

From Transcendence to Virtue: Development of a Multidimensional Spiritual Intelligence Scale

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Abstract

Spiritual intelligence (SI) has been operationalised in several competing theoretical models, but no published instrument directly measures Robert Emmons' (2000) original five-component conceptualisation of transcendence, heightened states of consciousness, sanctification, spiritual problem-solving, and virtuous behaviour. The present study addressed this gap by developing and preliminarily validating a Spiritual Intelligence Scale (SIS) explicitly grounded in Emmons' framework. An initial pool of 44 items was generated to represent the five theoretical dimensions and refined to 39 items following qualitative peer review. The scale was administered, together with measures of resilience, Openness to Experience, and an established SI inventory, to 105 adult participants (18–50 years) via an online survey. The 39-item scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .913$, 95% CI [.891, .934]). Preliminary construct validity was supported by a significant positive correlation with resilience ($r = .294$, 95% CI [.108, .460]), a small, nonsignificant correlation with Openness to Experience ($r = .082$, 95% CI [−.111, .269]), and a significant positive correlation with an established SI inventory ($r = .430$, 95% CI [.260, .574]). These findings provide preliminary evidence that Emmons' five-component model can be operationalized as an internally consistent and construct-valid psychological measure. Limitations — including the absence of a factor-analytic evaluation of the proposed structure, the modest sample size relative to the item pool, and reliance on a single cross-sectional sample — are discussed, and the scale is presented as a preliminary instrument requiring further psychometric evaluation, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis in larger, independent samples.

Keywords: spiritual intelligence; scale development; spiritual intelligence scale

Introduction

Spirituality in Psychology

The concept of spirituality has been studied on a large scale across the globe. The human experience of spirituality and its connection with many other psychosocial constructs have been explored, contributing to the formulation of numerous theories, models, and interventions, and to the field of positive psychology more broadly. Although religion and spirituality are interconnected, they are conceptually distinct. Religion generally involves organised systems of belief, practices, rituals, and traditions, whereas spirituality is more broadly concerned with personal experiences of meaning, connectedness, transcendence, and the search for significance. Spirituality may be expressed within religious traditions but is not restricted to formal religious affiliation or practice.

The increasing interest among researchers in spirituality reflects its potential significance for human functioning and well-being. Researchers in psychology and allied social sciences have examined the relationship of spirituality with constructs such as meaning in life, psychological well-being, resilience, coping, altruism, mindfulness, and personal growth. These studies have contributed to understanding the importance of studying spirituality within psychology through systematic and empirical methods. However, greater conceptual clarity is required in this field to conduct rigorous scientific research; psychological research therefore requires operational definitions and reliable, valid scales for measuring spirituality-related constructs.

Spiritual Intelligence

The concept of spiritual intelligence (SI) emerged around the turn of the twenty-first century from attempts to conceptualise spirituality in terms of psychological potencies rather than mere religious belief or subjective personal experience. Early conceptualisations proposed that spiritually related capacities could contribute to how individuals understand meaning, respond to existential concerns, and navigate everyday challenges. Zohar and Marshall (2000), for example, conceptualised spiritual intelligence in relation to meaning, purpose, values, and the integration of experiences within a broader framework of significance. In contrast, Emmons (2000) proposed spiritual intelligence as a set of capacities through which individuals could transcend material concerns, experience heightened states of consciousness, sanctify everyday experiences, use spiritual resources to address problems, and express virtuous behaviour.

This formulation placed greater emphasis than earlier accounts on the specific capacities through which spirituality could influence cognition, experience, and behaviour. The concept was later expanded by other theorists. King and DeCicco (2009), for instance, conceptualised SI in terms of critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Amram and Dryer (2008) developed a broader competency-oriented model encompassing multiple spiritual capacities, including consciousness, grace, meaning, transcendence, and truth. Because the operationalisation of spiritual intelligence depends heavily on the theoretical foundation adopted, theoretical clarity is a prerequisite for sound measurement. The present study adopts Emmons' (2000) five-component conceptualisation as its theoretical foundation and seeks to develop a scale that directly operationalises these dimensions.

Existing Measures of Spiritual Intelligence

Several scales measuring spiritual intelligence exist in the literature, although fewer than for many other constructs in psychology. One of the earliest measures was developed by King and DeCicco (2009): the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24), which operationalised SI as four related capacities — critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. The 24-item instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and provided an operationalisation of SI distinct from general religiosity, although its conceptual framework differs substantially from Emmons' model, particularly in its emphasis on existential cognition and meaning production.

Similarly, Amram and Dryer (2008) developed the Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale based on a competency-oriented model of spiritually intelligent functioning, incorporating dimensions such as consciousness, grace, meaning, transcendence, truth, peaceful surrender, and inner-directedness. This broader conceptualisation illustrates the multidimensionality of SI but also demonstrates the difficulty of

establishing a consistent conceptual boundary around the construct. Other measures have adopted more specific conceptualisations: Badri et al. (2020) developed a Spiritual Intelligence Scale for university students, and Kaur et al. (2026) developed and validated a 23-item Spiritual Intelligence Scale for young Indians comprising six dimensions — adaptability, wisdom, self-discovery, compassion, oneness, and inner peace. The continued emergence of such measures demonstrates that SI measurement is still evolving and that operational definitions remain substantially influenced by the theoretical and cultural context in which a scale is developed.

Thus, although many instruments purport to measure spiritual intelligence, they do not measure the same construct because of underlying theoretical differences. Emmons' model is among the most influential theoretical contributions to SI research; however, a review of the literature indicated that no published scale operationalises SI based specifically on Emmons' conceptual formulation. The present study addresses this need by developing a Spiritual Intelligence Scale directly grounded in Emmons' (2000) conceptualisation of spiritual intelligence.

Table 1
Comparison of Existing Spiritual Intelligence Measures

Measure	Theoretical Basis	Dimensions/ Domains
SISRI-24 (King & DeCicco, 2009)	King and DeCicco's model	4
Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (Amram & Dryer, 2008)	Amram's competency model	5
Spiritual Intelligence Scale for Young Indians	Gupta & Nair, 2026	6
SQ21	Wigglesworth	4
Spiritual Intelligence Assessment Tool (SIAT)	Ntumi et al., 2026	4
Spiritual Intelligence Scale for Young Indians (Kaur et al., 2026)	Context-specific multidimensional model of SI	6
Present scale (SIS)	Emmons' (2000) framework	5

Note. SISRI = Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory. SQ21 = SQ21 Spiritual Intelligence Assessment. SIS = Spiritual Intelligence Scale (present study).

Emmons' Theory of Spiritual Intelligence

Emmons (2000) proposed that spirituality can be understood within the framework of intelligence. This theory does not equate spirituality with religious belief or knowledge; rather, it refers to capacities through which individuals transcend ordinary perspectives, engage with higher states of consciousness, derive meaning from experience, apply spiritual resources to problems, and express spiritually informed qualities in behaviour. Emmons (2000) originally identified five principal capacities within this conceptualisation. The first is the capacity for transcendence — the ability to move beyond physical concerns and perceive oneself and one's experiences within a broader, more comprehensive frame of reference. The second is the ability to enter heightened states of consciousness, referring to the capacity to access or experience

states of awareness that differ qualitatively from ordinary waking consciousness, such as intensified awareness, absorption, or contemplative experience. Importantly, this dimension concerns the capacity for accessing such states rather than the frequency of participation in a particular religious or contemplative practice.

The third capacity is the ability to sanctify everyday experiences — perceiving ordinary people, objects, activities, relationships, or events as possessing sacred or spiritually significant qualities (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). This capacity allows individuals to interpret everyday life through a spiritual lens, thereby transforming the perceived significance of otherwise ordinary experiences. The fourth capacity involves the use of spiritual resources to solve problems: individuals may draw upon spiritual beliefs, values, perspectives, or practices when confronting problems and making decisions, linking spirituality with adaptive functioning and problem-solving. The fifth capacity is the capacity for virtuous behaviour, encompassing qualities such as compassion, forgiveness, humility, gratitude, and related virtues, and is particularly relevant to the present study because it conceptualises spiritual intelligence as extending beyond cognition and subjective experience to include the behavioural expression of spiritual understanding.

Emmons' theory therefore conceptualises spiritual intelligence as a multidimensional construct involving these five dimensions, differing from conceptualisations that define spiritual intelligence primarily in terms of existential reasoning or meaning production (King & DeCicco, 2009). The present study adopts Emmons' original five-component framework as its theoretical foundation and seeks to operationalise each component as a distinct but theoretically related domain of spiritual intelligence, retaining all five components to examine whether this broader conceptualisation can be meaningfully operationalised as a psychological construct.

Research Gap and Rationale for the Present Study

Although several scales measuring SI exist, their theoretical foundations differ considerably, as discussed above. This theoretical heterogeneity has important implications for psychological measurement: instruments developed from different theoretical models may differ considerably in item content, dimensional structure, and interpretation despite sharing the same construct label. Construct definition must therefore precede measurement, and the dimensions represented in an instrument should demonstrate clear correspondence with the theory from which the instrument is derived (Haynes et al., 1995; DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021).

A further limitation in the existing literature is the limited direct operationalisation of Emmons' original five-component formulation. A critical review of the literature indicated that no published psychometric scale measures SI based on Emmons' model. In particular, the inclusion of virtuous behaviour distinguishes the present conceptualisation from models that emphasise existential cognition, meaning production, transcendental awareness, or conscious state expansion (King & DeCicco, 2009). The present study addresses this theory-to-measurement gap by developing a Spiritual Intelligence Scale explicitly grounded in Emmons' (2000) five-component conceptualisation. The development process involved translating each theoretical domain — transcendence, heightened states of consciousness, sanctification of everyday experiences, spiritual problem-solving, and virtuous behaviour — into observable and measurable psychological indicators, and subsequently examining the content validity, item functioning, internal consistency, and preliminary construct validity of the resulting instrument. Rather than proposing that the present study definitively establishes the structure of spiritual intelligence, the objective is to

provide an initial, theoretically coherent operationalisation of Emmons' model that can be subjected to further independent psychometric evaluation.

The Present Study

The present study aimed to develop and preliminarily validate a measure of spiritual intelligence grounded explicitly in Emmons' (2000) conceptualisation. The scale was developed to operationalise five theoretically specified dimensions of spiritual intelligence: transcendence, heightened states of consciousness, sanctification, spiritual coping, and virtuous behaviour. The development process involved theory-based item generation, qualitative peer review, refinement of the initial item pool, and subsequent empirical evaluation of the resulting instrument, with the objective of providing a theoretically coherent measure that maintains direct correspondence between the conceptual definition of spiritual intelligence and the content of its measurement.

The present investigation constitutes a single-study scale-development and preliminary validation study. In accordance with the theoretical position adopted, spiritual intelligence is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct encompassing spiritually relevant capacities involving transcendence, consciousness, meaning attribution, coping, and behaviour. The study therefore sought to establish evidence for the content adequacy, item functioning, internal consistency, and construct validity of the resulting scale.

Objectives

The study specifically aimed to:

1. Develop items representing the five dimensions of Emmons' conceptualisation of spiritual intelligence.
2. Establish the content relevance and clarity of the developed items through qualitative review.
3. Examine the psychometric functioning of the items in a sample of 105 participants.
4. Assess the internal consistency of the resulting Spiritual Intelligence Scale.
5. Examine preliminary evidence of convergent, discriminant, and concurrent/criterion-related validity.

Research Design

A scale-development and preliminary validation design was employed. The study followed a theory-driven approach in which the conceptual framework proposed by Emmons (2000) served as the basis for defining the construct domains and generating items. Qualitative review was subsequently used to evaluate the relevance, clarity, and redundancy of the initial items, followed by empirical evaluation of the refined instrument. The development process was organised around three broad stages: theoretical specification of the construct, development and qualitative refinement of items, and empirical psychometric evaluation of the resulting scale. This approach ensured that the content of the instrument remained anchored to the theoretical conceptualisation rather than being generated solely from the statistical characteristics of items.

Construct Definition and Operationalisation

For the purposes of the present study, spiritual intelligence is conceptualised as a multidimensional set of capacities through which individuals transcend immediate material perspectives, access or experience heightened states of consciousness, perceive ordinary experiences as spiritually significant, employ spiritual resources in coping with problems, and express spiritually informed values through behaviour (Emmons, 2000).

Table 2

Operational Definitions of the Five Spiritual Intelligence Dimensions (Emmons, 2000)

Dimension	Operational Definition
Transcendence	The capacity to move beyond immediate physical or material perspectives and perceive oneself and one's experiences within a broader spiritual or transcendent framework.
Heightened States of Consciousness	The capacity to experience or access states of awareness that extend beyond ordinary waking consciousness.
Sanctification	The capacity to perceive ordinary experiences, events, relationships, or aspects of everyday life as possessing sacred or spiritual significance.
Spiritual Coping	The capacity to draw upon spiritual beliefs, resources, perspectives, or practices when responding to difficulties and problems.
Virtuous Behaviour	The expression of spiritually informed values through behaviours reflecting qualities such as compassion, forgiveness, humility, gratitude, and integrity.

The five dimensions were treated as theoretically distinct domains within the broader construct of spiritual intelligence and were used as the basis for item generation and subsequent qualitative evaluation.

Method

Item Development and Content Validation

Item development was guided by the five dimensions derived from Emmons' (2000) conceptualisation. An initial pool of 44 items was generated to provide adequate representation of the five proposed domains: 9 items for Transcendence, 8 for Heightened States of Consciousness, 11 for Sanctification, 7 for Spiritual Coping, and 9 for Virtuous Behaviour. Items were formulated to represent the psychological capacities specified in the operational definitions rather than merely referring to participation in religious practices or possession of religious beliefs, because the intended construct concerns spiritually relevant capacities and functioning rather than religious affiliation or religiosity per se.

The initial item pool subsequently underwent qualitative peer review. Reviewers were provided with the theoretical definitions of the five dimensions and were asked to evaluate the items with respect to their conceptual relevance, clarity, and redundancy against these explicit conceptual criteria, rather than on the basis of general impressions of spirituality. Based on this review, five repetitive items were removed and other items were revised to improve wording and clarity, resulting in a refined 39-item pool used for empirical evaluation. This qualitative stage was important for establishing preliminary content validity, as the correspondence between an item's wording and its intended theoretical domain represents a fundamental consideration in psychological scale development (Haynes et al., 1995; DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Content evaluation was therefore conducted before examining the empirical properties of the scale, ensuring that item reduction did not rely exclusively on statistical criteria.

The final instrument employed a five-point Likert-type response format (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), and items were presented in an intermixed order rather than being grouped according to their respective dimensions. Regularly scored items receive values from 1 to 5, whereas negatively worded items (Items 12, 19, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, and 33) are reverse scored. The global Spiritual Intelligence score is the sum of scores across all 39 items following reverse-scoring of negatively worded items; the manual

also permits interpretation using standardised (Z or T) scores or percentile ranks. Table 3 (Appendix A) presents the full item set together with its a priori assignment to the five theoretical dimensions.

Participants

The study included 105 participants who constituted the standardisation sample for the development and preliminary validation of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale. Participants were adults between 18 and 50 years of age. [convenience sampling], The sample size consisted of 105 participants from Maharashtra.

Measures

Spiritual Intelligence Scale (SIS).

The 39-item scale developed in the present study, described above, was used to assess spiritual intelligence as conceptualised by Emmons (2000).

Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI).

Concurrent validity was assessed using King and DeCicco's (2009) SISRI, an established self-report measure of spiritual intelligence.

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS).

Convergent validity was assessed using the BRS (Smith et al., 2008), a brief self-report measure of the ability to recover from stress.

Mini-IPIP Openness Subscale.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Openness to Experience subscale of the Mini International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP; Donnellan et al., 2006).

Procedure

The Spiritual Intelligence Scale and the measures selected for validity assessment were administered online through a Google Forms-based survey. Participants completed the Spiritual Intelligence Scale followed by the SISRI, the BRS, and the Openness subscale of the Mini-IPIP, with appropriate instructions provided for each measure. Informed consent was obtained from the participants and confidentiality of the results was maintained.

Data-Analysis Strategy

Data were analysed using JASP. Descriptive statistics were examined to characterise the study variables and item responses. Item-level analysis was conducted to evaluate the functioning of individual items, with particular attention to item-total correlations and the contribution of individual items to the overall scale. Internal consistency reliability of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a 95% confidence interval computed for the alpha coefficient. Evidence for construct validity was examined through theoretically expected relationships between spiritual intelligence and related and distinct psychological constructs. Specifically, convergent validity was examined through the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and resilience, whereas discriminant validity was examined through its relationship with Openness to Experience. Concurrent validity was examined through the relationship between the newly developed scale and the SISRI. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine these associations, and 95% confidence intervals for each correlation were computed using Fisher's z transformation, consistent with JARS-Quant reporting expectations (Appelbaum et al., 2018).

Because the present sample ($N = 105$) is modest relative to the 39-item pool (an item-to-participant ratio of approximately 1:2.7, below commonly cited minimums; Comrey & Lee, 1992; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019), an exploratory factor analysis of the item pool was not considered statistically justified in the present sample and was not conducted. This decision, and its implications for interpreting the scale's dimensional structure, is addressed directly in the Limitations section.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the total Spiritual Intelligence Scale score are presented in Table 4. The distribution of total scores did not depart significantly from normality, Shapiro-Wilk $W = .985$, $p = .305$.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for SIS Total Scores ($N = 105$)

Statistic	Value
Valid N	105
Missing	0
M	151.90
SD	17.83
Minimum	102.0
Maximum	190.0
Shapiro–Wilk W (p)	0.985 ($p = .305$)

Item-Level Results

Item-level analysis indicated variation in the contribution of individual items to the overall scale. Item-total correlations were examined to assess the extent to which individual items were associated with the overall Spiritual Intelligence score. Most items demonstrated meaningful associations with the total score, supporting their contribution to the measurement of the broader construct. However, several items showed comparatively weaker item-total relationships: for example, Item 27 demonstrated an item-total correlation of .404, whereas Items 28 and 33 demonstrated substantially lower item-total correlations of .053 and .162, respectively.

Decisions concerning item retention were not based solely on statistical indicators; items were considered in association with their theoretical relevance and their contribution to adequate coverage of the five dimensions, consistent with the theory-driven nature of the scale-development process. Full item wording, alpha-if-item-deleted statistics, and the a priori dimension to which each item was assigned are presented in Appendix A (Table A1). Based on this a total of 39 items were retained in the actual scale.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The 39-item scale demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency, $\alpha = .913$, 95% CI [.891, .934], $SE = .011$. The coefficient obtained suggests that the items demonstrate substantial consistency in measuring

the broader construct of spiritual intelligence. However, Cronbach's alpha should be interpreted specifically as evidence of internal consistency. It should not be taken as evidence of unidimensionality or structural validity. This distinction is particularly relevant for the present instrument, because spiritual intelligence was theoretically conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising five related domains. The item-level analysis further indicated that deletion of individual items would not produce a substantial improvement in overall reliability for most items (Appendix A, Table A1), supporting retention of the majority of items while preserving theoretical coverage of the construct.

Validity

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which a measure demonstrates an expected association with other measures assessing theoretically related constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In the present study, resilience was selected as a theoretically related construct because spiritually oriented resources may facilitate adaptive responses to adversity, and the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and resilience was examined using the BRS. The Spiritual Intelligence Scale demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation with resilience, $r = .294$, 95% CI [.108, .460], $p = .002$, providing evidence consistent with the expected relationship between the two constructs and preliminary support for convergent validity. It should be noted that resilience is a related but conceptually distinct construct rather than an alternative measure of the same trait; in the strict sense articulated by Campbell and Fiske (1959), this association is more accurately characterised as evidence of construct or nomological-network validity than as classical convergent validity, which requires agreement across measures of the same trait. The correlation with the SISRI (reported under Concurrent Validity, below) is the closer analogue to classical convergent validity, given that both instruments assess spiritual intelligence.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity concerns the extent to which a construct can be distinguished from theoretically different constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). This aspect of validity was examined through the relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Openness to Experience, assessed using the Openness subscale of the Mini-IPIP. A small and statistically nonsignificant correlation was observed, $r = .082$, 95% CI [-.111, .269], $p = .406$. The absence of a statistically significant association provides preliminary evidence that the Spiritual Intelligence Scale is not simply measuring individual differences in Openness to Experience.

Concurrent Validity

Concurrent validity refers to the extent to which scores on a newly developed instrument are associated with scores on an established measure of the same or a closely related construct obtained during the same period of assessment. In the present study, concurrent validity was examined by correlating scores on the Spiritual Intelligence Scale with the SISRI (King & DeCicco, 2009). A statistically significant positive correlation was observed, $r = .430$, 95% CI [.260, .574], $p < .001$. This moderate positive association provides evidence that the newly developed instrument shares meaningful variance with an established measure of spiritual intelligence while retaining its specific theoretical grounding in Emmons' conceptualisation.

Table 4
Correlations Between the Spiritual Intelligence Scale and External Measures

Measure	r	95% CI	p	Validity type
Brief Resilience Scale	.294	[.108, .460]	.002	Construct / convergent
Mini-IPIP Openness	.082	[−.111, .269]	.406	Discriminant
SISRI	.430	[.260, .574]	< .001	Concurrent

Note. SISRI = Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (King & DeCicco, 2009). Confidence intervals were computed using Fisher's z transformation.

Interpretation of the Validity Evidence

Taken together, the validity findings provide preliminary evidence for the construct validity of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale. The positive association with resilience was consistent with the theoretically expected relationship between spiritual intelligence and adaptive functioning, while the negligible association with Openness provided preliminary evidence of discriminant validity. The significant association with the SISRI further indicated convergence with an established measure of spiritual intelligence. Validity is an ongoing process of accumulating evidence rather than a property conclusively established by a single study (Messick, 1995; American Educational Research Association et al., 2014). Further research using independent samples and additional theoretically relevant constructs would strengthen the evidentiary basis for interpreting scores obtained from the scale.

Discussion

The present study developed a Spiritual Intelligence Scale grounded explicitly in Emmons' (2000) original conceptualisation of spiritual intelligence. Unlike approaches that define spiritual intelligence primarily through existential thinking, meaning production, or transcendental awareness, the present instrument retains the five capacities proposed in the original framework: transcendence, heightened states of consciousness, sanctification, spiritual coping, and virtuous behaviour. The development process involved theory-based item generation, qualitative review, item refinement, and empirical evaluation of the resulting 39-item instrument.

The findings provide preliminary support for the psychometric utility of the scale. The high internal consistency coefficient ($\alpha = .913$) indicates that the items demonstrate substantial consistency in assessing the broader construct, while the presence of five theoretically distinct domains indicates that the construct was conceptualised as multidimensional rather than as a narrowly defined psychological characteristic. The validity findings were broadly consistent with theoretical expectations. The positive relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and resilience supports the proposition that spiritually oriented capacities may be relevant to individuals' ability to respond adaptively to adversity, consistent with previous research linking spiritual intelligence and related spiritual resources with adaptive psychological functioning.

The negligible association between Spiritual Intelligence and Openness to Experience provides preliminary evidence that the scale is not reducible to a broad personality disposition — a theoretically important distinction, because spirituality-related characteristics may sometimes overlap with personality traits involving curiosity, imagination, or openness to experience. The present finding suggests that the

Spiritual Intelligence Scale captures content that extends beyond this personality domain. The moderate positive relationship with the SISRI provides further support for the scale's validity: although both instruments assess spiritual intelligence, they are grounded in different theoretical conceptualisations, so the observed correlation suggests meaningful convergence while also leaving room for differences in construct content. This distinction is particularly relevant because the present instrument was developed specifically to operationalise Emmons' theoretical framework rather than King and DeCicco's (2009) model.

Overall, the findings provide preliminary evidence that Emmons' conceptualisation can be translated into a measurable psychological instrument. The results should nevertheless be interpreted as part of an accumulating programme of validity research rather than as definitive confirmation of the theoretical structure, particularly given the absence of a factor-analytic test of the proposed five-dimensional structure in the present sample (see Limitations).

Theoretical Implications

The present study contributes to the literature by providing a theory-specific operationalisation of spiritual intelligence based on Emmons' (2000) original framework. Existing approaches to spiritual intelligence have differed considerably in their conceptual boundaries, with some emphasising existential cognition, meaning production, transcendental awareness, or conscious state expansion (King & DeCicco, 2009), and others adopting broader competency-based approaches (Amram & Dryer, 2008). The present scale provides an alternative operationalisation that maintains direct correspondence with Emmons' original five-component conceptualisation. A particularly important theoretical contribution is the retention of virtuous behaviour as a distinct component: in Emmons' formulation, spiritual intelligence extends beyond subjective spiritual awareness to include the capacity to express spiritually informed qualities through behaviour, and retaining this dimension allows the present instrument to examine whether the behavioural expression of spiritual values can meaningfully contribute to the broader conceptualisation of spiritual intelligence.

The study also contributes to the continuing discussion of whether spirituality-related capacities can appropriately be conceptualised within an intelligence framework. Rather than treating spiritual intelligence as synonymous with religiosity, religious knowledge, or spiritual belief, the present measure operationalises it in terms of capacities involving perception, consciousness, meaning attribution, coping, and behaviour, providing a framework through which spiritually relevant functioning can be investigated using established psychological measurement principles.

Practical Implications

The development of a theory-grounded Spiritual Intelligence Scale provides researchers with an instrument for examining spiritually related psychological functioning in empirical research. The scale may be useful in studies investigating relationships between spiritual intelligence and variables such as resilience, psychological well-being, coping, meaning in life, prosocial behaviour, personal growth, and other indicators of adaptive functioning. The availability of a measure explicitly grounded in Emmons' conceptualisation may also facilitate greater theoretical precision in future research, allowing researchers to distinguish between findings obtained using different models of spiritual intelligence rather than treating all instruments labelled as measures of spiritual intelligence as interchangeable. The scale may additionally have potential utility in educational, organisational, counselling, and well-being research

where spiritually informed capacities are relevant. However, such applications should remain research-oriented until further evidence regarding the stability, generalisability, and criterion-related utility of the instrument is established.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, and most importantly, the present study did not conduct an exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis of the 39-item pool. For a scale-validation article, the absence of a factor-analytic evaluation of the proposed five-dimensional structure is a substantial limitation, because the theoretical claim of multidimensionality has not yet been empirically tested. This decision was primarily driven by the sample size: with 39 items and $N = 105$, the item-to-participant ratio (approximately 1:2.7) falls below commonly cited minimum recommendations for exploratory factor analysis (e.g., 1:5 to 1:10; Comrey & Lee, 1992; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The present study should therefore be regarded explicitly as a preliminary report establishing content validity, internal consistency, and nomological-network evidence; the dimensional structure of the SIS awaits confirmation through EFA in a development sample and CFA in an independent sample, each with a substantially larger N .

Second, the psychometric evaluation was conducted using a relatively modest sample of 105 participants, which limits the generalisability of the findings to broader populations. Replication with larger and more diverse samples would provide stronger evidence regarding the stability of the scale's psychometric properties, including its dimensional structure.

Third, the study relied primarily on self-report measures. Responses to spirituality-related items may be influenced by social desirability, self-perception, or participants' individual interpretations of spiritual concepts. Future research could incorporate alternative assessment approaches, including behavioural indicators, informant reports, or qualitative methods where appropriate.

Fourth, the present validity assessment involved a limited set of external constructs. Although the relationships with resilience, Openness to Experience, and the SISRI provided preliminary evidence of construct, discriminant, and concurrent validity, additional validity evidence should be examined in future studies, including relationships with constructs such as meaning in life, compassion, prosocial behaviour, well-being, religiosity, and moral functioning.

Fifth, the study does not establish the temporal stability of the instrument. Test–retest reliability should therefore be examined in future research to determine whether Spiritual Intelligence Scale scores demonstrate adequate stability across time.

Sixth, a small number of items (e.g., Item 8, "I think that parenting is a sacred responsibility," and Item 13, "I feel that marital relationship has some divine qualities") presuppose marital or parental status. This raises a content-validity and fairness concern, because such items may be less applicable — or may function differently — for unmarried or childless respondents. Future revisions of the scale should consider rewording these items to broaden their applicability or should explicitly examine measurement invariance across marital/parental status groups.

Finally, the present study provides preliminary psychometric evidence but does not by itself establish the universality of Emmons' five-component conceptualisation. Independent replication across different demographic, cultural, religious, and linguistic groups — combined with the factor-analytic work noted above — would be valuable in determining the extent to which the proposed dimensions demonstrate cross-sample generalisability. Future research should therefore prioritise (a) EFA/CFA in larger,

independent samples to test the five-factor structure, (b) subscale-level reliability and validity analysis, (c) test–retest reliability, and (d) measurement invariance testing across demographic and cultural groups.

Conclusion

The present study developed a 39-item Spiritual Intelligence Scale grounded in Emmons' (2000) original conceptualisation of spiritual intelligence, encompassing five theoretically derived dimensions: transcendence, heightened states of consciousness, sanctification, spiritual coping, and virtuous behaviour. The development process combined theoretical specification, systematic item generation, qualitative review, item refinement, and empirical psychometric evaluation. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .913$) and showed theoretically meaningful relationships with Resilience, Openness to Experience, and an established measure of spiritual intelligence. The pattern of findings provides preliminary support for the reliability and construct validity of the new instrument. The principal contribution of the study is the development of a measure that directly operationalises Emmons' five-component model, including the theoretically distinctive dimension of virtuous behaviour. The scale may provide researchers with a theory-specific instrument for investigating spiritual intelligence as a psychological construct. Nevertheless, the findings should be regarded as preliminary, and further research — particularly factor-analytic evaluation of the proposed structure in larger, independent samples — is necessary to establish the robustness, dimensional validity, and generalisability of the instrument. Please note that this Psychometric Scale can be used for any academic and research purposes with proper citation and a prior email to the author at 28parthjoshi@gmail.com

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