Measuring Spiritual Intelligence among Higher Secondary Students: Scale Development and Psychometric Validation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The present study intents to create and validate a Spiritual Intelligence Scale for higher secondary students. It aims to evaluate spiritual intelligence as a multidimensional construct that facilitates meaning-making, self-awareness, existential reflection, and personal growth among adolescents. The study also vision to establish a reliable and valid measurement tool apt for educational and psychological research contexts.*

Methodology: *This study adopts a quantitative research structure with a scale development and psychometric validation approach. Data were collected from 150 higher secondary students from government, aided, and unaided schools in Kottayam District, Kerala, selected using stratified random sampling. An initial pool of 15 items was developed based on an extensive review of literature and expert validation. The instrument was tested using reliability analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine its psychometric properties and validate the factor structure.*

Findings/Result: *The outcome of the study revealed satisfactory internal consistency with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.815. EFA led to the removal of five items and identified a three-factor structure comprising Existence of Critical Thinking, Discovery of Personal Meaning, and Conscious State of Expansion. CFA confirmed the adequacy of the measurement model, with all goodness-of-fit indices meeting recommended thresholds. The standardized factor loadings and regression weights were statistically significant, confirming strong construct validity.*

Originality/Value: *This study contributes to the development of a context-specific and psychometrically validated Spiritual Intelligence Scale for higher secondary students. It provides a reliable instrument for further research in educational psychology and enhances understanding of spiritual intelligence as a key factor in adolescent development and well-being.*

Paper Type: *Empirical Research Paper.*

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence, Scale Development, Higher Secondary Students, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Construct Validity

1. INTRODUCTION :

Spiritual intelligence has gained growing attention as a distinct measurement of human intelligence that contributes to an individual's ability to seek meaning, purpose, and transcendence in life. It encompasses the potential to significantly reflect on existential issues, derive personal meaning from experiences, and acquire better states of consciousness that facilitate personal growth and well-being. Unlike conventional forms of intelligence that commonly focus on cognitive competencies or emotional competencies, spiritual intelligence permits people to combine values, beliefs, and ethical standards into their everyday lives and decision-making techniques. Researchers have emphasized that non secular intelligence plays a vital role in enhancing psychological resilience, life pleasure, self-recognition, and adaptive coping mechanisms (Emmons (2000). [1]; King (2012). [2]; Zohar & Marshall (2000). [3]). Therefore, the concept has emerged as a critical area of research in academic and behavioral sciences, especially among youngsters who're in the process of identity formation and value development.

The higher secondary level represents a critical period during which students stumble upon numerous academic, social, and emotional challenges that have an impact on their personal and academic outcomes (Evans, Borriello, & discipline (2018). [4]). In the course of this developmental segment, the ability to discover meaning in life, reflect on existential questions, and maintain inner stability may contribute considerably to students' overall well-being and adjustment. Even though several instruments have been developed to assess spiritual intelligence, variations in cultural, academic, and demographic contexts necessitate the development and validation of context-specific measurement tools. Moreover, ensuring the psychometric adequacy of such instruments is vital for producing reliable and valid research findings. Consequently, the present study aims to develop and psychometrically validate a spiritual Intelligence Scale among higher secondary students. by using reliability analysis, Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the study seeks to establish the reliability, construct validity, and underlying factor structure of the scale, thereby contributing a strong measurement instrument for future educational and psychological research.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :

The present study is significant as it contributes to the development of body of knowledge on spiritual intelligence by way of offering a scientifically developed and psychometrically validated instrument for its measurement among higher secondary students. Spiritual intelligence has been more and more recognized as a vital factor affecting personal growth, psychological well-being, resilience, ethical decision-making, and the skill to find meaning and purpose in life. However, the availability of context-specific and empirically validated instruments for evaluating spiritual intelligence among adolescents remains limited. By developing and validating a Spiritual Intelligence Scale, this study addresses this gap and provides a reliable instrument for measuring the multidimensional elements of spiritual intelligence within the educational context.

The study is also precious for researchers, educators, counselors, and policymakers. The validated scale can be utilized in future empirical investigations to study the relationship between spiritual intelligence and various educational, psychological, and behavioral outcomes. Educators and counselors may employ the instrument to identify students' spiritual skills and design appropriate developmental interventions aimed at enhancing personal well-being and character improvement. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the advancement of measurement practices in educational and psychological research by establishing evidence of reliability and construct validity through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Therefore, the study provides both theoretical and practical contributions by offering a robust instrument for assessing spiritual intelligence among higher secondary students.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM :

In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward the role of spiritual intelligence in promoting personal well-being, resilience, ethical behavior, and meaningful engagement with life. Higher secondary students encounter numerous academic, social, and emotional challenges during a critical stage of their development, making it essential to understand the factors that contribute to their holistic growth (Soumya (2025). [5]). Spiritual intelligence has been recognized as a potential resource that enables individuals to reflect on existential questions, derive meaning from experiences, and maintain psychological balance (Skrzypińska (2021). [6]). Despite its growing importance in educational and psychological research, the assessment of spiritual intelligence remains challenging due to the limited availability of reliable and valid measurement instruments specifically designed for student populations.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of research on spiritual intelligence largely depends on the quality of the instruments used for its measurement. Existing scales may not adequately capture the multidimensional nature of spiritual intelligence within specific educational and cultural contexts. Therefore, there is a need to develop and validate a psychometrically sound instrument that accurately measures the dimensions of spiritual intelligence among higher secondary students. In this context, the present study seeks to develop a Spiritual Intelligence Scale and examine its reliability and validity through rigorous statistical procedures, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The study aims to provide a dependable measurement tool that can facilitate future research and educational interventions related to spiritual intelligence.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Spiritual intelligence has emerged as an important construct that enables individuals to understand deeper existential questions, derive meaning from life experiences, and develop a sense of purpose and connectedness. Safara, M., & Bhatia, M. S. (2013) [7] described spiritual intelligence as the capacity to integrate inner awareness with everyday functioning, thereby promoting wisdom, compassion, and personal growth. Similarly, Amram and Dryer (2008) [8] developed the Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale and identified multiple dimensions of spiritual intelligence, including consciousness, meaning, truth, grace, and transcendence. Research has suggested that spiritual intelligence contributes positively to psychological well-being, emotional stability, resilience, and ethical decision-making. George (2006) [9] further argued that spiritual intelligence enhances individuals' ability to cope with challenges and make value-based decisions, indicating its relevance across educational, personal, and professional domains.

The development of valid and reliable measurement instruments is essential for advancing research on spiritual intelligence. Psychometric scholars have emphasized the importance of establishing reliability and construct validity through systematic scale development procedures. Sitgreaves (1979) [10] highlighted that reliability serves as a fundamental requirement for any psychological measurement instrument, while Hair et al. (2019) [11] recommended the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine underlying factor structures and validate measurement models. Kline (2016) [12] also emphasized that Structural Equation Modeling provides a robust framework for assessing construct validity through goodness-of-fit indices. These methodological approaches have been widely applied in educational and behavioral research to develop scientifically sound instruments. Therefore, the existing literature supports the need for developing and psychometrically validating a context-specific Spiritual Intelligence Scale for higher secondary students.

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY :

(1) To develop a Spiritual Intelligence Scale for measuring the dimensions of spiritual intelligence among higher secondary students.

(2) To examine the psychometric properties of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale by assessing its reliability, factor structure, and construct validity through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

The present study adopted a quantitative research design employing a scale development and psychometric validation approach to construct and validate a Spiritual Intelligence Scale among higher secondary students. The population of the study comprised higher secondary students enrolled in government, aided, and unaided schools in Kottayam District, Kerala. Kottayam District is recognized for its strong educational tradition and extensive network of schools, making it an appropriate setting for investigating spiritual intelligence among adolescents.

The scale development process was carried out systematically in multiple stages. Initially, an extensive review of the literature on spiritual intelligence and related theoretical frameworks was undertaken to identify the major dimensions of the construct. Based on the literature review, an initial pool of items was generated and subsequently examined by experts in education, psychology, and research methodology to establish content validity. Based on their suggestions, the items were revised and refined to develop the preliminary version of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale.

A sample of 150 higher secondary students was selected from various schools in Kottayam District using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of students across different schools and academic streams. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of the developed scale items. Prior permission was obtained from the school authorities, and participation was voluntary.

The psychometric properties of the instrument were assessed using various statistical techniques. Reliability was examined through Cronbach's alpha coefficients to determine the internal consistency of the scale. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to identify the underlying factor structure and dimensionality of the instrument. Subsequently, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the extracted factor structure and evaluate the adequacy of the measurement

model using various goodness-of-fit indices. The findings provided empirical evidence regarding the reliability and validity of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale and established its suitability for measuring spiritual intelligence among higher secondary students.

7. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION :

To assess the psychometric properties of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale, reliability and exploratory factor analyses were conducted. The reliability of the instrument was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. As presented in Table 1, the three dimensions—Existence of Critical Thinking ($\alpha = 0.771$), Discovery of Personal Meaning ($\alpha = 0.802$), and Conscious State of Expansion ($\alpha = 0.804$)—demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. The overall reliability coefficient for the 15-item scale was 0.815, indicating good reliability and suggesting that the instrument is suitable for measuring spiritual competencies among higher secondary students.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Factors	No. of Attributes	Cronbach's alpha
Existence of Critical Thinking	4	0.771
Discovery of Personal Meaning	4	0.802
Conscious State of Expansion	2	0.804
	Overall Cronbach's Alpha	0.815

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. As shown in Table 2, the KMO value was 0.715, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 and indicating adequate sampling adequacy (Kumar (2025). [13]). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1407.002$, df = 45, $p < 0.001$), confirming the presence of sufficient correlations among the variables for factor extraction. These results support the appropriateness of applying Exploratory Factor Analysis to identify the underlying factor structure of the scale.

Table 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.715
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	1407.002
	Degrees of freedom	45
	Significance	p <0.001

Table 3 presents the rotated component matrix derived using Varimax rotation. The results reveal a well-defined three-factor structure, with all retained items loading strongly on their respective factors. The factor loadings ranged from 0.741 to 0.910 for Component 1, 0.823 to 0.942 for Component 2, and 0.835 to 0.921 for Component 3, substantially exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al. (2019). [14]). These findings indicate strong relationships between the observed variables and their underlying latent constructs.

Moreover, no significant cross-loadings were observed, suggesting a clear distinction among the extracted factors and supporting the discriminant validity of the scale (Farrell & Rudd (2009). [15]). The rotated solution demonstrates a stable and interpretable factor structure, thereby providing empirical evidence for the construct validity of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale. Overall, the results confirm that the instrument adequately captures the multidimensional nature of spiritual intelligence and is suitable for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 3: Rotated component matrix of Spiritual Intelligence

		Component		
		1	2	3
SP10	I recognize qualities in people which are more meaningful than their body, personality, or emotions	.922		
SP12	I can control when I enter higher states of consciousness or awareness.	.919		

SP11	I am able to enter higher states of consciousness or awareness.	.915		
SP13	I am able to move freely between levels of consciousness or awareness.	.715		
SP3	I am able to deeply contemplate what happens after death.		.899	
SP1	I have often questioned or pondered the nature of reality.		.843	
SP4	I have developed my own theories about such things as life, death, reality, and existence		.833	
SP2	I have spent time contemplating the purpose or reason for my existence.		.814	
SP7	My ability to find meaning and purpose in life helps me adapt to stressful situations.			.929
SP6	I am able to define a purpose or reason for my life.			.923

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Model Fit Assessment:

The adequacy of the proposed measurement model was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). A range of goodness-of-fit indices was employed to assess the extent to which the hypothesized model represented the observed data. The model fit statistics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Model fit indices

Fit Index	Result	Recommended Value	Model Fit
Chi-square (χ^2)	20.181	$p > 0.05$	Good Fit
Degrees of Freedom (df)	29	–	–
p-value	0.88	> 0.05	Good Fit
Chi-square/degree of freedom (x^2/d.f.)	0.696	≤ 5.00	Good Fit
Comparative Fit index (CFI)	0.998	>0.90	Good Fit
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.984	>0.90	Good Fit
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.970	> 0.90	Good Fit
Normated Fit Index (NFI)	0.986	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.996	Approaches 1	Good Fit
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	0.989	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.038	< 0.08	Good Fit
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	0.519	>0.5	Good Fit
Parsimony-Adjusted Measures Index(PNFI)	0.635	>0.5	Good Fit
Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI)	0.644	>0.5	Good Fit

The results indicate that the proposed model demonstrates an excellent fit to the data. The chi-square statistic was non-significant ($\chi^2 = 20.181$, df = 29, p = 0.88), suggesting that there is no significant difference between the observed covariance matrix and the covariance matrix implied by the model (Kaplan, David (2009) [16]). Furthermore, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df = 0.696) was well below the recommended threshold, indicating a satisfactory level of model fit.

The incremental fit indices also supported the adequacy of the model. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.998), Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.986), Incremental Fit Index (IFI = 0.996), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.989) all exceeded the recommended cutoff value of 0.90, indicating excellent model fit (Gerbing and Anderson (1992). [17]). Similarly, the absolute fit indices, namely the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = 0.984) and Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI = 0.970), confirmed the suitability of the measurement model.

In addition, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.038) was substantially below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a close approximation of the model to the population covariance matrix (Yin, Y., Shi, D., & Fairchild, A. J., (2023). [18]). The parsimony-adjusted indices,

including the Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI = 0.519), Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI = 0.635), and Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI = 0.644), also exceeded the recommended benchmark of 0.50, demonstrating that the model achieves an appropriate balance between explanatory power and model simplicity (Yaşlıoğlu, M., & Yaşlıoğlu, D. T. (2020). [19]).

Collectively, the goodness-of-fit indices provide strong empirical support for the proposed measurement model. The findings confirm that the hypothesized factor structure adequately represents the observed data and provides evidence for the construct validity of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale. Therefore, the measurement model is considered appropriate for subsequent structural and inferential analyses. Since all goodness-of-fit indices satisfied the recommended threshold values, the measurement model was accepted, confirming that the hypothesized factor structure exhibited an adequate fit to the observed data.

Significance Tests of Individual Parameters:

The significance of the measurement model parameters was evaluated through regression weights, critical ratios (C.R.), and p-values. The results, presented in Table 5, indicate that all observed variables loaded significantly on their respective latent constructs.

Table 5: Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
SP10	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	1			
SP12	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.931	0.041	22.858	***
SP11	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.922	0.044	21.084	***
SP13	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.665	0.069	9.652	***
SP3	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	1			
SP1	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.932	0.065	14.282	***
SP4	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.886	0.065	13.679	***
SP2	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.882	0.066	13.383	***
SP7	<---	Conscious State of Expansion	1			
SP6	<---	Conscious State of Expansion	0.925	0.068	13.60	<0.001

For the construct Existence of Critical Thinking, the factor loadings ranged from 0.665 to 0.931, with all indicators demonstrating statistically significant relationships ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, the indicators associated with Discovery of Personal Meaning exhibited strong and significant loadings, ranging from 0.882 to 0.932 ($p < 0.001$). The indicator measuring Conscious State of Expansion also demonstrated a significant loading ($\beta = 0.925$, C.R. = 13.60, $p < 0.001$), confirming its contribution to the underlying construct.

All factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating adequate item reliability and strong associations between the observed variables and their respective latent constructs (Baharum et al. (2023). [20]). Furthermore, the critical ratios were substantially greater than the recommended value of 1.96, providing evidence of statistical significance. These findings support the convergent validity of the measurement model and confirm that the indicators are appropriate measures of the respective dimensions of spiritual intelligence.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the measurement model possesses satisfactory psychometric properties and that the relationships between the observed indicators and latent constructs are statistically significant.

Standardized Regression Weights:

Table 6 presents the standardized regression weights for the fitted measurement model. Standardized estimates facilitate the assessment of the relative contribution of each indicator to its corresponding latent construct. Higher standardized loadings indicate stronger relationships between the observed variables and the underlying factors (Brown & Moore (2012). [21]).

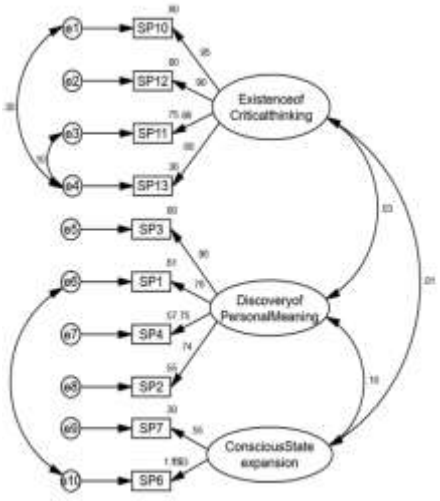

Fig. 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model of Spiritual Intelligence

The results show that the indicators associated with Existence of Critical Thinking exhibited substantial standardized loadings ranging from 0.601 to 0.948, indicating strong representation of the construct. Similarly, the indicators measuring Discovery of Personal Meaning demonstrated satisfactory loadings ranging from 0.742 to 0.897, suggesting that the items adequately capture the underlying dimension. For Conscious State Expansion, the standardized loadings were 0.546 for SP7 and 0.689 for SP6, indicating satisfactory relationships between the indicators and the latent construct. The standardized regression weights exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, providing evidence of convergent validity and confirming that the indicators adequately represent their respective dimensions of spiritual intelligence. The findings support the reliability and validity of the proposed measurement model.

Table 6: Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
SP10	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.948
SP12	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.897
SP11	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.865
SP13	<---	Existence of Critical Thinking	0.601
SP3	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.897
SP1	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.779
SP4	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.754
SP2	<---	Discovery of Personal Meaning	0.742
SP7	<---	Conscious State Expansion	0.546
SP6	<---	Conscious State Expansion	0.689

8. FINDINGS & CONCLUSION :

The present study aimed to develop and validate a Spiritual Intelligence Scale for higher secondary students. The scale development process began with 15 items derived from an extensive review of the literature and expert evaluation. Through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), five items were removed due to inadequate factor loadings, resulting in a final 10-item scale comprising three dimensions: Existence of Critical Thinking, Discovery of Personal Meaning, and Conscious State of Expansion. The retained items demonstrated satisfactory reliability and strong factor loadings, indicating that they adequately represent the underlying construct of spiritual intelligence.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) further established the construct validity of the scale, as all goodness-of-fit indices satisfied the recommended threshold values. The regression weights and standardized factor loadings were statistically significant, confirming strong relationships between the observed indicators and their respective latent constructs. Overall, the findings provide substantial evidence that the Spiritual Intelligence Scale is a reliable and valid multidimensional instrument for

assessing spiritual intelligence among higher secondary students. The scale may therefore be effectively utilized in future educational and psychological research examining spiritual intelligence and its associated outcomes.

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