

Relationship between Spiritual Intelligence, Self-compassion and Test Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Test anxiety among college going students is an alarming concern. Benefiting from self-compassion and spiritual intelligence could possibly aid in overcoming test anxiety. The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between the spiritual intelligence, self-compassion and its role in overcoming the test anxiety among college going students using purposive sampling. The sample included 196 undergraduate or postgraduate emerging adults across India (aged 18-25). The tools used for data collection are King's spiritual intelligence questionnaire (2008), Westside test anxiety scale developed by Driscoll (2004) and Neff's self-compassion scale (2003). Spearman rank order correlation analysis showed a negative relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety. Mediation analysis indicated self-compassion as a significant mediator in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety. Findings imply the scope for self-compassion as a catalyst in reducing test anxiety. Further, the study will foster in gaining more understanding of better ways to overcome test anxiety.

Keywords: *Spiritual Intelligence, Self-Compassion, Students, Test Anxiety*

Spiritual intelligence is characterized as the capacity of humans to ponder the ultimate meaning and purpose and the intertwined nature of our relationship with the world around us. Individuals' psychological well-being rises as well as their capacity to accomplish a life goal as a result of it. Research has shown that people with greater tendency to spirituality have less inclination toward suicide, and it has been reported that they feel more improvement and less depress (Bekelman et al. 2007; McClain et al. 2003). Spiritual intelligence is the ability to uncover our deepest meanings, goals, and motivations (Zohar, 2000). Stress can influence graduate healthcare students' capacity to perform academically and professionally, as well as their clinical competence and well-being. Test anxiety is a common occurrence among college students. Extreme worry and stress before and during an exam, on the other hand, can have negative consequences. When anxiety prohibits the student from performing or giving their best on an exam, it leads them to feel nervous all of the time. Test anxiety is a set of physical symptoms and mental responses that make it difficult to perform well on tests. Many students suffer from varied degrees of exam anxiety for a variety of reasons. Highly test-anxious people tend to fare worse on exams than low-test-anxious people, especially when the tests are given under stressful, evaluative

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Received: August 24, 2023; Revision Received: September 27, 2023; Accepted: September 30, 2023

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circumstances. Test anxiety is more than just apprehension prior to a test. A little pre-exam anxiousness can escalate into severe feelings of concern, dread, and panic in students who suffer from test anxiety, which can have a significant impact on performance. Young people with test anxiety frequently have increased levels of self-criticism (Cunha & Paiva, 2012). In recent years, cases of students' melancholy, anxiety, depression, suicidal tendency, emotional distress and even panic attacks have skyrocketed, imprinting its implications on their overall performance, especially in the academic dimensions.

Compassion directed at oneself is referred to as self. Self-kindness, shared humanity, and awareness are three key components of compassion and self-compassion, correspondingly. Self-compassion has been associated with student contentment. "There is growing evidence that self-compassion is an important predictor of well-being and resilience" as cited by (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Research from NEFF (2003) defined self-compassion as a healthy form of self-acceptance that includes three components. The first is a tendency to treat oneself kindly in the face of perceived inadequacy by engaging in self-soothing and positive self-talk. Finally, self-compassionate individuals are able to face their own painful thoughts without avoiding or exaggerating them, managing their disappointment and frustration by quelling self-pity and melodrama.

Not many studies have probed into investigating and examining the influence of spiritual intelligence, which is least studied in terms of understanding its role as a catalyst for reducing academic or test based anxiety and fostering self-compassion. Here the study's main highlight is to bring out the influence of spiritual intelligence on self-compassion and test anxiety. In research from Bolghan-Abadi et al. (2012b) the purpose was to study the role of spiritual intelligence in predicting the quality of life among university students. In research from Amrai et al. (2011) study, examined the relationship between personality traits and spiritual intelligence among university students. Here, again these two studies aren't aiming to understand the influence of spiritual intelligence as a catalyst for reducing academic-based anxiety and also increasing self-compassion. In research from Amrai et al. (2011), investigated how spiritual relationship and personality traits are intertwined among university students. In this research the authors were more concerned with understanding the five-factor model of personality in relation with the spiritual intelligence role. According to the findings, neuroticism and spiritual intelligence have a negative association, whereas conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extroversion do have positive relationships. Spiritual intelligence had nothing to do with openness. Personality attributes, according to the results, are components that influence a major impact in people's spiritual intelligence.

In research from Darabiyan et al. (2020), discussed how anxiety and exam anxiety are two of the most prominent psychological and emotional problems that adversely impact students' mental health and educational achievement during their college years. As a consequence, the goal of this report was to understand the purpose of spiritual intelligence in the development of concealed anxiety and test anxiety, and also the relationship between the two. Their main findings indicated spiritual intelligence is inversely connected to hidden anxiety and is linked to lower test anxiety. As a result, individuals with strong spiritual intelligence do not have less hidden anxiety. Again here, the study conducted was concerned with the understanding of the relationship of hidden anxiety and spiritual intelligence. However, this study could have highlighted the fact of academic based anxiety as a mediating factor for hidden anxiety.

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In research from Pant and Srivastava (2017), the goal of this review was to examine spiritual intelligence and mental health levels, to see how these two variables are associated, and to see how spiritual intelligence and mental health differ by educational background (arts and science) and gender. The purposive sample technique was used to recruit 300 college students from four distinct government degree colleges/campuses in Haridwar, representing both arts and scientific disciplines. Here the study discusses the both educational background and spiritual intelligence impact on mental health of students from arts and science academic courses. However, this research has to be looked into further to see if the spiritual intelligence differs in different groups or if it is unbound by any gender, group, or race.

Here, the aim of research is to examine the influence of spiritual intelligence in overcoming test-based anxiety and thereby enhancing their self-compassion. However, there were not sufficient studies that looked into the role of spiritual intelligence in overcoming academic anxiety while also cultivating self-compassion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Objectives

- To examine if test anxiety, spiritual intelligence, and self-compassion will differ concerning gender.
- To understand the relationship of test anxiety with spiritual intelligence and self-compassion.
- To assess if self-compassion is a mediator in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety.

Hypothesis

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Students with high spiritual intelligence have better self-compassion, thereby they've higher chances of overcoming test anxiety than students with low spiritual intelligence.

H0 (Null Hypothesis): Students with high spiritual intelligence do not have better self-compassion, thereby they have lower chances of overcoming test anxiety than students with low spiritual intelligence.

Participants

Total number of samples collected for this research study will be 196. Students who are pursuing their graduation or under graduation in any established Indian university. Purposive sampling procedure will be implemented in this research study as the focus on the students who are in college pursuing graduation or post-graduation. Exclusion criteria includes those students who are clinically diagnosed with any physical or mental health abnormality.

Materials

The tools used for in this research study are, spiritual intelligence scale by King (2008) to assess spiritual intelligence, Westside test anxiety scale developed by Driscoll (2004) to assess the test anxiety, self-compassion scale developed by Neff, K.D. (2003) to assess the self-compassion aspect.

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Data Collection

There will be three scales, which can be self-administered. After informed consent has been filled. The first scale to be administered to subjects would be the spiritual intelligence scale by King (2008), then their self-compassion will be assessed through the self-compassion scale developed by Neff, K.D. (2003). After which, the dependent variable i.e., test anxiety will be assessed through Westside test anxiety scale developed by Driscoll (2004). Informed Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality are the three core ethical dimensions which will be implemented through the research study. The scores resulting from the assessments and scales will be confidential. No personal information will be disclosed throughout the study. Integrity towards the subjects will be maintained. There will be no psychological or physical harm experienced by the subjects.

Scoring

For analysis correlation and regression design has been implemented, within subject design. Following was mediation analysis done, to identify if self-compassion influenced the relationship of spiritual intelligence and test anxiety. This study is concerned with analyzing and investigating the relationship between variables, which are spiritual intelligence, self-compassion and test anxiety. As the relationship between the variables is expressed using mediation analysis and correlation. The research was conducted within subject design, as the same subjects were being assessed through three scales of spiritual intelligence, self-compassion and test anxiety.

Variables

The variables in this research are spiritual intelligence as independent variable, self-compassion as mediating variable and test anxiety as dependent variable.

Due to its emphasis on students' capacity to derive personal meaning from their life experiences, consciousness, and critical thinking, spiritual intelligence can create an environment in the classroom where students can achieve their maximum potential (Denny et al., 2008). Spiritual intelligence is simply the ability to act and perform in a wise and sympathetic manner while upholding inner and exterior harmony, regardless of the circumstances (Wigglesworth, 2006). Self-compassion entails a desire for one's own health and well-being and is linked to a higher level of self-initiative to make the necessary changes in one's life (Neff, 2009).

Test anxiety occurs in situations where success is viewed as potentially endangering one's self-esteem (Krispenz et al., 2019). Students who are test-anxious exhibit greater levels of unpleasant bodily arousal and aggravated anxiety thoughts.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Spearman rank order correlation analysis showing the relationship of test anxiety with spiritual intelligence and self-compassion

	CET	PMP	TA	CSE	SI	SK	SJ	CH	Isolation	OI	Mindfulness	SC
CET												
PMP	.526**											
TA	.639**	.639**										
CSE	.422**	.596**	.602**									
SI	.796**	.807**	.882**	.782**								
SK	.186**	.455**	.372**	.405**	.412**							
SJ	-0.06	.239**	.206**	.200**	.149*	.440**						
CH	.188**	.351**	.327**	.280**	.334**	.602**	.288**					
Isolation	-0.05	.226**	0.12	.207**	0.12	.191**	.620**	.154*				
OI	-0.06	.206**	0.07	0.08	0.07	.304**	.637**	.198**	.515**			
Mindfulness	.286**	.510**	.327**	.413**	.448**	.617**	.324**	.564**	.265**	.323**		
SC	0.12	.444**	.317**	.343**	.336**	.688**	.811**	.622**	.684**	.676**	.686**	
Test anxiety	-0.13	.272**	.226**	-0.10	.201**	-.171*	.520**	-0.13	-.506**	-.444**	-.272**	-.516**

Note – ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

CET = Critical existential analysis, PMP= Personal Meaning Production, TA= Transcendental analysis, CSE= Conscious state expansion, SI= Spiritual Intelligence, SK= Self-Kindness, SJ =Self-Judgement, CH= Common Humanity, OI= Over Identification, SC= Self-Compassion

Using spearman rank order correlation, test anxiety has a significant positive relationship with personal meaning production ($r = .272$, $p < .05$), transcendental awareness ($r = .226$, $p < .01$), spiritual intelligence ($r = .201$, $p < .01$), self – judgment ($r = .520$, $p < .01$), over-identification ($r = .444$, $p < .01$) self- compassion ($r = .516$, $p < .01$). Test anxiety has a negative significant relation with Isolation ($r = -.506$, $p < .01$) and Mindfulness ($r = -.272$, $p < .01$). Results of the spearman rank order correlation indicated spiritual intelligence as an independent variable has negative association with test anxiety as a dependent variable. (See Table 1)

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Table 3 Regression analysis showing the predictors of test anxiety in the dimensions of spiritual intelligence.

Predictor	B	T	VIF	R ²	F
CET	0.061	0.66	1.77	0.08	4.15**
PMP	-0.30	-3.01**	2.01		
TA	-0.11	-0.99	2.66		
CSE	0.13	1.36	1.89		

**P < .01, DW = 1.92, B = unstandardized beta, VIF = Variance Inflation Factor

CET = Critical existential analysis, PMP= Personal Meaning Production, TA= Transcendental analysis, CSE= Conscious state expansion.

Personal meaning production is a significant predictor of test anxiety and has a negative significant relationship with test anxiety (t = -3.01, p < 0.01). (See Table 4)

Table 4 Regression analysis showing the predictors of test anxiety in the dimensions of self-compassion

Predictor	B	T	VIF	R ²	F
SK	0.14	1.62	2.25	0.34	16.00**
SJ	-0.33	-3.47**	2.53		
CH	0.04	0.50	1.80		
Isolation	-0.24	-3.07**	1.77		
OI	-0.11	-1.32	1.87		
Mindfulness	-0.13	-1.54	1.99		

**p < .01, DW = 1.92, B= unstandardized beta, VIF = Variance Inflation Factor

SK = self-kindness, SJ= self judgment, CH= Common humanity, OI= over identification

Using the linear regression analysis both dimensions SJ (t = -3.47, p < .01) and Isolation (t = -3.07, p < .01) of self-compassion are significant negative predictors of test anxiety. (See Table 5)

Table 5

Mediation analysis showing self-compassion as the mediator in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety

Type	Effect	SE	95% C.I.	95% C.I.		B	z
				Lower	Upper		
Indirect	SI ⇒ SC ⇒ Test anxiety	-0.09	0.02	-0.13	-0.05	-0.16	-4.20**
Component	SI ⇒ SC	0.29	0.05	0.18	0.40	0.36	5.32**
	SC ⇒ Test anxiety	-0.30	0.04	-0.39	-0.21	-0.46	-6.85**
Direct	SI ⇒ Test anxiety	-0.01	0.04	-0.08	0.06	-0.03	-0.38
Total	SI ⇒ Test anxiety	-0.10	0.04	-0.17	-0.03	-0.19	-2.69*

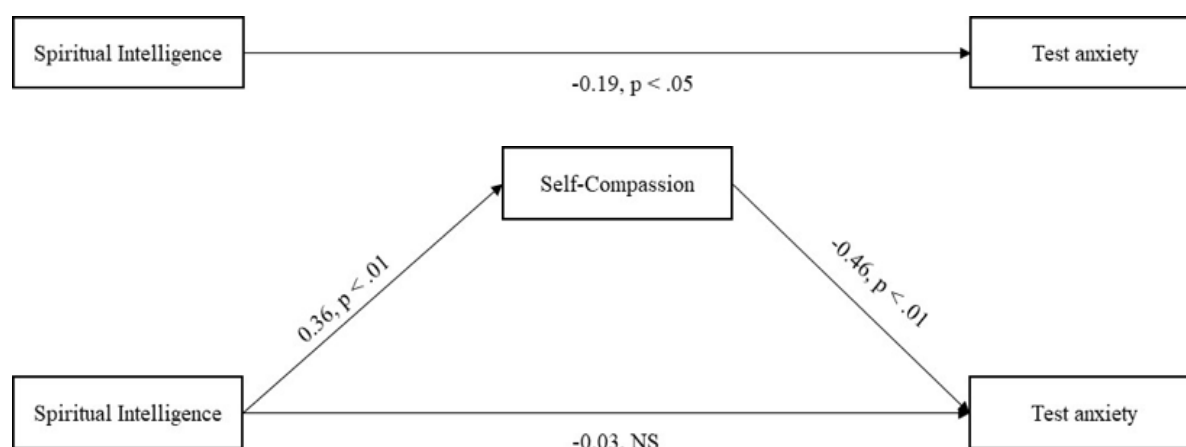
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Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method)

SI= Spiritual intelligence, SC= Self Compassion B = unstandardized beta, SE = standard error, CI = confidence interval, β = standardized beta, z = z score

Using mediation analysis, in indirect type which includes self-compassion as a mediating variable between spiritual intelligence as independent variable which significantly predicts test anxiety as dependent variable and the results show ($B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.02$, $\beta = -0.16$, $z = -4.20^{**}$, $p = < .01$). In the direct type , with the absence of self-compassion as a mediating variable there, spiritual intelligence as independent variable is not a significant predictor of test anxiety as a dependent variable ($B = -0.01$, $SE = 0.04$, $\beta = -0.03$, $z = -0.38$, $p = < 0.05$). (See Table 6)

Figure 1 Showing self-compassion as a mediator of spiritual intelligence and test anxiety



$p^{**} < 0.01$ = significant relationship, $p^* < 0.05$ = insignificant relationship. In the first part of the diagram, wherein with the absence of variable self-compassion, spiritual intelligence as an independent variable is not a significant predictor of test anxiety as dependent variable ($r = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$). Whereas, in the latter half of the diagram with the presence of self-compassion as a mediating variable, has a significant relationship with spiritual intelligence ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.1$) and test anxiety ($r = -0.46$, $p < 0.01$). Students with higher self-compassion have lower test anxiety, but in absence of self-compassion as a mediating variable there is insignificant reduction of test anxiety.

DISCUSSION

Results showed a negative relationship between test anxiety and spiritual intelligence. “Test anxiety and spiritual intelligence are strongly correlated, and test anxiety decreases as mental intelligence rises” (Darabiyani et al., 2020). There was a negative relationship between test anxiety and self-compassion. ‘Self-compassion has also reportedly been linked to greater wellbeing in young people.’ (Bluth et al., 2017) “It was found that there was a significant negative predictor of test anxiety ($r = -.36$, $p .05$), self-compassion. In other words, even after adjusting for gender and overall anxiety, adolescents with higher levels of self-compassion reported less test anxiety.” (O’Driscoll & McAleese, 2022)

Of the dimensions of self-compassion, self-judgment, isolation, over-identification, self-kindness, and mindfulness showed a negative relationship with test anxiety. Among these, self-judgment and isolation were significant inverse predictors of test anxiety.

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Self-compassion acted as a significant mediator in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety. Students who felt more test anxiety reported having lower life satisfaction and more negative emotional states (Steinmayr et al., 2016). This study was an attempt to understand the relationship between spiritual intelligence, self-compassion and test anxiety among college going students. As Kuhestani et al (2013) indicated, the present study showed spiritual intelligence having a negative relationship with test anxiety. It appears that a specific mechanism in spiritual intelligence reduces test anxiety, and some spiritual skills are more successful in doing so. The identification of intermediary variables in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety forms the basis for the development of educational materials that are better suited to developing spiritual intelligence's ability to reduce test anxiety (Jamshedi et al., 2017). Subjects with higher self-compassion generally reported less anxiety after the task (Neff et al., 2007). Through one's own efforts, self-compassion can improve health behaviors in the process of spiritual development (Neff, 2010). Self-compassion acted as a significant mediator in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and test anxiety. Tang (2019) had already observed self-compassion as a strategy that undergraduate students could practice to reduce test anxiety and intolerance of ambiguity (Tang, 2019). Many of these studies have supported the objectives, which have the commonality as to how self-compassion has reduced test anxiety among students and has a significant association with test anxiety. Not only this but higher spiritual intelligence is correlated with less test anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on investigating the role of self-compassion as a mediating variable in the association with spiritual intelligence and test anxiety. Most of the objectives for this research are met, except the assumption revolving around spiritual intelligence becoming a significant predictor of low-test anxiety. Very few variables in the spiritual intelligence dimension were having significant association with test anxiety, compared to self-compassion. The findings demonstrated that self-compassion positively correlates with cognitive test anxiety (Tang, 2019).

This research study would in particular aid students to effectively overcome test anxiety, whilst being self-compassionate and able to gauge through the meaning of life. Among many anxieties, the test anxiety which often is seen in students impairs their academic achievements, self-esteem and cognitive progression. Often, spiritual intelligence among emerging adults are taken for granted, neglected or unexplored. Therefore, through acknowledging the spiritual intelligence and being able to indulge in self-compassion, would bring awareness among them to effectively address test anxiety.

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Acknowledgment

To the supervisor Dr. Santosh KR, I owe a huge amount of gratitude for guiding and encouraging me throughout this research study. I would sincerely like to express my gratitude towards the participants of the study for filling out the questionnaire. I am thankful to my peer friends and my parents for providing me with suggestions and feedback.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Pandit, D. (2023). Relationship between Spiritual Intelligence, Self-compassion and Test Anxiety. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 4317-4326. DIP:18.01.401.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.401