

Does Spiritual Intelligence Link with Happiness and Psychological Adjustment among University Students?

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Abstract

Spiritual Intelligence (SI) is considered the most basic form of intelligence which enables an individual to deeply understand him and others and thus helps in achieving happiness and well-being in life (Subraniam & Panchanatham, 2015). The objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence, happiness and psychological adjustment in university students. A total of 350 students (Men = 175; Women = 175) were recruited from the universities of Lahore, Pakistan. The age of participants ranges between 18-30 years ($M = 21.76$; $SD = 2.07$). Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), and Psychological Adjustment Scale were used to assess spiritual intelligence, happiness, and psychological adjustment, respectively. Results revealed that spiritual intelligence significantly relates to and predicts happiness and psychological adjustment. As compared to men, psychological adjustment and spiritual intelligence were found to be higher in women. To conclude, students having higher spiritual intelligence are more likely to be happier and show better psychological adjustment, when compared to those who showed lower spiritual intelligence. In the future, spiritual intelligence-fostering programs such as community activities, orientation programs, spiritual seminars, counseling, and classroom activities could be catered for students.

Keywords: Happiness, Psychological Adjustment, Spiritual Intelligence, University Students

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Introduction

Intelligence refers to the ability to think logically, perceive, evaluate, and the combination of prior knowledge in dealing with novel situations (Colom et al., 2010). The construct of intelligence has been diffused to other areas such as existential and spiritual intelligence in the last couple of decades (Sahebalzamani et al., 2013). Spiritual intelligence (SI) is rather a new construct of studying human intelligence and is now accepted as a third type of intelligence (Peerzadah et al., 2018). SI is not only the blend of spirituality and intelligence instead it is a combination of

one's personality characteristics, neurological processes, cognitive skills, and spirituality. It is defined as the application of spiritual beliefs and thoughts in our daily functioning helping us in adaptability and adjustment to our daily life and enhancing our well-being (Faribors et al., 2010).

SI helps people to expand and go beyond their ego selves. This capability provides spiritual support and helps people to deal with life problems like good and evil, life and death, origins of human distress, and depression (Vaughan, 2002). Spiritual beliefs also bring hope to people and strengthen them in dealing with adverse life experiences (Zahedi, 2011). Without using spiritual intelligence, people mostly get emotionally overwhelmed (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). According to Viable Four-Factor model of SI (King & DeCicco, 2009), SI consists of the following components/domains: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious

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state expansion. Different researchers (Anwar & Rana, 2023; Seybold & Hill, 2001) have proposed that spirituality seems to be linked positively with psychological and physical well-being, improved and stable interpersonal relationships, and quality of life. Keeping this in view, the present study has focused on the relationship between happiness, psychological adjustment, and SI.

Happiness is one's affective and cognitive judgment of his life. This judgment or evaluation includes affective reactions to events and thoughtful judgment of satisfaction and fulfillment in life. Fordyce (1977, 1983) reported that happiness can be increased through the imitation of traits of happy people such as remaining busy and organized, spending more time in socialization, developing a positive outlook, and working on a healthy personality (Diener et al., 2002). A happiness state occurs when people relax and examine themselves. It was reported that happy individuals are optimistic, their self-esteem is high, have a sense of control over themselves, are involved in close relations that are meaningful to them, and hold strong faith in religion (Pettijohn & Pettijohn, 1996). Feelings of happiness with the surroundings make the individual more innovative and proficient, their decision-making power increases and their relationships with others are also improved. Certain components of spiritual intelligence anticipate happiness in individuals (Amirian & Fazilat-Pour, 2015). Spiritual intelligence broadens one's ability to deeply understand others (Subraniam & Panchanatham 2015). This capacity to better understand others helps an individual to lead a happy life. Therefore, spiritual intelligence has also been reported to have a positive relationship with happiness (Babanazari et al., 2012; Ozsari & Cetin, 2022). Likewise, Vafaeeeyan et al. (2015) also suggested that the level of happiness increases with an increase in the level of spiritual intelligence. Another construct that has been considered to be associated

with spiritual intelligence is psychological adjustment.

The adjustment has been explained as "a response to the hassles, demands or stresses along with pressures of societal settings obligatory on the individual" (Chauhan, 1998). Adjustment is a process through which individuals balance between psychological, academic, societal, and private demands satisfactorily whereas adjustment difficulties have been delineated as a failure to fulfill these ever-changing demands. Previous literature has suggested that spiritual intelligence tends to positively relate to psychological well-being (Sahebalzamani et al., 2013; Seybold & Hill, 2001). Sharma and Ali (2015) have also highlighted the beneficial influences of SI on the self-esteem and mental health of adolescents and suggested that the promotion of SI can be helpful in the prevention of mental disorders and the improvement of quality of life among adolescents. Similarly, another study conducted by Ahoei et al. (2017) also suggested a significant positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being in women with breast cancer. Jemal (2012) found that all college/university students who are newly enrolled went through some sort of adjustment issues. The majority of the students may feel inept and experience difficulty in coping with these changes which can in turn result in high test anxiety, lower academic self-efficacy, and lack of time management skills. Therefore, psychological adjustment has been suggested to be important for both college and university students.

Adulthood is a time of tremendous and gradual change and several important decisions are made during this period of life e.g., what kind of education and career to pursue, what kind of social relationships like friendships have to be maintained, when to start a family etc. These choices reflect the importance of this period for future life (Steinberg, 2013). So, the rationale of the present study was to explore the influence of SI in this age band that

would likely facilitate the above-mentioned areas among university students, who are getting prepared to play their key roles in the community. The promotion of spiritual intelligence and happiness of students could also facilitate them to lead their lives holistically, see patterns of life with different and varied dimensions, come through better skills to communicate, and have a knowledgeable sense to achieve a greater goal in life. It also helps to make them able to understand the actual meanings behind situations and be more sustainable and happy as once people feel happy they can become more productive, make fruitful decisions, and upgrade their interpersonal relationships. Beneficial outcomes of happiness also made it worthwhile to be explored among university students. The present study also addressed the dearth of literature investigating spiritual intelligence, happiness, and psychological adjustment altogether among students in Pakistan. Psychological adjustment has been investigated but not concerning spiritual intelligence and happiness. So, keeping in view the present study was designed to explore the relationship between spiritual intelligence, happiness, and psychological adjustment among university students.

Hypotheses

- There would be a relationship between spiritual intelligence, happiness, and psychological adjustment.

- Spiritual intelligence would predict happiness among university students.
- Spiritual intelligence and happiness would predict psychological adjustment among university students.

Method

Research Design and Sampling

The present study employed the correlational design and purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The sample size was calculated through G-power analysis with medium effect size for the regression analysis. The study sample included 350 university students from different faculties of two government universities in Lahore. The participants were aged between 18-30 years ($M = 21.76$; $SD = 2.07$). The participants were recruited following inclusion and exclusion criteria such that both male and female students of BS, MA/MS, MPhil/MS, or PhD enrolled in different universities of Lahore were included in the study. However, the students aged less than 18 years and students of semesters I and II were excluded from the study to rule out adjustment issues. The demographic characteristics of participants showed that the majority of the participants (71.7%) were educated up to BS and belonged to the art group (60.3%). Majority of the participants (75.7%) were single, day scholars (84.6%) and reported to be having a moderate level of religious inclination (Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency and Percentages of Demographic Characteristics of University Students (N = 350)

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%	Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Groups			Gender		
Science	139	39.7	Male	175	50
Arts	211	60.3	Female	175	50
Education			Religiosity		
BS	251	71.7	Low	31	8.9
MSc/MA	47	13.4	Average	279	79.7
MS	45	12.9	High	40	11.4
PhD	7	2			

Note. *f* = frequency, % = percentage

Measures

Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory-24 SISRI-24; (King & DeCicco, 2009)

It was used to measure the spiritual intelligence of participants. This is a 24-item scale (score ranges from 0 to 96) which is based on the model of SI (King, 2008). High scores indicate a higher level of spiritual intelligence and/or its components. This tool has good internal reliability of the scale i.e., .92 (King, 2008). The tool was translated into Urdu and used in the present study after obtaining permission from the author by using MAPI guidelines. For the current study, a Cronbach alpha of 0.89 was found for this tool. The Cronbach alpha for subscales also indicates good internal consistency reliability of this scale.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)

It was used for the assessment of subjective happiness of the participants in the present study. It is comprised of four items using a 7-point Likert scale. It has no subscales. Item 4 is reverse code. The tool was translated into Urdu and used in the present study after obtaining permission from the author. This tool has high internal consistency (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). In the present study, the Cronbach alpha value for this tool was 0.70 which indicates good reliability.

Psychological Adjustment Scale (Sabir, 1999)

Psychological Adjustment Scale (Sabir, 1999) for measuring psychological adjustment of university students. It had 27 items. It is a Likert-type scale. Some items are positively and some are negatively phrased. Permission for its use in the current study was taken from the original author beforehand. The split-half reliability of this Scale is 0.7. Cronbach alpha was found to be 0.62 for this study, which indicates average reliability.

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic form was developed by the researcher to take an account of the demographic variables such as gender, age, profession, education level, etc.

Procedure

Firstly, Institutional approval from the Research Project Evaluation Committee was taken. Then permissions were taken from the authors to use their tools in the present study. The pilot study was conducted on 20 students to determine the understandability of language and concept clarity of all items and the total times required for the administration. Participants faced a problem in understanding item 4 of the subjective happiness scale that it is not understandable as it contained difficult Urdu words, for which standard alternatives were provided. After the pilot study, the main study was conducted. The data collected in the pilot study was not included in the main study. A sample of 350 students from public sector Universities of Lahore was collected. The concerned authorities of different faculties of Government College University and the University of Punjab were approached to obtain their permission for data collection after explaining to them the characteristics and aim of the study. All the measures were administered after obtaining written informed consent from participants. Participants were ensured confidentiality regarding their identities and responses after explaining the purpose of the research. It was also made clear to the participants that the information they provided would be used only for research purposes. Participants were also told that they could ask any question they wanted regarding research. Questionnaires were administered in group settings. The average time taken to complete all the questionnaires was about 15-20 minutes.

Results

For data analyses, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 21) was used.

Table 2*Intercorrelation for Study Variables (N = 350)*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SISRI	56.99	13.48	-						
2. Critical Existential Thinking	17.09	4.99	.89**	-					
3. Personal Meaning Production	12.59	3.65	.86**	.71**	-				
4. Transcendental Awareness	16.19	3.87	.81**	.62**	.58**	-			
5. Conscious State Expansion	11.65	3.44	.89**	.64**	.64**	.57**	-		
6. Subjective Happiness Scale	19.46	4.41	.35**	.25**	.29**	.25**	.32**	-	
7. Psychological Adjustment Scale	93.88	9.37	.21**	.23**	.24**	.14**	.16**	.07	-

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, SISRI = Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory

** $p < .01$

As presented in Table 2, results of correlation analysis showed that spiritual intelligence and all of its four subscales are correlated with happiness. This shows that individuals having higher spiritual intelligence tend to be happier in life. It was also demonstrated by the analysis that there is a significant positive relationship

between all of the subscales of SI and psychological adjustment. This reflects that individuals with high levels of spiritual intelligence are more psychologically adjusted. However, happiness and psychological adjustment were not significantly related.

Table 3

Linear Regression for Spiritual Intelligence and Its Subscales as Predictors of Happiness (N=350)

Variable	Happiness		
	Model 1		95% CI
	B	B	
Constant	12.99**	12.50**	[10.59, 14.42]
SISRI	.11**		[0.13, 0.27]
Critical Existential Thinking		.26**	[-0.45, -0.06]
Personal Meaning Production			
Transcendental Awareness			
Conscious State Expansion			
R ²	.12	.14	
F	47.69**	27.57**	
ΔR ²		.01	
ΔF		6.69**	

Note. SISRI = Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory; ** $p < .001$

As presented in Table 3, results revealed that spiritual intelligence and critical existential thinking were significant positive predictors of happiness. For

happiness, two significant models emerged. In model 1 spiritual intelligence was significant with $F(1,348) = 47.69, p < .001$, and 12% of variance in happiness was

explained by spiritual intelligence. In model 2 critical existential thinking was a significant predictor with $F(1,347) =$

27.85, $p < .001$, and 14% of variance in happiness was explained by critical existential thinking.

Table 4

Regression Analysis Showing Spiritual Intelligence and Happiness as Predictors of Psychological Adjustment (N=350)

Variable	<i>B</i>	Psychological Adjustment	
		<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Constant	87.03	2.65	
Spiritual Intelligence	.33	.04	.47*
Critical Existential Thinking	.33	.15	.18
Personal Meaning Production	.19	.30	.07
Transcendental Awareness	-.71	.27	-.28
Conscious State Expansion	-.33	.28	-.12
Happiness	.04	.12	.02
R^2	.07		
<i>F</i>	5.75***		

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

According to the results displayed in Table 4, it was found that spiritual intelligence significantly positively predicted

psychological adjustment. Psychological adjustment was not found to be significantly predicted by happiness.

Table 5

Independent Sample t-test Showing Gender Differences on Study Variables (N=350)

	Men		Women		<i>t</i> (348)	<i>p</i>	95 % CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
SISRI	54.81	12.75	59.18	13.64	-3.99	.000	-8.41	-2.85	0.44
CET	15.99	4.96	18.18	4.80	-4.21	.000	-3.22	-1.17	0.45
PMP	11.84	3.51	13.33	3.65	-3.90	.000	-2.24	-.74	0.42
TA	15.21	3.69	16.13	3.69	-2.30	.022	-1.68	-.13	0.31
CTE	11.13	3.20	12.17	3.60	-2.84	.005	-1.75	-.32	0.30
SHS	19.17	4.28	19.75	4.53	-1.22	.222	-1.50	.35	0.13
PAS	91.58	8.71	96.18	9.47	-4.73	.000	-6.51	-2.69	0.51

Note. SISRI = Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, CET = Critical Existential Thinking, PMP = Personal Meaning Production, TA = Transcendental Awareness, CSE = Conscious State Expansion, SHS = Subjective Happiness Scale, PAS = Psychological Adjustment Scale; CI = Confidence Interval; *LL* = Lower Limit; *UL* = Upper Limit.

Additionally, the results of the independent t-test showed that as compared to men, women had more spiritual intelligence. Similarly, significant differences have also been found between women and men on all four subscales of spiritual intelligence. No

significant difference has also been found between men and women on the variable of happiness. Results also suggest that women are more psychologically adjusted than men (Table 5).

Discussion

The present study was directed to explore the relationship between SI, psychological adjustment, and happiness. This study also assessed the predictive relationship among SI, psychological adjustment, and happiness in university students. In addition, gender differences between SI, happiness, and psychological adjustment were also examined. The mean age of the study participants was 21.76 (age range = 18-30). The majority of the participants belonged to the Science group and educated up to BS.

Findings revealed that spiritual intelligence and all of its subscales are significantly positively correlated with happiness and psychological adjustment. Similar to these findings, another study conducted by Babanazari et al. (2012) suggested that SI has a significant positive relationship with happiness among high school adolescents. Likewise, Sher et al. (2023) conducted a study on Pakistani University Students and revealed that happiness positively relates to SI whereas, psychological distress has a significant negative relationship with SI. Furthermore, the results of another study conducted on hockey players suggested significant positive relationships between all subscales of spiritual intelligence and happiness (Ozsari & Cetin, 2022).

The positive relationship between SI and psychological adjustment is also evident by the results of another study suggesting that SI, life purpose, and psychological well-being are positively related (Sahebalzaman et al., 2013). Another study conducted by Ahoei et al. (2017) highlighted a significant positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being in women with breast cancer. Similarly, Devi et al. (2017) suggested a significant positive relationship between SI and adjustment among college students. Previous studies have also suggested that spiritual intelligence promotes positive coping styles and plays a protective role in enhancing resilience and reducing anxiety or psychological distress (Khosravi & Nikmanesh, 2014; Moeini et al., 2019).

Therefore, these beneficial effects of SI could in turn help in enhancing psychological adjustment and happiness in life.

SI is found to be a significant positive predictor of happiness. Consistent with these findings, Babanazari et al. (2012) also reported that spiritual intelligence significantly predicts happiness. The results of another study conducted by García-Vázquez et al. (2022) suggested that spirituality and happiness have an indirect relationship through the positive effects of altruism such that individuals with higher spirituality are more likely to engage in altruistic behaviors, which in turn results in an increase in the level of happiness. Spiritual beliefs also give hope to individuals and enable them to positively interpret the hurdles of life and also give them hope of having a peaceful everlasting life (Faribors et al., 2010). Furthermore, spiritual intelligence also emerged as a significant positive predictor of psychological adjustment. This finding can be supported by the study conducted by Sahebalzaman et al. (2013) who found that spiritual intelligence positively predicted psychological well-being. In addition, Baseliyo (2019) also reported that spirituality is a significant positive predictor of well-being whereas it negatively predicts pessimism. Bolghan-Abadi et al. (2014) also suggested the importance of SI in raising self-efficacy and levels of achievement among students that in turn help them in solving the life problems and reducing pessimistic attitudes.

Additionally, results also revealed comparable differences between men and women in spiritual intelligence and psychological adjustment. Women are more spiritually intelligent and are more psychologically adjusted as compared to men. These findings are supported by Azizi and Zamaniyan (2013) who conducted a study on SI and found that females have higher scores on SI as compared to males. Moreover, several previous studies conducted on spiritual intelligence found

that gender has a significant effect on spiritual intelligence such that women have more spiritual intelligence than men (Munawar & Tariq, 2018; Nodehi & Nehardani, 2013). Similarly, Gadela et al. (2022) conducted a study among university students and revealed that spiritual intelligence is higher among females than males. This may be due to the reason that females are more spiritual as compared to males and thus use spirituality in dealing with life effectively. In the context of psychological adjustment and well-being, similar findings were revealed by Babu et al. (2007) suggesting that females are slightly more adjusted than male patients.

Limitations and Recommendations

In the present study, data was collected only from two institutes; hence, limited representation could be ensured in the context of all students. Further studies should be conducted to determine other correlates of spiritual intelligence and to explore this construct in more detail within Pakistan's cultural context. Lastly, it is recommended to study both spiritual and emotional intelligence with psychological well-being to know how SI differs from emotional intelligence or whether they are together responsible for the well-being of individuals.

Implications

The present study findings have revealed the positive influences of spiritual intelligence and suggested it to be a factor that leads to happiness and psychological adjustment. Therefore, spiritual intelligence nurturing programs could be designed for the students, which can help to boost their mental health.

Conclusion

It is revealed from the result findings that students with higher levels of spiritual intelligence are happier and have enhanced psychological adjustment in comparison to students with low spiritual intelligence. It may also be concluded that women have more SI and improved psychological adjustment when matched to men.

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Contribution of Author

Tehreem Arshad: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the author.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [T.A.] upon the reasonable request.

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