

The Relationship between Psychological Lifestyle and Spiritual Intelligence among Women

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Abstract

Background: According to Adler, lifestyle reflects the individual's unique, unconscious, and repetitive way of responding to or avoiding main living routines: friendship, love, work, spirituality, family, and self-acceptance. Lifestyle is related to spirituality, as well as the life solutions chosen by a person.

Objectives: The present study aimed to examine the relationship between psychological lifestyle and spiritual intelligence in women.

Methods: In this descriptive-correlational study, all the women referred to counseling centers and health clinics in districts five and six of Tehran in 2020. The participants were 400 women who met our inclusion criteria and volunteered to participate in the study, chosen by the convenience sampling method. For calculating the sample size, we used the Cochran formula. The data were collected using the Self-Report Measure of Spiritual Intelligence (King & DeCicco, 2009) and Adlerian-Based Lifestyle Assessment (Curlette, Wheeler, & Kern, 1993) tools. The collected data were analyzed using the Pearson correlation test by SPSS 16.

Results: The results indicated that 32% of the women were 26 to 30 years old, 38.75% of them had a diploma, and 35.2% had two children. The findings showed a significant and positive relationship between lifestyle and spiritual intelligence ($P < 0.01$), indicating that the higher a person's lifestyle score was, the higher his/her level of spiritual intelligence would be.

Conclusion: Studies have shown that lifestyle, a sense of belonging, going along, taking charge, wanting recognition, and being cautious, plays a decisive role throughout a person's social, professional, marital, and physical lives, as well as his/her spiritual intelligence. Our findings can be used for educating, guiding, and counseling women to appropriately modify their life styles.

Keywords: *lifestyle, spiritual intelligence, women*

Introduction

Lifestyle is one of the concepts widely used in various socio-economic and cultural contexts [1]. Lifestyle is defined as the way of living or doing things and is formed in the family. Moreover, it is influenced by the individual's culture, race, religion, and socioeconomic status [2].

The term "lifestyle" was introduced for the first time by Alfred Adler (1927). Adler's lifestyle theory also encompasses his personality theory.

According to him, lifestyle is a set of actions and attitudes that find their meanings in a particular social context. Lifestyle is the pattern of the actions by which individuals are distinguished from one another, and these patterns gradually become the normal routine of daily life [3].

Lifestyle shapes people's perceptions of themselves and the world, as well as their specific behaviors and habits during pursuing personal goals. Everything a person does is influenced by

his/her unique lifestyle. Experiences within the family and sibling relationships help shape this way of understanding, feeling, thinking, and behaving [4].

Adler believed that people must master three universal life tasks: (1) building friendship (social tasks), (2) establishing intimacy (the love-marriage task), and (3) contributing to society (occupational tasks). Everyone should do these tasks regardless of age, gender, historical background, culture, or nationality. Dreikurs and Mosak (1967) added two other life tasks to this list: self-understanding (self-acceptance) and cultivating a spiritual dimension (including values, meaning, life goals, and the relationship with the world) [5]. These tasks are so important for human life that failure in any of them is often an indicator of mental disorders [6].

Choosing a specific lifestyle plays an essential role in determining whether or not people will accomplish their tasks. One of the reasons people go to counseling and treatment centers is to change their lifestyle so that they can have a better life and experience fewer psychological problems [7]. For example, Jonyniene and Kern (2012) showed that people's lifestyles affected their problem-solving skills in their professional, familial, emotional, and social relationships [8]. Another study found that the Adlerian lifestyle personality (attributed to the body mass index) is applicable to overweight women. It was also shown that women with higher BMI scores had higher belonging/social interests and were more striving for perfection than their normal-weight counterparts [9]. Rasmussen found that the Adlerian therapies focusing on lifestyle changes could help the women suffering from emotional problems redefine their lifestyles and increase their ability to adapt to life [10].

Furthermore, another issue that seems to be effective in choosing a lifestyle is spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence refers to a set of abilities, capacities, and spiritual resources whose application in daily life increases a person's adaptability. The definition of this term highlights its role in solving existential problems and finding meaning and purpose in the actions and events of daily life [11].

Spiritual intelligence causes a person to look at problems more tolerably, try harder to find solutions, and endure life hardships better [12].

Some studies have suggested that people with lower levels of spiritual intelligence face more problems in their familial and personal lives [13]. Both spiritual intelligence and wisdom are characterized by traits such as cognition and emotion, as well as humility and compassion [14]. People who have a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives cope better with critical conditions, and their hopes in God enable them to experience less mental distress [15]. Besides, a health-based physical and psychological lifestyle promotes people's satisfaction and the positive meaning of life until old age [16].

Smith et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis on 31 studies conducted from 1984 to 2005 and emphasized on the role of spirituality in adopting a psychological lifestyle. Their findings showed that spirituality-focused psychotherapy approaches might be helpful for people with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, and eating disorders [17]. Niemeijer et al. studied individuals with chronic cardiovascular diseases (CVD), which are associated with specific complications. These patients are usually advised to change their lifestyles to avoid the disease's complications. The results of the recent study showed that spirituality was an important aspect of health behaviors and lifestyle changes. This study also showed that lifestyle change was experienced as a constant internal battle, and spirituality empowered the patient to take more serious actions to fight the disease [18]. Previous studies have shown that people with higher levels of spiritual intelligence experience higher levels of mental health and happiness [19].

Dissatisfaction with lifestyle, spousal disagreements, and family and work problems can make people experience emotional problems. Regarding that lifestyle is derived from personality traits and the impacts of these traits on people's life activities, including their spiritual intelligence and spirituality, this study aimed to explore the relationship between psychological lifestyle and spiritual intelligence among women.

Methods

This study, in terms of its objectives, employed a descriptive-correlational design to explain the relationship between the mentioned variables. The research population in this study included all the

women referred to counseling centers and health clinics in districts five and six of Tehran in 2020. These two urban areas of Tehran harbor the highest number of counseling centers among other districts of the city. Patients were identified by referring to the lists of names and addresses available at the centers. After selecting the subjects by the convenience sampling method, they were contacted and reviewed to determine if they met inclusion criteria. The participants were those suffering from adjustment problems in their work and personal lives. The inclusion criteria were: (1) having at least a high school diploma degree to understand the items in questionnaires (2), being 20 to 40 years old (3), and having no acute psychiatric or physical problems based on physician's discretion. Exclusion criteria were: (1) being divorced (as a stressful life experience) and (2) incompletely filling questionnaires.

Given that a large number of people living in districts five and six of Tehran met the inclusion criteria, the participants were selected among volunteers and based on the convenience sampling approach. For sample size calculation, the Cochran formula was used (considering the size of the statistical population (N) as 7500, "Z" as 1.96, and "P" as 0.05). Given the possibility of a dropout during the study, 400 women were enrolled as participants in this research.

Data Collection

The following instruments were used to collect the data.

A: Self-Report Measure of Spiritual Intelligence: This instrument was developed by King (2008). It contains 24 items including critical existential thinking (7 items: 21, 17, 13, 9, 5, 3, and 1), personal meaning production (5 items: 23, 19, 15, 11, and 7), transcendent awareness (7 items: 22, 20, 18, 14, 10, 2, and 6), and conscious state expansion (5 items: 24, 16, 12, 8, and 4). The items were developed on a five-point Likert scale [1-5], and the total score ranged from 24 to 120 with a cutoff point of 96. In a pilot study, King administered the questionnaire to 619 undergraduate students (488 females and 131 males) at the University of St. Petersburg and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.36. In other studies to validate the scale, it was administered to 305 undergraduate students, delivering a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.95 [11,20].

Hossein Jari and Zakeri (2011) estimated the reliability of the scale to be 0.93 according to the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Besides, Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales of critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendent awareness, and conscious state expansion were 0.78, 0.68, 0.74, and 0.72, respectively [21]. In this study, the reliability of the scale was calculated as 0.71 (based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient).

B: Adlerian-Based Life Style Assessment (BASIS-A): This scale was developed by Curlette, Wheeler, and Kern (1993) to examine people's lifestyles based on Adler's theory of individual psychology [22]. The scale contains 65 items, each of which begins with the phrase "When I was a child", asking respondents to recall their childhood memories and match them with the items. This scale has five main subscales including Belonging-Social Interest (BSI), Going Along (GA), Taking Charge (TC), Wanting Recognition (WR), and Being Cautious (BC).

The questionnaire has 65 close-ended questions scored on a five-point Likert scale (5= strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree) [23]. The test's developers estimated the internal consistency values of the instrument on the five major scales by calculating alpha coefficients which ranged from 0.82 to 0.87. Moreover, the test-retest values were between 0.81 and 0.90 [22]. The questionnaire was standardized for being used in Iran by Bashiri (2007) in a study on 513 young people aged 18 to 40 years in Tehran, showing that all the five subscales of the original instrument were valid to be used for Iranians. In this study, the test-retest and internal consistency methods were used to calculate the tool's reliability coefficient, which varied from 0.57 to 0.76 for the five main subscales [24]. Also, the reliability index of the scale was calculated as 0.74 according to Cronbach's alpha.

Procedure

First, a list of marriage counseling and health centers in the districts five and six of Tehran was prepared. Given the restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 outbreak and the inaccessibility of the respondents, most of the questionnaires were distributed online among them. For this purpose, we gathered the emails of the people referring to the clinics. After preparing electronic versions of

the questionnaires, they were placed on the Internet as a link. In the next step, the questionnaires were distributed among the participants, who completed them from April 1 to August 10, 2020.

Ethical Considerations

To comply with ethical requirements, written informed consent was obtained from the participants. Furthermore, this study was approved under the registered ethical code of IR.IAU.TNB.REC.1399.036 by the Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) and inferential (correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis) statistics.

Results

Table 1 presents the participants' demographic characteristics. As shown in Table 1, 32% of the women were 26 to 30 years old, 38.75% of them had a high school diploma, and 35.2% had two children. In addition, 38.3% of the participants had good incomes.

Table 1: The Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age group (year)	20-25	21.5
	26-30	32
	31-35	27.5
	36-40	19
Education	Diploma	38.75
	Bachelor's degree	37
	Master's degree	16
	Ph.D.	8.25
Number of children	1	32
	2	35.2
	3	22.8
	4	9.5
	5 and more	0.5
Income	Weak	26.5
	Average	35.2
	Good	38.3

Table 2 shows the participants' scores in different dimensions of spiritual intelligence. As shown, the mean spiritual intelligence score of the participants was 69.33 ± 22.73 . Besides, the maximum and minimum scores were related to the existential critical thinking and conscious state

expansion dimensions with the corresponding values of 21.58 and 12.36, respectively. Table 3 shows the scores of the participants for different lifestyle subscales. As shown, the mean lifestyle score in the participants was 87.51 ± 12.83 .

Table 2: The Scores Obtained by the Participants Regarding Different Dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence

Subscales	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical existential thinking	7	35	21.58	7.47
Personal meaning production	5	25	15.45	5.46
Transcendental awareness	7	32	19.92	6.56
Conscious state expansion	5	25	12.36	5.5
Total	24	115	69.33	22.73

Table 3: The Participants' Scores for Different Lifestyle Subscales

Subscales	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Belonging-social interest	7	29	16.97	6.57
Going along	16	41	29.23	5.65
Taking charge	8	37	24.14	6.59
Wanting recognition	7	28	15.98	4.18
Being cautious	6	25	18.16	5.3
Lifestyle	50	110	87.51	12.83

The results presented in Table 4 show positive and significant relationships between spiritual intelligence and the lifestyle subscales of going

along, taking charge, wanting recognition, and being cautious ($P < 0.01$).

Table 4: The Correlation Matrix of Lifestyle Subscales with Spiritual Intelligence

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Belonging-social interest	1						
Going along	0.203**	1					
Taking charge	0.395**	-0.237**	1				
Wanting recognition	0.580**	0.051	0.371**	1			
Being cautious	0.447**	0.301**	0.215**	0.117*	1		
Lifestyle	0.666**	0.460**	0.619**	0.588**	0.695**	1	
Spiritual intelligence	0.207**	0.443**	0.286**	0.429**	0.338**	0.401**	1

*: $P < 0.05$ **: $P < 0.01$

The results presented in Table 5 indicated that lifestyle correlated significantly and positively with spiritual intelligence and its components,

including critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion ($P < 0.01$).

Table 5: The Correlation Matrix of Spiritual Intelligence and Its Subscales with Lifestyle

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Critical existential thinking	1					
Personal meaning production	0.822**	1				
Transcendental awareness	0.798**	0.759**	1			
Conscious state expansion	0.670**	0.699**	0.840**	1		
Spiritual intelligence	0.919**	0.899**	0.937**	0.873**	1	
Lifestyle	0.247**	0.354**	0.206**	0.426**	0.358**	1

Discussion

The present study showed that psychological lifestyles had a positive and significant relationship with spiritual intelligence in women. Accordingly, the adoption of a responsible and adaptive psychological lifestyle can increase women's spiritual intelligence, as indicated in previous studies [25,26].

Al-Saeayida & Al-Khatib (2017) investigated the relationship between lifestyle and mental health among university students and found that the coping style was more common than social

interest among their participants. The results of the recent study also revealed that students with controlling lifestyles were more likely to experience psychological problems, including anxiety and depression [25].

Tey et al. (2018) conducted a study to predict psychological well-being and self-regulation according to a religious and health-oriented lifestyle. The results showed that healthy lifestyle behaviors such as religiosity, goal setting, impulse control, and subjective well-being could predict psychological well-being in Malaysian Muslims.

They also found that psychological well-being and goal setting were correlated with religiosity and a healthy lifestyle [26].

The results of the present study showed that a responsible lifestyle, adaptability, and cautiousness were positively related to self-awareness, meaning life, and spiritual intelligence. Similarly, Tiwari (2010) considered social interest to be a prerequisite for social well-being and the ability to cope with life problems. He also pointed out that, psychologically, the mission of psychology is to ensure the psychological well-being and health of the individual. However, to cope with everyday social violence and problems, social interest and having a lifestyle based on social interest in others and the society not only contribute to the psychological well-being of the individual but also improve his/her social well-being [27].

Kim et al. (2010) also showed that the Adler's treatment, especially with the emphasis on a social interest lifestyle, could be effective in reducing anger, depression, and anxiety in middle-aged women who had aggressive behaviors [28]. Moreover, Kao et al. (2020) found that both religion and spirituality had always been effective in reducing the emotional and psychological problems faced by human beings [29]. In Adler's theory of individual psychology, a lifestyle based on social interest ultimately contributes to one's own transcendence in life by pursuing appropriate life goals. Individual transcendence is a concept used in spiritual intelligence. In other words, a person's goals in life and his/her lifestyle should contribute to the improvement of the society's social welfare [14, 30-31].

In general, individuals' psychological lifestyles are effective in applying critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendent awareness, and conscious state expansion to reduce their psychological and emotional problems [11,32]. Spiritual intelligence plays an important role in women's health and well-being and can help them adapt to life stresses [33,34].

Spiritual intelligence; on the other hand, provides a framework for identifying and organizing valuable skills, competencies, and guidance, including a set of required beliefs and values. Therefore, spirituality can help individuals to

adapt to and cope with life problems. People with a strong religion/spirituality often tend to adhere to social values and ethical principles in their behaviors and interpersonal relationships. The concept of spiritual intelligence also pays attention to interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships [20].

The findings of this study encourage mental health professionals and the health system to pay attention to individuals' psychological lifestyles along with their physical and health-oriented lifestyles. Accordingly, mental health professionals and health managers can use the insights from this study for designing educational and therapeutic interventions to enhance health-promoting behaviors in people.

The present study had some limitations. For instance, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there were some problems in selecting the participants; thus, they were selected using a non-random and convenience sampling method, and the participants completed the questionnaires online. Besides, the questionnaires were self-reporting measure, and the respondents might have answered them carelessly or with doubt, undermining the generalizability of the results of the study.

Conclusion

The present study showed that there was a relationship between women's psychological lifestyles and their spiritual intelligence. Both lifestyle and spiritual intelligence play an important role in a person's psychological and physical health in such a way that people who follow an adaptive and responsible psychological lifestyle have higher levels of spiritual intelligence. The findings of this study encourage mental health professionals and the health system to pay more attention to individuals' psychological, along with physical and health-oriented, lifestyles. Mental health experts can also use the insights from this study to design educational and therapeutic interventions to enhance health-promoting behaviors in the future.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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