

A Comprehensive Review of the Impact of Family Cohesion, Religious Values, and Spiritual Intelligence on Youth Susceptibility to Addiction

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the impact of spiritual intelligence and family cohesion on youth addiction prevention.

Methods: A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted using peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and authoritative reports published between 2000 and 2024. Databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar were searched using keywords related to spiritual intelligence, family cohesion, and youth addiction. Inclusion criteria focused on studies examining the relationship between these variables and their role in substance abuse prevention among adolescents and young adults.

Findings: The review identified several protective mechanisms through which spiritual intelligence contributes to resilience, such as self-awareness, moral integrity, and emotional regulation. Similarly, family cohesion, characterized by effective communication, emotional support, and strong parental bonds, was found to significantly reduce the risk of substance abuse in youth. An interactive effect was observed, where spiritual intelligence and family dynamics together enhanced adolescents' ability to cope with stress and peer pressure, minimizing the likelihood of engaging in addictive behaviors.

Conclusion: Spiritual intelligence and family cohesion are crucial protective factors in preventing youth addiction. Early interventions that focus on fostering spiritual intelligence and strengthening family relationships can effectively reduce addiction risk. The article emphasizes the need for educational programs and community-based initiatives to promote these protective factors from adolescence.

Keywords: addiction, family, youth, spiritual intelligence.

1. Introduction

Youth is a transitional developmental period between childhood and adulthood, characterized by significant biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. For some youth, this period marks a phase of adjustment and improved mental health, while for others, it is a time of maladaptation and increased levels of psychopathology. Recent studies in youth populations have reported a rise in mental health-related problems. The ever-increasing tendency toward substance abuse, as one of these issues, especially among adolescents and young adults, has long captured the attention of psychologists and sociologists (Guo et al., 2024; Mirzakhloo et al., 2024; Swendsen et al., 2012; Zare Mazloom et al., 2024).

Despite extensive global efforts to control drug use, the prevalence of substance abuse continues to rise, and the age of initial drug use is decreasing (Zeinali et al., 2008). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, approximately five percent of the world's population, or about 200 million people aged 15 to 64, use illicit drugs annually. Addiction, with its progressive nature, endangers individuals' health in all aspects of life, and its detrimental effects are evident on physical, psychological, social, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive health. In recent years, substance use disorders have increased globally, leading to significant economic costs incurred by nations due to the damage caused by these disorders (Swords et al., 2011).

Researchers emphasize the interaction between the individual and the family as a cause of substance use, often considering the problem from a systemic perspective and extending it to the entire family. The family is typically regarded as the most influential domain during youth, with family processes and relationships consistently linked to youths' psychosocial and behavioral outcomes. Research findings indicate that these associations are generalizable across different ethnicities and nationalities (Platter & Kelley, 2012).

Indeed, family cohesion, parent-child attachment, effective communication, discussions about expectations and values, and monitoring youth behaviors are critical protective family factors against substance abuse (Pirzadeh & Parsakia, 2023). Individuals who endure more hardships and adversities within the family during childhood are more likely to become involved with substance use, and dysfunctional family dynamics, particularly aggression, addiction, and alcohol use disorders, are correlated with substance use. Therefore, family functioning is the most

significant aspect of the family environment that impacts individuals' physical, emotional, and social health (Yan et al., 2014).

Beyond family cohesion, cultural policymaking to prevent drug use is an essential contemporary requirement. One of the protective factors against substance abuse is having firm religious and spiritual beliefs. Recently, World Health Organization experts have described humans as biological, psychological, social, and spiritual beings. Spirituality, viewed as a vital, motivating, inspiring, and life-affirming force, plays a crucial role in preventing substance abuse. A religiously faithful individual, connected to and grounded in their spiritual beliefs, is less likely to feel abandoned, meaningless, or isolated, which serves as a deterrent to drug use. On the other hand, spiritual intelligence, as a practical aspect of spirituality, is one of the newer intelligence concepts that underlies what we believe in and forms the basis of our beliefs, values, actions, and the structure of our lives (Farhangi et al., 2009).

The outcomes of developing and practicing spiritual intelligence include the ability to remain calm and focused in crises, adopt a selfless and altruistic attitude toward others, and maintain a clearer and more serene outlook on life. Therefore, teaching and fostering spiritual intelligence from adolescence and youth—arguably one of the most challenging life stages—is a suitable method for addiction prevention. Proper training and education during this period significantly influence an individual's future success or failure, especially in recent years when the prevalence of synthetic and chemical drugs has surged, and youth interest in these substances has increased. Consequently, this article provides a comprehensive review of the impact of family cohesion, religious values, and spiritual intelligence on youth susceptibility to addiction.

2. Methods

The methodology of this review article involves a comprehensive analysis of existing literature on the impact of spiritual intelligence and family cohesion on youth addiction prevention. The review is conducted using a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant research findings from peer-reviewed journals, books, and authoritative reports in the field of psychology.

The literature search is performed across multiple academic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Keywords and search terms include "spiritual intelligence," "family cohesion," "youth

addiction," "substance abuse prevention," "psychological resilience," and "protective factors." Boolean operators (AND, OR) are used to combine search terms effectively. The search is restricted to publications in English and those published between 2000 and 2024 to ensure the inclusion of recent and relevant studies.

- **Inclusion Criteria:** Studies that examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and addiction, research that highlights the role of family dynamics in addiction prevention, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, and studies that focus on adolescents and young adults.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Studies that focus solely on clinical interventions without addressing spiritual or familial factors, articles lacking empirical data, and publications in languages other than English or Persian (with reliable translations).

Key information from the selected studies is systematically extracted, including study design, sample characteristics, measures of spiritual intelligence and family cohesion, findings, and limitations. The extracted data are organized into themes to facilitate a narrative synthesis. The review emphasizes recurring patterns, theoretical frameworks, and critical insights into how spiritual intelligence and family cohesion influence youth addiction risk.

The review employs a thematic analysis to identify and discuss common themes across the selected studies. The themes explored include:

1. **The Protective Role of Spiritual Intelligence:** Examining how self-awareness, moral values, and spiritual practices contribute to resilience against substance abuse.
2. **Family Cohesion and Its Impact:** Analyzing the influence of strong family bonds, effective communication, and supportive parenting on reducing addiction susceptibility.
3. **Interaction Between Spirituality and Family Dynamics:** Exploring how spiritual intelligence interacts with family cohesion to enhance youth coping mechanisms and decrease addiction risk.

The quality of the included studies is assessed using established criteria, such as the relevance of research design, the validity and reliability of measures, and the rigor of data analysis. Studies are critically appraised to determine their contribution to understanding the role of spiritual and familial factors in addiction prevention.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Definition of Spirituality

Spirituality is one of the innate and intrinsic needs of humans, leading to personal growth and fulfillment, and it brings a sense of peace and satisfaction. There have been various definitions of spirituality, yet despite the increasing emphasis by scholars on the spiritual dimension of human development, a unified definition encompassing all aspects of spirituality has not been established (Samadi, 2006).

Spirituality is the effort to cultivate sensitivity toward oneself, others, a higher power (God), and an exploration of what is needed to become fully human, along with the search for complete humanity (Hinnells, 1995). It is defined as a personal relationship with a transcendent and infinite power (Ghobari Bonab et al., 2009).

Imam Khomeini (may his soul rest in peace) also believed that spirituality comprises qualities and actions that create a strong, intense, yet logical and appropriate passion in an individual, guiding them remarkably toward the one and only God (Amirpour et al., 2012).

The relationship between mental health and spirituality has gained attention from psychologists in recent years. Research shows that spirituality significantly affects mental and physical health (Koenig et al., 2001). Parvizi et al. (2004) found in their study that religious beliefs, awareness, and willpower are deterrents to youth inclining toward addiction.

3.2. Definition of Spiritual Intelligence

Intelligence is the ability to think, plan, create, adapt, solve problems, respond, make decisions, and learn (Noble, 2000).

Intelligence is categorized into various types, such as bodily intelligence (PO), intellectual intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ). These different types of intelligence are represented in a pyramid, with spiritual intelligence at the highest level, recognized as the most superior form of human intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence is a set of abilities that enable the use of religious and spiritual resources. It places actions and behaviors within a broad spiritual context and examines the meaningfulness of one stage of life compared to another (Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

Spiritual intelligence is a combination of the dimensions of intelligence and spirituality; it is, in essence, the ability to apply spirituality in life. A person with high spiritual

intelligence can act appropriately in different life situations and crises using their spirituality and beliefs. Spiritual intelligence is more about asking questions than providing answers, meaning that an individual poses more inquiries about themselves, life, and the surrounding world. Spiritual intelligence enlightens the mind and connects the soul to the underlying essence of existence, helping individuals distinguish reality from illusion (sensory error). In various cultures, this concept is known as the love of wisdom and service (Vaughan, 2003).

Amram and Dryer (2004) state that spiritual intelligence includes a sense of purpose and mission in life, a sense of sacredness in life, a balanced understanding of material value, and a commitment to improving the world. It

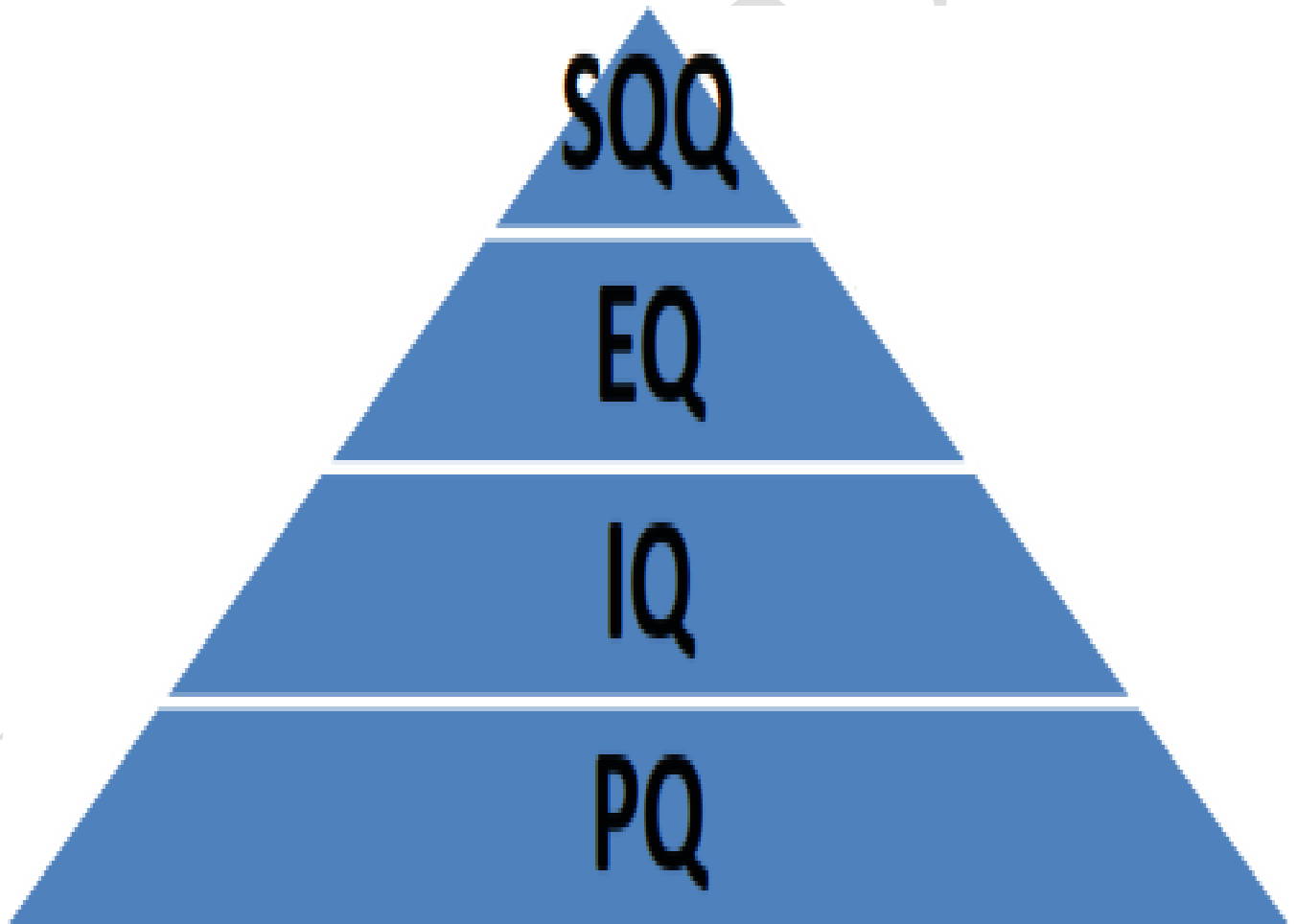
facilitates the use of spiritual information to solve everyday problems and achieve goals (Amram & Dryer, 2004).

Nasel (2004) defines spiritual intelligence as the ability to access spiritual resources for better understanding, finding meaning, and analyzing existence, spirituality, and practical behaviors (Nasel, 2004).

Spiritual intelligence fosters creativity in individuals, enabling them to replace rules and play with boundaries; it provides the ability to discern and choose, fills people with compassion and perception, and helps them recognize limitations. Spiritual intelligence has a transformative impact on the lives of those who develop and utilize it (Farhangi et al., 2009).

Figure 1

The Pyramid of Types of Intelligence (Viglizzo, 2004; as cited in Ghobari Bonab et al., 2007)



Spiritual intelligence encompasses at least five skills and competencies that form a part of foundational knowledge and lead to behaviors promoting environmental adaptation:

a) The capacity to transcend physical and material work, acknowledging the unity and interconnectedness of creation.

b) The ability to experience a high level of self-awareness.

- c) The ability to reflect on and refine daily experiences and activities in relation to religious and spiritual feelings.
- d) The ability to use spiritual resources to solve life problems.
- e) The ability to perform altruistic acts (forgiveness, sacrifice, etc.).

Spiritual intelligence gives individuals a holistic view of life and all experiences and events, enabling them to reframe and reinterpret experiences, deepening their understanding and awareness. People with high spiritual intelligence never blame others and always take responsibility for their actions. They are independent, feel secure, remain calm amid changes, and take life lightly. In contrast, those with low spiritual intelligence identify themselves with race, color, and status, blame others, seek validation from others, feel threatened by changes, easily become anxious, and feel hopeless (Samadi, 2006).

3.3. *Spiritual Intelligence and Youth Addiction*

Addiction is not a crime; it is a social illness that, if not addressed and prevented from the outset, can spread to others and become a widespread and critical societal crisis. Researchers have found that long-term substance use causes significant and lasting changes in the brain, potentially affecting various regions. Individuals who start using substances and alcohol at an early age are at greater risk for these changes and the onset of dependency. Unfortunately, these changes in the brain persist even after ceasing substance use. Each person is influenced by different factors that may lead them toward substance abuse. According to social control theories, deviance occurs when an individual's

commitment to society weakens or is destroyed (Mirbagheri & Moradi, 2009).

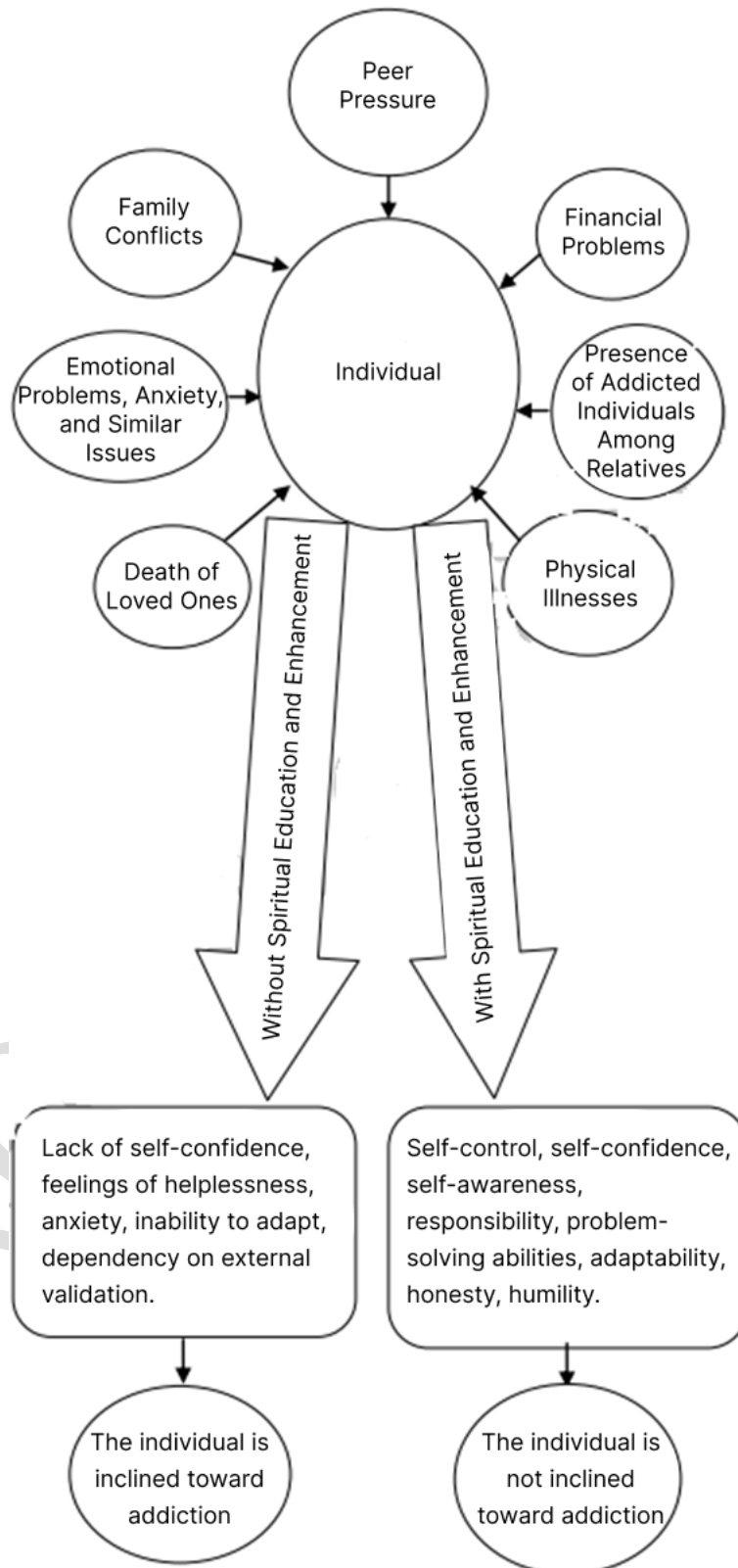
Alexander (1990), based on the adaptation model, describes involuntary drug dependency as an effort to cope with the failure resulting from a lack of social cohesion, such as failure to achieve social approval, competence, self-confidence, and personal independence, which are the minimum expectations of individuals and society. Youth turn to substances to cope with unwanted conditions and emotions (Alexander, 2011).

Many factors contribute to an individual's inclination toward substance use and eventual addiction, and examining all these factors is beyond the scope of this article. However, controlling certain factors, such as families' lack of awareness about addiction and addictive substances, the availability of these substances, and similar issues, falls under the responsibility of government authorities, legislative institutions, and mass media. Yet, many other factors influencing addiction are present in an individual's life despite regulatory control, and individuals can manage these factors by enhancing their spiritual intelligence. These factors are illustrated in a model shown in the following.

Moreover, since students are the youth of tomorrow and the future builders of our country, their religious tendencies and attention to spirituality play a significant role in their mental health and, consequently, in their avoidance of substance use. Thus, it is recommended to educate students about spiritual intelligence and foster its development. Adolescence is one of the most turbulent periods in a person's life and, according to statistics, can be the beginning of high-risk behaviors, including addiction. Therefore, teaching spiritual intelligence during adolescence can prevent risky behaviors in young adulthood.

Figure 2

Model for Controlling Factors Influencing Addiction (Addiction Prevention) through Enhancing Spiritual Intelligence



3.4. Family Cohesion and Youth Addiction

The family is one of the most critical institutions related to the phenomenon of addiction, and its role is considered so vital that it is treated as an independent variable in some studies (Di Pietro et al., 2007). The family is regarded as one of the fundamental organizations determining the health and illness of its members, with parents playing the primary role. Parenting styles are among the most crucial factors in the psychosocial development of children (Gallarín & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012). The family is the most significant developmental context that can cultivate a predisposition to addiction among its members. In families where humiliation, threats, and blame are prevalent, where appropriate, trust-based communication is lacking, where family boundaries are not clear and explicit, where roles and responsibilities are not aligned with members' developmental levels, where problem-solving does not occur effectively, where emotional support is absent, and where conflicts are not resolved appropriately, a suitable environment for addiction can be created (Qamari, 2011).

Decisions to use or refrain from substances often depend on individuals' interactions with their family, the family's coping mechanisms, and the substance use behaviors of other family members. In families where substance or alcohol use is not endorsed, members are less inclined to abuse these substances. It is evident that family members play a significant role in the trajectory of alcohol or substance use. Poor communication, weak problem-solving skills, arguments, financial stressors, and criticism are frequently reported as precursors to substance abuse. Miller et al. (2004) found in their study that families of alcohol-dependent individuals reported more dysfunction than other families (Miller et al., 2004). Agha and Zia (2008) demonstrated in their research that psychological issues and family functioning are risk factors for individuals' inclination toward addiction. Achieving optimal family functioning requires systematically and cohesively organizing roles, responsibilities, and duties among all family members (Agha et al., 2008). DePaul (2006) identifies certain characteristics of well-functioning families, such as open communication, effective stress management, empathy, leadership, expressing love and affection, personal responsibility, and family cohesion (DePaul, 2006).

The McMaster Model addresses six dimensions of family functioning, assessing family efficiency in fulfilling its tasks:

1. **Problem-Solving:** The family's ability to identify problems, evaluate solutions, implement them, and make necessary adjustments.
2. **Communication:** The exchange of information directly, effectively, and clearly, often involving verbal behaviors.
3. **Roles:** Behavioral patterns in interactive activities necessary for establishing a healthy, effective family system.
4. **Affective Responsiveness:** The family's capacity to meet members' emotional needs, responding appropriately to various situations with suitable emotions.
5. **Affective Involvement:** An expression of emotional responsiveness, indicating the satisfaction with and quality of interest and concern family members have for one another.
6. **Behavior Control:** The influence family members have on one another, encompassing rules and boundaries that regulate behavior (Lotfnejadafshar et al., 2022).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from the comprehensive review highlight the crucial role that spiritual intelligence and family cohesion play in youth addiction prevention. Spiritual intelligence is a multifaceted construct that involves self-awareness, moral integrity, emotional regulation, and resilience. It equips young individuals with the capacity to cope with life's stressors and challenges without resorting to substance use. The literature consistently underscores the importance of spiritual practices and beliefs as protective factors. For instance, Koenig (2001) emphasizes that spirituality significantly impacts both mental and physical health, contributing to an individual's overall well-being and reducing susceptibility to high-risk behaviors like addiction (Koenig et al., 2001).

The concept of spiritual intelligence, as defined by Zohar and Marshall (2000), emphasizes the importance of understanding and applying spiritual beliefs in practical life situations. Youth with higher spiritual intelligence demonstrate better problem-solving skills and adaptability, which are essential for managing peer pressure, emotional turmoil, and other risk factors for addiction (Zohar &

Marshall, 2000). Amram and Dryer (2004) further suggests that spiritual intelligence fosters a sense of purpose, mission, and a balanced understanding of life's material and spiritual aspects, all of which contribute to a reduced inclination toward substance abuse (Amram & Dryer, 2004).

Family cohesion is another significant protective factor. The family environment provides a foundation for psychological and social development, and positive family dynamics can mitigate the risk of substance abuse. Di Pietro et al. (2007) emphasize that family plays an independent and vital role in shaping youth behaviors, and parenting styles are closely linked to psychosocial outcomes. Families that exhibit open communication, emotional support, and effective problem-solving create a nurturing environment that fosters resilience (Di Pietro et al., 2007). Conversely, Gallarin and Alonso-Arbiol (2012) point out that dysfunctional family dynamics, such as humiliation, blame, and unresolved conflicts, can increase the vulnerability of youth to addiction (Gallarin & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012). Miller et al. (2004) found that families of alcohol-dependent individuals reported more dysfunction, highlighting the direct correlation between family structure and addiction risk (Miller et al., 2004).

The interactive effect of spiritual intelligence and family cohesion is noteworthy. A supportive family environment can reinforce the development of spiritual intelligence, while a spiritually intelligent individual can positively influence family relationships. This bidirectional relationship emphasizes the importance of integrated interventions that target both individual and familial factors. The model proposed by DePaul (2006), which outlines key dimensions of family functioning such as problem-solving, communication, and emotional support, provides a framework for understanding how cohesive family systems can act as a buffer against addiction (DePaul, 2006).

5. Suggestions and Limitations

Addiction remains a pressing social issue with far-reaching consequences, but this review emphasizes the significant potential of spiritual intelligence and family cohesion in prevention efforts. While governmental policies and external controls are essential, individual and family factors play an equally critical role in addressing the root causes of substance abuse. By fostering spiritual intelligence, young people can develop self-control, confidence, and resilience, which help them navigate life's challenges without turning to addictive substances.

Strengthening family cohesion further reinforces these protective mechanisms, creating an environment that nurtures healthy psychological and emotional development.

Based on the reviewed literature, it is recommended that educational systems and community programs incorporate spiritual intelligence training from adolescence. Increasing awareness among teachers and parents about the benefits of spiritual and familial support is crucial. Structured interventions, such as spiritual intelligence workshops and family counseling sessions, should be prioritized. By implementing these strategies, it is possible to reduce addiction risk and promote a healthier, more resilient youth population.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

Although this is a review article, ethical considerations include proper citation of sources and adherence to academic integrity. Efforts are made to present an unbiased and balanced perspective by including studies with varying findings and interpretations.

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