

The Relationship of Spiritual Intelligence/Academic Conscience with Academic Performance: the Mediating Role of Academic Hardiness

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Academic achievement is a behavioral consequence of great importance to students and is considered as an important indicator for evaluating educational systems and identifying the factors affecting it. Therefore, the present study was conducted to determine the relationship of spiritual intelligence and academic conscience with academic performance and to determine the mediating role of academic hardiness in ninth grade students in Zanjan, Iran.

Methods: The present study was a descriptive correlational study. The statistical population included all ninth grade male students in the second district of Zanjan in the academic year of 2018-2019. The sample size based on Morgan's table was determined to be 317 people and the participants were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. Data were collected using McIlroy and Banting Academic Conscience Questionnaire, Benishak et al.'s Spiritual Hardiness Questionnaire (SISRI) and King's Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire. Also, the total average of the students was used to assess academic performance. Pearson correlation test and stepwise regression test were used to analyze the data and Baron and Kenny method was used to determine the mediating role. In this study, all ethical considerations were observed and no conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Results: There was a significant and positive relationship between academic conscience and academic achievement ($P < 0.05$). There was a positive and significant relationship between academic hardiness and students' academic achievement ($P < 0.05$). The relationship between spiritual intelligence and academic achievement was also significant ($P < 0.05$). Also, according to the stages of determining the mediating role of Baron and Kenny, academic hardiness played a mediating role in the relationship between academic conscience and academic achievement. But this role was not approved for Spiritual Intelligence. Overall, the results of multi-stage regression showed that educational conscience and spiritual intelligence can explain 15% of the variance in academic achievement.

Conclusion: Spiritual intelligence was one of the factors affecting students' academic achievement and academic conscience, by affecting academic hardiness can lead to students' academic achievement.

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Summary

Background and Objective

One of the basic intrinsic factors often affecting the dimensions of life is personality or some

fundamental personality factors that can affect the academic performance of individuals (1). Conscience, as one of the main traits of personality, is a subset of duty-orientation, which is one of the five major factors of personality traits (1, 2). McMullen showed in a study that students with high conscience may be more likely to succeed because of their strong desire to learn or their dominant goals, which contributes to their competence and progress in school. Emus sees spiritual intelligence as the consistent use of spiritual data that facilitates the solution of everyday problems (3); some define spiritual intelligence as the third type of intelligence that develops the structure of people's behavior (4). In fact, it can be stated that spiritual intelligence is a cognitive-motivational factor that includes a set of adaptation skills and problem-solving resources that facilitate the achievement of the goals (5, 6); Academic toughness is also one of the variables related to students' academic achievement and psychological well-being (7, 8). It includes a set of personality traits that act as a source of resistance in the face of stressful life events including education (9). The results of the study by Sobramanians and Vinot Kuma (10) indicate that psychological stubbornness leads to a greater sense of self-esteem in individuals and ultimately increases their resistance to stress from work and education and increases their vitality. Students in some grades may experience more stress than others. For example, ninth-graders (major selection) and twelfth-graders (end of general education to enter university) may experience stressful periods, so the target population in the current study is the ninth-graders. Research findings have also shown a relationship between spiritual intelligence and academic conscience and academic achievement, while there are some contradictory and weak findings regarding research variables that may be influenced by stubborn mediation, because findings also indicate a strong association with spiritual intelligence (10) and academic achievement (11). Therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of predicting the academic achievement of ninth grade students based on spiritual intelligence and academic conscience through stubborn mediation.

Methods

Compliance with ethical guidelines: In this study, all ethical principles, including fidelity and honesty, obtaining informed consent from the participants, and maintaining the confidentiality of their identity information were observed and

individuals were free to leave the study at any stage of the study.

This was a descriptive-correlational study. The statistical population included all ninth-grade male students in District 2 of Zanjan in the academic year 2018-2019. The number of students in this course was 1800. The sample size was determined to be 317 participants based on Morgan's table and the same number of questionnaires was distributed among the students. Finally, 295 appropriately completed questionnaires were submitted to analysis. Multi-stage cluster sampling method was used to select the samples. Students' GPA was used to assess academic performance. The McIlroy and Bantig Questionnaire (12), the Revised Academic Hardiness Scale (13) and the King Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire (5) were also used to measure academic conscience. Pearson correlation and multiple regression tests were used to analyze the data.

Results

The results of correlation test showed a significant relationship between academic conscience and academic performance ($r=0.336$ and $P=0.001$). Also, the relationship of academic toughness ($r=0.201$ and $P=0.017$) and academic effort and commitment ($r=0.239$ and $P=0.010$) with students' academic performance was also found to be significant. A significant relationship also existed between spiritual intelligence and academic performance ($r=0.209$ and $P=0.001$). The type of communication was positive and direct in all cases. As the scores related to the predictor variables increased, the score of the dependent variable, i.e. academic performance, also increased. In the present study, not only was the direct relationship between academic hardiness and academic performance confirmed but the relationship between academic conscience and academic performance can also be confirmed through academic hardiness. However, the mediating role of academic hardiness in the relationship between spiritual intelligence and academic performance was not confirmed.

Conclusion

An examination of the relationship between the students' academic conscience and educational performance revealed a significant and positive relationship between the two; as the scores related to students' academic conscience increased, their academic performance also improved. This finding is consistent with the results of the studies by Usher *et al.* (14), Kumar, Braun, Kumar and

Robbie (15), McIlroy and Bunting (12), Shiner and Masten (16), Wolf and Johnson (17) and Fazli and Fooladchang (18).

Also in the present study, academic hardiness, besides being directly related to academic performance, played a mediating role in the relationship between academic conscience and academic performance. The relationship between the two variables was positive and direct. As the stubbornness of the students increased, so did their academic performance. This finding was in line with the results of Elhampour (19), Safarkhanlou (20). Spiritual intelligence was also one of the factors affecting students' 'academic performance and academic conscience, by affecting academic hardiness leading to students' improved academic performance. The effect of spiritual intelligence on students' academic performance was positive and direct such that the students with high spiritual intelligence also had good academic performance. Academic conscience and tenacity also had a positive and direct effect on students' academic performance.

According to the results of the present study, it is suggested that some of the components that lead to the improvement of students' academic performance be strengthened. In this regard, teaching stubborn academic practices and using methods that lead to greater motivation and enthusiasm of the students can be useful. Also, strengthening students' academic conscience will ultimately help students' academic growth and maturity.

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Ethical considerations

According to the authors of the article, this research is a part of the first author's doctoral dissertation in the field of educational psychology with the code of ethics of IR.IAU.Z.REC.1399.069, which was approved by the Islamic Azad University of Zanjan in 2020.

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Conflict of interest

The authors did not report any conflict of interest in this study.

Authors' contribution

Initial idea and design and collection of research background, distribution of questionnaires and Journal of Pizhūhish dar dīn va salāmat
(i.e., Research on Religion & Health)

data collection: first author; writing the method section and analysis and interpretation of the data and general supervision over the implementation of the project: second author, discussion and conclusion: third author; and text revision: fourth author.

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