

Academic Outcomes and Inner Dimensions: Exploring Spiritual Intelligence, Academic Achievement, and Personality Traits

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a research study that examines the relationships between spiritual intelligence (SI), academic performance, and personality and gender disparities among university students in Hyderabad, India. Based on the background of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India, which focuses on holistic development, the study is conducted on the effect of inner dimensions on academic outcomes. The correlational design was used with the sample of 213 students (62.4 percent men, 37.6 percent women; 18-30 years old). The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-2008), Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), and Academic Performance Questionnaire (McGregory, 2015) were used to collect data and assessed using SPSS through correlations, t-tests, and ANOVA. The findings have shown that the relationship between SI and academic achievement is significant and positive ($r = .261$, $p < .001$), which is in line with the hypothesis presented that SI increases academic performance. SI was found to be greatly affected by personality traits, especially the Agreeableness ($F(56, 156) = 1.644$, $p = .009$), and the rest of the personality traits were also shown to have a positive impact on SI, as there was a strong correlation ($r = .385$, $p = .001$). Gender differences were also explored; females ($M = 59.25$) scored higher on the SI than males ($M = 54.54$; $p = .009$). These results highlight the importance of SI to contribute to Academic achievement, which is supplemented by personality traits such as Agreeableness. The paper provides its recommendation for the inclusion of Spirituality in the education system in order to foster holistic growth of students, especially in the Indian academic environment that is highly competitive and spiritually oriented. The self-report bias and small sample size are limitations that may support future longitudinal and cross-cultural studies.

Keywords: *Personality Traits, Academic Achievement, Spiritual Intelligence, University Students*

Spirituality is a Latin word that is translated as breath or breath of life, and its Sanskrit counterpart, *adhyatma* (Adhi+atman = Adhyatman), means related to self, with *adhyatma* meaning related to and *atman* meaning self (Ruano, 1970). It is based on this etymological basis that Danah Zohar came up with the term "spiritual intelligence" in her book "Rewiring the Corporate Brain" (1997), and the term that she coined was used in

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her study to introduce a new paradigm of integrating spirituality and cognition. The operationally defined concept of spiritual intelligence (SI) is the ability to find a meaning, fit to one's purpose in life, and to adjust or change difficult circumstances (Zohar, 1997). The pioneer of SI as a scientific construct, Emmons (1999), conceptualized it as a resource to apply spiritual resources to solve problems, goal attainment, and promote personal integrity. His theory initially included five aspects: (a) the capacity to go beyond the physical and material, (b) the capacity to enter into higher states of consciousness, (c) the capacity to sanctify daily experience, (d) the capacity to apply spiritual resources to problem-solving, and (e) the capacity to be virtuous. This fifth element was later eliminated because it emphasized behavioral expressions instead of cognitive strengths and did not fit the set standards of scientific intelligence (Emmons, 1999).

The second major construct to be considered in this study is academic achievement, which can be described as the capacity of a student to perform academically, whereby the performance measure is in the form of grades, awards, or any other academic achievement. Nonetheless, academic success is not just a matter of cognitive skills, but it frequently interrelates with emotional control, self-efficacy, and self-resilience (Guamanga et al., 2024). Spiritual intelligence, among others, can play a significant role in impacting the overall academic performance because spiritual intelligence encourages self-awareness, concentration, and flexibility, thus improving the ability of the students to cope with the academic context and maximize their performance (Ma & Wang, 2022).

The third construct is the personality traits as explored using the Big Five model (Costa and McCrae, 1987), which is one of the most acceptable models in explaining personality. The five factors of the Big Five openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are constant traits that determine behavior, adaptability, and well-being (Filipiak & Łubianka, 2019). Openness to experience, characterized by inquisitiveness and resourcefulness, aids in learning as well as intellectual development. The property of conscientiousness, which implies goal-oriented and responsible behavior, has been correlated strongly with academic success. Extraversion is comprised of sociability, whereas agreeableness is composed of cooperativeness and empathy. Neuroticism, or emotional instability, may impair health and performance (Trapmann et al., 2007).

Empirical evidence has already confirmed the relationship between spiritual intelligence and academic achievement, and meta-analysis results indicated that the correlation coefficients between spiritual intelligence and student achievement were significant (Zhou et al., 2024). In particular, the meta-analytic data suggest that the student achievement and emotional intelligence correlation is estimated at $r = 0.50$, but correlations of spiritual intelligence vary within the range of $r = 0.25$ to $r = 0.42$, depending on the educational level. The results support the importance of taking spiritual intelligence as a predictive variable of educational success independently of emotional intelligence, both among university students and school students (Zhou et al., 2024).

The connection between spiritual intelligence and personality traits has been gradually gaining research interest, with scholars considering how the differences in character of individuals can affect spiritual abilities. Empirical studies, which employ regression analysis, have shown that certain Big Five traits, namely extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, are important predictors of spiritual intelligence (Amrai et al., 2011). It has been reported that emotional stability, agreeableness, and openness are the most

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commonly used variables to express spiritual intelligence (Hosaini et al., 2010). These relations have been further explained by quantitative analyses, according to which regression models proved that spiritual intelligence could explain 18 percent of extraversion, 5 percent of agreeableness, 11 percent of conscientiousness, and 6 percent of emotional stability (Skrzypińska, 2021). These results imply that even though spiritual intelligence has significant overlap with dimensions of personality, especially the social and self-regulatory functioning.

According to the NEP 2020 framework, educational strategies should help students develop in every possible dimension of their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual minds, and inner development should be at the heart of a holistic educational achievement. This paper tackles these gaps by evaluating the predictive nature of the Big Five personality traits on spiritual intelligence as it explores the combined nature of the constructions on determining academic performance in university students in Hyderabad, India. Placing this investigation in the spiritually rich setting of the culture of India, the policy requirements of NEP 2020, the research provides empirical evidence of the interplay of inner dimensions, spiritual intelligence, and personality characteristics, to influence the outcomes of academic performance.

Objectives of the study

- To determine the relationship between Spiritual intelligence and academic performance.
- To research the effect of varying personality factors on the spiritual intelligence of students.
- To investigate whether there is a difference in Spiritual Intelligence between female and male students in the university.

Hypotheses:

- **H01:** Spiritual intelligence will be positively correlated with students' academic achievements.
- **H02:** The personality factors will play a significant role in the spiritual intelligence of students.
- **H03:** There will be a significant difference between the spiritual intelligence of male and female students.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design:

The design used in this study is quantitative and non-experimental correlational research that aimed to test the relationship between the three variables: spiritual intelligence, academic achievement, and Big Five personality traits among university students in Hyderabad. The research examined predictive relationships and group differences with no manipulation of variables using regression analysis, ANOVA, and independent samples t-tests. Spiritual intelligence was also a predictor of academic performance as well as a product of personality traits. As the independent variables, there was the Big Five traits, as the dependent variable, academic achievement, and gender as the demographic grouping variable to determine the differences in spiritual intelligence between male and female students.

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Sampling Method and Criteria:

There was a combination of convenience sampling and a purposive one. The choice of the participants was determined by the purpose of the study, and researchers used digital platforms to distribute it. Specific criteria were used to ensure the sample was representative of the target population.

Sample Criteria

The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows:

1. Students enrolled in undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), MPhil, or PhD programs.
2. Age range between 18 - 30 years.
3. Residents of Hyderabad.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants were excluded from the study if they met any of the following conditions:

1. **Non-Students** – Individuals who were not currently enrolled in UG, PG, MPhil, or PhD programs.
2. **Age Limit**- persons under 18 years and over 30 years.
3. **Non-Residents**- Those who were not living and studying in Hyderabad during the period of data collection.
4. **Incomplete Responses**- will refer to participants who did not give full responses in the questionnaire or who did not give informed consent.
5. **Duplicate Submissions**- Any submission made by the same participant more than once was eliminated to keep the data intact.

Data Collection

The standardized self-report measures and data collection questionnaire were used to collect data in measuring academic performance. The survey with the consent form was available to participants in Google Forms, shared via WhatsApp, email, LinkedIn platforms.

Sample size:

The sample size used was 213 (80 women and 133 men). The respondents were categorized according to their level of study with 169 undergraduate students, 41 master's degree students, and 4 PhD students.

The data collection tools used were as follows:

- **Spiritual Intelligence Self-report Inventory (SISRI-2008) by D. King:** Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-2008) is a 24-item self-report questionnaire created by David King in 2008, which is used to demonstrate the level of spiritual intelligence of an individual. Spiritual intelligence encompasses mental capacities that assist individuals in the perception, coordination, and execution of non-material and higher realm elements of their lives, e.g., meaning, purpose, and relationship to a higher existence. SISRI-2008 evaluates this concept with the help of four parts:
- **Critical Existential Thinking (CET):** This skill is capable of being critical in thinking about existential questions, such as the meaning of life, death, and reality.
- **Personal Meaning Production (PMP):** This is the ability to seek personal meaning and purpose in life events, despite the challenges.

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- **Transcendental Awareness (TA):** This is awareness of a spiritual or transcendent aspect outside of the physical world.
- **Conscious State Expansion (CSE):** The skill to achieve and control the higher or altered state of consciousness, usually via meditation or prayer. Each of the items is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, which implies the extent to which each statement describes the respondents and their experiences or their beliefs, with 1 implying that the statement is not true at all, and 4 indicating that the item is entirely valid. The SISRI-2008 is widely applied in studies and clinical activities to understand the development and well-being of spirituality. Some studies have, however, criticized its setup by arguing that the four-component model is not necessarily applicable in all cultures and therefore its universal application may be limited.
- **Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling, S. D., Rentfrow, P. J., and Swann W. B., Jr. (2003)):** The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) is a self-report assessing 10 items in a short form and aims to measure the Big Five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. It enables an effective and fast assessment of the personality, and so can be adopted in an environment where time is minimal, like in a large survey or small assessment. The five traits are balanced in that every one is measured using two items, one being positively worded and the other negatively worded. The respondents will rate every item on the 7-point Likert scale, including disagree strongly to agree strongly, depending on the extent to which the statements describe their behavioral patterns and their feelings. According to the generally accepted model of the Big Five of personality, the personality profile of an individual is effectively captured in the TIPI, though not as detailed as longer tests. It is concise and this is one of its advantages, as it is an effective tool in the hands of researchers and professionals who may require a brief review of general personality traits (Chiorri et al., 2015).
- **The Academic Performance Questionnaire is the instrument developed by Christopher Gregory:** The Academic Performance Scale (APS) is an 8-item questionnaire, which is measured on a 5-point Likert scale to measure the self-reported academic behaviors and attitudes of students. Developed by the Saginaw Valley State University researchers, it offers a decent (internal consistency = 0.89, test-retest reliability = 0.85) and valid means of assessing such important variables as preparation, motivation, and effort. The total score will be between 8-40, performance as failing (0-8) or excellent (33-40), which provides a convenient assessment framework. It is easy to use and centered on academic processes and that is why it is useful to students, educators and researchers who want to enhance academic performance. Although documentation had slight inconsistencies, including the 0-8 range, Academic Performance Scale is a beneficial and valid instrument in the educational context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were statistically analyzed in order to explore the connection between Spiritual Intelligence, Personality Traits, and Academic Achievement. The data gathered below is described using descriptive statistics.

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Table 1 Gender and Age Crosstabulation

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age 18–20</i>	<i>Age 21–25</i>	<i>Age 25–30</i>	<i>Total</i>
Female	33	43	4	80
Male	80	43	10	133
Total	113	86	14	213

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)	0.38	0.485	213
Spiritual Intelligence	56.31	12.837	213
Academic Achievement	27.79	5.249	213
Personality (Aggregate)	65.95	4.632	213

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the major variables: Gender (coded 0 = Male, 1 = Female), Spiritual Intelligence, Academic Achievement, and Personality. The average scores of Spiritual Intelligence were 56.31 (SD = 12.837), Academic Achievement was 27.79 (SD = 5.249) and Personality (aggregate TIPI score) was 65.95 (SD = 4.632).

Descriptive statistics for the key variables—Gender (coded: 0 = Male, 1 = Female), Spiritual Intelligence, Academic Achievement, and Personality—are presented in Table 2. Spiritual Intelligence scores averaged 56.31 (SD = 12.837), Academic Achievement averaged 27.79 (SD = 5.249), and Personality (aggregate TIPI score) averaged 65.95 (SD = 4.632).

Table 3 Correlations Between Spiritual Intelligence and Academic Achievement

<i>Test</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Sig. (1-tailed)</i>	<i>N</i>
Pearson	.261**	.000	213
Kendall's tau-b	.173**	.000	213
Spearman's rho	.248**	.000	213

Note. ** $p < .01$.

H01. Spiritual intelligence will be positively correlated with students' academic achievements.

The correlation analysis done was Pearson correlation, and the variables to be analyzed were Spiritual Intelligence and Academic Achievement. The findings showed that there is a strong positive correlation with $r = .261$, $p < .001$ (one-tailed). This can be viewed as an indication that the deeper the Spiritual Intelligence, the higher the academic performance. This finding was supported by nonparametric tests. The tau-b of Kendall ($\tau = .173$, $p < .001$) was also significant as well as the rho of Spearman ($\rho = .248$, $p < .001$).

Research by Chauhan and Banu (2024) demonstrated that spiritual intelligence has an effect on the academic performance of students. In line with these results, a systematic review and meta-analysis study established that the correlation coefficient between spiritual intelligence and student achievement was significant, although emotional intelligence turned out to be a more prominent predictor in the study (Zhou et al., 2024).

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Table 4 ANOVA Results for the Influence of Personality Traits on Spiritual Intelligence

<i>Trait</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df (Between, Within)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Eta-squared</i>
Extraversion	0.772	56, 156	.867	.217
Agreeableness	1.644	56, 156	.009	.371
Conscientiousness	1.277	56, 156	.122	.314
Emotional Stability	0.810	56, 156	.817	.225
Openness to Experience	1.142	56, 156	.261	.291

H02: Personality factors will have a significant influence on students' spiritual intelligence.

Table 4 results indicated the significant effect of Agreeableness, $F(56, 156) = 1.644$, $p = .009$, with an eta-squared of .371, thus, a moderate effect was seen. The other characteristics did not have significant results: Extraversion ($F(56, 156) = .772$, $p = .867$), Conscientiousness ($F(56, 156) = 1.277$, $p = .122$), Emotional Stability ($F(56, 156) = .810$, $p = .817$), and Openness to Experience ($F(56, 156) = 1.142$, $p = .261$). Moreover, there was a significant Pearson correlation of Personality overall with Spiritual Intelligence, $r = .385$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). This observation implies that the concept of personality can influence the Spiritual Intelligence more than just the traits of the individual.

Part of these results are similar to other studies that had been conducted on the same topic previously by (Amrai et al., 2011), who focused on the connection between personality traits and spiritual intelligence in Tehran university students. Their research stated the highest association existing between conscientiousness and spiritual intelligence ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$), then agreeableness ($r = -0.51$, $p < 0.01$), extraversion ($r = -0.43$, $p < 0.01$), and neuroticism ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$). Remarkably, they did not discover an important connection with openness to experience in contrast with the current research findings, which indicated openness to experience.

Table 5 T-Test Results for Gender Differences in Spiritual Intelligence

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Diff.</i>	<i>95% CI Lower</i>	<i>95% CI Upper</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Female	80	59.25	13.090	2.628	211	.009	4.709	1.177	8.240	.372
Male	133	54.54	12.398							

Note. CI = confidence interval.

H03: Spiritual Intelligence Gender Differences.

An independent samples t-test was also used to test the differences in spiritual intelligence of the participants with regard to gender differences. The statistical significance of the difference between female and male students was statistically significant, $t(211) = 2.628$, $p = .009$ (two tails) (Reed, 2015). The mean scores on spiritual intelligence between female participants ($n = 80$) were significantly higher ($M = 59.25$, $SD = 13.090$) than in male participants ($n = 133$; $M = 54.54$, $SD = 12.398$). The difference of 4.709 was significant at the $p < .01$ level with a 95% confidence interval of 1.177 to 8.240, indicating that the true population difference is between the two ends of the confidence interval with 95% confidence.

The test of equality of variances (Levene) showed that the variance difference between the groups was not statistically significant ($F = .601$, $p = .439$), thus confirming the fact that the

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pooled variance t-test was appropriate. The level of the gender difference observed was evaluated using the measures of effect size in a number of ways. The d value of Cohen was .372, which showed a small to moderate effect size in terms of traditional criterion (Cohen, 1988). Hedges g (.371) and Glass Δ (.380) supported this finding and all three estimates were close to a similar estimate of practical significance.

The present research has a major gender difference in spiritual intelligence, where females are more likely to score higher than males. This is unlike several recent studies.

Kumar and Lokesh (2023) revealed no significant gender disparity in spiritual intelligence in Indian young adults ($N = 128$). Their t test results yielded almost the same mean score of males ($M = 54.94$, $SD = 15.62$) as that of females ($M = 54.64$, $SD = 15.45$), $t(126) = 0.10$, $p > .05$. On the same note, Kumud (2023) determined that there were no significant differences in the mean of postgraduate male and female students ($M = 60.02$, $SD = 9.05$ and $M = 57.25$, $SD = 13.51$, respectively) on all four dimensions of the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24). These dimensions are expansion of consciousness state, critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, and transcendence awareness, $t = 0.52$, $p > .05$. The variation in the findings of the current study and the previous ones can be attributed to a number of factors. These may be sample aspects, age groups, and cultures.

Implications

The research paper has indicated how spiritual intelligence has contributed to the academic performance and health of students. Academically, the application of practices such as mindfulness, values education, and reflective learning into the university program can enhance the motivation, resilience, and persistence of students. This helps them to increase their overall growth, other than cognitive outcomes. On the psychological front, the results indicate that personality testing is significant in determining students who require emotional and spiritual assistance. This is particularly so when it comes to enhancing the qualities pertaining to Agreeableness, empathy, cooperation, and involvement in the community. Through education, the outcomes indicate that there is a necessity for programs that take into account the differences between genders, especially to assist male students in spiritual development. It also underscores the importance of integrating spiritual intelligence into counseling, mentoring, and life skill programs. By providing secure places for students to discover meaning, purpose, and values, an educational environment can be more inclusive and supportive, helping students become comprehensive individuals.

Limitations and Future Scope

The research obtained in this study can be useful in understanding the relationships between spiritual intelligence, personality traits, and academic performance. But it has a number of limitations. The limitations of the depth, causation interpretation, and generalizability of the results are the use of a short personality measure (TIPI), the use of self-reported information, which can be affected by the social desirability bias, a cross-sectional study design, and a particular university sample. Thus, the findings cannot be taken at face value.

Future studies ought to address these disadvantages through more comprehensive methods of personality evaluation, longitudinal designs with the aim of examining causal and developmental patterns, and qualitative studies to document the lived-in spiritual experiences of students. A further expansion of the scope (attachment to different demographic and contextual factors) would enhance our knowledge about the interaction of

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spiritual intelligence, personality, and academic performance in different groups and settings.

CONCLUSION

This research adds to the abundance of literature investigating the psychological factors of spiritual intelligence. The results have shown a positive relation of spiritual intelligence to academic performance, with a significant contribution of Agreeableness and higher in the group of female students. These findings indicate the need to incorporate spiritual and emotional growth in learning environments and the possibility of personality-based support programmes in universities.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors stated that there was no conflict of interest.

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