

Does Happiness and Empathy Vary with Spiritual Intelligence Across Age?



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Abstract

The aim of this current study was to examine the relationship of spiritual intelligence with happiness and empathy of young and middle adults. A sample of 200 was selected using purposive sampling method. Tools used for the study were Spiritual Intelligence Scale by K.S. Mishra, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Pete Hills and Michael Argyle and Empathy Quotient by Simon Baron-Cohen and Sally Wheelwright. The questionnaires were filled by 2 groups i.e. 100 young adults and 100 middle adults. MANOVA, correlation, and t-test were used to analyze the data. Results showed significant variation in happiness and empathy across differences in spiritual intelligence. There were no age differences found in spiritual intelligence and happiness in young and middle adults. Age differences were found in empathy of young and middle adults. It was concluded that spiritual intelligence of young and middle adults is significantly related with happiness and empathy.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence, Happiness, Empathy, Age.

Introduction

Selman et al. (2012) perceived that "Spiritual Intelligence is related to having a higher guidance in life and the ability to cure ourselves of all the enmity. It is thinking of ourselves as an association of a transcendent reality." And according to Mohammadyari (2012) Spiritual Intelligence refers to the human capability in planning creatively constructed questions in life. Puchalski (2011) explained Spirituality as the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and convey the meaning and reason and the way they experience their connectedness to the instant, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred. As stated by Zenter (2014) spiritual dimension tries to be in peace with the universe, and aims for answers about the never ending, and comes into locus when one faces emotional and physical distress or death.

Spirituality is a journey which one takes for meaning, purpose and direction in life. It satisfies our want to have a foundation for living, a path of life in the light of a larger purpose. It conveys the need to be "aligned" with something greater than our body and mind. Spirituality goes beyond an expression of religious rituals and activities. There is a search for a spiritual element that not only motivates, but creates peace with the universe. That association between ourselves and something greater gravitates us to look for answers about the infinite. During episodes of intense emotional, mental, or physical stress, one looks for higher meaning, oftentimes through the medium of environment, music, artifacts, or sets of philosophical beliefs. This usually results in a broad system of principles that goes beyond all religions (Dienstmann, 2016).

Recently spirituality has been seen as a vital dimension of human being which has an important association with improvement of health (Macdonald, 2002). Newer researches identify the important role of prayer and meditation in assisting individuals to deal with social stress and diseases (Randolph, 2003). WHO gives the definition of health as "not merely the absence of disease but the integration of physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being" (Saduk, 2003).

Empathy & Spiritual Intelligence

Morelli (2015) identified Empathy as understanding & vicariously distribute other's emotions. Empathy not necessarily means that one is motivated to assist a person but that one knows why they are feeling what they are feeling (Nugent, 2013).

Empathy is the process of understanding another person's situation from their view point. It is said to increase prosocial (helping) behavior. Empathy is one of human beings' biggest qualities. It is the root of most of the behaviour that we associate with "goodness." It's the

beginning of compassion & altruism, self-sacrifice & charity. Conversely, a deficit of empathy is the beginning of highly destructive and dangerous behaviour - in fact, everything that we relate with "evil." A deficit of empathy towards victims makes crime doable. Absence of empathy with other human cultures makes war a possibility. A deficit of empathy allows psychopaths to deal with other humans callously, as objects who have no importance except as a way of gratifying their desires (Jacobs, 2000).

The main moral understanding of all world religions is "deal with other people as you would like to be treated yourself." In Judaism, this is conveyed in the saying "That who is hateful to you, doesn't do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah." In Hinduism, the idea of *daya* states that we should strive to remove the pain of all other human beings - including strangers and enemies - due to the fact that they are part of our own being. This is a moral imperative which roots back directly from "deep empathy" - and one which stems from the highest part of our nature (Duriez, 2004).

Happiness & Spiritual Intelligence

Aristotle at first stated that, Happiness is a state of activity. As defined by Myer (2007) Happiness is a life experience marked by a prevalence of positive emotion. Happiness is a multi faced construct including both emotional and cognitive (Argil, 2001). They defined the three main dimensions of happiness as: starting a positive effect or giving happiness most of the time, the increasing joy in a interval of time and deficit of negative emotions such as depression & anxiety. Happiness as a wholesome concept is an intact continuous gratification in life (Kiewcz, 1967). In cognitive theory, it is said that happy people experience nicer phenomenon than other people; it means that they think of neutral phenomenon as positive and the positive and even more. In fact humans are able to increase their own happiness by arranging their thoughts. For example, the idea that there is a transcendental force and purpose in the world can direct people towards happiness (Diner, 1984).

Spirituality and praying also provides individuals with a way to indulge in a meditative act. Meditation has showed a strong association with well-being because it soothes the body, decreases stress and anxiety, and also provides positive thinking. The increase of "holy moments" in usual life, whether by maintaining a journal or everyday spiritual activities, has been connected with decreased stress levels and increased psychological well-being. Lastly, together spirituality and organized religion can help serve people with a view point, hope, and a deeper sense of meaning. By trusting in something bigger than ourselves, it may lead them to positivity in times of stress and sadness, and increase resilience in its part as a coping strategy (Bonelli et al, 2012).

Review of Literature

Empathy and Spirituality

Spirituality of a person is his understanding of the presence of a higher power and a divine purpose for all human beings. This usually ends up making people feel interconnected to each other.

Whereas empathy is putting oneself in the situation, mindset of other people and trying to understand their feelings and emotions. Usually people experience such empathetic behavior due to several reasons one of them being the feeling of interconnectedness to the surrounding humans due to spirituality. Giordano et. al (2018) examined spirituality and religious commitment to predict empathy among counseling students. Results disclosed that spiritual concept of universal interconnectivity, age and sex predicted empathy among 146 graduate level counseling students.

A person's tendency to be highly spiritual, altruistic and empathetic at the same time is essentially linked to a prominent setting of feeling emotionally connected to others. Supporting this emotional connection and empathetic behavior in spiritual beings, Johnstone et. al (2018) assessed relationships among spirituality and cognitive dimensions of empathy in 98 volunteers with heterogeneous health conditions. Results revealed that spiritual experiences of a person are significantly related to affective empathy of an individual.

Happiness and Spirituality

Spirituality and happiness have been known to go hand in hand because when an individual practices spirituality through different processes like meditation, it improves mental and physical wellbeing and increases positive emotions and of them being happiness. Spiritual activities are also used as therapies to improve mental wellbeing, positive emotions and happiness. A pilot study by Forooshani et. al (2018) explored the impact of problem-solving spiritual therapy on positive emotions such as happiness and mental health among undergraduate students. The experimental group (n = 15) participated in ten sessions of the intervention, whilst control group (n = 15) left untouched with no intervention. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, Snaith-Hamilton Pleasure Scale, and General Health Questionnaire-28 were used for assessments. Results presented great improvements in happiness, pleasure, and mental health at both posttest and follow-up assessments.

Individuals suffering from disability or disorders usually find it hard to stay happy and they don't need short term quick fix for it, a more meaningful reason to stay happy is provided through the path of spirituality. To support this hypothesis, Clifton et. al (2018) studied the effects of spiritual path to happiness of people who have lived with quadriplegia for a long period of term. It was a qualitative study which included analysis of 3 summarized narratives of people living with quadriplegia who were introduced to spirituality. Their case studies show how spirituality significantly and positively impacted their condition; by adding meaning and purpose to their life; and helped them emotionally deal with dependency on others.

Even among the Buddhist community, spirituality is positively associated with mindfulness and happiness of an individual. A study conducted by Rattanaphet et al. (2016) investigated the relationship among spirituality, mindfulness, and happiness in Buddhism. Sample of 350 nurses employed under

government hospital volunteered for the study. Procedure included filling online scales of measurement and the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship among variables. Results revealed a positive correlation among spirituality, mindfulness and happiness in Buddhism.

Methodology

Objectives

1. Understanding the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Happiness.
2. Understanding the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Empathy.
3. Understanding the difference in Spiritual Intelligence, Happiness and Empathy between young adults and middle adults.

Hypothesis

1. **(H1)** There will be differences in happiness and empathy across level of spiritual intelligence.
2. **(H2)** There will be age differences in spiritual intelligences, happiness and empathy between young adults and middle adults

| Sno. | Name of The Tool | Reliability and Validity |
|------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Oxford Happiness Questionnaire | OHQ demonstrated high scale reliability-r(163)=0.80, P<0.001. Cronbach alpha value-0.92. |
| 2 | Empathy Quotient | Test Retest reliability-0.71. Cronbach's alpha value-0.65. Score of empathy was positively correlated with Self Awareness (r=0.431, P<0.05), Communication (r =0.518, P<0.05), Interpersonal Relationship (r = 0.467). |
| 3 | Spiritual Intelligence Scale | Split half reliability coefficients-0.864 (n=180, UG-PG) and 0.852 (n=160, 9-11 years). Cronbach alpha values-0.890 and 0.874. Validity testing revealed correlation of score on each item and score of SIS ranged from 0.184 to 0.614. |

Tool Description

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Pete Hills and Michael Argyle (2002) was constructed from the Oxford Happiness Inventory, (OHI). The OHI has 29 items, each including the selection of one of four options that differ for each item. The OHQ includes similar items to the OHI, each presented as a single statement or an item which can be marked on a six-point Likert scale. The revised scale is compact, easier to administer and allows answering over an extended range..

The Empathy Quotient

The Empathy Quotient (EQ) is a 60-item questionnaire derived to measure empathy in adults. The test was developed by Simon Baron-Cohen and Sally Wheelwright in 2003 at ARC (the Autism Research Centre) at the University of Cambridge. On the Clinical perspective, the empathy scores by the EQ are used by mental health professionals in testing the level of social impairment in certain disorders like Autism spectrum disorder. Since levels of empathy vary significantly among individuals, even among those without any mental health disorders, it is also suitable for use as a casual measure of temperamental empathy by and for the general population.

Spiritual Intelligence Scale

Spiritual Intelligence Scale by K S Mishra (2005) measures spiritual intelligence of High school students to P.G. Students. This scale consists of 42 items. The statements can be answered on a 6 point

Sample Description

The sample size comprised of 200 respondents, out of which 100 were young adults and the rest 100 were middle adults. According to Psychosocial Development theory by Eric Erickson following are the identified age groups:

YOUNG ADULthood: 19 TO 40 YEARS

MIDDLE ADULthood: 40 TO 65 YEARS

Locale of Study

Delhi NCR

Statistical Analysis

Mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, t-test, and Multivariate analysis of variance.

Tools Used

1. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)
2. Empathy Quotient (EQ)
3. Spiritual Intelligence Scale (SIS)

Likert scale. This scale is easy to administer and can be used to measure spirituality of the general population.

Procedure

The study collected primary data which is quantitative in nature. Structured questionnaires were used to obtain the data, administered through electronic mail and hand delivery. The responses to the questions were scored using the respective manuals. Then the Microsoft Database Access software was used to keep a record of the data (scores) in tabular form. Data analysis was done by using the SPSS software. Findings were analysed.

Analysis of Results

The basic purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of spirituality with happiness and empathy and also examine age differences among them.

Table 1 showing Mean, Standard Deviation And Sample Size of The Variables

| Variables | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------|-----|--------|--------------------|
| Spiritual Intelligence | 200 | 176.67 | 26.640 |
| Happiness | 200 | 131.79 | 28.939 |
| Empathy | 200 | 56.58 | 13.481 |

Table-1 is the tabular representation of the sample taken i.e. 200, mean of the scores that is graphically represented in figure-1, and standard deviation of the scores from the mean. The table basically describes the data involved in the research.

Figure 1 is showing graphical representation of mean scores of Spiritual Intelligence (SI), Happiness (H) and Empathy (E)

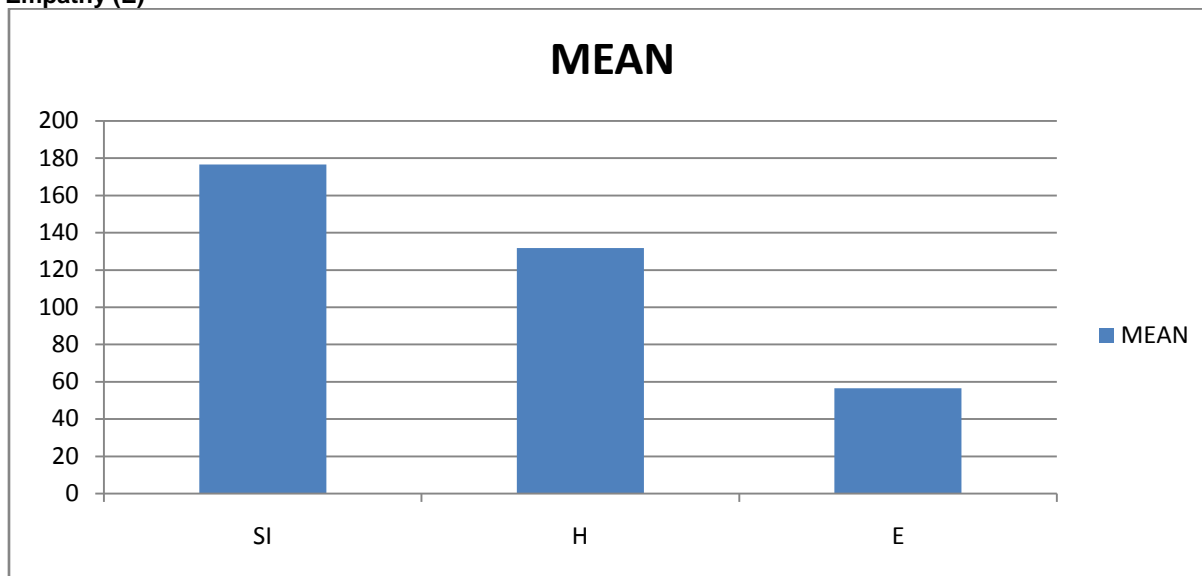


Table 2 showing the correlation of variables- Spiritual Intelligence, Happiness and Empathy

| Variables | Correlation |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE HAPPINESS | 0.951** |
| SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE EMPATHY | 0.902** |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Hypothesis-1 stated that there will be a significant relationship of spiritual intelligence with empathy and happiness of the sample is accepted. As showed by Table-2 the correlation between spiritual intelligence and happiness of the sample came out to

be 0.951 which is significant at 0.01 and correlation between spiritual intelligence and empathy of the sample came out to be 0.902 which is also significant at 0.01. Hence null hypothesis is discarded and alternate hypothesis is retained.

Table 3 showing sample size, mean, standard deviation, t value and P value of spiritual intelligence, happiness and empathy in young and middle adults

| Variables | Age | N | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-Value | p-Value |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| YOUNG SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE | ADULTS | 100 | 173.43 | 27.059 | -1.729 | 0.085 |
| | MIDDLE ADULTS | 100 | 179.91 | 25.944 | | |
| | YOUNG ADULTS | 100 | 127.59 | 29.034 | | |
| HAPPINESS | MIDDLE ADULTS | 100 | 135.98 | 28.371 | -2.067 | 0.40 |
| | YOUNG ADULTS | 100 | 54.28 | 13.142 | | |
| | EMPATHY | | | | | |
| | MIDDLE ADULTS | 100 | 58.87 | 13.490 | -2.437 | 0.016 |

HYPOTHESIS-2 which stated that there will be a significant age difference in spiritual intelligence, happiness and empathy among young and middle adults was partially accepted. There are no age differences in spiritual intelligence among young and middle adults as showed by Table 3 the p-value of the difference among young and middle adult is 0.085 which is higher than 0.05. There is also no significant age difference of happiness among young and middle adults, as showed by Table 3 the p-value of the difference among young and middle adult is 0.40 which is higher than 0.05. There was significant age difference in empathy between young and middle adults, as showed by Table 4 the p-value of the difference among young and middle adult is 0.016 which is less than 0.05.

Table 4: MANOVA- Differences in Happiness and Empathy with respect to Spiritual Intelligence and Age

| Variable | Value | F | df | P | Partial Eta Squared |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|----|-------|---------------------|
| Spiritual Intelligence | 0.77 | 60.98 | 4 | 0.00* | 0.39 |
| Age | 0.03 | 2.7 | 2 | 0.07 | 0.03 |
| Spiritual Intelligence*Age | 0.03 | 2.7 | 4 | 0.23 | 0.01 |

*Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.05$

There was a statistically significant difference in Happiness and Empathy due to Spiritual Intelligence, $F=60.98$, $p \leq 0.05$; Pillai's trace = 0.77 (Table 4).

Table 5: Univariate tests- Differences in Happiness and Empathy with respect to Spiritual Intelligence

| Dependent Variable | F | Significance | Partial Eta Squared | Groups | Mean | Significance |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------|--------------|
| Happiness | 286.62 | 0.00* | 0.75 | Low SI | 94.68 | 0.00* |
| | | | | Moderate SI | 134.5 | |
| | | | | Low SI | 94.68 | 0.00* |
| | | | | High SI | 166.41 | |
| | | | | Moderate SI | 134.5 | 0.00* |
| | | | | High SI | 166.41 | |
| Empathy | 222.79 | 0.00* | 0.69 | Low SI | 40.55 | 0.00* |
| | | | | Moderate SI | 57.09 | |
| | | | | Low SI | 40.55 | 0.00* |
| | | | | High SI | 72.74 | |
| | | | | Moderate SI | 57.09 | 0.00* |
| | | | | High SI | 72.74 | |

*Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.05$. SI= Spiritual Intelligence

The above table shows that Happiness, ($F=286.62$, $p \leq 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.75$) and Empathy ($F=222.79$, $p \leq 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.69$) significantly differs with respect to the level of Spiritual Intelligence. Happiness was highest (Mean=166.41) for those high level of

Spiritual intelligence as compared to the moderate and low Spiritual Intelligence groups. Also Empathy was highest (Mean=72.74) for those high level of Spiritual intelligence as compared to the moderate and low Spiritual Intelligence groups.

Table 6: Univariate tests- Differences in Happiness and Empathy with respect to Age

| Dependent Variable | F | Significance | Partial Eta Squared | Groups | Mean |
|--------------------|------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|--------|
| Happiness | 3.32 | 0.07 | 0.02 | Middle Adult | 133.89 |
| | | | | Young Adult | 129.83 |
| Empathy | 5.42 | 0.02* | 0.03 | Middle Adult | 58.11 |
| | | | | Young Adult | 55.48 |

*Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.05$

The above table shows that Empathy ($F=5.42$, $p \leq 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$) significantly differs with respect age. Empathy was higher (Mean=58.11) for middle adults as compared to the young adult group (Mean=55.48). Happiness does not differ with respect to age.

Discussion

Spirituality is something that helps us connect with our innerselves which leads to self

actualization. Spirituality can be practised through various ways like meditation, yoga, following religious practices, chanting etc. All these practices brings peace to a person which helps in the overall mental health leading to a higher level of self-satisfaction pertaining to the various aspects of everyday life as it encourages the realignment of perception in terms of personal priority, with the abstract and intelligible ideas of how to live one's life receiving more

importance than material possessions or external sources of fleeting enjoyment. The basis of the psychoanalytical perspective is to differentiate between happiness and pleasure; which can be controlled by the loci of individuals when they attempt to pursue a feeling that they often confuse with the social concept of 'true happiness'. Ideas found in ideologies of Existentialism and Radical Freedom are highly appropriate examples of this discrepancy found in the behavioural tendencies of individuals trying to attain a level of happiness through material drives which are rampant in a consumer culture: when the individual realises or accepts the notion that language isn't evolved enough to truly express the abstract feelings of the human mind, and that there needs to be a separate pacifier for these feelings in order to avoid the frustration that arises from being unable to express oneself. This is also agreed by Puchalski (2001) spirituality as the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose, this in turn provides them happiness and satisfaction in life.

It is clear that the default state of the human mind is indifference, and every experience an individual has contributes to the dynamic, ever-changing state of mind that an individual experiences, and thus it is important to keep in mind that caveat exists for both material and spiritual sources of happiness, which is that happiness takes effort. There needs to be an incentive for a person to partake in the activities that provide them with happiness, and most material sources simply do not provide it. An individual needs to maintain a self-sustained system which allows for the constant generation of motivation, which can only exist as a dynamic model which is constantly evolving through experiences, the most potent of which are interpersonal interactions stemming from empathy toward another. The focus on behaviour over intentions allows for a training of the mind of sorts which can actually engineer a system such as this through practice, and spiritual ideals of self-governance and functionality appear to be the most powerful tools in order to achieve it, since intentions are not what matter in the physical world, as they are not what drives an individual. What drives an individual are the underlying thought processes in the subconscious, which can be understood and brought out to the reach of the conscious mind by eliminating all distractions and practicing the ability of overlooking insignificant elements of life and focusing on priorities set by one's own perspective toward a healthy state of mind. Spirituality, in the preceding examples, is clearly a potent and significant entity which can be harnessed in the most subjective way, making it an ideal concept to practice in our own lives, as there are no rigid codes which dictate our behaviour; rather, it encourages self-management and establishment of responsibility to oneself and others, resulting in a state of mind that can attain a subjective notion of happiness through empathy and compassion for others as well as itself. Denyse (2006) agrees to this discussion by this statement, spirituality provides person with an insight of his environment

which in turn changes his attitude towards people and fills them with empathy towards other people.

In this primary research the main purpose was to study the influence of spiritual intelligence on happiness and empathy of young and middle adults. The correlations came out to be 0.95 and 0.90 respectively, which was significant at 0.01 level. The results disclosed a strong relationship of spiritual intelligence with happiness and empathy of young and middle adults. This implies that young and middle adults with high spirituality are more likely to be happy and empathetic individuals which is good for themselves and well as for the society surrounding them. There were no age differences found in spirituality and happiness of young and middle adults. This implies that spirituality of a person does not depend upon his age but on his interest and willingness to participate in spiritual activities, also same goes with happiness as stated by Buddha, "happiness lies within", it also does not depend upon a person's age but his inner state. The result showed that older people tend to be more empathetic than young people.

This research points in the direction that simple spiritual activities like yoga, meditation can increase the level of happiness and empathy of people as these spiritual activities result in better well being of a human body. And if a body is healthy then accordingly the human being tends to be more happy and understand others emotions also hence making him more empathetic towards others.

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