

## The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital on the Relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Job Burnout

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to investigate the mediating role of psychological capital on the relationship between the spiritual intelligence and job burnout among the staff at the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili. With regard to the optimal sampling volume for the structural equation modeling (125), the researcher conveniently selected a sample 183 individuals in this study. The King's Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory in 2008, the Luthans's Psychological Capital Questionnaire in 2008 and the Maslach Burnout Inventory in 1999 were used to collect the data. The content validity of the instruments was approved and their reliability was reported to be 0.89, 0.85 and 0.76, respectively. The AMOS Software was used for the process of analyzing the data. The results indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between the spiritual intelligence and the job burnout. Moreover, a significant negative relationship was observed between the psychological capital and the job burnout among the staff. Ultimately, the results revealed that the spiritual intelligence could affect the job burnout among the employees through the psychological capital.

**Key words:** Spiritual intelligence, psychological capital, job burnout, staff, employees

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### INTRODUCTION

Job burnout in an organization is mainly negatively related to important institutional and individual consequences such as job performance organizational behavior, job attitudes and psychological outcomes which has attracted much attention by researchers and organizational leaders (Maslach, 2003). The term job burnout refers to fatigue, weariness, job frustration, exhaustion, depletion and mental erosion (Abedi, 2002). Maslach (2003) defines the job burnout as a long-term response to severe interpersonal and emotional stressors at work. The job burnout is an inner subjective feeling which creates negative feelings and attitudes in individuals related to their jobs, such as dissatisfaction, weariness and loss of commitment and impairs the individual professional performance which leads to undesirable results such as absenteeism, turnover and reduced efficiency for both the individual and the organization (Bezerra and Beresin, 2009). In fact, the person feels a constant pressure at their workplace due to internal and external factors which eventually leads to burnout and a sense of energy loss is instilled upon them (Khatiban *et al.*, 2012). Maslach has provided three dimensions for the job burnout. Emotional exhaustion which implies physical and mental fatigue and occurs when the person feels no longer enough energy to

continue to work causing them to physically and mentally produce responses such as fatigue, disability and flexibility against work-related stress. Depersonalization indicating that the person is suffering from personality changes which reflects a distance or coldness in the relationship with the client. Finally, lack of personal efficacy occurs when the sense of competition and gaining success in working with others decreases. The job burnout reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of manpower and consequently reduces the efficiency of an organization. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate factors that can be influential in the prevention of this problem.

Spirituality is one of the factors influencing the job burnout. Life is meaningless without a job, however a meaningless job can push the life forward (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). Amram (2009) believes that the spiritual intelligence can be effective in having a successful career management to improve the employee's performance. The spiritual intelligence was first proposed by Stevens in 1996 and later on by Emmons in 1999 in the academic psychology literature. According to Emmons (2000), the spiritual intelligence is the adaptive use of spiritual information with the aim of facilitating the resolution of everyday problems and achieving goals and helps individuals to put their actions and lives in a broader, richer and more meaningful context. Amram (2005) defines

the spiritual intelligence as having a sense of meaning and a mission in life, a sense of the sacredness in life, a balanced understanding of values and the belief in the world to become a better place. Moreover, Sisk (2008) defines the spiritual intelligence as the ability to use multi-sensory approach in problem solving and learning by listening to an inner voice. The spiritual intelligence infact, enables us to give meaning to our works and activities and to be aware of and understand the concept of our performance and to realize which of our actions and behaviors is of greater value and which of our paths of life is higher and superior to be used as our model and myth. A great number of models have been proposed for the spiritual intelligence among which the King's Model proposed in 2008 is one of the most important. This model has four components: existential critical thinking which refers to thinking about one's entity and includes thinking about issues such as life and death, reality, consciousness, world, time, truth, justice, evil, etc. (King, 2008).

Personal meaning, production defined as "the ability to create personal meaning and purpose in all physical and mental experiences, the capacity to create and dominate a purpose in life having a proper understanding of the path, an understanding of the order and a reason for the existence" (King, 2008).

Transcendental consciousness defined as "the capacity to identify the dimensions of excellence of an individual, others and the material world, along with the capacity to identify their relationship with the individual and with their body". Excellence refers to "going beyond the ordinary and material experiences of human" or "the existence which is apart from the material world and is not subject to its limitations" (King, 2008).

Consciousness expansion is the last component of the spiritual intelligence which refers to the creation of consciousness opportunity in form of "entering capacity to higher spiritual situations such as pure consciousness, the unity like a deep thought, prayer and meditation and the ability to leave them". The state of consciousness can be described as "an integrated structure system or a psychological subsystem" (King, 2008). The concept of spiritual intelligence was used in the field of organization and management by Zohar and Marshal (2000) where it gained a special importance. The spirituality by influencing on people's conscience, can create in them a sense of commitment towards the responsibilities of everyday life and make them accustomed with a kind of accountability. This can be effective in reducing their job burnout since people who have a spiritual feeling in their work environment, experience a sense of enthusiasm,

usefulness and satisfaction with their jobs which ultimately results in a greater efficiency of the organization.

Moreover, the psychological capital was another variable evaluated in relation to the job burnout. Given the daily growing stress among organizational employees and managers, the positive organizational behavior can be used both to reduce psychological problems and to improve the organizational performance through the identification and development of positive psychological capital potential capabilities (Avey *et al.*, 2009). The psychological capital is a positive-oriented structure arising from a positive organizational behavior which can have positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, individual's sense of well-being and individual's citizenship behavior in an organization. However, the psychological capital is negatively related to job stress, cynicism and turnover intention (Avey *et al.*, 2011). The psychological capital infact, refers to the concept of "who you are (real-self)" and "who you wash to become (potential-self)" on a development and growing basis (Luthans, 2007). The psychological capital could be defined as the development of positive psychology which includes four components of self-efficacy, self-esteem, hopefulness (Snyder, 1994), optimism and flexibility (Luthans *et al.*, 2008) and or flexibility (Stewart *et al.*, 1997). Numerous studies have been conducted on these three variables. Shojafard in their study entitled "the relationship between the job burnout and resilience in the emergency medicine personnel in Tehran" concluded that there was a significant negative relationship between resilience and the job burnout. Yardley (2012) in his study observed a negative relationship between the psychological capital and the job burnout. Luo and Hao (2010) also showed a negative relationship between the psychological capital and the job burnout. Alipoor concluded in their study that the increasing psychological capital interventions proved to be effective in reducing the job burnout. Lin (2013) in his study has also noted a negative relationship between the psychological capital and the job burnout. Taheri and colleagues in their study entitled "the spiritual intelligence and the job burnout among the staff at Imam Reza Hospital in Mashhad" concluded that there was a significant negative correlation between the spiritual intelligence and the job burnout. In another study, Kianizadeh investigated the relationship between the spiritual intelligence and the nurse's job burnout. He showed that there was a significant negative relationship between the spiritual intelligence and the job burnout.

Yazdkhasti *et al.* (2014) in their study under the title of "on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and teacher's job burnout in exceptional and normal schools"

concluded that there was a significant negative relationship the spiritual intelligence and the job burnout among the teachers. Yet in another study by Tabarsa entitled “on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout”, it was concluded that a significant negative relationship existed between the spiritual intelligence and the job burnout. Bagheri also indicated in their study that the spiritual intelligence had an impact on nurse’s feeling of happiness. Moreover, Amram (2009) in their studies showed that the spiritual intelligence played an important role in successful and efficient job management. The research conducted by Captari (2010) showed that two of the spirituality dimensions (knowledge, stability) were better predictors of the job burnout. Piatkowska (2006) in his research on the relationship between the spirituality and the job burnout showed a positive significant correlation between the spirituality and the two job burnout subcategories of emotional exhaustion and individual performance.

Job burnout is an important organizational variable which not only is an indicator of the poor performance in a workplace but also has an impact on the employee’s attitudes and behavior in an organization. Hence, considering the importance of finding spirituality in today’s business world and with regard to the need for organizations to increase their employee’s psychological capital, the present study aims to examine the relationship between the spiritual intelligence and psychological capital and the job burnout.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to carry out this correlational research, the structural equation modeling was used. The study population consists of all employees at the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili. In order to determine the sample size in structural equation modeling, Muller introduced the ratio of sample size to number of free parameter model. He regarded the minimum value of the ratio 5: 1. With regard to 25 free parameters in the present model, the sample size of 125 (25×5) seems favorable. Regarding the normality of the variables in the model and due to convenient sampling approach, 183 subjects were selected. Data were analyzed using the AMOS Software.

**Instruments:** The King’s Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory in 2008 was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consists of 24 questions in four sections of existential thinking, personal meaning production, consciousness expansion and transcendental consciousness. The reliability of the questionnaire was reported by King (2008) to be 0.95. Furthermore, the reliability of this questionnaire has been reported to be

0.89 by Moalemi in Iran. The internal consistency of the questionnaire has been obtained to be 0.89 in this study using the Cronbach’s alpha. To collect data related to the job burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory was utilized. This questionnaire consists of 22 questions in three sections of emotional exhaustion or burnout, depersonalization and performance or lack of career advancement. The reliability of this questionnaire was reported to be 0.90 by Kordetmini. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was obtained to be 0.76 using the Cronbach’s alpha. Finally, the Luthans’s Psychological Capital Questionnaire was used to measure the psychological capital. The questionnaire is containing of 24 questions in four subcategories of self-esteem, self-efficacy, hopefulness, optimism and flexibility/resilience. The reliability of the questionnaire was reported to be 0.85 by Bahadori *et al.* (2012). Moreover, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was obtained to be 0.84 using the Cronbach’s alpha.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test the structural model of the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout and mediating effect of psychological capital structure, factors of the mentioned inventory were considered as indicators of latent variables. After depicting causal and intermediate paths among latent variables and conducting analysis, the model statistical specifications were examined based on the model coefficients, significance levels and fitting indices. Figure 1 shows the path the model describing the job burnout (Table 1). Abbreviations used in the diagram: Spiritual intelligence factors (ECT = Existential Critical Thinking; PMP = Personal Meaning Production; SA = Sublime Awareness; SCD = State of Consciousness Development), psychological capital factors (H = Hope; OPT. = Optimism; RES. = Resilience; Self. = Self-efficacy), job burnout factors (EE = Emotional Exhaustion, DP = Depersonalization; IA = Inadequacy). As it is shown in Fig. 1, paths of spiritual intelligence to psychological capital ( $p > 0.01$ ,  $\beta = 0.5$ ), spiritual intelligence to job burnout ( $p > 0.05$ ,  $\beta = -0.26$ ) and burnout to psychological capital ( $p > 0.01$ ,  $\beta = -0.30$ ) are statistically significant. These path coefficients represent the direct effects of the

Table 1: Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of the study variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
Spiritual intelligence	68.60	14.20	0.89		
Psychological capital	53.46	13.23	0.43**	0.84	
Job burnout	56.30	12.82	-0.37**	-0.32**	0.76

N = 183; \*\*, \* $p \leq 0.01$ , 0.05 alpha coefficients have been reported on the matrix diameter

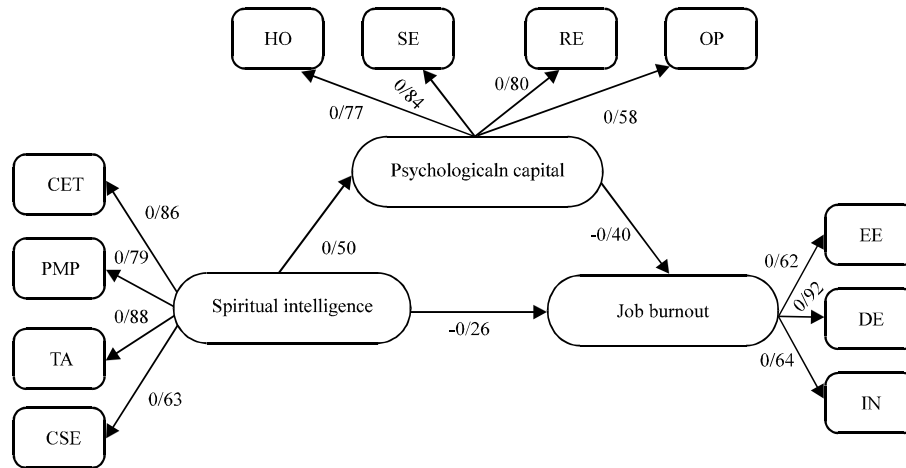


Fig. 1: Standard coefficients of latent structures model and observed variables are shown.

Table 2: Direct, indirect and total effects of the model latent variables.

Parameters	To: Job Burnout						To: Psychological capital		
	From: Spiritual intelligence			Psychological capital			Spiritual intelligence		
	$\beta$	SE	p-value	$\beta$	SE	p-value	$\beta$	SE	p-value
Direct effect	-0.26	0.11	0.024	-0.30	0.10	0.006	0.50	0.08	0.000
Indirect effect	-0.15	0.06	0.004	-	-	-	-	-	-
The total effect	-0.41	0.09	0.000	-0.30	0.01	0.006	0.50	0.08	0.000

Table 3: Fitness of the research model based on the fitting indices.

fitting indices	Model fit	Value	Ideal values	Status
Chi-square	$\chi^2$	49.140	<0.50	Favorable
Degree of freedom	df	41.000	-	Favorable
Chi-square/degree of freedom	$\chi^2/df$	1.200	>3	Favorable
Root Mean Square Error of approximation	RMSEA	0.040	>0.08	Favorable
Goodness of fit	GFI	0.933	<0.90	Favorable
Adjusted Goodness of Fit	AGFI	0.890	<0.90	Favorable
Tucker and Lewis Index	TLI	0.980	<0.90	Favorable
Comparative Fitting Index	CFI	0.980	<0.90	Favorable
Incremental Fitting Index	IFI	0.980	<0.90	Favorable

study variables. Indirect effects and ensemble model and the total effect of the model and relevant statistical indices are summarized in Table 2.

In Table 2, statistical indices of the model direct, indirect and total effects are summarized. The effect of spiritual intelligence on the job burnout, i.e., the sum of the direct effects of spiritual intelligence on the job burnout and indirect effects of these two variables mediating psychological capital ( $p > 0.01$ ,  $\beta = -0.41$ ) are statistically significant. In structural equation modeling, after specifying the path coefficients and the different effects in the model, some statistics are presented by the software program to evaluate the fitness of the model. These statistics examine the homogeneity of the estimated and observed covariance matrices. Fitting indices of the present research model are reported in Table 3.

As it is summarized in Table 3, All Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Tucker and Lewis Index (TLI) and Incremental Fitting Index (IFI) are above 0.9. The index of  $\chi^2/df$  is equal to 1.2 and is at an acceptable level. The index of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is equal to 0.04. It should be noted that in a perfect fit this is equal to zero and the value <0.08 is considered to be appropriate. Moreover, it is obligatory to reject the model for values above 0.1. Thus, the present model is in a favorable condition with regard to the RMSEA index. In general, all nine examined indices are in favorable conditions. Therefore, it can be said that all values of the model adjusting indices reveal the fitness of the structural model predicting job burnout via psychological capital and spiritual intelligence.

**First hypothesis:** Spiritual intelligence has a direct effect of decreasing job burnout. The results of the analysis showed that the paths of spiritual intelligence and burnout ( $p > 0.05$ ,  $\beta = -0.26$ ) have a direct effect. It means that spiritual intelligence can directly lead to decreased job burnout. This finding is consistent with the findings of Captari (2010) and Piatkowska (2006). Today, psychologists believe that the ultimate success of a large organization depends on its directors and employee's spiritual intelligence. They believe that encouraging

spirituality in the workplace can lead to increased creativity, honesty, trust, a sense of personal development, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, work ethic, motivation, performance and high productivity in 2014. Spiritual intelligence represents a set of abilities, potentials and intellectual resources whose use in everyday life can lead to increased adaptability. Its role in solving existential issues and finding implications and objectives of life events is emphasized. Studies have shown that those persons having spiritual tendencies better respond to the situation when dealing with damaging situations and they better manage the stressful situation and possess higher levels of mental health (Yaghobi, 2010). A person with high spiritual intelligence has self-awareness, adaptability and the capacity to deal with the difficulties and hardships and to go beyond them and spiritual intelligence makes human observe God present in all moments of their life and keep empowered in the face of difficulties and problems. Accordingly, the man would communicate with his colleagues with regard to compassion and empathy and take over his responsibilities based on wisdom, integrity and freedom from restrictions in order to achieve the sublime goals. In fact, these people are purposeful in performing their activities have a sense of duty, manage the life open-mindedly and peacefully surrender to the Creator (Yazdkhasti *et al.*, 2014). Thus, paying attention to the spiritual intelligence and enhancing it through various techniques such as continuous and related training courses workshops, holding self-assessment sessions for employees to be familiarized with human multiple dimensions and his high status are of paramount importance. These enhance their spiritual intelligence in organizations and change their perspective towards individual and organizational life and can provide an appropriate ground to prevent job burnout.

**The second hypothesis:** Psychological Capital has a direct effect on the decreased job burnout. The analysis results showed that the path of psychological capital to job burnout ( $p > 0.01$ ,  $\beta = -0.30$ ) is statistically significant. This means that spiritual intelligence can directly lead to decreased job burnout. This finding is in line with those of the research studies conducted by Khalifeh *et al.* (2014), Yardley (2012), Luo and Hao (2010) and Lin (2013). In the competitive environment of organizations, organization directors are always seeking to achieve their organizational goals through creating sustainable competitive advantage and improving their performance. Positive thoughts including compassion, excellence, resilience and other positive features of psychological

capital make the organizations having considered dynamic capabilities equipped in order to adapt and to respond to environmental changes. Psychological capital which is derived from positive organizational behavior is the result of the employee's behavioral strengths and is considered as a competitive advantage for any organization.

Hashemi Nosrat Abad believe that those having higher level of psychological capital possess greater capabilities to engage in more social participations. Hodges (2010) documented that the growth of psychological capital leads to staff's increased organizational participation and commitment as well as their reduced job incompetency sense and increased level of desired performance. Luthans and Olive in their study concluded that those employees having greater psychological capital enjoy greater job performance and less job burnout. In fact, self-efficacy and resilience, via increasing individual's confidence in doing activities and achieving goals, bring about tolerance against hardships, increased efforts and ultimately their high performance and commitment. Hope and optimism also create a positive attitude towards colleagues and the organization as a whole and these enhance the employee's job satisfaction and prevent from their exhaustion and burnout. Therefore, it is recommended that, holding training classes, the organization directors increase employee's psychological capital and its dimensions, involve their employees in challenging tasks and encourage them to participate in the organization's activities, provide positive feedback to employees and recognize their efforts and successes, increase their levels of resiliency and hope in achieving organizational and individual goals and enhance their self-efficacy in order to reduce the staff's burnout, absenteeism and turnover intentions.

**The third hypothesis:** Spiritual intelligence through psychological capital has an indirect effect on reducing burnout. The results of the analysis showed that the effect of spiritual intelligence on the job burnout, i.e., the sum of the direct effects of spiritual intelligence on the job burnout ( $\beta = -0.26$ ) and indirect effects of these two variables mediating psychological capital ( $p > 0.01$ ,  $\beta = -0.41$ ) are statistically significant at  $p > 0.01$ .

The managers can seek to empower their employees through strengthening and using spiritual intelligence and implementing religious teachings. Hence, their tendency and motivation towards the organization, their commitment to the organization and their efforts to achieve individual and organizational goals will be enhanced. In this way, the further we move forward

with a spiritual approach, the more peace we will achieve and the easier we will withstand the hardships of the working environment. On the other hand, the Positive Organizational Behavior and cognitive capital approaches believe that paying attention to the employee's strengths and desirable qualities will be made possible through avoiding leaders and colleagues from being preoccupied by their weaknesses and malfunctions. In this way, it will be possible to enhance employee's self-confidence, optimism and hope, improve their individual and organizational performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and confidence and eventually reduce absenteeism, job turnover and job burnout and exhaustion. It can be said that those who act in accordance with a moral framework, experience increased comfort, dynamism and flexibility. In other words, strengthening moral foundations and in particular religious foundations can enrich the employee's psychological capital (Golparvar *et al.*, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

As a result, strengthening different aspects of employee's capital including strengthening self-efficacy and self-esteem through increased positive feedback, strengthening optimism and motivation through creating more positive engagements and reduced pessimism, strengthening hope through an emphasis on internalizing goals and increasing their participation in academic activities, expanding flexibility through strengthening their value, spiritual and religious foundations can enhance their job satisfaction and tolerance and reduce their job burnout. Considering the importance of human resources in the organizations and the results of this study suggesting a negative relationship between spiritual intelligence and psychological capital and job burnout, organization directors are recommended to provide the grounds for their employee's growth and obtaining the goals, enhance their job satisfaction and organizational commitment and prevent their job burnout through providing training grounds for spiritual intelligence as well as psychological capital.

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