

Influence of Spiritual Intelligence on Personality Factors Among College Students

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Abstract:

Spiritual intelligence is essential for achieving oneness. It provides purpose and direction leading to a sense of identity in the minds of people. An attempt was made to explore the influence of spiritual intelligence on personality among college students. 136 students from Salem city were selected through simple random sampling. The data was collected with spiritual intelligence inventory by King (2008) and their personality was assessed using NEO-Big five personality locator by McCrae and Costa (1992). Results revealed that students do not differ in their spiritual intelligence on the basis of gender. In critical existential thinking and transcendental awareness students differ significantly on the basis of religion. Regression analysis indicated that conscious state expansion of spiritual intelligence had significant influence on personality factors. The implications are discussed in this article.

Keywords: *Spiritual intelligence, personality factors, transcendental awareness*

I. BACKGROUND

Personality consisted of “the distinctive patterns of behaviour including thoughts and emotions that characterize each individual’s adaptation to the situations of their life” (Mischel, 1967). Plato (390 BCE) saw the human soul as the seat of personality. Descartes (1649) viewed human personality as the product of interaction of divine and primal forces. He considered the immortal soul as the essential force behind human personality. Allport (1950) considered that “faith or religiousness was capable of conferring marked integration upon personality, providing meaning and peace during crisis in life”. Piedmont (1999) indicated that spirituality as a sixth factor of personality.

Earlier concept of soul and religion were based on a particular belief and custom, predominantly determined by culture and upbringing. In recent years, the concept of spiritual intelligence is considered as “soul’s intelligence”. It is a verifiable state of conscious identity distinct from ego (Zohar 2005). It is a hereditary capacity of brain that enables a person to form meanings, values and beliefs which is compatible with secular culture. It helps people to re-contextualize a situation towards a meaningful and holistic experience in life. Zohar (2005) reported that “spiritual intelligence was badly needed in our market economies. It allowed people from different cultures to understand each other, to think constructively, and change their roles in their lives according to new situations”. Schnell and Becker (2006) suggested that “individuals’ predisposition for particular sources of meaning depended on their personality. Persons with the capability of self transcendence as well as extraverted individuals were prone to experience their lives as meaningful”.

It was understood from the literature that attempts were made to establish relationship between spiritual intelligence and personality factors. Different studies reported mixed results. For example, relationship between personality traits and

spiritual intelligence was examined among students of in Tehran (Amrai, Farahani, Ebrahimi, & Bagherian, 2011) revealed that “conscientiousness, extroversion and agreeableness were positively correlated with spiritual intelligence while neuroticism was negatively correlated”. A study by Shariatmadar and Emadian (2014) examined the relationship between spiritual intelligence and personality characteristics and life expectancy among university students, indicated “a significant negative correlation between spiritual intelligence and neuroticism as well as a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and conscientiousness. From these studies it is indicative that there exists a significant association between spiritual intelligence and personality factors.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

An individual’s personality influences the way one approaches and reacts to important life situations. People’s abilities to adjust with dynamic challenges and successfully overcome them are associated with their personality. It is widely accepted by the personality researchers that human personality determines the nature of our behaviour, but at the same time the environment also influences the way we behave. It is also accepted that the ability to adapt with the environment depends upon an individual’s cognitive ability as well as emotional ability. Though similar environment is provided to many students, some of them excel in all activities and attain holistic development while the others do not. Person-environment fit is necessary to achieve excellence in every endeavour. Spiritual intelligence is recognized as a distinct ability to find meaning and align with one’s purpose of life or to change the situation to create a better one. Personality is the basic determinant of human behaviour and studies conducted at various cultures revealed

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the association between spiritual intelligence and personality factors. India is the country which laid foundation for spirituality across the globe, but there is dearth of studies on spiritual intelligence in Indian context. Above all students are the backbone of any nation and their spirituality certainly will influence the society. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the influence of spiritual intelligence on personality factors among college students.

III. HYPOTHESES

1. Male and female students differ significantly in their spiritual intelligence.
2. Students differ significantly in spiritual intelligence on the basis of religion.
3. Spiritual intelligence of students has significant influence on their personality factors.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study adopted survey method. The following tools were used to collect the data.

1. **Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory by King (2008):** This tool consists of 24 statements answered on a 5-point scale, measuring four factors that explain and predict spiritual intelligence. The factors measured in this too are Critical Existential Thinking (CET), Personal Meaning Production (PMP), Transcendental Awareness (TA), and Conscious State Expansion (CSE). The total score in these four factors reveals the spiritual intelligence score of a person.
2. **NEO-Big five personality locator by Mc Crae and Costa (1992):** This tool consists of 25 statements answered on a 5-point scale. The five factors measured by this scale are extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism vs. emotional stability.

The population of the study consisted of college students in Salem city. 150 college students from Salem city were selected through simple random sampling. The above mentioned tools were distributed to the students. Out of the 150 data collected, only 136 were considered for final analysis.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Spiritual Intelligence of College Students: Gender Wise Comparison

Dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence	Male (N=48)		Female (N=88)		‘t’ value
	M ₁	SD ₁	M ₂	SD ₂	
Critical Existential Thinking (CET)	16.00	5.37	16.77	3.34	0.90 ^{ns}
Personal Meaning Production (PMP)	13.33	3.30	12.73	3.00	1.05 ^{ns}
Transcendental Awareness (TA)	17.58	5.79	16.05	2.58	1.74 ^{ns}
Conscious State Expansion (CSE)	12.75	5.79	13.00	2.81	0.44 ^{ns}
Spiritual Intelligence (SI) Total	59.67	13.88	58.55	6.54	0.52 ^{ns}

^{ns} - Not Significant

From the table 1, it is found that the ‘t’ values are not significant for the dimensions of spiritual intelligence viz.

critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, and transcendental awareness. Hence, hypothesis-1 is not accepted. It is concluded that male and female college students do not differ significantly in their spiritual intelligence. In other words, gender does not make statistically significant difference on spiritual intelligence of college students. This is similar to the finding of Hassan, Shabani, Ahmad, & Baba (2011) reported that gender do not have moderating effect on spiritual intelligence as well as mental health among adolescents. Though spirituality is the term used frequently in Indian context, today we do not realize its’ significance in the techno-savvy culture, especially among college students. Spirituality is immaterial because at this stage majority of their focus is on job, marriage and settlement in life. This lack of awareness could have been the reason for the insignificant difference in the spiritual intelligence of boys and girls.

Table 2: Spiritual Intelligence of College Students: Based on their religion

Dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence	Religion						‘F’ value
	Hindu (N=116)		Muslim (N=12)		Christians (N=8)		
	M ₁	SD ₁	M ₂	SD ₂	M ₃	SD ₃	
CET	16.10	4.33	18.67	1.77	19.00	2.13	3.71*
PMP	12.86	3.06	13.33	4.37	13.50	1.60	0.25 ^{ns}
TA	17.03	4.10	14.33	3.22	13.50	1.60	5.14*
CSE	13.03	2.97	12.33	2.74	12.00	3.20	0.70 ^{ns}
SI Total	59.09	10.12	58.67	9.50	58.00	2.13	0.04 ^{ns}

*Significant at 0.05 level; ^{ns} - Not Significant

Table 2, reveals that ‘F’ values are significant for critical existential thinking and transcendental awareness, where as it is not significant for personal meaning production, conscious state expansion. Hence, the hypothesis-2 is partially accepted. It can be inferred that Hindu students had higher ability of achieving transcendental awareness than students of other religions. Religion is the science of soul. While philosophy provides vision, religious practices promote the realization of philosophy. It is the Indian philosophy which could have provided the concept of transcendental awareness to the world. So, it is quite natural that Hindu students scored high in that dimension. This indirectly indicated that transcendental meditation techniques could be taught to students at all levels which, in turn, enhance their spiritual intelligence.

It is observed that Christian students had significantly higher score in critical existential thinking. Critical existential thinking includes the ability to contemplate on issues such as life, death, reality and existence. Christian practices include regular mass, Sunday catechism classes and so on which could have promoted contemplation. It is more so when a minority community practice different ways of living from that of mainstream in order to promote group cohesiveness and sense of identity. This could be the reason for the higher score of the Christian students on critical existential thinking. In general, it is concluded that college students do not differ significantly in their spiritual intelligence on the basis of religion.

Table 3: Spiritual Intelligence as predictor of personality factors among college students

Dependent Variable	β	t-value	Model Summary
Extraversion	0.426	5.449*	R ² =0.181 F=29.695
Agreeableness	0.228	2.704*	R ² =0.052 F=7.314
Conscientiousness	0.342	4.211*	R ² =0.117 F=17.736
Emotionality Stability	0.262	3.136*	R ² =0.068 F=9.837
Openness to experience	0.097	1.133	R ² =0.009 F=1.24

* $p < 0.05$, Independent Variable: Conscious State Expansion

From the table 3, it is found that the “t” values for the regression co-efficient are significant for conscious state expansion. Hence, the hypothesis is partially accepted. It is concluded that conscious state expansion accounts for 18% variance in extraversion, 5% variance in agreeableness, 11% variance in conscientiousness and 6% variance in emotional stability.

King (2005) contended that conscious state expansion involves the ability to enter into higher or spiritual states. Researchers have demonstrated that altered brain activity occurs during heightened states of consciousness (Cahn & Polich, 2006). Also, states are commonly referred to as cosmic consciousness (James, 1902), and unitive consciousness (Maslow, 1964). Though these expanded states are deeply rooted in religious practices, it is considered as a potential mental ability (Emmon, 2000). Individuals through an inward journey of conscious engagement with collective unconsciousness become whom they are meant to be (Jung, 1968). Mystical and transcendent experiences have been found to have profound transformation in some individuals, including measurable positive changes in personality (MacLean et al. 2011). Hence, it can be inferred that people have ability to expand their consciousness which can significantly influence their personality. This result is in similar line to the finding of Amrai et al. (2011) which indicated that changes in spiritual intelligence could be explained (0.52 variance) by extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness factors of personality.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study clearly indicate the need for understanding spirituality in a broader perspective. Irrespective of gender, people should be trained to attain self transcendence which would lay the foundation for effective living. Indian yogic practices are found to be effective in this process and hence efforts should be taken to introduce yogic practices at least at college level thereby we could prepare the future generation with oneness and value for humans. Periodical training programmes could be organized for college students to realize and utilize their personality in an efficient way.

VII. REFERENCES

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