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Spiritual Intelligence During Catastrophe: The Covid-19 Pandemic Case

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to explain the significance role of spiritual intelligence during the complexities and uncertainties, particularly due to the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Spiritual intelligence is the capacity to behave with insight and humility while preserving inner and outer harmony irrespective of the circumstances. Not only does one with a high spiritual intellect respond appropriately in a particular circumstance or state, but it also analyzes how he or she is in that position. This study also aims to understand how the COVID-10 pandemic could lead someone to adjust, embrace and change life and turn the tragedy into a time of resilience, strength, knowledge and a new environment of mutual and communal living, sharing responsibilities and appreciating solidarity.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence, COVID-19, Uncertainties, Catastrophe, Meaning

Introduction

Spirituality has for centuries been the realm of theology and philosophy. Only in the last century it has become a recognized subject of research within the field of psychology. It has become a focal point by a growing number of studies, due to the effect on people's quality of life, especially during the catastrophe. (Mirghafourvand & Charandabi, 2016) The quality of life during the period of uncertainty in this context of discussion is a state of well-being in diverse communities, especially university students during the lockdown or movement control order due to COVID-19 pandemic. University student which is categorized in youngster group of community is considered to be one of the most important stages of population growth, and low spiritual fitness levels may have an effect on well-being during maturity. (Mathew, 2018)

COVID-19 has pushed all of us in ways we've never been pushed, and made us do something we've never done before. It also emphasizes us in very strange ways. Perhaps one of the most

tiresome aspects is the lack of consistency all over the place. The situation is bad enough to worry about the impact on economies of shifting working habits. Travel, restaurants, sports, and other businesses worry as people are motivated to stop being in closed spaces with others. Hospitals and other health care services are planning for the surge of patients.

Indeed, during this pandemic time we can understand our inner force more. There are opportunities here, which is increased reliance upon spiritual practices through our spiritual intelligence or also known as spirituality.

Despite the ongoing confusion, COVID-19 quietly gives us an opportunity to reflect on the metaphysical effect it has on the social and individual lives. In this broad sense, the spiritual impact is actually not unmistakably positive; however, at the end of the day, society as a whole will make a spiritual leap forward. Victor Frankl, survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, quoted Nietzsche when asked how he survived the horror: "He who has a 'why' to live can bear with almost any how." One way of getting to the "why" in your own life is highlighting and defining our meaning, values and purpose. As Albert Camus realized, a pandemic is the time to question yourself what life is for.

Indeed, there are ways to make this uneasy period not only endurable but rewarding. There are ways on how to endure with purpose and make this a period of emotional and moral transformation.

Research Methodology

This study employed WHOQoL-BREF questionnaire which is short questionnaire consists of originally 26 items version of World Health Organization Quality of Life assessment (WHOQoL-100). For this article, only those items that are directly applicable to the problem have been discussed in this article. The focus of the cross-sectional analysis is restricted to students from different faculties who take compulsory university courses for the academic year 2019/2020 in this second semester, with a total of 160 samples. This analysis also uses a systemic approach, where problem-solving is objectively evaluated on the basis of information gathered from previous studies, and a new concept emerges with a new conclusion. This applies to any research that attempts to include an overview of current work, such as a completion report, a literature review, and so on.

Findings & Discussions

This study used the descriptive approach to summarize the percentage of data represented. Rate based on the percentage of those elements that are directly linked to the facets of spirituality. Spirituality in this context is defined as having a specific meaning, purpose, and value of life through a spiritual connection with the superpower, transcendence of self, others, and nature, which results in a feeling of inner peace, harmony, and satisfaction.

During the data analysis process, the following three forms of relationship emerged: relationship with higher beings, self, and other people. Spirituality goes beyond self: it fosters sense of meaning, wholeness, harmony, and interaction with all others, including nature and the universe.

What is Spiritual Intelligence

According to the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute in its National Review of the Quest for Significance and Intent of Students, 80 % of respondents said they were interested in spirituality and believed in the sacredness of life. 66% acknowledged that their religion was a

source of joy. Another study found that some students resort to spirituality as a coping method as a response to the various challenges they face (Castellanos and Gloria, 2008).

Human beings have been born into three basic realms, physical, intellectual and spiritual. For the physical realm, it is best systemically defined as consisting of complex structures such as the intestinal, central nervous, renal, endocrine, reproductive and lymphoid organs. The second realm is intellectual, where the brain plays its part. The third one is the spiritual realm. In the Bible, the word "Lev" (heart) appears 1024 times and the frequency that affirms to the multivalence of the concept common to the Hebrew and ancient Semites, for whom the heart, as an organ crucial to life, is a place for the attention of all vital forces. (Encyclopedia of Religion)

According to Islam, this spiritual domain places the heart or is called "*qalb*" in Arabic. In this spiritual heart, resides the spirit or referred to as the soul. The success of the function of the heart can be seen through *akhlaq* (moral deeds) that are able of producing to pure values or virtues.

The word "spiritual" can evoke images of the sacred experience of the soul, the question of meaning, purpose and value of existence. Knowledge connotes the mind at work and is generally correlated with intellectual problem-solving and scientific comprehension. Spirituality is the foundation of human existence and getting more attention in Global Health recently.

Spirituality is now widely examined, especially in relation to many other manifestations, such as identity, quest for the essence of life, technique for coping, well-being and wellbeing. In terms of unique skills, Sisk (2019) indicates that spirituality can also have properties or organs that are better interpreted in terms of special abilities. In this case, according to Islamic perspective, we believe that for the spiritual organs, it should come inside spirit, which could encompass organ like, heart, soul and aql. In order for this process to work, spirituality requires those instrument that encourages or enables many of its activities (especially the quest for both general and personal meaning in life).

Many philosophies such as Buddhism and Confucianism, as well as parts of psychological literature such as Danah and Ian Marshall (2000), stress both consciousness transition and meaning as key factors in spiritual development. Spiritual intelligence is a set of spiritual abilities and resources that emerge from the highest degree of human intellectual growth, that is, transcendental achievement (Frankl, 1966; King 2010; Danah, 2000).

A professor of medicine at the George Washington School of Medicine and Health Sciences described spirituality as an aspect of humanity that refers to the way in which individuals seek and communicate meaning, purpose, value and experience their relation to the moment, to themselves, to others, to nature and to the meaning or the sacred. (Christina Puchalski, et al., 2009) Life's purpose will help boost your motivation and keep it there. In fact, knowing life's purpose is so powerful, it could be considered the source of your actual motivation, no matter what it is you're doing (Rick, 2002).

Not everyone is agreed that spirituality can be classified as a type of intelligence, least of all Gardner (2000:27) who regards intelligence mostly in the domain of cognitive that requires information processing and mental action to acquire knowledge and understanding through thinking, experience and perception. However, in this analysis, we will consider it an intellect because, with it, it could improve the ability to interpret others at the deepest level, to discern both the 'true cause' of actions without judgement, and to meet the 'true needs' of others before they learn to serve their own needs.

In 1997, Danah Zohar, a management thought leader, physicist, philosopher and author of her best-selling books include *Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live By and SQ – Spiritual Intelligence*, first presented the word spiritual intelligence (SI). According to her, spiritual intelligence is the force that the person can manifest on the basis of his or her deepest meaning, purpose and value (Danah, 2000). It is a set of spiritual abilities that emerge from the highest degree of transcendental achievement that originates from the spiritual domain, which includes all spiritual organs, as described from the Islamic point of view, the spirit, or the soul, resides in the heart, the spiritual heart, or is called the "*qalb*" in Arabic. The performance of the work of the heart can be seen by *akhlaq* (moral deeds) capable of producing pure values or virtues.

According to Danah, the first step to embark on this spiritual intelligence is learning to focus on the inner life and the seat of the conscience. She also asserted that the indications of high spiritual intelligence are, flexibility, self-awareness, the ability to face and use suffering, the ability to face and surpass pain, the quality of being inspired by purpose and values, unwillingness to cause unnecessary harm, the tendency to see in a big picture and to connect between various things, the tendency to ask why, what if, and to seek answers, the ability to work against conventional.

According to Vaughan, spiritual intelligence is a capacity for strong comprehension of philosophical issues and insight into various layers of consciousness. It links the self to the spirit, opens the heart, illuminates the mind and inspires the soul, linking the individual human psyche to the fundamental ground of human being.

Richard (2001) affirmed that every one of us has spiritual intelligence. Because of this we have the capacity to reason with our hearts. Thus, spiritual intelligence can be infused as a human capacity to challenge the meaning, purpose and value of life and to find a link between each one of us and the universe in which we reside. The intangible universe that deals with faith and knowledge that tries to understand.

There are three ways of discovering meaning: by giving to the world in terms of creation, by relating to and appreciating the world in terms of encounter and experiences, and by taking a stand toward unavoidable suffering (Frankl, 1959).

In dealing with catastrophe and uncertainty, the first step each of individual should do is to accept that in life, not everything we can control. With this belief in mind, one become more open-minded and realistic and can easily accept the fact that catastrophe and uncertainty are something that is acceptable and bearable. We need to be reminded that we can do so much thing right now — and that make us strong and not weak. Things are going to unfold soon enough. In the meantime, we are in charge of the way we handle them (Hardy, 1979). By having a clear spiritual perspective that full of meaning, purpose and value, one can approach it appropriately and sensibly.

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, this tragedy needs to be overcome, and one way to do this is through the empowerment of spiritual wisdom, features that all human beings possess but are still under-utilized. Indeed, this COVID-19 pandemic is the best opportunity to lead anyone to adapt, embrace and turn life and tragedy into a moment of resilience, strength, wisdom and a new environment of shared and collective life, sharing responsibility and appreciating solidarity. In this situation, people need to believe in themselves, develop sensitivity and cognitive regulation that will cope more positively with catastrophe, momentous tragic event and uncertainty in order to live with the best version of ourselves.

In order to develop the spiritual intelligence, intelligence that can infuse as a human capacity to have a meaning, purpose and value of life it is important to establish the relationship and

interactions between individuals and own self, individual and the superpower and individuals with other people. Relationships can also lead to a sense of identity, a strong social network, active community interaction, increased understanding of proximity and encouragement, access to appropriate services and knowledge of health, exposure to positive modelling, mentoring and involvement in pro-social activities (Cohen & Wills).

Establishing a Relationship

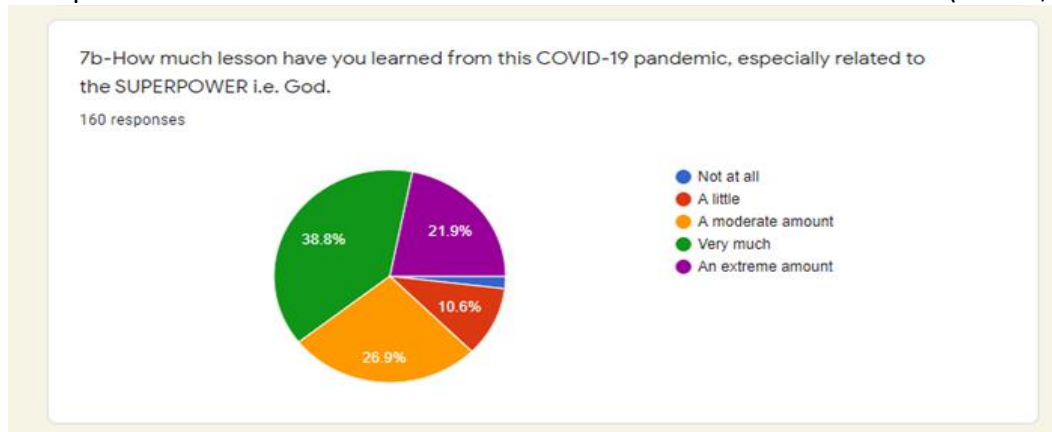
In dealing with catastrophe and uncertainty, the first step each of individual should do is to accept that in life, not everything we can control. With this belief in mind, one become more open-minded and realistic and can easily accept the fact that catastrophe and uncertainty are something that is acceptable and bearable. We need to be reminded that we can do so much thing right now — and that make us strong and not weak. Things are going to unfold soon enough. In the meantime, we are in charge of the way we handle them (Hardy, 1979).

Getting a relationship is also a way of showing how we owe ourselves meaning and value, and this is a kind of wise answer to the pandemic. Relationships can contribute to a greater sense of belonging, a healthy social network, constructive engagement with the group, a greater awareness of closeness and motivation, access to effective health resources and information, commitment to positive modelling, mentoring and engagement in pro-social events.

Relationship with Superpower

A personal relationship with a higher being can be done through meditation. All religions practice forms of meditation. There are many ways of meditation, one of them is through prayer. In prayer we reflect on the silence around us and seek a deeper connection with the God or Universe.

It follows that we should agree that there is one power beyond the grasp of human beings anytime something occurs beyond us. A superpower (God) relationship, a higher force, is theoretically a source of energy for humanity. This induces a confidence in people that all human suffering should be coped with. One will have a philosophical viewpoint through this relationship that allows him to make sense of life and better frame life events (Danah, 2000).



From the above chart we might understand that during the catastrophe 60.7% of students discovered something relevant to the superpower. Even though the number should be higher, it is sufficient to mean that a certain number of students have discovered that there is a kind of relationship, a relationship with a metaphysical element that is also known as the Superpower or God.

By having a sense of connectedness with the superpower, it will promote a feeling of bonding. The Islamic purpose deeply rooted in being aware of God and seeking His Pleasure gives us drive, motivation and success at work and home. In this case many people believe that faith makes them part of something greater than themselves. It can happen by prayer or meditation, or by engaging in religious activities or simply doing things like listening and brisk walking (Park, 2017).

Spirituality can lessen the impact of the catastrophe on people's wellbeing. Research indicates that confidence serves as a shield for the deleterious effects of a disaster and/or leads to psychological distress in the disaster. Based on their research on the 9/11 event, Ai, et al. (2005), postulated that stronger trust, optimism, and spirituality are inversely linked with depression and anxiety associated with the exposure to direct and indirect 9/11 trauma.

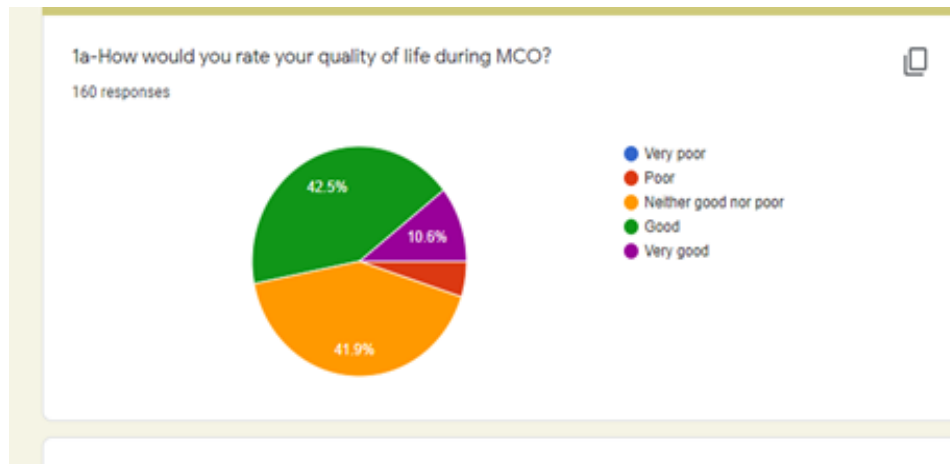
Relationship with Own Self

Being spiritual includes thinking, acting and connecting with one's self-consciousness as not forming the spirit or form, but the mind, not the body. Self-love conquers your darkness in many ways. It helps us cultivate a relationship with our spiritual core so we can love ourselves, have a self-value, self-love, self-confidence and give the best of our own self like courage who we are on a much deeper level than what we see in the mirror.

Self-compassion involves how we respond to ourselves during life challenges and painful experiences. We will react in a positive way to struggles and errors when you help and respect yourself. Going back to the superpower, to God (the one that belongs you), is one of the safe ways to react. From Islamic perspective for example, people need to understand that life circumstances are not us. They are events that happened to us and definitely they don't define us. In this case we need to be in the state Mindfulness. This mindfulness is not only about mental and emotional well-being, more specifically about spiritual well-being – which we believe can maintain our emotional wellbeing and is profoundly rooted in our knowledge of and relationship with God. The spiritual mindfulness is not judging any situation as negative. But always embrace it.

Fromm (2008) claimed that self-love requires confidence and bravery to take chances and conquer the life's setback and sorrows. Trust in ourselves allows us to be comforted and to face obstacles and defeats without lapsing into concern or judgement. We need to develop the ability to see objectivity and realize you're going to thrive; despite the feelings we are feeling.

Mindfulness is one of the technique to exercise self-love. It helps us to focus to the present moment without being swept away by all the stimuli, emotions, thoughts and feelings that we encounter. Mindfulness is the very basis of emotional intelligence as we are aware of ourselves: the effect of our feelings, emotions and behaviors on our personal success, our teams and our organizations is the core of emotional intelligence. According to numerous research on neuroscience, mindfulness has a strong relationship with emotional control and well-being.



Almost half of the students, 53.1% during the lockdown, felt their quality of life to be 'fair and very good' and the other half felt the other way round. Even if some of them were at home and some of them were at the university or private accommodations, they all were lockdown. From this result, we may infer that some students will not be able to manage the obstacles very well, but some will.

It would be normal for students involved in an incident such as this pandemic to feel some anxiety, panic, depression or disconnectedness. It's the confusion that scares them. They can't get together, and just keep on studying. Their lives have also changed due to loss of earnings or loss of parental income, deterioration of psychological state due to bad news and events such as fear of becoming sick or spreading the disease to one's family.

Relationship with Other Human being

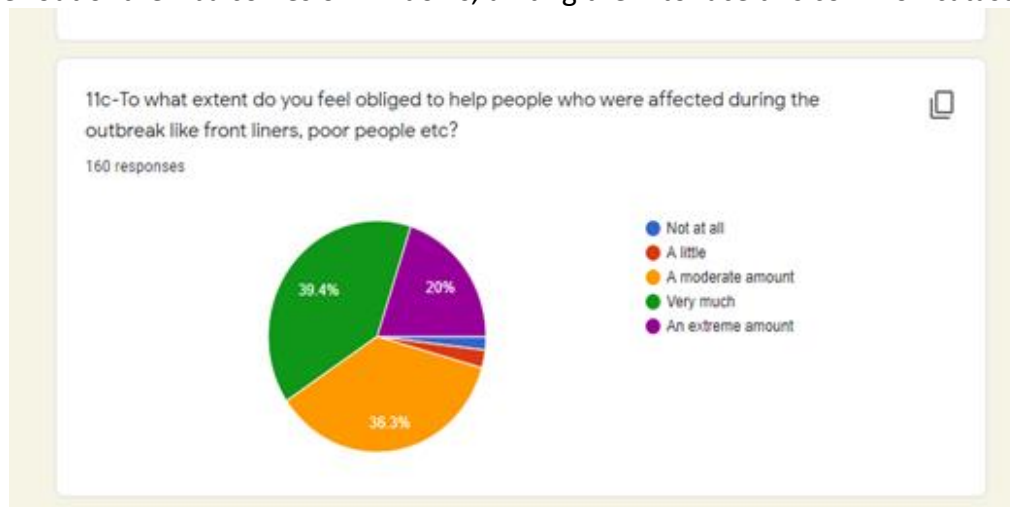
During this time, people need to speak and interact with others and not get in isolation but speak to someone about their sorrow, anger, and the like, although it can be difficult to get started. Even if we need to keep a physical distance, but in terms of social cohesion, this is the moment we need to get closer and closer. Physically isolated does not mean that there is a need to isolate socially. These are the kind of treatment they need and they have to take excise. Identify a friend who knows your feelings and supports them, or a trusted teacher, counsellor (Coles, 1990)

The sense of community and the core human values such as love, kindness, caring, justice and integrity can only be externalized by relationships with others or by social life. Islam genuinely upholds this by claiming that the best of you is the one who does the best to a fellow human being. That is why giving or taking care or helping the people less fortunate, sharing the emotional burden like sadness, the pain of the suffering are great ways to establish relationship with fellow human being and also a process to attain spirituality.

Social connections can help us to cope, whereas isolation may make us feel more depressed and anxious. This especially holds true if you ruminate about the disaster. While you may want to hold in your feelings and your stress, sharing these feelings with people that care about you will help you move forward.

Even so, because we need to limit the spread of illness, which is primarily dependent on a coordinated response from the general population, it makes it impossible for humans to be totally "social." Travel, tours, social events, and public functions have been restricted, and people are being asked to practice basic hygiene, avoid meeting others, and maintain a safe distance when they do. Nonetheless, the current crisis brings people together on an emotional and spiritual level by allowing them to care for one another. In many countries, we

could wee from the internet, the societies pulling themselves together now, just singing together out of their balconies or windows, uniting them to face this common catastrophe.



Our relationship with other people is an important aspect of spirituality. 59.4% felt compelled to assist those affected by the outbreak. A strong sign that students have a spiritual ability is a sense of helping others. This is because students want to contribute things like good deeds, no matter what kind of support, tangible or intangible. This is because the act of kindness is going to reach the hearts and make people recover in happiness. It is important to see helping others as equally essential spiritual practice, alongside common subjects such as prayer, meditation, study of the Scriptures, or fasting.

As asserted by Addiss (2016), 'Public health embodies a spirit of interconnectedness and acknowledges the need for global collaboration to solve these problems. A popular way for individuals to be in contact with their spiritual nature is to do something that can help others without getting something back. COVID-19 demands physical distancing but requires unified societal action.

Social distancing may raise concerns over the cohesiveness of our society, community, or family, yet it is crucial to stop the spread. Solidarity is the key to defeating COVID-19". The young and old need to care for each other, people with good health should care about the people with health conditions, and obviously, countries should also care for each other in this now global pandemic. In other words, we need intergenerational solidarity, cross-national solidarity.

Relationship with Nature

Another relationship that we need to build in order to acquire spiritual intelligence is a relationship with nature. The COVID-19 pandemic is changing human interactions with nature at various levels and through a wide variety of contexts. New information is required to understand the impacts of the global pandemic, considering its large spatial dimensions and the social distance measures used to contain it.

Globally, people around the world have recognized that the pandemic may have resulted in beneficial environmental externalities, such as decreased air pollution. Furthermore, with the changed of mobility patterns and limited opportunities for other types of sociability, there has been widespread public use and interaction with local green spaces, especially in densely populated areas. At the individual level, however, we can see that the more urgent issues regarding health and hygiene have relegated conservation practices to a lower priority.

While MCO has restricted our movement, we can still connect with nature by planting trees or urban farming at home or just have a brisk walk in the park or nature reserve and imagine that all the trees, plants and animals are the creatures of the Creator. Instead of just looking at them, strive to feel the presence of the Creator that we have created for the sake of the human being.

Human beings once crossed the globe and remained in close contact with nature, helping to define us and becoming an integral part of who we were. To help us make sense of this world, we gave it the human qualities we could understand, the spirits we considered our equals – we didn't think ourselves superior. We need to understand and respect the beauty of nature. We've never been left with the spirits. Being between land and sea has settled us down, and given us a sense of our greater selves.

In a logical and busy world, when we don't have time to think let alone feel, to connect with spirits in nature, whether we believe they actually exist or not, can help us find who we are, remind us of our place and priorities, and be a powerful and vital tonic.

There is so much of life to embrace, explore, and relish. Connecting with the spirit of nature can be our guide, and doorway, to a better life. The lockdown or MCO period is the best way to get to nature to show how much we appreciate and value them by planting the trees and breeding the animals. This is the best time to look around and imagine and notice how the earth grows and nurtures so much of all that becomes part of it. Feel the presence of the rocks, earth, mountains, streams and lakes. Let yourself feel what they are like in their parts and as a whole and are there just to serve human being. Feel the spirit of kinship we share with each other and the entirety.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can see that Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which posed unparalleled health threats to all strata of society across the world, has also urged us to look at it from a new viewpoint, one that involves spiritual treatment in terms of quality of life, health and well-being and, similarly, the end of life. It is likely to be imprinted on every human, in all walks of life, including students.

With spiritual intelligence that could be formed through relationships and experiences between individuals and one's own self, the person and the Superpower, and individuals with others, human capacity can be infused to reach the meaning, purpose and value of life and to find a connection between each one of us and the universe in which we reside.

The relationships with the Superpower or God have a direct effect on people's beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behavior. People like students or individuals need to possess this through their moral belief in times of personal hardship and widespread fear or disaster. The need to introduce spiritual care for all walks of life during the pandemic and post-pandemic era is therefore essential.

The findings of this study provide a broad view of spirituality or spiritual intelligence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Spiritual intelligence is better understood by integrating a spiritual perspective which includes defining aspects of faith and individual life. Indeed, COVID-19 is only one example of instability, catastrophe, uncertainty and confusion. What is important is that we have learned the lesson from it and how we treat it. In this case, we have been able to understand how much spiritual intelligence people, particularly students, possess. From this, as a way forward more effort need to be done to ensure during their journey as university students they would be able to equip themselves with physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspect equally in order they could become a balanced and healthy personality.

This spiritual intelligence is a grace or noble quality that helps students to adapt or integrate with others, no matter what their lives may be.

This paper also suggests that spiritual intelligence is the road to attaining and cultivating our own faith, and that it is a technique for dealing with instability such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is times like this that the words of Viktor Frankl become most relevant: "It is we ourselves who must answer the questions that life asks of us, and to those questions we can respond only by being responsible for our existence" (Frankl, 1959).

Indeed, this is an amazing moment in history, full of opportunity to learn more about ourselves and those around us.

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