

## Research Paper



# The Mediating Role of Meaning in Life in Relationships of Responsibility and Spiritual Health With Prospective Personality in Competent Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

**Background and Objectives:** Spiritual health, along with mental, physical, and emotional health, is one of the four dimensions of health, which can increase the level of adaptation of teachers to life events. The present study investigates the mediating role of meaning in life in relationships of responsibility and spiritual health with prospective personalities of competent teachers.

**Methods:** This study used a structural equation model method, and the statistical population consisted of all competent teachers in Ahvaz City, Iran, in 2023. A total of 264 participants were selected via multi-stage cluster sampling. Prospective personality, responsibility, spiritual health, and meaning in life questionnaires were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, the Pearson correlation coefficient, and structural equation modeling.

**Results:** Spiritual health had positive, significant relationships with prospective personality and meaning in life in competent teachers ( $P < 0.01$ ). Responsibility was significantly related to prospective personality and meaning in life ( $P < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, the relationship between meaning in life and perspective personality in teachers was significant ( $P < 0.001$ ). The indirect paths to perspective personality were found to become significant through meaning in life ( $P < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** The proposed model had a good fit and is a major step toward identifying factors affecting prospective personality in teachers.

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## Introduction

**E**ducation is a major organization in countries. Motivated and effective teachers strongly contribute to the progress of this organization [1]. Teachers are the core element of teaching and learning and can ensure the effectiveness of education systems through high levels of motivation, enthusiasm, and spirit [2, 3]. Prospective personality is a novel human personality concept. It describes general behavior tendencies to identify opportunities that would lead to active changes in humans [4]. Compared to personally passive individuals, a perspective person is willing to actively manipulate and shape their peripheral environment to achieve their life goals [5, 6].

Several factors, such as responsibility, influence the prospective personality of teachers. Harendza [7] believed that individuals require responsibility to feel better in their jobs and lives. Teachers are role models to students and can play a key role in transferring prospective personalities to their students [8]. Latapí Agudelo et al. [9] argued that responsibility is a duty to private institutions, in the sense that they should not adversely impact life in the community where they work. The extent of this duty generally includes indiscriminate recruitment, avoiding unethical activities, and informing consumers of product quality. It is also a duty based on positive participation in the lives of individuals in society [10].

Spiritual health is crucial to teachers. Religious and spiritual beliefs would meet many basic demands of individuals and fill their ethical, emotional, and spiritual gaps [11]. Spiritual health consists of two components, i.e. spirituality and health, and has two dimensions: Religious health and existential health [12, 13]. The former refers to the connection with the supreme power (God). At the same time, the latter is a socio-mental element representing how an individual feels who they are, what they do and why, and where they belong. Both religious health and existential health include excellence and moving beyond one's self [14].

Meaning in life can affect responsibility and spiritual health in teachers and enhance their prospective personality [15]. It is a sense of connection with God, having a purpose in life, pursuing and achieving valuable goals, and evolution [16, 17]. Klefaras and Psarra [18] demonstrated that individuals with greater meaning in life would have a better connection with God and show lower symptoms of depression.

Research has shown that teachers are more vulnerable to work-related stress than people in other jobs [19, 20]. Major and abrupt changes and stress in life are factors that threaten teachers' physical health [21]. Today, despite deep cultural variations and changes in lifestyles, many individuals lack basic abilities to handle life situations and are thus vulnerable to the challenges of daily life, leading to physical-mental health deterioration [22]. Mental challenges impose drastic pressure on individuals, and it is essential to pay attention to mental health [23]. Due to the key role of teachers in the development of society and students and the multiple challenges encountered by teachers in educational settings, it is necessary to develop plans to improve the teaching performance and responsibility of teachers. Therefore, based on the issues outlined above, the present study investigates the mediating role of meaning in life in relationships of responsibility and spiritual health with prospective personalities of competent teachers.

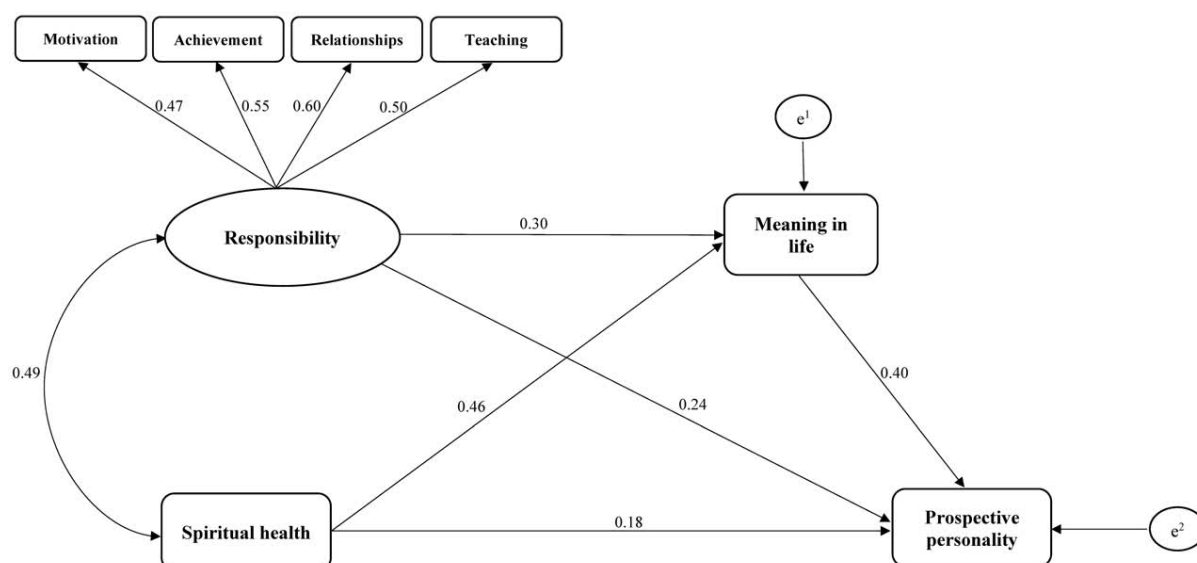
## Methods

This study adopted a descriptive-correlational methodology, where relationships between variables were evaluated using structural equations. The statistical population consisted of elementary school teachers in Ahvaz City, Iran, in 2023. Multi-staged cluster sampling was used to select participants. According to Rahbar [24], a minimum of five to ten participants are required per parameter. However, more than ten participants can be considered for each parameter to ensure the adequacy of the sample size to test the model. Hence, the sample size was estimated to be 250. However, a total of 280 participants were selected to cope with the possible reduction in the sample size. Finally, 264 completed questionnaires were returned. The inclusion criteria were having at least 3 years of work experience, age range from 20 to 50 years, and informed consent to participate in the research. In addition, the exclusion criterion was a failure to answer all items of the questionnaires.

## Measurement tools

### Prospective personality measure

The ten-item personality inventory (TIPI) was employed to measure prospective personality. The items are scored from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high); for instance, "How much have you felt that you need a large power to make a productive change in your workplace in the past six months?" [25]. The internal consistency of TIPI was reported with the Cronbach  $\alpha$  of 0.70 [25].



**Figure 1.** Model of the mediating role of the meaning of life in the relationship between responsibility and spiritual health with prospective personality

### Responsibility measure

To evaluate the responsibility of the teachers, Lauer-mann and Karabenick's [26] teacher responsibility scale (TRS) was utilized. It consists of thirteen items and four sub-scales, including responsibility for student motiva-tion (items 1-3), responsibility for student achieve-ment (items 4-7), responsibility for relationships with students (items 8-10), and responsibility for teaching (items 11-13). The respondents score the items based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). The reliability of the teacher responsibility scale was reported as 0.81 using the Cronbach  $\alpha$  method [27].

### Spiritual health measure

The spiritual well-being scale was developed by Palout-zian et al. [28] and has 20 items. The items are scored based on a 6-point Likert scale, from "Completely Agree" to "Completely Disagree". The negative items (items 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 16, and 18) are scored inversely. The total spiritual health score is the sum of the scores of the items. The reliability of the spiritual well-being scale was reported 0.81 using the Cronbach  $\alpha$  method [29].

### Meaning in life measure

The meaning in life questionnaire was proposed by Ste-ger et al. [30] with 10 items. It measures the meaning in life and searching for meaning. The items are scored based on a 7-point scale. The reliability of the meaning in-life question-naire was reported 0.96 using the Cronbach  $\alpha$  method [31].

### Statistical analyses

The Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to evaluate relationships between the variables. To evaluate the proposed model, structural equation modeling was used in the SPSS software, version 27.0, and AMOS software, version 25.

### Results

The respondents were 176 female and 88 male teach-ers. Furthermore, 115 of the teachers were unmarried, and the remaining 149 were married. Table 1 provides the Mean $\pm$ SD, and Pearson correlation coefficient for the variables.

According to Table 1, there were significant correla-tions between all the variables ( $P<0.01$ ). Figure 1 illus-trates the initial model to explain prospective personal-ity based on responsibility, spiritual health, and meaning in life.

According to Table 2, the root-mean-square error was 0.0001, which implies good fitness in the model.

Table 3 represents the path coefficients to evaluate the direct relationships. The results showed that spiritual health had positive, significant relationships with pro-spective personality ( $\beta=0.18$ ,  $P=0.005$ ) and meaning in life ( $\beta=0.45$ ,  $P=0.001$ ) in competent teachers. Respon-sibility was significantly related to prospective person-

**Table 1.** Mean scores and Pearson correlation coefficient between the variables

| Variables               | Mean±SD     | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4 |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| Prospective personality | 29.36±6.35  | 1      |        |        |   |
| Responsibility          | 39.32±6.27  | 0.41** | 1      |        |   |
| Spiritual health        | 69.89±16.55 | 0.54** | 0.38** | 1      |   |
| Meaning in life         | 39.95±9.37  | 0.63** | 0.40** | 0.61** | 1 |

\*\*P&lt;0.01.

**Table 2.** Fit indicators of the research model

| Fit Indicators | $\chi^2$ | df | $\chi^2/df$ | TLI  | CFI  | RFI  | NFI  | RMSEA  |
|----------------|----------|----|-------------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Model          | 10.12    | 11 | 0.92        | 0.99 | 0.99 | 0.95 | 0.97 | 0.0001 |

Abbreviations: Df: Degree of freedom; TLI: Tucker-Lewis index; CFI: Comparative fit index; RFI: Relative fit index; NFI: Normed fit index; RMSEA: Root mean square error of approximation.

**Table 3.** Path coefficients of direct relationship between the research variables

| Paths                                      | Model   |       |
|--|---------|-------|
|  | $\beta$ | P     |
| Responsibility → Prospective personality   | 0.24    | 0.005 |
| Spiritual health → Prospective personality | 0.18    | 0.005 |
| Responsibility → Meaning in life           | 0.30    | 0.001 |
| Spiritual health → Meaning in life         | 0.46    | 0.001 |
| Meaning in life → Prospective personality  | 0.40    | 0.001 |

ality ( $\beta=0.24$ ,  $P=0.005$ ) and meaning in life ( $\beta=0.30$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). Furthermore, the relationship between meaning in life and perspective personality in teachers was significant ( $\beta=0.40$ ,  $P=0.001$ ).

Bootstrapping was used to measure the significance of the mediators, as shown in Table 4. According to Table 4,

the indirect path from responsibility to prospective personality with the mediating role of meaning in life was significant ( $\beta=0.71$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). Furthermore, the indirect path from spiritual health to prospective personality with the mediating role of meaning in life was significant ( $\beta=0.07$ ,  $P=0.002$ ).

**Table 4.** Path coefficients of indirect relationship between the research variables

| Paths  | Model   |       |
|--|---------|-------|
|  | $\beta$ | P     |
| Responsibility → Prospective personality through meaning in life   | 0.707   | 0.001 |
| Spiritual health → Prospective personality through meaning in life | 0.071   | 0.002 |

## Discussion

This study investigated the mediating role of meaning in life in relationships of responsibility and spiritual health with prospective personality in competent teachers. The relationship between responsibility and prospective personality in teachers was found to be significant. This finding is consistent with Li et al. [32]. Responsibility is the commitment to and accepting one's responsibilities and duties. Prospective personality refers to the traits, values, and beliefs that shape the decisions and behavior of individuals. Teachers have an active role in students' lives and contribute to their education. Thus, responsibility and prospective personality are crucial for teachers. Teachers have a strong influence on the lives of their students with their decisions, and teachers must make responsible decisions since efficient, rational arrangements of student's lives would yield positive outcomes [32]. Furthermore, the prospective personality of teachers plays a key role in the education and personality of students. Teachers are role models to students, and their characteristics and values inevitably have positive effects on students. Therefore, the prospective personality of teachers should be consistent with acceptable and productive values and characteristics.

Additionally, the relationship between spiritual health and prospective personality was significant. This finding is consistent with Golparvar [33]. In this respect, spiritual health refers to the spiritual and psychological status of an individual and includes satisfaction, happiness, peace, and deep relationships with one's self, others, and the world. Prospective personality plays an important role in interacting with others and effectiveness in life. Teachers play a key role in shaping the lives of students. They are responsible not only for meeting the educational requirements of students but also for their ethical and psychological education [33]. Therefore, teachers can enhance the spiritual health of their students. Drawing on meaning in life concepts, teachers can help students arrange a spiritual perspective in their lives. They can transfer values, goals, and meaning in life to students and help them with the search for meaning in their lives. Moreover, by providing a good role model to students, teachers help them form personalities and improve their spiritual well-being. As a result, teachers play the role of a model for their students and help them achieve spiritual health.

The relationship between meaning in life and prospective personality was significant. This finding is consistent with Ghasemi et al. [34]. The relationship between meaning in life and prospective personality in teachers is dependent on various factors. It can also be influen-

tial. Several teachers believe that their main goal is to serve society. They make endeavors in education to improve society and contribute to the individual and social achievements of students [15]. Furthermore, some teachers play a key role in finding and realizing their personal goals. They make challenging opportunities and achieve individual growth. Teachers accept establishing relationships with students as a goal in their lives. They attempt to positively influence the relationships and behaviors of students and contribute to individual and social achievements of students as a starting point for positive changes in society. Some teachers believe meeting the requirements of society in education to be their purpose in life.

The results showed that the indirect relationship between responsibility and prospective personality with the mediating role of meaning in life was significant. In the direct hypothesis, it was revealed that a significant relationship existed between responsibility and prospective personality. In the indirect hypothesis, it was shown that responsibility enhances meaning in life in competent teachers, improving their prospective personality. Responsibility is accepting one's responsibility for their actions/decisions. For teachers, responsibility refers to their commitment to educating students [26]. The life of a student as an individual governing the life of their students is important. The relationship between responsibility and meaning in life in teachers is significant for several reasons. Teachers substantially contribute to shaping their students' lives by taking responsibility. By effectively fulfilling their tasks, teachers can show efficient behavior patterns and have strong effects on students' lives. Teachers play a key role in relationships with the families of students. By being committed to their responsibilities, teachers can establish positive and productive relationships with students' families. This, in turn, could help improve students' lives and sustainable presence in educational settings [2].

The indirect relationship between spiritual health and prospective personality with the mediating role of meaning in life was significant. Similar studies concerning this finding were not found in the literature. In the direct hypothesis, it was demonstrated that spiritual health and prospective personality had a significant relationship. In the indirect hypothesis, it was demonstrated that spiritual health enhances meaning in life in competent teachers, improving their prospective personality. Teachers are important in the lives of students. They are responsible for teaching students and for creating personality and meaning in life for students. By combining spiritual health and prospective personality, a teacher can enhance ethical principles and values in teachers by being a role



model and helping them achieve meaning in life [13]. The relationship between spiritual health and prospective personality in competent teachers can be enhanced by the meaning of life mediator. Therefore, it can be concluded that meaning in life is an effective mediator in the relationship between responsibility and prospective personality.

## Conclusion

The proposed model had a good fit and can be considered an innovative model contributing to improving prospective personality in teachers. The spiritual health of teachers can be enhanced through in-service courses and workshops. It is suggested that the Ministry of Education raise payments to teachers so that they would not need to have a second job and show higher commitment and responsibility. Teachers are recommended to enhance their spiritual capital at the connection level (connection with God) and practical level (value orientation and spiritual influence) to improve their spiritual health. Furthermore, enhancing prospective personality in professional communities could lay the ground for establishing a stronger relationship between spiritual values and prospective personality.

## Study limitations

The limitations of the present article include self-report data collection tools, which could be subject to social desirability biases. Furthermore, the participants were selected from elementary school teachers in Ahvaz City, Iran, and may not be generalizable to teachers in other grades and in other cities with different cultural backgrounds and personality traits. This study was *ex post facto* research, which would not allow the researcher to manipulate the independent variables. Furthermore, it is not often possible to control all the variables that can affect the dependent variables. Therefore, the results of investigating dependent and independent variables cannot be solid judgments. It is suggested that future works control influential variables, including the marital status, gender, and work experience of competent teachers, and compare the results to the present work.

## Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, (Code: IR.IAU.AHVAZ.REC.1402.124).

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## Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, study design, supervision, resources and writing: Fatemeh Sadat Marashian; Data gathering, analysis, interpretation, and statistical analysis: Abdolhassan Hardani.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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