Relationship between personality traits, spiritual intelligence and well being in university students

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Abstract

Objective: This research was carried out to explore the relationship between personality traits, spiritual intelligence and well being among university students. **Method:** Big Five Factor Inventory by Rammstedt and John was employed to assess personality traits, Spiritual Intelligence Scale of King (SISRI -24) to measure spiritual intelligence and WHO-Five Well-being Index (WHO-5) to measure well being of 120 students doing post graduation in Psychology from the University of Jammu (N=50) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (N=70). The mean age of the sample was 24.79. Independent samples t test was employed to assess the difference in personality traits and spiritual intelligence in students from two universities. Data was subjected to correlation and regression analysis. **Results:** Differences in personality traits and spiritual intelligence emerged in this study. Positive relationship was found between personal meaning production and two factors namely agreeableness and neuroticism. Significant relationship appeared between transcendental awareness and openness. Regression analysis revealed that transcendental awareness predicted well being. **Conclusion:** To further enhance the well being steps should be taken to develop and strengthen transcendental awareness in students.

Keywords: Personality traits, Spiritual Intelligence, Well Being, Students

1. Introduction

Well being refers to physical, mental and emotional health of an individual. It enables an individual to thrive and flourish. Gough and McGregor (2007) defines well being as something that people are notionally able to do and to be, and what they have actually been able to do and to be. It is more than the absence of illness or pathology. These aspects of well being are integral part of students and their learning processes (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). Well being of student depends on growth and integration of five areas into balanced whole namely physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual (Masters, 2004). It is important to enhance well being of young people as the students despite of low levels of health and wellbeing have to overcome enormous obstacles to experience success from their education for which they have to feel well within (Marshall, 2004).

Spiritual intelligence is the way we assign meaning and feel connected to the power of larger than ourselves. Spiritual intelligence is one of the several types of intelligence that can be developed independently and contributes to psychological well being and overall healthy human development (Vaughan, 2003). Spiritual intelligence is a set of adaptive mental capacities based on non-material and transcendent aspects of reality (King & Teresa, 2009). The four components of spiritual intelligence are critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion. Critical existential thinking is best described as the capacity an individual to critically contemplate meaning, purpose, and other existential/metaphysical issue; to come to original existential conclusions or philosophies; and to contemplate non-existential issues in relation to one's existence. An ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose is regarded as personal meaning production. Transcendental awareness is the capacity to identify transcendent dimensions/patterns of the self, of others, and of the physical world during normal states of consciousness, accompanied by the capacity to identify their relationship to one's self and to the physical world. Conscious State Expansion is defined as an ability to enter and exit higher/spiritual states of consciousness at one's own discretion. Significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental health has been reported in previous studies (Emmons, 2000; Noble, 2000). Spiritual intelligence and its components can be used to enhance mental health (West, 2004).

Personality is an important determinant factor for well being (Gilovich & Eibach, 2001). Review of literature reflects that numerous studies have been conducted showing an association between well being and the two personality traits namely extraversion and neuroticism (Diener, 2000; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Libran, 2006; Vittesera, 2001; Wismijer & van Assen, 2008). On the other hand, based on meta analysis, opposite trend has been reported by DeNeve and Cooper (1998) suggesting that well being and these two traits are not strongly associated and rather traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness are associated with well being. In terms

of Big Five factors neuroticism and extraversion are found to be strong predictors of spiritual intelligence (Amrai, Farahani, Ebrahimi, & Bagherian, 2011; Hoossein, Ahmad, & Elham, 2012).

The aim of the present study is to explore the relationship between personality traits with reference to Big Five personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) along with spiritual intelligence (critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state explanation) and well being.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The sample consisted of 120 students enrolled in post graduate program in University of Jammu and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Jammu Study Centre. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 45 with a mean age of 24.8.   Of these 50 of 120 (42%) were from the university of Jammu and 70 of 120 (58%) were from IGNOU. Of the total sample, 53 percent (107 of 120) were male and 47% (97 of 120) were female. Twenty three percent of participants (n = 28) were married and 77 % (n=92) were single. Students working or employed accounted for 25 percent of the sample.

2.2 Procedure

Data was gathered from the students of 1st year and 2nd year doing post graduation in Psychology. At the onset the students were clearly told about the purpose of research and confidentiality was assured. Consent of all the students was sought and tools were administered in the form of booklet. Data was interpreted individually as well as collectively. The obtained data was subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS 17 and results were obtained.

232 Measures

Big five personality traits were assessed using a ten item short version of Big Five Inventory (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Participants rated the items on a 5-point scale (1 = disagree strongly, 5 = agree strongly). The scale consists of one true scored and one false scored item for each factor. The range of scores is 10 to 50.

To measure well being, WHO-Five Well-being Index (WHO-5) developed by Psychiatric Research Unit, World Health Organization (1998) was used. It includes positive worded items only covering positive mood, vitality, and general interests. It is on 6-point scale (0= at no time, 5=all the time). Total possible score ranges from 0 to 25. Total score of 13 and below indicates poor well being.

Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24) of King (2008) was used to assess spiritual intelligence. After reverse coding item number six scores are obtained ranging from 0 to 96.   It comprises of four subscales namely critical existential thinking (CET), personal meaning production (PMP), transcendental awareness (TA), and conscious state expansion (CSE). Higher scores represent higher level of spiritual intelligence and also each capacity.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 represents mean and standard deviation of students on personality traits, spiritual intelligence and well being scores. It clearly shows results of *t* test for personality traits, spiritual intelligence (and its subscales) and well being, among students of University of Jammu and IGNOU. Results from independent samples *t* test indicate that there are meaningful differences between students from two universities on agreeableness and conscientiousness. The students from two universities differed on three sub dimensions of spiritual intelligence. The students from IGNOU are higher on both the traits. The students from IGNOU show higher on CET, PMP, and CSE than those from University of Jammu. However no significant difference is found on scores for well being between the students of two universities.

Table 2 represents correlation matrix of Big Five personality traits, spiritual intelligence and well being. It shows that there is a positive meaningful correlation between conscientiousness and well being (p<0.01). Conscientiousness was found to be positively associated with well being in previous studies as well (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Steel, Schmidt, & Shutz, 2008). Neuroticism has negative association with well being indicating that with increase in neuroticism score there is decrease in well being. Similar findings were obtained in studies by (DeNeve & & Cooper, 1998; Diener, 2000; George, 1984; Vittesera, 2001; Wismijer & van Assen, 2008). The sub dimension of spiritual intelligence PMP is positively related to agreeableness showing that those high on this trait are also likely to be high on PMP. Positive association of agreeableness and spiritual intelligence are in line with previous studies (Beshlideh, Charkhabi, Kalkhoran, & Marashi, 2011).   The negative correlation is evident in neuroticism and PMP revealing those high on neuroticism reflect low PMP. Negative relationship between neuroticism and spiritual intelligence was also revealed in a study on university students (Amrai, Farahani, Ebrahimi, & Bagherian, 2011; Hossein, Ahmad, & Elham, 2012). TA is also negatively associated with openness. The CSE is positively related with conscientiousness.

Full model with all possible predictor variables was employed for regression analysis. Undjusted R for the data is .415 and R^2 is .172.   All the variables in combination (Significant F change = .03) predict well being of the students. The full model is statistically significant (f=2.04, df=11,108, sig =.031). Inspection of the coefficient table reveals that conscientiousness β =.249 is significant at 0.01 level and TA is also significant at .05 level with β value .293 (Table 3). The regression weight for conscientiousness in full model is .249. It is significantly predicting the well being meaning higher the conscientiousness higher will be the well being of the students. These findings are in line with previous studies (Hayes & Joseph, 2003). Opposite trend is noticed for TA predicting well being to be higher with decrease in TA.

4. Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to find out association between Big Five personality traits, spiritual intelligence and well being and to explain the role of personality traits and spiritual intelligence in university students. Findings of the study suggest that conscientiousness should be regarded as main predictor of well being in university level students. Difference in certain aspects in students from two types of universities has emerged out of this study. A comparison of the students studying through open system with those studying in the university following regular mode for imparting education reflects that the students from University of Jammu are lower on agreeableness and conscientiousness as well as on all the subcomponents of spiritual intelligence except TA. As TA is negatively predicting well being of students, further research should be carried out to explore into the causes of this negative trend. The findings of the study are restricted to students doing post graduation in psychology so it needs to be confirmed through carrying out more studies while considering the students from various departments of both universities. Future studies may focus on finding out the causes of lower scores on spiritual intelligence in students studying through regular mode.

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Table 1 Comparison of Personality Traits, Spiritual Intelligence (with sub components), and Well Being between Students from Two Universities

Variable	University of Jammu (n=50)		IGNOU (n=70)		
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	t-value
Personality Trait					
Extraversion	6.22	1.84	6.67	1.55	1.44
Agreeableness	7.16	1.88	8.12	1.53	3.07**
Conscientiousness	6.54	1.47	7.17	1.45	2.33*
Neuroticism	6.20	1.79	5.87	1.97	.93
Openness	6.38	1.17	6.61	1.20	1.05
Spiritual Intelligence					
CET	13.52	4.05	15.47	4.99	2.27**
PMP	12.30	3.31	13.95	3.50	2.61**
TA	16.32	3.67	17.54	4.30	1.62
CSE	10.30	3.47	11.78	3.87	2.16*
Overall SI	59.54	59.48	58.55	12.32	0.13
Well Being	16.22	3.97	14.94	5.18	.46

*significant at .05 level   **significant at .01 level

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of Personality Traits, Spiritual Intelligence and Well Being

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 E	1										
2 A	.008	1									
3 C	.145	.177	1								
4 N	-.195*	-.277	-.213*	1							
5 O	-.083	.073	.008	.127	1						
6 WB	.105	.098	.292**	-.227*	.041	1					
7 CET	0.65	.149	.124	-.162	.011	.022	1				
8 PMP	.022	.256**	.144	-.223*	-.013	.078	.378**	1			
9 TA	.080	.146	.108	-.177	-.198*	-.148	.503**	.423**	1		
10 CSE	.000	.114	.217*	-.168	-.066	.050	.296**	.488**	.487**	1	
11 SI	-.067	.161	.029	-.166	-.084	-.002	.165	.115	.229*	.195*	1

*significant at .05 level   **significant at .01 level

Table 3 Prediction of Well Being based on Personality Traits and Spiritual Intelligence

	Criterion Variable: Well Being	
Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	Significance
Extraversion	.026	.780
Agreeableness	.012	.897
Conscientiousness	.249	.009
Neuroticism	-.185	.061
Openness	.009	.925
CET	.066	.533
PMP	.070	.522
TA	-.293	.015
CSE	.052	.639
SI	-.002	.984