Influence of Spiritual Intelligence on the Big Five Personality Traits

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Abstract
The aim of the current investigation was to study the role of spiritual intelligence (SI) on the big five personality traits. A cross-sectional research design was utilized for the study. A sample of 172 college students participated in the study. The students were administered the measures of SI and personality traits. Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis was conducted to analyze the obtained data. The results indicated a significant association of SI with the big five factors, namely, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness and openness to experience. Further, the results show that SI has a significant and positive association with extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience. However, it has significant but negative relationship with neuroticism. These findings clearly indicate that SI is associated with healthy personality traits.

Keywords: Spiritual intelligence, big five, healthy, personality, traits, SI

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of any education system is to nurture socially relevant goals in the young minds and to empower them with capacities to pursue their goals in future. In the last two decades, a lot of research has been conducted for understanding and validating the concept of spiritual intelligence (SI). SI can be defined as the global capacity of an individual to generate, comprehend, analyze and solve problems while dealing with the environment; through understanding self, and by possessing a high degree of conscience, compassion, and commitment towards humanity, in order to accomplish a socially relevant purpose in life. The big-five factor model of personality [1] which came into existence in 1980s and 90s is most often used model by researchers today due to the empirical evidences for its validity. The big five taxonomy is reported to be applicable not only across the clinical and non-clinical populations but also across the different cultures and countries. Besides it has garnered enough supporting genetic evidence to prove that these traits have a biological basis and are stable across the life span. Thus, big five model gives a very comprehensive assessment of an individual's personality. Extending the views of Carl Roger’s fully functioning person, the contemporary researchers view psychologically healthy person as someone with high levels of openness to feelings, positive emotions, and straightforwardness together with low levels of neuroticism [2]. Traits are understood as the enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings and behavior of an individual across the lifespan. Thus, in order to understand the relevance and validity of the concept of SI on human behavior, it is empirical to study the relationship between SI and big five traits of personality.

1.1 Literature Review

Spiritual intelligence (SI) in present times has become significant as it has the capability to bring changes in the human behaviour at a larger level. Researchers examined the interrelationship between intelligence and personality processes [3]. Some have also suggested a possibility of a both a conceptual and empirical relationship between personality and intelligence. It is reported that openness to experience had a consistent and moderate positive association with intelligence whereas neuroticism had a weak and negative relationship [4].

Others examined the association between personality traits and SI in a sample of students studying at the University of Tehran. Findings suggest significant relationship between SI and all the big five factors of personality except for openness. A negative association was observed between neuroticism and SI. However positive relation with conscientiousness, agreeableness and extroversion was observed [5]. Similarly, in another
study on male students also reported statistically significant correlations between SI and the three personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Here also openness did not show any significant relationship with SI as in the previous study. Further, in the study, neuroticism also indicated a non-significant relationship with SI [6].

Some have reported strong and positive correlation between SI and all big five personality traits with the exception of neuroticism, with which it showed a strong negative association [7]. Similarly, in a study on Indian students, a significant relationship was reported between self-meaning generation (sub-scale of spiritual intelligence) and agreeableness and neuroticism. Similar findings were also found between transcendental awareness (sub-scale of SI) and openness [8].

A study was conducted to explore the relationship between SI and personality traits in physical education managers. The study results revealed a positive significant association between SI scale [9] and the big five factors of personality. There was significant negative association between SI subscales and the personality trait of neuroticism. However, with all other four factors the relationship was positive and significant [10]. In another study on Indian college students SI was examined as a predictor of personality traits. The results indicated variance in the range of 5% to 18% for the traits of agreeableness, emotional stability, extraversion and conscientiousness in decreasing order. However, openness was the only trait which had no effect of SI [11].

More recently researchers using SISRI 24, examined the association of SI with big five traits in a sample of Jordanian students. They reported that there was a significant relationship between the four factors of SI and all the big five personality traits. Only neuroticism showed a significant association with two out of the four factors of SI. The regression analysis indicated that the five personality traits showed a variance in the range of 5.7% to 12% for the four factors of SI [12].

Furthermore, a study on medical and dental students of Babol University of Iran explored the relationship of SI and personality traits. The results of the multivariate regression analysis indicated that extraversion was positively associated with SI whereas openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness showed a negative association with SI. Only the trait of neuroticism did not show any association with SI [13]. Very recently study on school students reported positively significant relationship between SI and four of the big five personality traits and negative association for neuroticism. Furthermore, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness could significantly predict students’ SI [14].

1.2 Summary of the Research

Based on the scientific literature available, it can be seen that SI is an emerging area of interest among scientific community. Although, the above literature describes various studies conducted in different parts of the world with varying population, the results have been mixed. Similarly, in almost all the studies different instruments were used to study SI. The objective of the present study was to examine the association of SI with big five factors using Scale for Spiritual Intelligence [15, 16]. While keeping the healthy personality in mind, the following hypothesis were generated:

H1: Spiritual Intelligence has a significant positive association with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience.

H2: Spiritual Intelligence has a significant negative association with neuroticism.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Participants and procedures
The design for the study was cross sectional research design. The data for the study was collected from a multidisciplinary Indian University. 172 male and female participants in the age range of 18 to 23 with a mean of 20.4 (SD = 9.4) years participated in the study. The students were pursuing various undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the discipline of engineering, management, humanities and social sciences.

2.2 Instruments for the study
Spiritual intelligence was assessed using Scale for Spiritual Intelligence [15, 16]. The scale consists of 20 items.
The response criterion follows a five-point Likert type rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Ten items in the scale are reverse scored. The big five personality traits were assessed by using the 44-item BFI [17]. It is a short measure of personality based on Big five model of personality. It is an effective assessment tool of the big five traits (Neuroticism, Openness to experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion) when measurement of the individual facets of the traits is not needed [18]. The measure assesses the traits on a 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating higher characteristics for the respective trait.

2.3. Data management and analysis

Data collected was analysed using SPSS 21. Pearson correlation coefficients and simple regression analysis were done to analyse the relationship between SI and big five factors, namely extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and alpha coefficient of variables studied. It also presents the correlations between variables. There was significant association between SI and big five personality traits. The association between SI and four traits, namely extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness were significant and positive in nature. However, the association between SI and neuroticism was significant but negative.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Cronbach’s alpha for Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>SQ</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Intelligence</td>
<td>65.88</td>
<td>12.63</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note *p < .05; **p < .01

The results of the simple regression analysis performed also indicated significant relationship between SI and extraversion ($\beta = .29$, $t = 3.954$, $p < .001$). SI also explained a significant proportion of variance in extraversion scores ($R^2 = .08$, $F (1,170) = 15.631$, $p < .001$). Similarly, SI had a significant relationship with conscientious ($\beta = .208$, $t = 2.779$, $p < .01$), Agreeableness ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.404$, $p < .05$), and openness to experience ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.081$, $p < .05$). SI also explained a significant proportion of variance in conscientiousness scores ($R^2 = .043$, $F (1,170) = 7.723$, $p < .01$), agreeableness scores ($R^2 = .033$, $F (1,170) = 5.777$, $p < .05$), and openness to experience scores ($R^2 = .025$, $F (1,170) = 4.332$, $p < .05$). The relationship between SI and neuroticism was significant but negative ($\beta = -.205$, $t = -2.726$, $p < .05$). However, SI also explained a significant proportion of variance in neuroticism scores ($R^2 = .042$, $F (1,170) = 7.432$, $p < .01$). Overall, SI had a significant relationship with extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness and openness to experience respectively.

Table 2. Summary of the Regression Analysis Predicting Personality Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. error</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Model F (1,170)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>3.954***</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>15.63***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>2.081*</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>4.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>2.779**</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>7.72**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>2.404*</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>5.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>-2.726**</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>7.43**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note *p < .05; **p < .01; *** p<.001
V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present investigation was to study the relationship between SI and the big five traits; extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism. Out of the big five personality traits, the relationship between SI and extraversion was the strongest. This was followed by conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness and openness to experience respectively. Thus, as the scores on SI increased, the individuals tend to become energetic, assertive, optimistic, social and generally upbeat about life in general. The significant positive relationship between SI and conscientiousness indicated that as SI increased the individuals become purposeful, determined, strong-willed, self-controlled and perhaps workaholic.

The results also indicated that the relationship between SI and neuroticism was significant but negative. This indicates that as the SI increases, the individuals tend to become emotionally calm, relaxed and even tempered. They tend to possess the ability to deal with stressful situations without being getting upset. The significant positive relationship between SI and agreeableness indicated that spiritually intelligent individuals tend to be altruistic, sympathetic and always excited to help others. Individuals high on agreeableness believe that the help they rendered will be reciprocated by others. Similarly, SI had a significant association with the trait openness to experience, indicating that as SI increases, individuals tend to be more intellectually curious and unconventional. People high on openness to experience personality trait tend to have lives full of varied experiences. They experience both positive and negative emotions more intensely in comparison to the ones low on this trait. They have active imagination and have independence of judgement.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present investigation was to study the relationship between spiritual intelligence and big five personality factors. The results clearly indicate that SI has a significant association with extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness and openness to experience traits. It also indicates that SI has a significant association with healthy personality i.e. SI has a significant positive association with extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience traits. However, the relationship is significant but negative with neuroticism indicating better emotional stability and well-being in them.

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REFERENCES


