



**Research Paper: Predicting Students' Psychological Well-being Based on the Components of Spiritual Intelligence and Sense of Coherence**



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**Abstract**

Psychological well-being, meaning cognitive and emotional evaluations of one's life, which is one of the components of positive psychology, is of particular importance in students' behavior today. Therefore, recognizing the factors affecting it plays a crucial role in enhancing students' psychological well-being. The present study aims at predicting students' psychological well-being based on the components of spiritual intelligence and a sense of coherence. The present study is applied as well as descriptive/correlational research in terms of purpose and in terms of the nature and method respectively. Based on the Morgan Table, a sample of 248 of Bilesavar Moghan Azad University students in the academic year 2019-2020 is randomly selected. Sense of Coherence Questionnaire, Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) and Psychological Well-being Questionnaire are employed for data collection. Pearson correlation coefficient and regression are used for analysis data. The results show that there is a significant and positive relationship between spiritual intelligence as well as sense of coherence and students' psychological well-being; this means that whenever spiritual intelligence as well as sense of coherence increase, there is also improvement in psychological well-being. Spiritual intelligence can be a good predictor of psychological well-being and mental health. The spiritual tendency in life prevents a person from doing wrong and showing unacceptable behavior; it can ensure person's mental health.

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## 1. Introduction

Health is a dynamic state in which people are constantly adapting themselves to the changes in the environment; moreover, psychological well-being is one of the most fundamental components of health. The absence of mental health is no longer just a disorder; therefore, improving the level of psychological well-being is one of the goals of psychology in this century. In addition, the psychologists are focused on the fields of mood and personality, the effect of culture, coping skills, the level of optimism and pessimism, social support and individual cognition and its effect on psychological well-being (Sabzi et al., 2015). Psychological well-being is the development of a person's true talents and an attempt to realize one's individual potentials. According to Ryff theory, psychological well-being is the same as life goals, awareness of individual abilities and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Thus, well-being is to strive for transcendence and promotion, which is manifested in the realization of one's talents and abilities. In psychology, well-being is defined as the optimal functioning of human beings. The studies have confirmed a correlation between spirituality and purposeful life as well as life satisfaction and mental health. Ryff (1995) defines psychological well-being as the pursuit of perfection and the realization of one's potentials. Accordingly, psychological well-being is an attempt to seek excellence and advancement, manifesting itself in the actualization of one's talents and abilities. Psychological well-being is one of the psychological foundations of the quality of life, reflecting one's positive nature and vitality. Ryff & Keyes (1995) try to determine and classify the criteria of an

optimal life or the so-called "good life". Intelligence is a concept that researchers have long been interested in studying its dimensions, signs, features and types.

Another type of intelligence component is spiritual intelligence; however, a comprehensive and coherent research to identify and explain its components has not been conducted yet compared to other dimensions of intelligence. Spiritual intelligence has gone beyond the domain of physical and cognitive relationships with one's environment and has entered the domain of transcendence in one's life worldview. Patrick (cited in Rajaei, 2010) believes that religion has helped people to produce psychological structures and strategies over time; it has also solved many problems of human beings in the field of psychology. This indicates one of the basic functions of religion in its evolutionary path.

All the strategies such as altruism, unity, and social interaction have a religious foundation. Religion has been able to help to solve human problems in these areas before the advent of contemporary psychological science (Nasel, 2004). One of the effects of spiritual intelligence on interpersonal empathy and sympathy toward others is that if the other party deeply understands his/her inner mistakes, he/she will stop doing the wrong action. This abandonment of action will free the people from confusion in the face of change which is a high level of spiritual intelligence. A highly spiritual intelligent person has feelings such as God's control and supervision over actions, feelings of peace and being away from depression, and states such as losing concern and gaining a sense of harmony with the world,

perceiving truths, and that the world is often subject to objective change; this means the feeling of purity, freshness and beauty, and finally deep joy and happiness. A sense of self-sufficiency in childhood also leads to a sense of coherence in adulthood. According to Antonovsky's theory, the feeling of adequacy and creating sources of resistance in childhood and adolescence lead to a feeling of strong connection in adulthood. Antonovsky considers the sense of coherence as a pervasive orientation leading to the formation of beliefs in such a way that the internal and external stimuli in the path of life are predictable and explicable (Abdollahzade, Bagherpour, Boujmehrani & Lotfi, 2009). The person has the resources and abilities to deal with a set of these stimuli guide people into a valuable sense of exposure to these stimuli. Additionally, Antonovsky believes that a sense of coherence creates a source of generalized resilience mitigating the effects of stress on health. Therefore, it provides useful methods of dealing with stressors and thus enables the person to show more resistance to the effects of life stress (Abdullahzade et al., 2009). The sense of coherence is a personality structure with three components of perceptibility, ability to manage and meaningfulness. Regarding perceptibility, the sense of coherence means that a person believes that nothing negative or surprising has happened; it also means that life can go well and reasonably as expected. The component of the ability to manage reflects the feeling of having the resources needed to solve a problem and cope with stress. Finally, a sense of meaningfulness implies one that values life not only cognitively but also emotionally (Vastamaki, 2009). Besides, psychological well-being is defined as mental well-being,

but it may have a different meaning. Well-being in people is defined by the quality and quantity of finding their lives enjoyable; that is, evaluating one's life is based on mental well-being. Mental well-being refers to the fact that people can determine whether they have lived a pleasant life which is influenced by the criteria of success. One of the most important models that conceptualize and operationalize psychological well-being is the Multi-dimensional model of Ryff, Singer, Love & Essex (1998). Now a days, spirituality has been considered by researchers as one of the dimensions of human interactions that has a significant relationship with health and recovery (Downie, Fyfe & Tannahill, 1990). Apart from being similar to religion, spirituality is also a broader concept than religion (Macdonald, 2002). Spiritual intelligence combines the variables of spirituality and intelligence into a new structure (Macdonald, 2002) and is listed under such headings as human abilities and experiences and the integrated connection between us and the world in which we live (Emmons, 1999). Since psychological well-being is one of the important indicators of mental health, quality of life and life satisfaction, as well as social, personality, emotional, cultural, occupational, and other factors playing a role in people's well-being. Moreover, one of the main tools of mental health is mental well-being; therefore, universities need to seek recourse to social normalization in this field, because their feelings, behavior, actions and way of thinking are quickly modeled by people. Consequently, recognizing psychological needs, values, and the norms governing their behavior can contribute to researchers and social thinkers in order to predict some social realities.

Students are the scientific, political, and economic pioneers of development in any country; therefore, taking care of their mental health is challenging for the authorities. Psychological well-being, spirituality and meaningfulness in the lives of young people and students are among the challenges the socio-political and educational system of the country are facing. Therefore, all necessary measures should be taken according to the fundamental changes in the lifestyle as well as many fundamental issues in the students' lives.

Ameri & Khajvand Khoshli (2015) report that there is a statistically positive and significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and the psychological well-being of students. In addition, the results of Yazdani Ahmadabadi's (2017) study indicate that the components of sense of coherence (comprehensibility, meaningfulness and manageability) could predict students' life satisfaction by 13%, among which the component of manageability is the best predictor of life satisfaction in students by six percent.

Moreover, Hajilari (2017) indicate that there is a significant relationship between emotion regulation styles and spiritual intelligence with students' psychological well-being. Students' psychological well-being can be predicted by their emotion regulation styles and spiritual intelligence, and there is no significant difference between the psychological well-being, emotion regulation styles, and spiritual intelligence of female and male students.

Martínez and Custódio (2014) studied the correlation between mental health and spiritual well-being among kidney patients.

He shows that there is a positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being, extraversion and openness to empiricism and a negative relationship with neuroticism. In addition, spiritual intelligence is related to positive emotions and general satisfaction with life in various areas of family, education and employment, among others, which is reported to be the fundamental organizer of personality.

De Caroli and Sagone (2016) finds that feelings of coherence, mental well-being and gender awareness are related. Female leaders positively or impartially refer to gender in a male-dominated workplace by full integration. The results put emphasis on the strategies for promoting individuals and social health in an organization and individual orientation contributing to individuals' (mental) health. This study contributes to the gender literature in the paradigm of positive organizational behavior, providing recommendations for future research, and highlighting practical implications for organizations. Nilsson, Leppert, Simonsson and Starrin (2010) report that improvement with age shows a stronger sense of coherence in male than that of female participants. In addition, the sense of coherence has increased with age in both genders. Their findings suggest that SOCs may last for a lifetime.

Several tests have been administered in the field for explaining the role of spiritual intelligence, resilience, well-being and sense of coherence and their effects on mental health and self-control and even self-leadership of individuals; however, in both Iranian and foreign studies, variables of spiritual intelligence and sense of continuity do not affect students'

psychological well-being. Therefore, performing in-depth research on the students' state of mental well-being in the current situation in Iran seems necessary. Besides, some other questions are also raised here. The present study aims at answering this question: Is there a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence, the sense of coherence and the psychological well-being of students at the Islamic Azad University, Bilesavar Moghan Branch?

## 2. Method

The present study is applied in terms of purpose, descriptive and correlational in terms of design and field research in terms of the data collection method. The participants of the study were 700 students studying at Bilesavar Moghan Azad University in 2019, of which 248 people were randomly selected as a sample using Morgan Table the sample size calculator. The participants of the study were selected based on availability. Three closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect the data, the descriptions of which are given below:

**Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24):** This questionnaire was designed and developed by King (2008). It has 24 items with 5 Likert scales ranging from "no opinion (0)" to completely correct (4); it includes four scales of Critical Existential Thinking, Personal Meaning Production, Transcendent Awareness and Consciousness State Expansion. Critical thinking has 7 questions. The Personal Meaning Creation subscale includes 5 questions. Besides, the transcendental consciousness subscale has 7 items. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by statistics experts and the

reliability of this questionnaire was obtained 0.83 using Cronbach's alpha method.

**Sense of Coherence questionnaire:** Antonovsky Coherence Feeling Questionnaire (1993) contains 29 five-option questions to be graded from 1 to 5. This questionnaire consists of three dimensions, which are listed below in terms of their related items: comprehensibility: The score of this subscale ranges from 11 to 55; manageability: the score of this subscale ranges from 10 to 50. Sense of meaningfulness: the score of this subscale ranged from 7 to 35. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by statistics experts and its reliability was 0.90 using Cronbach's alpha method.

**Psychological Well-being Questionnaire:** The Ryff's Psychological Well-being Questionnaire was developed in 1998 and revised in 2002 (cited in Ashkani & Heydari) This scale has six subscales of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance that are scored on a six-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by statistics experts and its reliability was 0.89 employing Cronbach's alpha method.

## 3. Results

Since the normality of research variables is one of the basic assumptions of using parametric tests, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used for normal data distribution. The test results indicated that the Z value for all research variables is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the Z value is not significant to the alpha value of 0.05 level, indicating the normal distribution of

variables. Moreover, the means of research variables are as follows: spiritual intelligence (3.89), sense of coherence (3.75), psychological well-being (3.61) and their standard deviations are 0.25, 0.21, and 0.18, respectively. The highest mean, (3.89)

is related to the spiritual intelligence dimension and the lowest mean, (3.61) is related to the mental well-being dimension. **Table 1** shows the correlation coefficient between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being.

Table 1

*The correlation coefficient between spiritual intelligence and psychological well-being*

Number of samples	Significance level	Correlation coefficient
248	0.001	0.512

As shown in **Table 1**, the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental well-being is significant at the 0.001 level. Besides, the correlation intensity between the two variables, spiritual intelligence and

mental well-being is 0.51, indicating a direct relationship between the two variables. **Table 2** shows the correlation coefficient of the sense of coherence and mental well-being.

Table 2

*The correlation coefficient between a sense of coherence and psychological well-being*

Number of samples	Significance level	Correlation coefficient
248	0.000	0.614

**Table 2** illustrates that the relationship between the sense of coherence and psychological well-being is significant at the 0.001 level. Accordingly, the intensity of the correlation between the sense of coherence and psychological well-being is 0.614%, indicating a direct relationship

between the two variables. Additionally, multivariate regression (Enter method) was hired to predict the changes in the scores of spiritual intelligence, sense of coherence, and psychological well-being. **Table 3** summarizes the multivariate regression model.

Table 3

*A summary of multivariate regression model*

Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	The adjusted coefficient of determination	Durbin-Watson Test
0.63	0.426	0.418	1.962

As displayed in **Table 3**, the correlation coefficient between spiritual intelligence as well as the sense of coherence and psychological well-being equaled to 0.635 and the coefficient of determination was reported to be 0.426. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 0.962 ranging

from 1.5 to 2.5, thus the errors do not correlate. **Table 4** shows the results of the multivariate regression analysis test for predicting mental well-being based on the sense of coherence and spiritual intelligence.

Table 4

*The results of multivariate regression analysis of spiritual intelligence, sense of coherence and psychological well-being*

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T value	Significance level
Constant	1.307	0.204		6.405	0.001
Spiritual Intelligence	0.161	0.123	0.192	1.370	0.001
Sense of coherence	0.410	0.080	0.390	5.128	0.001

a. Dependent Variable: psychological well-being

Table 4 reveals that there is a significant relationship between the sum of independent variables and the dependent variable (psychological well-being). The obtained beta value indicates that the highest coefficient belongs to the variables of sense of coherence factors (0.390) and the lowest spiritual intelligence (0.192). That is, as spiritual intelligence increases, the sense of coherence and the students' psychological well-being also increases, and vice versa, as the spiritual intelligence and sense of coherence decreases, the psychological well-being also decreases.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study aimed at predicting students' psychological well-being based on the components of spiritual intelligence and sense of coherence. The statistical analysis showed that there was a direct and significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and students' psychological well-being. The present result was in line with the studies done by Askary, Asgary and Sangani (2019), Jalali and Khosh Mardan (2018), Behrozi, Kamranifar and Marouti (2018), Hajilari (2017), Nosrati, Rahimi-Nejad and Ghayoomi Naeeni (2018), Sotoodeh, Shakerinia, Kheyraati, Dargahi and Ghasemi Jobaneh (2016), Delqhandi, (2016), Shojaei and Soleymani (2015), Ameri & Khajvand Khoshli (2015),

and Martínez and Custódio (2014). In addition, spiritual intelligence could have a significant impact on the well-being and psychological and mental health of human beings. A person with spiritual tendency in life won't do wrong or show inconsistent behaviors and stay mentally healthy. Moreover, a person who uses spiritual intelligence can have negative experiences leading to mental illness; also, this person can experience meaningfulness, escape from their suffering or get rid of the negative thoughts. However, he/she will establish a deeper relationship with others and ultimately increase life satisfaction.

There is a positive relationship between the sense of coherence and students' psychological well-being, which is in line with the studies of Nilsson (2010) and De Caroli and Sagone (2016). Therefore, the results indicate that a sense of coherence makes a person able to understand and accept life emotions and events better. Also, a sense of coherence leads to building self-confidence in these people and thus increases the psychological well-being of students. As a result, it should be noted that there is a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and the sense of coherence and students' psychological well-being. Thus, deep knowledge of God purpose in life, two elements of spiritual

intelligence, can help people tackle a problem. If a person has a higher level of spiritual intelligence, he/she will experience a valuable and purposeful meaning in his/her life. Therefore, they endure hardships and show a greater sense of solidarity in society. The school time is a good time to teach spiritual intelligence to the students. Stimulating environment that leads to raise spiritual questions can increase and strengthen spiritual intelligence in people. As a result, it will be possible for students to achieve this goal by creating group lessons and workshops in this field. Finally, spiritual intelligence can be increased, regardless of individual and demographic differences, through various exercises, attention, changing emotions, and reinforcing moral behavior. One of the best ways to strengthen it is to teach science along with true greatness and grandeur of life, and to show new horizons that unveil intellectual limitations so that learners can see and hear, and then get rid of the limitations of material life and understand the meaning of existence and life. Since this research was conducted at Bilesavar Moghan Azad University, extending it to other cities shall be done with care, which is another limitation imposed to the nature of the case study strategy. This reduces the generalizability of the results to other participants or other times. It is suggested that the effect of social support training on resilience and psychological well-being and happiness be examined in future research.

## 5. Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that spiritual intelligence and higher sense of coherence in university students are correlated with promoted welfare.

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## Conflict of interest

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any organization. Also, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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