

## DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-IDENTITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCE

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### Abstract

*Self-identity is an important life skill of adolescents. Researchers have observed that the skill of reflecting on the experiences of life, which is related to one's spiritual intelligence, is helpful in the development of positive self-identity. Hence, the present research was carried out to understand the development of spiritual intelligence and self-identity among adolescent boys and girls and thereby examine the mediating role of spiritual intelligence in the development of self-identity. Participants in the study were 360 college students in equal numbers from boys and girls belonging to early, middle, and late adolescent period. Four-core abilities of spiritual intelligence namely; critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion were measured. Like-wise, personal, relational, social, and collective self-identities were measured. The results showed that girls are better than boys in the development of both spiritual intelligence and positive self-identity. Further, spiritual intelligence significantly and positively predicted each of the domains of self-identity.*

**Keywords:** adolescents, self-identity, Spiritual intelligence, mediating process



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### Introduction

Spiritual intelligence is a state of higher intelligence that activates the qualities and capabilities of the authentic self in the form of wisdom, compassion, integrity, joy, love, creativity and peace (Emmons, 2006). Spiritual intelligence results in sense of deeper meaning and purpose, combined with improvements in a wide range of important life skills and work skills. Spiritual intelligence refers to the skills, abilities and behaviors required to understand one's inner self including thoughts, beliefs, values and actions, to maintain a sense of belonging with others, to express dependence on supreme power through meditation, to live with a mind of inquiry and a quest for meaning in life, and to act in love and compassion (Madhumathi&Suparna, 2017). Miller (2000) argued that spiritual intelligence is an essential component of human development focusing on the intrinsic aspects of individuals and integrating spirituality among adolescents brings a complete development in them rather than a fragmented self.

Mortazavi (2014) argued in favor of development of spiritual intelligence among adolescents. Adolescence being a unique stage of transition is subject to stress and having few life experiences, they are not equipped to cope with pressure. They are highly vulnerable to anxieties that result from stress. Further, during adolescence, thoughts take more abstract forms and higher order cognitive processes become strong. This is the time when their inner processes shape their future directions of life. Hence, spiritual intelligence by guiding the adolescents to richer perspectives of life, to noble ways of thinking and acting, and by promoting hope and optimism, help them to constructively handle the pressure and stresses of the time. Therefore, spiritual intelligence among the adolescents serves as building blocks for healthy social and emotional development. Spiritual intelligence gives positive coping strategies for personal problems, helps to act bravely during trouble times, and prevents the adolescents from being violent and hopeless and from low self-esteem. Thus, there is a need for the adolescents to develop a right perspective of life, a nature of enquiry, a sense of purpose in life, a taste for reflective thinking and encourage them to construct meaning from their experiences and allow them to ask existential questions (Gupta, 2012).

### **The current model of spiritual intelligence**

King (2007) proposed a four-core abilities model of spiritual intelligence. Those are critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Critical Existential Thinking refers to the capacity to critically contemplate the nature of existence, reality, the universe, space, time, and other existential/metaphysical issues and also the capacity to contemplate non-existential issues in relation to one's existence. Personal Meaning Production refers to the ability of a person to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose. The meaning of Transcendental Awareness is the capacity to identify transcendent dimensions/patterns of the self (i.e., a transpersonal or transcendent self), of others, and of the physical world (e.g., non-materialism) during normal states of consciousness, accompanied by the capacity to identify their relationship to one's self and to the physical. Finally, Conscious State Expansion refers to the ability to enter and exit higher states of consciousness (e.g. pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness, unity, oneness) and other states of trance at one's own discretion as in deep contemplation, meditation, prayer, etc. The present research is proposed to examine the

development of spiritual intelligence among the adolescents using the above model proposed by King (2007).

### **Self-identity**

According to Erik Erikson, a prominent developmental theorist of the 1950's, youth must resolve two life "crises" during adolescence. The first crisis typically occurs during early to middle adolescence, and is called the crisis of identity versus identity confusion. This crisis represents the struggle to find a balance between developing a unique, individual identity while still being accepted and "fitting in." Thus, youth must determine who they want to be, and how they want to be perceived by others. Erikson believed that when youth successfully navigate this crisis they emerge with a clear understanding of their individual identity and can easily share this "self" with others; therefore, they are healthy and well-adjusted. As a result, they are confident individuals who can freely associate with others without losing their own identity. However, when youth fail to navigate this crisis successfully, they are uncertain who they are. Lacking this understanding, they can become socially disconnected and cut-off from others; or conversely, they can develop an exaggerated sense of their own importance and may adopt extreme positions. According to Erikson's theory, when youth become stuck at this stage, they will be unable to become emotionally mature adults.

The second crisis, occurring between late adolescence and early adulthood, is called the crisis of intimacy versus isolation. This crisis represents the struggle to resolve the reciprocal nature of intimacy; i.e., to achieve a mutual balance between giving love and support, and receiving love and support. Thus, youth must determine how to develop and maintain close friendships outside the family, as well as how to achieve reciprocity in relationships. Erikson believed that when youth successfully navigate this crisis they emerge with the ability to form honest, reciprocal relationships with others and have the capacity to bond with others to achieve common goals (e.g., marriage). When youth fail to navigate this crisis successfully, they can become distant and self-contained; or conversely, they can become needy, dependent, and vulnerable. If youth do not resolve this crisis, their emotional development becomes stalled, and as a result, they will remain isolated and lonely without social supports.

Arising from the Erikson's model of self-identity, Cheek and Briggs (2013) classified the development of self-identity into four types namely; personal identity, relational identity,

social identity and collective identity. Personal identity refers to a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of an internal emphasis, based on self-knowledge and self-evaluation. Relational identity is how they see them in the context of their intimate relationships. Social identity refers to one's popularity or social reputation deriving from interpersonal relationships. Finally, Collective identity orientation refers to collective self, which reflects how they represent their various reference group identities.

### **Spiritual intelligence and self-identity**

It comes out from the above discussions, that the development of self-identity among the adolescents may be related to their development of spiritual intelligence. Khalajani and Farhangi(2017) presented a model from meta-analysis 24 studies relating to spiritual intelligence and development of self-identity. The three phase model includes environment such as family, school, society, culture, economic issues, political issues and religious issues at the input end; spiritual intelligence as the mediating variable and self-identity at the output end. All the studied included in the meta-analysis have not addressed the issue of gender with respect to spiritual intelligence and development of self-identity. Keeping this research gap in mind and following the input output model, the present research was proposed examine gender difference in the development of self-identity and its relation with spiritual intelligence with respect to a group of adolescents who share much of their environmental factors in common. The following objectives were developed for the study.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the nature of development of spiritual intelligence from early to late adolescence.
2. To examine the gender difference in the development of spiritual intelligence during the adolescent period.
3. To examine the nature of development of self-identity from early to late adolescence.
4. To examine the gender difference in the development of self-identity during the adolescent period.
5. To examine the role of spiritual intelligence as a moderating variable in the development of identity among adolescents.

### **Method**

Participants were 360 undergraduate students, including equal number of boys and girls from each of the early, middle and late adolescence groups. The Students represented

from several undergraduate colleges of Odisha. They completed the Spiritual Intelligence Self Inventory (SSRI-24; King, 2008) and Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-IV, Cheek & Briggs, 2013). The SSRI-24 consisted of 24 items to be responded in a five-point Likert scale to assess the four domains of spiritual intelligence namely; Critical existential thinking (7 items), Personal meaning production (5 items), Transcendental awareness (7 items), and Conscious state expansion (5 items). The AIQ-IV consisted of 45 items to measure the four attributes of self-identity namely; Personal identity (10 items), relational identity (10 items), social identity (7 items) and collective identity (8 items). AIQ-IV was also responded on a five-point Likert scale. These two instruments are widely used popular measures having reported sound psychometric properties.

**Results**

**(i) Development of spiritual intelligence**

The means and standard deviation of both boys and girls for the four measures of spiritual intelligence are reported in Table 1. As observed in the means, the spiritual intelligence of adolescence in each of the four domains is low but there is consistent increase across the stages of adolescence for both boys and girls. Hence, the results suggested for a two-way analysis of variance. The results of ANOVA (Table 2) showed significant main effects of both gender and adolescent stage in critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, and transcendental awareness but only for adolescent stage in conscious state expansion. However, none of the interaction effect was significant. The results of Tukey’s HSD test (not reported) showed that girls are better than boys in the development of critical existential thinking and conscious state expansion in each of the three stages of adolescence. On the other hand, in personal meaning production and transcendental awareness, girls are better than boys only in the late adolescence and not in the two prior stages.

**TABLE 1 Means and Standard Deviations of the domains of Spiritual Intelligence of boys and girls**

Domain		Boys			Girls		
		EA	MA	LA	EA	MA	LA
Critical Existential Thinking	Mean	5.72	6.34	7.39	6.16	7.54	8.38
Maximum Score=28	SD	1.12	1.09	1.34	1.93	1.61	1.45
Personal Meaning Production	Mean	6.74	7.75	8.05	6.92	8.06	9.28
Maximum Score=20	SD	1.35	1.28	1.41	0.96	1.18	1.53
Transcendental Awareness	Mean	3.77	4.19	6.16	3.39	4.56	7.61
Maximum Score=28	SD	0.88	1.13	1.36	1.06	1.28	1.42
ConsciousState Expansion	Mean	5.47	6.39	7.41	6.23	7.94	9.61
Maximum Score=20	SD	1.22	1.13	1.07	1.41	1.38	1.27

**TABLE 2 Results of two way ANOVA (2: gender X 3: adolescent stage) for the attributes of spiritual intelligence**

<b>Critical Existential Thinking</b>				
Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	50.41	1	50.41	8.36**
Adolescent Stage	132.66	2	66.33	11.00**
AXB	18.34	2	9.17	1.52
Error	2135.92	354	6.03	
<b>Personal Meaning Production</b>				
Gender	59.98	1	59.98	7.82**
Adolescent Stage	226.86	2	113.43	14.79**
AXB	39.27	2	19.64	2.56
Error	2714.28	354	7.67	
<b>Transcendental Awareness</b>				
Gender	72.61	1	72.61	13.78**
Adolescent Stage	175.42	2	87.71	16.64**
AXB	38.32	2	19.16	3.63
Error	1865.94	354	5.27	
<b>ConsciousState Expansion</b>				
Gender	18.03	1	18.03	2.89
Adolescent Stage	141.64	2	70.82	11.35**
AXB	21.96	2	10.98	1.76
Error	2210.57	354	6.24	

**(ii) Development of self-identity**

The means and standard deviations of both boys and girls for the four measures of self-identity are reported in Table 3. The observation of means pointed out that for both boys and girls, there is consistent increase in each of the four measures of self-identity. Therefore, two-way ANOVA was performed on the data. The results of two-way ANOVA (Table 4) showed that the main effects of both gender and adolescent stage are significant for three of the measures namely; personal identity, social identity, and collectivity identity, while for relational identity the main effect of only adolescent stage was significant. Two of the interaction effects relating to personal identity and social identity are significant. Tukey's HSD for multiple comparisons of means (not reported) pointed out that girls are better than boys in personal identity, social identity, and collective identity in each of the three stages adolescence. However, with respect to relational identity significant gender difference was not observed at any of the stages. The trend of the results in the ANOVA suggested for multiple regression analyses to examine the mediating role of spiritual intelligence measures as predictor variables for the development of self-concepts. The results of multiple regressions are reported in Table 5.

**TABLE 3 Means and Standard Deviations of the domains of self-identity of boys and girls**

Domain		Boys			Girls		
		EA	MA	LA	EA	MA	LA
Personal Identity	Mean	18.69	21.35	24.41	20.05	23.17	26.54
Maximum score=50	SD	4.16	3.95	4.63	3.55	4.76	4.58
Relational Identity	Mean	21.11	22.35	26.88	21.26	21.94	26.44
Maximum score=50	SD	5.22	6.35	5.67	5.54	5.39	6.18
Social Identity	Mean	12.61	15.39	18.94	14.68	18.47	22.54
Maximum score=35	SD	3.25	3.73	3.91	3.66	3.94	4.14
Collective Identity	Mean	11.45	12.13	17.68	14.76	15.33	18.11
Maximum score=40	SD	3.28	4.77	5.17	4.16	4.35	4.57

**TABLE 4 Results of two way ANOVA (2: gender X 3: adolescent stage) for the domains of self-identity**

<b>Personal Identity</b>				
Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	288.04	1	288.04	22.86**
Adolescent Stage	462.16	2	231.08	18.34**
AXB	123.22	2	61.61	4.89*
Error	4270.66	354	12.6	
<b>Relational Identity</b>				
Gender	38.06	1	38.06	3.46
Adolescent Stage	542.31	2	271.15	24.65**
AXB	48.18	2	24.09	2.19
Error	3894.42	354	11.00	
<b>Social Identity</b>				
Gender	153.81	1	153.81	16.14**
Adolescent Stage	521.48	2	260.74	27.36**
AXB	140.09	2	70.04	7.35**
Error	3373.61	354	9.53	
<b>Collective Identity</b>				
Gender	120.54	1	120.54	10.63**
Adolescent Stage	388.73	2	194.37	17.14**
AXB	91.93	2	25.97	2.29
Error	4014.86	354	11.34	

**(iii)Regression analyses**

The extent to which domains of spiritual intelligence predicted each of the four academic self-identities was examined (Table 5). It is observed that critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion explained 29% of the variances in personal identity,  $F(4, 355) = 18.36, p < .01$ ; critical existential thinking, personal meaning production and conscious state expansion explained 25% of the variances in relational identity,  $F(4, 355) = 20.46, p < .01$ ; critical existential thinking, personal meaning production and conscious state expansion explained 27% of the variances in social identity,  $F(4, 355) = 17.62, p < .01$  and critical existential

thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion explained 30% of the variances in collective identity,  $F(4, 355) = 18.43, p < .01$ .

**TABLE 5 Multiple Regression Analyses with domains of Spiritual intelligence Regressed On Each Of The Four domains of Self-identity.**

Criterion	Predictor		Beta	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Personal identity	Critical Thinking	Existential	0.26**		
	Personal Production	Meaning	0.30**		
	Transcendental Awareness		0.33**		
	Conscious Expansion	State	0.19**	0.29**	0.26**
Relational Identity	Critical Thinking	Existential	0.28**		
	Personal Production	Meaning	0.27**		
	Conscious Expansion	State	0.24**	0.25**	0.24**
Social Identity	Critical Thinking	Existential	0.31**		
	Personal Production	Meaning	0.25**		
	Conscious Expansion	State	0.29**	0.27**	0.25**
Collective Identity	Critical Thinking	Existential	0.34**		
	Personal Production	Meaning	0.29**		
	Transcendental Awareness		0.26**		
	Conscious Expansion	State	0.31**	0.30**	0.28**

### Discussion

First of all, it observed that adolescents are low incritical existential thinking and transcendental awareness astheir group means are only around 30% of the respective maximum scores. However, with respect to personal meaning production and conscious state expansion, it is about 45% of the respective maximum scores. Nair and Paul (2017) pointed out that development of spiritual intelligence depends on the skill of reflecting on the life experience beyond the ego-involvement and adolescents being ego-centric have less reflective experience and are therefore likely to have low spiritual intelligence. On the other hand, the results showed consistent increase across the stages of adolescents in all the four domains of spiritual intelligence for both boys and girls which underlie the evidence that



adolescents are responsive to development of spiritual intelligence. Further, significant gender difference in favor of girls in three of four domains of spiritual intelligence is clearly suggestive of the fact that adolescent girls are more reflective on their life experiences compared to their counterparts among boys. It may be said that girls, having to face more challenging experiences in the socio-cultural background where the samples were drawn, mature quickly from their experience compared to boys and hence, they grow up better in spiritual intelligence.

With respect to development of self-identity, girls are also naturally found better than boys in all the four domains. However, while development of personal and social identity is consistent across the stages of adolescent, relational identity and collective identity develops significantly only between the middle to later adolescent stage for both boys and girls. This finding is consistent with Erikson's crisis of identity versus identity confusion and the crisis of intimacy versus isolation. It may be said that in personal and social identity, the adolescent is only the point of focus as the crisis is his or her identity versus identity confusion. On the other hand, in relational identity and collective identity, the adolescent is not the only point of focus but along with him / her significant others are also the point of reference. Hence, the results of the present study substantiated the Erikson's model of adolescent development.

To understand the intricate relationship between spiritual intelligence and self-identity, the results of multiple regression analyses showed that each of the domains of the self-identity is loudly predicted by the domains of spiritual intelligence. To the extent 29% of variances of personal identity, 25% of relational identity, 27% of social identity, and 30 % collective identity are predicted by spiritual intelligence. Hierarchical multiple regression could bring better clarity in the relationship. In summary, it may be well said that spiritual intelligence is a significant contributor to the development of self-identity among adolescents.

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