Research Paper: A Comparative Study of Religious Orientation, Well-being, and Identity Crisis among Adolescents Residing in Welfare Centers and Normal Adolescents in Rasht City

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Abstract

The Purpose of this research was to compare religious orientation, well-being, and identity crisis among adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents. This study employed a causal-comparative research design. The statistical population of the research included all adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents in Rasht city. For this purpose, 37 adolescents residing in welfare centers and 38 normal adolescents were selected using convenience sampling method. The instruments used in this study were the religious orientation questionnaire, Oxford happiness questionnaire (OHQ), and identity crisis questionnaire. The obtained data were analyzed using independent t-tests to compare the two groups. The results of the independent t-tests indicated significant differences between the two groups of children residing in welfare centers and normal children in terms of total score of identity crisis, total score of well-being, and religious orientation. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the upbringing of adolescents in normal families is important for enhancing religious orientation, increasing self-confidence, and reducing identity crisis. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the upbringing of adolescents in normal families is important for enhancing religious orientation, increasing self-confidence, and reducing identity crisis.

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1. Introduction

In today's societies, the increase in divorce rates, poverty, addiction, and industrialization-related consequences has led to the emergence of phenomena such as homelessness and neglect, significantly increasing the number of homeless and neglected children and adolescents (Okorodudu, 2010). Neglected adolescents are individuals who have a guardian but due to reasons such as the loss of one parent, illness, unemployment of a parent, addiction, specific physical and mental illnesses and behaviors of parents, or poor economic conditions of the family, they lack the possibility of proper care and support (Mirdrikvand et al., 2016). Neglected adolescents not only face the challenges of adolescence but also encounter problems arising from the absence of a family and have compounded issues compared to other adolescents. Living away from the family and limited family interactions in the long term put such children at risk of identity, relational, personal, and social crises, reduced well-being, and feelings of dissatisfaction (Ramezani et al., 2018).

One of the most significant issues that adolescents face during adolescence is identity crisis. Erikson refers to the primary crisis of adolescence as the identity versus role confusion. This period is when self-concept is formed, meaning the integration of an individual's beliefs about themselves and what others think of them. A person achieves a coherent and stable self-image when this process is satisfactorily resolved (Schultz & Schultz, 2013/ 2023). In an identity crisis, adolescents experience severe anxiety and mental distress. In this state, they struggle to integrate various aspects of their personality into a cohesive and acceptable self (Zare Shahabadi & Ebrahimabadi, 2011). Adolescence is a stage of identity formation. Successfully navigating this stage leads to a productive and happy adulthood. During this period, adolescents constantly ask themselves, "Who am I?" This self-exploration extends to religious, cultural, ethical, political, social relationships, and sexual domains. If an adolescent fails to develop a positive and independent identity during this period, they may experience an identity crisis and confusion (Mansour, 2022).

Another factor related to adolescence is religious orientation. Religion has a long-standing history, as archaeological and anthropological studies have shown that it has been a part of human life throughout all ages. According to Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, a deep and genuine religious sense exists in the depths of every human's unconscious (Sahraian et al., 2011). Religion plays a significant role in the lives of adolescents. Beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and moral characteristics can be profoundly influenced by the infiltration of religious beliefs. In fact, religion is one of the primary sources that give meaning to life. Among the various approaches and theories regarding religious orientation, Alport's perspective on the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation has had the most influence and effectiveness. In terms of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations, it should be noted that individuals with an "intrinsic religion" place importance and significance

on personal beliefs, while social aspects of religion are less important. On the other hand, individuals with an "extrinsic religion" rely on external social and communal values and beliefs for their religious motivation (Dehghani & Andishmand, 2017).

In addition to the mentioned topics, one of the issues that has received attention in positive psychology in recent years is the concept of happiness. Happiness is a multidimensional and hierarchical concept consisting of cognitive, emotional-affective, and social components. The theorists mainly refer to two cognitive and emotional components in analyzing the concept of happiness. The cognitive components are mostly related to life satisfaction, while the emotional components are more related to states such as laughter, humor, and the balance between positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions include joy and happiness, while negative emotions include crying and feeling upset (Salehzadeh et al., 2017).

At the beginning of adolescence, individuals face many life events (such as choosing a major, competition in school, independence, and adaptation to new and necessary environments in life) and plan for the future. Erikson believes that individuals need to have the ability to adapt to their environment in order to experience happiness, and identity serves as the key determinant of individuals' ability to achieve happiness in life. If adolescents fail to achieve identity cohesion and remain in an identity crisis, they may face difficulties in achieving happiness, such as in school, the workplace, and interpersonal relationships

(Li, 2005). Based on this, the study by Bakhshayesh (2013) showed a significant negative relationship between fundamental religious beliefs and identity crisis, and religious beliefs had a meaningful relationship with all identity styles. Van Hoof and Raaijmakers (2002) conducted a study on American adolescents and found that there is a relationship between identity crisis and happiness.

Adolescents who are orphaned or have negligent parents, deprived of maternal affection, love, and intimate parent-child relationships, often suffer from emotional disorders, insecurity, dependency and rejection, escape or extreme group orientation. Considering the importance and critical nature of adolescence, the initiation of religious inclinations, the significance of happiness and well-being in adolescents, and the lack of independent research in this regard, the aim of this study was to compare religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis among adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents in the city of Rasht.

2. Method
The current research employed a comparative design. The population of this study included all adolescents residing in welfare centers and regular adolescents in the city of Rasht in the year 2021. Initially, all the youth welfare centers in Rasht (which were four in total) were identified, and then a total of 37 adolescents (24 girls and 13 boys) who were willing to participate were selected using convenience sampling from these four centers. Additionally, 38 individuals (21 girls

and 17 boys) studying in regular schools in Rasht during the academic year 2020-2021 were selected using convenience sampling as well. This selection was carried out while considering a minimum of fifteen participants for each group (Delavar, 2021). The instruments used in this study included the religious orientation questionnaire (Bahrami Ehsan,1999), the Oxford happiness scale, and the identitycrisis questionnaire (Ahmadi, 1995).

The data were analyzed using independent t-test to compare the two groups. The inclusion criteria were as follows: being a resident of a welfare center or a regular family, being under the age of eighteen, having no history of severe mental illness or the use of psychotropic drugs, and being willing to participate. The exclusion criteria included being over the age of eighteen, not being a resident of a welfare center or a regular family, as well as having a history of severe mental illness and medication. Participants were also asked to sign a consent form after a thorough explanation of the research details, and it was ensured that all their information would remain confidential.

2.1. Instruments

Religious Orientation Questionnaire: This questionnaire was evaluated using a scale of the same name, which was validated by Bahrami Ehsan (1999). The reliability coefficients of this form were reported between 0.91 and 0.85. Its content validity and structure were also examined and confirmed (Bahrami Ehsan, 1999). The fundamental framework of this questionnaire is to give importance to the structure of

human relationships and interactions in all its dimensions in the context of human and divine relationship.

Identity Crisis Questionnaire: To measure identity crisis, Ahmadi's Personal Identity questionnaire, which is a 10-item questionnaire (consisting of 4 sections), was used. The advantages of this test include individual and group administration and quick response time (between 5 to 10 minutes). It can be used for both genders. The maximum score of the test, which indicates the highest level of identity crisis, is 30, the minimum identity crisis score is 10, and a score below 10 indicates the absence of identity crisis. To determine the reliability and validity of the test, the creator of this test administered it to 60 students in secondary schools in Isfahan. The comprehensibility, simplicity, and face validity of the questions were confirmed. The scores obtained from these students were analyzed using the split-half method (even and odd) and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. The questionnaire was distributed among 30 university students by the creator, and a correlation coefficient of 0.89 was obtained. Additionally, using the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient, the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was calculated as 0.92 (Ahmadi, 1995).

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ): This questionnaire consists of 29 items and was developed by Argyle and colleagues (2000). The validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been examined in various studies. For example, Argyle and colleagues obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.90 using the Cronbach's alpha method and a

concurrent validity of 0.43. In a study conducted on 110 undergraduate students at Shahed and Allameh Tabataba'i universities, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.98, and a reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained using the test-retest method (Sahraian, 2011).

3. Results

In this study, 75 participants, including 37 adolescents residing in welfare centers (24 females (64.9%) and 13 males (35.1%)), and 38 normal adolescents (21 females (55.3%) and 17 males (44.7%)), participated in the city of Rasht. Out of these numbers, 12 adolescents residing in welfare centers had primary education (32.4%), 13 had middle school education (35.1%), and 12 had high school education (32.4%). Among the normal adolescents, 6 had primary education (15.8%), 5 had middle school education (13.2%), and 27 had high school education (71.1%).

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables in Adolescents Residing in Welfare Centers and Normal Adolescents

Variables	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total identity Crisis Score	Welfare Centers	11.10	6.66
	Normal Adolescents	2.78	2.01
Total Happiness Score	Welfare Centers	39.94	16.64
	Normal Adolescents	53.84	53.84
Religious Orientation	Welfare Centers	100.64	27.04
	Normal Adolescents	111.94	18.90

Table 2

Independent t-test Results in Two Groups of Children with Neglectful Guardians and Normal in Variables of Religious Orientation, Happiness, Identity Crisis.

variables	Mean Differences	Standard Error of Differences	T	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Total Identity Crisis Score	8.31	1.14	7.27	42.36	0.000
Total Happiness Score	-13.89	3.10	-4.47	55.27	0.000
Religious Orientation	0.04	64.24	-2.09	5.40	-11.29

In Table 2, the comparison of means between two groups, adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents, in the variables of religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis, is reported. The findings from Table 2 indicate that the observed t-values resulting from comparing the means of identity crisis, happiness, and

religious orientation between the two groups of adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents are statistically significant. Thus, the identity crisis is higher in adolescents residing in welfare centers compared to normal adolescents ($p < 0.001$, $t = 27.7$). Happiness is higher in normal adolescents compared to adolescents residing in welfare centers ($p < 0.001$, $t = 47.4$-). Additionally, religious orientation is higher in normal adolescents compared to adolescents residing in welfare centers ($p < 0.001$, $t = -09.2$).

4. Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to compare religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis in adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents. According to the results of the data analysis, the evidence suggests that the levels of religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis differ between adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Dahghaninia and Andishmand (2017), Bakhtiyari (2013), Van Hoof and Raajmakers (2002), and are in line with their findings.

Based on the results of the data analysis, the evidence suggests that there is a difference in religious orientation between adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents. In other words, religious orientation is higher in normal adolescents compared to adolescents residing in welfare centers. This implies that the level of religious beliefs is higher in normal adolescents than in adolescents residing in

welfare centers (Bakhtiyari, 2013). Despite the pessimistic views of some psychologists towards religion from the early stages of the formation of applied psychology, research on the relationship between religion and mental health often indicates a positive relationship between these two variables. The belief that there is a higher power controlling situations and watching over individuals reduces anxiety to a great extent. Many believers describe their relationship with God as a very close friendship and believe that they can control uncontrollable situations through reliance and supplication to God. It seems that religious orientation can lead to a sense of happiness, as a personal relationship with a superior being creates a positive outlook on life (Sahraian et al., 2011).

On the other hand, the results indicate that the level of happiness is higher in normal adolescents compared to adolescents residing in welfare centers. It appears that an increase in social relationships and family and group interactions enhances people's happiness. Recreation has a significant impact on all aspects of health, particularly positive emotions, as well as mental and physical well-being, and to a lesser extent, on happiness itself. The benefits of recreation on happiness can be partly explained by the social satisfaction derived from engaging in recreational activities. In fact, individuals who are more hopeful and optimistic about the future tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction and mental well-being. Conversely, individuals who lack hope and motivation for action gradually become stagnant, lethargic, and isolated beings. Women, in terms of their caretaking role in

socialization, learn to be receptive to both negative and positive emotions and may experience a greater intensity of positive and negative emotions compared to men (Salehzadeh et al., 2017).

According to the findings of the data analysis, identity crisis is lower in normal adolescents compared to adolescents residing in welfare centers. Minuchin considers the family as the origin and nucleus of identity formation. He believes that identity is based on two pillars: a sense of belonging and differentiation. The family structure plays a role in shaping human identity. The aforementioned considerations, in general, indicate the influence of the family on the formation of adolescents' identity, although it is still not possible to quantify the intensity and nature of this influence. On the other hand, the family serves as a mediator for the transmission of beliefs and values to adolescents, although it is not the only possible channel (Bakhshayesh, 2013).

The present study had some limitations. The questionnaire had a large number of questions, which could cause fatigue among participants. It is recommended to use shorter questionnaires in future research with similar topics. Additionally, it is suggested that future research be conducted in other cultures and provinces. Furthermore, future studies should focus on the effectiveness of educational strategies to enhance religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis.

5. Conclusion
The findings of this study, in addition to highlighting the differences in religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis among adolescents residing in welfare centers and normal adolescents, can provide a basis for educational, developmental, and practical strategies for families, officials, and educational experts to improve religious orientation, happiness, and identity crisis.

Conflict of Interest
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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