

Review Article

Spiritual Health in Children: A Review Study



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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Achieving spiritual health is an aspect of human development and there are differences in the spiritual health of children with adults. Despite the importance of the issue of children's spiritual health, there are very few studies in this field. Therefore, this review study was conducted to review the knowledge about children's spiritual health in the sources.

Methods: This scoping review study was performed using the JBI checklist. The electronic databases of PubMed, Scopus, Ambis, Web of Science, Google Scholar, the database of Iranian journals and magazines, and the database of the Jihad Daneshgahi Scientific Information Center were searched for information.

Results: Spiritual health in children means awareness, inner experience of wonders, curiosity, and belief in a strong force. The spiritual health in children are classified into three dimensions: emotional, relational, and existential. Important factors affecting children's spiritual health were the child's socio-cultural context, children's own experiences, their relationship with others, parental and media behaviors, and spiritual health outcomes, including a wide range of positive outcomes.

Conclusion: The findings of the present study showed that the concept of spiritual health and its dimensions in children are as ambiguous as adults and also less attention has been paid to this issue. On the other hand, based on the findings of the present study, most studies in this field have been done in recent years, which could be a sign of increased sensitivity in this area. Therefore, considering the important role and impact of the cultural context of each country, it is necessary to conduct studies to explain the spiritual health of children and its indicators.

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Introduction

Health is one of the basic human needs that plays an important role in sustainable development [1]. Health is a comprehensive and general concept that includes physical, psychological, social, cultural, emotional, and spiritual dimensions [2].

Enjoying spiritual health as one of the dimensions of health [3] is a vague and complex process of human development that provides coordination between the inner forces of the individual. This dimension of health determines the unity and integrity of the individual with the characteristics of stability in life, peace, having a close relationship with God, self, society, and environment [4]. According to Islamic knowledge, spiritual health is the basis of human physical and mental health [5].

Spiritual health is a state with various levels, in which the insights, tendencies, and abilities necessary for the transcendence of the soul, which is the closeness to the Almighty God, are provided so that all the God-given powers and talents of man are used in a harmonious and balanced way for this general goal, and internal and external behaviors appear by them [6]. Despite much research in the field of spiritual health, there is still no single and comprehensive definition for it [7] and there are also different views on spiritual health. Some scholars in their studies consider spiritual health as believing in the existence of God and performing religious practices [8-10] and in fact defined spirituality in the context of religion. On the other hand, secular views on spirituality and spiritual health, which excludes religion from spiritual health in general [11-15]. Also, some studies consider striving for meaning and purpose and connecting to a higher power as components of spiritual health, while others consider self-awareness, connection to oneself and others, and a superior reality as components of spiritual health [16].

A review of studies shows that although the concept of spiritual health is generally the same for all age groups, there are differences in the spiritual health of children with adults. For example, the free expression of emotions or the occurrence of behaviors, such as laughing, crying, screaming, running is mainly seen in children [17]. However, in adults, self-control and anger are considered components of spiritual health [18]. There is also a need for approval from adults, presence at the moment and purposeful activities to discover the world around, visualize, play are specific components of children's spiritual health [17].

Achieving spiritual health is an ultimate goal for everyone. Since each section or group of society has its specific age, occupation, and skill requirements, the target groups can be divided into different categories and specific goals can be set for each with specific indicators. One of these special groups is children. The spiritual health of the child is focused on all aspects of his existence [19] and despite its importance and impact on their physical and emotional health, studies in this field are very few and in the early stages. Understanding children's spirituality is an emerging field for research and lacks a common or integrated theoretical framework [20]. Considering the effects of spiritual health on the growth and development of children and preventing the occurrence of moral and behavioral crises in the later years of life, the importance of studying and providing a comprehensive definition of it seems necessary. Therefore, this review study was conducted to review the knowledge about children's spiritual health in the sources.

Methods

This study is a scoping review that examines the extent of research on children's spiritual health to help understand the knowledge available in this area. This study is based on a systematic review checklist [written by Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI)] [21].

Search strategy

This study was conducted from January 1, 2000, to March 31, 2020, to find published studies on the spiritual health of children based on the JBI systematic review checklist. This checklist is designed to assess the methodological quality of a study and includes 11 questions. These questions examine the clarity of the research question, the relevance of the inclusion criteria to the research question, the search strategy appropriate to the research question, the appropriateness of the resources sought, methods for reducing errors in data extraction, and appropriate methods for combining data [22].

The search consisted of three steps. In the first step, a limited search was conducted on [Medline](#) and [Google Scholar](#), and the terms in the title and abstract of the obtained articles were analyzed. In the second step, using the keywords obtained from the first step, the search syntax was designed and then a search was conducted in all electronic databases of [PubMed](#), [Scopus](#), [Embase](#), [Web of Science](#), [Google Scholar](#), the database of [Iranian journals](#), and [magazines \(Magiran\)](#) and the database of the [Scientific Information Center of Jihad Daneshgahi \(SID\)](#). In the third stage, the references of the obtained

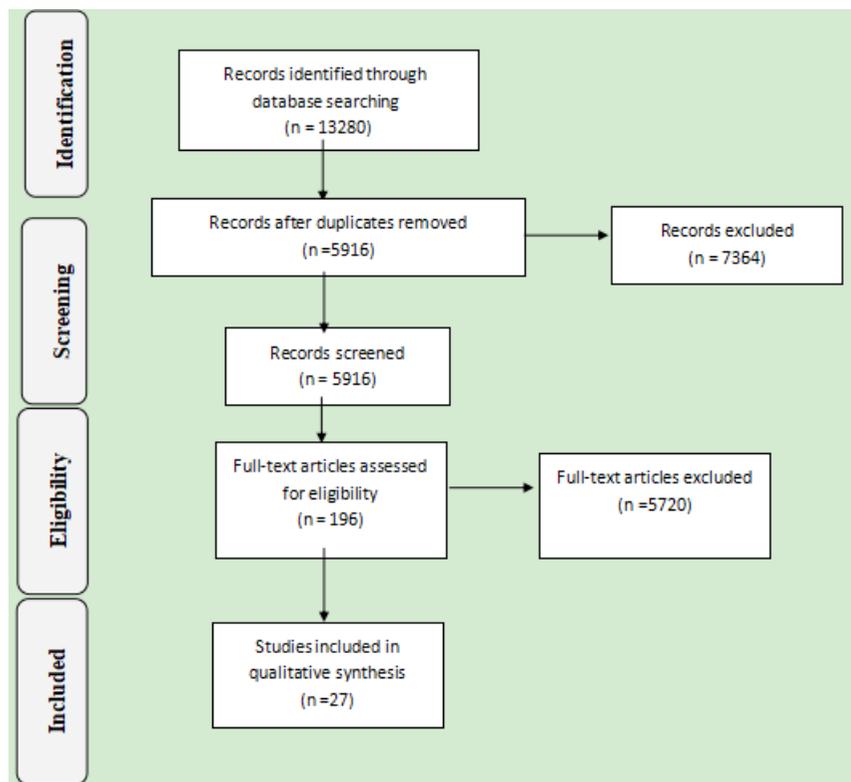


Figure 1. Flowchart of the screening of the studies based on the PRISMA chart



articles were examined to find related studies. The syntax was used for systematic search in the PubMed database.

PubMed

The use keyword were spirituality ([MeSH Major Topic] OR spiritualities [tiab] OR Religion [tiab] OR “spiritual health” [tiab] OR spiritual wellbeing [tiab]) AND (Children [tiab] OR Child [tiab] OR Minors [tiab] OR Kids [tiab] OR pediatric [tiab]).

Study selection process

At this stage, studies were reviewed based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria were as follows: 1- English or Persian language of study, 2- Focus of study on children’s spiritual health, and 3- Results on children’s spiritual health. Studies in the field of the spiritual health of sick adults or children and in-hospital conditions were excluded from the study.

Two independent researchers conducted an initial screening of studies based on the title and abstract of the articles. In the next step, these two researchers studied the articles, in which it was possible to deal with the spiritual health of children in more detail, by obtaining their full text.

Data extraction and management

After discussing with the team members, information, such as study details (author, publication date, type of journal, place of study, purpose, design, type of study, sample size, and main findings) and participants’ details (age and gender) was extracted. The data extracted from the entered studies were re-examined by all authors (Figure 1).

Results

Describing studies

From a total of 13820 extracted studies, 4533 study of Web of Science, 3151 study of Scopus, 2695 of Embase, 2764 study of PubMed, 60 study of Google Scholar, 49 studies from Iranian publications and magazines, and 27 studies from the database of the SID Information Center were obtained. In the first stage, repeated articles (5364 studies) were removed. In the second stage, 3816 studies were excluded from studies due to the different titles and purposes. In the third stage, the study abstract was reviewed and 1904 studies were deleted and 169 studies were excluded after the complete review of the study, due to inappropriate content. Finally, 27 studies were included for review (Flowchart No. 1). 27 studies were from 2004 to 2020. Nearly half of these studies were car-

Table 1. Final accepted articles based on search protocol

Row	Author/Year	Country	Type of Study/Purpose	Results
1	Mata McMahon et al., 2020 [23]	America	Qualitative-grounded theory/ Perception of educators in secular educational centers of children's spirituality	Children's spirituality is in eight main areas of communication (with the world, nature, and others), moral virtues, discovering the meaning of life, belief in God, self-awareness, presence at the moment, humanity, and inner feelings.
2	Michaelson, 2020 [24]	Canada	Qualitative-content analysis/Conceptualization and definition of spiritual health in children	The four dimensions of spiritual health include communication with oneself, others, nature, and the higher power. Consequences of spiritual health include feeling calm and in control of oneself, being honest with oneself, having an open mind, being balanced, taking time for oneself, and caring for oneself.
3	Polemikou and Da Silva, 2020 [25]	Portugal	Quantitative-review/Understanding the concept of spirituality and spiritual development in children	Spiritual relationships are defined as relationships with oneself, others, God, and nature. Important dimensions of spirituality include love, wonder, and amazement at the greatness of the world, pleasure, ecstasy, ambition, integrity, beauty, music, art, and science.
4	Dillen, 2020 [26]	Philippines	Quantitative-review/Examining the role of context on children's spirituality	context is a factor influencing the spirituality of children and in addition to the living environment includes socio-cultural context such as ethnicity and race and related factors such as age and gender, socio-economic conditions, place of residence, religious background, and children's own experiences such as illness, migration or death of parents.
5	Sajedi and Sajedi, 2020 [27]	Iran	Qualitative-contractual content analysis/Providing a definition of spiritual health, determining the components and indicators of children's spiritual health from the perspective of experts	Indicators of spiritual health include theology and God-centeredness, hope in God in all problems of life, obedience to religious orders, modeling the lifestyle of Imams and using them, knowing the Hereafter and its relationship with the world. Parents' behaviors can play a positive or negative role in promoting children's spiritual health.
6	Nauli and Mu-lyono, 2019 [28]	Indonesia	Quantitative-correlation/ Determining the relationship between children's level of spirituality and their resilience	Happy children, no stress and depression, easier control of emotions, comfortable adaptation to circumstances are the consequences of spirituality in children.
7	Heland-Kurzak, 2019 [29]	Poland	Qualitative-phenomenology/A study of the attitudes of children of different religions (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) towards God and the differences in their level of religion	Most children believe that God is merciful, very great, and invisible. The best way to communicate with God is through prayer, and helping other people, especially those in need, is a way to please God
8	Harris, 2019 [30]	America	Quantitative-case/Study of the effect of Roger's approach on children's spirituality	The search for spiritual identity occurs with the support of parents and teachers through daily activities and communication to discover the meaning of one's existence and to share one's perceptions with peers. Emotions, tolerance, uniqueness, and love are important elements of spirituality in children.
9	Mata-McMahon, 2020 [20]	America	Qualitative-content analysis/ Examining school teachers' perceptions of ways to strengthen children's spirituality	Teaching appreciation of nature, thinking, and contemplation, yoga, and meditation are important ways to strengthen the spiritual health of children in school.
10	Robinson, 2019 [31]	Australia	Qualitative-phenomenology/A study of the experiences and approaches of teachers in religious centers on ways to strengthen the spirituality of children	Outdoor games such as planting and watering plants help children grow spiritually. In addition, empathy and love for people and strong relationships with adults are very important.
11	Mata-McMahon, 2019 [15]	America	Qualitative-grounded theory/A study of secular teachers' perceptions of their spirituality and the approaches they use to strengthen children's spirituality	Teachers through actions such as helping to express emotions creatively through music, art, and dance, communicating with nature such as thinking about nature, engaging in intellectual activities such as yoga and prayer, communicating and respecting others, playing and exercising, and finally talking about spirituality contributes to spiritual growth.

Row	Author/Year	Country	Type of Study/Purpose	Results
12	Khazaei and khazaei, 2018 [4]	Iran	Quantitative-review/Study of spirituality and spiritual health in different religions	Spiritual health includes observing healthy behaviors such as healthy eating, maintaining, providing, and promoting your physical and mental health, and reducing stress. Its consequences are ensuring peace, satisfaction, and vitality in the community and disease prevention, increasing disease tolerance, faster disease recovery.
13	Surr, 2016 [32]	America	Qualitative-grounded theory/ Clarification of the concept of spirituality to better educate teachers to work with children	Methods of spirituality in children include happiness, kindness, love for others, communication with friends and relatives, curiosity about the environment, enjoyment of favorite activities, creativity, and imagination. To strengthen children's spirituality, a calm and stress-free environment should be created. Children should ask their questions freely and have the opportunity to think in silence and calm.
14	Khani and Tam-meh, 2016 [33]	Iran	Qualitative-content analysis/ Identifying children's spiritual styles	The four main approaches for children to know God include word-driven (reading books and teaching), emotion-driven (nature), symbol-driven (prayer in times of trouble), and action-driven (helping the needy, fasting ..).
15	Meghdadi and Javadpour, 2016 [6]	Iran	Quantitative-conceptual analysis/Determining the foundation of a child's spiritual education and the role of parents in promoting it	Elements of spiritual health include: honesty, trustworthiness, helping the weak, observing personal cleanliness, social skills such as communicating with others and associating with worthy people, kindness, self-control or patience, purposefulness and finding meaning in life, doing individual and social spiritual affairs, Healthy environment, clean nutrition, faith, trust in God and love. The consequences of spiritual health include vitality, hope, satisfaction, heartfelt confidence, having a healthy heart in the person, establishing a dynamic relationship based on moral virtues, love, and affection with oneself, others, and the world around.
16	Cervantes and Arczynski, 2105 [34]	America	Quantitative-review/Determining concepts related to spirituality in children and providing a practical solution	Spiritual health in children means increasing awareness, inner experience of wonders, curiosity, belief in a strong force, and excellence in the path of life.
17	Moriarty, 2013 [35]	Australia	Qualitative-content analysis/ Examining the effect of exercise on children's spirituality	Physical activity and exercise increase sensory awareness, improve relationships with others, and strengthen a child's identity.
18	King, 2013 [36]	British	Quantitative-review/Define children's spirituality and determine the factors affecting it	Children's spiritual world includes their living environment, their dreams, hopes, experiences, fears, and pains. Factors affecting the spiritual health of children are the teachings of parents, teachers, and friends. The consequences of strengthening spirituality include the deep discovery of the world, love of life, creativity, acceptance of oneself as part of a larger society, and contributing to world peace and tranquility.
19	Moore, 2012 [16]	Canada	Qualitative-content analysis/Examining children's understanding of spirituality and God	Having positive feelings when praying, talking to God in times of sorrow, loneliness, and unhappiness, believing in the presence of God everywhere, believing in God's help directly and indirectly in all matters, hearing God and answering their prayers, Belief in the existence of the soul and belief in the mercy of God is part of children's perceptions of God.
20	Boynton, 2011 [37]	Canada	Quantitative-review/Examine the spirituality of children from different perspectives	Spiritual health and religion have a semantic overlap. Spiritual health has a great impact on the development of other aspects of children's lives. Cultural structure, values, ideals are effective factors in children's spiritual health. Spirituality affects children's health, happiness, and well-being.
21	Moore et al., 2011 [38]	America	Qualitative-content analysis/ Study of spiritual experiences of children with different religious backgrounds	The most common indicator of spirituality was praying and then believing in the existence of God and His help in all stages of life. The consequence of spirituality in children is mental health.
22	Bosacki et al., 2010 [7]	Canada	Quantitative-review/examining the impact of different media on children's spirituality	Weekend activities such as attending church, reading religious books by parents, listening to music, reading the Bible, watching TV, and religious movies are the most common spiritual elements in children's lives that are influenced by the media.

Row	Author/Year	Country	Type of Study/Purpose	Results
23	Ruddock and Cameron, 2010 [39]	British	Quantitative-review/Determining the concept of spirituality in school-age children	Characteristics of children who grow up spiritually are values and behaviors such as knowing and understanding the beliefs of themselves and others, respecting themselves and others, empathizing with and helping others, the ability to defend their goals, values, principles and beliefs, value beauty, love, order, goodness, truth and understanding your feelings and emotions.
24	Kirmani and Kirmani, 2009 [40]	America	Qualitative-content analysis/study of spiritual identity and its impact on children	The spiritual identity of individuals manifests itself in one or more of the following ways: Emotion centered Community-centered Nature-centered-World-centered-Ancestor-centered-Event-centered-Transcendental-centered
25	Hyde, 2008 [10]	Australia	Qualitative-phenomenology/Determining the characteristics of children's spirituality in Catholic schools	The four characteristics of spirituality in children include the following: Presence at the moment - Consolidation of consciousness - Search for meaning - Spiritual search
26	Takriti et al., 2006 [41]	British	Qualitative-content analysis/Determining the perception of children with different religious backgrounds from God	The most important attributes of God in performing miracles are creation and kindness to all. Praying, going to religious places, and wearing special clothes or food are considered religious behaviors. Doing good deeds and avoiding bad deeds are considered as part of religion.
27	Houskamp et al., 2004 [17]	America	Quantitative-review/Determining spirituality in children	Three spiritual dimensions in children include emotional, relational, and existential.



ried out between 2018 and 2020. The highest number of studies was related to the United States (n=9). Five study was related to Muslim countries, of which four studies were conducted in Iran. The number of studies in European countries was five. Studies in non-Muslim countries had different religions (Christian, Orthodox, Catholics, and Muslims), and part of them were secular. The number of writers varied from 1 to 4 people. Of the 27 articles entered in the study, 4 cases were in Persian and 23 cases in English. Methodologically, 13 cases were qualitative and the rest were conducted in a quantitative and overview method. Most qualitative and quantitative studies followed the discovery of the concept of spirituality in children and their ways to strengthen it (Table 1).

Findings showed that the spiritual health of children in three areas of the concept of spiritual health, dimensions, and indicators, factors affecting spiritual health, and the outcome of spiritual health have been studied in studies.

At the heart of the concept of spiritual health and its dimensions in children is the concept of increasing awareness, inner experience of wonders, curiosity, belief in the existence of a strong force [37]. On the other hand, spiritual health as an important dimension of human health in each person is different from the other and is a protective factor for health and well-being, especially when facing problems and helps to overcome problems [24]. Therefore, spiritual health includes observing health behaviors such as healthy eating, maintaining, providing, and promoting one's physical and mental health, and reducing

stress [4]. Some studies have shown that children's spiritual health is similar to that of adults in four dimensions: relationship with self, others, nature, and superior power. Communicating with oneself is about finding meaning in life, being purposeful, and experiencing joy in life. Concerning others, the important elements of spiritual health include kindness, forgiveness, striving to make the world a better place for others, and helping others. The dimension of communication with the higher power includes such things as communication with God, reading the Bible, and doing religious affairs [24]. Moral virtues (love, forgiveness, compassion, respect, non-judgment of others, kindness, compassion, acceptance of circumstances, and honesty), discovering the meaning of life (curiosity, asking questions, accepting the opinions of others and personal beliefs), belief in God (Talking about God and religious books such as the Bible, reading the Bible, believing in the soul), self-awareness (self-knowledge, ability to move and do things within one's ability), presence at the moment, humanity and inner feelings (easy expression of positive and negative emotions) also indicates spiritual health [23].

Elements of spiritual health include honesty, trustworthiness, helping the weak, observing personal cleanliness, social skills such as communicating with others and associating with worthy people, kindness, self-control or enduring hardships, purposefulness and finding meaning in life, doing Individual and social spiritual affairs, improving the environment, clean nutrition, faith,

trust in God and love [6]. Children's spiritual world includes their living environment, their dreams, hopes, experiences, fears, and pains [36]. Emotions, tolerance, uniqueness, and love are important elements of spirituality in children [30].

Happiness, kindness, love for others, communication with friends and relatives, curiosity about the environment, enjoyment of favorite activities, creativity, and imagination are the most important dimensions of children's spirituality from the perspective of John Surr [32]. However, Bosacki et al. summarized the dimensions of children's spirituality in the religious dimension and included activities such as attending church, reading religious books by their parents, listening to music, reading the Bible, watching TV, and watching religious films were considered as spiritual elements in children's lives [7]. Ruddock et al. consider recognizing and understanding the beliefs of oneself and others, respecting oneself and others, empathizing with and helping others, being able to defend the goals of one's values, principles and beliefs, valuing beauty, love, order, goodness, the truth, and understanding of their feelings and emotions as characteristics of children who have developed spirituality [39]. Hyde defines four characteristics of children's spirituality: 1. Presence at the moment: Awareness of situations, events, and people in the present. 2- Integrating awareness: focusing on several situations 3- Searching for meaning: curiosity and asking about the world around and what happened. 4- Spiritual search: Relationship with family, altruism, and helping the needy [10] In the field of spiritual health indicators, few studies have been done. Theology and God-centeredness, hope in God in all problems of life, obedience to religious orders, modeling the lifestyle of Imams and their help [27, 38], and finally knowing the Hereafter and its relationship with the world is one of the indicators of spiritual health [37].

The second focus of findings includes factors affecting the spiritual health of children, a group of studies in addition to the importance of individual characteristics of the child such as age, gender, ethnicity, and race, as well as children's own experiences such as migration or death of parents, emphasize the role of socio-cultural context, religious background and socio-economic conditions of the child on the spiritual health of the child. [24, 26, 28, 34, 37], Mata-McMahon et al. children's relationships with others such as family, teachers, friends and classmates, relationships with nature, sports and games, music, art and dance, thinking, and prayer are among the factors affecting the spiritual health of children [15]. Sajedi H and Sajedi A. show the behaviors of parents such as religious education appropriate to the child's capacity,

religious stories and films, and the role of various media on the spiritual health of children [27]. According to Robinson, empathy and love for people and strong relationships with adults, and relationships with nature can also affect a child's spiritual health [31].

The focus of spiritual health outcomes illustrated a wide range of positive outcomes. Meghdadi and Javadpour considered the feeling of peace and self-control, happiness, time and self-importance, hope, and dynamic communication based on moral virtues with others and the world around them as the most important consequences of spiritual health in children [6]. In addition to feeling happy and relaxed, Michaelson cited the lack of stress and resilience to problems as consequences of spiritual health [24]. In King's study, the growth of wisdom, love of life, and creativity were mentioned as the consequences of spiritual health [36] and Boynton pointed to the increase in quality of life and the feeling of well-being resulting from spiritual health [37].

Discussion

In the focus of the concept of health and its dimensions, an attempt has been made to explain the concept of children's spiritual health, but the findings of the study showed that although studies have been done in this area, this concept is vague and there is a consensus to define this concept in children. does not have. So that each person can have a different definition of spiritual health [42]. In addition, researchers in different fields have different views on this field and everyone has expressed different definitions and applications for spiritual health according to their expertise. Some have defined spiritual health in the field of medical sciences and for providing health services [43]. While some people have defined spirituality in the areas of belief, consciousness, and practice.

In their study of 73 studies using thematic analysis, Sessanna et al. report that the concept of spirituality is defined in four main themes: 1) Spirituality as a religious system of beliefs and values (spirituality=religion). In these studies, there is no distinction between spirituality and religion, and the relationship between spirituality and health is measured by religious practices and beliefs; 2) Spirituality is the meaning of life, purpose, and relationship with others; In these studies, spirituality is defined as the relationship with others and the relationship with a superior being; 3) spirituality as a secular system, a set of beliefs and values; In these studies, spirituality, and religion are introduced as two separate phenomena; 4) Spirituality is introduced as a metaphysical concept or transcendent phenomenon [44].

Although the results of studies show that there is rarely a person without religious beliefs [45] and there is a relationship between religion and spiritual health, but the definition of spiritual health in different religions, despite the commonalities, can be different, although the meaning can be considered the main goal of all religions. In the Islamic approach, God is the creator of all beings and the universe and their life and death are in His hands. According to Islamic teachings, the tendency towards spirituality is rooted in the God-seeking nature of man [46]. Therefore, it can be said that belief in God is the common denominator of all religions. But differences such as one-dimensionality, differences in values and worldviews in different religions can be different and affect spiritual health indicators. In humanist religions, man is a material being and all his emotions and feelings revolve around material issues. While from a religious point of view, a healthy person is the result of spiritual balance and unity of other dimensions. There are also differences in meaning in different religions. In Islam, meaning is manifested in faith and belief in God, while in some religions, material issues are also involved [47].

Therefore, it seems that the definition and meaning of spiritual health can be extracted from its application [48, 49] and this issue is especially important for planning in the field of children and implementing measures for their spiritual health [24]. Researchers consider spirituality and spiritual health in children as an inherent dimension that affects their communication, creativity, and interaction in the outside world [50]. Thus, studies have used spiritual health in the education of children, religious growth and education, and in some studies, the role of spiritual health during illness. In general, the findings of studies showed that children's spiritual health has four dimensions of the relationship with self, God, others, and nature, and to achieve spiritual health, it is necessary to improve and strengthen communication in these four areas.

In terms of connection with God or the transcendent being, children have a tendency and commitment to religious issues, regardless of their affiliation with a particular religion. In communicating with others, kindness and forgiveness are important to children. In the field of communication with self, finding meaning and happiness, and in the field of communication with nature, having passion and excitement in nature and loving it represents the spiritual health of children [24]. Hay and Nye's model shows a sense of awareness, a sense of mystery, and a sense of worth reflects the capacity of the child's spiritual health. A sense of awareness means understanding the presence and ability to coordinate. A sense of mystery refers to children's interest and curiosity to know

the world in which they live. Children develop a wide range of cognitive abilities from birth, based on which they identify the world around them. Sense of value is based on children's ability to experience a range of emotions from fear to happiness, from despair to hope [12].

It seems that the spiritual health of children needs meaning in terms of insight, orientation, and habits. Therefore, the child's awareness and cognition, as well as his mental information, should be such as to create a deep belief in him and ultimately improve his behavior and lifestyle. In other words, achieving and enjoying spiritual health in four dimensions must be at different levels of insight, orientation and behavior.

Based on the findings of the study, another focus of studies in the field of the spiritual health of children is to examine the factors affecting it. Spiritual health and growth are highly dependent on the context that nurtures this existential dimension. In this area, not only the situation in which they experience spirituality but also gender, socio-economic status and religion are important here [51]. The environmental-social model refers to the impact of different contexts on children's spiritual health. These areas include micro-systems (family, school, peer group, or religious community) and macro-systems (dominant cultural values and ideologies) [52].

The socio-cultural pattern shows the influence of adults and peers. Parents, relatives, clergy, educators, older siblings, and friends can act as mentors and role models. Each of these individuals, as educators, can provide the ground for spiritual connection and greater understanding and interaction with collective rituals and worships [53]. The interactive model expresses the interaction of children and parents [42, 54]. Most studies have pointed to the role of parents in children's spiritual health. Sajedi H. and Sajedi A. consider parenting education to be the most important factor in promoting spiritual health [27] and according to the teachings of Islam, attention to spiritual health should be done before the formation of sperm. Parents' level of education, religious beliefs, place of residence, type of nutrition, family communication status all affect spiritual health [55]. Therefore, spirituality and spiritual health in children is not a static concept and is very much influenced by others, parents, teachers, researchers, and peers [26].

There is very little research on cultural diversity [51]. Therefore, according to the findings of the study, it can be said that the role of parents in spiritual education to

achieve the spiritual health of the child is more prominent than other factors, especially at younger ages. The child can be very influenced by parents because of their trust and interest in them and observing their behavior. Therefore, it seems that parents' self-awareness and understanding of their important role is the first step to take steps in the field of children's spiritual health. Parents' words and the things they say are the easiest way to convey concepts. However, it should be noted that direct verbal instruction, especially if repeated, may reduce their desire.

Another important point is the coordination of parents' verbal education with their behavior and performance as well as their lifestyle. In such situations, the child becomes distrustful of the principles and knowledge learned over time by observing the contradictory behavior of the parents. Informed, purposeful, and creative parents for their child's spiritual health use appropriate and memorable opportunities for spiritual education and seek to promote their child's spiritual health by combining different and effective methods [27]. In conclusion, it can be said that the context of raising a child and the context in which he grows up play a very important role in spiritual health. Parents are the most important factors affecting the spiritual health of children from birth and also in different stages of life because parents are aware of the influence of other factors such as friends, school, etc. at every stage of the development process and as a result take appropriate and timely action.

The next focus in spiritual health studies is to examine the consequences of spiritual health in children. Considering the role of spirituality and the importance of spiritual health in the health of other dimensions, it seems that spiritual health is effective on children's vision and attitude and has an effect on children's success. Findings show that spiritual health is effective on mental health, physical health, and sense of well-being and also helps the child to cope with problems by increasing adaptation [56].

Some studies have mentioned the consequences of spiritual health to support the child in stressful situations. So that having spiritual health in children is helpful when going through developmental stages and stress caused by new and diverse situations [57]. This leads to a decrease in alcohol and drug use in adolescence and adulthood, especially in critical situations [56]. According to the findings, it can be said that having spiritual health and promoting it affects different levels and different aspects of existence and lays the foundation for adult personality. Therefore, it seems that having spiritual health plays an important role in different levels of prevention. This is especially important when planning and designing interventions. Such

children, in addition to being less prone to crises at different stages of life and being able to manage their conflicts and issues, but also as future parents can be effective in transmitting this cycle and raising a capable generation.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study showed that the concept of spiritual health and its dimensions in children is ambiguous and there is no clear and integrated definition for this concept in children. On the other hand, attention to the concept of spiritual health in children has been less than adults. Because direct research on children to gain their experiences in this regard has received less attention and most studies have focused on the concept of spiritual health and spirituality when suffering from the disease, and therefore less attention has been paid to recognizing this dimension and its development. However, children are the best source of information in this regard, and understanding their experiences in the field of spirituality and spiritual health is important to know more and understand their responses at different stages of life.

The findings showed that the spiritual health of children, like adults, is explained in four areas of relationship with God or a higher being, others, self, and nature. Concerning God, prayer has been considered in all cultures. While studies in the context of Islamic culture, in addition to prayer, theology, God-centeredness, recourse, and imitation of the Imams have also been considered. In relationships with others, more attention is paid to the ability to communicate with friends and respect people. Based on the findings of the present study, most studies have been conducted in recent years, which could be a sign of increased sensitivity in this area.

Considering that most of the studies have been done in European and American countries and with the dominant culture in those countries and few studies have been done in Islamic countries. Therefore, considering the important role and impact of the cultural context of each country, it is necessary to conduct studies to explain the spiritual health of children and its indicators to pave the way for planning and designing targeted interventions for children as the future makers of the country.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

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

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Authors' contributions

Conceptualization and Supervision: Maryam Safara; Methodology, Investigation, Writing-original draft: Hanieh Gholamnejad and Soolmaz Moosavi; Writing -review & editing: All authors; Data collection & Data analysis: Hanieh Gholamnejad and Soolmaz Moosavi; Funding acquisition and Resources: Maryam Safara.

Conflict of interest

There are no conflict of interests in this study.

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