

The Effectiveness of Spiritual Competence Training on the Psychological Well-being of Preschool Teachers

Masomeh Miri¹, Reza Dastjerdi^{2*}, Mohammad Reza Asadi Younesi³, Majid Pakdaman⁴

¹Qaenat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaenat, Iran

²Birjand University of Medical Sciences, Birjand, Iran

³Department of Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Birjand University, Birjand, Iran

⁴Department of Psychology, Qaenat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaenat, Iran

*Corresponding Author: Reza Dastjerdi, Birjand University of Medical Sciences, Birjand, Iran. E-mail: R.dastjerdi@bums.ac.ir

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Abstract

Background: Spiritual competence means understanding the difference between spirituality and religion; and between spirituality, religion, and culture.

Objectives: This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of spiritual competence training on the psychological well-being of preschool teachers.

Methods: This is a quantitative, semi-experimental, pre-test-post-test study with a control group. The statistical population included all preschool teachers in Birjand city in the academic year 2019 - 2020. Using the purposeful sampling method and following the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 40 participants were randomly selected and divided into two experimental and control groups. The experimental group received the educational package of spiritual competence in 12 sessions, and the control group did not receive any intervention. In order to analyze the data, the analysis of variance test was used with repeated measures after observing the statistical assumption.

Results: The mean age of the participants was 37.38 ± 7.39 years. All of the participants were female (100%). The results of the present study showed that the educational package of spiritual competence was effective for the psychological well-being of preschool teachers. The results of the test of simple effects between groups in three stages of measurement showed that there is no significant difference between the two experimental and control groups in the pre-test. Post-test and follow-up, there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups, and the average of the experimental group is higher in the two stages of post-test and follow-up.

Conclusions: According to the findings, it can be said that the educational package of spiritual competence evaluated in the present study can help in increasing the mental health and psychological well-being of preschool teachers.

Keywords: Effectiveness; Spiritual Competence; Psychological Well-being; Preschool Teachers; Birjand

1. Background

Childhood is the first and most significant period of a person's life and is important for developing basic skills. The preschool period is the first stage of formal education and is considered a very important behavioral environment for many children. In this space, there is a need for a motivating and stimulating environment to develop children's talents. An environment where children feel emotional security and enjoy being in this environment (1-3).

People's understanding of well-being and how to promote it has evolved over the past two decades. Psychological well-being is a good way to live and a combination of good feelings and effective performance. Also, well-being is emotional experiences (positive and negative feelings) and evaluation of people's lives (satisfaction with life). Ryff et al. define psychological well-being as the growth

and flourishing of a person's real potential abilities and consider it a process of comprehensive growth throughout life (4-7).

Research findings have shown that psychological factors affect physical and physical performance, and those with higher psychological well-being also have higher physical health. People with high psychological well-being are more interested in taking on a role in society, creating more passionate free time for themselves and participating in more community activities, have a more cooperative spirit, and mainly have positive emotions and a positive evaluation of the happening events. On the other hand, people with low psychological well-being evaluate situations and events as unfavorable, and for this reason, they experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and aggression more often (8-12).



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Considering the intense activities and problems educators find in preschool centers with the principal, parents, and colleagues, and also because of the much effort they spend in the centers to control children's abnormal behavior, they are constantly anxious and tense. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the health issues of this huge group from a positive point of view (13-17).

2. Objectives

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of spiritual competence training on the psychological well-being of preschool teachers.

3. Methods

This is a quantitative, semi-experimental, pre-test-post-test study with a control group. The statistical population included all preschool teachers in Birjand city in the academic year 2019 - 2020. Using the purposeful sampling method and following the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 40 participants were selected and divided randomly into two experimental and control groups. The experimental group received the educational package of spiritual competence in 12 sessions, and the control group did not receive any intervention. First, the participants were divided into two groups (experimental and control), and then the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages were performed.

The inclusion criteria for participating in the study were as follows: At least two years of teaching experience in preschool, not having any psychological problems, being at least 25 and at most 55 years old, and having a bachelor's degree or higher. The training package details are written and published in another article (18). Then, with the coordination of the experimental group, the best time to hold training classes was determined. This training was conducted in 12 sessions of 90 minutes. In all sessions, learners actively participated in an intellectual challenge, and the topic arose in each session, and expressed their opinions. Assignments and exercises related to each session's topic were presented to reach the desired concept and to know and evaluate the individual at the end of each session. In each session, the assignments from the previous session were reviewed. To analyze the data, descriptive analyses and analysis of variance tests were used with repeated measures after observing the statistical assumption.

4. Results

The mean age of the participants was 37.38 ± 7.39 years. 100% of the participants were female. Most participants were in the age group of 30 to 40 years. The minimum age of the participants was 22 years, and the maximum age was 53 years. 85% of the participants in the study were married (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Information on the Participants

Demographic Categories	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Female	40 (100)
Male	0
Age	
20 - 30	4 (10)
30 - 40	21 (52.5)
40 - 50	11 (27.5)
50 - 60	4 (10)
Marital status	
Married	34 (85)
Single	6 (15)
Academic fields	
Psychology	15 (37.5)
Educational sciences	11 (27.5)
Elementary education	8 (20)
Computer sciences	1 (2.5)
Geography	1 (2.5)
Islamic art	1 (2.5)
Child coach	3 (7.5)
Educational background	
Associate	3 (7.5)
Bachelor	21 (52.5)
Master	13 (32.5)
Ph.D.	3 (7.5)

The mean post-test scores of psychological well-being and its dimensions, except for the personal growth com-

ponent, have increased in the post-test and follow-up phase compared to the pre-test phase (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Psychological Well-being and its Dimensions in the Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-up Stages a

Variables and Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Follow-up
Self-acceptance			
Experimental	32.1 ± 3.4	34.4 ± 4.45	35.7 ± 3.86
Control	33.3 ± 3.4	32.2 ± 3.12	31.30 ± 5.39
Purpose in life			
Experimental	33 ± 3.64	35.07 ± 2.84	36.03 ± 4.02
Control	33.31 ± 4.08	33.72 ± 3.16	34.25 ± 3.64
Positive relationship			
Experimental	32.71 ± 3.82	35.63 ± 5.2	37.22 ± 3.2
Control	30.58 ± 4.77	31.05 ± 2.66	31.65 ± 2.92
Personal growth			
Experimental	30.5 ± 4.47	27.52 ± 4.28	28.56 ± 3.57
Control	29.40 ± 5.06	28.75 ± 2.17	29 ± 2.68
Environmental mastery			
Experimental	30.1 ± 3.90	33.65 ± 4.36	34.22 ± 3.10
Control	28.8 ± 3.73	29.45 ± 2.76	30.05 ± 3.73
Autonomy			
Experimental	32.2 ± 3.3	35.40 ± 2.85	36.83 ± 3.50
Control	32.05 ± 4.30	31.5 ± 3.77	31 ± 4.1
Psychological well-being			
Experimental	185.29 ± 8.96	190.84 ± 11.24	192.48 ± 7.2
Control	184.46 ± 10.06	184.85 ± 8.74	184.23 ± 10.7

^a Values are expressed as mean ± SD.

The results of the test of simple effects between groups in three stages of measurement showed that there is no significant difference between the two experimental and control groups in the pre-test. In the post-test and follow-

up, there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups, and the average of the experimental group is higher in the two stages post-test and follow-up (Figure 1).

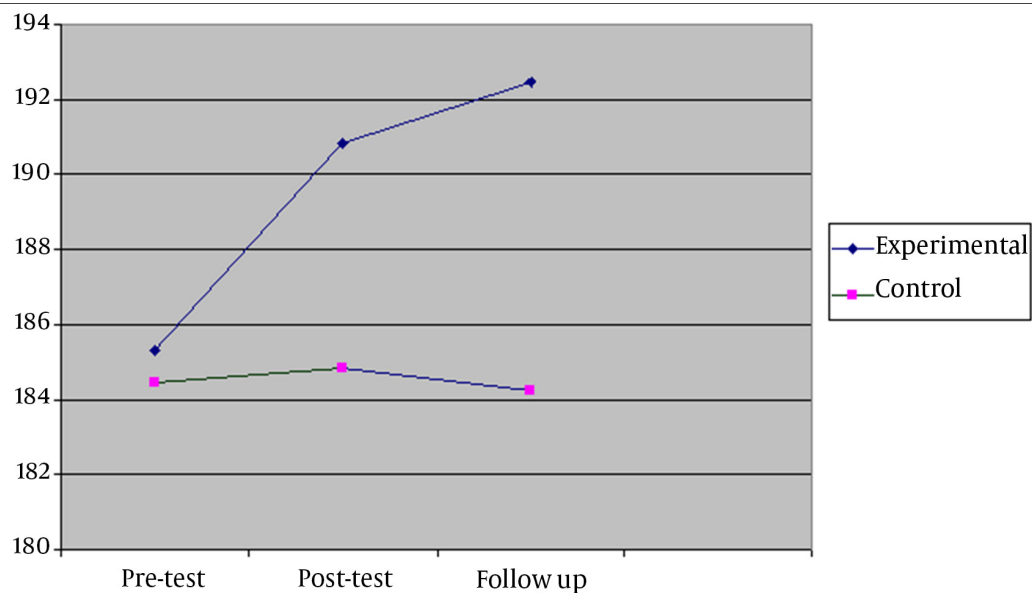


Figure 1. Mean psychological well-being in two experimental and control groups in three stages of measurement

5. Discussion

The hypothesis raised in this study was whether spiritual competence training is effective on the psychological well-being of preschool teachers. Based on our study, the results of the analysis of variance with repeated measures showed that competence training is effective in the psychological well-being of preschool teachers. These findings are in agreement with the research findings of Bush et al. (19), Johnson et al. (20), Yun (21), Byun et al. (22), and Supriatna & Septian (23).

As a result of these findings, it may be stated that spiritual competence facilitates a person's recognition of the fact that reality is part of a larger and multidimensional reality by increasing their ability to use spiritual resources to solve life's problems and to accept them as reality through the creation of a holistic perspective and increased ability to use spiritual resources. Because optimistic people have a positive view of events and the world around them, they can better adapt to existing issues and solve them, and as a result, they have an optimistic view of life. They emphasize more on the positive aspects of life and plan and try to overcome these problems when faced with problems, so they can dominate their living environment (24, 25).

Some studies have also expressed other results. For example, a study has shown that spirituality significantly increases people's mental health (26). Another study showed that psychological well-being and spiritual health are positively and significantly related to teachers' organizational commitment. In addition, approximately 50% of the variation in organizational commitment subscales can be explained by the variables of spiritual health and psychological well-being (27). Also, the results of Tao-Tao study showed a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. Also, spiritual attitudes and participation significantly mediate the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being (28).

5.1. Limitations

One of the limitations of this research was that the study's sample was limited to preschool teachers in Birjand city. Therefore, generalizing these results to other groups of society and other regions of the country should be done with caution. Another limitation was the follow-up time. Due to the involvement of people in the crisis of the COVID-19 virus epidemic, participation in the follow-up phase was faced with a serious loss of samples, and a follow-up test was conducted forcibly in the minimum possible time to prevent further loss.

5.2. Conclusions

After the child enters the preschool centers, the teacher is the most critical person in raising the child. One of the challenges and problems of coaches is the decrease in

their psychological well-being. The results of the present study showed that the educational package of spiritual competence has a significant role in increasing the psychological well-being of preschool teachers. Therapists can use this educational package for researchers, trainers, and teachers to improve positive psychological indicators, primarily the psychological well-being of people.

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Conflict of Interests: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in writing this article.

Ethical Approval: All the stages of the present study were performed by observing ethical principles. The authors, while obtaining informed consent from the study participants, fully complied with the principles of information confidentiality and secrecy.

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