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**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN DIFFICULTIES IN EMOTION REGULATION AND SPIRITUAL WELL-
BEING IN FEMALE STUDENTS OF ISFAHAN UNIVERSITY DORMITORY**

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ABSTRACT

The present research was aimed to recognize the mediating role of stress management in the relationship between emotion regulation difficulties and spiritual well-being.

The tools used in this study were Paloezian Walison's (1983) spiritual well-being questionnaire, difficulties in emotion regulation scale (DERS), and Dr. Malekpoor's (1986) stress management questionnaire. Indirect effect (mediator variable) was examined in Preacher and Hayes (2004) SPSS Macroprogram using Bootstrap method.

Correlational research method was used. The statistical sample was all female newcomers living in the Martyrs Dormitory Complexes of Isfahan University in 2013, of which 200 were chosen randomly.

The results showed that difficulties in emotion regulation had significant relationship with spiritual well-being and procedural and interactive stress management ($p < 0/01$). Furthermore, stress management is the mediator in the relationship between emotion regulation and stress management.

**Keywords: Stress Management, Difficulties In Emotion Regulation, Spiritual Well-Being,
Dormitory Students**

INTRODUCTION

During the past three decades, a great deal of studies has been tried to scrutinize emotion regulation and management and the effect of turbulent emotions on physical and mental

health [1]. Difficulty with emotional self-regulation means the alexithymia or inability in cognitive processing of emotion information and control [2]. People suffering

from difficulties in emotion regulation or alexithymia exaggerate normal physical emotions, misinterpret physical signs of emotion provocation and stressful situations, demonstrate emotion helplessness with physical complaint, and search for physical treatment symptoms in the medicating procedures [2].

Difficulty in emotion regulation or alexithymia due to its consequences is an important issue amongst university students. Entering to university is a very crucial period in each country's efficient, active, and young forces and is mostly accompanied with a lot of changes in their mental issues and social and individual relations [3]. Recent studies have found that efficient and effective emotion regulation is vital for students' mental health and difficulties in emotion regulation in stressful situations; and also ineffective reacting method will lead a student to a range of problematic behaviors and mental disorders [5].

Lazaross (1982) identifies a person's reaction to stress as attempts to curb (including dominance, tolerance, decrease or minimizing) oppositions, and inner and environmental wants, which are beyond the specific sources. According to this definition, there are two models to deal: 1) problem-

focused coping, 2) emotion-focused coping (emotion regulation). Problem-focused coping is the process by which a person attempts to react towards stress through changing behaviors that causes a continuing problem or is based on the environmental condition changes [6].

The previous studies revealed that spirituality can mediate the effects of severe life crises and help a person in reacting to stressful cases as a mediating guideline.

Voon (2003) defined spirituality as the humans' ongoing attempts to answer the whys of life. Spirituality is one of the human's inner needs and some scholars believe it involves having high levels of cognitive, ethical, emotional, and individual development [9]; in other words, optimum use of creativity and curiosity to find the existing reasons related to surviving, living, and, consequently, growth and evolution constitute an important part of spirituality [10].

Spirituality and spiritual well-being have increasingly attracted psychologists and mental health and sanitation professionals' attention within the past decades. Spiritual well-being is one of the aspects of spirituality that can be defined as a feeling of connection to others, having an intent, goal, belief, and connection to a sublime power in life. Various

researches have supported this theory that spiritual well-being can enhance psychological functioning and adjustment. Tehran and Heydari (2009), Hossein Chari and Kheir (2002), Dehshiry and others (2008), Ficsher (2003), Hirnell (2003), Shahidy (2002) have all reported significant correlations between spiritual well-being scale score and variables such as religious activities, depression, self-esteem, internal religious orientation and also emotion instability, mood disorders, stress, and difficulties in emotion regulation.

To sum up theoretical and investigative foundations, it can be said that difficulty in emotion regulation has many negative consequences that can endanger a person's mental health. Moreover, Ficsher (2003), Hirnell (2004), Attar (2005), Froom(2000), Besharat (2010), and Taylor et al. (2000) demonstrated that difficulty in appropriate emotion regulation had a negative relationship with mental health; besides, Langari and Ahmadi (2011), Roosh and Viner(2011), Endller and Parker(2007), Deyree et al. (2007), Pikoo (2005), Pichenham(2009),Robinson (2007) revealed that emotion regulation had a negative significant relationship with alexithymia or difficulties in emotion regulation.

The importance of this study is considered in two points: first, in previous studies the direct relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and spiritual well-being was examined, however, the current research , using the process of mediation, not only considers the direct relationship, but also attempts to identify the way in which spiritual well-being can lead to emotion regulation. On the other side, the increase in students' referral to counseling experts in recent years emphasizes the existence of increasing mental, social, and educational disorders and problems, stress, anxiety, inability to control negative emotions. So, students educating in different majors who are supposed to take responsibility for providing, maintaining, and promoting society health level and to play their role as an educated and expert force competently have to be cared for [11]. Additionally, since this topic has not been investigated so far in Iran, this research aims to identify the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and spiritual well-being and stress management mediation.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a correlational one. Difficulty in emotion regulation as the endogenous variable and stress management as the mediating variable and spiritual well-

being as the final exogenous variable are considered.

Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient. In order to investigate mediating relationship hypotheses of the study, Baron and Kenny's (1986) presuppositions were considered. Baron and Kenny mentioned that variable M was considered as mediator in three cases: 1- variance X (independent variable) significantly anticipated variance M (Figure 1, $a \neq 0$), 2- variance M significantly predicted variance Y (dependent variable) (Figure 1, $b \neq 0$), and 3- when A and B path was controlled, X and Y relationship was not decreased or significant. In order to identify the significance of the independent variable's indirect paths to dependent variable via mediator variable, Bootstrap method in Preacher and Hayes (2004) Macro program [13] was used. So, Preacher and Hayes (2004) Macro program in SPSS software was utilized in this study.

The sample of this investigation was all freshmen female students living in Martyrs Dormitory Complexes of Isfahan University in 2013, of which 220 students were chosen randomly. Cochran formula was utilized to identify sample volume; according to the population size and one of the variables' variance, the sample size was 220. After

distributing and collecting research questionnaires, 200 questionnaires were analyzable (89% return). It is necessary to mention that testees' age was between 18-22 years old.

Research Tools

To collect information on the research various variables, three questionnaires of Paleozian and Walison's (1983) welfare, difficulties in emotion regulation scale (DERS), and Malekpoor's (1997) stress management were used. The aforementioned scales are introduced in the following.

DERS Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a self-report index that has been comprehensively made in comparison with the other related tools to evaluate existing difficulties in emotion regulation, and has 36 expressions and 6 small scales. Small scales are: 1. denial of emotional responses, 2. difficulties in handling the targeted behavior, 3. difficulties in impulse control, 4. lack of emotional awareness, 5. limited access to emotion regulation strategies, 6. lack of emotional clarity. Testees' answers range from 1 to 5 (1. almost never, 2. sometimes, 3. almost half the times, 4. most of the times, 5. almost always). High scores indicate more emotion regulation difficulties. Results of this study revealed

high internal homogeneity for the whole scale ($\alpha = 0.86$ 91/31M= 17.78 sd) within Iranian population. The mean, standard deviation, and stability were respectively 84/0702, 21/53563, and 0/93 in this study.

Spiritual well-being scale (SWB)

This scale was prepared by [14] Paleozian and Allison (1983). The scale contains two sub-scales: spiritual well-being, existential well-being. The overall score shows the spiritual well-being. For this study the whole scale was utilized. 20 questions of the scale are Likert type, containing from number 1 meaning completely agreed to number 6 meaning completely disagreed. Negative words containing items reversed the score. Even number items evaluate living well-being and odd numbers evaluate religious well-being. The overall spiritual score calculated with summing all answers to 20 items. The correlation between two sub-scales was 0/32 ($P < 0.00$). However, high correlation between each of two factors and spiritual well-being was found. Test-retest reliability coefficient was classified between 0.86 and 0/93 scale.

Stress management

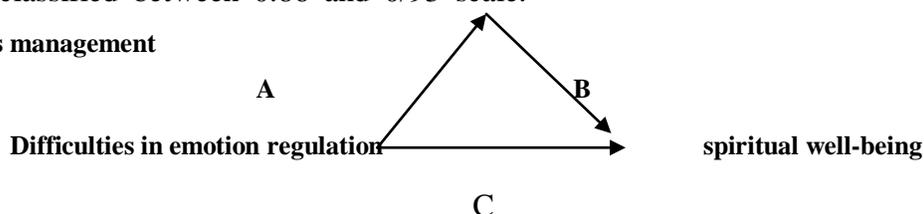


Figure1: Suggested pattern of research for indirect effect of difficulties in emotion regulation on spiritual well-being through stress management

The internal stability was calculated between 0/78 and 0/89. These scales were positively related to life goals and negatively related to UCLA loneliness scale [15]. The mean, standard deviation, validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaire were respectively 89/8830, 14/48481, 0/425, and 0/88.

Stress Management Questionnaire

This questionnaire was prepared in (1997) by Malekpoor and contained 17 questions. Each question has four options, the 4-degree Likert scale is from "never" to "often". In order to obtain simultaneous validity of questionnaire, Malekpoor tested it on 87 students and normal and retarded children's parents, and in order to retest it, it was done by 40 independent people. Coefficient concurrent validity of the questionnaire was reported 0/63 and test retest reliability was 0/67. Mean, standard deviation, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire in the present study were respectively, 46/7141, 8/43198, 0/672, and 0/87.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and inter-correlations between variables. As shown in **Table 1**, difficulty in emotion regulation has a negative relationship with stress management and spiritual well-being; also, stress management has a significantly positive relationship with spiritual well-being ($p < 0/01$). Therefore, this research hypotheses regarding relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation, stress management, and spiritual well-being are confirmed. In **Table 2**, the direct effects of total variables that are needed to analyze the mediator is presented using Preacher and Hayes (2004) method. In this table, three required regressions, which Baron and Kenny recognized necessary for identifying mediation, can be considered. As demonstrated in **Table 2**, difficulties in emotion regulation with non-standard coefficient of -0/28 significantly anticipates spiritual well-being ($p < 0/01$). Therefore, Path C significance condition is met. Difficulties in emotion regulation with non-standard coefficient of -0/04, significantly anticipates stress management. Therefore, Path A significance condition is met. Besides, stress management, with non-standard coefficient of -1/72 and significance level of

0/0001, anticipates spiritual well-being. So, a significance condition of Path B is also met. As demonstrated in **Table 2**, when the effect of stress management is controlled in the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and spiritual well-being, non-standard coefficient becomes -0/173 (Path C'). This path coefficient is significantly positive relationship with spiritual well-being ($p < 0/01$). Therefore, this research decreased in comparison with Path C but has not yet lost its significance.

Bootstrap method in Preacher and Hayes (2004) macro program was utilized to investigate the mediating role of stress management in the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and spiritual well-being and indirect effect significance. The results of Bootstrap method are illustrated in **Table 3**.

As illustrated in **Table 3**, lower bound is -0/165 and upper bound is -0/025. Bootstrap's confidence interval is 99 and the re-sampling number is 1000. Failure to be included in the confidence interval of zero indicates the significance of the indirect pathway. So, the main hypothesis is confirmed on the basis of indirect path significance. Since $a \times b \times c$'s positive, this kind of mediator is named supplementary [16].

Figure 2 shows the pattern of indirect effect and non-standard coefficient of paths. Figure 2 shows the pattern of indirect effect and non-standard coefficient of paths.

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Table 1: Internal coefficient of research variables and their significance levels

		Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3
1	Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	92/00	22/95	1/00	-	-

2	Stress Management	16/76	4/46	-0/33**	1/00	-
3	Spiritual Well-Being	92/73	13/82	-0/40**	0/49**	1/00

Table 2: Direct and Overall Effect of Research Variables

	B coefficient	Standard Deviation	t	significance
Path C (direct effect of emotion control difficulty on spiritual well-being)	-0/28	0/056	-4/61	0/0001
Path A (direct effect of difficulties in emotion regulation on stress management)	-0/04	0/014	-3/62	0/0004
Path B (direct effect of stress management on spiritual well-being	1/72	0/343	-4/73	0/0001
Path C' (direct effect of difficulties in emotion regulation on spiritual well-being with stress management control	-0/173	0/054	-3/20	0/0021

Table 3: Bootstrap results for difficulties in emotion regulation path

Data	Boot	Orientation	Standard Deviation	Upper Bound	Lower Bound
-0/085	-0/085	0/0001	0/029	-0/025	-0/165

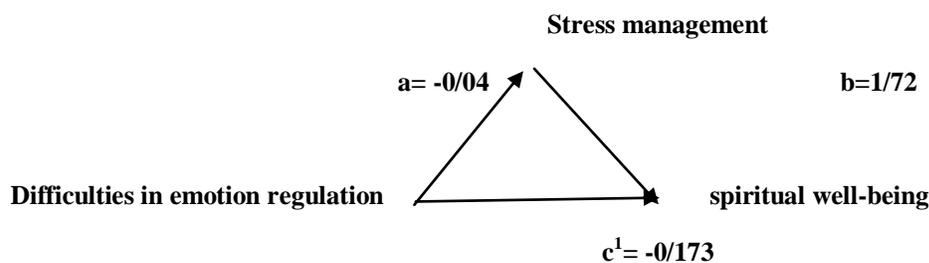


Figure 2: Final research pattern (indirect effect of difficulties in emotion regulation on spiritual well-being via stress management)

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

well-being; also, stress management had a significantly positive correlation with spiritual well-being.

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and spiritual well-being by identifying the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and spiritual well-being by Herkel (2007), Williams (2005), Yarahmadi (2011), Attari (2008), Ficsher (2003), Hirnell (2004), Attar (2005), Ferum (2000), Besharat (2010), Taylor et al.(2000), Langary and Ahmadi

(2011), Roush and Winner (2011), Endler and existential solidarity and unity feeling, Parker (2007), Diry et al. (2007), Picco (2005), contributes to promotion of mental health that Pekenham (2009), and Robinson (2007). In will result in people's having a goal in life and specifying the overall results of this study, it can being optimistic towards the future[18].

be said:

Therefore, regarding the aforementioned results, Emotion regulation and management difficulties teaching cognitive strategies focused on positive (passing process from processing to acting), in emotions accompanied by strategies focused on personal behaviors level, threaten and weaken the issue, positive meditation, positive reappraisal mental health by decrease in psychological of emotion regulation seem necessary in welfare and increase in psychological inability; strengthening the regulation of emotions and also, in interpersonal interaction level, harmfully spirituality to enhance students' physical, affect communicative and interactive skills. psychological, and social health.

Activation of communicative and cognitive skills **REFERENCES**

increases emotion related abilities of a person and decrease difficulties in emotion regulation features; therefore, lowness of emotion tension, with the help of mental peace, causes the person to react well to stress and manage stressful conditions by utilizing cognitive and communicative skills, a situation that is against difficulties in emotion regulation.

Furthermore, based on Patoon and Barterm's (2009) research, spirituality, in other words, spiritual well-being is one of the effective reacting methods in stressful conditions. They found that spiritual well-being had a significantly reversed relationship with negative emotion regulation; spiritual well-being, by providing a framework for interpreting and explaining life experiences and whereby providing a kind of

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