

## Study of Association between Spiritual Well-Being and Happiness in Male Students in Firouzabad County, Iran

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### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Currently, People worldwide are increasingly turning to spirituality and spiritual issues. Religion and spirituality are considered one of the determinants of happiness in psychology. This study was conducted to investigate the association between spiritual well-being and happiness in male students of Firouzabad County.

**Methods:** Study samples were 200 students in Firouzabad professional schools who were selected by random cluster sampling. Research instruments were Paloutzian and Ellison's Spiritual Well-Being Scale and Argyle's Happiness Scale.

**Results:** The findings demonstrated that spiritual well-being positively and significantly predicted happiness in the adolescents. Moreover, the components of spiritual well-being, i.e. existential well-being and religious well-being, can predict happiness in the adolescents.

**Conclusion:** Spirituality plays a very significant and main role in the adolescents' life. The adolescents that have cordial love toward and mental belief in God and ahl-ul-bait are happier and experience more academic achievements. In addition, happiness can help the adolescents become industrious and efficient people in the community.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Happiness, Spiritual Well-being.

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## Introduction

In the recent decades, spiritual significance and spiritual growth in human have been increasingly attracting psychologists' and mental health experts' attention. Advancements in psychology, on the one hand, and dynamic and complex nature of novel communities, on the other hand, have caused humans' spiritual needs to stand against their material desires and to increase in significance such that according to the World Health Organization (WHO), physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects comprise human existence, and the fourth aspect, i.e. spiritual aspect, is considered to contribute to human growth and development (1).

According to Hafford et al., spiritual well-being refers to combination of religious well-being and personal relationship with God, and existential well-being to personal relationship with the world that includes one's sense of

meaning, satisfaction, and purpose in life (2). Hateley explained spiritual well-being with reference to relationship with self, empathy with the community, and relationship with God (3). Ellison argues that spiritual well-being consists of a psychosocial element and a religious element. Religious well-being, i.e. the religious element, represents relationship with a superior force, i.e. God. The psychosocial element refers to existential well-being representing one's sense of who he/she is, what he/she is doing and why he/she is doing so, and where he/she belongs to (4).

Besides that, happiness is one of the human psychological needs that constantly preoccupies human attention because of having a major impact on his/her life. Vitality and joy is one of human's natural and essential needs and can be considered the most important

factor in family and community health. Spirit of hope, effort, and progress is in the light of living a happy and joyful life

The main components of happiness are positive emotion, lack of negative emotion (such as depression and anxiety), and life satisfaction (5). Therefore, to analyze happiness concept, theorists consider two components, cognitive and affective. The cognitive component refers to life satisfaction and affective component refers to balance between positive and negative emotions (6).

Religion and spirituality are considered one of the determinants of happiness in psychology. Since the inception of applied psychology, studies on association between religion and mental health have frequently demonstrated positive correlation between these two variables. Believing that there is a God that controls the situations and monitors his servants can relieve anxiety to a large extent. Moreover, Kim et al. have argued that religion is positively correlated with good mood, kindness, self-confidence, attention, and calmness (7). Peterson and Hwang conducted a study on a Muslim population according to which they suggested that religiosity was associated with religious coping which in turn was positively correlated with optimism. Furthermore, optimism has been demonstrated to be a mediator between religiosity and cognitive mental health (8). Smith et al. have found that religiosity is associated with low depression symptoms.

In addition, certain religiosity indices have been found to be even more negatively correlated with depression symptoms, while negative religious coping and external religious motivation are positively correlated with depression symptoms (9).

## Methods

The study population of this descriptive-analytical study consists of all male students of Firouzabad County in 2014-2016 academic year, of whom 200 people were selected as study samples.

Data were collected by Paloutzian and Ellison's Spiritual Well-Being Scale (10) and Revised Argyle's Happiness Scale (11).

Paloutzian and Ellison's Spiritual Well-being Scale, developed by Paloutzian and Ellison in 1982, this scale consists of 20 items and two subscales. Odd-numbered items are concerned with religious well-being subscale and the level of experience of having satisfactory relationship with God and even-numbered questions to existential well-being subscale with the sense of being purposeful and having life satisfaction. The items are rated by a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) and scored 1-5. By this scoring, the scores of religious well-being and existential well-being as well as total score of spiritual well-being are obtained. Paloutzian and Ellison reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of religious well-being, existential well-being, and the whole scale to be 0.91, 0.91, and 0.93, respectively. Dehshiri et al. investigated the psychometrics of this study in a sample population of the students of the universities in Tehran.

Test-retest reliability coefficients of the whole scale, religious well-being subscale, and existential well-being subscale were derived 0.85, 0.78, and 0.80, respectively. Besides that, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was reported 0.90 for the whole scale, and 0.82 and 0.87 for religious and existential well-being subscales, respectively. This scale's validity has been calculated by factor analysis and the correlation with the scores for happiness, religiosity, and psychiatric disorders, and reported to be satisfactory (12).

To measure happiness, the Oxford Happiness Inventory revised by Argyle, cited by Kar (11) was used. This scale consists of 29 5-choice items scored 1-5. The total scores of the 29 items represent the total score for the scale. Cambril reported the test-retest reliability of this scale to be 81%. In Iran, Alipoor and Noorbala reported an acceptable level for this scale such that its reliability coefficient according to Cronbach's alpha, split-half, and test-retest was derived 0.93, 0.92, and 0.79, respectively.

The data were analyzed by correlation tests and regression in SPSS.

## Result

Table 1 shows the correlation matrix of the studied variables. According to Table 2, spiritual well-being is positively and significantly correlated with religious well-being and existential well-being. Moreover, happiness was positively and significantly correlated with spiritual well-being and its components, i.e. religious well-being and existential well-being.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of the studied variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Religious well-being	1		
2. Existential well-being	0.80**	1	
3. Spiritual well-being	0.70**	0.65**	1
4. Happiness	0.45**	0.44**	0.85**

The results of concurrent multivariate regression of the variables are shown in Table 2. According to Table 2, spiritual well-being is a positive and significant predictor of happiness in adolescents ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Besides that, the components of spiritual well-being, i.e. existential well-being ( $\beta=0.18$ ,  $P<0.003$ ) and religious well-being ( $\beta=0.16$ ,  $P<0.004$ ), could positively predict happiness in the adolescents.

Table 2. Prediction of happiness based on spiritual well-being and its components

Predictive variables	t	Beta	R <sup>2</sup>	R	P	F	Sig
Religious well-being	2	0.16	0.15	0.39	0.001	5.28	0.04
Existential well-being	2.10	0.18					0.03
Spiritual well-being	2.64	0.20					0.01

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrated that there was a significant association between spiritual well-being and happiness in the students. More clearly, the higher levels of spiritual well-being the students have, the more happy they are. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that all aspects of spiritual well-being were significantly associated with happiness, which is consistent with Diz et al.'s study cited by Hadianfard (12). Diz et al. argue that spiritual people experience higher levels of happiness.

Spirituality is a main and significant aspect of healthy life that makes life purposeful and meaningful. Meyers and Peterson studies

indicated that happiness was effective in enhancing physical and mental health (13).

A study demonstrated that spirituality could be effective in developing hope, sense of being private to others, excitory peace, and opportunity to flourish, inhibiting impulses, and solving problems. Newman (14).

Spirituality is a main and significant aspect of healthy life that makes life purposeful and meaningful. This concept is derived from the life emphasis on one's relationship with others, nature, and self, and has a multidimensional structure. Spirituality is entangled with a sense of being meaningful and valuable, feeling sacred in life, more balanced understanding of material values, and believing betterment of the material world. Enjoying personal spirituality leads to internal peace and feeling comfortable, and lacking it is associated with feeling empty and meaningless, and consequently suffering from a variety of psychiatric disorders such as depression (15). Moreover, Peterson (16) has argued that happy people tend to see themselves and others and interpret events positively. Moreover, happy people have been demonstrated to experience higher levels of academic and social achievements.

## Conclusion

Because emotions were found to be mostly associated with happiness, happiness can be to some extent developed in adolescents through planning from emotional perspectives. Therefore, development and dissemination of Islamic culture (confidence, honesty, and accountability) in adolescents are effective in realization and enhancement of happiness. As a result, if Education Organization puts further emphasis on enhancing spiritual well-being among the students, happiness is developed in them, and therefore they can gain further academic achievements and take steps to progress scientifically and spiritually with greater self-satisfaction and more positive mood. The more cognition, emotions, and spiritual well-being action the students enjoy, the more stable happiness they will achieve.

In the light of this study's findings, it is recommended to provide students with the

conditions through which they can enjoy higher levels of spiritual well-being. Through implementation of extracurricular activities to enhance adolescents' spiritual well-being, great actions can be taken to improve happiness in them.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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No

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