

## Predicting Dimensions Of Psychological Well Being Based on Religious Orientations and Spirituality: An Investigation into a Causal Model

Abbasali Soleimani Khashab,  
MA<sup>1</sup>  
Ali Mansouri Khashab, PhD<sup>2</sup>  
Mohammad Reza Mohammadi,  
MD<sup>3</sup>  
Hamid Zarabipour, MA<sup>4</sup>  
Vahid Malekpour, MA<sup>4</sup>

1 Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

2 Islamic Azad University, Central  
Tehran branch, Shiraz, Iran

3 Psychiatry and Psychology  
Research Center, Roozbeh  
Hospital, Tehran University of  
Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

4 Tehran University of Medical  
Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

### Corresponding author:

Abbasali Soleimani Khashab  
MSc, Shiraz University. Shiraz  
Iran,  
Tell: 09169717823  
Email: asol.khashab@yahoo.com

**Objective:** The aim of this study was to investigate the possibility of predicting psychological well-being based on spirituality and religiousness.

**Methods:** A sample of 300 participants was selected from the whole entrants to Shiraz University of Medical Sciences and Shiraz University using a random cluster sampling. The tools of this study were the Spiritual Scale of Ironson, the Internal and External Orientations of Allport and Ross, Spiritual Religious Orientation of Betson and Showinerdand and the Psychological Well-Being Scale. To analyze the results of this study, we used the statistical method of Pearson correlation and we also performed the path analysis. Multiple regressions were used in a hierarchical simultaneous way in accordance with the stages of Barron and Kenny.

**Results:** The following results were obtained in this study: 1) Spirituality positively predicted two religious orientations (question and internal) among which the internal spirituality possessed a higher degree of predictability; 2) Through intra-religious orientation, and in a direct way, spirituality predicted psychological well-being; 3) The internal orientation was the only strong mediator in the relationship between spirituality and psychological well-being.

**Conclusion:** Spirituality and religiosity were significant determinants of mental health, and they had more shares in psychological well-being, and made religious beliefs profound and internalized them.

**Keywords:** *Psychological Well-Being, Spirituality, Internal & External and Question Orientation of Religion, Students*

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In recent years, the notion of mental health and psychopathology has been reviewed and revised (1). Currently, the subjects of psychological well-being and happiness are used in a large part of research studies, and researchers seriously work on recognizing and upgrading the positive aspects of human beings. In fact, psychological well-being is the largest and most important goal of a human that affects his mental health more than anything else (2). Ryff found six factors as psychological well-being markers: self-acceptance (ability to see and accept one's strengths and weaknesses); goal directedness in life (having goals that give meaning to life), personal growth (feeling that a person's potential capabilities are going to be real); having positive relations with others (i.e., having close and valuable relations with dominant others); dominance on environment (ability to regulate and manage life issues especially daily

issues); and finally, independency (ability to follow personal principles even if they are opposed to traditions and social demands).

Some researchers divided spirituality into the framework of meaning and purpose, and supremacy (such as being a human is more than a material existence), connectedness (connectedness to others, nature and divinity) and values (such as love, compassion and justice) (3). Moreover, "meaning and goal in life, consciousness, connectedness to self, others and a superior reality" are components of spiritual health. The word "religion" is derived from a Latin root (Religare) meaning "to bind together". Religion organizes the collective experiences of a group of people in a system of beliefs and practices. "To be religious" is defined as the rate of sharing in acceptance of beliefs and practices of an organized religion (4). It must be noted that religious orientation is a central view of psychology of religion in the last

40 years (5). In determining the psychological outcomes of religion, Allport and Russ concluded that we must differentiate between internal and external religious orientation (6). External religious orientation also named religion tool is the expression of maladaptive use of religion for selfish goals but internal religious orientation also named religious goals, is a mature form of religious belief used as a dominant motivation, and it guides a person's life path. People with internal religious orientation use religion to reach security, consolation and relaxation. Religion is very valuable to these people, and their belief often is in the surface level (7). People with internal orientation accept religion as a dominant motivation and tend to organize their lives based on their religious beliefs (5). Allport describes them as people who are completely engaged in religious beliefs, and people whose religion has a major impact on them and on their lives (8). The study of Lewis et al indicates that separation between internal and external religion to determine the relation between religion and well-being and life satisfaction is of prime importance. In the topic of spirituality and religiosity outcomes, a number of studies points to increasing mental health level and life satisfaction (9, 10, 11, and 12). According to the increasing growth of studies in the domain of positive psychology in the world and a little research history for this field of study in Iran, this study was conducted to determine the influence of spirituality on dimensions of psychological well-being with the mediating role of religious orientations. The questions of this research are: 1) Do religious orientations have a role as intermediate variables in a connection between spirituality and psychological well-being? 2) If religious orientations have an intermediate role, what is the rate of direct/indirect influence of spirituality on psychological well-being due to these intermediate variables

## Material and Methods

The research design of this study was correlation. In this study spirituality was an exogenous variable, religious orientations were intermediate variables and psychological well-being was a final endogenous variable.

### A. Participants and Research Design

Participants were 308 students (136 males and 172 females) who studied at Shiraz University and Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (SUMS), but due to the inaccessibility to the list of student' names in these universities, we used multi-stage random cluster sampling to ensure that the sample was random.

### B. Measures

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS): In order to measure psychological well-being, the Ryff's psychological well-being scale (1989) was used. This questionnaire has 18 items, with scores ranging from completely wrong (1) to completely true (5) On a 5-degree Likert scale. The validity of this scale in the

study of Ryff was 0/93. In this research, the reliability of the scale was calculated by Cronbach's alpha, and the coefficient of 0/72 was calculated. Also, to confirm validity, confirmatory factor analysis (KNO coefficient, 0/77, Bartlett sphericity ratio chi-square 633/397, in significant level of 0/0001) was used and the results showed good validity for this scale.

Spirituality Perspective Scale (SPS) 1989: This scale has 11 items and each item has five options. The reliability of this questionnaire was 0/90 using Cronbach's alpha for the general score; its validity was calculated by Criterion validity and Discriminant validity. The Alpha coefficient was 0/90 for this scale in this study, and Confirmatory factor analysis was used to check the validity of the scale. The value of KMO coefficient and the value of Bartlett's Chi-square test were 0/92 and 2176/70, respectively. The Bartlett's Chi-square test was significant in 0/0001 levels.

Religious Orientation Scale (ROS): This scale is used to examine internal or external orientation into religion and is a 20 item self-report scale, with 11 items examining internal orientation and 9 items examining external orientation. The validity and reliability of this scale were good in both domestic and foreign studies (8, 13). In this research, Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm reliability, and factor analysis was used to determine validity. Alpha coefficient was 0/73 for the internal orientation dimension and it was 0/66 for the external orientation dimension. The results of Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the existence of the two factors in the scale ( $P < 0/0001$ ).

### C. Method

In order to do the research, three fields were randomly selected from the faculties of Shiraz University and Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (SUMS), and from classes of each study field. and all students of the selected classes were asked to complete the scales. The mean age and standard deviation for females were 22/93 and 5/05 and were 23/54 and 4/69 for males.

Before completing these scales, some explanations about research goals and the style of completing forms were presented to the students.

### D. Data Analysis

In this study, using path analysis, the mediating role of religious orientations in relation to spirituality and psychological well-being was assessed. The path analysis used in this research is based on the model of Barron and Kenny. Consistent with this model, spirituality was considered an exogenous variable, religious orientation considered an intermediate variable and psychological well-being was considered a final dependent variable or an endogenous variable. In addition, in order to check the path coefficients, simultaneous regression was used.

## Results

Table 1 demonstrates the mean and standard deviation of the variables and their correlation with one another.

Table 1: mean and standard deviations of variables and correlation of them with each other

Row	Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	UCorrelation										
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	spirituality	35	5/9	1										
2	Internal religious orientation	20.8	3/8	0.30	1									
3	External religious orientation	15.7	3/7	0.30	0.34	1								
4	Question orientation	20.2	3/7	0.27	0.41	0.44	1							
5	Self-acceptance	9.4	2/3	0.40	0.35	0.33	0.33	1						
6	Relation with others	9.4	2/3	0.14	0.30	0.38	0.39	0.43	1					
7	autonomy	10.1	2/2	0.33	0.25	0.25	0.37	0.36	0.34	1				
8	Goal-directed life	9.6	2/2	0.28	0.44	0.43	0.30	0.45	0.51	0.20	1			
9	Personal growth	10.4	2	0.35	0.31	0.25	0.39	0.31	0.31	0.38	0.37	1		
10	Dominance on environment	10.4	2/1	0.40	0.26	0.36	0.42	0.45	0.32	0.46	0.28	0.38	1	

Table 2: predicting psychological well being based on spirituality

Criterion variable	Predictive variable	R	R2	$\beta$	t	P
Self-acceptance	Spirituality	0.39	0.15	0.39	5.9	0.0001
Relation with others		0.14	0.02	0.14	1.9	0.05
autonomy		0.32	0.10	0.32	4.7	0.0001
Goal-directed life		0.28	0.8	0.28	4.00	0.0001
Personal growth		0.34	0.12	0.35	5.06	0.0001
Dominance on environment		0.40	0.16	0.40	6.6	0.0001

Table3: predicting religious orientations based on spirituality

Predictive variable	Criterion variable	R	R2	B	T	p
Spirituality	Internal religious orientation	0.63	0.40	0.63	10.01	0/001
	External religious orientation	0.15	0.02	0.05	-2.4	0.05
	Question orientation	0.36	0.001	0.36	5.06	0.001

Table4-predicting psychological well being dimensions based on religious and spiritual orientations

Predictive variable	Criterion variable	R	R2	B	T	p
Internal religious orientation	Self-acceptance	0.49	0.24	0.14	0.2	n.s
External religious orientation				0.08	0.47	n.s
Question orientation				0.15	2.07	0.04
Spirituality	Relation with others	0.47	0.22	0.27	3.7	0.0001
Internal religious orientation				0.10	1.9	n.s
External religious orientation				0.23	3.3	0.0002
Question orientation	autonomy	0.44	0.19	0.23	3.07	0.0002
spirituality				0.04	0.60	n.s
Internal religious orientation				0.008	0.06	n.s
External religious orientation	Goal-directed life	0.53	0.28	0.07	0.96	n.s
Question orientation				0.27	3.5	0.0002
spirituality				0.03	0.99	n.s
Internal religious orientation	Personal growth	0.47	0.22	0.23	3.8	0.0001
External religious orientation				0.29	4.174	0.0001
Question orientation				0.07	0.28	n.s
spirituality	Dominance on environment	0.53	0.29	0.02	0.99	n.s
Internal religious orientation				0.23	3.1	0.002
External religious orientation				0.04	0.6	n.s
Question orientation	Spirituality	0.47	0.22	0.27	3.5	0.001
Spirituality				0.05	1.1	n.s
Internal religious orientation				0.04	0.5	n.s
External religious orientation	Question orientation	0.53	0.29	0.18	2.5	0.01
Question orientation				0.27	3.7	0.0001
spirituality				0.30	4.25	0.0001

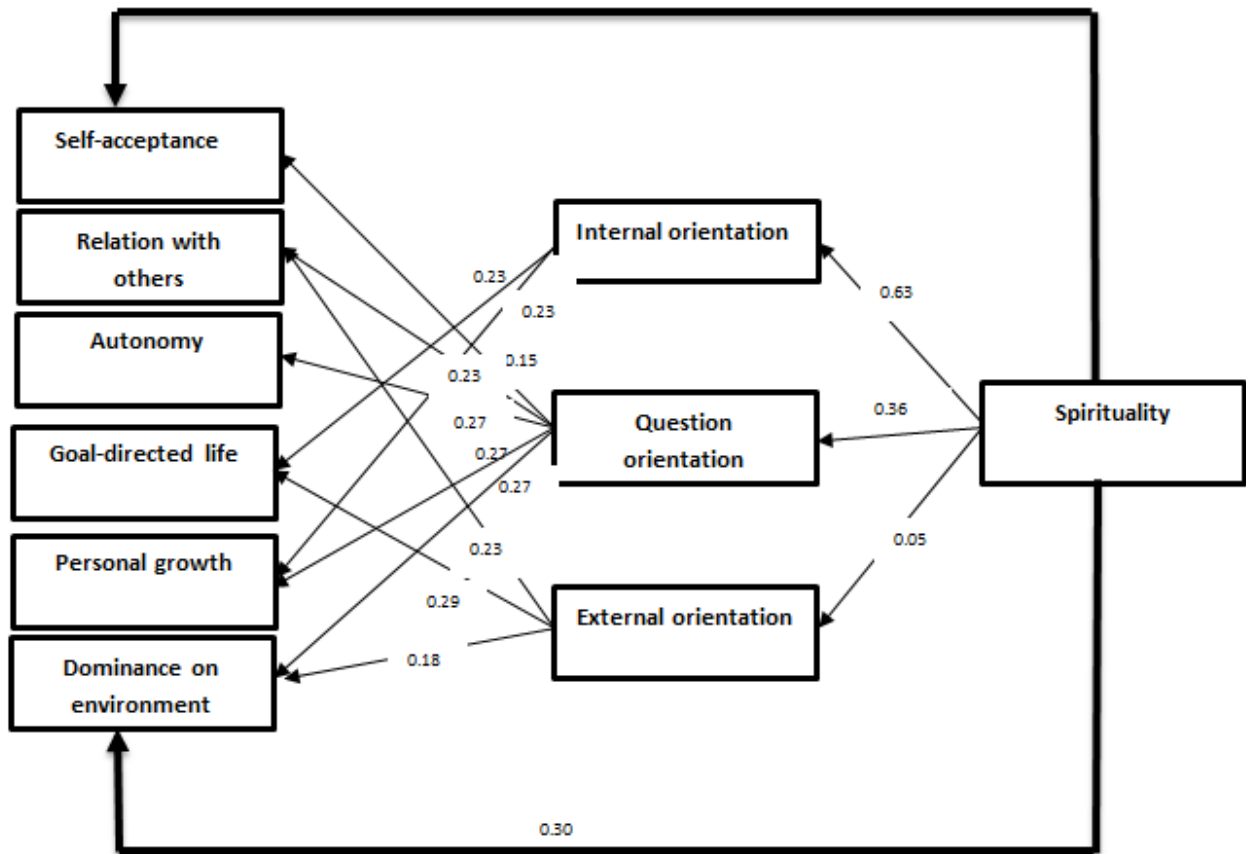


Figure 1-final path coefficients for spirituality, religiosity and psychological well-being

As demonstrated in Table 1, a relationship was found between spirituality and psychological well-being dimensions. In addition, a relation also existed between spirituality and religious orientations. Psychological well-being was related to religious orientations. In order to perform path analysis, first spirituality as a predictive variable and psychological well-being as a criterion variable were entered into the regression equation. Results are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the spirituality variable was able to predict psychological well-being dimensions.

In the second step, using three regressions, the role of spirituality variable in predicting religious orientations was determined. As presented in Table 3, spirituality significantly and positively predicted internal religious orientation ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $\beta = 0.63$ ), external religious orientation ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.05$ ) and question orientation ( $p < 0.36$ ).

In the third step, spirituality and religious orientation were entered as predictive variables simultaneously and each psychological well-being dimensions was entered as a criterion variable into the regression equation. Results are shown in Table 4.

As demonstrated in Table 4, religious orientation was capable of significantly and positively predicting psychological well-being. From the different types of religious orientations, internal religious orientation predicted psychological well-being in the dimensions

of personal growth ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ ) and goal-directed life ( $p < 0.0001$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ ). In addition, external religious orientation predicted psychological well-being in dimensions of dominance on environment ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $\beta = 0.18$ ), goal-directed life ( $p < 0.0001$ ,  $\beta = 0.29$ ) and relation with others ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ ). Religious question orientation predicted psychological well-being in dimensions of personal growth ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $\beta = 0.27$ ), dominance on environment ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $\beta = 0.27$ ), autonomy ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ ), relation with others ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ ) and self-acceptance ( $p < 0.0001$ ,  $\beta = 0.27$ ). Thus, spirituality through the above variables, both sagittally and directly, can predict psychological well-being dimensions, self-acceptance ( $p < 0.0001$ ,  $\beta = 0.30$ ) and dominance on environment, so mediation of religious orientations to the spirituality path and psychological well-being dimensions is confirmed.

Barron and Kenny in their suggested path analysis method noted that if beta coefficients for exogenous variables decrease from level 1 to level 3, it represents the mediating role of the intermediate independent variable (14). In this regard, with comparing spiritual beta coefficient in step 1 of the analysis with its coefficient in step 3 of the analysis, it was determined that spirituality beta coefficient on self-acceptance dimension of well-being was decreased (0.27 versus 0.39). Thus, the mediating role of internal religious orientation between spirituality and dimensions of

psychological well-being was confirmed. According to the research findings, the final model is depicted as following.

## Discussion

The goal of this research was to study a causal model in determining the role of spirituality and religiosity on predicting psychological well-being. When a person has a spiritual attitude in his/her interpersonal relationships, his/her attitude toward self, other people and environment improves. Because of this, self-acceptance is developed as a quality for healthy people. These people are capable of having a positive attitude toward self, others and environment and have a realistic acceptance of different existential aspects. This study corresponds to the study of Wood et al.

In this study, spirituality predicts dimensions of relation with others, goal-directed life and dominance on environment by internal orientation, goal-directed life dimensions, personal growth and religious external dimensions. This finding is in accordance with the findings of Lockenhoff et al. (12) and Soleymanikhashab, et al. (13) and Mohammadi, et al. (14). All of them believe that reduction in spirituality and religion is related to several disorders and is related to reduction of mental health and life satisfaction. Most researchers believe that with the help of religion and spirituality, it is easier to confront negative emotions and social situations (11) and it leads to more self-acceptance and autonomy. Other domestic and foreign researches (13, 15, 12,) in the analysis of relation between spirituality and religious orientations and relation between spirituality and mental health components found that these components significantly and positively are related to internal orientation and spirituality and are negatively related to external religious orientation. In the explanation of these findings, they suggest that a spiritual man who is faced with a problem uses a cognitive-step approach which has three sections: dealing with the issue and acceptance, processing and deliberating on the issue and ultimately raising the issue. In the whole of these three sections, there is a kind of original thinking that makes the personal and interpersonal environment predictable. In addition, because this person finds his life a consequence of his understandings, he tries to internalize these issues. In this regard, religion is a theorized spirituality which an intellectual man can practice through the principles of religion in order to make his life better.

Strengthening family constructs, appropriate behavioral models in educational settings, and more emphasis on the role of mass media can provide us with helpful information and can also help us promote healthy personalities. An important conclusion of this study is that the power of religious orientations in predicting psychological well-being is relatively the same. This finding signifies that religiosity, both in the framework of external actions or a belief or a faith, leads to

improvement of psychological well-being. Based on the previous studies, we can suggest that in order to enhance religious culture, great attention should be paid to both religious orientations and pluralism in religion backgrounds and people should be allowed to intellectually explore rites before they make a commitment to them.

According to the importance of demographical situations of participants in distinguishing between spirituality and religiosity, we hope that in future researches, groups with higher education (MSc or PHD) be used as the comparing groups

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