

Spiritual Intelligence and Anxiety among Undergraduate Students: A Correlation Study

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ABSTRACT

In the present time, anxiety is a common mental issue among students due to increasing competition, academic pressure, social changes, family pressure, and personal responsibilities. Spiritual intelligence is believed to influence emotional stability and mental well-being. The sample consists of 151 undergraduate students (B.Tech and B.C.A) from colleges in Kanpur. Data were collected using the K.S. Misra Spiritual Intelligence Scale and a self-constructed Anxiety Scale. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a negative relationship ($r = -0.104$, $p > 0.05$) overall, with a significant moderate negative correlation among female students ($r = -0.300$, $p = 0.028$). This study revealed a weak, statistically nonsignificant negative correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety among undergraduate students overall. Spiritual intelligence may not serve as a strong standalone predictor of anxiety, suggesting that other psychological, social, or environmental factors may have a more significant influence on anxiety levels. Findings suggest gender-specific differences in how spiritual intelligence relates to anxiety, with implications for counselling and educational interventions.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Spiritual Intelligence, Undergraduate students*

Education is the process through which an individual acquires knowledge, skills, aptitude, attitude, qualities, and values. Education not only means that a person simply figures out how to read, write, and get higher degrees, but also allows the person to stand up socially, economically, psychologically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Spirituality is a basic part of an individual's overall health and well-being. Education aims at the holistic development of individuals, encompassing not just academic knowledge but also social, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Qadri, 2020). Spirituality is the experience of being unique, being human, being something, a power, vitality, or presence, that shapes one's activities and develops a person's life. Spirituality, spiritual well-being, and teaching learning methodologies are well-connected (Nath, 2020). Today's educators must be aware of various factors such as learning styles, multiple intelligences,

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emotional intelligence, social intelligence, and spiritual intelligence to make teaching and learning a joyful experience for students (Qadri, 2020). Thus, spiritual intelligence is deeply connected to education and its foundation. research has indicated that spiritual intelligence can enhance self-awareness, foster resilience, and provide meaningful frameworks for interpreting life's stressors, potentially reducing anxiety symptoms (Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

The term spiritual intelligence can be broken down into two different words, spiritual and intelligence, where the term spiritual can be broken off to the word spirit. The English word spirit is etymologically derived from the Latin word spiritus, meaning "breath" or "soul" (Singh & Yadav, 2020). Spiritual intelligence has been connected with higher perseverance and in turn to better mental health via enabling people to overcome and face mental stresses, tension and depression—changing the threats of life into opportunities. Spiritual intelligence is the adaptive use of spiritual awareness to facilitate the process of problem-solving and to endure the stresses of life and motivates people to achieve personal goals (Harder et al., 2022).

“According to Zohar and Marshall (2000), spiritual intelligence enables individuals to interpret life challenges and pursue meaningful goals through a value-based perspective.”

Robert Emmons (2000) defined spiritual intelligence as “An adjustable usage of spiritual information to facilitate day-to-day problem solving and attainment of goal”.

Zohar and Marshall (2000) indications of a highly developed spiritual intelligence include:

- The capacity to be flexible
- A high degree of self-awareness;
- A capacity to face and use suffering;
- A capacity to face and transcend pain;
- The quality of being inspired by vision and values.
- A reluctance to cause unnecessary harm;
- An inclination to see the connections between diverse things
- A marked tendency to ask ‘Why?’ or ‘What if?’ questions and to seek ‘fundamental’ answers; and
- Possessing a facility for working against convention (Prajapati, 2022).

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Spiritual Intelligence Components













| Characteristic | Description |
|--|-------------------------------------|
|  Spontaneity | Act freely and naturally |
|  Empathy | Understand others' feelings |
|  Humility | Modest view of self |
|  Learn from Mistake | Grow from errors |
|  Autonomy | Self-governance and independence |
|  Service for All | Helping everyone equally |
|  Self-Aware | Conscious of one's character |
|  Visionary | Thinking about the future |
|  Holistic | Interconnectedness of mind and body |
|  Value People's Difference | Respecting individual uniqueness |
|  Ask Fundamental Questions | Questioning basic assumptions |
|  Whole Method of Problem-Solving | Comprehensive approach to issues |

Figure 1: Conceptual model of spiritual intelligence (Adapted from Zohar & Marshall, 2000)

Spiritual intelligence is an assemblage of mental abilities that aids good comprehension, differentiation, and heritable application of philosophical and supernatural elements of one's life (Gedela et al, 2022). Spiritual intelligence has an impact on the physical and mental health of people and helps them maintain their stability, reduce their anxiety, and communicate more deeply with others (Tamannaefar & Panah, 2019). Empirical studies indicate that students with higher SI demonstrate greater emotional stability and lower anxiety levels, making spiritual intelligence a crucial factor in mental well-being (Nasel, 2004).

The word *anxiety* is derived from the Latin word *anxietas*, meaning to choke, trouble, or disturb. It encompasses behavioral, emotional (affective), and cognitive reactions that arise in response to perceived threats (Trivedi & Gupta, 2010).

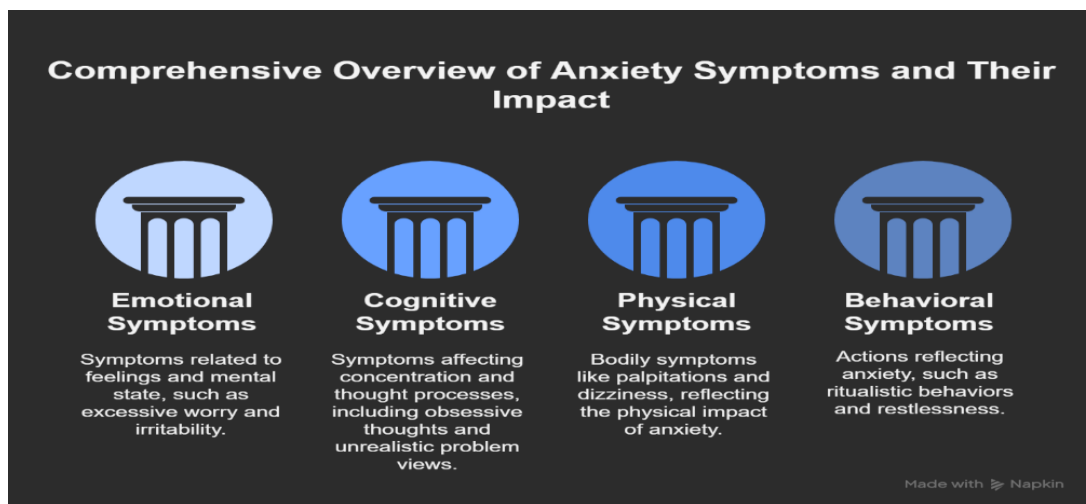
Anxiety is often described as unresolved fear, or as a state of undirected arousal following the perception of threat” (Ohman, 2008).

According to Good (1973), anxiety refers to a state of apprehension, tension, or uneasiness marked by feelings of fear, dread, or uncertainty, often without a clear or identifiable cause. It may involve ongoing worry about future events or general emotional responses when facing decisions or important choices.

Anxiety is an internal feeling of uneasiness, discomfort, apprehension, or fear, often accompanied by various physical and autonomic responses. While it is a natural and

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expected emotional reaction to actual or potential threats, it becomes a concern when the symptoms are excessive, irrational, prolonged, or intense, especially when they occur without a clear cause or begin to disrupt daily life—this is referred to as an anxiety disorder (Shri, 2010). Anxiety typically involves both mental and physical experiences, and the way we mentally interpret a physically arousing situation can significantly impact how we respond or perform in that moment. (Maloney et al, 2014). The psychological symptoms of anxiety among students include feeling nervous before a study class, panicking, going blank during a test, feeling helpless while doing assignments, or lack of interest of subjects difficult, whereas the physiological symptoms include sweaty palms, racing heartbeat, or an upset stomach (Vitasari et al, 2010).



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Figure 2: Anxiety symptoms and their impact

Many external factors may contribute to anxiety which can be as follows: stress in school, stress in personal relationship, work stress, financial stress, stress that result from an emotional trauma such as the loss of a loved one, victimization through crime, exposure to natural disasters, experiences of sexual or physical abuse, and adverse side effects of medications are all potential triggers or contributing factors to the development of anxiety and related psychological conditions.(Hooda &Saini, 2017).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Al-Shoubaki (2024) studied “Effectiveness of educational training courses aimed at developing spiritual intelligence and reducing anxiety and depressive disorders among students.” This research aims to determine whether or not spiritual intelligence can help college students deal with mental issues like depression & illogical thinking while simultaneously boosting their academic performance. Results showed that student support programs that include intervention focused on spiritual intelligence may help students’ mental health and academic performance.

Imamuddin (2023) studied “The role of spiritual intelligence of students in mathematical learning” The results of the research are that students’ spiritual intelligence can influence students’ motivation to learn mathematics and lower anxiety, and result in higher achievement.

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Saleem & Majeed (2023) studied “Spiritual Intelligence, self-management skills, depression and anxiety in patients with tuberculosis”; the results revealed that spiritual intelligence has a significant positive correlation with self-management skills and a significant negative relationship with depression and anxiety.

Pandit (2023) studied “Relationship between spiritual intelligence, self-compassion and test anxiety”; the sample included 196 undergraduate adults. The tools used for data collection are King's spiritual intelligence (2008), Westside test anxiety scale (2004) & Neff's self-compassion scale (2003). Finding implies the scope for self-compassion as a catalyst in reducing test anxiety.

Navya & Sharma (2022) studied “Impact of spiritual intelligence on perceived stress among male and female university students”, the sample consisted of 160 youth aged between 23-24 years by multistage purposive random sampling. The result revealed that spiritual intelligence was significantly high in females’ respondents against males and male respondents were found to have significantly greater perceived stress as compared to their female counterpart in all the dimension namely pressure, physical stress, anxiety and frustration.

Jahangir (2020) studied “Impact of spiritual intelligence and happiness on mental health among adults”. Convenient sampling techniques were used and the sample consisted of adults (n=400) taken from Multan and their age range was between 25 to 55 years old. the findings were that spiritual intelligence can reduce the mental health problems like depression and anxiety.

Singh & Singh (2020) studied “A study of spiritual intelligence and anxiety as a predictor of academic achievement among B. Ed teacher trainees”, findings are that spiritual intelligence appears to be making maximum contribution to the success in academic achievement among B. Ed teacher trainees.

Dami (2019) studied “Effectiveness of group counselling on depression, anxiety, stress and components of spiritual intelligence in school”, a total of 64 students were taken through convenience sampling. The result showed that programs were able to reduce and overcome negative emotional problem and could improve spiritual intelligence.

Mosavinezhad et al. (2019) studied “Role of spiritual intelligence and personal beliefs in social anxiety among university student”. The number of samples were 300 selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the social anxiety scale by Connor et al, Kings spiritual intelligence test and personal belief questionnaire by Ellis. The study concluded that strengthening the component of spiritual intelligence and personal beliefs can be effective in reducing social anxiety among students which improve their mental health.

Kaur & Behra (2019) studied “Buffer role of spiritual intelligence on anxiety among private sector employees in New Delhi”, sample of 120 employees were selected from three different sectors. Spiritual intelligence scale and comprehensive anxiety test (1998) were used. The study concluded that spiritual intelligence could act as a potent coping mechanism to deal with the anxiety experienced by private sector employees.

Pahlevan et al (2021) studied “The relationship between spirituality dimensions and death anxiety among Iranian Veterans: partial least square structural equations modelling

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approach”, the study found a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and death anxiety after controlling for the effects of age, education level and disability. Negative relationship was found between spiritual well-being and death anxiety among Iranian veterans.

Pawar (2018) studied “A study of spiritual intelligence, depression and anxiety among undergraduate students”, in this paper researcher has tried to study relationship between spiritual intelligence, depression and anxiety among undergraduate college students. The result show that spiritual intelligence and depression have positive relationship whereas spiritual intelligence and anxiety have negative relationship.

Ganjavi (2016) studied “Effectiveness of training of spiritual intelligence components on consequences of psychological and self-esteem of adolescents”, the research was aimed to study the effectiveness of training of spiritual intelligence components on depression, anxiety, stress and self-esteem of adolescents. The finding indicated that training of spiritual intelligence components significantly reduces depression, anxiety, stress and increases self-esteem in adolescents.

Khaleghkah & Babaei (2016) studied “The relationship between religious attitude, spiritual intelligence and anxiety among medical student”, 290 students were selected by multistep random sampling. there is negative of this study emphasized on the use of religious attitude and spiritual intelligence in student’s anxiety.

Maloney et al (2014) studied “Effectiveness of training of spiritual intelligence components on depression, anxiety, and stress of adolescents”, the sequences showed that the exercise of the spiritual intelligence parts clearly decreased grief, stress, and anxiety in youths.

Gupta & Vats (2015) studied “Relationship of spiritual intelligence and personality traits among secondary school teachers”, the sample consisted 127 secondary school teachers of Delhi. Findings shows that there is positive relationship between spiritual intelligence with self-concept, independence-dependence and adjustment and negative relationship between introversion and anxiety.

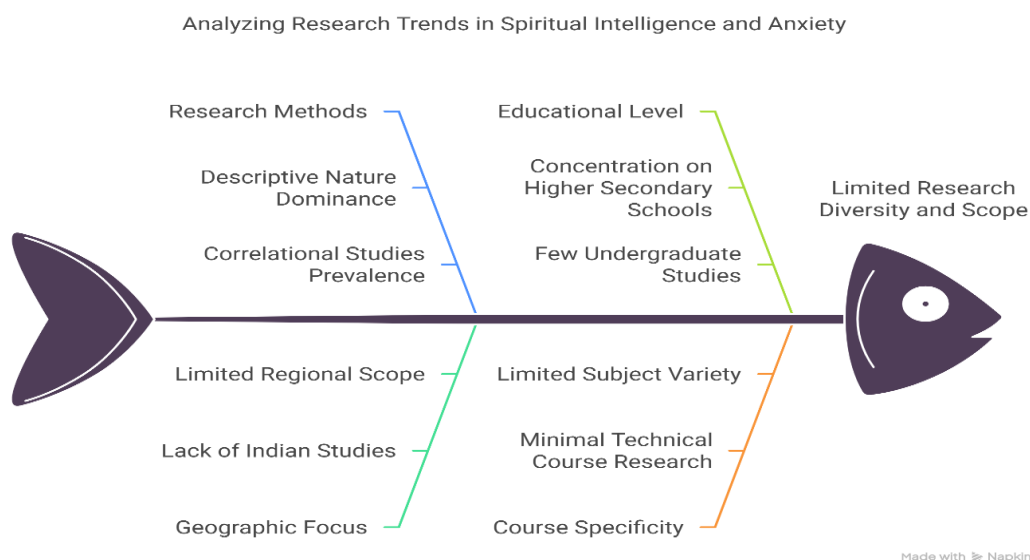
Ahang (2014) studied “The relationship between spiritual intelligence and anxiety mediated the religious attitude in undergraduate student of Islamic Azad University”, the sample size was estimated to 300 using a multistage cluster sampling. The result showed a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence with religious attitude there is a significant relationship between religious attitude and anxiety of students The result showed that religious attitude did not show the mediating ROL in the relationship between intellectual intelligence and anxiety.

Research Gaps

Based on the literature review, the following research gaps have been identified:

- The methods used in most of the research were a correlation study.
- Limited research has been conducted in India on spiritual intelligence and anxiety. Most of the researches are conducted on higher secondary schools, a few studies have been conducted at the undergraduate level.
- Very few research studies have been conducted on technical courses.

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Figure 3: Analyzing research trends in spiritual intelligence and anxiety (Napkin, 2025)

Therefore, keeping in mind the overview and rigorous analysis of these studies, the present study is novel, original, important, relevant, and fruitful for the Indian Education System and society as well.

Significance of the research

This study is significant as it explores the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety among undergraduates. Undergraduate students are in developmental stage switching schools to colleges, marked by identity formation, increased independence, and life decision and away from spirituality, in this stage anxiety is common and this study can be helpful for them to understand the role of spirituality, how it relates to anxiety, how can spiritual intelligence help in coping anxiety. Students as research has indicated that spiritual intelligence can enhance self-awareness, foster resilience, and provide meaningful frameworks for interpreting life's stressors, potentially reducing anxiety symptoms (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). The study also concluded that Spiritual Intelligence can act as an influential way of managing stress to deal with anxiety (Kaur & Behra, 2019). The findings of this study could also pave the way for further research into different aspects of spiritual intelligence, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety of undergraduate students.
 - 1.1 To examine the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety of male students.
 - 1.2 To examine the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety of female students.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and anxiety in undergraduate students.
 - 1.1 There is no significant correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety in male students.

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1.2 There is no significant correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety in female students.

METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive quantitative correlational design. A descriptive correlational study aims to describe the relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them or attempting to establish cause-and-effect. In simple terms, correlational research seeks to figure out if two or more variables are related and, if so, in what way.

Participants

Sample background and selection

A total of 151 undergraduate students from B.Tech and B.C.A programs in Kanpur were selected through purposive sampling, and participants within these colleges were chosen using random sampling.

Gender distribution

A total of 151 students were selected, of whom 97 were males and 54 were females. Males make up the majority (64.2%), while females constitute 35.8% of the sample.

Data collection method

The K.S. Misra Spiritual Intelligence Scale was used, which consists of 42 items. A five-point Likert-type response format was used. The five responses are- strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. A five-point anxiety scale is prepared for data collection purposes from respondents consisting of 37 items, and the five responses are- strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree and the reliability of the self-constructed tool is 0.93.

Findings

After data collection, the research process includes structuring and organizing the data, examining it through statistical analysis. The analysis was done by using SPSS software. Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety. The significance level was considered to be 0.05.

Table 1: Frequency and percent classification of the sample

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Male | 97 | 64.2 | 64.2 | 64.2 |
| | Female | 54 | 35.8 | 35.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 151 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The table presents the gender distribution of the study participants.

Out of the total 151 respondents, 97 were male, constituting 64.2 % of the sample, while 54 were female, comprising 35.8%. This shows that males are predominant. The data presented confirms that there are no missing responses related to gender, as the valid percentage and cumulative percentage both add up to 100%.

Objective-1: To study the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety of undergraduate students.

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H₀1: There is no significant relationship between Spiritual intelligence and Anxiety of undergraduate students.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of undergraduate students

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|------------------|--------|----------------|-----|
| Anxiety Scores | 104.83 | 22.228 | 151 |
| Spiritual Scores | 159.12 | 19.423 | 151 |

The mean and standard deviation of the sample have been determined in order to evaluate the above hypothesis, and the results are shown in the above table.

Table 3: Relationship between anxiety scores and spiritual intelligence of undergraduate students

| | | Anxiety Scores | Spiritual Scores |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Anxiety Scores | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.104 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .205 |
| | N | 151 | 151 |
| Spiritual Scores | Pearson Correlation | -.104 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .205 | |
| | N | 151 | 151 |

The correlation table presents the relationship between Anxiety scores and Spiritual intelligence scores using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The correlation value ($r=-0.104$) suggests a very weak negative correlation between the two variables, indicating that higher spiritual intelligence is slightly associated with lower anxiety levels. However, this relationship is not strong. The p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.205, which is greater than the standard significance threshold of 0.05. Since the p-value is above the threshold, the correlation is **not statistically significant**, meaning the observed relationship could have occurred by chance. Therefore, the **null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant correlation between anxiety and spiritual intelligence, is not rejected**.

Correlation Between Anxiety and Spiritual Intelligence

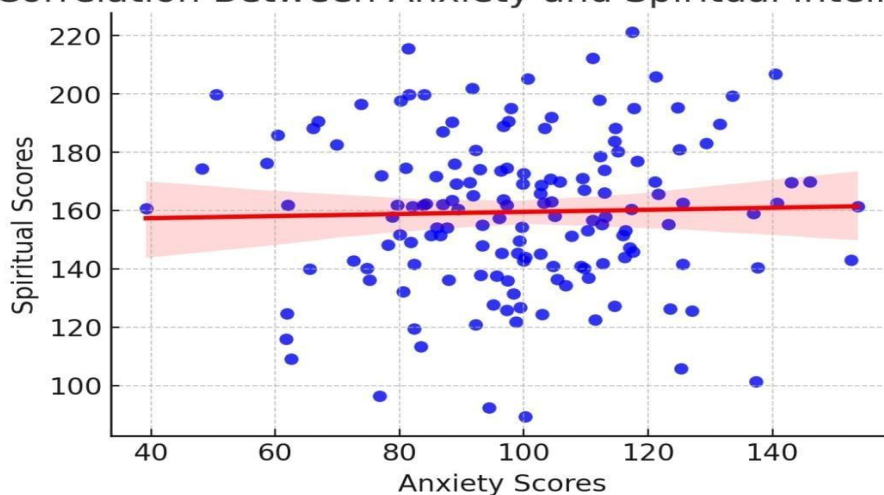


Figure 5: Correlation between anxiety and spiritual intelligence of undergraduate students

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The scatter plot shows the correlation between **Anxiety Scores** and **Spiritual Scores** among undergraduate students. In this scatter plot, the **blue dots** represent individual data points, where the x-axis shows the anxiety scores, and the y-axis shows the spiritual intelligence scores, while the **red line** in the middle is the trendline, as the red line is nearly horizontal and flat, indicating a weak negative correlation. This implies that spiritual intelligence does not have a statistically significant relationship with anxiety level.

Objective-1.1: To study the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety of male students.

H₀1.1: There is no significant relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Anxiety of male students.

The mean and standard deviation of males have been determined in order to evaluate the above hypothesis, and the results are shown in the table below.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of male students

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------|----|
| Anxiety Scores | 106.27 | 21.471 | 97 |
| Spiritual Scores | 158.11 | 17.660 | 97 |

a. Gender = Male

Table 5: Relationship between anxiety scores and spiritual scores of male students

| | | Anxiety Scores | Spiritual Scores |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Anxiety Scores | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .055 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .593 |
| | N | 97 | 97 |
| Spiritual Scores | Pearson Correlation | .055 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .593 | |
| | N | 97 | 97 |

a. Gender = 1 (Male)

For male participants, the analysis reveals a Pearson correlation coefficient between Anxiety scores and Spiritual Scores is 0.055, indicating a very weak positive relationship. The p-value associated with this correlation is 0.593, which is well above the conventional significance level of 0.05. This means that there is no meaningful or statistically significant association between anxiety and spiritual scores in this sample, and any observed relationship is likely due to random chance. Therefore, the **null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant correlation between anxiety and spiritual intelligence, is not rejected.**

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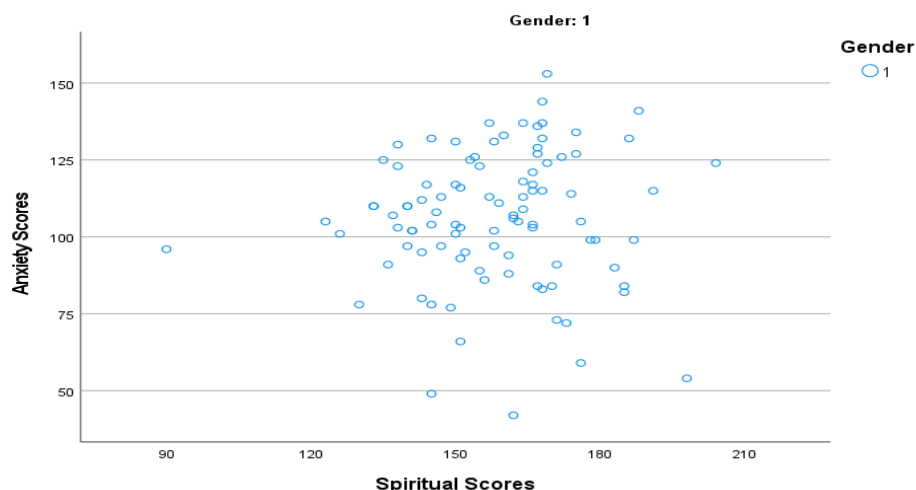


Figure 6: Correlation between anxiety and spiritual scores of male students

The scatter plot represents the relationship between **Anxiety score** and **Spiritual Scores** for **male** participants. Each blue dot represents an individual participant's scores. Since the correlation is very weak ($r= 0.055$) and not statistically significant ($p= 0.593$), there is no clear pattern or strong trend in the data distribution.

Objective-1.2: To study the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety of female students.

$H_{01.2}$: There is no significant relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Anxiety of female students.

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation of females

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|------------------|--------|----------------|----|
| Anxiety Scores | 102.24 | 23.510 | 54 |
| Spiritual Scores | 160.93 | 22.307 | 54 |

a. Gender = 2 (Females)

The mean and standard deviation of females have been determined in order to evaluate the above hypothesis, and the results are shown in the above table.

Table 7: Relationship between anxiety scores and spiritual scores of female students

| | | Anxiety Scores | Spiritual Scores |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Anxiety Scores | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.300* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .028 |
| | N | 54 | 54 |
| Spiritual Scores | Pearson Correlation | -.300* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .028 | |
| | N | 54 | 54 |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

a. Gender = 2

For female participants, the correlation analysis between Anxiety Scores and Spiritual scores reveals a Pearson correlation coefficient of $- 0.300$, indicating a moderate negative

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correlation between the two variables. This suggests that as spiritual intelligence increases, anxiety levels tend to decrease to some extent. The p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.028, which is less than the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. Since the p-value is statistically significant, we **reject the null hypothesis**, which states that there is no correlation between anxiety and spiritual intelligence.

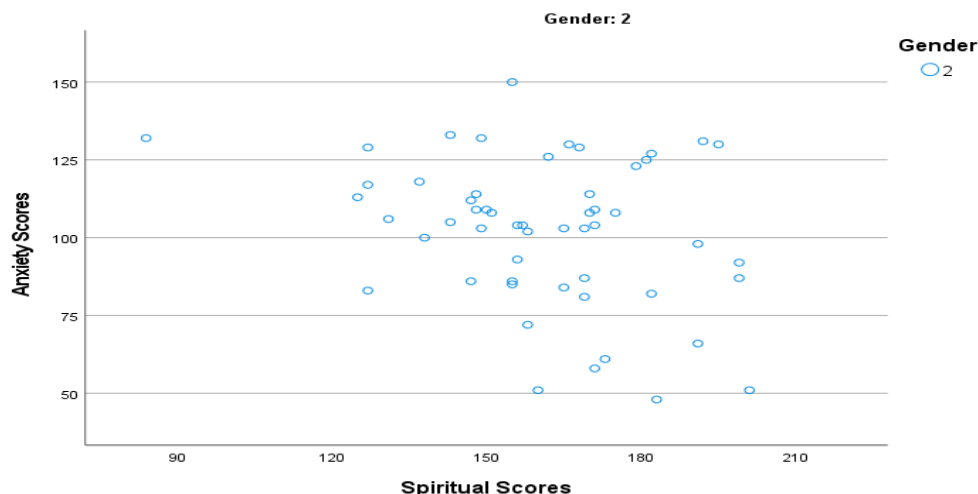


Figure 7: Correlation between anxiety and spiritual scores of female students

The scatter plot represents the relationship between Anxiety Scores and Spiritual Scores for **female** participants. Each blue dot represents an individual's scores. Since the correlation is **moderate and negative ($r = -0.300$, $p = 0.028$)**, the trend suggests that as spiritual intelligence increases, anxiety levels tend to decrease.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study concluded that the study found a weak correlation $r = -0.104$ between spiritual intelligence and anxiety in undergraduate students, indicating that higher spiritual intelligence is slightly associated with lower anxiety levels (Pawar, 2018). However, this correlation was not statistically significant ($p = 0.205$), suggesting that the relationship could have occurred by chance.

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.055$) between spiritual intelligence and anxiety among male students. This suggests that higher spiritual intelligence has a minimal association with anxiety levels. Additionally, the p-value (0.593) is greater than the standard significance level (0.05). Other psychological, social, or environmental factors likely play a more substantial role in determining anxiety levels.

The correlation analysis for female participants revealed a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.300$) between spiritual intelligence and anxiety. This suggests that higher spiritual intelligence is associated with lower anxiety levels. Additionally, the correlation was statistically significant ($p = 0.028$), indicating that the relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Compared to male participants, where no significant correlation was found, this result suggests a possible gender difference in the influence of spiritual intelligence on anxiety (Gedela, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the correlation between spiritual intelligence and anxiety among undergraduate students. The findings indicate that spiritual intelligence alone is not a strong

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predictor of anxiety, suggesting that other psychological, social, or environmental factors may have a more significant influence on anxiety levels.

The results further suggest that spiritual intelligence does not have a meaningful impact on anxiety across the overall sample, reinforcing the idea that multiple external factors contribute to students' anxiety. However, when analysing gender differences, a significant negative correlation was found between spiritual intelligence and anxiety among female students, indicating that higher spiritual intelligence may help reduce anxiety in this group. In contrast, no significant correlation was found among male students, suggesting that the influence of spiritual intelligence on anxiety may vary based on gender.

Future studies could explore other contributing variables or employ qualitative approaches to understand gender-based differences in greater depth.

Recommendation

Educational institutions should consider integrating spiritual intelligence training into their counselling services to help students manage anxiety more effectively. Educators could also embed elements of spiritual intelligence within the curriculum to foster emotional and psychological development, potentially reducing anxiety by promoting self-awareness and a deeper sense of purpose. By acknowledging the link between spiritual intelligence and anxiety, higher education institutions not only address students' immediate mental health needs but also equip them to navigate post-graduation challenges.

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Conflict of Interest

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