

# The mediating role of psychological capital on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout

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## Abstract

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**Background:** Job burnout in an organization is mainly negatively related to important institutional and individual consequences. The aim of this study was to investigate the mediating role of psychological capital on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout among the employees.

**Materials and Methods:** This study was descriptive and correlational. Community consisted of all employees of the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran in 2017 of which 183 were selected through convenient sampling. The King's Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, the Luthans's Psychological Capital Questionnaire, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were used to collect the data. The content validity of the instruments was approved and their reliability was reported 0.89, 0.85, and 0.76, respectively. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation, regression and the structural equation modeling.

**Results:** There was a significant negative relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout ( $R = -0.37$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Moreover, a significant negative relationship was observed between psychological capital and job burnout among the staff ( $R = -0.34$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Ultimately, the results revealed that spiritual intelligence could affect job burnout among the employees through psychological capital.

**Conclusions:** Spiritual intelligence directly and psychological capital as a mediator reduce job burn out. Therefore amplification of different psychological aspects among employers such as spiritual intelligence and specifically psychological capital would help their liveliness at work place and reduction of job burnout.

**Keywords:** Intelligence, Psychological, Burnout, Job, Employees

## 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 (1). Job burnout is an inner subjective feeling which creates negative feelings and attitudes in individuals related to their job, 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 (2, 3). Maslach has provided three dimensions for the job burnout (4).

Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal efficacy occurs when the sense of competition and gaining success in working

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with others decreases (5). The job burnout reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of manpower, and consequently reduces the efficiency of an organization (6). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate factors that can be influential in the prevention of this problem. Research showed that the spiritual intelligence can be effective in having a successful career management to improve the employees' performance (7). Amram defined 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 (7, 8). The spiritual intelligence, in fact, 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 (9). 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 (10). Moreover, the psychological capital was another variable evaluated in relation to job burnout. Given the growing daily stress among organizational employees and managers, the positive organizational behavior can be used to reduce psychological problems and to improve the organizational performance through the identification and development of positive psychological capital potential capabilities (11). The psychological capital is a positive-oriented structure arising from a positive organizational behavior which can have positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, individuals' sense of well-being and individuals' citizenship behavior in an organization. However, the psychological capital is negatively related to job stress, cynicism and turnover intention (12). The psychological capital, in fact, refers to the concept of "who you are (real-self)" and "who you were to become

(potential-self)" on a development and growing basis (13). The psychological capital could be defined as the development of positive psychology, which includes four components of self-efficacy, self-esteem, hopefulness, optimism, and flexibility (14, 15). Also a negative relationship was shown between psychological capital and job burnout (16). Alipoor et al. concluded in their study that increasing psychological capital interventions proved to be effective in reducing the job burnout (17). In other study, they have also noted a negative relationship between psychological capital and job burnout (18). Also researchers have concluded in their study that there was a significant negative correlation between spiritual intelligence and job burnout (19-21).

One study has shown the effect of work stress on job burnout among teachers with the mediating role of self-efficacy (22). Researchers have also shown that spiritual intelligence had an impact on nurses' feeling of happiness and that the spiritual intelligence played an important role in successful and efficient job management (23). 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 employees' attitudes and behavior in an organization (1). By Considering the previous researches that is not attention to the psychological variables affected of intelligence spiritual in job burnout in employees, the present study deal with investigation studies and importance of psychological capital, and aims to examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout with the mediating role of psychological capital.

## Material and Methods

In order to carry out this descriptive study, the structural equation modeling was used. The study population consisted of all employees at

the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Iran, in year 2017. In order to determine the sample size in structural equation modeling, Müller (24) introduced the ratio of sample size to number of free parameter model. He regarded the minimum ratio of 5:1. With regard to 25 free parameters in the present model, the sample size of 125 ( $25 \times 5$ ) seems favorable. Regarding the external credit enhancement by increasing the number of specimens and due to convenient sampling approach, 183 subjects were selected. Inclusion criteria included providing full consent to participate in research and holding a diploma degree or higher, and the age of 20-40 years. We obtained informed consent from all participants and reassured them regarding the confidentiality of the information.

The King's Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory was used to collect the data (25). The questionnaire consists of 24 questions in four sections of existential thinking, personal meaning production, consciousness expansion and transcendental consciousness. As a result, the individual score of each subscale range will be between 0 and 24. The reliability of the questionnaire was reported by King to be 0.95. The reliability for each subscale was as follows: existential thinking 0.78, personal meaning production 0.78, consciousness expansion 0.87, transcendental consciousness 0.91 (25). Furthermore, the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.92 in Iran (26). The internal consistency of the questionnaire was 0.89 in this study using the Cronbach's alpha.

To collect the data related to job burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory was utilized (27). In Iran the reliability was reported 0.78 through a test-retest method (28). The internal consistency of the questionnaire in this study was 0.76 using the Cronbach's alpha.

Finally, the Luthans's Psychological Capital Questionnaire was used to measure the psychological capital. The questionnaire contains 24 questions in four subcategories of self-esteem, self-efficacy, hopefulness, optimism, and flexibility/resilience(14). The participants respond to each question on a scale of 6 degree Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Higher scores on this scale indicate greater psychological capital. The reliability of the questionnaire was reported to be 0.85 by Bahadori (29). Moreover, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was 0.84 using the Cronbach's alpha.

Data from the study group were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient, regression analysis and structural equation modeling with the level of significance 0.05.

In this analysis, two types of variables were used: endogenous variables and exogenous variables. Endogenous variables are equivalent to dependent/ independent (24). Data were analyzed using AMOS version 21.0.

## **Results**

Mean age of the employees was 33.12 with 5.10 standard deviation. To test the structural model of the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job burnout and the 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 (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Cronbach's alpha coefficient, mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of the spiritual intelligence, psychological capital and job burnout (n = 183)

Variables	Mean ± 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**

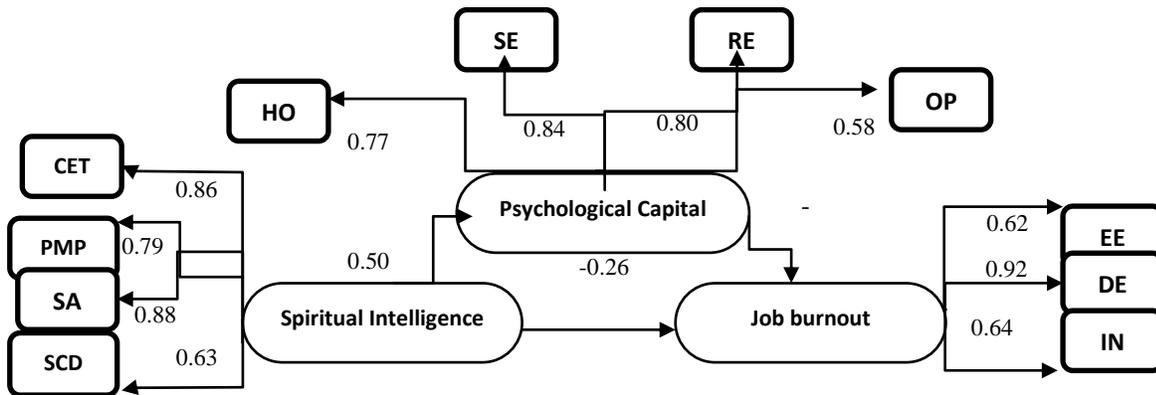
Alpha coefficients have been reported on the matrix diameter  
 \*P ≤ 0.01  
 \*\*P ≤ 0.001

As shown in figure 1, paths of spiritual intelligence to psychological capital (P < 0.01, β = 0.50), spiritual intelligence to job burnout (P < 0.05, β = -0.26), and burnout to psychological capital (P < 0.01, β = -0.30) are statistically

significant. These path coefficients represent the direct effects of the study variables. Indirect effects and ensemble model and the total effect of the model and relevant statistical indices are summarized in table 2.

**Table 2:** Direct, indirect, and total effects of the model latent variables mediating the role of psychological capital on the relationship between the spiritual intelligence and job burnout (n = 183)

From:	To: job burnout						To: psychological capital		
	Spiritual intelligence			Psychological capital			Spiritual intelligence		
	β	SE	P	β	SE	P	β	SE	P
Direct effect	-0.26	0.11	0.024	-0.30	0.1	0.006	0.50	0.08	< 0.001
Indirect effect	-0.15	0.06	0.004	-	-	-	-	-	-
The total effect	-0.41	0.09	< 0.001	-0.30	0.01	0.006	0.50	0.08	< 0.001



**Figure 1:** The path model describing job burnout

CET: Existential critical thinking; PMP: Personal meaning production; SA: Sublime awareness; SCD: State of consciousness development; HO: Hope; OP: Optimism; RE: Resilience; SE: Self-efficacy; EE: Emotional exhaustion; DP: Depersonalization; IA: Inadequacy

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 used. The index of  $X^2/df$  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 less than 0.08 is considered 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.

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

fitting indices	Model fit	Value	Ideal values
Chi-square	$X^2$	49.14	> 0.50
Degrees of freedom	Df	41	-
Chi-square/degrees of freedom	$X^2/df$	1.2	< 3.00
Root mean square error of approximation	RMSEA	0.04	< 0.08
Goodness of fit	GFI	0.93	> 0.90
Adjusted goodness of fit	AGFI	0.89	> 0.90
Tucker and Lewis index	TLI	0.98	> 0.90
Comparative fitting index	CFI	0.98	> 0.90
Incremental fitting index	IFI	0.98	> 0.90

**Discussion**

First hypothesis: Spiritual intelligence has a direct effect on decreasing job burnout. The results of the analysis showed that the paths of spiritual intelligence and burnout ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = -0.26$ ) had a direct effect. It means that spiritual intelligence can directly lead to decreased job burnout. This is consistent with previous studies (19-21). Today, psychologists believe that the ultimate success of a large organization depends on its directors and employees' 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.

Spiritual intelligence represents a set of abilities, potentials and intellectual resources the use of which 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 who have spiritual tendencies better respond to damaging situations and manage the stressful situations better and possess higher levels of mental health (30). 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 as suggested by Bahrampour (31). Enhancing spiritual intelligence in organizations and changing their perspective towards individual and organizational life can provide an appropriate ground to prevent job burnout.

The second hypothesis: psychological capital has a direct effect on decreasing job burnout. The results showed that the path of psychological capital to job burnout ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $\beta = -0.30$ ) was 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 Alipoor et al. (17), Estiri et al (18) and Yu et al (22).

Positive thoughts including compassion, excellence, resilience and other positive features of psychological capital make the organizations consider the dynamic capabilities 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 (18).

Samouei and Ghasemi (32) believe that those having higher level of psychological capital possess greater capabilities to engage more in social participations. Hodges (33) documented that the growth of psychological capital leads to staff's increased organizational participation and commitment as well as reduced sense of job incompetency and increased level of desired performance.

Avey in their study concluded that those employees that have greater psychological

capital enjoy greater job performance and less job burnout (34). 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 higher performance and commitment (22).

The third hypothesis: spiritual intelligence has an indirect effect on reducing burnout through psychological capital. The results showed that the effect of spiritual intelligence on job burnout, i.e. the sum of the direct effects of spiritual intelligence on job burnout ( $\beta = -0.26$ ), and indirect effects of these two variables mediating psychological capital ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $\beta = -0.41$ ) were statistically significant ( $P < 0.01$ ). This finding is in line with the study conducted by Zhao and Zhang (16).

Also feel worthy work to help strengthen the spiritual intelligence and trying to integration with business and professional world, your efficiency increases. In other words, strengthening moral foundations and in particular, religious foundations can enrich the employees' psychological capital (35). The limitation of this study is inability to generalize the results to employees of other governmental or private agencies. Therefore, it is suggested to run similar studies with larger sample size in other governmental and private organizations.

### Conclusion

As a result, strengthening different aspects of employees' psychological capital through emphasis on internalizing goals and increasing their participation in academic activities, and expanding flexibility through strengthening their values, spiritual and religious foundations can enhance their job satisfaction and tolerance and reduce their job burnout. 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 get

familiar with human multiple dimensions and his high status are of paramount importance.

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