

## Spiritual Intelligence in Prisoners and Non-Prisoners of Mazandaran Province

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**Abstract:** Spiritual intelligence makes people gain an insight when facing life events and incidents. It also makes them not to be scared of life difficulties. The study aims to compare spiritual intelligence in prisoners and non-prisoners. In a cross-sectional design study, 678 individuals were selected by cluster sampling method. Data were collected through questionnaire including Spiritual intelligence Inventory. Analysis of the data involved T test. The results indicate difference in spiritual intelligence at Prisoners and Non-Prisoners. The results showed spiritual intelligence mean is greater in the group of prisoners. According to these findings, people turn to God and spirituality in difficult situations in order to get rid of problems. Given that spirituality could have a positive effect on cognitive and behavioral performance, spiritual educations in society could prevent the occurrence of crimes in difficult situations.

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### 1. Introduction

The need for meaning is essential to mental health which shows itself in all mental functions. Some studies point out the importance of spiritual awareness in stressful situations and argue that belief in God helps reduce stress and promote physical and mental health (Hemmati-maslakpak et al., 2011). The results of the studies conducted on people with different ethnic backgrounds indicate that people with high degrees of religiosity and spirituality are more provident (Zimbardo & Boyed, 2008). Moreover, these people can establish good social relations and they take part in community service activities and usually use identified resources such as prayer, individual activity, and belief in God at the time of stress. Religion is the source of comfort and power, and it helps increase social support and finds a sense of perfection through providing sources to deal with stress (Tiffany, 2011). Vohan (1993) defines spirituality as a continuous effort to answer the "Whys" of life (Razipour Jouybari, 2011). Abdollahzadeh (2009) consider spiritual intelligence (SI) as a combination of two dimensions: "Understanding and Communication with the Source of Existence (UCSE)" and "Spiritual Life, Reliance on Internal Core (SL)" (Razipour Jouybari, 2011). Zohar & Marshal believe that spiritual intelligence makes people gain an insight when facing life events and incidents. It also makes them not to be scared of life difficulties, but to fight with them through patience and thinking, and find rational and humane solutions for them (Abdollahzadeh, 2009). Now the question is whether all people can find rational

solutions for their problems or not? If so, how can we justify high rates of crime and social deviance?

Studying the relationship between spiritual intelligence and prisoners' adaptability, Rotimia (2010) found that people with higher spiritual intelligence were more adaptable in prison environment during their imprisonment. In another study, it was shown that spiritual intelligence affects conflict resolution behavior among road transport workers (Rotimia, 2008). Other studies showed that there is a relationship between spirituality and purpose of life, life satisfaction, mental health, happiness, and conflict resolution behavior (Tiffany, 2011; Razipour Jouybari, 2011, Abdollahzadeh, 2009; Mohammadzadeh & Najafi, 2010). Cavendish (2004) believes that spiritual intelligence brings about flexibility so that people look at difficulties with more calmness and try harder to find rational solutions (Razipour Jouybari, 2011). It seems that studying spiritual intelligence simultaneously in criminals and non-criminals could help further clarify its role in the occurrence of crime. The present study aims to make a comparison between spiritual intelligence in prisoners and non-criminals.

### 2. Material and Methods

The present study is ex post facto type. The statistical community consists of Prisoners and Non-Prisoners with an age range of 25-60 years old. Number of 678 samples (349 Prisoners & 329 Non-Prisoners), were selected by cluster sampling method. Sample volume was determined with table of Krejcie & Morgan. The two groups were matched in terms of

age, gender and education. Data was gathered by the use of one criterion, self-reporting.

### Spiritual Intelligence Inventory

This questionnaire was designed by Abdollahzade, Keshmiri & Arab Ameri (2009) and it has two dimensions of "Understanding and Communication with the Source of Existence" and "Spiritual Life, Reliance on Internal Core". It consists of 29 questions in a five-degree Likert scale. Abdollahzade reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of questionnaire equal 0.89 (Razipour Jouybari, 2011).

Gathered data were analyzed using SPSS 18 software and statistical tests of T.

### 3. Results

In this study, age group of examinees allocated as 25-60 years old. 678 individuals including 349 prisoners and 329 non-prisoners participated in this study. The two groups were matched for age, gender, and education. Table 1 shows the subjects' demographic information.

Table 1. Overview of demographic characteristics

Parameter		Number	
		prisoners	Non- prisoners
Age	>35	89	79
	<35	260	250
Sex	Male	149	154
	Female	200	175
Education	Illiterate	216	210
	Junior high school	91	85
	High school and college	27	28
	Noun character	15	6

Independent t-test was used to evaluate the difference in spiritual intelligence and compare it in the two groups.

Table 2. Compare spiritual intelligence in prisoners (P) and non- prisoners (N-P)

Source	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p
UCSE	p	54.87	6.55	0.945	676	0.345
	N-P	54.43	5.45			
SL	p	72.71	10.40	4.622	649.33	0.000
	N-P	69.43	7.97			
SI	p	127.59	16.00	3.433	644.16	0.001
	N-P	123.87	12.01			

The results of Table 2 indicate that p-value (0.05) is significant for spiritual intelligence and sub-dimension of "Spiritual Life" and its average is greater in the group of prisoners. Therefore, no significant difference was observed in the subscale of "Understanding and Communication with the Source of Existence".

### 4. Discussions

Data analysis showed that there is a significant difference in the dimension of "Spiritual Life" among criminals and non-criminals. It also indicated that the level of spiritual intelligence is higher in criminals. The results are inconsistent with the studies that showed there is a relationship between spiritual beliefs and risky behaviors (drug use and liaison) (Chamratrithong et al., 2010; Dezutter et al.,

2009). Spiritual intelligence affects emotion and excitement control as well as social skills (Abdollahzadeh, 2009). These factors play important role in situation-based crime prevention (Razipour Jouybari, 2011). These crimes occur because people are not equipped with the required self-control mechanisms and social skills. The results of this study could be regarded as consistent with the studies that showed people in difficult situations (such as chronic disease etc.) turn to spirituality more (Tiffany, 2011). In a study, Bernard et al. (2002) evaluated religion and spirituality among the patients who were about to die, and found that these people enjoy a high level of spiritual (moral) attitude (Abdollahzadeh, 2009). Therefore, higher spiritual intelligence in prisoners compared to non-prisoners is probably due to difficult conditions of the prison that makes them turn to God

and spirituality more (recourse to a metaphysical force to meet the needs).

It is also probable that prisoners are not equipped with cognitive and behavioral mechanisms before committing the crime, and they feel sorry or regret after being imprisoned through awareness of what they committed. On the other hand, spiritual education in prison might be the reason for their spiritual growth, because as Rotimia (2010) showed, spiritual intelligence in some prisoners will make them more adaptable than other prisoners. Therefore, it can be concluded that higher spiritual intelligence results in more appropriate behavior under any circumstances, and this is true even after imprisonment. According to the results of this study and other studies showing there was a positive relationship between spiritual beliefs and cognitive performance (Van Laarhoven et al., 2011), providing the society with spiritual educations could improve cognitive and behavioral performance and prevent the occurrence of many of the crimes. For a more detailed study of the role of spirituality in the occurrence of crime, a longitudinal study is recommended to be conducted on people receiving spiritual education at different age levels to further clarify the role of spirituality in preventing the occurrence of crime.

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