

## The Influence of Spiritual Intelligence and Fear and Fragility of Happiness on Mental Well-Being

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The present study investigated if spiritual intelligence could determine mental well-being with fear of happiness, and fragility of happiness as the moderating variables. Participants (N=300) male and female (Indian nationality), aged 18-65yrs, were selected using convenient sampling and subjected to four scales- The Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory, Fear of Happiness Scale, Fragility of Happiness Scale, and The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale. Results showed that spiritual intelligence, mental well-being, and fragility of happiness were related to each other; mental well-being significantly predicted by other two variables, and fragility of happiness significantly moderated the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being. This study outlines how spiritual intelligence and happiness interweave to cause a dynamic impact on mental well-being.

**Keywords:** spiritual intelligence, well-being, fear of happiness; fragility of happiness

Well-being is the most important asset of a human being (Diener et al., 2017; Knapp et al., 2011). Well-being, as defined by (WHO, 1946)) signifies a state of complete mental, physical, and social fitness, and not merely being free from diseases or illness, hence, it is a comprehensive profile of the mind and body of the person. However, well-being can hold different connotations for different people. Subjective well-being can be elucidated by the

way individuals perceive and assess their lives, as well as certain aspects and activities taking place within. Happiness is an important index of well-being, particularly how some fear that happiness is temporary and considers it to be a fragile emotion, which further construes the aim of this study.

The two concepts- fear of happiness and fragility of happiness were derived and conceptualized when the gap in the literature on happiness was realized, especially owing to the belief (which was prevalent in a few cultures but not researched yet) that happiness is transient and may at any time alter into a less desirable emotional state (Joshnloo et al., 2014). In an event of the fragility of happiness (i.e. one's confidence that happiness does not last long or passes quickly, and can easily turn into unfavorable circumstances), subjective well-being can be strongly compromised by strengthening one's maladaptive beliefs, aversion to happy feelings, and neuroticism (Joshnloo, 2018b; Joshnloo et al., 2014). Fragility of happiness has been a significant factor in subjective well-being (Sethia & Markandey,

2022). According to dogmatic beliefs, pleasure and satisfaction is unstable, can easily be turned into loss, and is thought to be the resultants of destiny or being governed by a higher power, highlighting that some things are beyond human control, and are arbitrary (Ji et al., 2001; Lyubomirsky, 2000), a phenomenon that can be usually seen across cultures. In this regard, one notion is that the human capacity to ask existential questions makes people better able to handle life's difficulties and encourages them to work harder to solve problems (Robinson et al., 2015), and increases life satisfaction (Heydari et al., 2017).

Similar to this concept is the fear of happiness, which is a conviction that feelings of pleasure, satisfaction, and happiness might have unfavourable effects, which could impact the quality of life satisfaction (Joshanloo, 2013b). There seems to be a conceptual similarity in both the concepts of fear of happiness and the fragility of happiness. Both notions have also been shown to be indicators of happiness and well-being (Joshanloo, 2018b). According to (Lambert et al., 2021), having faith in the notion of fear and fragility of happiness can contribute to diminished subjective well-being, physical health problems and illnesses. Fragility beliefs have been reported to negatively influence the determinants of subjective well-being, and modify neuroticism, unfavourable life circumstances, and valuing happiness (Joshanloo, 2018b).

The spiritual intelligence as coined by Zohar (1997), refers to the ability to analyse and resolve issues of significance and worth, the capacity to view our deeds and lives in a larger, more meaningful framework, and the ability to determine which course of life is more important than another. To end an existential crisis and explore deeper meaning in life, spiritual intelligence can be useful (Skrzypińska, 2021) and has been recognized as a basic intelligence (Gardner,

1998). Spiritual intelligence helps understand oneself and each other better, serving adaptive functions (Emmons, 2000; King, 2008; Skrzypińska, 2021), and can thus, help to understand, define and attain happiness (Abdollahpour & Khosravi, 2018), which according to many beliefs (where external loci of control is more prevalent) is thought to be arbitrary and beyond human control (Joshanloo, 2013a; McMahan, 2006, 2008). This belief fundamentally gives birth to the concepts of fear of happiness and fragility of happiness, and spirituality, therefore, becomes a medium for people to seek this happiness, and make peace with this belief. Studies have found a significantly positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and happiness (Faribors et al., 2010), and between the dimensions of spiritual intelligence and happiness (Amirian & Fazilat-Pour, 2016). Being spiritually intelligent can strengthen psychological functions and even successfully adapt to stress (Jasmindebora et al., 2019).

A vital characteristic of well-being in this regard is happiness, which is an "emotional state of positive, and pleasant emotions which can range from contentment to intense joy" (Sundriyal & Kumar, 2014). Stating the importance of happiness, (O'Brien, 2008), suggests that 'happiness literacy' can create or contribute to building sustainable well-being, efficient decision making and even acknowledge actions on a community level; thus extending to a broader level of well-being, which can even cater not just in present but, in future as well. Various psychological and personality traits, like locus of control (LOC), affect how joyful and susceptible to mental health issues people are, and internal LOC (Devin et al., 2012). This external locus of control also primarily contributes to the idea that life is frail and difficult to manage, as well as with the idea that happiness is fragile (Joshanloo et al., 2017). This leans towards a more hopeless,

fatalistic perspective, distorting the outlook on life, and interfering with the process of relishing positive emotions (Joshnloo, 2018a), and gives birth to the concepts of fear of happiness and the fragility of happiness.

Thus, the study expected that there would be a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence, fear of happiness, the fragility of happiness, and mental well-being. Secondly, it is expected that the mental wellbeing would be predicted by spiritual intelligence and fear and fragility of Happiness. Finally, it was expected that the fear and fragility of happiness would moderate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental wellbeing.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The present study comprised a sample of 300 adults (150 -females and 150 -males), in the age range of 18 to 65yrs, belonging to different educational, socio-economic, and religious statuses from India (nationality) and abroad (Indians settled abroad), and were recruited through convenient sampling. The mother tongue of participants varied (Malayalam, Hindi, Urdu and Tamil), but all understood and spoke English fluently as a second language and they came from different walks of life and varied occupations/vocations. The respondents were grouped into two age categories, based on Erikson's classification of psychosocial development. The inclusion criteria was that, the participants (males and females) should be in the age range of 18-65 years and should be willing to participate in the study; exclusion criteria was that, participants should not be dealing with any severe psychiatric problem, and those whole are not willing to share personal feelings in the area. The current study functioned within the ethical guidelines, and no rights of participants were violated. Participants were briefed about the aim of

the study, their voluntary and anonymous participation, that they could quit at any time during the study, and that the data generated would solely be used for research purposes and not misused.

### **Procedure**

The present study involved taking informed consent from the participants. The confidentiality of participants was kept intact. Each respondent was a unique individual. After a short introduction concerning the motive of the study, a socio-demographic data sheet was administered. After this, all the questionnaires (all the questionnaires used were in their original versions, that were already either standardized or had cross-cultural validations, and all were in English language. These questionnaires have been found suitable for Indian population use as well (Anbugeetha, 2015; Bhojak & Patel, 2023; Kumari, 2023). These questionnaires were administered one after the other, with respective instructions. The collection of data was done online, via Google Forms (222 participants), as well as personally (78 participants) (in India and abroad), using a simple convenient sampling method, by trained researchers. According to Gosling et al. (2004), data collected through online means is valid and reliable.

### **Materials**

*The Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24)*: The SISRI-24 (King & Decicco, 2009) is a 24-item self-report scale that measures Spiritual Intelligence (SI). SISRI-24 comprises four components: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. On a 5-point scale, participants are asked to rate the items. The scoring procedure involves subscale scoring for each of the four subscales and total SI scoring; its response options ranged from 0 (not at all true of me)-

4 (completely true of me). Reverse scoring existed for one of the items. Cronbach's alpha reliability for this scale was .920.

**Fear of Happiness scale**

Constructed by Joshanloo (2013), this tool consists of five statements that gauge participants' perception of how happiness and good fortune affect their lives. Responses range on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To determine the final score, the responses to each item were added together. The Cronbach's alpha varying between 0.70 to 0.87 across twelve countries (Joshanloo et al., 2014).

**Fragility of happiness scale**

Developed by (Joshanloo et al., 2014), the tool has four items. Each item is rated on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Adding up the responses of all the items delivers the total score. Reliability for the fragility of happiness scale was at an average of about 0.71 across many nations (Joshanloo et al., 2014).

*The Warwińk-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)* Developed in 2007, the Warwińk-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) aims to evaluate mental health apart from its determinants, comprising of various socioeconomic elements. It comprises of 14 items. Each item on this scale is positively written and has been combined such that they encompass several aspects of mental health, including both hedonistic and eudemonic viewpoints. Responses are made on a 5-point scale, ranging from 'none of the time to all of the time. The cumulative score is acquired by adding the scores for each of the 14 items. The total score ranges from 14-70. Cronbach's alpha coefficient = 0.89 (n = 348), and test-retest reliability for this scale was 0.83.

**Results**

The correlation, regression analysis and a moderation analysis was performed using Haye's PROCESS (version 4.1). For moderation analysis, the dependent variable (mental well-being), independent variable (spiritual intelligence), and moderating variable (fragility of happiness), were placed in their respective sections, i.e., Y variable, X variable, and moderator variable W, respectively in the PROCESS software and Model no. 1 was selected. PROCESS was then instructed to generate the code for visualizing interactions; the mean was centered for all variables that define products; moderation and conditioning were set at p<.05 and -1SD, mean +1SD, respectively; finally, output was generated. Further, slope analysis was also carried out.

Table 1. Descriptive of Sample characteristics

Socio-demographic variables		Participants	
		Females (N=150)	Males (N=150)
		N (%)	N (%)
Age	Young Adults (18– 35 years)	123 (82%)	96 (46%)
	Adulthood (35– 65 years)	27 (18%)	54 (36%)
Religiosity	Atheists/None	26 (17%)	15 (10%)
	Somewhat Religious	70 (47%)	80 (53%)
	Highly religious	54(36%)	55 (37%)
Family	None	10 (7%)	6 (4%)
Religiosity	Somewhat	59(39%)	59(39%)
	High	81(54%)	85(57%)
Participation in	Never	29 (19%)	23(15%)
Religious activities	Sometimes	100 (67%)	98 (66%)
	Always	21 (14%)	29 (19%)

Table 2 . Inter Correlations among dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence, total spiritual intelligence and Mental Well-being (N= 300)

Variables	MWB	CSE	TA	PMP	CET	Total SI
MWB	-					
CSE	.363**	-				
TA	.495**	.491**	-			
PMP	.570**	.622**	.828**	-		
CET	.256**	.489**	.712**	.644**	-	
Total SI	.481**	.743**	.896**	.896**	.862**	-

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note – MWB- Mental Well-being; CSE- Conscious State Expansion; TA- Transcendental Awareness; PMP- Personal meaning production; CET- Critical Existential Thinking;

SI - Spiritual Intelligence

As the correlation table indicates, there is a positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being. Additionally, a positive correlation has also been found between mental well-being and the dimensions of spiritual intelligence [“conscious state expansion (CSE)”, “transcendental awareness (TA)”, “personal meaning production (PMP)”, and “critical existential thinking (CET)”].

Table 3. Indicates the inter-correlations amongst spiritual intelligence, fear of happiness, fragility of happiness, and mental well-being.

Variables	MWB	Fear of happiness	Fragility of happiness	Spiritual Intelligence
MWB	-			
Fear of happiness	-.109	-		

Fragility of happiness	-.146*	.460**	-	
Spiritual Intelligence	-.481**	-.018	.069	-

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

There was a significant positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being. A significant negative correlation was found between fragility of happiness and mental well-being. However, there was a non-significant relation between fear of happiness and mental well-being.

Table 4. Regression Analysis, with spiritual intelligence and fragility of happiness as the predictor variables and mental well-being as the outcome variable

Predicto variables	Standard beta value	t value	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Spiritual intelligence	.494	9.88**	53.160	.264
Fragility of happiness	-.180	-3.603**		

\*\* $p < 0.05$ , Dependent variable: Mental well-being

Since fear of happiness did not significantly correlate with mental well-being, it was not considered for the regression analysis. The results showed that the outcome variable- mental well-being was regressed on predicting variables- spiritual intelligence and fragility of happiness. Regression analysis showed that spiritual intelligence and fragility of happiness significantly predicted mental well-being, and contributes 25.9% of the variance,  $R^2 = .264$ ,  $F(2, 297) = 53.160$ ,  $p < .001$ .

To check for multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) was 1.005 and Tolerance was .995, which were all under the acceptable level (with VIF being between 1 and 5 and Tolerance being more than 0.2). Thus, multicollinearity does not exist here. Hence, it is safe to proceed with the current analysis.

Table 5. Moderation role of Fragility of Happiness on the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Mental Well-being (N=300)

	Model						R <sup>2</sup>	F
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI		
Constant	55.39	.46	119.10	.000	54.476	56.306	.274	37.24**
SI	.241	.02	8.53	.000	.1859	.2973		
FrH	-.244	.07	-3.36	.000	-.3869	-.1011		
SI*FrH	-.007	.00	-2.06	.040	-.0153	-.0004		

\*\*p<.05

**Note:** SI= Spiritual Intelligence; FrH= Fragility of Happiness; SI\*FrH= Interaction between Spiritual Intelligence and Fragility of Happiness; Dependent Variable: Mental well-being,

For this, a simple moderation analysis was performed using SPSS (fear of happiness was not considered for moderation analysis since it did not correlate significantly with mental well-being). The interaction between spiritual intelligence and fragility of happiness was found to be statistically significant ( $b = -.007$ , 95% CI  $[-.0153, -.0004]$ ,  $t = -2.060$ ,  $p = .040$ ). The direction of moderation was negative, i.e., fragility of happiness negatively impacts the association between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being. The conditional effect of spiritual intelligence on mental well-being showed significant results. At average moderation, the conditional effect was significant, ( $b = .2416$ , 95% confidence interval  $(.1859, .2973)$ ,  $p < .05$ , signifying the positive effect of spiritual intelligence on mental well-being. At low moderation, the conditional effect was significant, ( $b = .2922$ , 95% confidence interval  $(.2330, .3514)$ ,  $p < .05$ , signifying that the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being increases when fragility of happiness is low. At high moderation, the conditional effect was significant, ( $b = .1910$ , 95% confidence interval  $(1.051, .2769)$ ,  $p < .05$ , signifying that the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being decreases when fragility of happiness is high. This relationship has been illustrated in Figure 1,

which shows that fragility of happiness moderates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being.



Figure 1. Depicting the effect of fragility of happiness on the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Mental Well-being

A simple slope analysis was conducted to better understand the nature of the moderating effects, as shown in Figure 2. All the slopes were found to be statistically significant. As can be seen in Figure 2, the line is much steeper for low fragility of happiness, which shows that at low fragility of happiness, the impact of spiritual intelligence on mental well-being is much stronger in comparison to high fragility of happiness, i.e., as fragility of happiness increases, the strength of the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being will be decreased.

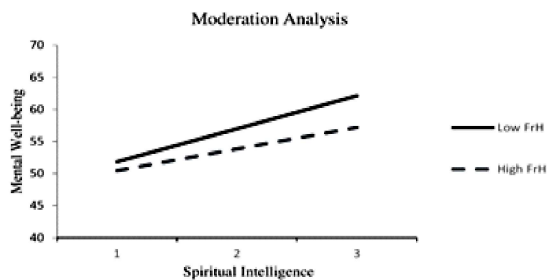


Figure 2: Slope analysis depicting the Moderation analysis

### Discussion

The current study was envisaged to explore if spiritual intelligence, and fear and fragility of happiness are related and the combined effect of these two concepts on mental well-being. Spiritual intelligence is defined by the notion of discovering a higher-order significance and motivation in a wide range of important life and professional expertise (Emmons, 2000). Studies have reported a significantly positive correlation between happiness, and spiritual intelligence (Amirian & Fazilat-Pour, 2016; Faribors et al., 2010). As reported by Jahangir et al. (2020), spiritual intelligence has a marked impact on the mental health of adults. Fear and fragility of happiness can be understood by individual's level of aversion and the weakness of happiness.

A positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being concord with the previous studies (Bozek et al., 2020; Pant & Srivastava, 2019) which show a positive relationship between these two variables, and that certain health-related behaviors (both physical and psychological health) can play a mediating role. The results of the present study provided an empirical support to the relationship between spiritual intelligence, its dimensions, and mental wellbeing, as has been proposed in the Six Factor Model of Psychological well-being by Ryff & Keyes (1995), which illuminates the idea that well-being cannot be determined

only by physical or biological descriptions, rather it is multidimensional, and a philosophical enquiry is needed to understand ways of living the life. Spiritual intelligence mirrors existential thinking, the meaning one attaches to life, reducing materialistic desires, and following divine values and pathway that guides an individual to practice a healthy way of living, problem-solving, and perceiving and practicing emotions deeply (Faribors et al., 2010; Sahebalzamani et al., 2013). Shabani et al. (2010) found that mental health can indeed be predicted by spiritual intelligence (SI) and emotional intelligence (EI).

A non-significant correlation between spiritual intelligence and fear of happiness indicates no relationship between the variables. Although this result is opposed to the studies in the past which have found a relationship between the components of spiritual intelligence and happiness (Ansari, 2015; Hejazi et al., 2020). This might be because of the educational level of the participants or their age level.

Apart from this, results also showed a significantly negative correlation between mental well-being and fragility of happiness. Taking a lead with previous works (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1985), it is understandable that happiness forms as an essential part of the well-being, and beliefs that happiness is fleeting and short-lived can hamper with the satisfaction in life, enhance on the vulnerability to maladjustments (Wong & Yuen, 2023), and interfere with the overall well-being by making people believe that happiness is unachievable which decreases their willingness to pursue happiness (Joshani, 2017; Joshani et al., 2014), hence, an increase in fragility of happiness can cause lower well-being and mental health (Lambert et al., 2021).

Spiritual intelligence and fragility of happiness can significantly predict mental

well-being, as result of the regression analysis. Spiritual intelligence uplifts the thoughts and spirits of a person, thus offering sound well-being and a lifestyle, devoid of mental health problems like anxiety and depression (Jahangir et al., 2020). When investigating association between spiritual intelligence and the parameters of mental health (particularly, depression, anxiety, and substance use), it was found that the latter was firmly associated with searching for a sense in the experiences of life; these associations were also found to be reliable and meaningful (Giannone & Kaplin, 2020).

Fragility of happiness was further found to moderate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being. This makes sense in terms of the personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955), which proposes that individual's notion or construct of how the world works (the belief that happiness is fragile and not in human control), succumbs them to unique idea to make sense of the world; hence, the amount of anxiety and the apprehension of waiting for something to happen (here, to feel happy again) determines the extent a person will drive himself (delving into spiritual behaviour) to transcend into the better state of being (attaining better mental well-being) (Kelly, 2017). Further, higher spiritual intelligence has been reported to create a jovial mood and boost happiness which promotes better mental health, and thus helps the person deliver performance at their best (Raisi et al., 2013). This interaction between spiritual intelligence and happiness has been analyzed by Shahsavari et al. (2018) and suggests that both attributes work together by fostering psychological hardiness, and subsequently uplifting social support, which are a given for quality well-being. Attaching personal meaning (a component of spiritual intelligence) to self can prevent depression, develop problem-solving attitude, particularly during stressful situations, and this structure

is significantly related to the general health of a person (Amirian & Fazilat-Pour, 2016).

Development of spiritual intelligence since childhood can help the individual to grow and mature into a peaceful personality, develop confidence and wisdom, and exhibit a quality performance (Safara & Bhatia, 2013). In agreement with K Jos & Pandey (2022), spiritual intelligence is vital to be inculcated across people of all ages and professions to deal with demanding circumstances, and this can be done through varied practices and mental health interventions, such as yoga, mindfulness, psychoeducation, and meditation.

### **Implications**

Spirituality intelligence can enable individuals to improve their mental health, adapt to regular pressure and keep them grounded. It can provide a method for adapting mental flexibility that will be useful for leaders and individuals in managerial positions to enhance efficiency and productivity at work. Individuals, if putting effort into boosting their happiness, can also enhance their spiritual intelligence, and allow individuals to change their maladaptive beliefs about happiness and boost positive psychology interventions and therapy procedures to improve an individual's overall mental well-being. The findings from the present study would be of value to the clinicians to understand the individuals/patients dealing with bouts of existential crisis, particularly from certain cultures like Asian cultures where the belief of fleeting happiness seems to be higher.

### **Limitations**

There have been certain limitations while carrying out the current study. The sample for the study was chosen from a limited geographical area, thus, narrowing the scope for wider generalization. Future research may carry out on a larger sample that is inclusive



of a wide variety of demographic factors, larger geographical area, and different cultural and ethnic groups, to aid in a comparative study.

### Conclusion

Some individuals may find it hard to enjoy happiness to the fullest due to the fear that any unfortunate and unforeseen event may dampen their happiness. This can cause the happy moment to fade away faster and in turn, affect the overall mental well-being of the individual. The present research aimed to study the effect of spiritual intelligence on the mental well-being of an individual under the influence of the fear and fragility of happiness. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence, mental wellbeing and, fragility of happiness however, no significant relationship was found between fear of happiness with spiritual intelligence and with mental wellbeing. Mental well-being was also found to be significantly predicted by spiritual intelligence and fragility of happiness; and fragility of happiness were found to moderate this relationship.

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