



Spiritual Intelligence and its Relationship with Happiness and Resilience among Undergraduate Muslim Students

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ABSTRACT

University life is one of the most challenging stages individuals can face. Due to environmental changes, university students encounter various physical and emotional difficulties, which, if not managed properly, can negatively affect their physical and mental health. This study examines the relationship between spiritual intelligence, happiness, and resilience among undergraduate Muslim students at a public university in Malaysia. The sample comprised 287 respondents selected through convenience sampling. A survey was created using Google Forms and distributed randomly across various online and on-site platforms. The study employed three measurement tools: the 24-item Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI-24), the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). The Pearson correlation coefficient between spiritual intelligence and happiness was 0.249, indicating a weak positive correlation. Similarly, the coefficient between spiritual intelligence and resilience was 0.201, also suggesting a weak positive correlation. Despite these weak correlations, the study reveals a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and both happiness and resilience among undergraduate Muslim students. This research offers valuable insights for educational institutions, highlighting the need to develop more effective programmes to enhance students' spiritual intelligence. By doing so, universities can foster greater happiness and resilience, helping students navigate life's challenges more effectively.

Keywords: spiritual Intelligence, resilience, happiness, undergraduate students

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1 INTRODUCTION

Studying at the university is one of the most challenging periods in an individual's development. Students face physical and emotional challenges due to changes in their environment, which can lead to negative consequences (Joan et al., 2021). University students are expected to study independently, choose their majors and courses, and demonstrate initiative and effort in achieving their goals. They must transition into adult learners and adapt quickly to changes in the learning system from high school to university, often leading to significant stress. To manage their well-being throughout their university life, students need to optimise their abilities. Their capacity to enhance their psychological well-being can be assessed in various ways, one of which is spiritual intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence has a positive impact on transcendental awareness, personal meaning-creation, self-awareness, and existential thinking (Farahmand et al., 2014). Another study conducted among nurses also found that spiritual intelligence is significantly associated with life satisfaction (Kalantarkousheh et al., 2014; Sahebalzamani et al., 2013). Meanwhile, several studies have revealed a relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness (Hejazi et al., 2020; Ozsari & Cetin, 2022; Ramezanli et al., 2020). Happiness is defined as the state of being happy, encompassing emotions of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being (American Psychological Association, 2018). Numerous studies have also examined the relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience (Hassan, 2022; Nejad et al., 2019; Thankachan & Babu, 2021). Resilience refers to the ability to adapt to difficulties or challenges in life, adjusting to both external and internal demands through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Ahoei et al. (2017), who investigated the connection between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being in individuals battling breast cancer, found that higher scores in spiritual intelligence were strongly correlated with a positive self-attitude and self-acceptance. Meanwhile, Ozsari and Cetin (2022) studied individuals involved in systematic sports training and discovered that spiritual intelligence facilitates a profound understanding of one's innermost being. When someone constructs an appropriate system of thoughts, they can respond effectively to events, resulting in happiness through proper reactions (Ozsari & Cetin, 2022). These studies underscore the important role of spiritual intelligence in emotional regulation and encourage an examination of the relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness among undergraduate Muslim students.

Additionally, some studies have highlighted the connection between spiritual intelligence and resilience (Kessel, 2013; Khosravi & Nikmanesh, 2014; Sinchana & Joy, 2023). Individuals with a high level of resilience are better equipped to create plans and take steps to move beyond challenging situations (Thankachan & Babu, 2021). They possess a positive self-view and confidence in their strengths and abilities (Thankachan & Babu, 2021). These findings spark curiosity about the relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience among undergraduate

Muslim students. Furthermore, very few studies have explored this correlation in the context of Malaysia (Ibrahim, 2022).

1.1 Spiritual Intelligence

According to Oszari and Cetin (2022), intelligence is the capacity to manage cognitive complexity. It encompasses the ability to think, reason, perceive truths, make judgments, and ultimately draw conclusions. However, over the past two decades, the discourse surrounding intelligence has expanded to include various forms, such as natural, existential, and spiritual intelligence (Oszari & Cetin, 2022).

Zohar and Marshall (2000) define spiritual intelligence as a fundamental aspect of intelligence. Spiritual intelligence, or spiritual quotient, focuses on finding the value in our actions and placing them within a meaningful context (Jain, 2024). It can help individuals reach the deepest layers of their true selves (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Additionally, spiritual intelligence refers to a collection of spiritual skills and capabilities that can be optimised to enhance a person's adaptability (Ahoei et al., 2017). The meaning of spiritual intelligence continues to evolve, as it remains challenging to define it precisely. Skrzypinska (2020) notes that spiritual traditions, such as spiritualism, along with certain psychological literature, emphasise consciousness and the pursuit of meaning, which are essential for spiritual development.

On the other hand, King (2008) proposed four elements of spiritual intelligence: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. King's model will be utilised in this research and explained in more detail later. The diverse concepts surrounding spiritual intelligence indicate that this aspect of intelligence is complex and may vary across cultures.

1.2 Happiness and its relationship with Spiritual Intelligence

According to Cherry (2022), happiness has two key components: positive choices and life satisfaction. Everyone experiences a mix of positive and negative moods and emotions, but happiness is primarily associated with positive experiences. When people are happy, they feel content with life, have a great life satisfaction (Li et al., 2019). On the other hand, happiness has also been defined as a complete and justified satisfaction with life (Jahangir et al., 2020). It encompasses the belief in achieving one's goals and the pleasant feelings that accompany this achievement (Jahangir et al., 2020). Happiness serves as the ultimate motivator for human behaviour (Jahangir et al., 2020) and is often regarded as a positive inner experience that individuals use to assess the overall quality of their lives (Jahangir et al., 2020).

Spiritual intelligence consists of cognitive and emotional capacities that contribute to optimal personal well-being and a higher sense of well-being (Hejazi et al., 2020). This form of intelligence can help individuals overcome challenges associated with spiritual behaviour, ultimately leading

to happiness and self-healing (Hejazi et al., 2020). As the cognitive theory of happiness suggests, happiness results from cognitive functions that compare the reality of life with how life should be (Rojas & Veenhoven, 2011). Individuals who develop a suitable mental model can respond to situations effectively and experience happiness through appropriate reactions (Oszari & Cetin, 2022). When individuals understand the true nature of life, they experience happiness as a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Spiritual intelligence facilitates a deep understanding of one's innermost being (Oszari & Cetin, 2022). A deeper understanding of oneself and others fosters greater happiness (Oszari & Cetin, 2022). This aligns with the cognitive theory of happiness, emphasising that happiness depends on how a person creates personal meaning.

1.3 Resilience and its relationship with Spiritual Intelligence

Resilience refers to the capacity to recover, adapt, or strengthen oneself in the face of challenges or adversity (Tankachan & Babu, 2021). It can help moderate stressful events and reduce their impact on individuals (Nejad et al., 2019). According to Sinchana and Joy (2023), resilience comprises three key factors: (1) recovery, which involves returning to a positive or normal state that existed before the stressor occurred; (2) resistance, which is the ability to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle after encountering a stressor; and (3) reconfiguration, which involves gaining stability and flexibility to adjust to various circumstances. Tankachan and Babu (2021) assert that resilience is not an inherent trait but rather a process that develops over one's lifespan, involving behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned.

Spiritual intelligence encourages individuals to reflect on the consequences of their actions, establish their objectives, and lead purposeful lives (Tankachan & Babu, 2021). A person with a high level of resilience is better equipped to create plans and take steps to move beyond obstacles (Tankachan & Babu, 2021). They typically possess a positive self-image and confidence in their strengths and skills (Tankachan & Babu, 2021). The ability to manage these attributes is linked to the traits of spiritual intelligence. Therefore, cultivating spiritual intelligence is a significant factor in developing resilience (Tankachan & Babu, 2021). According to Sinchana and Joy (2023), higher levels of spiritual quality or religious belief are associated with improved coping mechanisms, greater resilience against stress, a more positive outlook on life, and lower anxiety levels during recovery from stressors. Spiritual intelligence has been found to enhance an individual's ability to make optimal decisions and achieve goals in challenging situations and crises, as it emphasises the importance of personal priorities and values (Nejad et al., 2019).

1.4 King's Model of Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence is multifaceted and has been the subject of discussion among several researchers, each providing different definitions (King, 2008). According to King (2008), there is a four-factor model of spiritual intelligence. The first component, critical existential thinking (CET), involves observing and conceptualising aspects of life, reality, and metaphysical phenomena. This encompasses the ability to contemplate non-existential matters within one's

existence and existential issues related to mortality (Anwar et al., 2015). The second component, personal meaning production (PMP), refers to the ability to connect physical and intellectual experiences to establish a purpose or criteria for one's life. The quest for meaning in life is often associated with spirituality (Vancea, 2014). Transcendental awareness (TA), the third component, involves recognising the transcendent aspects of oneself and others. It includes the capacity to acknowledge the relationship between oneself and the physical body while maintaining awareness (Anwar et al., 2015; Jahangir et al., 2020; Vancea, 2014). The final element in King's model is the expansion of the conscious state (CSE), which entails an enhanced and refined level of awareness. This component allows individuals to transcend ordinary consciousness and enter deeper states of spirituality, facilitated by techniques such as meditation, relaxation, and deep contemplation (Jahangir et al., 2020; Vancea, 2014).

Incorporating a diagram of King's framework would be beneficial to visualise these components. This theory addresses aspects of human well-being by fostering a deeper quality of meaning production and enhancing our understanding of life's purpose (Jos & Pandey, 2022). Moreover, it can contribute to resilience; the practices associated with spiritual intelligence, particularly within the TA and CSE components, can aid individuals in adapting to adversity (Jos & Pandey, 2022).

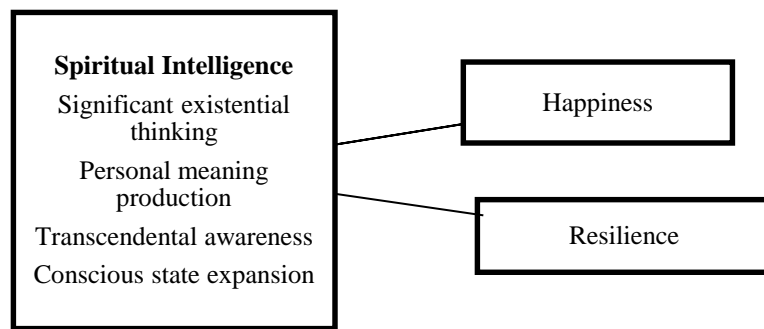


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of study.

1.5 Spiritual Intelligence in Islamic context

In the Islamic context, spiritual intelligence refers to a human's ability to understand the meaning of life, cleanse their soul from negativity, and establish a connection with their Creator (Ibrahim et al., 2022). This intelligence stems from a deep faith in Allah's oneness, with the heart (al-qalb) as the spiritual component guiding individuals towards faith (Ibrahim et al., 2022). According to Anwar et al. (2020), there is a correlation between spirituality and spiritual intelligence within the broader framework of Islamic culture. Taqwa (piety) in Islam signifies recognition and devotion to Allah the Almighty, which contributes to self-awareness and enhances an individual's cognitive processes, emotions, and responses (Anwar et al., 2020). In Islam, the belief in the oneness of

Allah (Tawhid) fosters a continuous search for truth and transcendence as Muslims strive to connect with their Creator (Anwar et al., 2020). The transcendental awareness aspect of spiritual intelligence is closely related to understanding the meaning of Tawhid.

Additionally, Islam introduces the concept of maqasid al-Hayat, which denotes the absolute purpose of life (Anwar et al., 2020). This concept defines the true purpose of a Muslim's existence as devoting themselves to Allah and becoming the Khalifah (Caliph), a leader who obeys Allah (Anwar et al., 2020). Those who adhere to Allah's commandments will be rewarded with magnificent blessings in heaven. At the same time, those who neglect His will may face punishment in hellfire unless they repent in their lifetime. This clear delineation of life's purpose in Islam can be linked to the concept of personal meaning production in spiritual intelligence (Anwar et al., 2020). According to King (2008), personal meaning production within spiritual intelligence illustrates the interconnection between physical abilities and psychological experiences. In essence, it relates the purpose of life to the integration of body and soul (Anwar et al., 2020). As previously discussed, the concept of spiritual intelligence in Islam aligns with King's (2008) framework. Therefore, this instrument will be employed to measure the level of spiritual intelligence in this research.

The discussion above raises several issues that will serve as the research objectives of this study:

1. To examine the level of spiritual intelligence among undergraduate Muslim students.
2. To examine the rate of happiness among undergraduate Muslim students.
3. To examine the score of resilience among undergraduate Muslim students.
4. To investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness among undergraduate Muslim students.
5. To investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience among undergraduate Muslim students.

Additionally, the findings from previous studies have led to the formulation of two hypotheses for this research. The first hypothesis (Ha1) posits that there is a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness among undergraduate Muslim students. The second hypothesis (Ha2) suggests a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and resilience among undergraduate Muslim students.

2 METHODS

2.1 Population and Sampling

A total of 287 respondents from a public university in Malaysia were involved in the survey that took place in 2024. The demographic data of the samples, with the details shown in Table 1, were gathered in the study. Table 1 shows the number of female respondents is 247 (86.1%) and the

number of male respondents is 40 (13.9%). As for the race frequency, the highest number of respondents are Malay, with 201 (70.0%) responses, followed by Bumiputera Sabah (N = 41, 14.3%) and Bumiputera Sarawak (N = 38, 13.2%). There are responses from 5 Chinese respondents (1.7%), Bugis and Somali, with a respondent (0.3%) participating from both races.

Table 1. Demography of the samples.

Demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	247	86.1
	Male	40	13.9
Race	Bugis	1	0.3
	Bumiputera Sabah	41	14.3
	Bumiputera Sarawak	38	3.2
	Chinese	5	1.7
	Malay	201	70
	Somali	1	0.3

2.2 Research Design

The study was conducted using a quantitative approach. The research took place in a public university with the participation of 287 undergraduate Muslim students. The research uses the convenience sampling method. Hence, the participants would voluntarily answer the questionnaire to reduce the sampling bias. A survey form was created using Google Forms and distributed randomly online and on-site. An online version of the mini poster, which consists of the Google Forms link and the researcher's contact information, was distributed. The researcher distributed the mini posters around campus as one of their advertising methods for the study. Upon the completion of the survey, the participant would send their information through an email to the researcher to claim a token. Through this process, the researcher could manage the possibility of repetition or overlapping participants.

2.3 Instruments and Procedure for Data Collection

This survey consisted of three well-established assessments, which are the 24-item Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report (SISRI-24) by King (2008) to measure the level of spiritual Intelligence, the 4-item Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) by Lyubormisky and Lepper (1999) to measure the level of happiness, and the 6-item Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) by Smith et al. (2008). The SISRI-24 and BRS assess the respondents' agreeableness upon the statement, while the SHS assesses the respondents' best description of themselves based on the statement.

SISRI-24 was developed to assess four components of spiritual intelligence: CET, PMP, TA, and CSE. All the assessments were assessed using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The original version of SHS used a 7-point Likert scale, which was adapted to a 5-point Likert scale to maintain the consistency of the survey. This change is supported by an article by Dawes (2007), who stated that rescaling is the method that can be used to alter the scale. It is also stated in the article that when the multi-point format is used in a set of questionnaires, the scale with more score options will produce slightly lower scores, which may affect the overall score (Dawes, 2007).

Before the actual study was conducted, a pilot study involving 16 undergraduate Muslim students from a public university was implemented to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The study's data was analysed using Cronbach's alpha, and the alpha value of each assessment was at an acceptable and excellent level of reliability. The reliability of SISRI-24 was $\alpha = 0.945$, the reliability of SHS was $\alpha = 0.705$, and the reliability of BRS was $\alpha = 0.701$. The Pearson's correlation coefficient test in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 27 (SPSS 27) was used to measure the relationship between spiritual Intelligence, happiness, and resilience.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The means of the variables were analysed to determine the level of spiritual intelligence, happiness, and resilience. The reference used to interpret the score is the scoring range of the Likert scale by Sözen and Guzen (2019) (refer to Table 2).

Table 2. Likert scale scoring ranges for the survey.

Likert Scale	Range
Strongly disagree	1.00 – 1.80
Disagree	1.81 – 2.60
Neither/Nor agree	2.61 – 3.40
Agree	3.41 – 4.20
Strongly agree	4.21 – 5.00

The mean score also would be compared to similar mean scores from different studies to enhance the accuracy of the interpretation. Table 3 shows the results of the mean and standard deviation of spiritual intelligence, happiness, and resilience.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of variables.

Variables	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Spiritual Intelligence	3.6587	0.5457
Happiness	3.2456	0.7452
Resilience	3.0726	0.5556

The total mean score of spiritual intelligence is $M = 3.6587$. Table 2 shows that the total mean indicates the sample agrees with the statement assessing their spiritual intelligence level. According to King (2008), a higher score shows a higher level of spiritual intelligence. The level of spiritual intelligence is high or positive among the sample. This interpretation corresponds with the study from Tak and Sharma (2022), which shows a similar range of mean scores. The mean score of spiritual intelligence in this study is $M = 3.96$, and the result can be interpreted as a high level of spiritual intelligence. The total mean score of happiness is $M = 3.2456$. Based on the assessment administration guideline, a higher score shows a higher level of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). As the mean score of the variable is 3.2456 out of the total perfect score of 5.0, the level of happiness is high or positive among the sample. This interpretation corresponds with the study from Tak and Sharma (2022), which shows a similar range of mean scores. The mean happiness score in this study is $M = 3.42$, and the result can be interpreted as a high level of happiness. The total mean score of resilience is $M = 3.0726$. Table 2 indicates that if the total mean falls within the range of 2.61 to 3.40, the sample neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement assessing their resilience. Based on the assessment administration guideline, the higher score shows a higher level of resilience (Smith et al., 1999). As the mean score of the variable is 3.0725 out of the total perfect score of 5.0, the level of resilience is moderate among the sample. This interpretation corresponds with the Sinchana and Joy (2023) study that shows a similar range of mean scores. The mean resilience score in this study is $M = 3.08$, and the result can be interpreted as an acceptable level of resilience.

Table 4 shows that Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between SI and happiness is 0.249, with a significant value, $p < .001$, which is less than the alpha value ($\alpha = 0.05$). It indicates a weak positive correlation between SI and happiness among undergraduate Muslim students. The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between SI and resilience is 0.201, and the significant value is less than $\alpha = 0.05$, $p < .001$. A weak positive correlation exists between SI and resilience among undergraduate Muslim students. Both hypotheses of this research are accepted.

Table 4. Correlation between Spiritual Intelligence (SI) with happiness and resilience.

		Happiness	Resilience
Spiritual Intelligence	Pearson Correlation (r)	.249**	.201**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001
	N	287	287

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

The analysis shows that the level of spiritual intelligence is high. It corresponds with the concept explained by Anwar et al. (2020) about integrating Islamic teaching in Muslim life with spiritual intelligence. According to Anwar et al. (2020), three concepts correlated with the components of spiritual intelligence are Tawhid (belief in the oneness of Allah), Taqwa (recognition and devotion to Allah by following all His rules and avoiding all things that he forbids), and Maqasid al-Hayat

(absolute meaning and purpose of life – to be a Khalifah and worshipper of Allah). These three concepts can be related to critical existential thinking and conscious state expansion (Taqwa), transcendental awareness (Tawhid), and personal meaning production (maqasid al-Hayat).

The result shows that the level of happiness is considered moderate to high. This corresponds with Wahab's (2022) concept of happiness in Islam, which explains that happiness, especially absolute happiness, can be obtained when someone truly trusts and believes in one God (Allah). It shows that the level of resilience is moderate. A study by Hussein et al. (2023) comparing the resilience of Muslim students and other students showed that the resilience of Muslim students, especially those with an Islamic studies background, is higher than that of other students. Hussein et al. (2022) explained that the underlying reason for the level of resilience is adhering to strong religious practice and understanding.

As for the correlation analysis, there is a significant weak positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness and resilience. The finding is consistent with previous studies, such as Jahangir et al. (2020), and Tamannaefar and Hossain (2019), showing a positive correlation between SI and happiness. The result also corresponds with the previous studies, such as those by Sinchana and Joy (2023) and Tankachan and Babu (2021), which show a positive correlation between SI and resilience. Spiritual intelligence enhances individuals' ability to find personal meaning or meaning in life (PMP). Various studies revealed that the ability to produce the meaning of life is positively correlated with positive well-being and happiness (Li et al., 2019; Tamannaefar & Hossain, 2019). PMP also has a positive correlation with positive reinterpretation and proactive planning in coping processes, which are essential skills in resilience (Ward et al., 2022). Apart from that, the transcendental awareness concept in SI elevates the happiness level in individuals (Verhoef, 2024). TA also enhances individuals' coping abilities, a crucial part of resilience (Sodikin et al., 2022). SI also helps individuals enhance mindfulness, which promotes better psychological well-being related to positive emotion and cognitive abilities associated with coping skills (Jerath et al., 2012). Overall, the SI concept, especially involving the four concepts from King (2008), is related to the happiness and resilience in an individual, especially Muslim students.

The results of this research have prominent positive implications for society, especially academic institutions and related entities. Since the study occurred in a university setting, the findings can help educational institutions develop better programs to enhance student well-being. The variables being studied in this research can be the basis or concept to build a framework for a well-being program in the institution. Besides that, the assessment used in the study helps individuals, especially students, figure out their abilities and capabilities to improve their well-being, especially happiness and resilience. This study may help individuals, especially students, improve their quality of life because the concept of spiritual intelligence is the ability of humans to find meaning in life and integrate it with other creations (Sahebalzamani et al., 2013). Thus, if individuals find meaning in life, they can be contented. Lastly, since the focus of this study is spiritual intelligence, which has less exposure in Malaysia, the findings from this study can be used to foster spiritual intelligence awareness in Malaysia as one of the faculties that shapes the human mind's ability. Its

concepts can help Malaysia's authorities, especially those related to the mental health field, find interventions to enhance the field in our country.

Concerning the limitation of the study, the research design limits the study's ability to provide in-depth findings and interpretations of the variables. Since the study is quantitative and cross-sectional, the findings do not offer a complete picture of the population or the variables involved. There may be underlying factors influencing the variables not captured in this study. Future studies are encouraged to develop a more comprehensive research framework that enhances the understanding of the concept in greater depth. Since this research employed a quantitative approach, future research could adopt qualitative and longitudinal designs to gain deeper insights into the topic. Thus, it is recommended that future research explore the variables in an experimental setting. Moreover, rather than examining spiritual intelligence as the independent variable influencing other factors, future research could focus on identifying the variables or factors that contribute to the development or level of spiritual intelligence.

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