The effectiveness of spirituality education based on religious teachings on the meaning of life and the religious commitment of students

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Abstract

Introduction: The desire to search for meaning and achieve it is an essential element in human life. "Meaning of life" is one of the most important philosophical, psychological and religious issues of human beings in the new era and the era of industrialization of societies and comprehensive progress of science and technology. The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of spiritual education based on religious teachings on the meaning of life and the religious commitment of students.

research methodology: The research method is a quasi-experimental type of pre-test and post-test with a control group. The sample included two groups (experimental and control) of 20 people who were selected by random sampling. The spirituality protocol was implemented in 9 sessions of 90 minutes based on the religious teachings of Richard and Bergin. The data collection tool included a) Sirajzadeh and Rahimi's meaning of life questionnaire and b) Ahmadi Abhari's religious commitment.

Findings: Covariance results showed that spiritual education based on religious teachings is effective on students' religious commitment and meaning of life. Also, with the control pre-test, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the groups in terms of the scores of meaningful components of life (value 0.16, purposefulness 0.46, hope 0.44) and religious commitment 0.63 in the post-test.

Conclusion: According to the research findings, it can be stated that teaching religious teachings to students creates positive feedback regarding the meaning of life and their beliefs and convictions, as well as commitment to them, and this has an impact on the personal, social, religious, and academic growth of students.

 Key Words: spiritual education, religious teachings, the meaning of life, religious commitment

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Introduction

The desire to search for meaning and achieve it is an essential element in human life (Zarani et al., 2020). "Meaning of life" is one of the most important philosophical, psychological and religious issues of human beings in the new era and the era of industrialization of societies and comprehensive progress of science and technology (Van Tongeren et al., 2015). When a person engages in his favorite activities, he feels the presence of meaning in himself (Zarani et al., 2020). Also, when he feels that his existence is connected to an eternal source and relies on broad and reliable frameworks and supports such as the religion and philosophy that he has chosen to live, he gets, understands the meaning, and feels it (Balqanabadi, 2018). Batista & Almond (1973) view meaningful life as a process of individual beliefs rather than the ultimate source of belief content. According to these researchers, the more values a person believes in and adheres to, the more meaningful his life is (Henri et al., 2014). In the meaning of life definition, one cannot pay attention to only one field of meaning; rather, in its analysis, one should pay attention to all the logical, rational, psychological, and existential levels and aspects of this type of life. In this regard, in a general view, life is meaningful if his four needs for meaning are satisfied. These four requirements are 1. Being purposeful towards life 2. Feeling efficient and in control 3. Having a set of values that can justify one's actions by means of them 4. Having a stable foundation and Strong to have a positive sense of self-worth (Balqanabadi, 2018).

On the other hand, there are various sources to make life meaningful, one of the most important of which is "religious commitment". In this regard, Kierkegaard (1850) considers meaningful life to be synonymous with religious and faith life and considers the main condition of a meaningful life to be "achieving passionate faith in God" and one of the general characteristics of a meaningful life is God-centered life or It is religious (Mahini et al., 2017). Religion is one of the most fundamental and important institutions that human society has seen, so that mankind has never lived outside of this phenomenon and has always taken refuge in it, as a mediator, on the process of thinking and evaluating the daily events of a Society influences. A person's life can provide the meaning of life in the moment of life and in certain circumstances by providing explanatory bases, it can improve the level of human life and save humans from suspense and meaninglessness (Saadat and Mandani, 2015). Religious commitment is one of the challenging concepts in the empirical studies of religion; so that in its operational definition, various indicators and dimensions have been considered (Mahini et al., 2017). The manifestation of the values and signs of a person's religiosity can be found in his attitude, tendency, and overt and hidden actions (Sanjarifar, 2021). On the one hand, man considers himself obliged to follow religious orders and recommendations, and on the other hand, his religious commitment distinguishes him from others. Therefore, others can recognize him in two ways; one is his religious commitment and the other is the consequence of religiosity and the effects of religiosity on his personal and social thought and life (Mohini et al., 2017).

In recent decades, with the rapid growth of human knowledge and the emergence of new sciences, the discussion of the influence of "religious teachings" in various dimensions of life has been raised more than ever. In religious teachings, establishing a relationship with God and remembering him is mentioned as a factor in opening and elevating the mind (Khaledian et al., 2018), which has many psychological and health effects. Religious teachings have a special effect on people's health (Narawi et al., 2013). In this regard, the importance of "spirituality" and spiritual growth in human life has received more attention from psychologists and mental health professionals in the past few decades. As far as the World Health Organization defines the dimensions of human existence, it refers to the physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. Lack of attention to the spiritual dimension and self-awareness of teenagers, based on the theories of theorists and researches, hinders their growth and prosperity (Mollai Zarandi and Dortaj, 2019).

The teachings of spirituality have an important place in the field of life issues and provide satisfaction with life in spiritual evolution. These teachings include cognitive, emotional and behavioral methods that respond to human needs including material, spiritual, cognitive, rational and emotional (Seligman, 2013). Piedmont believes that spirituality, because of its positive influence on personal health and well-being, is the way in which ultimate meaning is created and can be considered to some extent as a fundamentally organized aspect of personality (cited by Movahedi et al., 2014). In fact, spirituality is a dimension of man that shows his connection and integration with existence. This connection and integration gives people hope and meaning (Ahmadi and Toure, 2017), creates a sense of meaning in their hearts (Shah et al., 2011) and frees them from the limitations of time, place and material interests and it goes beyond (Ahmadi and Toure, 2017; Khaledian et al., 2017). Basharat et al. (2021) conducted a study on the relationship between spiritual perfectionism and mental strength and spiritual health. The results of the research showed that spiritual-religious perfectionism has a positive and significant relationship with religious well-being, existential well-being, spiritual health and self-strength. Based on research findings, spiritual/religious perfectionism can be considered as one of the determining factors of spiritual health and personality health. Taliban (2020) conducted a research titled religious pluralism and religious commitment; the results indicate that there is no relationship between religious pluralism and religious commitment in Iran. In fact, the findings of this research cannot have the empirical support of the two paradigms governing the sociology of religion in how religious pluralism-diversity is related to religious commitment; rather, it should be considered as an experimental challenge for both the secularization paradigm and the religion market. Amiri et al. (2020) conducted a study titled the role of servitude in the meaning of life; the results show that philosophers have given different interpretations about the meaning and purpose of life; some of these interpretations are material and others are unrealistic and imaginary. On the other hand, some philosophers look for the meaning of life in belief in God, in the monotheistic worldview based on the teachings of Islam, life finds meaning with belief in God and servitude.

Khaledian (2018) conducted a research entitled "Effectiveness of spiritual education based on religious teachings on improving the resilience of married students". The research population included all married students of Payam Noor Qorveh University in the academic year of 2015-16. The findings showed that spirituality education with an emphasis on the teachings of Islam is effective in improving the resilience of married students. Namdar Joyiee et al. (2018) conducted a research entitled communication skills in Razavi's life with religious commitment to Islamic beliefs, and the results showed: communication skills based on Razavi's lifestyle have a meaningful, positive and constructive relationship with religious commitment to Asami's beliefs, and the more a person adheres to nominal beliefs, the more communication skills such as empathy and compassion etc. with others.

Rahul (2021) has done a research titled "Teaching spirituality to humanists", the results showed that: Religious and spiritual concerns are important for understanding health-related behaviors and sources of social support for patients, that makes it important for philanthropists to understand and understand these nuances in their work. Malibari and al-Farji (2021) came to this conclusion in a research entitled religious commitment and its relationship with happiness among Saudi university students - Umm al-Qura University as a model, that religious commitment has a significant effect and percentage on the level of happiness of students of Umm al-Qura University, and it is possible to predict their level of happiness. It is noted that the value of the estimation coefficient ($R2$) has reached 31, which means that the dimensions of religious commitment (31%) contribute to the happiness of Umm al-Qura University students. Campos et al. (2020) conducted a study entitled "The relationship between religiosity and depressive symptoms with the mediation of meaningful life". The statistical population of the research was Italian women aged 19 to 33. Their findings showed that meaningfulness of life mediates the relationship between internal religiosity and depressive symptoms. Therefore, religiosity has a protective effect against depression symptoms. However, it happens indirectly through meaningfulness of life. Villani et al. (2018) conducted a research titled "The role of spirituality and religiosity in the psychological well-being of people with different religious status". The findings showed that spirituality has a positive effect on mental well-being (except for the aspect of mutual communication) and this relationship has no effect on a person's religion.

Instead, they tested models of religiosity based only on religiosity and uncertainty and found that the relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being varied by religious situation. Specifically, the major difference we found was that religious identity commitment positively predicted life satisfaction among religious individuals, but not among undecided individuals. Vitorino et al. (2018) conducted a study entitled "Relationship between spirituality and religiosity and mental health". The statistical population of the research was the students of Brazilian public universities. Their findings showed that spirituality has a significant effect on religiosity and mental health. Also, religiosity can predict mental health to an acceptable extent. Elmer et al.

(2017) in a review of research conducted on the effects of spirituality on people's health found that spirituality is associated with less disease and longer life, and people with a spiritual orientation respond better to treatment when faced with trauma and deal with trauma in a more appropriate way. Along with other opportunities and threats, education in three fields, cognitive, emotional and behavioral, has become the most important concern of officials and parents of secondary school students. In this regard, due to the importance of spirituality and religious teachings, the necessity of education and application of these teachings is revealed for students. According to what was mentioned, the aim of the present research was to answer the question of whether spirituality education based on religious teachings has an effect on the meaning of life and religious commitment of students.

Research question

What are the challenges and opportunities of decentralization of high school curriculum with an emphasis on multiculturalism and cultural heritage?

Methodology

The current research is a semi-experimental research method with a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The statistical population includes all 519 male students of the 11th grade of Gamishan city in the academic year of 2021. From these two groups of 25 people, test and control were done by multi-stage cluster sampling method from one school; and then they were divided into groups by simple random method. Admission requirements include age 16-17, male gender, not suffering from mental illnesses, consent of parents and students, not participating in similar training courses at the same time. Spiritual training based on religious teachings was conducted for the experimental group in 9 sessions of 90 minutes per week. In order to comply with the ethical principles, in addition to the initial explanations, the students were given the option to leave the meeting if they were not satisfied. The researchers committed to implement this intervention on the students of the control group (in case of informed consent) if the spiritual education based on religious teachings is effective in accordance with the principles of scientific ethics.

Intervention

The participants received 9 sessions of spirituality training with an emphasis on the teachings of the religion of Islam based on the book of Richard and Bergin (2005). In the spiritual training protocol based on religious teachings, communication with God is considered in all stages. In this approach, the goal is to increase religious commitment and increase the meaning of life by using spiritual resources.

The protocol of spirituality training based on religious teachings, separated by the implemented sessions, are:

Table 1. Summary of spiritual therapy sessions with the emphasis on religious teachings

Session	The Content of the Session
1	Preparation, determining group goals and rules, familiarizing group members with each other, consulting and discussing spirituality, and implementing questionnaires on religious commitment and meaning of life
2	Statement of the problem, discussion about students' religiosity, and discussion about the effects of spirituality and religiosity in creating mental health and meaning in life
3	Weekday prayers and prayers, prayers and religious rituals
4	Verses and interpretation of the Quran, mention of divine names, explanations about divine judgment and destiny, with the belief that a force superior to us is able to guide us to the path of health
5	Explaining and explaining the merits and benefits of participating in religious ceremonies, seeking forgiveness, repentance, forgiveness, and divine grace with the belief that the creator of the universe is the best helper (based on interventions by Richard and Bergin, 2005)
6	Listening to the audio of the Holy Qur'an and reciting the Holy Quran by the members of the group
7	The Qur'anic story of resorting to the lights of household and companions, (peace be upon them)
8	Description and description of the benefits of prayer and congregational prayer, the biography of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him)
9	Summarizing and concluding the sessions and ending, talking about what you have learned in the group, reviewing the program and summarizing the educational program of spiritual therapy, and implementing religious commitment and meaning of life questionnaires

Measures

Meaning of life questionnaire by Sirajzadeh and Rahimi (2013) with 15 items including the dimensions of value, hope and purposefulness (5 items for each dimension). The range of answers to the questions of the Likert questionnaire is 5 points. Considering that the researchers had used this questionnaire before, its validity was confirmed. In the research of Sirajzadeh and Rahimi (2013), Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.79. Value dimension 0.72, hope 0.84, and purposefulness 0.74 indicate the appropriate reliability of the scale.

The religious commitment questionnaire in Iran was prepared and standardized by Ahmadi Abhari (2006). In this questionnaire, those religious actions and behaviors (such as obligatory prayer and fasting) that are expected from a Muslim teenager or youth are the focus of attention. This tool can only be used to examine the religious behavior of teenagers and young people in an Islamic society. This questionnaire has 45 items that are set on a 5-point Likert scale. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated in Saadat and Mandani's research (2014) by a number of Muslim scholars and university professors, which was approved by the experts after the proposed reforms and the implementation of the proposed reforms. In this research, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) statistical test from SPSS software was used for data analysis.

Research Findings

The tests used in this research were statistical analyzes of covariance tests. In Table 1, the normality of the distribution of the variables has been checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 2. The results of the normality test of research variables

Variable	Group	Stage	Z statistic	(Sig)
The meaning of life	Control	pre-tests	0/457	0/985
		post-test	0/627	0/828
	The Experiment	pre-tests	0/553	0/919
		post-test	0/658	0/779
Religious Commitment	Control	pre-tests	0/946	0/333
		post-test	0/597	0/869
	The Experiment	pre-tests	1/233	0/096
		post-test	1/094	0/182

According to table (2), the level of all variables is more than 5%. Therefore, the distribution of data obtained from research questionnaires is normal.

The first hypothesis: spiritual education based on religious teachings has an effect on the meaningful components of students' lives (value, hope and purposefulness).

Table 3. Summary of covariance analysis information of the meaningful components of life (value, hope, and purposefulness), in the experimental and control groups for the interaction effect test.

	Group effect	Source of changes	The value of the test statistic	F value	Error degree of freedom	Assumption degree of freedom	Sig
Pillai's effect		0.512	11.523	3	33	0.001	
Lambda-Wilks		0.488	11.523	3	33	0.001	
Hotelling's effect		1.048	11.523	3	33	0.001	
		The biggest root	1.048	11.523	3	33	0.001

According to the value (p=.128, F=1.262 (189.10462)), the homogeneity test of dispersion matrices is not significant .According to the data in the table, the significance level of 0.001 in the table is less than 5%, so we conclude that spiritual education based on Islamic teachings has an impact on the meaningful components of life (value, hope, and purposefulness), and improves them.

Table 4. Summary of multivariate covariance analysis of meaningful components of life (value, hope, purposefulness) in experimental and control groups

Source		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Sig	Effect size	Statistical power
Value	Pre-test	357.642	4	89.411	2.24	0.450	0.237	0.53
	Groups	221.699	1	21.699	6.755	0.140	0.162	1
	Error	1148.758	35	32.822				
Hope	Pre-test	448.343	4	112.086	8.118	0.098	0.481	0.46
	Groups	394.436	1	394.436	28.567	0.001	0.449	1
	Error	483.257	35	13.807				
Purposefulness	Pre-test	664.452	4	166.113	8.596	0.056	0.496	0.39
	Groups	590.633	1	590.633	30.566	0.001	0.466	1
	Error	676.323	35	19.324				

As shown in the above table, with the pre-test control, the average of the meaningful components of life (value, hope, purposefulness) of the test group in the post-test stage has a significant difference at the error level of 0.05. Based on this, the first research hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, education based on multidimensional planning has an effect on the components of meaningful life components (value, hope, purposefulness) of 11th grade male students in Gamishan city. Also, the effect size equal to 0.162 shows that 162 % of the improvement in the scores of the test group in a valuable variable can be attributed to the effect of spiritual education based on religious teachings. That is, 162% of the difference in post-test scores is the valuable variable of the experimental and control groups related to participation in spirituality classes based on Islamic teachings. Also, the effect size equal to 0.44 indicates that 44% of the improvement in the scores of the experimental group in the variable of hope can be attributed to the effect of spiritual education based on religious teachings. That is, 44% of the difference in the post-test scores of the variable usefulness of the experimental and control groups is related to spiritual education based on religious teachings. The effect size equal to 0.46 shows that 46% of the experimental group's score improvement in the target variable can be attributed to the effect of spiritual education based on religious teachings. That is, 46% of the difference in the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups is related to spiritual education based on religious teachings.

Second hypothesis: Spiritual education based on religious teachings has an effect on students' religious commitment.

Table 5. Summary of covariance analysis information of the components of moral responsibility in two groups for the interaction effect test

	Source of changes	The value of the test statistic	F value	Error degree of freedom	Assumption degree of freedom	Sig
Pillai's effect	Group effect	0.83	10.75	3	33	0.001
Lambda-Wilks		0.17	10.75	3	33	0.001
Hoteling's effect		1.86	10.75	3	33	0.001
	The biggest root	10.48	10.75	3	33	0.001

According to the value (p=0.16, F (16693.13 and 6) = 1.52), the homogeneity test of dispersion matrices is not significant. According to the data in Table 6, and the value of the Lambda-Wilks test (p = 0.001, F = 0.17 (3, 33)), we conclude that the hypothesis of the similarity of the averages of the two groups based on the dependent variables of religious commitment is rejected. And multivariate analysis of covariance is generally significant.

Table 7. Summary of multivariate covariance analysis of components of religious commitment in experimental and control groups

Source		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Sig	Effect size	Statistical power
Religious commitment	Pre-test	3658.4	2	18291.08	35.2	0.000	0.656	0.23
	Groups	33586.6	1	33586.68	64.7	0.001	0.636	1
	Error	19206.8	37	519.10				

As shown in the above table, with the control pre-test, the average religious commitment component of the experimental group has a significant difference in the post-test stage at the error level of 0.05. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the research is confirmed. In other words, spiritual education based on Islamic teachings has an effect on the religious commitment of 11th-grade male students in Gomishan city. Also, the effect size of 0.636 indicates that 636 % of the improvement in the scores of the test group in the variable of religious commitment can be attributed to the effect of spirituality education based on Islamic teachings. That is 636 % of the difference in the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups' religious commitment variable is related to spiritual education based on Islamic teachings.

Table 8. Summary of multivariate covariance analysis of the multivariate significance of life and religious commitment in experimental and control groups

Source		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Sig	η^2	Statistical power
The meaning of life	Pre-test	5.240	3	5.240	0.010	1.49	0.50	0.46
	Groups	3433.964	1	3433.606	32.667	0.001	0.476	0.476
	Error	3783.964	36	105.110				
Religious commitment	Pre-test	46.144	3	46.144	2.439	2.992	0.052	0.39
	Groups	3147.867	1	3147.867	59.01	0.001	0.621	1
	Error	19201.605	36	533.378				

As shown in the above table, with the pre-test control, the significant averages of life and religious commitment of the experimental group in the post-test stage are significantly different at the error level of 0.05. Therefore, the main research hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, education based on multidimensional planning has an effect on the meaningfulness of life and religious commitment of 11th-grade male students in Gomishan city. Also, the effect size equal to 0.476 indicates that 476 % of the improvement in the scores of the experimental group in the meaningful variable of life can be attributed to the effect of spiritual education based on Islamic teachings. That is, 47 % of the difference in the post-test scores is a significant variable in the life of the experimental and control groups related to spiritual education based on Islamic teachings. As well as, the effect size of 0.39 indicates that 39% of the improvement in the scores of the experimental group in the variable of religious commitment can be attributed to the effect of spiritual education based on Islamic teachings. That is, 39% of the difference in the post-test scores of the religious commitment variable of the test group and the evidence is related to spiritual education based on Islamic teachings.

Discussion and conclusion

Spirituality based on religious teachings has a significant effect on the meaningful components of life (value, hope and purposefulness) of students. The results of this part of the research are consistent with the findings of Khaledian (2019), Bayi et al. (2018), Rahul (2021), Villani et al. (2019), Elmer et al., 2017. In explaining these findings, it can be stated that the first and most important factor related to the special effect of spirituality education based on religious teachings is in improving students' attitude and interpretation towards life. The importance of the pressure factor is determined through cognitive evaluation, which is determined by the influence of individual beliefs and values, such as individual control and existential and spiritual beliefs. People manage their stress based on available resources and different ways of coping. From this point of view, it can be said that beliefs affect important cognitive evaluations in the coping process. Hence, teaching spirituality can help students

evaluate negative events in different ways. Therefore, spirituality creates a stronger sense of control, which in this way contributes to psychological adjustment; and control their feelings and emotions through spirituality, by using them correctly, they can do their work more easily and comfortably, and instead of satisfying their desires, they move towards their goals, and also pay attention to their deepest values and interests with spiritual training based on religious teachings on the way to reach their goals, and use them to give meaning to life. In different religions, with different evolutionary methods, the flourishing of talents and the actualization of human abilities have been emphasized. If in the clear religion of Islam faith is based on faith in God and prophets, in other religions the message of perfection and dealing with problems has been taught to their followers in other ways. Considering that aspects of value, hope and meaningful purpose of life are very important in the educational system, and macro policies also follow this goal. Providing the content of spirituality programs based on Islamic teachings can be effective on the value, hope and purposefulness of the students and as a result the academic vitality of the students.

Spirituality based on Islamic teachings has a significant effect on students' religious commitment. This result is consistent with the findings of Chan et al. (2018), Campos et al. (2020), Pandya 2019. In fact, spiritual intervention increases the level of adaptation of students by helping students to cope better with the stressful factors of social and academic life, through religious commitment and altruism, gratitude, forgiveness and more peace. And in this way, it makes the purpose of life clear for the person and in painful and threatening situations, it becomes a source of more peace in the student and makes him able to accept unchangeable events. Since religious commitment appears beyond the educational environment, teachers and educators can integrate and harmonize the educational content of spirituality based on Islamic teachings with parenting methods in the family, so that parents, along with teachers, have an effective role in establishing the religious characteristics of students. As in Islam, responsibility before God means that the result is punishment in the hereafter. Many Christian thinkers have divided the commitment to religious, religious and moral issues into acceptable and reprehensible, rational and narrative. But the result of this religious commitment is the commitment that people have to their personal and social duties. A positive spiritual orientation system makes people have the courage to face problems and increases their stress management. They should also give meaning to life events and submit to God's will and be safe from many unnecessary tensions (Spilka et al., 2003). Many aspects of spirituality emphasize hope, optimism, empathy, connection, pardon, and forgiveness. Solving problems with these spiritual characteristics has a positive and lasting effect on the cognitive and behavioral aspects of students.

Conclusion

Finally, according to the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that spirituality education based on religious teachings has an impact on the meaning of life and religious commitment of students.

Limitations

One of this study's limitations was that due to the prevalence of corona disease and the physical absence of students from schools, the distribution of questionnaires in the post-test in the control and control groups was done virtually and through the electronic version of the questionnaires and the results received in the same way.

Suggestions

It is suggested that according to the method of teaching spirituality based on religious teachings and taking help from religion, prayer is one of the appropriate intervention methods, and it can be used to prevent physical, mental and social diseases of students, and through them, one can trust the infinite source of divine power and have a sense of hope and meaning; therefore, it is suggested to education officials and planners to activate spirituality in different ways and by holding extra-curricular classes, using different software to activate spirituality, etc., to improve the mental well-being and academic performance of students and follow up.

Following the principles of research ethics

Informed consent forms were completed by all subjects in the present study.

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Conflicts of interest

According to the authors, the present article does not have any conflict of interest.

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