with body, emotion, cognition, and social role exhausts the meaning of the self.

This distinction is important because the concept of psychological capital is generally oriented toward improving performance, achieving goals, adaptation, and individual functioning. Within the *Vedānta* framework, resilience does not merely mean the ability to maintain performance under pressure, but also the ability to free one's actions from the domination of the ego, attachments, fears, and uncontrollable outcomes. Self-efficacy, for example, cannot be understood merely as the belief that an individual is capable of achieving a specific goal. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the conviction to act must be grounded in an

awareness of dharma, self-discipline, mastery of the mind, and the understanding that while an individual has agency over their actions, they do not have complete control over the outcomes. Similarly, optimism is not synonymous with the simple belief that all events will end happily. Vedantic optimism is closer to the conviction that actions in harmony with dharma, performed with clarity and without attachment, possess intrinsic meaning even if their outward results do not always align with expectations.

Arjuna's crisis demonstrates that psychological breakdown is not always caused by personal weakness, but can arise from a clash between values, social identity, affection, duty, and the consequences of one's actions. Arjuna is not a person lacking competence. He is a well-trained, experienced warrior with a high capacity for action. However, that competence loses its power when the structure of meaning that supports it collapses. He no longer knows why he must act, for whom the action is being performed, and whether the action can be justified. Thus, Arjuna's problem is not merely a lack of self-confidence, but an ontological and ethical disorientation. His recovery also cannot be explained simply as an increase in motivation, but rather as a reconstruction of how he understands himself and his duties.

In this context, the four dimensions of psychological capital can be reinterpreted through the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Hope relates to the ability to reorient one's goals based on dharma, not merely personal desires. Self-efficacy grows through the recognition of one's ability to act with discipline and mindfulness, not through the reinforcement of the ego. Optimism is built on the view that life possesses moral and spiritual order, while resilience arises from the ability to maintain balance when facing success and failure, pleasure and suffering, as well as acceptance and rejection. Keshavan (2020) demonstrates that the *Bhagavad Gita* offers several paths to building resilience, particularly through knowledge, right action, and spiritual discipline. Thus, resilience in the *Gita* is neither passive nor fatalistic but demands active engagement accompanied by self-control and freedom from attachment to outcomes.

This perspective aligns with the Vedantic interpretation, which posits the transformation of consciousness as the foundation for behavioral change. Knowledge of the true nature of the self is not intended as metaphysical speculation detached from life, but as the foundation for courage, serenity, and ethical action. In *Advaita Vedanta*, suffering is linked to a mistake in identification when humans equate themselves entirely with the body, mind, emotions, status, or social roles, all of which are transient (Comans, 2000). When empirical identity is regarded as the whole self, threats to status, relationships, or the outcomes of actions are easily experienced as threats to one's very existence. Conversely, knowledge of the *ātman* allows individuals to maintain a reflective distance from mental turmoil without shirking practical responsibility. This is where resilience gains a deeper foundation: not merely the ability to endure, but the capacity to act without being overcome by fear and attachment.

Contemporary studies on Hinduism, psychology, and psychotherapy have opened up a space for dialogue between Indian traditions and the field of mental health. Mukherjee (2012) demonstrates that Hindu psychology possesses its own distinct framework for understanding personality, suffering, and personal transformation. Keshavan and Tandon (2023) as well as Dhillon (2023) emphasize that the Vedic and *Gita* traditions offer unique perspectives on the mind, healing, and self-formation. Nevertheless, there is a tendency in some of the literature to seek direct parallels between the teachings of the *Gita* and modern therapies, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, existential therapy, or eclectic approaches (Bhatia et al., 2013; Mishra et al., 2023; Risal, 2024; Sharma, 2014; Shukla, 2018). Such comparative approaches are useful but risk reducing *Vedanta's* teachings to psychological tools detached from their metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual contexts.

On the other hand, research on psychological capital remains predominantly rooted in individualistic assumptions and a performance orientation. Hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience are generally measured based on an individual's capacity to achieve goals, increase productivity, or adapt to environmental demands (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). This framework does not fully explain how psychological resources are shaped by

value systems, self-understanding, moral obligations, spiritual relationships, and transcendental orientations. Critiques of the universalization of psychological categories also point out that concepts of the self and agency are always rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts (Muthukrishna et al., 2021). Therefore, interpreting the *Bhagavad Gita* through a psychological lens requires a two-way approach. Concepts from positive psychology can help identify the structure of Arjuna's transformation, while *Vedanta* can expand upon and critique positive psychology's assumptions about the self, success, agency, and resilience.

Recent scholarship emphasizes the transformative relevance of the *Bhagavad Gita* to self-control, courage, clarity of action, and value-oriented education. Jana & Adhikary (2025) identify karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and *bhakti-yoga* as interconnected orientations that support both spiritual and social development, while Gupta and Satija (2025) locate dharma within the broader Vedic ordering of human purposes. Jemiwi & Dharma (2025) similarly position dharma as a guiding principle for restoring harmony between human action and the true self. From this perspective, competence cannot be separated from moral sensitivity, social responsibility, and clarity of purpose. Spiritual awareness is therefore not opposed to psychological resilience; rather, it provides a normative framework through which individuals can confront suffering and change without losing their ethical orientation.

The contemporary relevance of *Vedanta* also lies in its capacity to connect personal psychology with broader questions of consciousness, meaning, and interdependence. Narayan & Jairam (2025) describe Vedic knowledge as a holistic framework in which mind, self, nature, and cosmos cannot be understood as isolated realities, while Pallathadka & Roy (2025) demonstrate the continuing relevance of the *Bhagavad Gita* in global spiritual responses to modern uncertainty. Within this framework, psychological crisis may be interpreted as a crisis of connectedness in which individuals lose their orientation toward themselves, others, moral values, nature, and transcendent reality. Resilience, therefore, cannot be developed solely through individual affirmation; it also requires the restoration of relationships with ethical values, life purpose, and a broader order of meaning. Such an understanding expands resilience beyond personal adaptation toward relational balance, responsible action, and spiritual maturity.

Based on the above discussion, there are three research gaps. First, studies on the *Bhagavad Gita* and psychotherapy have largely focused on similarities in therapeutic techniques but have not sufficiently addressed psychological capital as an integrative framework encompassing hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. Second, studies of psychological capital tend to be oriented toward performance and adaptation, while the ethical, metaphysical, and spiritual dimensions have not received adequate attention. Third, there is a need to interpret Arjuna's transformation without reducing the *Bhagavad Gita* to a manual for modern psychotherapy. This requires an analytical framework, that can bring together positive psychology and *Vedanta* while preserving the epistemological differences between the two.

On that basis, this study aims to analyze Arjuna's transformation from a state of crisis to personal resilience through four dimensions of psychological capital: hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. This study also examines how Vedantic concepts such as ātman, dharma, karma-yoga, samatva, and detachment from attachment to outcomes expand the understanding of psychological capital. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to reconstruct psychological capital as an ethical-spiritual resource, rather than merely an individual adaptive capacity. Thus, this article is expected to contribute to the development of a more contextual, dialogical, and open psychology toward non-Western knowledge traditions, while also offering a conceptual framework for fostering modern human resilience rooted in awareness, responsibility, and a dharma-oriented perspective.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Research design

The inquiry was designed as a qualitative interpretation of textual meaning rather than as an empirical examination of causal relations. Its analytical object was the narrative and conceptual movement through which Arjuna's crisis is diagnosed, reframed, and transformed. The study is not intended to statistically test causal relationships between variables but rather to identify the structure of meaning, patterns of argumentation, and processes of psychological transformation found in the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Methodologically, this study combines directed qualitative content analysis with hermeneutic interpretation. Directed content analysis was used because the study already had preliminary conceptual categories in the form of four dimensions of psychological capital: hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. These categories served as an initial framework for selecting and organizing data, but were not treated as fixed categories. Meanings emerging from the text are still given room to expand, correct, or reconstruct the understanding of modern psychological modalities (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Meanwhile, hermeneutic interpretation is used to understand each teaching in relation to the text, the narrative context, the tradition of commentary, and the issues facing modern humanity.

This approach is important because the *Bhagavad Gita* cannot be read merely as a document of modern psychology. The text is part of the Hindu philosophical and religious tradition that addresses the nature of the self, duty, action, knowledge, devotion, and liberation. Therefore, this study does not merely seek parallels between the Gita's teachings and psychological modal theories but also analyzes differences in assumptions regarding the self, the purpose of life, agency, suffering, and human transformation. This strategy aligns with Aggarwal's (2026) critique that a mental health-oriented reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* must be distinguished from a religious commentary, as both operate through anthropological and epistemological assumptions that are not always the same.

### 2.2 Data sources

Research data sources are categorized into primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, particularly the sections describing Arjuna's crisis, Kṛṣṇa's response, and Arjuna's shift in consciousness and decision. The analysis focuses on Chapter I, " , " which describes Arjuna Viṣāda, or Arjuna's despair; Chapter II, which lays the foundation for teachings on the ātman, action, and inner balance; Chapter III, on karma-yoga; Chapter VI on the control of the mind; Chapter XII on the qualities of devotion; Chapter XIV on the three gunas; and Chapter XVIII, which illustrates the consolidation of Arjuna's understanding and his readiness to act.

The reading of the primary text is supported by commentaries and interpretive works rooted in the *Vedānta* tradition. These include Śaṅkara's commentary in the Goyandka edition (2024), Chinmayananda's interpretations (1959a, 1959b), Vivekananda's reading (1992), and Aithal and Ramanathan's (2026) integrated account of knowledge, realization, devotion, and self-mastery in Chapters VII–XII. These works contextualize ātman, dharma, karma-yoga, buddhi, samatva, vairāgya, and detachment from the fruits of action.

Secondary sources include scientific articles, books, and research findings that discuss the relationship between the *Bhagavad Gita*, psychotherapy, Hindu psychology, resilience, self-concept, and mental health. The literature used includes Aggarwal (2026), Balodhi & Keshavan (2011), Dhillon (2023), Keshavan (2020, 2023), Keshavan and Tandon (2023), Mishra et al. (2023), Mukherjee (2012), Pandurangi et al. (2014), Reddy (2012), Risal (2024), and Shukla (2018). The literature on psychological capital was used to define the characteristics of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience, while the *Vedānta* literature was used to assess the conceptual adequacy and limitations of applying modern psychological categories. To ensure the study remains up-to-date, the literature search was

updated through June 2026, prioritizing articles with a DOI, verifiable academic journals, and works directly relevant to the focus of the analysis. Additional sources were used comparatively to clarify three contexts: Vedic accounts of consciousness and human purpose (Chouhan, 2024; Gupta & Satija, 2025; Narayan & Jairam, 2025); the Gita's educational and psycho-spiritual interpretations (Bhattacharjee, 2025; Jana & Adhikary, 2025; Pallathadka & Roy, 2025); and contemplative or therapeutic practice (Balkrishna et al., 2024; Kathirasan, 2024; Pardhe, 2025; Tallapaka, 2025). These sources function as interpretive comparators rather than empirical proof of Vedantic metaphysical claims.

### 2.3 Data collection techniques

Data collection was conducted through a documentary study and literature review. The data collection process consisted of four stages. First, the researcher identified passages in the *Bhagavad Gita* that directly describe Arjuna's psychological state before, during, and after receiving Kṛṣṇa's teachings. The indicators examined included physical symptoms, emotional changes, moral doubts, loss of motivation, reluctance to act, changes in thinking, and Arjuna's final decision.

Second, the selected verses were grouped based on their relevance to the four dimensions of psychological capital. Hope was identified through statements related to goals, courses of action, future orientation, and the meaning of life. Self-efficacy is identified through teachings on the ability to act, discipline, self-control, and the restoration of confidence in one's personal capacities. Optimism is traced through views on the orderliness of life, the meaning of actions, faith in dharma, and the possibility of transformation. Resilience is identified through teachings on balance, steadfastness, control of the mind, acceptance of change, and the ability to rise from suffering.

Third, each piece of textual data is compared with Vedantic commentaries to ensure that the concepts being analyzed are not separated from their metaphysical and soteriological contexts. For example, the teaching on steadfastness is not immediately categorized as resilience before its relationship to samatva, buddhi-yoga, vairāgya, and knowledge of the ātman is analyzed. Similarly, the conviction in action is not immediately equated with self-efficacy because, in the Gita, the capacity for action is always situated in relation to dharma, discipline, and detachment from outcomes. Fourth, data from the primary text were compared with the literature on mental health and psychotherapy. This stage was conducted to identify points of convergence, differences, and tensions between modern psychological models and the *Vedanta* framework. The research, therefore, does not employ a one-way assimilation model, that is, fully subsuming the teachings of the Gita into Western psychological categories, but rather adopts a dialogical model. Positive psychology is used to interpret the dynamics of Arjuna's transformation, while *Vedanta* is employed to expand upon and critically examine psychological understandings of the self and resilience.

### 2.4 Data analysis techniques

Data analysis was conducted in six stages. First, all relevant texts were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the progression of Arjuna's crisis and transformation. The initial reading focused on the narrative context so that each sloka would not be detached from the issues Arjuna was facing. Second, a process of identifying units of meaning was carried out. A unit of meaning could be a single verse, a series of verses, a statement by Arjuna, a response from Kṛṣṇa, or a change in attitude that indicated a specific psychological dynamic. Each unit of meaning was recorded along with the chapter context, philosophical theme, psychological condition, and its relevance to psychological modalities. Third, the units of meaning are assigned initial codes. Coding is performed both deductively and inductively. Deductive codes are derived from the four dimensions of psychological modality, while inductive codes are developed from concepts that emerge in the text, such as the crisis of dharma, errors in self-identification, attachment to results,

mastery of the mind, inner balance, knowledge of the ātman, and surrender to transcendent reality. The combination of deductive and inductive coding allows the analysis to remain focused without forcing the entire meaning of the text into predefined categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Fourth, these codes are grouped into analytical themes. The main themes include: (1) the collapse of the structure of meaning during Arjuna's crisis; (2) the restoration of purpose through dharma as the foundation of hope; (3) the strengthening of the capacity to act through self-discipline as a means of reconstructing self-efficacy; (4) the formation of a constructive outlook through knowledge and trust in moral order as a source of optimism; and (5) the attainment of inner balance as the foundation of resilience. Fifth, a comparative interpretation was conducted between the perspectives of psychological capital and *Vedanta*. At this stage, each dimension was analyzed across three layers. The first layer explains its meaning in positive psychology. The second layer identifies corresponding or related concepts in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The third layer analyzes the corrections and expansions provided by *Vedanta*. For example, hope in positive psychology relates to goals and the path to achieving them, whereas in the *Gita*, goals must be tested against dharma. Self-efficacy relates to the belief in one's ability to act, but in *Vedanta*, that belief is not directed toward inflating the ego. Optimism is not understood as a belief that outcomes are always pleasant, but rather as a conviction that righteous actions remain meaningful. Resilience does not merely mean returning to one's original state, but rather reaching a more mature level of consciousness after a crisis. Sixth, the results of the interpretation were organized into a conceptual model of Arjuna's transformation. This model progresses from an identity crisis and a conflict of dharma toward clarification of one's true nature, reconstruction of the meaning of action, control of the mind, detachment from outcomes, and restoration of the capacity to act. These stages were then mapped onto four dimensions of psychological capital to demonstrate that Arjuna's resilience was not the result of momentary motivation but rather a comprehensive shift in how he understood himself, his duties, his actions, and reality.

## 2.5 Data validity

The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation, referential adequacy, and interpretive transparency. Source triangulation is conducted by comparing the text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Vedanta* commentaries, psychotherapy studies, and psychological modality literature. This comparison is used to prevent interpretations that rely solely on a single interpretive tradition. Referential adequacy was ensured by using relevant classical and contemporary sources. Religious commentaries are used to maintain philosophical depth, while mental health articles are used to assess psychological relevance. The study also pays attention to the differences between clinical and religious interpretations, as emphasized by Aggarwal (2026), so that conceptual similarities are not automatically treated as epistemological equivalence.

Transparency in interpretation is achieved by demonstrating the relationship between textual data, analytical categories, and conclusions. Every claim regarding expectations, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience must be traceable to units of meaning in the text as well as the conceptual explanations that support them. This procedure follows the principles of qualitative content analysis, which emphasizes consistency among the data, the coding process, category formation, and interpretation (Krippendorff, 2013). The study also incorporates researcher reflexivity. Reflexivity is necessary because the interpretation of religious texts is always influenced by the interpreter's intellectual stance, experiences, and assumptions. In this study, categories from modern psychology are not treated as the sole standard for evaluating *Vedanta* teachings. Instead, each category is critically examined to avoid reducing, appropriating, or oversimplifying the Hindu tradition of knowledge.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Arjuna's crisis as a disruption of the self-structure and psychological capital

An analysis of Chapter I and the beginning of Chapter II of the *Bhagavad Gita* shows that Arjuna's crisis cannot be adequately understood as a fear of war or situational anxiety. The somatic symptoms he experienced, his body weakening, his mouth drying up, his body trembling, his skin feeling as if on fire, his bow slipping from his hand, and his mind losing its stability, indicate serious psychological disorganization (*Bhagavad Gita* 1.28–30). However, the source of this disorganization is not technical incompetence. Arjuna is a highly skilled and well-trained warrior. His breakdown, in fact, occurred because his abilities were no longer supported by normative certainty regarding the reasons, purposes, and legitimacy of his actions. These findings show that objective competence does not always translate into the capacity to act. Individuals may possess knowledge, skills, and experience, yet still experience paralysis when the structure of meaning that organizes their actions collapses. Thus, Arjuna's crisis is a multidimensional one involving a conflict of values, identity fragmentation, moral uncertainty, disrupted emotional regulation, and a loss of orientation for action. He faces a conflict between his identities as a warrior, a disciple, a relative, a family member, and a moral agent. Each identity demands different actions, so there is no choice that is entirely free from ethical consequences.

Within the framework of psychological capital, this situation reveals a simultaneous weakening of four capacities. Hope diminishes because Arjuna no longer finds a meaningful purpose to strive for. Self-efficacy is compromised not because of a loss of ability, but because he no longer believes that ability is worth using. Optimism collapses when the future is envisioned only in terms of family destruction, moral decline, and social sin. Resilience weakens as the conflict he experiences drives him to abandon his role and avoid taking action. His statement that living by begging is better than killing his teachers indicates that he has lost the framework for integrating compassion, duty, and social responsibility (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.5). This interpretation is closely related to the concept of "Arjuna syndrome," which is used to explain patterns of anxiety, moral conflict, confusion, and an inability to make decisions (Keshavan, 2023). Nevertheless, this clinical categorization captures only part of the complexity of the Arjuna crisis. Reducing it to psychopathological symptoms risks overlooking the fact that Arjuna's suffering stems from serious moral reflection. He is not merely afraid of pain, but questions the legitimacy of actions that could destroy social relationships and the family structure.

Aggarwal (2026) shows that mental health interpretations and religious commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita* often stem from different assumptions about the self and the goals of transformation. In a clinical framework, recovery is generally measured by a reduction in symptoms and a restoration of function. In *Vedanta*, Arjuna's transformation also involves correcting errors in self-identification, attachment to outcomes, and the inability to distinguish between emotions, social roles, and the true nature of the self. Therefore, Arjuna's crisis is best understood as a disruption of the self-structure that is simultaneously psychological, ethical, and ontological.

#### 3.2 Dharma-based hope: From personal desire to normative orientation

The results of the analysis show that Kṛṣṇa does not restore Arjuna's hope by promising salvation, victory, or the end of suffering. Hope is formed through the reconstruction of purpose. Arjuna's focus shifts from questions about desirable outcomes to questions about right action. This shift is significant because it demonstrates that hope in the *Bhagavad Gita* is not emotional optimism, but rather a normative orientation toward action. In psychological capital theory, hope is associated with the capacity to set goals, develop a path toward those goals, and sustain the energy needed to achieve them. However, this framework generally does not address the moral quality of goals. The *Bhagavad Gita* adds an evaluative dimension: goals are not merely something that can be achieved; they must

also be worth striving for. This is where dharma functions as a principle that evaluates goals, rather than merely a means to achieve them.

The teaching in the *Bhagavad Gita* 2.47 asserts that humans have agency over their actions but do not have absolute control over the outcomes. This statement is often interpreted as a teaching of detachment, but psychologically it can also be understood as a restructuring of the locus of control. Arjuna is guided to distinguish between elements within his capacity, intention, decision, discipline, and the quality of his actions and elements that cannot be fully controlled, namely the final outcome and the world's response to his actions. This distinction reduces the anxiety arising from the illusion of total control.

However, letting go of outcomes is not a form of passivity. Rather, letting go allows one to act with greater focus, as psychological energy is not wasted on trying to control variables beyond human capacity. Hope thus shifts from an expectation of specific outcomes to a commitment to the right process. Individuals continue to work toward their goals, but they do not make outcomes the sole basis of their self-worth and the meaning of life. Jemiwi and Dharma (2025) view dharma as an orientation that restores humans to harmony with themselves. This perspective reinforces the finding that Arjuna's crisis was not merely a loss of courage, but a loss of his center of orientation. Hope is restored when actions are reconnected to values that transcend personal preferences. This finding also corrects the tendency in positive psychology to overemphasize hope as a means of achievement. Hope without moral evaluation can reinforce destructive ambitions. Within the framework of the *Gita*, hope becomes constructive only when guided by dharma. *Vedanta's* contribution lies in transforming hope from a capacity for achievement into an ethical capacity to remain steadfast in the right purpose.

### 3.3 Reconstructing self-efficacy through *Buddhi* and mastery of the mind

Self-efficacy in Arjuna's transformation is not built through affirmations of personal superiority, but through the restoration of the relationship between knowledge, self-control, and action. Arjuna does not lack ability; he has lost the ability to activate his competencies in situations of conflict. This demonstrates that self-efficacy cannot be reduced to a perception of skill. Self-efficacy also depends on the integration of ability, moral legitimacy, and the stability of the self-structure.

Krishna's admonition to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* 2.2–3 can be interpreted as an initial intervention to prevent total identification with emotional states. However, this admonition does not stand alone. Krishna then lays the philosophical foundation that enables Arjuna to distance himself from his mental turmoil. The teaching on the *ātman* affirms that the true nature of the self is not identical with the body, emotions, or changing psychological states (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.20). From this perspective, fearful thoughts need not be interpreted as evidence of one's own inadequacy. Emotions are treated as real experiences, but not as the final authority in determining one's actions. This distinction creates a reflective space between emotional experiences and decisions. It is this space that allows self-efficacy to be reconstructed.

The *Bhagavad Gita* 6.5 affirms the individual's responsibility to elevate oneself through one's own efforts. This statement shows that *Vedanta* does not negate agency. On the contrary, the individual is seen as having the capacity to educate and direct the mind. However, this agency is not placed in the uncontrolled ego, but rather in *buddhi* the discriminating faculty that assesses, distinguishes, and determines actions in harmony with truth. Controlling the mind is also not portrayed as a simple process. Kṛṣṇa acknowledges that the mind is difficult to control, but it can be trained through *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, that is, sustained practice and detachment (*Bhagavad Gita* 6.35). This acknowledgment provides a realistic psychological foundation. Transformation does not occur through a single insight or a single form of motivation, but through repeated practice that changes mental habits.

These findings expand the concept of self-efficacy in two ways. First, belief in one's abilities must be linked to the ability to regulate one's thoughts, not merely to external competence. Second, self-efficacy must be tempered by a moral orientation so that it does

not degenerate into narcissism or an illusion of control. Within the *Vedanta* framework, the statement “I am capable” does not stand alone, but must be followed by the questions “for what purpose is that ability used” and “under what state of consciousness is that action performed.” Balodhi & Keshavan (2011) and Pandurangi et al. (2014) show that the Kṛṣṇa–Arjuna dialogue contains elements of cognitive restructuring, motivation, and behavioral restoration. However, a Vedantic reading reveals that these mechanisms do not merely reinforce the functional ego. Transformation occurs when the ego is placed under the supervision of buddhi and guided by dharma. Therefore, self-efficacy in the Gita is more accurately described as ethically disciplined self-efficacy.

### 3.4 Non-illusory optimism in karma-yoga

The optimism presented in the *Bhagavad Gita* cannot be equated with the belief that the future will inevitably bring pleasant circumstances. Kṛṣṇa does not rule out the possibility of loss, suffering, or failure. Optimism is built not by denying negative realities, but by changing the basis for evaluating one’s actions. In the early stages, Arjuna interpreted the future in deterministic terms. He envisioned that war would only lead to the destruction of families, moral transgressions, and social collapse. These concerns had an ethical basis, but they turned into cognitive totalization when all possible futures were reduced to disaster. In this state, Arjuna was no longer able to distinguish reasonable risks from absolute conclusions.

The teachings of karma-yoga correct this pattern. The *Bhagavad Gita* 2.48 emphasizes action with equanimity toward both success and failure. This orientation does not eliminate the aspiration to succeed, but it prevents external outcomes from becoming the sole measure of an action’s value. Optimism shifts from the prediction “I will surely win” to the conviction that “right action remains meaningful even if the outcome is not entirely within one’s control.” This kind of optimism can be called non-illusory optimism. It acknowledges human limitations, the possibility of failure, and the ambiguity of life. Precisely because it does not depend on the certainty of an outcome, this optimism is more stable than optimism built on the expectation of absolute success. When individuals are only capable of being optimistic when the odds of winning are high, their optimism easily crumbles in uncertain situations. In contrast, karma-yoga maintains the meaning of action even when the probability of an ideal outcome decreases. This finding also distinguishes Vedantic optimism from toxic positivity. Toxic positivity rejects or downplays negative experiences. *Vedanta* does not require individuals to eliminate sadness, fear, or doubt. What is required is that these experiences not completely dominate one’s decisions. Optimism is not a denial of reality, but the ability to maintain a constructive outlook within a difficult reality. Jana and Adhikary (2025) show how karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and bhakti-yoga can orient education toward both spiritual and social development. In this context, optimism is not a self-centered belief that individuals will always prevail. It is confidence that action grounded in responsibility, truth, and disciplined purpose retains value. This expands psychological capital from a performative orientation toward a social-spiritual orientation.

### 3.5 Transformative resilience: From functional recovery to a shift in consciousness

Resilience is the most evident aspect of Arjuna’s transformation. However, this resilience does not simply mean a return to the pre-crisis state. Arjuna does not recover by erasing his moral conflict or forgetting his personal relationships. He acquires a new framework of understanding that allows him to continue acting in tragic situations without losing his ethical compass. The concept of samatva is a key foundation of resilience. Samatva refers to balance in dealing with pairs of experiences, such as pleasure and suffering, victory and defeat, gain and loss. This balance is not synonymous with emotional numbness. Samatva is better understood as evaluative stability that is, the ability to maintain clarity of judgment even as emotional and external circumstances change.

The *Bhagavad Gita* 2.14 asserts that pleasurable and painful sensations are transient. This teaching provides a temporal framework for suffering. Negative experiences are not viewed as permanent conditions or as defining one's entire self. Psychologically, this understanding fosters tolerance for distress. Individuals do not have to wait for all discomfort to subside before taking action again. Resilience is also built through the deconstruction of overly narrow identities. At the beginning of the dialogue, Arjuna is absolutely bound to his identities as a family member, a student, and a warrior. Because each identity entails different obligations, the conflict between these roles develops into a fragmentation of the self. The teaching on the *ātman* does not eliminate these roles, but places them within a broader structure of the self. In this way, Arjuna can fulfill his roles without making them the entirety of his true self.

Keshavan (2020) identifies knowledge, action, and commitment as pathways that can support resilience. The analysis in this study shows that these three do not operate in isolation. Knowledge provides a framework for interpretation, action rebuilds agency, and commitment reduces the ego's burden of controlling all outcomes. The integration of these three elements results in resilience that is not only adaptive but also transformative. The culmination of this transformation is seen in the *Bhagavad Gita* 18.73, when Arjuna declares that his confusion has vanished, his memory has returned, and he is ready to act. This statement is significant because the external circumstances have not changed. The battlefield, the enemy, and the risks remain the same. What has changed is the way Arjuna interprets the situation and positions himself within it. Based on these findings, Arjuna's resilience can be described as transformative resilience. Adaptive resilience typically refers to the ability to return to one's original functioning. Transformative resilience refers to the formation of a new structure of consciousness following a crisis. Individuals not only return to functioning but become better able to distinguish between emotions and the self, between outcomes and actions, and between personal interests and moral demands.

### 3.6 *From an identity crisis to transformative resilience: The integration of psychological capital and Vedanta*

The analysis shows that hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience in the *Bhagavad Gita* do not stand as independent psychological attributes. All four are integrated through the concepts of dharma, *ātman*, buddhi, karma-yoga, and samatva. This integration yields a model of psychological capital that differs from formulations focused solely on performance. To illustrate the conceptual progression through which psychological adversity is transformed into spiritual-ethical resilience, the proposed framework is presented in Figure 1. This model suggests that recovery does not begin with increased motivation, but rather with a correction in how one understands oneself and one's actions. Hope emerges after a goal has gained moral legitimacy. Self-efficacy strengthens when thoughts can be guided by buddhi. Optimism develops when the value of an action is not entirely dependent on the outcome. Resilience is formed when an individual is able to maintain balance amid change. From a theoretical perspective, *Vedanta* offers three corrections to psychological capital. First, psychological capital is not morally neutral. Hope and self-efficacy can be used for destructive purposes if not guided by dharma. Second, psychological capital is not solely focused on personal success. Its value is also determined by its contribution to social order, responsibility, and broader well-being. Third, psychological strength does not have to be built through ego inflation. It can grow through the reduction of attachments and the expansion of self-understanding. Thus, *Vedanta's* contribution goes beyond simply providing local equivalents for Western psychological concepts. *Vedanta* transforms their conceptual structure. Hope becomes normative hope, self-efficacy becomes disciplined agency, optimism becomes non-illusory optimism, and resilience becomes transformative resilience.

This circular model illustrates that Arjuna's transformation did not occur as a simple linear process, but rather as a comprehensive restructuring of how he understood himself, his goals, his actions, and his outcomes. Within the framework of Psychological Capital

(PsyCap), this change can be understood through four main dimensions: hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. However, from the perspective of the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Vedanta*, these four dimensions do not stand alone as neutral psychological capacities; rather, they are shaped and guided by ātman, dharma, buddhi, karma-yoga, and samatva.

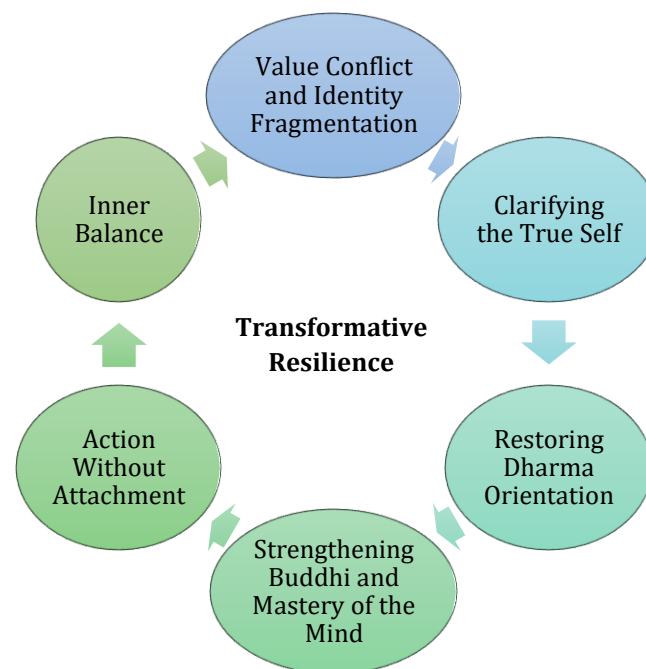


Fig. 1. A circular model of the integration of psychological capital and *Vedanta* in Arjuna's transformation

The initial stage of the model reveals a conflict of values and fragmentation of identity. Arjuna experiences a clash between his roles as a knight, a student, a family member, and a moral agent. This situation simultaneously weakens all components of PsyCap: hope loses its direction, self-efficacy cannot be actualized, optimism turns into a projection of doom, and resilience collapses into an inability to act. Arjuna's crisis, therefore, is not merely a lack of motivation, but a disorganization of the structure of meaning. Transformation begins with clarifying one's true nature. The teachings on the ātman enable Arjuna to distinguish between his true self and his changing psychological states. In the context of PsyCap, this stage provides the ontological foundation for self-recovery. Arjuna no longer identifies his entire self with fear, confusion, or role conflict. This reflective distance becomes a prerequisite for the reemergence of a more stable psychological capacity.

The restoration of dharma orientation then reconstructs the dimension of hope. In PsyCap, hope encompasses goals, paths to achievement, and the energy to act. *Vedanta* expands this understanding by adding moral legitimacy to the goals. Hope does not merely mean having a goal, but having the right goal. Thus, hope in this model is normative hope that is, the ability to maintain a course of action based on dharma, rather than solely on personal desires or favorable outcomes. Strengthening buddhi and mastering the mind reconstruct self-efficacy. In PsyCap, self-efficacy refers to the belief that an individual is capable of carrying out the necessary actions. From the *Vedanta* perspective, this belief must be guided by buddhi the discriminative faculty that enables clear judgment. Self-efficacy is not understood as ego inflation, but rather as disciplined agency. Individuals become confident in their abilities because their thoughts can be directed, their emotions can be managed, and their actions can be aligned with the right goals.

The stage of action without attachment reconstructs optimism. In PsyCap, optimism is associated with positive expectations regarding the present and the future. *Vedanta* corrects optimism that is overly dependent on outcomes. Through karma-yoga, optimism transforms into non-illusory optimism: individuals continue to act with conviction and

purpose, but do not stake their entire self-worth and inner peace on external success. The value of an action lies in the quality of intention, the process, and its alignment with dharma. Inner balance through samatva fosters resilience. In PsyCap, resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity. In this model, resilience does not stop at the restoration of function but evolves into a transformation of consciousness. Individuals do not merely return to their pre-crisis state but acquire a more mature framework of understanding. They are able to face success and failure, joy and sorrow, without losing their moral compass or clarity of action.

The pinnacle of the model is transformative resilience. This concept unites the four dimensions of PsyCap within the *Vedanta* framework. Hope becomes an orientation rooted in dharma; self-efficacy becomes agency guided by buddhi; optimism becomes trust in the value of action without the illusion of control; and resilience becomes the capacity to grow through crises. Thus, transformative resilience describes not only individuals who are able to endure, but also those who experience a deepening of consciousness, ethical maturity, and the ability to act responsibly. Theoretically, this integration demonstrates that PsyCap, from a *Vedanta* perspective, does not serve merely to enhance performance. Psychological capital is directed toward the development of individuals capable of acting effectively, meaningfully, and ethically. This model also emphasizes that psychological strength is not merely a matter of “being able to cope with pressure,” but also a matter of “for what purpose that ability is used,” “what values guide it,” and “what structure of consciousness underpins it.”

### 3.7 Points of convergence and tension between the *Bhagavad Gita* and psychotherapy

The dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna involves a number of processes that share functional similarities with psychotherapy: problem disclosure, conflict clarification, examination of assumptions, restructuring of thought patterns, emotional regulation, empowerment, and restoration of action. These similarities explain why the *Bhagavad Gita* is often compared to cognitive-behavioral therapy, existential therapy, supportive approaches, and contemporary eclectic interventions (Bhatia et al., 2013; Mishra et al., 2023; Reddy, 2012; Risal, 2024; Sharma, 2014; Shukla, 2018). However, functional similarity does not imply epistemological identity. Kṛṣṇa does not merely act as a facilitator who helps Arjuna find his own answers. He also appears as a spiritual teacher who articulates metaphysical claims regarding the self, reality, action, and liberation. Therefore, the Kṛṣṇa–Arjuna relationship cannot be fully explained through the model of a modern therapeutic relationship.

Aggarwal (2026) aptly points out the difference between mental health literature and religious commentaries in interpreting the *Bhagavad Gita*. Psychotherapy literature tends to extract elements compatible with clinical techniques, whereas the tradition of commentary preserves the theological and soteriological context. This tension is significant because using the Gita as a source for psychology can lead to epistemic reduction if concepts such as ātman, dharma, and mokṣa are interpreted solely as techniques for mental well-being. Therefore, a more responsible form of integration is dialogical integration, not assimilative integration. The assimilative approach treats modern psychology as the primary framework and regards the Gita as an illustration. The dialogical approach acknowledges that the two traditions can correct one another. Positive psychology helps identify the mechanisms of Arjuna’s transformation, while *Vedanta* challenges positive psychology’s assumptions about the self, purpose, control, and success.

The findings of this study have implications for the development of a more contextual approach to psychology that is not entirely dependent on individualistic anthropology. The concept of psychological capital is generally developed within organizational settings and is associated with productivity, performance, and competitiveness. While this orientation is useful, it risks reducing resilience to the ability to adapt to stress without questioning the source of that stress. The *Bhagavad Gita* reminds us that resilience is not the same as uncritical obedience. Resilience rooted in dharma includes the ability to assess whether an

action, goal, or system is worth upholding. Thus, resilience must not be used to normalize exploitation, exhaustion, or injustice.

A broader Vedic account situates consciousness within relations among mind, self, society, nature, and cosmos (Narayan & Jairam, 2025). The global reception of the Gita similarly shows that its vocabulary of karma, devotion, knowledge, and dharma continues to organize spiritual responses to modern uncertainty (Pallathadka & Roy, 2025). Within this framework, resilience is directed not only toward personal success but also toward relational balance, collective responsibility, and ethical participation in a larger order of meaning. Consequently, psychological capital can be reconceptualized as psychological-ethical-spiritual capital. This framework acknowledges an individual's internal capacities but refuses to separate them from values, relationships, and life goals. Psychological capital addresses not only the question of "how people become strong," but also "what that strength is used for" and "what structure of consciousness underpins it."

Table 1. Reconstruction of psychological capital dimensions within a Vedantic framework

| Dimensions of Psychological Modalities | General Formulation                  | Vedantic Reconstruction                                               |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hope                                   | Goals, Paths, and Motivation         | Goal Orientation Based on Dharma                                      |
| Self-efficacy                          | Belief in one's abilities            | Agency guided by buddhi and self-discipline                           |
| Optimism                               | Positive expectations for the future | Trust in the value of action without the illusion of control          |
| Resilience                             | The ability to recover after stress  | Transformation of consciousness through equanimity and non-attachment |

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, the study not only identifies similarities between the Gita and positive psychology but also reconstructs the four dimensions of psychological modalities through the *Vedanta* framework. Second, the study frames Arjuna's transformation as a process of structural change within the self, rather than merely a reduction of symptoms. Third, the study introduces a model of transformative resilience that integrates psychological, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. Conceptually, the research findings can be summarized as follows Table 1. This reconstruction shows that the *Bhagavad Gita* not only reinforces the theory of psychological modalities but also critiques its instrumentalist tendencies. Resilience is not judged solely by the ability to achieve goals, but also by the appropriateness of the goals, the clarity of consciousness, the control of attachment, and the alignment of actions with dharma. Thus, Arjuna's transformation offers a model of resilience that does not stop at psychological functioning but moves toward self-integration, moral responsibility, and spiritual maturity.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study shows that Arjuna's crisis in the *Bhagavad Gita* represents not only emotional distress but also a disruption in his sense of self, moral orientation, and capacity for action. Arjuna experiences a collapse of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience due to a loss of clarity regarding who he is, what his duties are, and how he should act in a situation fraught with conflicting values. Therefore, his recovery does not occur through motivational encouragement alone, but rather through a comprehensive reconstruction of his understanding of self, actions, goals, and outcomes.

The research findings show that the four dimensions of psychological capital take on a broader meaning when viewed through the lens of *Vedanta*. Hope is reconstructed as a goal-oriented approach rooted in dharma, rather than merely the ability to pursue personal desires. Self-efficacy is understood as agency guided by buddhi, discipline, and mastery of the mind, rather than as ego inflation. Optimism develops as a belief in the value of right action without the illusion of control over outcomes. Resilience emerges as the ability to

maintain samatva while undergoing a transformation of consciousness following a crisis. Thus, the *Bhagavad Gita* does not merely provide a conceptual parallel to positive psychology, but offers a corrective to a psychological orientation that is overly individualistic, instrumental, and performance-centered. Within the framework of *Vedanta*, psychological forces are not morally neutral. Hope, self-confidence, optimism, and resilience must be guided by righteous goals, social responsibility, clarity of consciousness, and liberation from egoistic attachments. Arjuna's transformation demonstrates that true resilience is not the ability to eliminate fear, sadness, and doubt. Rather, resilience lies in the ability to understand these experiences clearly, place them within a broader framework of meaning, and continue to act responsibly. Arjuna's external circumstances did not change, but the way he understood himself and his actions underwent a fundamental shift. On this basis, this study proposes the concepts of psychological-ethical-spiritual capital and transformative resilience as its primary theoretical contributions.

The dialogue between psychological theory and *Vedanta* must also be viewed critically. The *Bhagavad Gita* cannot be reduced to a modern psychotherapy manual because the purpose of its teachings goes beyond symptom reduction and functional recovery. This text speaks of ātman, dharma, action, devotion, and liberation. Therefore, a responsible integration is not the assimilation of the Gita's teachings into Western psychological categories, but rather an epistemological dialogue that allows both traditions to mutually expand and correct one another. In practical terms, the research findings are relevant to education, counseling, human resource development, leadership, and character building. Resilience cannot be built solely through the drive to continuously achieve; it requires a clarification of values, practice in self-control, the ability to distinguish between areas of control and those beyond one's control, and an awareness of the purpose behind one's actions. This approach is essential to ensure that the concept of resilience is not used to normalize pressure, exploitation, or injustice, but rather to shape individuals who are strong yet critical, responsible, and dharma-oriented.

This study is textual-interpretive in nature; therefore, its findings remain at the conceptual level and have not yet empirically tested the proposed psychological-ethical-spiritual model. Furthermore, the interpretation of *Vedanta* in this study primarily emphasizes concepts relevant to Arjuna's transformation and thus does not encompass the full diversity of interpretive traditions of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Differences between *Advaita Vedanta*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *Dvaita*, and modern commentarial traditions can lead to differing emphases on the self, agency, devotion, and resilience. Future research should develop operational indicators for dharma-based hope, buddhi-guided self-efficacy, non-illusory optimism, and transformative resilience. Testing can be conducted through qualitative studies, the development of psychological scales, or intervention research in the fields of education, counseling, organizations, and mental health. Comparative cross-tradition studies of " " are also needed to assess the extent to which this model can engage in dialogue with contemporary psychology without losing the philosophical and spiritual integrity of *Vedanta*.

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## Author Contribution

Conceptualization, R.D.K., N.K.S. and A.A.; Methodology, N.K.S. and A.A.; Validation, N.K.S. and A.A.; Formal Analysis, N.K.S. and A.A.; Investigation, N.K.S. and A.A.; Resources, N.K.S. and A.A.; Data Curation, N.K.S. and A.A.; Writing-Original Draft Preparation, R.D.K. and N.K.S.; Writing-Review and Editing, R.D.K., N.K.S. and A.A.; Visualization, A.A.; Supervision,

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Not available.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

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### **Data Availability Statement**

No new data were created or generated in this study. The textual sources analyzed are publicly available and are cited in the manuscript's reference list.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **Declaration of Generative AI Use**

During the preparation of this work, the authors used an AI-assisted translation tool to assist in translating and refining the language of the manuscript. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the translated content as needed and took full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the publication.

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### Biographies of Authors

**Relin Denayu Ekawati**, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar, Denpasar, Bali 80236, Indonesia.

- Email: [ayurelin@uhnsugriwa.ac.id](mailto:ayurelin@uhnsugriwa.ac.id)
- ORCID: 0000-0002-3473-4892
- Web of Science ResearcherID: N/A
- Scopus Author ID: N/A
- Homepage: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=8uw6zp0AAAAJ&hl=id>

**Ni Kadek Surpi**, Hindu State University of I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa and Research Center for Religion, Education and Social Science, Denpasar, Bali 80238, Indonesia

- Email: [nikadeksurpi@uhnsugriwa.ac.id](mailto:nikadeksurpi@uhnsugriwa.ac.id)
- ORCID: 0000-0002-1121-179X
- Web of Science ResearcherID: N/A
- Scopus Author ID: 58029588800
- Homepage: <https://www.denpasarinstitute.com/259/dr-ni-kadek-surpi-m-fil-h.html>

**Aditya Ansu**, Abu Dhabi University, Abu Dhabi 59911, United Arab Emirates.

- Email: [aditya.anshu@adu.ac.ae](mailto:aditya.anshu@adu.ac.ae)
- ORCID: N/A
- Web of Science ResearcherID: N/A
- Scopus Author ID: N/A
- Homepage: N/A