

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Dimension Level of Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) and Psychological Well-Being of Nursing Students during Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The pandemic of COVID-19 critically affects the mental health condition of people worldwide and causes an interrupted learning environment among university students. Spiritual intelligence is important and can play a role in controlling the mind to overcome the negative effects of the uncertain pandemic situation along with physical and psychological well-being. Objectives: This study aimed to determine whether spiritual intelligence among nursing student is associated with their psychological well-being through hardiness experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional study using the convenience sampling method was conducted among 210 nursing students at IIUM Kuantan. Data were collected using online forms of the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) and Ryff Psychological Well-Being (PWB). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Independent T-test, and one-way ANOVA. **Result:** The results showed the nursing students had a high level of spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being status. Furthermore, there was an association between spiritual intelligence and its dimensions including critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion with psychological well-being ($r=0.480$, $p<0.001$). **Conclusion:** This study emphasizes that continuously supporting, and facilitating activities that can strengthen and enhance spiritual intelligence are correlated with the psychological well-being of nursing students. Spiritual growth can act as a base for a better and more coordinated life of a person.

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INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization (1) highlighted that 93% of countries worldwide critically need mental health services due to the increasing number of mental health issues during the pandemic of Coronavirus Novel

2019 (COVID-19). This situation may be related to the isolation, loss of income and fear since the lockdown was implemented. These factors that occur would trigger mental health conditions or worsen the existing ones. In addition, poor adaptability to the events in this pandemic can also cause people to think and act negatively and reject the reason why this situation needs to happen. The higher level of mental well-being is associated with improving physical health and protective health behaviours as it is conceptualized as encompassing the aspects of emotional, psychological, social, physical, and spiritual well-being (2). Thus, the psychological of

the individuals needs to be prioritized as it can lead to mental complications like stress, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts, therefore can affect their general health (2).

University students were one of the population affected by the pandemic. They had to adapt to the new environment, which was not used to them, and they needed to be more mentally prepared. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the pandemic caused more than one billion students in 129 countries around the world to be interrupted in learning. Most universities around the world have moved to emergency remote teaching (ERT) via online platforms, and it is a factor that induces anxiety among students (3). The healthcare-related field students had to undergo the most challenging experience in which they had to continue their clinical attachment in the hospital during the lockdown. They must follow strictly the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) when caring for the patients. At the same time, they have to attend ongoing online classes (university courses) and ongoing clinical assessments that need to be completed. The stressors and exposures affected their psychological and threatened their mental health. Thus, they might need more motivation to study. Nursing students had a higher chance of getting moderate to high anxiety if they had lower spiritual well-being, opposite to those with higher spiritual well-being (4). Various studies have proven spiritual intelligence has a positive impact on mental health (5, 6). It is because it contains spiritual sources, values, and specifications that enhance the improvement of an individual's daily functioning physical and mental health. An increase in spiritual growth can act as a fundamental factor in a better and more coordinated life for a person (6). The potential of Spiritual intelligence in influencing psychological well-being often leaving out when comparing with other forms of intelligence, such as emotional intelligence or cognitive intelligence. Most studies look at psychological well-being broadly, without focusing on specific dimensions such as resilience, coping strategies, or life satisfaction. Also, much of the existing research focuses on general populations, often leaving out specific groups such as nursing students who also includes in the vulnerable population for mental health issues. Taking into account the potential of spiritual intelligence as a factor that can stimulates individuals to encounter life events with deeper insight, not to be afraid of the difficulties of life, to deal with the problems with patience, wisdom and stability (8) thus the need to establish the baseline data on nursing students' spiritual intelligence level and its association with psychological well-being during the uncertainty of the pandemic condition and the adaptation of new norms is warrant.

METHODOLOGY

This a cross-sectional study among undergraduate

nursing students in Kulliyah of Nursing, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuantan, Pahang. All the students were approached through the batch leader (according to the year of study) informing about the study, however some of the students were sick due to COVID 19. Thus, the selection of the participants was done through convenience sampling that is more possible at that time. The data collection tool included three questionnaires: Sociodemographic including gender, age and year of study; Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24 including four subscales of 24 items (critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion), which were scored in a Likert scale 0-4 from not at all true of me to completely true of me (7). SISRI-24 is a reliable and valid measure of spiritual intelligence, with strong psychometric properties including high reliability (Cronbach's alpha range of 0.92 to 0.95 for the total scale) and construct validity demonstrated in various studies with diverse population (6, 7, 10). Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scales included six dimensions of 42 items (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance), which were scored on a Likert 6-point scale from strongly agree to disagree (9) strongly. Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scales is a reliable and valid measure of psychological well-being, with strong psychometric properties including high reliability (Cronbach's alpha range of 0.70 to 0.90 for the total scale) and construct validity demonstrated in various studies with diverse population (3, 5, 6, 9). This study has obtained approval from Kulliyah of the Nursing Postgraduate Research Centre (KNPGRC) and IIUM Research Ethics Committee (IREC). The data collection was done by distributing the questionnaires among nursing students using the Google Form online platform. Students who met the inclusion criteria (undergraduate students only) were approached by the researcher and invited voluntarily to answer the questionnaire with written informed consent. The analysis was done by using descriptive statistical tests (frequency, percentage, mean and SD) and inferential statistical tests (Independent T-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation) through IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

RESULT

A total of 210 students were involved in this study, and the sociodemographic data among nursing students (n=210) are shown in Table 1. The majority of the students were female, with 160 respondents (76.2%), while the rest (50 students) (23.8%) were male. More than half of the students (63.8%) were in the 19 to 21 years old age group, and 36.2% of the students were in the 22 to 24 years old. The majority of the students were from year 2 (30.0%), followed by year 4 (26.7%) and year 3 (24.8%). The least students recruited were from year 1 (18.6%). All the 210 respondents recruited were full-time students.

Table II shows the dimension of spiritual intelligence among IIUM nursing students. The mean (SD) of spiritual intelligence of nursing students was 2.845 (0.535), which indicates a high level of spiritual intelligence of nursing students in IIUM Kuantan. The ranking mean (SD) of the four dimensions of spiritual intelligence are 2.899 (0.622) for personal meaning production (PMP), 2.679 (0.616) for conscious state expansion (CSE), 2.662 (0.577) for transcendental awareness (TA) and 2.582 (0.612) for critical existential thinking (CET).

Table III presents the dimension of psychological well-being status among IIUM nursing students. The mean (SD) of the psychological well-being of nursing students was 4.107 (0.820), which indicated the high psychological well-being status of nursing students in IIUM Kuantan. The ranking mean (SD) of the six dimensions of psychological well-being was 4.288 (0.878) for personal growth, 4.191 (0.884) for positive relations with others, 4.150 (0.950) for purpose in life, 4.055 (0.945) for self-acceptance, 4.048 (0.827) for environmental mastery, and 3.908 (0.830) for autonomy.

Table I: Sociodemographic Data

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Critical Existential Thinking	2.582	0.612	0.86	4
Personal Meaning Production	2.899	0.622	1.2	4
Transcendental Awareness	2.662	0.577	1.14	4
Conscious State Expansion	2.679	0.616	1	4
Spiritual Intelligence (Total)	2.845	0.535	1.67	4

Table II: The dimension of spiritual intelligence among IIUM nursing students

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Critical Existential Thinking	2.582	0.612	0.86	4
Personal Meaning Production	2.899	0.622	1.2	4
Transcendental Awareness	2.662	0.577	1.14	4
Conscious State Expansion	2.679	0.616	1	4
Spiritual Intelligence (Total)	2.845	0.535	1.67	4

Table III: The dimension of psychological well-being status

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Autonomy	3.908	0.83	1.86	5.71
Environmental Mastery	4.048	0.827	1.86	5.86
Personal Growth	4.288	0.878	1.86	6
Positive Relations with Others	4.191	0.884	2.14	5.86
Purpose In Life	4.15	0.95	1.71	6
Self-Acceptance	4.055	0.945	1.43	5.86
Psychological Well-Being (Total)	4.107	0.82	2.07	5.74

Table IV shows the relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being among IIUM nursing students with $r=0.480$ ($p=0.001$). Since $p < 0.05$, it showed a significant direct linear association between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being with moderate strength. Regarding the association of each component of spiritual intelligence with psychological well-being, Pearson correlation was 0.351 ($p=0.001$) for critical existential thinking, 0.561 ($p=0.001$) for personal meaning production, 0.389 ($p=0.001$) for transcendental awareness and 0.439 ($p=0.001$) for conscious state expansion.

Table IV: Relationship between the spiritual intelligence with psychological well-being among nursing students

Variables	P	r
Spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being	0	0.48
Critical existential thinking and psychological well-being	0	0.351
Personal meaning production and psychological well-being	0	0.561
Transcendental awareness and psychological well-being	0	0.389
Conscious state expansion and psychological well-being	0	0.439

*Pearson correlation test, p -value < 0.05

Table V and Table VI showed the relationship between sociodemographic and spiritual intelligence among IIUM nursing students. Based on the analysis, it found that there is no significant relationship between gender, age, and year of study with the level of spiritual intelligence among nursing students, with p -values of 0.210, 0.316, and 0.106, respectively. Table VII and Table VIII showed the relationship between sociodemographic and psychological well-being among IIUM nursing students. Based on the analysis, it found that there is no significant relationship between gender, age, and year of study with psychological well-being status among nursing students, with p -values of 0.139, 0.770, and 0.284, respectively.

Table V: The relationship between gender and age with the spiritual intelligence among IIUM undergraduate nursing students (n=210)

Spiritual Intelligence	Mean (SD)	t-statistics (df) ^a	p-value
Male	2.774 (0.547)	1.258 (208)	0.21
Female	2.665 (0.530)		
19-21	2.719 (0.531)	1.006 (208)	0.316
22-24	2.642 (0.541)		

^aIndependent T-test

Table VI: The relationship between year of study and spiritual intelligence among IIUM undergraduate nursing students (n=210)

Spiritual Intelligence	Mean (SD)	F-statistics (df) ^a	p-value
Year 1	2.689 (0.507)	2.065 (3)	0.106
Year 2	2.817 (0.593)		
Year 3	2.659 (0.491)		
Year 4	2.580 (0.507)		

^aOne-way ANOVA Test

Table VII: The relationship between gender and age with psychological well-being among IIUM undergraduate nursing students (n=210)

Psychological well-being status	Mean (SD)	t-statistics (df) ^a	p-value
Male	4.257 (0.836)	1.485 (208)	0.139
Female	4.060 (0.812)		
19-21	4.119 (0.834)	0.293 (208)	0.77
22-24	4.085 (0.801)		

^aIndependent T-test

Table VIII: The relationship between year of study and psychological well-being among IIUM undergraduate nursing students (n=210)

Psychological well-being status	Mean (SD)	F-statistics (df) ^a	p-value
Year 1	4.132 (0.794)	1.276	0.284
Year 2	4.259 (0.932)		
Year 3	3.991 (0.738)		
Year 4	4.024 (0.769)		

^aOne-way ANOVA Test

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the spiritual intelligence of nursing students was considered high. The highest subscales of spiritual intelligence were personal meaning production (PMP) which reflects that the students could interpret their meaning and purpose regarding their experiences and challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The PMP is highly adaptive in this spiritual nature of the students to do problem-solving and cope with the problems related to physical and psychological health. A similar study by (6) that found the highest score of subscales was PMP that was conducted among nurses in Iran because the nurses reflected the value and own meaning to adapt to the current situation, thus enhancing their daily function to provide care to their patients. The IIUM nursing students may organize their logical thinking, which may distract them from overthinking, as they also receive continuous full support from the kulliyah/faculty. Other studies showed spiritual intelligence has a positive effect on university students, which helps them avoid negative attitudes, handle their weaknesses, and prevent excessive thinking that confuses their minds and attention (10).

The high level of spiritual intelligence also influenced nursing students in this study. It can be seen that the psychological well-being status among nursing students in IIUM Kuantan was also high. The environment and social connections play high roles in determining the mental health status of individuals during this pandemic (11). The highest dimension of psychological well-being among nursing students was personal growth. The lockdown and social isolation involve both adjustment and fatigue processes, and it appears to result in improving well-being with controlled viral spread (12). The nursing students were open to new experiences during this pandemic while increasing their personal growth in life. Thus, they are able to cope with changes in situations and maintain their psychological health.

The results of the present study showed the relationship between spiritual intelligence and its dimensions with psychological well-being among IIUM nursing students, consistent with the findings of other researchers (6, 13-15). The finding showed that nursing students with positive spiritual direction have better coping skills and respond better to dealing with stressors such as struggles in online classes and clinical posting during this pandemic, thus reducing the effects on their psychological health. The ability to solve problems realistically and practically by using spirituality as a tool is one of the most basic signs of intelligence. Spiritual intelligence incorporates spiritual sources, ideals, and specifications that help people increase their daily function and psychological stability (14). Hence, one can face life events with a deeper insight and have good responses when dealing with problems while providing a feeling of satisfaction and self-confidence.

Despite the correlated findings between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being, however, there was no association found between gender, age, and year of study with spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being in the present study, and these findings are consistent with the results of other studies conducted elsewhere (6, 15-16). However, contrary to this, other studies have shown there was an association between gender and spiritual intelligence among students due to the different responsibilities towards self, family, and community, as well as the practice and belief towards life (17-18). As nursing students often face stressful situations especially at the clinical area thus the spiritual intelligence can equip nurses with better coping strategies, ability of mental adaptation, helping them manage stress, avoid burnout, and maintain emotional resilience (6). Integrating spiritual intelligence into nursing education and practice can enhance the holistic care nurses provide, contributing to better patient outcomes while maintaining their own well-being and promote compassionate healthcare environment.

LIMITATION

The use of convenience sampling may introduce biases and limits the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

The current study showed that a high level of spiritual intelligence is correlated with psychological well-being among IIUM nursing students despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The role of the university by encouraging faculty to check in regularly with students during crises, nursing educator initiative to offers theoretical knowledge to real-life scenarios that enhancing their preparedness towards crisis, and provide them with a comfortable psychological environment might contribute to their spiritual intelligence strength and psychological stability.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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