

Research Paper

Influence of Socio-demographic Factors on Spiritual Intelligence among College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined differences in the spiritual intelligence of college going students particularly youths between the age group of 19 to 24 (considered as a stage of early adulthood by World Health Organization) with respect to the socio demographic factors particularly related to gender, age and socioeconomic status as it is directly related to their emotional, social and cognitive aspects of personal wellbeing. Using a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 332 students of colleges across three assembly constituency of Bhubaneswar. Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24), developed by King & DeCicco, a standardized 24-item scale measuring four dimensions of spiritual intelligence, was administered along with a Background Information Form. Data was analysed using independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Scheffe's post-hoc tests. Results showed significant differences related to age and gender. Socio economic status also exerted a significant influence, with middle-income group outperforming low and higher-income group. These findings indicate that spiritual intelligence is influenced by various demographic factors. The study also highlights the need for emotional, social and cognitive development initiatives that promote reflective and spiritually grounded practices, particularly for younger students who are from low-income groups.

Keywords: *Socio-Demographic Factors, Spiritual Intelligence, Socio-Economic Status, Early Adulthood*

An emerging topic of 21st century that is surfacing academicians and research scholars of present time is Spiritual Intelligence. It is a multi-dimensional construct that deals with life's ultimate questions. It encompasses various aspects of an individual's ability to integrate a broader sense of meaning, purpose, and values of life. It is not limited to religious beliefs but includes a deep connection with oneself, others, nature, and the transcendent. It has been used by some philosophers, psychologists, and developmental theorists as a spiritual parallel of IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient). In 1997 Danah Zohar coined the term and introduced the idea in her book "Rewiring the Corporate Brain". According to her it is the ability to connect wither higher

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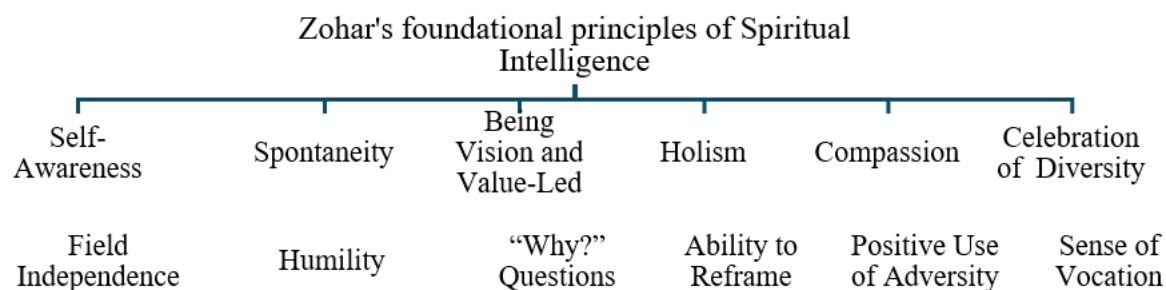
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Received: April 18, 2026; Revision Received: May 28, 2026; Accepted: June 02, 2026

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meanings and values, and to use those connections to create a more fulfilling life. Spiritual intelligence is actually an inherent capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions like the meaning of life and experiencing the seamless connection between the person and the world (Wolman, 2001) and (Gold, 2011).

According to Zohar all human beings are born with the capacity to use these three types of intelligences such as IQ, EQ and SQ to some degree as each of them supports their survival. Some may be strong in one and weak in others, but each of them has these three flairs that can be nurtured and developed. He reported that spiritual intelligence is fostered by applying some principles that helps in understanding and regulation of life. He identified twelve principles of spiritual intelligence, which were derived from the theory of complex adaptive system. According to Zohar, each one of us is a conscious complex adaptive system and a great collaboration of both physical ability and mental ability, or both. Any desire to build or create will bring about flexible boundaries and will be in constant dialogue with itself and its environment. This transaction between the physical and the mental characteristics is a cosmic ideal. Zohar's continued effort and research in understanding these cosmic relationships among physical, mental and environmental led him to develop these 12 principles of spiritual intelligence which he subsequently called the foundational attributes of spiritual intelligence.



(i) *Self-awareness.* Zohar's concept of self-awareness is different from Goleman's emotional self-awareness. It refers to understanding what I care about' and 'what I live for'. It means to be truthful to oneself while communicating with others. Spiritual self-awareness is the process of awakening the self into the truth and reality and thereby empowering self to sustain a meaningful living.

(ii) *Spontaneity.* Zohar said that spontaneity is being responsive and responsible to the moment by behaviors honored by self-discipline and self-control. It is the ability to take responsibility for our actions in the moment leaving all our problems, prejudices, assumptions, values, and projections behind.

(iii) *Being Vision and Value-Led.* Vision is the capacity to see something broader that inspires us. It seeks answers to the bigger, more difficult questions like, "Why do I have a life?" A person being in vision will be able to find the answer.

(iv) *Holism.* In quantum physics, holism refers to the inseparability of the parts of a system. Holism believes that what you think, feel, and value affects the whole world. Lack of holism encourages competition, which encourages separateness. For more effective collaborations, we need cooperation and a sense of oneness.

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(v) *Compassion*. Compassion is the ability to go out of the way to help the people physically, mentally, or emotionally. It is often regarded as having sensitivity to suffering of others. In short compassion is the desire to alleviate sufferings of others.

(vi) *Celebration of Diversity*. It means understanding and recognizing that everyone is unique along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

(vii) *Field Independence*. Field independence is the ability “to stand against the crowd,” by one’s own conviction. It is a willingness to go alone, only after carefully considering what others have to say.

(viii) *Humility*. Humility is appreciation of one’s true place in the world. Humility is the other side of field independence, whereby one realizes that each one is an actor of a larger play and that one might be wrong. Humility makes us great, not small. It makes us proud to be a voice in a choir.

(ix) *“Why?” Questions*. It means readiness to question to seek deeper understanding example, “Why are we doing it this way rather than that way?” “Why am I in this collaboration, and what does it exist for? Why aren’t we doing something else?”

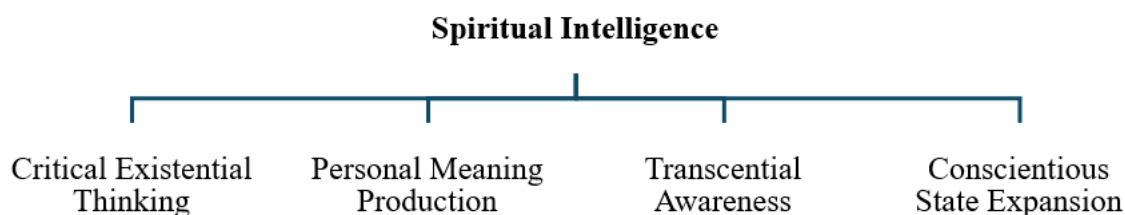
(x) *Ability to Reframe*. It refers to the ability to stand back from a situation or problem and appreciate a wider context. One of the greatest problems of our world today is short-term thinking due to the lack of ability to reframe

(xi) *Positive Use of Adversity*. This principle is about acknowledging mistakes or learning and growing from mistakes, setbacks and sufferings.

(xii) *Sense of Vocation*. It refers to the ability to serve and expressing gratitude for the service received and desire to respond in return.

All these principles sum up spiritual intelligence and spiritual capital.

According to David B. King (2008) another pioneer of research project on spiritual intelligence defines spiritual intelligence as a set of adaptive mental capacities based on non-material and transcendent aspects of reality. King proposed four core abilities or capacities of spiritual intelligence. He developed a questionnaire called SSRI-24 to measure these four attributes of spiritual intelligence which are as following.



(i) ***Critical Existential Thinking***. Critical existential thinking is the capacity to critically examine the existential/metaphysical issues; also, the capacity to ponder the non-existential issues in relation to one's existence.

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(ii) Personal Meaning Production. Personal meaning production is the ability to derive meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose.

(iii) Transcendental Awareness. Transcendental awareness is the capacity to identify transcendent dimensions of the self-accompanied by the capacity to identify their relationship with the physical world.

(iv) Conscious State Expansion. Conscious state expansion is the ability to enter and exit higher states of consciousness (e.g. pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness) and other states of trans through one's own discretion of deep contemplation, meditation, and prayers etc.

Research suggests mature individuals often show higher SI than younger adults, often due to heightened meaning-making and life experience. Whereas Studies on gender show mixed results. Some research indicates no significant difference between male and female SI. Other studies suggest females may score higher in compassion, joy, and emotional understanding, or that females have higher SI in stressful environments. In case of Income/Economic Status, Perceived income adequacy is positively associated with higher spiritual intelligence. Individuals with sufficient income tend to report higher SI compared to those with insufficient income.

Spiritual Intelligence and Early adulthood

Early adulthood roughly ages between 18 to 26 years (whereas according to Deniel Levinson it is between 17 to 45 and for Erik Erikson it is between 20 to 40) is a critical transition period marked by hazards such as high mental health risks (depression/anxiety), substance abuse and the onset of obesity or chronic diseases. Thus, it is observed that the students who are at their early adulthood, are subject to various life challenges. In fact, they are highly vulnerable to anxieties that result from stress. Further, during adolescence, thoughts take more abstract forms and higher order cognitive processes become strong. This is the time when their inner processes shape their future directions of life. It also shapes their later health and social outcomes. But this is also the period when their foundations of spirituality largely grow up. Hence, Mortazavi suggested that spiritual intelligence by guiding the students belonging particularly to this stage to a richer perspective of life, to noble ways of thinking and acting, and by promoting hope and optimism, help them to constructively handle the pressure and challenges of the time. Spiritual intelligence among the adolescents can serve as building blocks for healthy social and emotional development. Spiritual intelligence can provide them with positive coping strategies for personal problems, help them to act bravely during trouble times, and prevent them from being violent and hopeless and from low self-esteem. Thus, as there is a need for the young adults to develop a right perspective of life, a healthy nature of enquiry, a sense of purpose in life, a taste for reflective thinking and to construct meaning from their experiences and to allow them to ask existential questions.

Emmons (2000) observed that spiritual orientation about life protects human beings against non-desirable and non-adaptive behaviours. Edwards (2003) has also emphasised for the characteristic use of spiritual intelligence to resolve dilemma/troubles and employing them in solving non-spiritual problems. Of course, spiritual intelligence is not simply integrating one's intelligence with his/her spirituality. On the contrary, it represents a combination of the individual's personality characteristics, neurological processes, specialized cognitive

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capabilities, and spiritual qualities and interests. It can help people to outgrow their immediate ego selves and to reach beyond those deeper layers of potentiality that lie hidden within them. It helps them to live life at a deeper level of meaning.

Arising from the above considered importance of spiritual intelligence in the life and as the goal of Education is all round development/holistic development, spiritual intelligence is closely related to Education and foundation of Education of the student. Thus, the core values of spiritual intelligence which can find natural expression in curriculum includes connectedness, compassion, honesty, responsibility, respect, unity, service are emphasised. Overburdened curriculum, corporate educational system, great expectations of the teachers and parents can make the students more stressed & leading to more psychological problems, like insecurity, competitions, developing suicidal tendencies among the school and college students. Spiritual growth is thus as necessary as air water & food. It gives the right perspective. Spiritual intelligence is the best tool to achieve our goals (Bhangale and Mahajan, 2013). However, spiritual intelligence (SI) generally increases with maturity and life experience. Higher age, urban residency, and higher income often correlate with greater SI, while studies on gender show varied results, sometimes favoring women in compassion-based components.

Sociodemographic factors

Another construct that the study wants to focus is the Sociodemographic factors. Sociodemographic factors refer to the characteristics of a population that influence behaviours and choices of individuals. These factors are considered as important in social sciences to examine, since it is related to humans and their needs. It includes age, gender, education, income etc.

Research suggests mature individuals often show higher SI than younger adults, often due to heightened meaning-making and life experience. Whereas Studies on gender show mixed results. Some research indicates no significant difference between male and female SI. Other studies suggest females may score higher in compassion, joy, and emotional understanding, or that females have higher SI in stressful environments. In case of Income/Economic Status, Perceived income adequacy is positively associated with higher spiritual intelligence. Individuals with sufficient income tend to report higher SI compared to those with insufficient income.

The present research thus has focused on understanding and the development of spiritual intelligence among college going students who are at their early adulthood (between the age group 19 to 24) taking some demographic factors into account. Hence, to build up a rationale for the study, issues relating to the development of spiritual intelligence among the students related to some sociodemographic factors are appropriate to mention.

Theories and models:

There are several prominent theories and models describe the consequences of sociodemographic factors influencing spiritual intelligence. Some of these theories are:

- **Cognitive Development Theory:** As cognitive abilities mature, the capacity for abstract thought increases, allowing for deeper exploration of existential and spiritual issues. (Ken Wilber)
- **Sociocultural Theory (Gender Role Socialization):** Gender differences in SQ are often rooted in social processes rather than biological superiority. Traditional roles

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may lead women toward more care-oriented, relational spiritual perspectives, while men might approach it through a lens of personal purpose. (Vygotsky)

- **Gender Schema Theory:** Individuals develop mental blueprints for "appropriate" behaviors (including expression of emotions and spirituality) based on their environment. (Sandra Bem-1981).
- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory:** People with higher SES have more opportunity to explore self-actualization and spiritual meaning which relate to spiritual intelligence.
- **Human Development Theory:** According to Erik Erikson SES influences education opportunities and life experience, which in turn influences spiritual awareness and existential questioning the components of SQ.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gupta (2012) investigated a study on the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and emotional intelligence with self-efficacy and self-regulation among college students. It was found that male students were better in spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence as compared to female students. In another study by Thakur and Sharm (2023) it was found that significant differences in spiritual intelligence exist across age groups.

Spiritual intelligence helps individuals solve life problems and develop meaning in life, which gradually develops with age and maturity (Hosseini, Elias, Krauss and Aishah,2010). According to Angmo and Sing (2024), higher spiritual intelligence is associated better emotional regulation and maturity with increasing age. Some researchers have noted that development of spiritual intelligence is not influenced by gender factor and as it requires a higher level of abstraction and thinking, the role of the gender factor is limited (e.g., Keating, 2009; Martin &Hafer, 2009; Ronel, 2008). Azam (2014) conducted a study on gender difference on spiritual intelligence among adolescents. The aim of the research was to measure spiritual intelligence among adolescents studying in two schools of Aligarh city. For this purpose, Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24) developed by D. King (2008) was administered to the sample of 60 adolescents. Of these, 30 were male and 30 were female students. The main findings were as follows: Significant difference were found between the two groups, on subscales, namely, Personal Meaning Production (PMP), Transcendental Awareness (TA) and Conscious State Expansion (CSE), Critical Existential Thinking (CET) and composite scores on spiritual intelligence.

Kang (2000) from his studies on gender diversity in spiritual intelligence observed that women are spiritually more intelligent than men in later age groups like late adulthood and old age, but not during adolescence and early adulthood. Moree (2009) from a cross-cultural study reported that significant gender difference in spiritual intelligence was observed mostly in favour of women across the culture groups but differences were not similar with respect to the different attributes of spiritual intelligence. Several other researchers (e.g., Dillman, 2006; Wiley, 2006, Hermann, 2007, Yuen &Patneau, 2006) have also reported significant gender differences in spiritual intelligence in favour of women. Mahasweta Nasel (2004) reported that socio economic conditions may influence religious exposure, values and life experiences that contribute to spiritual intelligence. According to Cindy Wigglesworth (2012) spiritual intelligence can develop through life experiences, education and self-awareness, which may be indirectly influenced by socio-economic conditions such as educational opportunities and social support.

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Research gap:

The study addresses the following research gap in the existing literature on the role of sociodemographic factors in spiritual intelligence:

- While there has been a growing interest in understanding the impact of socio-demographic factors on spiritual intelligence little research has been done on the specific construct of socio-demographic factors and its effects on spiritual intelligence among students who are at their early adulthood or at their stage of emerging adulthood and particularly who are natives of Odisha.
- Regional studies particularly within Odisha's socio-cultural context are limited as gender roles, expectations, and gender norms vary significantly across regions when spiritual intelligence is considered.
- Besides the absence of localized research makes it difficult to accurately assess how spiritual intelligence manifests itself within Odia households particularly related to socio economic condition and age of students are considered.
- By understanding the relationship between demographic factors and spiritual intelligence educational institutions can design interventions that can promote a more engaged and committed educational environment free from gender and socioeconomic disparities at the college level for development of spiritual intelligence for a better lively hood.
- By exploring the relationship, the study can advance our understanding of the mechanisms that underlie these influences and offer insights into the factors that can contribute to development of spiritual intelligence among students who are at their early adult hood as early adult hood is a period full of challenges related to career, mental health issues, relationship struggles and lifestyle maintenance.

Statement of Problem

The present study was undertaken to understand the influence of demographic factors on spiritual intelligence among students who are at their early adulthood. In addition, the study also seeks to understand which socio-economic condition better predicts spiritual intelligence along with age and gender.

Objectives of the Study

- To compare the level of spiritual intelligence of students of according to gender.
- To compare the level of spiritual intelligence of students of according to age.
- To assess level of spiritual intelligence of students of different socio-economic status (classification based on Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Status Scale ,1976).
- To analyse the relationship between different levels of socio-economic status and spiritual intelligence.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the prevalence, and psychological consequences of socio-demographic factors on spiritual intelligence among students of the age group between 19 to 24 and who are natives of Odisha and residing in Bhubaneswar.

Participants

A total of 332 students were selected through a stratified random sampling technique from different colleges offering graduation, post-graduation and above level programs situated in Bhubaneswar. Inclusion criteria required participants to be students between the age group

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of 19 to 24 and to be natives of Odisha or simply from Odisha. Participants who are not students and who are not natives of Odisha and who have any history of diagnosed psychiatric or neurological disorders were excluded from the study.

Instruments

Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24): The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24): designed by (King and DeCicco, 2008) consisted of 24 self-report measure items of spiritual intelligence. The tool exhibits a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .94$ by Cronbach's alpha. Item responses ranged on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 ("not at all true of me") to 4 ("completely true of me"), with higher responses representing higher levels of spiritual intelligence. A total spiritual intelligence score can be calculated by summing across all subscales.

Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Status Scale (1976): Socio-economic status was assessed by using the scale which considers education, occupation and monthly income of the head of the family.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by using SPSS 24. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were computed to determine the prevalence of spiritual intelligence. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare levels across gender and age. Besides one way ANOVA and Scheffe's post-hoc test was administered to assess the influence of different levels of socio-economic status on spiritual intelligence and to examine the significant predictor of spiritual intelligence. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study provide a significant insight into the association between different demographic factors and Spiritual Intelligence based on the data collected through the Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24).

Analysis and Interpretation

The differential influence of gender on the distribution of spiritual intelligence was examined by comparing boys and girls. The result of the t-test is given below:

Table 1: Comparison of spiritual intelligence of boys' and girls' students

GROUPS	N	MEAN	SD	t-VALUE	SIG
GIRLS	101	211.76	23.008	2.56	.001
BOYS	231	203.98	26.370		

The t value estimated is significant ($t=2.56$; $p<.001$), revealing a true difference between boys and girls in their spiritual intelligence. The mean score for girls excels boys indicates that girls are more spiritually intelligent than boys which is supported by the findings of Dwivedi & Ameta (2015), Desai (2016), Zalawadia (2017).

The differential influence of age on the distribution of spiritual intelligence was examined by comparing students between the age group 19 to 21 and 22 to 24 in years. The result of the t-test is given below:

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Table 2: comparison of spiritual intelligence according to age

Groups	N	Mena	SD	t-Values	Sig
19-21 Years	130	20.10	4.80	2.00	0.005
22-24Years	201	24.00	5.20		

The t value estimated is significant ($t=2.00$; $p<.005$), revealing a true difference in spiritual intelligence when age was considered. The mean score of elders excels that of the youngers indicates that spiritual intelligence increases with age which supports the findings of Nazam (2014), Siti Aishah Hassan, Aminah Ahmad, Maznah Baba (2019).

To find out the differential influence of socio-economic status that is low, medium, and high-income group (based on Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Status Scale, 1976). on spiritual intelligence. Summary of one-way ANOVA for comparison between three levels is given below.

Table 3: summary table of ANOVA

SOURCE OF VARIANCE	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG
BETWEEN GROUPS	10781.386	2	5390.693		
WITHIN GROUPS	206353.780	329	627.215	8.595	.001
TOTAL	217135.166	331			

Table: 4 Post Hoc Test for comparison with different socio-economic status

(I)SCH	(J)SCH	(I-J) Mean Difference	Std Error	Sig	95% confidence Interval	
					LB	UB
LOW	MIDDLE	-13.422	3.293	.000	-21.52	-5.33
	HIGH	-1.327	3.755	.939	-10.56	7.91
MIDDLE	LOW	13.422	3.293	.000	5.33	21.52
	HIGH	12.095	4.286	.020	1.56	22.63
HIGH	LOW	1.327	3.755	.939	- 7.91	10.56
	MIDLE	-12.095	4.286	.020	-22.63	-1.56

The result of the post hoc test shows a significance of difference between three levels with middle income group excelling the other two groups. Overall, the result reveals that the socioeconomic status has impact on spiritual intelligence and middle-income group has comparatively more effective than the other two groups supported by the findings of Deb S, McGirr K, Sun J(2005).

Interpretation of the Result

- The findings of the present study provide significant insights into the association between socio demographic factors with spiritual intelligence of the college going students who are at their early adulthood.
- The findings also revealed that not only age and gender bring changes in levels of spiritual intelligence, but also socio-economic condition influences the level of spiritual intelligence.

CONCLUSION

- The present study examined the influence of socio-demographic factors on spiritual intelligence of the college going students who are at their early adulthood. The findings revealed that the mean score for girls excels boys, indicating that girls are

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spiritually more intelligent than boys. Similarly, the *t* value estimated was 2.56($p < .001$), revealing that a true difference exists between boys and girls. The findings also indicate that mean score of elders exceeds that of the younger ones, indicating that spiritual intelligence increases with age. Besides the result of the post hoc test shows a significance of difference between three levels with middle income group excelling the other two groups. Overall, the result reveals that socioeconomic status has impact on spiritual intelligence and middle-income group has comparatively more effective than the other two groups.

Therefore, from above discussion of the findings, it can be concluded that spiritual intelligence varies meaningfully across several demographic factors like age, gender and socio-economic conditions.

Suggestions:

- Paying attention to the spiritual factors particularly among younger students irrespective of gender and socio-economic conditions as development of a society or a community or a country depends on them.
- Creating a psychosocial atmosphere within every educational institution to train spiritual abilities in emotion and responsiveness irrespective of gender, age and socio-economic condition

Limitations:

- This research had to use more diverse samples from various geographical locations in future for generalizability as sample was limited and purposive to a particular city.
- The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences: longitudinal designs could offer more powerful evidence's
- The reliance on self-report measures can be problematic; adding qualitative methods or observational data could provide a richer view.
- The research has not cover several other socio-demographic variables which could provide a richer view of the impact.

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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: Mishra, G., Mohanty, S. & Pattanaik, S. (2026). Influence of Socio-demographic Factors on Spiritual Intelligence among College Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(2), 1662-1672. DIP:18.01.153.20261402, DOI:10.25215/1402.153