

Research Paper: The Relationship Between Spiritual Health and School Burnout With Mediating Role of Social Support



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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: In the past few decades, spiritual health, as one of the dimensions of health besides physical, mental, and social health, has drawn the attention of psychologists and mental health professionals more than ever. However, there is a research gap in our country, so the primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between spiritual health and school burnout with the mediating role of social support.

Methods: This descriptive correlational research used the path analysis method. The statistical population comprised all sixth-grade female students (600 people) in Rudbar City, Iran, in the academic year 2020-2021. The sample size is calculated with the Morgan table (234 people). The samples were recruited by a simple random sampling method, and the research tools were the related questionnaire. The content validity and reliability of this research were confirmed. The tests were analyzed according to the research questions by path analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the 1-sample t test. The obtained data were analyzed in SPSS v. 26 software and LISREL software v. 8.8.

Results: There is a significant relationship between spiritual health and school burnout ($P=0.01$). Also, there is a significant relationship between spiritual health and social support ($P=0.01$). The t values obtained from the studied paths have P-values less than 0.05, so the indirect effects were statistically significant. So, social support has had an indirect impact on spiritual health and academic burnout.

Conclusion: One of the influential factors in reducing school burnout and increasing spiritual health is the social support perceived by students.

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Introduction

Today, most societies in all aspects have undergone rapid and dramatic changes that the effects of these changes on their physical and mental health are very noticeable. Encountering physical and mental problems can cause acute and severe crises in people's health and increase their vulnerability; however, they can result in personal and spiritual growth [1]. Since 47 years ago, the results of extensive research showed the relationship between religious and spiritual factors with physical indicators and provided a more comprehensive and new definition of health. These findings were gradually introduced in scientific writings [2]. After several years that the health concept has been analyzed based on specific dimensions (physical health, mental health, and social health), another important dimension of individual and social life has been presented to health experts, which can be called spiritual health [3].

School burnout is considered an obstacle to academic achievement. With more stress and adverse consequences in students' lives, the quality and quantity of academic performance are reduced. Prevention and coping with students' school burnout is one of the main problems of any educational system. School burnout not only prevents learners from academic achievement but also disrupts their normal functioning in school and the learning environment [4].

In contrast, social support for students is a vital issue. Social support is the love, attention, and assistance that a person receives from family members, friends, and others; social support protects against stressful events. Inadequate social support makes life adaptation difficult for students. It prevents them from accepting their various roles in the family, school, and society, resulting in poor physical, mental, and spiritual health [5]. According to what was said, we sought to investigate the effect of spiritual health on school burnout through a descriptive correlational method of path analysis considering the mediating role of social support in sixth-grade female students in Rudbar City, Iran.

Methods

According to our research topic, this study was a descriptive-correlational study with a path analysis method. Also, it is an applied study in terms of its objectives. The statistical population comprised all sixth-grade female students in Rudbar (600 people) studying in the academic year 2020-2021. The statistical sample of this

study, according to Krejcie-Morgan's table, comprised 234 sixth-grade female students in Rudbar who were selected by a simple random sampling method. However, 300 questionnaires were distributed among students online because of distance learning due to COVID-19 epidemics, of which 66 returned questionnaires were removed. The researcher informed the people about their right to leave the research and the absence of any obligation. Then the questionnaires were distributed online, and participants were asked to answer the questions without any time limit and at any time. The research tools included three standard questionnaires as follows:

Spiritual Health Questionnaire

The 20-item spiritual health questionnaire of Pultzin and Ellison (1982) assesses the religious health of the people with 10 questions (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 19) and their physical health with another 10 other questions (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20). The range of spiritual health scores is between 20 and 120. The answers to these questions are scored on a 6-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree = 1" to "strongly agree = 6" [6]. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been confirmed in various studies. In Iran, its α coefficient was found 0.82 [7]. Also, in another study, the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.85 using the Cronbach α [8].

Academic Burnout Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Bresó et al. in 2007. The academic burnout questionnaire assesses three areas of school burnout: academic fatigue, academic apathy, and academic inefficiency. The questionnaire consists of 15 expressions scored on a 5-point Likert scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". The reliability values of the questionnaire were calculated by its developers as 0.82, 0.70, and 0.75 for the three burnout areas, respectively [9]. In a study, the Cronbach α values were calculated at 0.85 for the whole questionnaire and 0.77, 0.82, and 0.66 for the areas of academic fatigue, academic apathy, and academic inefficiency, respectively [10].

Social Support Questionnaire

This tool has been prepared by Zimeat et al. (1988) to measure the social support perceived by family, friends, and important people in a person's life. It has 12 items, and the respondents express their opinion on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree" [11]. Various studies have confirmed

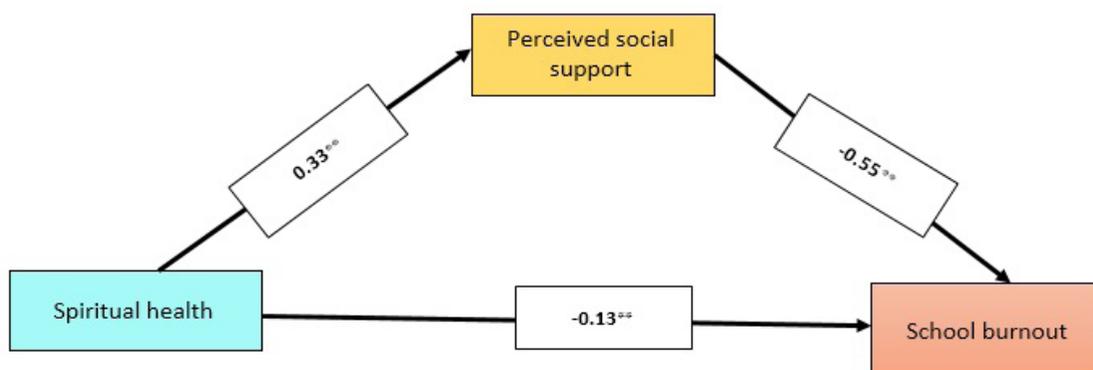


Figure 1. Path diagram related to the path coefficients of the research conceptual model



the validity of this questionnaire, and one study reported its internal reliability as 0.89 [12].

In the present study, to determine the validity of the above questionnaires, they were provided to five professors and experts in educational sciences. After their review, the questionnaires were approved and used. To determine the validity of these questionnaires, we used the Cronbach α coefficient, which was calculated 0.92 for spiritual health, 0.90 for school burnout, and 0.86 for social support. According to the research topic and the method required for data analysis in this research, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. In descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used. In inferential statistics, the appropriate tests to the research questions such as path analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the 1-sample t test were used.

Results

The overall indicators of the goodness-of-fit test in the path analysis indicate the overall fit of the proposed model; if the Chi-square over the degree of freedom was less than 3, it is desirable. Also, when the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is less than 0.1, the model analysis and fit are desirable. Finally, the closer the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Good-

ness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Nonnormed Fit Index (NNFI) to 1, the better the model's fit. According to the obtained indices in the above table, the Chi-square index over the degree of freedom is 275.50. Also, the values of GFI, AGFI, NF, CFI, and NNFI fit indices are close to 1, indicating that these indicators have achieved the necessary standards. Therefore, it can be said that the model has a good fit and is confirmed (Table 1). The results of calculating the t statistics (t values) and the standard estimation mode related to the path analysis of the variables are shown (Figure 1).

Table 1 shows that the spiritual health variable has an average and standard deviation of 95.36 and 11.10, respectively. Also, the social support variable has a mean and standard deviation of 46.22 and 10.74, and the school burnout variable has a mean and standard deviation of 27.85 and 3.17, respectively.

As seen in Table 2, the correlation of spiritual health with social support ($r=0.330$) is positive and statistically significant ($P<0.01$). The results also show that social support can predict 0.105 of changes in spiritual health ($F=28.35$, $B=0.330$, $t=5.32$, $P<0.01$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on spiritual health, social support, and school burnout

| Variables | Mean \pm SD | Skewness | Elongation |
|------------------|-------------------|----------|------------|
| Spiritual health | 95.36 \pm 11.10 | -0.46 | -0.82 |
| Social support | 46.22 \pm 10.74 | -0.65 | -0.52 |
| School burnout | 27.85 \pm 3.17 | -0.98 | -0.47 |



Table 2. Summary of the spiritual health regression pattern with social support

| Variables | | Correlation Coef- ficient | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Non-standard Beta | Standard Beta | t | Sig. |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|------|-------|
| Spiritual health | Social sup- port | 0.330** | 0.109 | 0.105 | 0.319 | 0.330 | 32.5 | 0.001 |

** P<0.01.



The above diagrams show that the data are normal. Also, the degree of skewness and elongation of the re- search variables indicate that the data are normal.

As seen in Table 3, the correlation between spiritual health and school burnout ($r=-0.313$) is negative, and statistically significant ($P<0.01$). The results also show that school burnout can predict 0.094 of changes in spiri- tual health ($F=13.25$, $B -0.313$, $t=-5.01$, $P<0.01$).

The diagrams show that the data are normal. Also, the degree of skewness and elongation of the research vari- ables indicate that the data are normal.

Table 4 presents the direct, indirect effects, and overall standardized effect of spiritual health and school burn- out with the mediating role of social support. Spiritual health directly affects social support and school burnout by 0.33 and -0.13 values, respectively. It is also observed that social support directly affects school burnout with a -0.55 value. While it indirectly and through the me- diating role of school burnout affects spiritual health by -0.18. The total effect (direct and indirect) was estimated to be -0.51. Therefore, social support has indirectly af- fected the spiritual health and school burnout of sixth- grade female students in Rudbar City, Iran.

We used the 1-sample t test to assess the level of spiritu- al health, social support, and school burnout of students.

As Table 5 shows, the variable of spiritual health is sig- nificant ($P<0.01$) with $t=34.93$, $df=233$, and test value $=70$. Since the average spiritual health is greater than the test value, so the level of the spiritual health of sixth-grade female students in Rudbar is at a high level. This finding is consistent with the results of Lee et al. [13].

Table 5 also indicate that perceived social support is significant ($P<0.01$) with $t=14.55$, $df=233$, and test val- ue= 36. Since the average perceived social support is higher than the test value, the perceived social support of sixth-grade female students in Rudbar is high. This finding is consistent with the results of Azizi Abargoeei et al. [10] and Chavoshian et al. [15].

The Table 5 also showed that school burnout is signifi- cant ($P<0.01$) with $t=-82.50$, $df=233$, and test value= 45. Since the average test burnout value is smaller than the test value, the burnout rate of sixth-grade female stu- dents in Rudbar is low. This finding is consistent with the results of Sadeghian et al. and Pouratashi and Za- mani studies. But it does not agree with the results of Ortorgota and Sivakersi. They concluded that the level of burnout is high in students, especially girls.

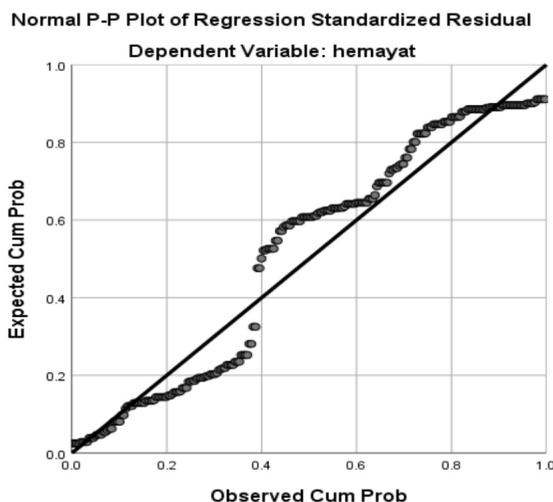


Figure 2. Normal p-p plot regression chart of spiritual health and social support



Table 3. Summary of the pattern of spiritual health regression with social support and school burnout

| Variables | Correlation Coefficient | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Non-standard Beta | Standard Beta | t | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|-------|
| Spiritual health School burn-out | -0.313** | 0.098 | -0.94 | -0.179 | -0.313 | -5.01 | 0.001 |

** P<0.01.



Table 4. Estimation of direct, indirect and the total effect of spiritual health and school burnout with social support

| Paths in the Final Pattern | Coefficients | | | |
|--|--------------|----------|----------------|--------------|
| | Direct | Indirect | General effect | Result |
| Spiritual health → Social support | 0.33** | - | 0.33** | Confirmation |
| Spiritual health → School burnout | -0.13** | - | -0.13** | Confirmation |
| Social support → School burnout | -0.55** | - | -0.55** | Confirmation |
| Spiritual health → Social support School burnout | 0.33** | -0.18** | -0.51** | Confirmation |

** P<0.01.



Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of spiritual health on school burnout with the mediating role of social support for sixth-grade female students in Rudbar City, Iran.

School burnout in educational settings is defined as a feeling of tiredness due to the demand and requirements

of education (fatigue), having a pessimistic and uninterested sense about the content and assignments (indifference), and a sense of poor personal progress in academic affairs (decreased personal self-efficacy). People with school burnout often experience symptoms such as a lack of interest in the educational materials, inability to continue attending classes, frequent absences, non-participation in class activities, a feeling of inability to learn the courses, and ultimately academic failure [13].

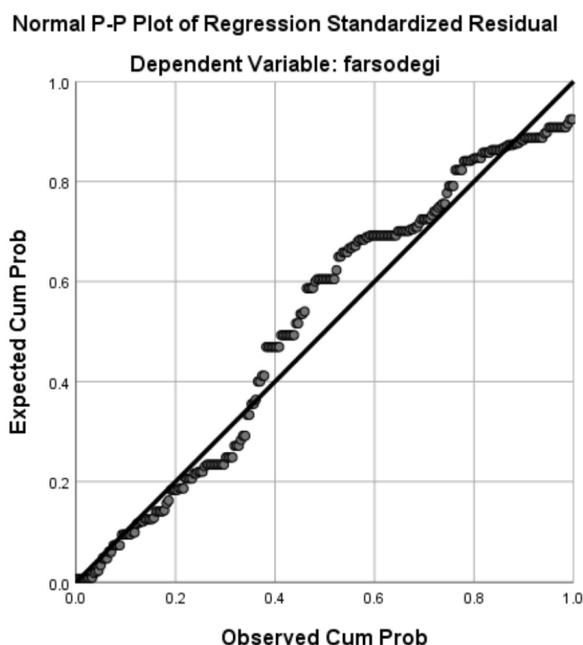


Figure 3. Normal p-p plot regression chart of spiritual health and school burnout



Table 5. Results of 1-sample t test examining the spiritual health, social support, and school burnout

| Variables | Number | Mean±SD | Test Value | t | df | Sig. |
|------------------|--------|-------------|------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Spiritual health | 234 | 36.95±10.11 | 70 | 34.93 | 233 | 0.001 |
| Social support | 234 | 22.46±74.10 | 36 | 14.55 | 233 | 0.001 |
| School burnout | 234 | 85.27±17.13 | 45 | -82.50 | 233 | 0.001 |



On the other hand, spiritual health is essential for humans, especially for adolescents, because they are looking for purpose, meaning, and identity in their lives. They are in a time when issues like decision-making, inner peace, self-awareness, and socio-moral compatibility are essential to them. James (1997) believed that these issues urge the necessity of teaching spiritual skills to adolescent students. By learning these skills, students can understand the meaning of their lives, follow rational and logical behaviors, make their relationship with others human and doctrinal, create a positive attitude towards themselves and others, and increase their spiritual health. Some studies suggest that without spiritual health, other biological, psychological, and social dimensions may not function properly or reach their maximum potential. Therefore, the highest level of quality of life will not be achieved. In other words, spiritual health harmonizes different aspects of life and strengthens mental function and adaptation [14]. According to the obtained results In this study, higher spiritual health can control students' school burnout and improve and grow their academic performance.

Chavoshian et al. found a significant relationship between the components of social support and spiritual health [15]. Al-Warani and Al-Radaydeh found a positive and significant correlation between spiritual wellbeing and perceived social support, and also between perceived social support and life satisfaction. Besides, both areas of spiritual wellbeing had positive and significant correlations with all perceived sources of social support [16]. The health of an individual is the foundation of the health of society, and society plays a decisive role in the health of individuals. The health status of individuals in society affects their health and emotions in various ways, as well as the economic and social indicators of society. Therefore, ensuring the health of people in society, especially their spiritual health, is essential. Spiritual health provides a harmonious and integrated connection between internal forces. It defines the feeling of a close relationship with oneself, God, society, and the environment with the characteristics of stability in life, peace, and harmony. Spiritual health determines the integrity of an individual [17].

The use of spirituality can effectively promote social support, adaptation, and compliance in matters related to health [18]. The concept of perceived social support means a person's cognitive assessment of the environment and relationships with others. Kubzanski, Berkman, and Seaman argued that by creating reciprocal commitments, social support makes a situation in which one feels loved, cared for, respected, and valued. Throughout life, people need intimate and supportive environments to master appropriate coping methods to ensure their mental and spiritual health. Social support enables growth and self-fulfillment by creating a sense of security in the individual [19]. Social support is the strongest and most potent factor for successful and easy coping in times of stress [20]. Social support is related to health and has positive consequences on people's health, especially spiritual health [21]. This study found that social support, perceived as a critical variable, has an essential role in promoting spiritual health. In other words, the importance of spiritual health in various fields has led to its role in promoting social support and the formation of social groups.

Research has also shown that stress and overall self-efficacy are associated with school burnout and engagement. They defined self-efficacy and social support as internal and external variables related to burnout of technical and vocational students. They also found that students' academic burnout has a significant and negative effect on academic achievement [22].

Evidence and conducted research inside and outside of Iran indicate that school burnout is a serious issue in learners' academic years. Meanwhile, students, as the educated strata of society and those responsible for the society's future, are more affected by the adverse effects of school burnout, such as impairment in mental, psychological, and physical wellbeing. School burnout is a crucial factor in understanding students' academic behaviors and performance. It affects students' relationships with their place of study and their desire to continue their education [23]. Therefore, the student's perception of social support by classmates and teachers is very effective in reducing their school burnout, and paying attention to issues related to students as future builders of society is of particular importance. Improving students' educational status, especially the factors affecting the

reduction of school burnout and increasing their spiritual health, is one of the main goals of current education systems. One of the effective factors in reducing school burnout and increasing spiritual health is the social support perceived by students.

In this regard, it is suggested that educational workshops and packages be held to increase spiritual health and social support and reduce burnout in students, teachers, and parents. One of the study limitations was the statistical population confined to sixth-grade female students in Rudbar City, Iran. So care should be taken in generalizing the findings. Also, considering that in the present study, only one tool (questionnaire) was used to collect the desired information, while other methods such as interview, observation may yield different results. It is also suggested that similar studies be conducted in larger and different communities to generalize the results further.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of spiritual health on school burnout with the mediating role of social support in sixth-grade female students in Rudbar City. The results showed a direct and significant relationship between spiritual health and school burnout, between spiritual health with students' social support, and between school burnout and students' social support. There was an indirect and significant relationship between spiritual health and school burnout with the mediating role of students' social support. Also, the levels of spiritual health and perceived social support of students were high, but the degree of school burnout of students was low.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

There were no ethical considerations to be considered in this research.

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The paper was extracted from the MA thesis of the first author.

Authors' contributions

Both authors equally contributed to preparing this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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