ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

TRAVEL AVOIDANCE OR ECO-FRIENDLY BEHAVIOR: INVESTIGATING THE OUTCOMES OF PANDEMIC FEAR IN THE CONTEXT OF TOURIST RESILIENCE

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Abstract:

Purpose: *This paper examines the effect of pandemic fear on travel avoidance and tourists' intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior, focusing on the mediating role of resilience. It aims to enhance scientific knowledge by examining how pandemic fear can lead to positive environmental actions in tourism, as travel avoidance reduces people's congestion at tourist places, keeps social distance, takes care of wastage, and properly takes preemptive measures to clean places. This study also gives new directions to sustain the tourism and hospitality industry during pandemics.*

Method: *Quantitative research method is employed to collect data from 430 participants from Pakistan through an online self-complete questionnaire. As for testing the proposed relationships, Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed.*

Findings: *The findings show that pandemic fear significantly predicts travel avoidance and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior. Moreover, resilience is found as the mediator that positively connects pandemic fear to eco-friendly behaviors as well as reduces travel avoidance.*

The study established that fear of pandemic has a strong/positive correlation with travel avoidance and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior. Further, resilience is identified as the mediator; it is positively linked to pandemic fear and eco-friendly behavior and negatively to travel avoidance.

Implications: *The research shows use the role of resilience to call to support sustainable tourism practices in crises. The study has important implication for policy makers and managers of the tourism sector to consider and coordinate with them on how best to reduce the impact of perceived pandemic fear on tourism sector, and simultaneously promote sustainable eco-friendly behavior among tourists. This area of research focuses on the use of resilience in encouraging the adoption of sustainable tourism practices in emergencies. Based on the findings, serves as an important reference for policymakers and tourism managers concerning how to reduce the adverse impacts of perceived pandemic threats on tourists and promote their eco-friendly behavior.*

Keywords: Pandemic fear**,** resilience**,** travel avoidance**,** and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior

Introduction

The fear of COVID-19 may positively correlate with visitors' desire to engage in eco-friendly behaviors, defined as acts taken by people to safeguard the environment. The protracted

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nature of the crisis, together with its many repercussions and ramifications, motivates individuals to embrace eco-friendly behaviors as a means of safeguarding themselves against the apprehension of future pandemic waves (Hong et al., 2024). The environmental concerns are closely related to fear of a pandemic like COVID-19. As "COVID-19 is reported as a bat-related epidemic" (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020), the epidemic is considered nature's revenge on humankind. A key lesson from the pandemic is the significance of human-nature interaction, suggesting that people might gain advantages by learning from and coexisting with nature rather than attempting to exploit and alter it. Consequently, we anticipated that consumers and tourists exhibiting a high or a low degree of concern over COVID-19 would be more inclined to enhance their pro-environmental beliefs and bolster their pro-environmental activities (e.g., safeguarding wildlife, etc.). Furthermore, terror management research (Vess & Arndt, 2008) suggests that the fear of a pandemic may serve as an indicator of mortality salience, thus fostering pro-environmental motivation, particularly when individuals see nature as significantly pertinent to their lives (Fritsche & Häfner, 2012).

Pandemic fear, resilience, and travel avoidance are also associated with other behavioral intentions which include the willingness to engage in more eco-friendly behaviors. On health and safety issues, tourists are developing a shift to be environmentally sustainable and conscious when they tour. This is because the COVID-19 pandemic has changed tourists' behavior regarding the desire to have more and greener travel choices as a way of dealing with travel uncertainty (Kupi & Szemerédi, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2024). This shift is especially noticeable when it comes to avoiding travel, as the perceived risk, alongside the concerns with environmental impact, will bring people towards less crowded travel options (Chan et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2021).

The tourism and hospitality industry has faced unparalleled hurdles owing to the wake of the pandemic, including lockdowns, rapidly altered government regulations, imposed limitations on internal as well as international travel, and reluctance on the part of the tourist to travel hence increasing travel avoidance (Sann et al., 2024). Many hotels including small and medium-sized were forced to end their business operations because of the pandemic (Sharma et al., 2021). The pandemic has changed the population's behaviors and attitudes. Fear of contracting the virus has led to changes in various aspects of life, including travel and environmental behavior (Demirbas & Kutlu, 2022; Quadros et al., 2021). In addition to these circumstances, the fear of the pandemic and tourists' perceptions have resulted in a considerable reduction in demand for travel owing to the uncertainty and fake information about diseases in social media (Zheng et al., 2021). There are many lessons to be learned from the pandemic scenario as this pandemic was far more massive and destructive than the earlier pandemics. To assist the tourism and hospitality industry recover from this outbreak, it is very crucial to comprehend tourist's "travel fear" related to the pandemic (Hong et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 has altered human behavior tremendously when it comes to travel and sustainability. A specific fear has been identified as the cause of the changes in the behaviors that have been brought around due to COVID-19 pandemic. Self-protective motives enhanced risk-related COVID-19 threat and its impact on travel avoidance (Kavčič et al., 2021; Nazneen et al., 2021).

Fear and anxiety due to the pandemic has eroded mental health and reduced the preparedness to undertake travel activities. This fear is not only a reaction to activities that present current risks to health, but reactivity to generic future threats evident in avoidance behaviors (Sediri et al., 2020; Zenker et al., 2021).

There is no such direct connection between the perceptions of the pandemic fear and eco-friendly behavior adoption. People have therefore begun to take the environment into account

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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more often called as a 'green recovery there is also ample evidence which suggests that travel related behaviors have become highly careless as restrictions ((Prayag & Dassanayake, 2023)). Such relations bring out the argument that sociological imagination is necessary to discover the factors that determine the resilience concept, which, in this case, can be defined as the ability to maintain a positive way of coping with stressors. Resilience can counteract adverse consequences of stressful and fearful conditions on mental health, thus provoking behavioral effects (Cao et al., 2023; Keener et al., 2021). For instance, prominent effective coping strategies in protective individuals entail practicing environmentally sustainable behaviors, even during the COVID-19 crisis (Mallhi et al., 2022).

Understanding these relationships can help promote sustainable behaviors and mitigate the negative impact of fear during the pandemic. This study holds significant value in terms of enhancing our comprehension of the factors that exert an influence on travel behavior and the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices amid the fear of the pandemic. Hence, it aims to bring light to the underlying psychological mechanisms that underpin individual behavior during these times. The research model of our study is presented in Figure 1.

[Figure1]

2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)

Protection motivation theory describes that "when consumers face fear, they act based on two types of cognitive processes: the estimation of a threat and the ability to handle threats" (Rogers, 1975). Prentice-Dunn and Rogers (1986) argue that individuals' response to threat depends on two cognitive processes: threat appraisal and coping appraisal. Threat appraisal involves perceived susceptibility to the threat (i.e., the likelihood of contracting pandemic) and perceived severity of the threat (i.e. the seriousness of the consequences of contracting the pandemic) while coping appraisal includes perceived protective efficacy (e.g., how effective is mask-wearing or social distancing) and perceived self-efficacy (e.g., how confident one is in their capacity to execute the appropriate protective acts) (Lee et al., 2019; Ruan et al., 2020). As suggested by Hunter and Röös (2016) to understand how the behavior of individuals changes in the scenario of environmental and health risks, this study also used PMT theory to conceptualize the pandemic fear and its precautionary measures. The literature based on the research during the pandemic suggests that the theory of Protection Motivation is a good fit for the tourism and hospitality industry (Shah Alam et al., 2023).

2.2. Pandemic fear and travel avoidance

During the pandemic, many factors motivate people to avoid travelling including accurate pandemic/risk information, debunking rumours, and trust in the government and media (Dai et al., 2020; Van Der Does et al., 2021). The public's trust during the pandemic has been contingent on different stakeholders(Arica et al., 2022). Travel during a pandemic is dependent on interpersonal and institutional effectiveness in disease control and prevention, as well as personal protective behaviors. As highlighted by Novelli et al. (2018) how Ebola affected travel showed that during its spread, demand for travel to Africa significantly decreased.

The behavior of customers has been changed to avoid the fear of the pandemic, which indicated that it has focused on health-protective behaviour, travel avoidance, decision-making regarding lodging, and preference between P2P and hotel sharing (Mody et al., 2021). People's needs for ride-sharing services are rising in the post-pandemic world due to an increase in travel demands, which is associated with an increased risk of infection, so it's critical to look into and comprehend how customers are protecting themselves to prevent the pandemic from regaining momentum (Cheng et al., 2024).

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In the scenario of a pandemic, people try to avoid or even delay their decisions regarding travelling, keeping in view the risk of exposure to the pandemic (Chi et al., 2022). Scholars particularly in the tourism and hospitality sector are of the view that research on the safety of tourists is highly required to minimize travel avoidance by individuals (Foroudi et al., 2021). They also taking into consideration the situation or circumstances focus more on health risks as compared with other risks (Arica et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2022). Previous studies show that health risk in comparison with other risks is the most dominant factor which affects the decision of the tourist regarding travelling or avoiding travel (Wang & Xia, 2021; Wassler & Fan, 2021). The expectations of tourists regarding safety preventative measures can be a significant determinant affecting their travel behavior (Chua et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed and tested:

H1: *There is a positive association between pandemic fear and* travel avoidance.

2.3. Pandemic fear and eco-friendly behavior

Rafiq et al. (2022) define Eco-friendly tourists' behavior as "an individual's aim to minimize his/her detrimental impacts on the natural environment and otherwise contribute to environmental protection". It includes the set of actions and attitudes undertaken by an individual that reflects care for the environment and its sustainability. The literature emphasizes that the eco-friendly behavior of tourists can be shown through pro-environmental behavior Sadiq (2019), it is for this reason that tourists prefer eco-friendly hotels over conventional hotels. The prediction of tourists' behavioral intentions especially in the scenario of post-pandemic is of high significance (George & George, 2004). Ajzen (1991) states that the degree to which the individual intends to perform or not to perform a particular volitional action refers to the behavioral intention of the tourists. Therefore, understanding what prompts tourists towards eco-friendly behavior is of extreme importance.

Ajzen (1991) stated that there is a positive association between pandemic fear and tourists' eco-friendly behavioral intentions. Another study stated that underlying psychological reasons include attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms that explain the association between pandemic fear (COVID-19) and eco-friendly behavioral intentions among tourists (Hong et al., 2024). As a result of pandemic fear, people are more likely to adopt eco-friendly behavior. This suggests that people prioritize safety over leisure and tourist activities (Chang et al., 2022). It is also indicated that people would wish their close ones to exhibit similar kind of eco-friendly behavior and this pressure from their close ones would hence mould their subjective norm in a way that would motivate them to act in an environmentally responsible manner (Youn et al., 2021). Additionally, it is shown that fear of the pandemic may have an impact on people's perspective and the correlation with their adoption of eco-friendly behavior (Hong et al., 2024).

H2: *There is a negative association between pandemic fear and eco-friendly behavior.*

2.4. Pandemic fear and resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated widespread fear and anxiety, significantly influencing individuals' psychological resilience. Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity, plays a crucial role in managing the psychological impacts of pandemic-related stressors. The studies have also shown that pandemic fear has a positive correlation with resilience, which means that increased fear makes people willing to build up coping mechanisms that would help in building up resilience (Kumar et al., 2022; Yıldırım & Ashraf, 2023).

Individuals who had higher perceived risk associated with COVID-19 were more likely to show resilience since fear from the virus induced people into practicing health enhancing resilience (Yıldırım et al., 2022). This connection supports the idea that fear may trigger growth and have people face specific obstacles and work towards rendering their anxiety

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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unthreatening. the level of fear that young people experience because of the pandemic was reduced through the use of flexibility strategies that would enable people to manage the uncertainties (Aminoff et al., 2021; Polizzi et al., 2020). This means that beyond the distress of having to feel afraid, there can be created a form of strength that increases resilience.

Resilience has been deemed a protective factor against the negative psychological effects of pandemic fear. Resilient individuals were better equipped to handle feelings of loneliness and anxiety associated with COVID-19 fear, indicating that resilience can buffer the adverse effects of such fears (Kıllı et al., 2023). Resilience significantly mediated the relationship between COVID-19-related work stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression among healthcare workers (Shi et al., 2022). Such evidence suggests that resilience not only helps individuals cope with fear but also fosters a more robust psychological state that can withstand the pressures of a pandemic.

H3: *There is a positive association between pandemic fear and resilience.*

2.5 Resilience and Travel Avoidance

The relationship between resilience and travel avoidance has gained significant attention, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resilience is the ability to adapt and recover from adversity, plays a crucial role in how individuals respond to travel-related stressors, especially during crises. Psychological resilience plays a strong role to influence travel intentions during crisis. Shi et al. (2022) revealed that people who are more resilient take protective travel measures without avoiding travel in general. Resilient people believe in authorities when it comes to avoiding travel (Morar et al., 2021). The same reasoning as for trust applies here because Çınar et al. (2022) stated that protection motivation is highly connected with resilience and influences holiday avoidance behaviors during the pandemic. This is an indication that the resilient person is likely to use pro-active coping mechanisms as opposed to using non-pro-active ones.

To look at the psychological side of travel avoidance and how persons react emotionally during crises. Richardson et al. (2021) pointed out that, although coping styles like avoidance make symptoms disappear for a while, they further worsen the state of affairs in the long run being associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Evidence of positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being, meaning that people with high levels of resilience are likely to handle stress in a better way and hence are less likely to avoid (Yıldırım et al., 2020). Caldeira et al. (2022) corroborated this notion by recognizing that enhanced health consciousness and resulting adaptative travel behavior offset the tendency for avoidance. Travel fears have substantially been instigated by the pandemic as many people now avoid travelling as much as they used to before the pandemic. Five still coping indices associated with travel avoidance, including fear of the pandemic and travel resilience (Yushairi et al., 2022). They conclude that, people with higher resilience can opt for careful travel instead of avoiding travel all together. Self-protective measures that are, inter alia, a result of resilience, significantly influence travel behavior during the pandemic (El-Said & Aziz, 2022).

H4: *There is a negative association between resilience and travel avoidance.*

2.5 Resilience and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior

Research interest in the link between resilience and the intention to engage in behaviors towards environmental sustainability has however grown in the recent years with environmental issues becoming more apparent in the climate change and sustainability. In the current research, resilience has a direct and significant effect on the participants' intention to act environmentally sustainable.

Hasan et al. (2024) showed that customers displaying a high extent of consumer environmental activism engage in more eco-friendly consumer behavior as resilience elevates

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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their capacity to manage environmental constraints and encourages them to make progressive changes toward sustainability. Resilience fosters people's sensitivity toward external challenges (Baker et al., 2021).

Research evidences show that resilience hugely helps in improving pro-environmental behaviors due to increased agency and motivation. Gao et al. (2022) note that there exists a positive relationship between self-reported green behavioral intention and actual green consumption and contribution behavior. This implies that people with higher levels of resilience – coping mechanisms that makes one prepare well for potential stressors including fear of the current and impending pandemics – are likely to proceed with their intentions and engage in sustainable activities.

In addition, the study by Yusiana et al. (2021) reveal that eco-labeling has a positive effect on consumer buying behavior; which suggests that during the period of the pandemic, consumers are ready to make a shift towards sustainable products whenever they feel a sense of control and resilience regarding their decisions. TPB was used to understand how resilience alongside attitude and subjective norms affects people's intentions towards environmentally sustainable behaviors. Liu et al. (2022) suggested that due to COVID-19 pandemic, subjective norm can influence through fear to change behavior towards environmentally conscious practices. This is consistent with the theory of (Duchi et al., 2020), according to their analysis, conscientiousness which is regarded to as a form of resilience, makes individuals stick to better practices of environmental conservation during the time of crises. People with higher level of conscientiousness are likely to practice behaviors that reduce effects on environment more so bearing in mind that there is an outbreak of a pandemic. However, leadership and organizational culture which underpin the actions for building resilience as well as promoting sustainable behaviors have a large part. Ahmad and his associates point out that ethical leadership improves environmental knowledge and commitment in employees and, therefore, fosters green behavior, (Quadros et al., 2021) suggests that if an organization invest on developing resilience within its members, then there is likely to be improvement on the number of green behaviors when disaster hits the business organizations.

H5: *There is a positive association between resilience and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior.*

2.5. Mediating Role of Resilience

Pandemic fear and resilience cause better mental health consequences, which determines the choice of traveling. According to Rees et al. (2015), resilience leads to positive psychological health hence counteracting the ill health effect of fear. This relationship is important because those with better mental health are likely to participate in travel activities and even through fear. Hence, the studies suggested that promoting resilience could be a major approach towards ensuring safer mobility.

Pandemic fear can make people become more sensitive about the environment, and resort to good practices as a way of social contribution at the time of ''pandemic.'' For example, evidence suggests that the perception of environment consciousness has increased during the pandemic in terms of the explicit behavioral intentions towards environment-friendly activities (Yusiana et al., 2021). Such intention is, as a rule, mitigated by personal coping capacity. People with higher resilience would seek out a behavioral response, which is working to prevent harm from occurring or engaging in practices that are more environmentally friendly (Gao et al., 2022). This means that resilience in the face of pandemic stressors not only assists people in how they respond to the pressures of the current pandemic but also assists people in acting proactively regarding the environment.

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
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The pandemic was shown to increase sustainable behaviors among people with strong eco-friendly attitudes (Yusiana et al., 2021). This suggests that resilience can improve the chances of promoting eco-susceptible behaviors by providing reassurance at gears against fear. Through this, organizational identification which can be associated with individual resilience has a positive relationship with employees' pro-environmental behaviors (Ribeiro et al., 2022).

Interaction with natural environments (blue-green spaces) impacts mental health and resilience during the COVID-19 lockdown. It posits that heightened interaction with nature may serve as a coping mechanism in times of anxiety and uncertainty. It is suggested that pandemic-induced anxiety may compel people to engage in environmentally sustainable activities, such as increased time spent in nature, as a component of their adaptive coping strategies (Pouso et al., 2021). The anxiety and seclusion induced by COVID-19 prompted individuals to alter their habits, including physical exercise, as a coping mechanism. Resilience is a crucial element in sustaining health-promoting habits during the epidemic. This refers to how resilience enables individuals to modify their behaviors in reaction to pandemic-related anxiety, indicating a potential route toward environmentally sustainable practices or avoiding travel as a component of this adaptive mechanism (Matias et al., 2020). The correlation between psychological resilience during the pandemic and engagement in preventative activities, including travel avoidance and compliance with health standards, indicates that resilience is crucial in how people cope with stress and panic throughout the epidemic. This research substantiates that resilience modulates the correlation between pandemic-induced anxiety and adaptive behaviors such as travel avoidance or environmentally conscious acts (Yıldırım et al., 2023).

COVID-19 pandemic made it possible to observe drastic changes the travelling behavior of the population; people experienced fear factors that caused them to avoid traveling. Polish travelers realized that respondents cut down their travel plans overseas, choosing domestic trips considered safer (Jęczmyk et al., 2023). In addition, through favorable changes in consumption and travel habits due to the pandemic people began to pay more attention to environmental problems (Čaušević, 2023; Liu et al., 2022). However, there is a dearth of knowledge as to how resilience might act as a moderator and affect the relationship between the fear of the pandemic, or the travel avoidance and the adoption of the eco-friendly behavior. Fear of the pandemic has been identified as an independent variable, and travel avoidance and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior are two dependent variables that can be impacted by fear. Resilience acts as a mediating variable that can impact these relationships.

H6: *Resilience mediates the relationship between pandemic fear and travel avoidance.*

H7: *Resilience mediates the relationship between pandemic fear and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior.*

3. Methodology

The study applied a quantitative deductive approach where hypotheses were confirmed based on collected data through a survey with the help of Google Forms. The population was the individuals who had an interest in traveling and had travelled for a tourism activity at least once during COVID-19. The entire population was spread all over Pakistan as near our city Bahawalpur a grand festival with the name of Jeep Raily was celebrated every year and tourists all over Pakistan visited that place and many of them have visited many international places for tourism purposes and also have attended many tourism events and we collected data from those tourists. Tourism activities take place all over Pakistan and there are many tourist places in almost every province of Pakistan like different tourist places all over the world. The questionnaire for this study was divided into two main sections: the first section

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asked questions about demographics, and the second section contained items only used to measure the study's variables using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. During 3 months, 430 usable responses were received out of 500 distributed questionnaires with a response rate of 86%. The demographic information of the respondents is shown in **[Table 1].**

3.1. Measures.

3.1.1. Pandemic Fear: We used 10-items scale of Ahorsu et al. (2020) to assess pandemic fear among our respondents. Sample items are for example "*I am most afraid of pandemic*", "*It makes me uncomfortable to think about the pandemic*", and "*I worry a lot about the pandemic*". All questions were designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The value of Cronbach's alpha for reliability statistics was 0.895.

3.1.2. Resilience: We used Campbell-Sills and Stein (2007) scale to measure the resilience among our respondents. Questions are for example "*I able to adapt to change in travel*.", and "*I deal with whatever comes in travel*". All questions were designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The value of Cronbach's alpha for reliability statistics was 0.838.

3.1.3. Intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior: To assess the intention of tourists to adopt eco-friendly behavior with a scale from (Han et al., 2020). Questions are for example "*I intend to behave eco-friendly during and after the pandemic*", and "*When I travel to any destination during and after the pandemic, I tend to choose destinations and services that promise to be eco-friendly*". All questions were designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The value of Cronbach's alpha for reliability statistics was 0.874.

3.1.4. Travel avoidance: We measured travel avoidance among our respondents using a scale from (Cahyanto et al., 2016). Questions are for example, "*I avoid travelling in the post-pandemic period*", and "*I delay making decisions about travelling in the post-pandemic*". All questions were designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The value of Cronbach's alpha for reliability statistics was 0.822.

4. ANALYSES AND RESULTS

To investigate the attributes of a certain group, including gender, age, marital status, degree of education, and monthly income, demographic analysis was done. It was used to comprehend the cultural, social, and economic elements affecting the behavior of individuals within a certain demographic group.

The participant's gender, marital status, age, degree of education, and income level are among the demographic variables included in this information. Table 1 indicates that 72.60% of the participants were men and 27.40% were women, suggesting a male-dominated culture in Pakistan. Most of the respondents, 75.10, were married, had a mature understanding, and were valuable for the study. As far as the age of the respondents was concerned, 56% of the respondents were in the age group of 20-29 the majority of the respondents had graduated at an educational level of 50%. The final demographic variable was the income level, and most of the respondents participating in this study had an income below 50 thousand.

[Table2]

4.1.Assessment of the Measurement Model

The core data for this study was gathered using a Google form with a five-point Likert scale and restrictions on each response. After completing the survey, the data was downloaded as a CSV file, loaded into SPSS, and then imported into Smart-PLS for additional analysis because the data was complete and contained no missing or abnormal values. Thus, for this data, multivariate analysis is optional.

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After the data authenticity was verified, the following test using Smart-PLS 4.0 was the measurement model for validating the validity and reliability of the research variables, in which the factors' loadings are considered as a first assumption. As shown in Figure 2, most of the outer loading values are 0.8 and higher, while all other values are above 0.7, and none are recorded as being below the threshold value. All loadings above the acceptable threshold value of 0.7; good loadings are deemed to be 0.8 and outstanding loadings are deemed to be 0.9. For each variable, the values of the outer loadings also known as factor loadings are used to determine the Cronbach's Alpha value for its constituent parts. It follows that every research variable item satisfies the dependability requirements.

[Figure 2]

The reliability of the variables is evaluated by calculating the values of Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability once the reliability of the factors has been confirmed. Convergent validity is then assessed for the AVE value. Thus, the following general guideline for determining the alpha value was created by George and Mallery (2003): "α> 0.9- Excellent, α < 0.8- Good, α < 0.7- Acceptable." The composite reliability is then calculated using the same procedure. However, the cutoff value for the AVE was set at or above 5.0. Table 2 displays the Cronbach's alpha values for the independent variables, which are pandemic fear (PF) at 0.895, and resilience (RES) at 0.838. The dependent variables, intention to adopt ecofriendly behavior (EFB), has an alpha value of 0.874, and travel avoidance (TA) has an alpha value of 0.822. Given that the Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.8, which is considered good, it is evident from these numbers that every variable in this study satisfies the fundamental requirements of reliability.

Cronbach's alpha values effectively provide the average measure of internal consistency reliability and item dependability, while composite reliability (CR) is generally used to evaluate the overall reliability of the scale, ideally with CFA. The same criteria are used, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, to assess Alpha's composite dependability ratings. Table 2 presents the composite reliability values for the independent variables pandemic fear (PF) at 0.917 and RES (resilience) at 0.885. The intention to engage in eco-friendly behavior (EFB) and travel avoidance (TA), the dependent variables, obtained CR values of 0.914 and 0.894, respectively. As a result, every composite reliability value for every variable in this research framework is higher than 0.8, which is considered excellent and means that every study variable is reliable, sufficient, and suitable for further calculations and analysis.

One way to measure convergent validity is to take the average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable whose threshold value is 0.5. The mean of the squared loadings of each indicator associated with a construct is used to calculate the AVE. Resilience (RES) = 0.607, pandemic fear (PF) = 0.580, Intention to Adopt Ecofriendly Behavior (EFB) = 0.727, and Travel Avoidance (TA) = 0.738 are the AVE values in this instance. Every value is thus greater than the AVE threshold. As reported in Table 2, with the aid of outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha values, composite reliability values, and, lastly, the values of average variance extracted (AVE), the validity and reliability of the research instrument are verified.

The Fornell and Larcker Criterion is used in Smart-PLS 4.0 to establish discriminant validity, which is used to determine how unique the study's constructs are. If the diagonal or bolded values in the discriminant validity table are higher than the cross-diagonal value, then discriminant validity is obtained, and vice versa. As a result, Table 3 reports that all values on the diagonal are larger than those off the diagonal.

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
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[Table3]

4.2.Structural Model Assessment

Following the implementation of the PLS algorithm to obtain measurement model measures for the validity and reliability of the study model, the structural model results are obtained. To this end, bootstrapping was carried out to evaluate the structural model to analyze the hypotheses from the inner model.

4.2.1 Hypotheses Testing and Direct Effects

The p-value and t-value are used to determine the acceptance criteria for the seven hypotheses, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 and H7, once they have been put out and tested. The hypothesis is deemed supported if the t-value is more than 1.64 and the p-value is less than 0.05; otherwise, it is rejected or not supported. Therefore, the values for the supported hypothesis H1 (t=11.831 and p=0.000), supported hypothesis H2 (t=9.019 and p=0.000), supported hypothesis H3 (t=7.854 and p=0.000), not supported hypothesis H4 (t=7.820 and p=0.000) but beta value is positive while the relation has negative association, supported hypothesis H5 (t=12.299 and p=0.000) are displayed in Figures 3, 4, and Table 4. Table 4 reports the direct associations found in the present research. Column 3 has the beta values for each direct relationship, Column 5 contains t-values, and Column 6 contains p-values. Furthermore, it is clear from Decision Column 7 that all research hypotheses are supported by the effect sizes in Column 8, and Column 9 provides the r-square value. These values are 0.387, 0.464, and 0.147, respectively. This indicates that the pandemic fear and resilience are responsible for 38.7% of the change in travel avoidance, pandemic fear and resilience are responsible for 46.4% of the change in intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior, and pandemic fear is responsible for 14.7% of the change in resilience.

[Table3]

4.2.2 Hypotheses Testing and Mediation Effects

The acceptance criteria for the two hypotheses, H4 and H5, are established using the p-value and t-value after they have been tested. If the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-value is more than 1.64, the hypothesis is considered supported; if not, it is rejected or not supported. Consequently, it may be said that pandemic fear (PF) and TA and COVID-19 fear and EFB were partly mediated by RES. The supported hypothesis H6 (t-value of 5.415 and p-value of 0.000) and the supported hypothesis H7 (t-value of 6.691 and p-value of 0.000) are shown in figure 3, figure 4, and Table 5.

[Figure 3] [Figure 4] [Table5]

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary aim of the research was to examine how tourists' resilience and pandemic fear affect their intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior (EFB) and their tendency to avoid travel. As in view of previous studies 7 hypotheses were drawn in which 5 indicate direct relations and 2 indicate specific indirect effects (mediation relations). As indicated in Table 4, the obtained result of H1 confirmed the direct relationship between pandemic fear and travel avoidance which is aligned with previous studies, as highlighted by Novelli et al. (2018) how Ebola affected travel showed that during its spread, demand for travel to Africa significantly decreased. It is critical to look into and comprehend how customers are protecting themselves to prevent the pandemic from regaining momentum (Cheng et al., 2024). In the scenario of a pandemic, people try to avoid or even delay their decisions regarding travelling, keeping in view the risk of exposure to the pandemic (Chi et al., 2022). The safety of tourists is highly required to minimize travel avoidance by individuals (Foroudi et al., 2021). The situation or circumstances focus more on health risks as compared with other risks (Arica et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2022). Previous studies show that health risk in comparison with other risks is the

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most dominant factor which affects the decision of the tourist regarding travelling or avoiding travel (Jonas et al., 2011). The expectations of tourists regarding safety preventative measures can be a significant determinant affecting their travel behavior (Chua et al., 2021).

The hypothesis H2 is confirmed the direct relationship between pandemic fear intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior which is aligned with previous studies, that the eco-friendly behavior of tourists can be shown through pro-environmental behavior Sadiq (2019), it is for this reason that tourists prefer eco-friendly hotels over conventional hotels. As stated that underlying psychological reasons include attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms that explain the association between pandemic fear (COVID-19) and eco-friendly behavioral intentions among tourists (Hong et al., 2024). As a result of pandemic fear, people are more likely to adopt eco-friendly behavior. This suggests that people prioritize safety over leisure and tourist activities (Chang et al., 2022). Additionally, it is shown that fear of the pandemic may have an impact on people's perspective and the correlation with their adoption of eco-friendly behavior (Hong et al., 2024). The hypothesis H3 is confirmed the direct relationship between pandemic fear and resilience which is aligned with previous studies, The COVID-19 pandemic has generated widespread fear and anxiety, significantly influencing individuals' psychological resilience. The pandemic fear has a positive correlation with resilience, which means that increased fear makes people willing to build up coping mechanisms that would help in building up resilience (Kumar et al., 2022; Yıldırım & Ashraf, 2023). Individuals who had higher perceived risk associated with COVID-19 were more likely to show resilience since fear from the virus induced people into practicing health enhancing resilience (Yıldırım et al., 2022). The level of fear that young people experience because of the pandemic was reduced through the use of flexibility strategies that would enable people to manage the uncertainties (Aminoff et al., 2021; Polizzi et al., 2020). Resilient individuals were better equipped to handle feelings of loneliness and anxiety associated with COVID-19 fear, indicating that resilience can buffer the adverse effects of such fears (Kıllı et al., 2023).

The results of H4 not confirmed the direct relationship between resilience and travel avoidance which is not aligned with previous studies this is due to the reason that there is no a stable culture of research, while the findings from previous studies shows the relationship between resilience and travel avoidance has gained significant attention, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological resilience plays a strong role to influence travel intentions during crisis. Shi et al. (2022) revealed that people who are more resilient take protective travel measures without avoiding travel in general. Resilient people believe in authorities when it comes to avoiding travel (Morar et al., 2021). Evidence of positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being, meaning that people with high levels of resilience are likely to handle stress in a better way and hence are less likely to avoid (Yıldırım et al., 2020). Caldeira et al. (2022) corroborated this notion by recognizing that enhanced health consciousness and resulting adaptative travel behavior offset the tendency for avoidance. Travel fears have substantially been instigated by the pandemic as many people now avoid travelling as much as they used to before the pandemic. Five still coping indices associated with travel avoidance, including fear of the pandemic and travel resilience (Yushairi et al., 2022). They conclude that, people with higher resilience can opt for careful travel instead of avoiding travel all together. Self-protective measures that are, inter alia, a result of resilience, significantly influence travel behavior during the pandemic (El-Said & Aziz, 2022).

The results of the hypothesis H5 confirmed the direct relationships between resilience and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior which is aligned with previous studies, Gao et al. (2022) note that there exists a positive relationship between self-reported green behavioral

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intention and actual green consumption and contribution behavior. In addition, the study by Yusiana et al. (2021) reveal that eco-labeling has a positive effect on consumer buying behavior; which suggests that during the period of the pandemic, consumers are ready to make a shift towards sustainable products whenever they feel a sense of control and resilience regarding their decisions. Liu et al. (2022) suggested that due to COVID-19 pandemic, subjective norm can influence through fear to change behavior towards environmentally conscious practices. This is consistent with the theory of (Duchi et al., 2020), according to their analysis, conscientiousness which is regarded to as a form of resilience, makes individuals stick to better practices of environmental conservation during the time of crises. The ethical leadership improves environmental knowledge and commitment in employees and, therefore, fosters green behavior, (Quadros et al., 2021) suggests that if an organization invest on developing resilience within its members, then there is likely to be improvement on the number of green behaviors when disaster hits the business organizations.

Regarding the mediation relations results, resilience (RES) mediated the relationship between pandemic fear (PF) and travel avoidance (TA), and the results of H6 are significant, showing that there is partial mediation which is aligned with previous studies, as According to Rees et al. (2015), resilience leads to positive psychological health hence counteracting the ill health effect of fear. Hence, the studies suggested that promoting resilience could be a major approach towards ensuring safer mobility. Pandemic fear can make people become more sensitive about the environment, and resort to good practices as a way of social contribution at the time of ‘’pandemic.” For example, evidence suggests that the perception of environment consciousness has increased during the pandemic in terms of the explicit behavioral intentions towards environment-friendly activities (Yusiana et al., 2021). People with higher resilience would seek out a behavioral response, which is working to prevent harm from occurring or engaging in practices that are more environmentally friendly (Gao et al., 2022). The pandemic was shown to increase sustainable behaviors among people with strong eco-friendly attitudes (Yusiana et al., 2021). The organizational identification which can be associated with individual resilience has a positive relationship with employees’ pro-environmental behaviors (Ribeiro et al., 2022). Polish travelers realized that respondents cut down their travel plans overseas, choosing domestic trips considered safer (Jęczmyk et al., 2023). In addition, through favorable changes in consumption and travel habits due to the pandemic people began to pay more attention to environmental problems (Čaušević, 2023; Liu et al., 2022). Regarding the second mediation relations results (H7), resilience (RES) mediated the relationship between pandemic fear and intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior (EFB), and the results are significant, showing shown in Figures 3 and 4 and Tables 4 and 5 shows partial mediation.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study proves that resilience can work effectively in the elimination of travel avoidance syndromes while at the same time promoting environmentally friendly practices. In contrast to the conventional perspective that discusses resilience as a process that serves as a shield, or a protective factor, this outcome reveals that resilience is also process that creates new possibilities and determines behavioral actions different from those traced by risk. This extends the theoretical knowledge about resilience as a positive force promoting proactive and sustainable actions instead of opposite. This study contributes to the theory of PMT by enhancing the concept of resilience and demonstrating how it can affect not only protective behaviors (for example, avoiding travelling) but also sustainable motivational plans. It also broadens in applying PMT in a tourism environment, suggesting that the theory can incorporate environmental intentions as people’s reaction to perceived dangers. This

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contribution brings the opportunity for PMT to have a new view by emphasizing that coping mechanisms can also embrace environmentally favorable actions under threat conditions.

The study finds that pandemic fear, through resilience, indirectly promotes eco-friendly behavior, suggesting that fear can motivate eco-friendly behavior rather than solely leading to avoidance behaviors. This positions pandemic fear as a dual-impact factor, potentially enhancing ecological intentions through resilience. The finding offers a new angle to crisis psychology and tourism literature by suggesting that health-related fears can initiate broader behavioral shifts toward environmental responsibility. From the results of the research, it can objectively be stated that resilience indeed acts as a starting point of successful, adaptive sustainable tourism models in crisis situations. Consequential to this study's empirical evidence of resilience's mediation, the study offers structure to the proposition that resilience might be cost-effectively promoted for sustainable execution of objectives even in difficult circumstances. This provides a theoretical underpinning for the redesigning of tourism management interventions to include the development of resilience as an essential part of the preservation of sustainable practices within disasters.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Wellness workshops, or mental health support, should be made available through tourism managers and policymakers to build the touristic subjective resilience. Through fostering of resilience hence reducing travel phobia these programs encourage tourists to adopt environmentally friendly practices throughout crises. Fear of the pandemic When tourists are resilient and ready to take on challenges, then the tourism businesses should focus on marketing their environmentally friendly service and products. Advertising green accommodation or activities as the responsible, safe option despite the vagueness is a major appeal to resilient travelers and practices. The managers should reduce the reception of pandemic related fears by combining safety information with those encompassing sustainable tourism practices. Combining safety and environmental consciousness as two primary priority areas will help establish trust between tourism operators and tourists, while at the same time pointing tourists towards behaviors that promote sustainable tourism, using congruent language. Providing reasons and choice of health safety measures together with green solutions might help overturn tourists' said avoidance behaviors.

The managers should minimize reception of pandemic related fears by coinciding safety information with those on sustainable tourism. That integrating safety and environment as two major concerns with priority will foster the emergence of confidence between the tour operators and the tourist while at the same time directing the tourist in the sustainable tourism practices using similar language. Explaining reasons and choice of health safety measures along with green solutions might assist to reverse tourists' said avoidance behavior. To manage tourist's fear specific target hospitality and tourism staff should be trained to provide resilience-Supportive service delivery. It is possible to make staff ready to explain about the opposite health-related measures and eco-friendly behavior for acquiring the guests' psychological comfort and their-needed suitable behavior. It can also improve the satisfaction level of the guest and is in accordance with sustainable tourism development.

5.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study was conducted at the student level with limited funds and also taking into consideration only a few factors of protection motivation theory for measuring the role of these factors for the intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior (EFB), and travel avoidance (TA) as these include resilience (RES), and pandemic fear, and many more factors of this theory can be taken for more understand the concepts of eco-friendly behavior and travel avoidance and also the scope of this measure can be enhanced to international level as this study was limited only to the area of southern Punjab, Pakistan to generalize the findings.

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5.4 Conclusion

In this study the value of intention to adopt eco-friendly behavior (EFB) and travel avoidance (TA) and how these are affected by the resilience (RES) and pandemic fear by tourists, small business owners, local communities, government institutions, tour operators and the findings of this research will help change the mode or attitude of the stakeholders of the tourism industry also this study will be helpful to achieve the SDGs especially connected to environment.

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Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
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Demographic Variables	Details	No. of Responses	Percentage
Gender	Male	312	72.60
	Female	118	27.40
Marital Status	Married	323	75.1
	Unmarried	107	24.9
Age	Less than 20 years	86	20.00
	20-29 years	241	56.00
	30-39 years	80	18.60
	40-49 years	21	4.90
	Above 49 years	2	0.50
Education Level	High School	1	0.20
	College	55	12.80
	Bachelor	215	50.00
	Masters	142	33.00
	PhD	17	4.00
Monthly Income	Less than 50,000	310	72.10
	50,000-100,000	73	17.00
	100,000-150,000	25	5.80
	150,000-200,000	4	0.90
	Above 2,00,000	18	4.20

Table 2: *Results of Measurement Model (Reliability and Validity)*

Name of the Study Variables	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Intention to adopt Ecofriendly Behavior (EFB)	EFB1	0.858	0.874	0.914	0.727
	EFB2	0.882			
	EFB3	0.857			
	EFB4	0.812			
Travel Avoidance (TA)	TA1	0.877	0.822	0.894	0.738
	TA2	0.898			
	TA3	0.800			
Pandemic Fear (PF)	PF1	0.747	0.895	0.917	0.580
	PF 10	0.753			
	PF2	0.808			
	PF 3	0.830			
	PF4	0.639			
	PF6	0.749			
	PF7	0.768			
	PF8	0.783			
Resilience (RES)	RES1	0.786	0.838	0.885	0.607
	RES2	0.798			
	RES3	0.745			
	RES4	0.802			

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	RES5	0.763

Table 3: *Fornell and Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity*

	EFB	PF	RES	TA
Eco-Friendly Behavior (EFB)	0.852			
Pandemic Fear (PF)	0.403	0.761		
Resilience (RES)	0.661	0.384	0.779	
Travel Avoidance (TA)	0.545	0.492	0.540	0.859

Table 4: *Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix for Discriminant Validity*

	EFB	PF	RES	TA
Eco-Friendly Behavior (EFB)				
Pandemic Fear (PF)	0.450			
Resilience (RES)	0.771	0.440		
Travel Avoidance (TA)	0.645	0.571	0.653	

Table 5: *Results of Direct Hypotheses*

Sr. No	**Hypotheses**	**Beta**	**SD**	**T statistics**	**P values**	**Decision**	**f^2**	**R^2**
1	Pandemic Fear -> Travel Avoidance	0.497	0.042	11.831	0.000	Supported	**0.155**	**0.387**
	Resilience->Travel Avoidance	0.413	0.053	7.820	0.000	Not Supported	**0.237**	
2	Pandemic Fear -> Intention to Adopt Eco-friendly Behavior	0.407	0.045	9.019	0.000	Supported	**0.049**	**0.464**
	Resilience->Intention to Adopt Eco-friendly Behavior	0.595	0.048	12.299	0.000	Supported	**0.561**	
3	Pandemic Fear -> Resilience	0.388	0.049	7.854	0.000	Supported	**0.172**	**0.147**

Table 6*: Details of the Hypotheses (mediating effects)*

Relationships	**Beta**	**SD**	**T statistics**	**P values**	**2.5 %**	**97.5%**	**Decision**
PF -> RES -> TA	0.160	0.029	5.415	0.000	0.108	0.221	Supported
PF -> RES -> EFB	0.228	0.034	6.691	0.000	0.166	0.298	Supported

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
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Figure1
Research Model

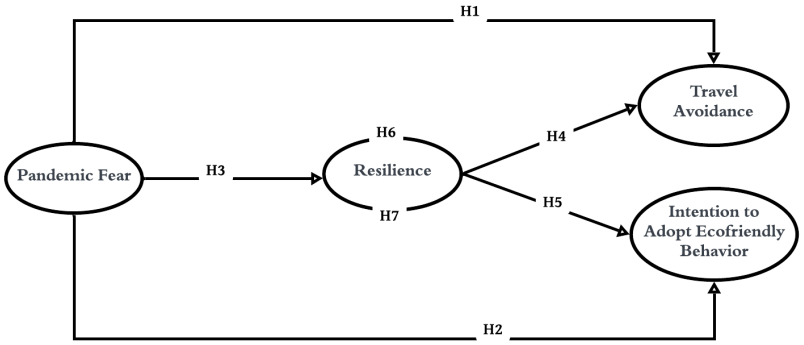

Figure 2: *Results of the Measurement Model (Factors Loadings)*

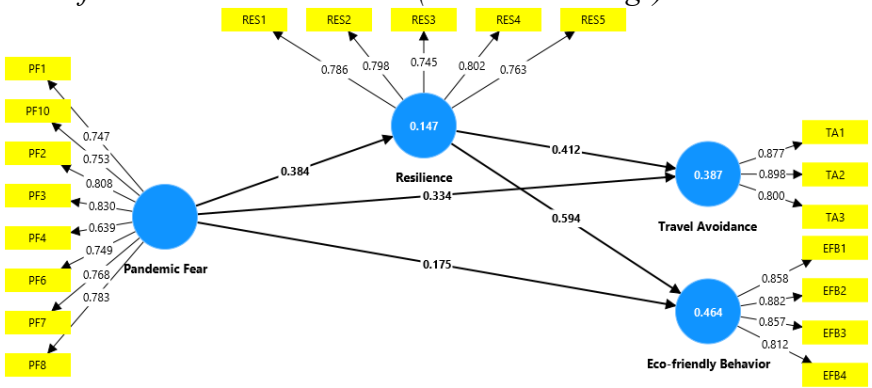

Figure 3: *Structural Model results with P-values*

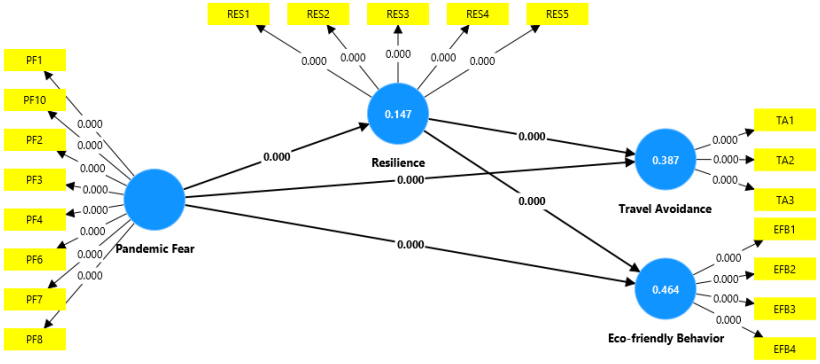

Figure 4: *Structural Model results with T-values*