

Research Paper

Comparative Analysis: Spiritual Intelligence Dimensions across Marital Status with Personality Covariates

Dr. Ranvijay Singh^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Research demonstrates that Marital Status links with Spiritual Intelligence development, yet whether these associations reflect fundamental SI differences or confounding Personality effects remains unclear (Erikson, 1980; Singh & Pandey, 2023). This study examined Spiritual Intelligence dimensions across Marital Status groups with statistical control for Personality Traits (Neuroticism and Extraversion) that might explain observed differences. A sample of 363 participants (228 unmarried, 135 married) completed measures of SI domains (Consciousness, Grace, Meaning, Transcendence, Truth) and Personality Traits. Unadjusted t-tests and ANCOVA controlling for Neuroticism and Extraversion compared SI across marital groups. Married individuals showed significantly higher SI-Total in unadjusted analyses ($d = -0.555$, $p < .001$) and all five SI domains showed significant differences favoring married participants (d range: -0.272 to -0.694). When controlling for Personality Traits via ANCOVA, Marital Status effects remained highly significant across all SI domains (all $p < .001$), with minimal effect size reduction. Married individuals exceeded unmarried counterparts by 2.55-4.51 points on SI domains even after accounting for personality. SI-Meaning showed the largest unadjusted effect ($d = -0.694$) and remained strongly differentiated after covariate control ($B = 3.471$, $p < .001$). The persistence of effects after personality control suggests that marriage itself fosters SI development through distinct relational and social mechanisms independent of personality influences. Intimate partnership may provide distinctive context for cultivating Consciousness through sustained attention, Grace through secure attachment, Meaning through commitment, Transcendence through expanded perspective, and Truth through relational challenges requiring equanimity (Emmons, 2005; Vaughan, 2002). Findings support Marriage as a context for spiritual development independent of personality selection effects.

Keywords: *Spiritual Intelligence, Marital Status, Personality Covariates*

Marriage and Spiritual Development

Marriage represents a fundamental life transition and social role carrying profound implications for psychological development (Erikson, 1980). From a developmental perspective, marriage involves not merely romantic attachment but commitment to interdependence, shared meaning-making, and expanding identity beyond self-focused

¹Department of Psychology, KKM College, Jamui, A Constituent Unit of Munger University, Munger, Bihar, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: November 29, 2025; Revision Received: January 15, 2026; Accepted: January 19, 2026

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concerns. These psychological processes might facilitate spiritual development by creating contexts for transcendence beyond individual ego and cultivation of compassion through intimate relationship (Vaughan, 2002).

Empirical research documents that married individuals report higher well-being, life satisfaction, and psychological health compared to unmarried peers (Myers & Booth, 1996). Additionally, spiritual traditions across cultures emphasize marriage and intimate partnership as spiritual pathways. Hindu philosophy values household life (grihastha) as a legitimate spiritual stage (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Christian theology emphasizes marriage as covenantal relationship between two soulmates. Buddhist teachings highlight how relationships foster compassion and non-attachment (Emmons, 2005). These traditions suggest that marital commitment itself might facilitate Spiritual Capacities including Consciousness, Grace, Meaning, Transcendence, and Truth (King & DeCicco, 2009).

The Confounding Problem

However, potential confounds complicate interpretation of Marital Status-SI associations. Marriage is not randomly assigned; individuals selecting marriage may differ on Personality Traits from those remaining unmarried (Singh, 2015). Specifically, individuals lower in Neuroticism (more emotionally stable) and higher in Extraversion (more socially engaged) might both be more likely to marry and simultaneously show higher SI. If true, apparent Marital Status effects on SI might reflect personality differences rather than marriage's inherent effects on Spiritual development (Vaughan, 2002).

Rationale for Statistical Control

Controlling for Personality Covariates enables more rigorous testing of whether Marital Status per se relates to SI beyond personality effects (King, 2008). This analysis tests whether married individuals show higher SI even among those with equivalent Neuroticism and Extraversion levels. If Marital Status effects persist after controlling personality, this suggests marriage itself—through intimate relationships, interdependence, and shared meaning-making—fosters SI development independent of personality foundations (Emmons, 2005).

This approach aligns with best practices in observational research where covariates accounting for selection bias and confounding are statistically controlled. Using ANCOVA to examine adjusted means enables comparison of Married versus Unmarried individuals with equivalent personality profiles, estimating whether marriage itself contributes to SI (Singh & Pandey, 2023).

Present Study

This study addresses gaps by conducting both unadjusted comparisons (standard t-tests) and adjusted comparisons (ANCOVA) of SI dimensions across Marital Status groups, explicitly controlling for Neuroticism and Extraversion as potential confounds. We hypothesized:

- (H1) Married individuals would show significantly higher SI across all domains in unadjusted analyses (Erikson, 1980);
- (H2) These effects would remain significant after controlling personality covariates, indicating marriage itself fosters SI (Vaughan, 2002);
- (H3) SI-Meaning would show particularly strong Marital Status effects, reflecting marriage's emphasis on commitment and shared purpose (King & DeCicco, 2009); and

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- (H4) Effect sizes would show minimal reduction after personality control, suggesting personality differences do not substantially confound Marital Status-SI relationships (Singh & Pandey, 2023).

METHOD

Participants

The sample comprised 363 participants (210 females, 57.9%; 153 males, 42.1%) with mean age 24 years ($SD = 5.2$). Marital Status: 228 unmarried (62.8%) and 135 married (37.2%). Additional demographics: 65.3% urban, 34.7% rural; education included 19.6% up to 10th standard through 12.7% post-graduation. Participants provided informed consent prior to questionnaire completion.

Measures

- **Spiritual Intelligence:** The Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (ISIS-83; Amram, 2008) measured five SI domains: Consciousness (9 items: mindfulness, intuition, synthesis), Grace (18 items: beauty, discernment, freedom, gratitude, immanence, joy), Meaning (6 items: purpose, service), Transcendence (20 items: higher self, holism, practice, relatedness, sacredness), and Truth (15 items: egolessness, equanimity, inner wholeness, openness, presence, trust). Domain scores were calculated by summing relevant items; total SI score summed all items. Higher scores indicate greater SI. The ISIS demonstrates strong reliability with coefficients exceeding .80 across domains (King, 2008).
- **Personality:** The Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) measured Neuroticism (24 items, range 0-24) and Extraversion (24 items, range 0-24) with dichotomous item responses scored and summed.

Data Analysis

Unadjusted Analyses: Independent samples t-tests compared SI domains between unmarried and married groups (Erikson, 1980). Effect sizes were calculated as Cohen's d . Statistical significance was assessed at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed).

ANCOVA: Analysis of covariance compared SI domains across marital groups while statistically controlling for Neuroticism and Extraversion (Singh & Pandey, 2023). This approach estimates adjusted means—values for each marital group after adjusting for covariate values. By computing adjusted means at average covariate levels, ANCOVA addresses confounding. Regression coefficients (B) estimated SI differences between Married and Unmarried individuals with Equivalent Personality Profiles. Standard errors enabled t-tests and p-values for significance testing. Comparisons of unadjusted (d) and adjusted (B) effect sizes revealed whether personality control substantially altered Marital Status-SI relationships.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations by Marital Status. Married participants showed higher means across all SI domains and total SI compared to unmarried participants.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: SI Domains by Marital Status

SI Domain	Unmarried M (SD) (n = 228)	Married M (SD) (n = 135)	Difference	p
SI-Consciousness	45.94 (7.81)	48.87 (6.66)	2.93	<.001***
SI-Grace	76.82 (10.42)	79.53 (9.53)	2.71	.014*
SI-Meaning	33.78 (5.61)	37.27 (4.40)	3.49	<.001***
SI-Transcendence	88.74 (12.03)	93.25 (9.63)	4.51	<.001***
SI-Truth	82.34 (10.27)	86.34 (8.87)	4.00	<.001***
SI-Total	332.84 (34.46)	350.72 (29.82)	17.88	<.001***

Note. $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$. Married individuals show higher means across all dimensions.

Unadjusted Comparisons

Married individuals showed significantly higher SI across all domains. SI-Meaning demonstrated the largest effect ($d = -0.694$, $p < .001$), followed by SI-Total ($d = -0.555$, $p < .001$). All five domains showed statistically significant differences at $p < .001$ except SI-Grace ($p = .014$), with effect sizes ranging from small-medium (SI-Grace, $d = -0.272$) to large (SI-Meaning, $d = -0.694$) (Vaughan, 2002).

Table 2: Unadjusted Comparisons: t-tests and Effect Sizes

SI Domain	T	p	Cohen's d	Effect Size
SI-Consciousness	-3.635	<.001***	-0.403	Medium
SI-Grace	-2.473	.014*	-0.272	Small-Medium
SI-Meaning	-6.202	<.001***	-0.694	Large
SI-Transcendence	-3.709	<.001***	-0.414	Medium
SI-Truth	-3.767	<.001***	-0.417	Medium
SI-Total	-5.016	<.001***	-0.555	Large

Note. Negative d values indicate Married > Unmarried. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

ANCOVA: Adjusted Comparisons

After controlling for Neuroticism and Extraversion, Marital Status effects remained significant across all SI domains (Table 3). Importantly, effect sizes showed minimal reduction after personality control, with all adjusted differences remaining substantial and highly significant (King & DeCicco, 2009).

Table 3: ANCOVA Results: Adjusted Means and Covariate-Controlled Effects

SI Domain	Adj. M Unmarried	Adj. M Married	Difference	t	p
SI-Consciousness	45.96	48.83	2.87	3.572	<.001***
SI-Grace	76.88	79.43	2.55	2.351	.019*
SI-Meaning	33.79	37.26	3.47	6.161	<.001***
SI-Transcendence	88.74	93.25	4.51	3.710	<.001***
SI-Truth	82.37	86.30	3.93	3.796	<.001***
SI-Total	332.95	350.53	17.58	4.953	<.001***

Note. Adjusted means control for Neuroticism and Extraversion. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$. All effects remain significant after personality control.

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Domain-Specific Findings

- **SI-Consciousness:** Married individuals showed 2.87 higher adjusted means ($p < .001$), corresponding to approximately 0.38 standard deviations of the scale. This effect is substantial and remained highly significant after personality control (Emmons, 2005).
- **SI-Grace:** Married individuals scored 2.55 higher after adjustment ($p = .019$). This smaller effect reflects that SI-Grace showed the weakest unadjusted marital difference. Even with this weaker effect, statistical significance persists after personality control (Singh & Pandey, 2023).
- **SI-Meaning:** The largest marital effect emerged for SI-Meaning (adjusted difference = 3.47, $p < .001$), with married individuals showing substantially higher purpose and service orientation. This substantial effect supports the hypothesis that marriage particularly facilitates meaning development (Erikson, 1980).
- **SI-Transcendence:** Married individuals showed 4.51-point adjusted advantage ($p < .001$), the largest absolute difference among domains. This substantial effect suggests marriage significantly enhances awareness of interconnectedness and spiritual practice (Vaughan, 2002).
- **SI-Truth:** Married individuals exceeded unmarried counterparts by 3.93 points after adjustment ($p < .001$), indicating marriage substantially facilitates equanimity and inner wholeness development (King, 2008).
- **SI-Total:** After personality control, married individuals showed 17.58-point advantage on total SI ($p < .001$), representing approximately 0.52 standard deviations.

Effect Size Persistence

Comparison of unadjusted and adjusted effect sizes reveals minimal change after personality control. The average absolute difference between unadjusted and adjusted effects across domains was minimal (mean $|\Delta| = 0.11$ in standardized units), suggesting that personality differences explain little of the Marital Status-SI relationship (Singh & Pandey, 2023). This pattern supports the interpretation that marriage itself—rather than personality selection effects—drives SI differences (Vaughan, 2002).

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

This comparative analysis reveals that Married individuals demonstrate significantly higher Spiritual Intelligence across all five domains compared to Unmarried counterparts. Importantly, these differences persist after statistically controlling for Personality Traits (Neuroticism and Extraversion) that might confound the relationship. The persistence of strong effects after personality control suggests that marriage itself fosters spiritual development rather than married and unmarried groups simply differing in personality (King & DeCicco, 2009).

Theoretical Interpretation: Marriage as Context for SI Development

The robust Marital Status-SI associations after personality control support the theoretical proposition that marriage provides a distinctive context facilitating spiritual development (Erikson, 1980). Intimate partnership involves psychological processes—commitment, interdependence, mutual care, shared meaning-making about life's purpose—that inherently promote spiritual capacities (Vaughan, 2002).

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Consciousness development may be facilitated by sustained intimate attention to another person, cultivating mindfulness and intuitive understanding of another's inner world (King, 2008). Grace-related capacities (gratitude, joy, beauty appreciation) likely flourish in contexts of secure attachment and mutual appreciation. Meaning development naturally accompanies marriage through commitment to partnership and potentially family creation. Transcendence emerges as individuals expand concern beyond self-focused interests to partnership and family systemic concerns. Truth-related equanimity and inner wholeness may develop through navigating relational challenges, practicing acceptance and forgiveness within intimate contexts (Emmons, 2005).

The particularly strong effect for SI-Meaning ($d = -0.694$ unadjusted, $B = 3.471$ adjusted) aligns with this interpretation. Marriage explicitly involves commitment to shared purpose, potentially facilitating meaning-domain SI development more than other domains (Singh & Pandey, 2023).

Alternative Interpretations and Limitations

While Marital Status effects persist after personality control, alternative interpretations merit consideration (Vaughan, 2002). Marriage might select for individuals already disposed toward spiritual development through other mechanisms. Alternatively, the cross-sectional design cannot determine whether SI facilitates marriage or marriage fosters SI; longitudinal research tracking individuals through marriage transitions would illuminate causality (Erikson, 1980).

Additionally, the present analysis does not capture relationship quality. Individuals in distressed marriages might show reduced SI benefits compared to those in satisfying partnerships (Emmons, 2005). Future research examining relationship satisfaction as a moderator would clarify whether marriage per se or relationship quality drives SI associations.

The study controlled for Neuroticism and Extraversion but not other Personality Traits (conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness) that might similarly confound relationships (King & DeCicco, 2009). Comprehensive personality control would strengthen conclusions. The sample consisted of young North Indians in particular contexts; findings might not generalize to other cultures with different marriage norms, meanings, and practices (Singh, 2015).

Practical Implications

These findings have implications for understanding life transitions and spiritual development contexts (Vaughan, 2002). The strong Marital Status-SI associations suggest that intimate partnership provides a distinctive and powerful context for spiritual growth. For unmarried individuals, these findings do not imply that marriage is necessary for SI development; rather, they suggest that intimate partnerships provide particular opportunities for spiritual cultivation (Erikson, 1980). Unmarried individuals might access similar SI-fostering processes through other intimate relationships (deep friendships, community involvement, spiritual communities) providing commitment, interdependence, and mutual care (Emmons, 2005).

For married couples, findings suggest that approaching marriage consciously as a spiritual practice—emphasizing mindfulness in partnership, gratitude toward one's partner, shared

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meaning-making about commitment and life purpose, and expanding perspective beyond individual concerns—might deepen both the marriage and individual spiritual development (Singh & Pandey, 2023). Marriage counselors and spiritual directors might explicitly incorporate SI-development perspectives into couple interventions (King, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis with covariate control demonstrates that Married individuals show significantly higher Spiritual Intelligence across all five domains compared to Unmarried counterparts, even after accounting for Personality differences. The persistence of effects after personality control suggests that marriage itself—through intimate relationships, commitment, and shared meaning-making—fosters spiritual development (Vaughan, 2002). SI-Meaning showed particularly strong associations with Marital Status, suggesting marriage particularly facilitates purpose and service orientation (Erikson, 1980). These findings support theoretical perspectives emphasizing marriage as a context for psychological and spiritual growth while highlighting the importance of intimate relationships for holistic human development (Emmons, 2005; King & DeCicco, 2009).

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Acknowledgment

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

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Singh, R. (2026). Comparative Analysis: Spiritual Intelligence Dimensions across Marital Status with Personality Covariates. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(1), 134-141. DIP:18.01.011.20261401, DOI:10.25215/1401.011