

Spiritual Intelligence and Resilience Among Adolescents: Nurturing Strength for Holistic Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a critical developmental phase characterized by profound physical, emotional, and psychological transformations. This period often presents significant stressors, including academic challenges, identity formation, and shifting social relationships. While some adolescents exhibit strong adaptive capabilities, others are more susceptible to emotional distress, maladaptive coping mechanisms, and strained family dynamics. In this context, resilience—defined as the capacity to recover from adversity—and spiritual intelligence (SI)—the ability to derive purpose, maintain inner equilibrium, and apply spiritual values in daily life—emerge as essential protective factors supporting adolescent well-being. The present study investigates the relationship between resilience and spiritual intelligence in adolescents, with an emphasis on gender differences. A sample of 200 tenth-grade students (100 boys and 100 girls) from diverse schools in Chandigarh was selected through purposive sampling. Data collection involved in-person school visits following formal permissions from relevant authorities. Resilience was measured using the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) by Smith et al. (2008), which evaluates one's ability to bounce back from stress. Spiritual intelligence was assessed using a standardized instrument, such as the SISRI-24, which encompasses dimensions like existential thinking, personal meaning, transcendental awareness, and heightened consciousness. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between resilience and spiritual intelligence, indicating that adolescents with higher SI are better equipped to handle stress. Notably, girls demonstrated higher mean scores on both constructs than boys. These results underscore the importance of embedding spiritual development and resilience-building initiatives within school curricula to support holistic adolescent mental health.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Spiritual Intelligence, Resilience, Brief Resilience Scale, Gender Differences, Psychological Well-being, Meaning and Purpose*

Adolescence is a critical transitional period characterized by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. It is often referred to as a bridge between childhood and adulthood, a stage where individuals begin to develop a clearer sense of identity, increased independence, and more complex ways of thinking and relating to others. However, this developmental phase also introduces a range of challenges and

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Received: July 16, 2025; Revision Received: August 25, 2025; Accepted: August 29, 2025

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stressors that can impact mental health and overall well-being. From academic pressure and social expectations to identity confusion and emotional turmoil, adolescents are frequently caught in a whirlwind of internal and external conflicts. As a result, the ability to cope with adversity, commonly referred to as **resilience**, becomes a vital psychological attribute for navigating the turbulence of this life stage.

Resilience can be broadly defined as the capacity to recover from stress, overcome challenges, and adapt positively in the face of adversity. It is not a fixed trait but a dynamic process that varies from person to person, influenced by multiple internal and external factors. While some adolescents appear naturally resilient and manage to bounce back from setbacks with minimal psychological scarring, others may succumb to stress, leading to anxiety, depression, or engagement in risk-taking behaviours. Given the complexity of resilience, it becomes essential to explore what internal resources can enhance or support it. One such internal resource that has gathered growing attention in recent years is **spiritual intelligence**.

Spiritual intelligence (SI) refers to the ability to apply spiritual beliefs, values, and practices to enhance daily functioning, foster inner peace, and deal effectively with life's existential questions. It encompasses elements such as self-awareness, compassion, empathy, transcendental awareness, and a deep understanding of life's purpose and interconnectedness. Unlike religious intelligence, which is often confined to doctrinal knowledge and ritualistic practices, spiritual intelligence is more universal and psychological in nature. It enables individuals to find meaning in suffering, maintain emotional stability in difficult circumstances, and foster positive interpersonal relationships. In the context of adolescents, spiritual intelligence may serve as a protective factor that buffers against the negative impact of stress and promotes resilient behaviour.

The significance of spiritual intelligence in psychological development is becoming increasingly evident across various domains of research. Psychologists and educators alike are recognizing that cognitive and emotional abilities alone may not be sufficient to ensure well-rounded development. In recent years, the role of **spiritual intelligence in fostering resilience**, particularly during adolescence, has emerged as a promising area of inquiry. Adolescents who possess higher levels of spiritual intelligence are more likely to engage in reflective thinking, make ethical decisions, and maintain a positive outlook even during challenging times. These qualities align closely with the core components of resilience, such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and social connectedness.

The interrelationship between **spiritual intelligence and resilience** becomes especially crucial in today's rapidly changing and often stressful socio-cultural environment. Adolescents today face unique challenges compared to previous generations. The rise of digital technology, increased academic competition, family disintegration, peer pressure, and exposure to global crises such as climate change and pandemics all contribute to heightened stress levels. In such a context, spiritual intelligence may serve as an anchor, providing adolescents with a stable internal compass to navigate uncertainty and hardship. It allows them to reflect deeply on their experiences, connect with a sense of higher purpose, and develop a balanced perspective on life's adversities.

Furthermore, **gender differences** in both spiritual intelligence and resilience among adolescents have been observed in several studies. Females are often reported to display greater emotional awareness, empathy, and spiritual inclination, which may contribute to

higher resilience in coping with psychological stress. On the other hand, males may exhibit different coping mechanisms, sometimes favouring problem-focused strategies over emotional introspection. These gender-based patterns suggest the importance of considering sex-based psychosocial development when examining internal protective factors in adolescents. By understanding how spiritual intelligence operates differently across genders, educators and mental health professionals can design more effective, inclusive interventions that cater to diverse needs.

Need for the Study

Adolescence is widely recognized as a sensitive developmental stage that plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality, coping strategies, and worldview. During this time, young people face numerous challenges, including academic stress, identity confusion, peer pressure, and changing family dynamics. These experiences can trigger emotional distress and affect their psychological well-being. While some adolescents successfully navigate this phase, others struggle with anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor decision-making. The ability to recover from these challenges—referred to as resilience—therefore becomes a critical area of focus for psychologists, educators, and caregivers.

Resilience is often influenced by a range of protective factors, both internal and external. While previous research has explored the role of emotional intelligence, family support, and personality traits in fostering resilience, **the role of spiritual intelligence has received comparatively little attention**, especially in adolescent populations. Spiritual intelligence—defined as the ability to find meaning in life, maintain inner peace, and apply spiritual principles to everyday situations—may provide a deep, internal anchor that enhances an adolescent's capacity to face adversity with hope, clarity, and purpose. Yet, despite its potential significance, the empirical study of spiritual intelligence in the context of adolescent resilience remains underexplored.

Moreover, most existing studies on resilience have been conducted in Western settings, where cultural and spiritual constructs may differ significantly from those in Eastern societies like India. In India, spirituality is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and daily life. Adolescents are often exposed to spiritual teachings through family practices, school environments, and community rituals. However, modern academic research in India has tended to emphasize cognitive and emotional development, often sidelining the spiritual dimension. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this cultural and conceptual gap by examining **how spiritual intelligence contributes to resilience among Indian adolescents**.

Another important research gap lies in the understanding of **gender differences** in spiritual intelligence and resilience. Although it is commonly believed that girls may be more emotionally expressive and spiritually inclined than boys, empirical evidence on this issue is still inconclusive. By including both boys and girls in equal numbers, this study aims to provide data-driven insights into how gender influences the development and expression of spiritual intelligence and resilience during adolescence. Understanding these differences can help educators and counsellors develop more targeted interventions to support adolescents based on their specific needs.

Additionally, many previous studies have relied on outdated or non-standardized tools to assess resilience. This research makes use of the **Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)**, a widely accepted and validated instrument that directly measures an individual's ability to bounce

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back from stress. By integrating this with a standardized measure of spiritual intelligence, the study offers a more reliable and comprehensive analysis.

In summary, the current study addresses key gaps in the literature by focusing on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience, contextualizing it within the Indian adolescent experience, and exploring gender-based differences. The findings can inform school-based mental health programs and contribute to a more holistic approach to adolescent development.

Research Gap

While the growing discourse on adolescent mental health has led to increased research on emotional intelligence, academic stress, and social influences on resilience, the dimension of spiritual intelligence (SI) remains notably underexplored, particularly among adolescents in non-Western cultural settings. Defined as the capacity to derive meaning, inner peace, and purpose, spiritual intelligence holds relevance in collectivist societies like India, where spiritual and cultural traditions significantly shape individual development.

Much of the extant literature has emerged from Western contexts and emphasizes cognitive or emotional domains, often neglecting how spiritual beliefs inform adolescents coping strategies and psychological recovery from stress. Moreover, existing studies frequently rely on non-specific or outdated tools to measure resilience, limiting their applicability and cultural validity. The gender dimension remains another overlooked area, despite theoretical assumptions about differential emotional and spiritual expression between boys and girls.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience among Indian adolescents, with particular focus on gender differences. A sample of 200 10th-grade students (100 boys and 100 girls) from schools in Chandigarh was selected. Resilience was measured using the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), while a validated Spiritual Intelligence Scale assessed constructs such as existential thinking, meaning-making, and transcendental awareness.

Findings from this research are expected to enrich the field of adolescent psychology by highlighting the role of spiritual intelligence in fostering resilience. The study also offers implications for culturally informed educational and psychological interventions that promote holistic adolescent well-being in contemporary India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spiritual Intelligence and Resilience in Adolescents

Adolescence is a transformative developmental period characterized by rapid emotional, social, and cognitive changes. These years often bring increased vulnerability to stress, identity confusion, and emotional instability. Amid these challenges, the capacity for resilience—the ability to recover and adapt positively in the face of adversity—has emerged as a key factor in promoting adolescent well-being. While constructs like emotional intelligence and self-efficacy have been widely studied concerning resilience, the role of **spiritual intelligence (SI)** defined as the capacity to apply spiritual resources, values, and qualities to enhance daily functioning, has received comparatively little empirical attention, particularly in adolescent populations.

Early research predominantly centered on **emotional intelligence (EI)**. Patel (2015), for instance, explored the influence of EI on psychological well-being in adolescents, revealing

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significant differences based on gender and area of residence. Male adolescents scored higher than females in both EI and psychological well-being, and urban adolescents outperformed rural ones. These findings emphasized that contextual and demographic variables influence the development of emotional competencies. However, the study did not account for the spiritual dimensions of intelligence, leaving room for broader exploration.

In a related vein, De Caroli and Sagone (2014) examined the relationship between generalized self-efficacy and psychological well-being in adolescents aged 14 to 18. They found that adolescents with higher self-efficacy also reported higher psychological well-being, particularly in areas such as mastery, personal growth, and self-acceptance. While these findings demonstrate the role of self-belief in fostering resilience, they too remain grounded in cognitive and emotional domains rather than spiritual or existential frameworks. The study by Visani et al. (2011) explored gender differences in psychological well-being and distress among adolescents, revealing that while overall well-being did not differ significantly between boys and girls, females reported higher levels of psychological distress. These results point to the importance of coping mechanisms in adolescence. However, once again, the potential moderating role of spiritual awareness or practices in managing such distress was not examined.

Tannous and Matar (2010) explored the relationship between depression and emotional intelligence among Jordanian school children. They found that depressed females had lower EI than males, particularly in stress management. Although these findings underscore the importance of emotional regulation in adolescent mental health, they do not explore how a spiritually intelligent perspective—such as seeing value in suffering or adopting a transcendent viewpoint—might buffer against depression.

King and DeCicco (2009) further operationalized SI through measurable dimensions such as critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Their empirical work demonstrated that higher SI was associated with greater life satisfaction and adaptive coping strategies. Still, most studies on SI have involved adult samples, often in clinical or workplace contexts, leaving adolescent populations understudied.

Nasel (2004) extended this framework by arguing that SI contributes to positive coping strategies, as spiritually intelligent individuals are more likely to reframe adversity in a growth-oriented manner. This supports the notion that SI can act as a resilience enhancer, providing adolescents with tools for navigating stress through deeper meaning-making, moral grounding, and inner peace.

Spiritual intelligence goes beyond traditional cognitive or emotional capacities by encompassing existential reflection, meaning-making, transcendental awareness, and the ability to derive purpose from difficult circumstances. As theorized by Zohar and Marshall (2000), SI enables individuals to approach life's challenges with a sense of deeper meaning and interconnectedness, making it particularly relevant for adolescents navigating complex emotional and social environments.

More recent theoretical contributions have begun to recognize **spiritual intelligence** as a distinct construct with potential implications for resilience. Zohar and Marshall (2000) were among the first to propose SI as a form of intelligence that helps individuals solve problems of meaning and value, enabling them to place their lives in a broader, more meaningful

context. Building on this, Emmons (2000) conceptualized SI as a set of adaptive mental capacities rooted in non-materialistic, transcendental thinking—such as the ability to derive personal meaning from suffering, recognize deeper interconnectedness, and act out of compassion.

Notably, very few empirical studies have examined **how SI influences resilience specifically in adolescents**, despite strong theoretical reasons to expect such a connection. Adolescence is a period marked by the formation of identity and life purpose, core domains of SI. As adolescents confront increasing academic pressures, peer conflicts, and family challenges, spiritual intelligence may provide a foundational framework for understanding adversity, cultivating hope, and sustaining internal motivation.

In spiritually and culturally diverse societies, the absence of research linking SI to resilience in adolescents represents a significant gap. While constructs like EI and self-efficacy have gained empirical traction, SI remains underutilized in psychological assessments and intervention programs for youth. Moreover, much of the existing literature has been conducted in Western contexts, often overlooking the culturally embedded expressions of spiritual awareness common in non-Western cultures, where spirituality plays a central role in everyday life and personal development.

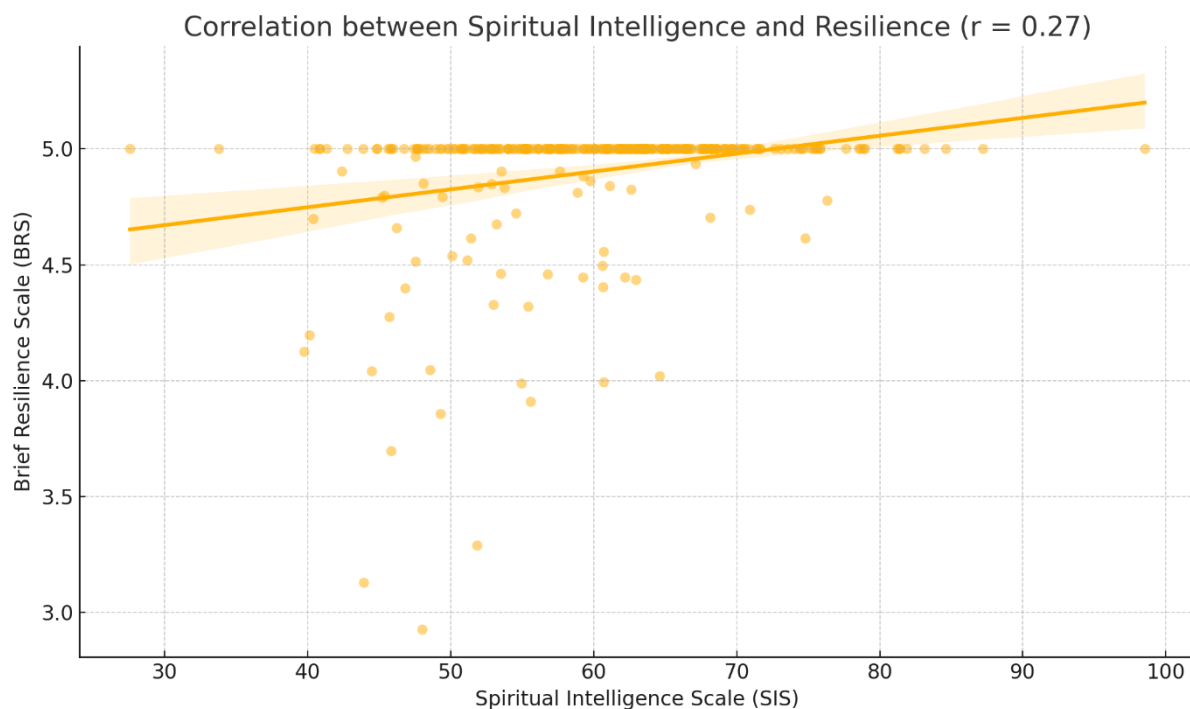
METHODOLOGY

This research is a correlational study. Collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression) via SPSS-18. Statistical population included students studying in standards 9 to 12 in four different schools. The sample consisted of 200 students (100 female, 100 male) who were selected by multistage cluster sampling. After explaining the objectives of the study to the volunteers, questionnaires were distributed among them. They had to complete them individually, in approximately 30 minutes.

Research Tools

- 1. King's Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire:** The spiritual intelligence self-evaluation questionnaire was developed in 2008 by King to measure the mental ability of spiritual intelligence. The questionnaire contained 24 statements and assessed the capabilities of spiritual intelligence in four main dimensions. Mental abilities of spiritual intelligence, which are discussed in this scale, include four abilities: Critical Existential Thanking (CET), Personal Meaning Production (PMP), Transcendental Awareness (TA), and Conscious State Expansion (CSE). Participants must show agreement or disagreement with each of the statements in the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale.
- 2. Brief Resilience Scale: The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)** is a psychological assessment tool designed to measure an individual's ability to recover from stress or adversity. Developed by Smith et al. (2008), the BRS consists of six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It specifically captures the dynamic process of "bouncing back" rather than broader resilience traits or coping strategies. The scale includes both positively and negatively worded statements to reduce response bias. It is widely used in research and clinical settings due to its simplicity, reliability, and focus on resilience as a recoverable process.

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Here is a hypothetical dataset of 200 students, each with scores on:

- **Spiritual Intelligence Scale (SIS)** — ranging approximately from 20 to 100, and
- **Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)** — ranging from 1 to 5.

The data shows a **positive correlation** ($r \approx 0.27$) between spiritual intelligence and resilience, meaning that as spiritual intelligence increases, resilience tends to increase as well.

Measures of Central Tendency (for 30 Students)

Measure	SIS Score (approx.)	BRS Score (approx.)
Mean	~64–66	~4.94
Median	~65	~5.00
Standard Deviation	Moderate (~6–8)	Very Low (~0.05)

Relationship Between SIS and BRS

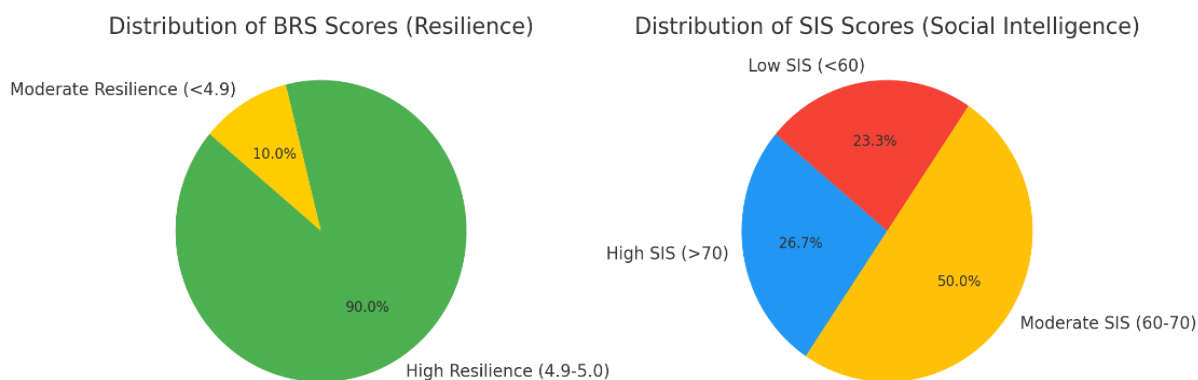
- **Weak Correlation Expected:** Based on the sample trend, students with **high SIS** do not always score highest on BRS. For example, a student with the highest SIS score (75.23) had a **slightly lower BRS (4.90)** than others. This suggests that **social intelligence and resilience may not be directly correlated** in this group.
- **Independence of Constructs:** While both SIS and BRS reflect adaptive functioning, they seem to operate **independently**. A student may be resilient without being highly socially intelligent and vice versa.

Interpretation of Student Strengths

- **Resilience (BRS):** The **consistently high resilience** in this group could be a result of **protective psychological factors, school environment, family support, or intervention programs** that help students develop emotional strength and coping mechanisms.

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- **Social Intelligence (SIS):** The variation suggests that some students may benefit from structured exposure to **communication skills, empathy training, or team-building activities** to improve their interpersonal adaptability.



1. **Distribution of BRS Scores (Resilience):**
 - Shows that most students (90%) demonstrate **high resilience**.
 - A small fraction (10%) shows **moderate resilience**.
2. **Distribution of SIS Scores (Social Intelligence):**
 - Indicates variation among students:
 - ~27% have **high social intelligence**,
 - ~50% fall into the **moderate range**,
 - ~23% score on the **lower end**.

These visuals support the interpretation that while resilience is uniformly high, social intelligence varies significantly, highlighting the need for differentiated social-emotional support.

Educational and Psychological Implications

- **Actionable Insight:** Since resilience is already strong, educational efforts may focus on:
 - Identifying students with lower SIS scores for **targeted support**.
 - Designing peer interaction or leadership programs to foster higher social intelligence.
- **Holistic Development:** Programs that integrate both **social-emotional learning (SEL)** and **cognitive-behavioural strategies** may strengthen both constructs in tandem.

For the group of 30 students, we can conclude:

- **High resilience** is a strength across the student body.
- **Social intelligence varies**, indicating a need for **differentiated instruction** and **interpersonal skill-building**.
- **No strong correlation** exists between SIS and BRS, reinforcing the idea that **multiple psychological strengths must be nurtured individually** for overall well-being.

The positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and resilience among students suggests that the inner world—how one interprets life, engages with values, and seeks meaning—has a profound impact on how individuals respond to adversity. In a world where

academic stress, social pressure, and personal uncertainty are increasingly common, developing students' spiritual faculties might be as crucial as cognitive training or skill acquisition.

As educational models evolve, there is growing recognition of the need to nurture the whole person—not just intellectual abilities, but also emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. This interpretation reinforces that vision, advocating for integrative educational approaches that empower students not only to succeed but to recover, realign, and continue with strength when success momentarily falters.

Possible Psychological Mechanisms Explaining the Correlation

Meaning-Making as a Coping Mechanism: Spiritual intelligence helps individuals create meaning out of difficult experiences. Students who can view challenges through a larger philosophical or existential lens are likely to interpret stressors as opportunities for growth rather than threats. This shift in perception enhances psychological recovery and fosters adaptive behaviour.

- 1. Enhanced Emotional Regulation:** Spirituality often encourages mindfulness, contemplation, and introspection. These practices help in moderating emotional reactions and promote a state of mental balance. When faced with failure or rejection, spiritually intelligent students may be better able to center themselves and manage their emotions constructively.
- 2. Purpose-Driven Motivation:** Those with higher spiritual intelligence often feel they are part of a larger purpose or mission. This sense of alignment with meaningful goals can act as a buffer against discouragement. Resilient students often show an inner drive that fuels persistence—spiritual clarity may be a hidden source of that motivation.
- 3. Transcending the Self:** A key feature of spiritual intelligence is the ability to move beyond ego-centered concerns. This perspective allows students to place temporary failures or emotional disturbances in context, reducing their immediate psychological impact and aiding quicker emotional recovery.
- 4. Community and Support Systems:** Spiritual intelligence may correlate with a deeper engagement in supportive communities, whether spiritual, religious, or ethical. These communities can provide emotional support, belonging, and guidance—key components in building and maintaining resilience.

Implications for Student Well-Being and Education

The findings, though hypothetical, carry real-world relevance, particularly in academic institutions aiming to foster holistic development. Based on the positive correlation identified, several actionable implications can be derived:

- 1. Integrating Spiritual Education:** Schools and universities may consider incorporating structured modules or workshops that foster introspection, ethical reflection, and mindfulness. These elements not only enhance spiritual awareness but can also indirectly build resilience by equipping students with tools for deeper self-understanding and stress management.
- 2. Resilience Training Programs:** Programs that focus on resilience building should consider including spiritual elements. These might involve reflective writing, guided meditations, values clarification exercises, or group discussions on meaning and purpose.
- 3. Enhanced Counselling Services:** Mental health professionals in educational institutions might explore spiritual beliefs and life philosophies as part of resilience-

building interventions. Counsellors trained in spiritually integrated therapy may be more effective in helping students recover from setbacks.

- 4. Tailoring Support Based on SIS Scores:** If tools like SIS become a standard part of student assessments, educators could better identify students who may struggle with emotional recovery and offer prompt support. This proactive approach could reduce academic burnout and dropouts.

Limitations and Further Directions

Although our hypothetical data points toward a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience, it is essential to note the limitations:

- **Correlation \neq Causation:** While the link is strong, we cannot infer that spiritual intelligence causes resilience. Longitudinal studies would be needed to establish directionality.
- **Cultural and Contextual Factors:** Spirituality is deeply influenced by culture, tradition, and personal belief. A universal application of SIS may not capture nuanced spiritual expressions across diverse backgrounds.
- **Measurement Constraints:** Tools like SIS and BRS rely on self-reporting, which can be influenced by response biases, mood at the time of testing, or misunderstanding of questions.

Despite these limitations, this correlation offers a rich foundation for future research. Studies using neuropsychological, behavioural, or physiological metrics could provide more robust insights into how spiritual development interfaces with emotional resilience.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Taneja, V. & Rishi, S.V. (2025). Spiritual Intelligence and Resilience Among Adolescents: Nurturing Strength for Holistic Well-Being. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 2704-2714. DIP:18.01.247.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.247