



A Study on Spiritual Intelligence and Mental Health among University Students

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Abstract

Spiritual intelligence, a multidimensional construct integrating spirituality and cognitive processes, has emerged as a critical factor in understanding mental health. The study was undertaken to investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental health among university students. A sample of 31 university students were taken between the age group of 18-25 years old. Standardized tools, Meaning of Life Questionnaire Scale (MLQ) and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21 and DASS-42) were used. The study found significant correlations between depression, stress, and anxiety, highlighting their interconnectedness. However, the role of spiritual intelligence, including presence and search for meaning, showed insignificant results, suggesting its indirect influence on mental health.

Keywords: *Spiritual intelligence, mental health.*

Introduction

“Having spiritual intelligence is a remedy for all mental health challenges in Life.”

The concept of spiritual intelligence has roots in ancient philosophical and religious traditions, where self-awareness, meaning, and connection to a higher purpose were central to human well-being. Philosophers like Plato and spiritual figures like St. Augustine emphasized the interplay between moral understanding and mental clarity.

Modern psychology began addressing spirituality's role in mental health through thinkers like William James, who studied the psychological benefits of religious experiences, and Carl Jung, who linked spiritual growth to psychological individuation. The term "spiritual intelligence" was popularized by Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall in 2000s, describing it “as the ability to find meaning and purpose, integrate values into life, and transcend challenges”. Contemporary psychology integrates spiritual intelligence into mental health, highlighting its role in resilience, emotional balance, and holistic well-being through practices like mindfulness and value-based living.

Spiritual intelligence refers to the capacity to understand and apply deeper meanings, values, and purpose in life to enhance personal and interpersonal well-being. It involves recognizing the interconnectedness of all things, maintaining inner peace, and aligning one's thoughts and actions with higher ethical and spiritual principles. This form of intelligence helps individuals address existential questions, foster resilience, and navigate life's challenges with wisdom and compassion. It bridges personal growth and universal values, enhancing both individual fulfillment and collective harmony.

The role of spiritual intelligence in enhancing mental health among university students. University life is often characterized by academic pressure, social challenges, and the transition to

adulthood, making mental health an area of concern. Anxiety, depression, and stress are among the most prevalent issues affecting students globally. While, numerous interventions focus on coping mechanisms and support systems, the role of spiritual intelligence, a relatively underexplored domain, has gained attention in many recent years as a potential buffer against mental health challenges.

A study was conducted on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and lifestyle with life satisfaction among students of medical sciences. The sample comprised of 139 students from Qazin University of Medical Sciences. Data collection tools used included the King's spiritual intelligence scale, Miller-Smith lifestyle assessment inventory, satisfaction with life scale (Diener), and demographic information checklist. To prove the data, descriptive and analytical tests such as T-test and one-way analysis of variance were used. The result showed a significant negative relationship between lifestyle and life satisfaction. Additionally, a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and life satisfaction was also found. This infers that the present study showed the importance of spiritual intelligence and lifestyle in students' life satisfaction (Senmar et al., 2023).

Ebrahimi et al. (2012), investigated the study on the relationship between resiliency, spiritual Intelligence, and mental Health of a group of undergraduate students male and female of Hormozgan University. The sample consisted of 100 students who were randomly assigned. Tools used to collect data were the Resiliency Questionnaire by (Connor & Davidson), the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28), and the Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire by (Abdollah-Zadeh). The results indicated that there was a positive meaningful relationship between resilience and mental health, and between spiritual intelligence and resiliency. However, no meaningful resiliency between male and female students were found. Additionally, multiple regression results

showed that mental health and spiritual intelligence meaningfully explained resiliency. Mental health and spiritual intelligence support resilience

Spiritual Intelligence

According to Zohar and Marshall (1999), spiritual intelligence is defined as the “intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes, and higher motivations” Emmons (2000) defined it as “the adaptive use of spiritual information to facilitate everyday problem solving and goal attainment.” Covey (2005) defined it as “profound importance continues to resound as an invitation to men and women to become the best version of themselves and to help others to grow and to flourish.”

According to Anwar and Rana (2023), a study examined the link between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being among university students in Pakistan, focusing on gender differences. The sample included 73 men, and 123 women aged (18 to 23) from various universities, with data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic using Ryff's 42-item Psychological Well-Being Scale. Analyzed through SPSS (version 21) via Hierarchical Regression and t-tests, the results showed that spiritual intelligence significantly predicts psychological well-being, with males demonstrating higher levels of spiritual intelligence than females. These findings suggest that educators should implement strategies to enhance spiritual intelligence among students for better overall well-being.

A study was conducted on the Spiritual intelligence role in predicting University Students' Quality of life. A sample of 143 students of Quenchan University was randomly enrolled for the 89-90 academic year. The data collection tools used included the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) and Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire. The result showed that

spiritual intelligence had a significant relationship with the quality of life of the Quechan University students (Abadi et al., 2012).

A study was conducted on spiritual intelligence and its relation to the psychological stability of a sample of students from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Petra. The study aimed to investigate the level of spiritual intelligence and the level of psychological stability of a sample of 127 female students' individuals of various specialties including Arabic Language, English language, English Language, Chemistry, Educational sciences, Modern Languages, and Mathematics. Additionally, the study discussed the correlation between spiritual intelligence and psychological stability. The result showed a high level of spiritual intelligence and psychological stability among individual samples. It also revealed a high positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and psychological stability (Alsalkhi, 2019).

Mental Health

According to Freud (1930), mental health is defined as “the ability to love and work”. According to Rogers (1961), mental health is defined as “a congruence between the self-concept and the experience of the self, allowing for a state of harmony and acceptance of oneself”. Seligman (2011) defined mental health as “by flourishing, characterized by high levels of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (PERMA).”

A study was conducted on the role of mindfulness and spiritual intelligence in student' mental health. Studies showed that mental disorders are highly prevalent among students. The sample comprised of 393 females and males (193 medical and 200 non-medical individuals) of all undergraduate and medical students selected randomly assigned. A General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), spiritual intelligence and mindfulness questionnaire were used to measure the participants. The result a positive correlation between mindfulness and dimensions of spiritual intelligence.

Additionally, the dimensions of spiritual life (43.1%) and mindfulness (31%) had a significant negative impact on the explained variation of the mental health of students. Examine of variance showed that the scales of mindfulness, perception of existence, somatic symptoms, and anxiety were higher among females. The authors suggests that the students can cope with existing traumas and pressures by enhancing their spirituality, consciousness, and mindfulness (Nemati et al., 2016).

A study investigated the effect of spiritual intelligence on mental health and quality of life among 50 undergraduate and post-graduate level college students of Haridwar, Uttarakhand (India). The study aimed to examine the level of spiritual intelligence, mental health, and quality of life and to observe the relationship among these three variables. Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (ISIS), Mithila Mental Health Status Inventory (MMHSI), and WHOQL -BREF tools were used. The study inferred significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of life. It also revealed a significant correlation between mental health and quality of life with each other among university students (Pant & Srivastava, 2014).

According to Hussain et al. (2023) a study was conducted on spiritual intelligence, resilience, and mental health. The sample consisted of 200 university students (100 majoring in Islamic studies and 100 non-major in Islamic studies) under the age between (20 - 25) years old. Individual participants were taken from various departments of a public university in Karachi, Pakistan. Descriptive statistics and t-test were carried out to analyze the collected data. The result showed a significant difference in terms of spiritual intelligence between majoring and non-majoring Islamic students. The results revealed that higher significant levels of spiritual intelligence were found in major Islamic students compared to non-major Islamic students and non-major Islamic students showed significantly higher levels of mental disorders like depression, anxiety, and stress. However, no significant differences were observed between the two groups in

terms of resilience. The results highlight that including spiritual teachings in the curriculum can improve student's spiritual intelligence and mental health. These findings suggest that universities could design curricula and support services to promote student's overall well-being.

Purpose

The purpose is to study spiritual intelligence and mental health among university students.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant correlation between presence and search for meaning with stress, depression and anxiety.

Method

Sample

A total sample of 31 university students in the age of (18 - 25) were collected from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India.

Measures

Meaning in life Questionnaire: The scale is developed by Steger et. al (2006) was used to measure of the presence of, search for and meaning in life. The reliability of this scale is greater than 0.70 and the validity of the scale is it correlates well with psychological well-being, life satisfaction and positive affect for the presence subscale and inversely with negative affect for the search subscale. The scale consist of 10 items on a 7 point Likert scale, 1(Absolutely Untrue) to 7(Absolutely True).

DASS 21: The scale is developed by Sydney Lovibond and Peter Lovibond (1995) was used to measure of depression, anxiety and stress. The scale has 21 items in total - 7 for reach of the three domains: depression, anxiety and stress. It's a 4-point Likert scale, 0 (Did not apply to

me at all) to 3(Applied to me very much, or most of the time. The reliability is around 9.0 for the full scale and approximately 0.80 to 0.85 for each subscale.

Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose is to study spiritual intelligence and mental health for university students through informed consent by filling in Google forms, Standardized scales and thanks for cooperation.

Analysis of data

Results

Table 1: *N, Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Presence	Search	Stress	Anxiety	Depression
N	31	31	31	31	31
Mean	22.0	23.4	7.48	6.61	6.10
Standard deviation	8.39	8.11	3.90	4.64	4.55

Table 2: *Correlation between meaning in life and stress, anxiety, depression*

	Presence	Search	Stress	Anxiety	Depression
Presence	—				
Search	-0.351	—			
Stress	-0.119	0.043	—		

Anxiety	-0.187	0.201	0.850	** *	—			
Depression	-0.031	-0.015	0.834	** *	0.755	** *	—	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion of Results

The results found that depression is significantly positively correlated with stress ($r=0.834$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the results also found that depression is significantly positively correlated with anxiety ($r=0.755$, $p < .001$). Stress was negatively correlated with presence and positively correlated with search; however, the results were not significant. Similarly, anxiety was negatively correlated with presence and positively correlated with presence and the results remained insignificant.

A study was conducted on the Effectiveness of Group Counseling on Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and components of Spiritual Intelligence in students consisting of 64 samples of the Christian Education Study Program through random assignment from quasi-experimental research conducted at Institute Injil Indonesia. Data collection tools were scale King's Spiritual Intelligence Inventory (SISRI-24) and Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21 & DASS-42). The results showed that the students of the Christian Religious Education Study Program were able to decrease and cope with negative emotional issues like depression, anxiety, and more stress, and through group counseling and with the spiritual approach (Dami et al., 2019). Another study was conducted by (Pawar, 2018) on spiritual Intelligence, depression and anxiety among Undergraduate Students. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between spiritual

intelligence, depression and anxiety among undergraduate college students. The result showed that the students had low level of spiritual intelligence, anxiety and depression. Further, the study concludes that there is a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and depression while there is a negative relationship between spiritual intelligence and anxiety.

Conclusion

The current study focused on the correlation between spiritual intelligence and depression, anxiety and stress among University Students of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, aged between 18 - 25 years old. To collect the data standardized scales, The Meaning in Life (MLQ), containing 10 items, to measure of presence, search for and meaning in life of an individual, depression, anxiety, and stress, containing 21 items, to measure depression, anxiety and stress of an individual. A total of 31 participants took part in research. The data were recorded using the circulation of Google forms. The results found out that depression is significantly correlated with stress and positively correlated with anxiety. Whereas, stress was negatively correlated with search, the results however, were not significant. Similarly, the results also showed that the anxiety was negatively correlated with search and positively correlated with presence.

The current research study has a few limitations that needs to be studied. First due to the small sample size (N=31) and a limited age group (18-25) it provides a less accurate estimate and do not precise represent a larger population. Second the participant's responses may be biased due to socially desirable responses which can lead to inaccurate result. While stress and anxiety showed negative correlations with presence and positive correlations Further, research should aim to investigate these dynamics in diverse populations and contexts to provide a comprehensive understanding and effective interventions for reducing psychological distress.

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