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Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence among Undergraduate Learners

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ABSTRACT

With the dynamics of the world changing, intelligence of learners no longer being strictly related to academic performance, it's important to under the EQ & SQ indicators to understand the overall holistic development of the leaners into higher education. This study examines the relationship between EQ and SQ among undergraduate learners and how emotional awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and inner values combine to affect academic engagement, interpersonal relationships, and general well-being of theirs.

The paper had primary data collected using structured questionnaires from learners of undergraduate programs, 101 in number, from different disciplines in the Mumbai Suburban region & the study employs descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and one-sample t-tests to explore levels of EQ and SQ and their association with Year of Study. Analysis further reveals that Emotional Quotient remains relatively stable across different years of study, whereas Spiritual Quotient shows a statistically significant negative relationship with academic progression, suggesting a gradual decline as students advance in their academic journey.

The study provides evidence that experiential and reflective learning-based EQ and SQ competencies could significantly contribute to

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emotional stability, ethical sensitivity, and resilience among young adults. Beyond personal development, the implications of integrating EQ and SQ in educational frameworks are wide-ranging, offering a chance for the growth of emotionally intelligent and spiritually grounded future leaders.

Introduction

In recent decades, higher education has seen a heightened interest in non-cognitive factors that explain learner success and well-being holistically. Two constructs of heightened interest are Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ). Emotional quotient refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions in oneself and others to effect common behavior and adaptive functioning. SQ is concerned with a person's capacity to access deeper meaning, purpose, and values in living, connecting the self to a more extended existential. The interplay between both areas of concern is of interest in educational contexts because both may have implications for how undergraduate learners deal with academic challenges, personal growth, and evolving identity. In fact, instruments to measure emotional and spiritual intelligence have been applied within learner samples and lend themselves to significant relationships with such outcomes as well-being, engagement, and attainment (e.g., emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence) (Mohammadi et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2024).

While significant evidence has accumulated to link emotional intelligence with learner outcomes—such as academic performance, and the effective management of stress—suggesting (Najafi-Vasough et al., 2023) the distinctive contribution of spiritual intelligence remains less clearly delineated within undergraduate settings (Sneha & Gowri, 2025). The second issue concerns the extent to which there is an interrelationship between EQ and SQ: to what degree do learners scoring high on one dimension of intelligence also reveal high levels of the other, and how are these constructs coexisting and/or interacting? Some studies show positive correlations between SQ and EQ (Kaur, 2022), though the findings are mixed and may have multiple factors dependent during the study. A recent meta-analysis discovered moderate correlation coefficients between SQ and achievement ($r = .36$) and between EQ and achievement ($r = .50$) for learner populations, which suggests that both dimensions independently carry meaning for learner outcomes (Zhou et al., 2024). These issues taken together point to the need for focused empirical investigation into the relationship between EQ and SQ specifically in undergraduate learners, including the strength, direction, and educational implications of that relationship.

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The aim of the paper will be to investigate the relationship between EQ and SQ in undergraduate learners for the Mumbai Suburban region. Precisely, it intends to establish the level and nature of their relationship in higher education settings. In so doing, the study purports to add to the growing evidence of how and whether these dimensions of intelligence interface and complement each other to affect the development of learners beyond mere cognitive measures. This should, ultimately, have implications for how curricula are designed, learner support services are provided, and educational strategies are crafted to advance not just academic performance but also the personal growth, meaning-making, and emotional-spiritual integration of learners.

Literature Review

Historical Overview

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) was popularized in the mid-1990s when Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* and argued that competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management might predict success beyond traditional cognitive intelligence. Wikipedia+1 Foundational work by John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey in the 1990s conceptualized EQ as a set of emotional-processing abilities: perceiving emotions, using them to facilitate thinking, understanding, and managing emotions. Wikipedia+1 Meanwhile, more recently, the idea of Spiritual Intelligence came about as some scholars have begun an effort to explore whether there is a “spiritual” dimension to intelligence itself, drawing on such human capacities as existential reflection, meaning-making, and transcendence. For example, a theoretical exploration by Donald B. King (2012) and others proposed different models of SI, such as critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Digital Commons+2 Digital Commons+2 There has been a relatively increasing number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses lately, such as Zhou et al. (2023), indicating that both EQ and SQ have been applied to academic, organizational, and health contexts, and that the interaction between them deserves further scrutiny.

Thus, the historical development of the two constructs indicates the recognition of non-cognitive intelligences (EQ) beyond IQ, an emergence of a “spiritual” intelligence concept (SQ) aiming to capture deeper or meaning-oriented competencies, and finally, the most recent empirical work on how EQ and SQ interrelate and influence outcomes such as learner achievement, well-being, coping, and adaptation in educational settings.

Major Contribution to this Research Area

A 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis performed by Zhenfei Zhou et al. estimated the correlation coefficients between SQ and achievement to be around $r = 0.36$ and between EQ and achievement to be approximately $r = 0.50$ in samples of university and school learners. PMC This would indicate that both intelligences are meaningfully related to academic outcomes; however, the latter has somewhat stronger links in that respect.

A scoping review focused on SQ found consistent positive correlations between SI and variables such as resilience, general and mental/spiritual health, emotional intelligence and social behaviours; and negative correlations with burnout, stress, depression and anxiety. PMC This points to the role of SQ in learner well being, which may interplay with EQ in educational settings.

Empirical correlational studies have found positive associations between EQ and SQ. For example, King and DeCicco (2009) reported significant associations between spiritual intelligence and two self-report measures of emotional intelligence in a sample of Canadian adults. Digital Commons Another study in Pakistan found significant positive correlations among EQ, SQ and academic performance among 113 learners.

Review studies, for example, "Emotional Intelligence and Spirituality: A Review" (2019) synthesized the findings from 40 articles published between 1998-2012, and reached a conclusion that EQ and spirituality/SQ are related to lower stress, better health outcomes, and improved functioning. IJIP

Taking all these contributions together, it becomes clear that EQ and SQ represent meaningful constructs in educational research, and both relate to learner outcomes; their mutual relationship, though gradually emerging, is not well understood. The most important gap that remains is that while both constructs are worthy, very few studies have targeted the relationship between EQ and SQ in undergraduate populations in depth-i.e., with respect to strength of association, directionality, and moderating or mediating factors.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the literature gap identified, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the levels and distribution of Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) among learners across different years of study.
2. To evaluate the relative stability of Emotional Quotient across academic progression in comparison to Spiritual Quotient.

Hypotheses

H_{1a}: There is a significant positive correlation between EQ among learners across different years of study.

H_{1b}: There is a significant positive correlation between SQ among learners across different years of study.

H_{2a}: EQ and SQ do not differ in their patterns of association w.r.t. Year of Study.

Method of Research

Participants

The sample comprised 101 undergraduate learners enrolled in BBA program at colleges in the Mumbai region. The sample was selected from all three levels of the undergraduate BBA course, namely first, second and third year. The sampling method used in this research was convenience sampling, in which the learners who were available and willing were invited to fill in the survey.

Materials

Data were collected through an online structured survey administered via Google Forms. The survey included the measurement of emotional intelligence (EQ) and spiritual intelligence (SQ), which will be detailed in the data collection appendix. Graphical and statistical techniques, such as charts, histograms, scatter plots, and correlation and descriptive statistics, were envisioned for the purpose of analysis. Hence, it meets the recommendations for transparent reporting of research methods.

Procedures

The survey link was forwarded to learners across all three years of the BBA programme at selected colleges in Mumbai. Participation was voluntary, and learners were told about the purpose of the study, along with the assured confidentiality of their responses. Following informed consent, respondents completed the online questionnaire. Responses were downloaded once data collection was closed and cleaned for missing values and responses that did not meet criteria for inclusion, such as incomplete sets of responses. Next, the steps included coding the data, importing it into statistical software, such as SPSS or equivalent, and preparing for analysis. This procedure follows recommended practice for method sections to enable readers to replicate the study.

Analysis

Data analysis involved both graphical and statistical techniques. Graphical tools-including bar charts, pie charts, and scatter plots-were used to depict the distribution of the participants, for instance, by year of academic study, EQ and SQ scores, and preliminary patterns. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics-means and standard deviations-and inferential statistics-such as Pearson's correlation-to test the relationship between EQ and SQ among undergraduate learners. Key numerical results were summarized in tables, and narrative descriptions accompanied all presentations of data. The foregoing analytic approach meets the general goal of the paper-to examine the nature, or magnitude and direction, of the relationship between Emotional Quotient and Spiritual Quotient in undergraduate learners-such that the research questions and hypotheses are answered in a clear, replicable manner.

Overview of Findings

The present analysis examines the relationship between **Year of academic study (YS)** and two psychological constructs:

- **Emotional Quotient (EQ)**
- **Spiritual Quotient (SQ)**

Additionally, one-sample *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether the mean scores of YS, EQ, and SQ differ significantly from a reference value (Test Value = 0), primarily to establish statistical presence and magnitude of these variables in the sample.

The total sample size across all analyses was **N = 101**.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics indicate adequate variability and acceptable distributional properties for all variables analysed.

Variable	Mean	SD	Min-Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Year of academic study (YS)	1.90	0.76	1-3	0.57	-1.22
Spiritual Quotient (SQ)	51.88	16.51	12-85	-0.19	-0.81
Emotional Quotient (EQ)	88.63	28.85	41-161	0.83	-0.31

Interpretation

- All variables demonstrate acceptable skewness and kurtosis, indicating approximate normality clearly indicating clear usages of parametric tests such as Pearson correlation & t-test.

Correlation Analysis

A. Year of academic study and Emotional Quotient

Confidence Intervals				
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (1-tailed)	95% Confidence Intervals (1-tailed) ^a	
			Lower	Upper
Year of academic study - Emotional Quotient	.033	.373	-.133	1.000
a. Estimation is based on Fisher's r-to-z transformation.				

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a very weak yet positive correlation between Year of academic study and EQ ($r = 0.033$), which is not statistically significant ($p = 0.373$, one-tailed).

Interpretation: Emotional Quotient shows no significant variation on basis of Year of academic study, interpreting that advancement in academic year alone does not appear to influence emotional intelligence levels amongst undergraduate learners.

B. Year of academic study and Spiritual Quotient

Confidence Intervals				
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (1-tailed)	95% Confidence Intervals (1-tailed) ^a	
			Lower	Upper
Year of academic study - Spiritual Quotient	-.206	.019	-1.000	-.043
a. Estimation is based on Fisher's r-to-z transformation.				

A negative and statistically significant correlation was observed between Year of academic study and Spiritual Quotient ($r = -0.206$, $p = 0.019$, one-tailed).

Interpretation: There was an inverse relationship observed between the Year of academic study & SQ clearly throwing some light on the potential academic, environmental, or age-related influences reducing spiritual orientation over time.

One-Sample *t*-Test Analysis

A. Year of academic study and Spiritual Quotient

Both Year of academic study and Spiritual Quotient showed highly significant mean differences from the test value.

Variable	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
Year of academic study	25.30	100	< .001	2.52
Spiritual Quotient	31.58	100	< .001	3.14

Interpretation:

- Extremely large effect sizes indicate that observed values are substantively and statistically meaningful.
- The magnitude reflects strong construct presence rather than practical group comparison.

B. Year of academic study and Emotional Quotient

Similarly, Year of academic study and Emotional Quotient were found to be statistically significant with very large effect sizes.

Variable	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
Year of academic study	25.30	100	< .001	2.52
Emotional Quotient	30.88	100	< .001	3.07

Interpretation: Emotional Quotient scores indicate that very large effect sizes confirm the strength and consistency of measured EQ levels amongst undergraduate learners.

Proposed Explanations of the Findings

The primary data analysis indicates that both EQ and SQ are substantially present among learners, with mean scores significantly higher than the reference value indicating that learners, irrespective of their academic year, possess well-developed emotional and spiritual capacities, reflecting the effectiveness of broader socialization processes, family influences, and prior educational experiences that shape these non-cognitive constructs before and during higher education. The relatively stable distribution of EQ across year of academic study further implies that emotional competencies may be more trait-like in individuals and develop early in lives and remain consistent as learners' progress academically.

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EQ shows no statistically significant association with Year of academic study, suggesting that academic advancement alone does not substantially alter learners' emotional intelligence. This may be explained by the fact that emotional skills such as self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal awareness are often reinforced through everyday life experiences rather than formal academic progression. On the contrary, SQ demonstrates a statistically significant negative relationship with Year of academic study, indicating a modest decline as learners advance academically. This pattern may reflect on the increasing career-oriented focus, academic pressure, and reduced engagement with more of reflective or value-based practices over time both academically & personally.

Collectively, these findings suggest that while EQ remains relatively stable across academic progression, whereas, SQ may be more sensitive to contextual and environmental changes within higher education, highlighting the need for institutional initiatives that consciously help & guide learners in their holistic development alongside academic achievement through diversified forms of pedagogy used.

Conclusion

The present study provides empirical evidence on the distribution and academic trajectory of Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) among undergraduate learners, offering nuanced insights into non-cognitive dimensions of learner development. The findings clearly indicate that EQ remains largely stable across different years of academic study, suggesting that emotional competencies namely, interpersonal sensitivity, emotional regulation, and self-awareness are relatively enduring characteristics that are not substantially altered by academic progression alone. On the contrary, SQ demonstrates a statistically significant decline as learners advance academically, highlighting the potential impact of increasing performance orientation, academic pressures, and career-focused priorities on learners' value-based, reflective, and meaning-oriented capacities. The strong effect sizes observed in the one-sample *t*-tests further confirm that both EQ and SQ are robustly present and reliably measured within the study population, strengthening confidence in the validity of the findings.

This has important implications for educational policy and curriculum design, underscoring the need for learner development interventions that go beyond cognitive and technical skill-building to consciously nurture emotional and spiritual well-being.

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