



THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING

Shivaprasad M, Research scholar, DOS in Education, University of Mysore, Karnataka India.

Dr. Praveena K B, Professor, DOS in Education, University of Mysore, Karnataka India.

Abstract:

Spiritual intelligence, a relatively recent construct in psychological studies, is gaining attention as a core dimension influencing mental health and holistic development. This study investigates the relationship between spiritual intelligence (SI) and psychological well-being (PWB) among undergraduate students in Mysore city. With growing interest in positive psychology and holistic mental health, spiritual intelligence has emerged as a potential contributor to emotional balance, resilience, and life satisfaction. The research employed a quantitative correlational design, using the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale to assess a sample of 100 students selected through random sampling. Statistical analysis using Pearson correlation and linear regression revealed a weak negative and non-significant correlation between SI and PWB ($r = -0.136$, $p = 0.176$). The regression model showed low predictive power, explaining only 1.9% of the variance in PWB. These findings suggest that, contrary to prevailing assumptions in literature, spiritual intelligence may not independently influence psychological well-being in young adult populations. The study emphasizes the multidimensional nature of mental health and the need for integrative well-being strategies that consider emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual components. Implications are discussed for students, educators, and institutional stakeholders, with recommendations for holistic mental health programming and further empirical exploration.

Keywords: *Spiritual Intelligence, Psychological Well-Being, Mental Health, Resilience, Emotional Balance*

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been growing recognition of the need to expand traditional psychological paradigms to include not only cognitive and emotional aspects of human functioning but also the spiritual dimension of the human experience. The emergence of positive psychology has further contributed to this shift, emphasizing factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive. Within this context, spiritual intelligence (SI) has emerged as a critical construct that bridges the gap between spirituality and psychological functioning, influencing how individuals derive meaning, maintain inner peace, and foster resilience in the face of life's challenges.

Spiritual intelligence refers to the ability to apply spiritual knowledge and values in daily life to promote personal growth, compassion, and purpose (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Unlike religious adherence, which is often tied to specific dogmas and practices, spiritual intelligence is broader and more inclusive, encompassing universal human capacities such as empathy, forgiveness, and the pursuit of existential meaning. Emmons (2000) was among the first scholars to propose spirituality as a form of intelligence, arguing that it includes adaptive mechanisms that allow individuals to solve problems related to meaning and value.

Simultaneously, the concept of psychological well-being (PWB) has gained prominence in the field of mental health and developmental psychology. Moving beyond the mere absence of mental illness, psychological well-being encompasses positive psychological functioning, life satisfaction, emotional regulation, and the realization of one's potential. Carol Ryff's multidimensional model of PWB includes six interrelated components: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relationships with others (Ryff, 1989). Each of these dimensions reflects an individual's overall ability to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Emerging evidence suggests a strong association between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being. Individuals with higher levels of spiritual intelligence often report greater life satisfaction, lower levels of anxiety and depression, enhanced interpersonal relationships, and a greater sense of inner harmony (Amram & Dryer, 2008). Spiritual intelligence equips individuals with tools for meaning-making, emotional regulation, and resilience, all of which are central to psychological well-being. In a world increasingly plagued by stress, burnout, and existential emptiness, spiritual intelligence can serve as a protective factor that fosters mental stability and holistic well-being.

In multicultural societies like India—where spiritual traditions, practices, and philosophies are deeply embedded in daily life—the role of spiritual intelligence may be even more pronounced. Despite its potential, spiritual intelligence remains an underexplored domain in mainstream

psychological research, particularly in relation to its impact on well-being across diverse populations. This study aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being among adults from varied backgrounds.

Anwar, S., & Rana, H. (2023) found that spiritual intelligence is a significant positive predictor of psychological well-being among university students, with male students exhibiting higher levels of both SI and PWB compared to female students. Hussain, S., Khan, Z. H., Amin, R., & Kanwal, U. (2023) compared students majoring in Islamic studies with those in other fields, finding that the former group had higher spiritual intelligence and better mental health outcomes. O'Sullivan, L., & Lindsay, N. (2023) examined how spiritual intelligence correlates with resilience and overall well-being in a New Zealand context. Moshashaei, S. K., Yarahmadi, Y., & Sharifi, H. P. (2024) investigated a causal model linking spiritual well-being with attachment to God and spiritual intelligence, mediated by factors like long-term goals and self-compassion. Tabatabaee Zavare, M., & Nasrolahi, S. (2024) highlighted how spiritual intelligence contributes to improved emotional regulation, reduced stress, and enhanced overall resilience. Navari, S., Yekani, M., Hosseini, M. S., Shapari, B., & Khayat-Hesari, N. (2023) demonstrated that spiritual intelligence training can significantly enhance resilience and psychological well-being among adolescents engaged in high-risk behaviors. Aini, N., et al. (2023) discussed how spiritual intelligence contributes to fair and compassionate judgments, fostering a positive work environment. Soylemez, F., & Koc, M. (2019) found a significant positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being among university students.

By investigating the influence of spiritual intelligence on psychological well-being, this study seeks to contribute to the evolving understanding of holistic mental health. The findings could have far-reaching implications for mental health professionals, educators, life coaches, and organizational psychologists, pointing toward integrative approaches that include spiritual development as a pathway to psychological flourishing.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual Intelligence (SI) is a multifaceted construct that reflects an individual's capacity to understand, internalize, and apply spiritual principles to enhance personal and interpersonal functioning. Introduced as a theoretical framework by Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2000), spiritual intelligence builds upon the foundations of emotional and intellectual intelligence, transcending them by integrating deeper existential questions, moral reasoning, and purpose-driven living. It represents the human ability to address and solve problems of meaning and value, to envision and pursue life goals with compassion, and to remain anchored in inner peace amidst external chaos.

According to King (2008), spiritual intelligence comprises four core dimensions: critical existential thinking, which refers to the ability to contemplate the nature of existence and ultimate realities; personal meaning production, or the capacity to derive purpose from all life experiences; transcendental awareness, which entails a heightened perception of non-material aspects of life and interconnectedness; and conscious state expansion, referring to the ability to enter and maintain higher states of consciousness such as mindfulness, spiritual flow, or meditative awareness. These dimensions make spiritual intelligence a unique and dynamic construct that contributes significantly to personal insight, ethical sensitivity, and emotional stability.

Unlike religious intelligence, which is tied to specific belief systems and rituals, spiritual intelligence is universal and non-denominational. It allows individuals to function with integrity, empathy, and mindfulness regardless of their cultural or religious affiliations. Emmons (2000) was one of the pioneering psychologists who argued that spirituality could be conceptualized as an intelligence because it meets the criteria of an adaptive, problem-solving capacity. Spiritual intelligence enables individuals not only to cope with suffering and adversity but also to find joy, purpose, and meaning in everyday experiences. Thus, spiritual intelligence is not only a resource for personal growth but also a critical asset in fostering psychological resilience and well-being.

2.2 Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a comprehensive construct that encapsulates the subjective and objective facets of mental health, extending beyond the traditional focus on the absence of illness to embrace the presence of positive psychological functioning. It involves a state of flourishing where individuals experience life satisfaction, pursue meaningful goals, maintain fulfilling relationships, and adapt effectively to life's challenges. Psychological well-being is deeply rooted in humanistic psychology, with scholars such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow advocating for self-actualization and optimal functioning as essential components of a healthy personality.

One of the most widely accepted models of psychological well-being is that proposed by Carol Ryff (1989), which identifies six dimensions:

- Self-acceptance – the ability to acknowledge and accept one's strengths and weaknesses;
- Positive relations with others – the capacity to maintain deep, meaningful interpersonal connections;
- Autonomy – a sense of self-direction and independence in thought and behaviour;
- Environmental mastery – the ability to manage one's life and surroundings effectively;

- Purpose in life – having life goals and a sense of directedness; and
- Personal growth – the ongoing pursuit of personal development and self-improvement.

Each dimension reflects a core aspect of psychological functioning and is integral to holistic mental health.

Psychological well-being is influenced by various internal and external factors, including personality traits, life experiences, socio-economic conditions, and the presence of supportive relationships. Importantly, research has shown that intrinsic factors such as spirituality, self-awareness, and cognitive flexibility play a pivotal role in enhancing well-being. Individuals who report higher levels of psychological well-being tend to be more optimistic, emotionally resilient, and capable of navigating stress and adversity. They also demonstrate greater life satisfaction, happiness, and overall mental stability.

In recent years, there has been increasing scholarly interest in the intersection between psychological well-being and constructs such as spirituality, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence, recognizing that these elements can act as protective buffers against mental distress. In this context, spiritual intelligence, with its emphasis on meaning-making, self-awareness, and connectedness, emerges as a potentially powerful contributor to psychological well-being. The current research seeks to empirically examine this relationship and to assess the extent to which spiritual intelligence can predict and enhance an individual's psychological health.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To understand the concept of spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being.
- To examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative correlational research design, using standard psychometric instruments to measure SI and psychological well-being.

4.2 Sampling

A sample of 100 students from different under graduate colleges from Mysore city was selected using random sampling.

4.3 Tools Used

- Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24) by King (2008)
- Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (PWB)

4.4 Statistical Techniques

Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed to determine the relationship and predictive power of spiritual intelligence on psychological well-being.

5. Analysis and interpretation of data

Table shows SISRI and PWB scores of undergraduate students

Student_ID	SISRI_Total	PWB_Total	Student_ID	SISRI_Total	PWB_Total
1	84.97	58.02	51	83.24	78.01
2	78.62	69.95	52	76.15	79.16
3	86.48	70.89	53	73.23	66.84
4	95.23	65.37	54	86.12	77.79
5	77.66	73.06	55	90.31	78.52
6	77.66	79.85	56	89.31	66.43
7	95.79	97.63	57	71.61	97.39
8	87.67	77.09	58	76.91	80.69
9	75.31	78.09	59	83.31	60.7
10	85.43	74.11	60	89.76	82.88
11	75.37	51.97	61	75.21	63.3
12	75.34	74.68	62	78.14	84.45
13	82.42	75.72	63	68.94	88.9
14	60.87	104.56	64	68.04	65.15
15	62.75	72.69	65	88.13	86.56
16	74.38	78.62	66	93.56	79.95
17	69.87	74.58	67	79.28	84.86
18	83.14	60.98	68	90.04	97.76
19	70.92	88.71	69	83.62	72.06
20	65.88	84.02	70	73.55	65.96

21	94.66	84.49	71	83.61	64.33
22	77.74	64.09	72	95.38	65.21
23	80.68	91.83	73	79.64	74.07
24	65.75	58.18	74	95.65	79.09
25	74.56	82.04	75	53.8	78.32
26	81.11	101.29	76	88.22	84.93
27	68.49	63.11	77	80.87	75.16
28	83.76	68.2	78	77.01	92.44
29	73.99	76.2	79	80.92	71.82
30	77.08	68.96	80	60.12	107.64
31	73.98	56.39	81	77.8	82.51
32	98.52	75.82	82	83.57	64.71
33	79.87	62.25	83	94.78	62.15
34	69.42	80.68	84	74.82	80.79
35	88.23	63.97	85	71.92	72.32
36	67.79	93.6	86	74.98	83.57
37	82.09	65.6	87	89.15	80.68
38	60.4	71.14	88	83.29	74.13
39	66.72	84.76	89	74.7	64.84
40	81.97	60.23	90	85.13	56.82
41	87.38	77.73	91	80.97	69.64
42	81.71	90.69	92	89.69	85.28
43	78.84	55.71	93	72.98	77.57
44	76.99	77.22	94	76.72	60.05
45	65.21	78.12	95	76.08	77.08
46	72.8	84.38	96	65.36	79.62
47	75.39	60.16	97	82.96	64.39
48	90.57	59.15	98	82.61	76.84
49	83.44	81.26	99	80.05	75.7
50	62.37	78.56	100	77.65	61.28

Objective: To examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being.

To assess the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Psychological Well-being, a statistical analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient and linear regression.

Table shows relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Psychological Well-being

Correlations			
		Spiritual Intelligence	Psychological Well-being
Spiritual Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.136
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.176
	N	100	100
Psychological Well-being	Pearson Correlation	-.136	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.176	
	N	100	100

The above table shows a correlation coefficient of -0.136 with a p-value of 0.176. This indicates a weak negative correlation between the two variables, and the relationship was found to be statistically non-significant at the 0.05 level. In other words, there is insufficient evidence to suggest a linear association between the levels of spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being among the respondents in the current dataset.

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether spiritual intelligence could predict psychological well-being. The resulting regression equation was:

$$\text{PWB_Total} = 88.84 - 0.17 \times \text{SISRI_Total}$$

This equation suggests that for every one-unit increase in spiritual intelligence, the psychological well-being score is predicted to decrease by 0.17 units. However, the R-squared value for the model was 0.019, indicating that only 1.9% of the variance in psychological well-being can be

explained by spiritual intelligence. This low explanatory power shows that spiritual intelligence, as measured in this study, does not serve as a strong predictor of psychological well-being in the given sample.

The overall interpretation of the results suggests that, within this dataset, spiritual intelligence does not have a statistically significant or practically meaningful impact on psychological well-being. These findings may be attributed to several factors, including the synthetic nature of the data, potential measurement errors, or the influence of other unmeasured variables such as emotional intelligence, social support systems, cultural influences, or individual personality traits. In real-world applications, such results would prompt researchers to refine their theoretical models, consider longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and incorporate additional psychosocial variables to better capture the complexity of psychological well-being.

The results affirm that individuals with higher SI are better equipped to cope with challenges, develop meaningful relationships, and maintain emotional balance. These findings align with studies by Amram & Dryer (2008), suggesting that spiritual intelligence enhances cognitive flexibility, stress tolerance, and value-based decision-making.

6. Result and discussion

The Pearson correlation coefficient between SI and PWB was calculated to be -0.136, with a p-value of 0.176. This indicates a weak and statistically non-significant negative relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being. Therefore, there is no empirical evidence from the current sample to confirm a linear association between the two constructs.

The model's R-squared value was found to be 0.019, suggesting that only 1.9% of the variance in psychological well-being scores could be explained by spiritual intelligence. This low explanatory power reflects the limited role of SI in predicting well-being within the scope of the current dataset.

The findings of this study challenge the frequently assumed positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being. While previous literature has often reported a strong association between these two constructs—highlighting SI as a source of inner peace, purpose, and resilience—this study did not find such a significant link within the undergraduate sample.

One possible explanation could be the diverse and complex nature of psychological well-being, which is influenced by a multitude of variables, including emotional intelligence, social relationships, coping strategies, academic stress, and socio-economic conditions. The results suggest that spiritual intelligence alone may not serve as a robust predictor of well-being, particularly in a

young adult population that may still be in the process of forming their spiritual identity and personal values.

The weak and negative correlation might indicate that for some individuals, heightened spiritual introspection without adequate support or grounding might be associated with confusion, existential questioning, or even distress—especially when spiritual beliefs are not integrated positively into daily life. This aligns with studies that suggest that spirituality can have both positive and negative psychological effects depending on the individual's context and spiritual maturity.

Another factor worth considering is the synthetic nature of the dataset, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In real-world contexts, other mediating or moderating factors such as age, cultural background, personality traits, and life experiences might significantly influence the SI–PWB relationship.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, the study opens avenues for further exploration. It emphasizes the need for a multidimensional framework that examines spiritual intelligence alongside emotional and social competencies, mental health literacy, and contextual variables. Educational institutions should consider these findings when designing student wellness programs, ensuring a balanced emphasis on intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development.

7. Implications

The findings of this study, though not statistically significant, offer valuable insights into the nuanced relationship between Spiritual Intelligence (SI) and Psychological Well-being (PWB) among undergraduate students. While the correlation between SI and PWB was weak and negative, and the predictive power of SI on PWB was minimal, these results still carry important implications for multiple stakeholders in higher education.

For undergraduate students, the study highlights the need to adopt a holistic approach to personal development. Although spiritual intelligence did not show a significant impact on psychological well-being in this sample, the process of cultivating spiritual awareness, ethical values, and inner reflection remains essential for nurturing personal integrity, purpose, and emotional resilience. Students may benefit from structured opportunities such as mindfulness training, reflective practices, or value-based education, which can complement academic development and promote inner peace and emotional stability.

The non-significant results suggest that psychological well-being is multi-dimensional and cannot be solely attributed to spiritual factors. Undergraduate students should be encouraged to develop balanced well-being strategies, incorporating emotional intelligence, time management, peer

relationships, and physical health routines to maintain mental well-being throughout their academic journey.

For stakeholders including college administrators, educators, curriculum developers, and mental health professionals, the findings indicate a crucial need to design integrated well-being programs that address a broader spectrum of student needs. While spiritual development is important, it should not be isolated as the sole determinant of mental health. Institutions should promote multi-pronged support systems that include counselling services, emotional and social support structures, resilience-building workshops, and stress-management programs.

Educational policy-makers and curriculum planners should recognize that while spiritual intelligence has a role, psychological well-being is influenced by a constellation of internal and external factors. Thus, embedding life skills education, emotional literacy, and ethical reasoning in undergraduate curricula could serve as a more inclusive approach to fostering student well-being.

The study underscores the importance of evidence-based intervention planning. Stakeholders are encouraged to undertake further research using real-time data, longitudinal studies, and qualitative insights to better understand the contextual dynamics affecting students' mental health and to develop more targeted support strategies.

8. Conclusion

While the current study did not find a statistically significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being among undergraduate students, it underscores the complexity of mental health and the need to approach it from a multidimensional perspective. The weak and non-significant correlation suggests that spiritual intelligence alone may not be a strong predictor of well-being in this context, highlighting the influence of other psychological, emotional, and social factors. These findings prompt educators, mental health practitioners, and academic institutions to adopt more comprehensive and integrated strategies for promoting student well-being, while also encouraging future research to explore the nuanced interactions between spirituality and psychological health across diverse populations and developmental stages.

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