Comparing Spiritual Well-Being, Happiness, and General Health among University and Seminary Students

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Spirituality has been reported as one of the most important factors in increasing happiness and general health. Given the fact that one of the factors in creating spiritual well-being is spiritual environment, this comparative study was designed to investigate the relationship between spiritual well-being and happiness as well as general health of university and seminary students in Kerman, Iran.

Method: The statistical population of this causal-comparative study consisted of all students at Shahid Bahonar University and Seminaries of Kerman. From among the university students, 376 were selected by random cluster sampling and 274 seminary students were selected through access sampling. The measurement instruments were Spiritual Well-being Questionnaire (SWB), Oxford Happiness Inventory (AHQ) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The data were analyzed using multivariate regression, independent T-test, and Maan-Whitney U test. In this study, all ethical issues were carefully observed and the authors have declared no conflict of interest.

Results: Results showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between spiritual well-being, existential well-being and religious well-being (P<.001), but they have a significant and negative relationship to general health (P<.001). In addition, there was a significant difference between spiritual well-being and happiness among Shahid Bahonar and seminary students (P<.01); however, there weren't significant differences between them considering general health (P<0.05).

Conclusion: The findings of this study indicate higher levels of spiritual well-being and happiness among seminary students, which confirms the effects of spirituality on these schools. Given that, steps should be taken to foster spiritual aspects.

Summary

Background and Objectives: Well-being includes various physical, psychological and spiritual aspects (1). The spiritual aspect of well-being is vital for every one (2). Spiritual well-being bears a positive and meaningful relation to more adaptability (3); besides, daily spiritual experiences adjust negative effects of daily stresses on behaviors (4). After analyzing 466 university students, 1002 students and 494 religious individuals, Fisher found out that having relation with God, given the personality and age, explained the happiness variance more clearly (5). According to the report by Stavrovah et al, religious people have more happiness and satisfaction with life and this effect is clearer in religious societies (6). Elliot and Green showed that religious people have reported more health and happiness (7). By analyzing 152 men and women up to 65 years old, Soo-You et al indicated that religious activities and well-being religious index correlate with general health (8). They concluded that those who have more religious beliefs in life were less anxious and depressed (9). Similarly, by analyzing the available information in the database from 1996, Ellison, Hill and Burdette confirmed that the religious trends and belief to the resurrection have a negative
relation with anxiety and have a positive relation with the peace of mind (10). Further, Koenig et al examined the available effects of religion and spirituality in West and middle Asia. They found out that higher religious association correlated with mental health (11). In this research, being present in church and having personal worships were found to have a meaningful role in mental health. Academic curriculum can be a decisive course of life because of various reasons. In other words, entering university is a very sensitive stage in the life of efficient and active forces in every country and usually it is associated with major changes in an individual life, affecting the performance and efficiency of the individuals (12). Although various lines of research analyze the predictor effects of psychology among students at universities and diverse fields (12, 13), the question of which stratum of the students is more vulnerable to these psychological pressures hasn’t been addressed. In addition, tackling problems associated with the psychological health cannot guarantee the goals of education by itself; rather, taking subjects such as happiness into account can help bring about the resistance and required spirit when facing high-pressure situations. Therefore, by considering the role of spiritual well-being in predicting happiness and mental health, this research was conducted on students of Bahonar University and seminary in Kerman with the purpose of analyzing and comparing spiritual well-being components with happiness and general health.

**Method:** The statistical population (n = 650) of this causal – comparative study consisted of all students at Shahid Bahonar University and seminaries of Kerman. From among the university students, 376 were selected by random cluster sampling and 274 seminary students were selected through access sampling. In order to collect the data, three measurement instruments were used, namely Spiritual Well-being Questionnaire (SWB), Oxford Happiness Inventory (AHQ), and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The data were analyzed using simultaneous regression, independent T-test, and Maan-Whitney U test.

**Results:** The results demonstrated that almost 50 percent of changes in happiness were due to spiritual well-being in the case of university students and 42 percent in the case of seminary students. Moreover, nearly 29 percent of changes in general health of seminary students was determined by the spiritual well-being. The average comparison in spiritual well-being level between university students and seminary students suggested higher spiritual well-being among seminary students. The average comparison in total level of general health showed that there was no meaningful difference between the general health of students at Bahonar University and seminary students and the average comparison in happiness grades signified the meaningful difference in happiness between students of Bahonar University and the seminaries.

**Conclusion:** Spirituality is a fundamental factor in the lessons and life of seminary students so that their life has been meaningful due to the belief system which helps them in the face of adversities through developing special practical ideas and solutions. This asset can bring about positive and happy spirits because of the belief in God as the strongest supporter. Although according to the researches, there are not many studies on comparing the students of seminary and university, there are many findings about comparing religious and spiritual groups with others confirming higher happiness and general health levels in these groups. As Starvrovah et al argue, religious people have higher average of happiness and satisfaction with life and this is clearer in religious societies. Investigating the reasons of this difference between religious and non-religious individuals in religious societies indicates that in such societies religious people have more well-being feelings since they have a respectful attitude and are respected by the public (13), which is confirmed by the findings of this study. In general, based on the outcomes of this research, we can say that seminary students have higher spiritual well-being and happiness than university students. As these findings show, spirituality and religion act like a shield against problems and discomforts, extending the mental and physical health and reducing disorders in this regard. Thus, the higher spiritual well-being, the more happiness and mental health. Given this important role of spirituality, measures should be taken to foster spiritual aspects of individuals.

**References**


