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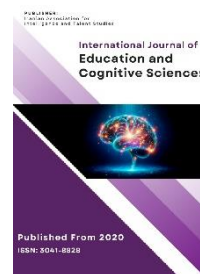
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Design and Validation of a Spiritual Education Model Based on the Fundamental Transformation Document of Education

Khaled. Alipour¹, Fatemeh. Ahmadbeigi^{2*}, Fahimeh. Ansarian³, Mahshid. Izadi³

¹ Department of Philosophy of Education, CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

² Department of Educational Sciences, NT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

³ Department of Education and Counseling, CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: 0051668181@iau.ir

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to design and validate a comprehensive model of spiritual education derived from the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) to identify its core dimensions, influencing factors, and structural validity within the Iranian educational context.

Methods and Materials: This applied qualitative study employed a content analysis approach. The research population included experts in education, school principals, and vice-principals. Using purposive non-random sampling and the principle of theoretical saturation, 20 experts were selected for semi-structured interviews. Data were gathered through both library (academic sources, theses, and databases from 2000 to 2022) and field methods. Thematic analysis was conducted using MAXQDA 2020 software, identifying basic, organizing, and overarching themes. The resulting model was further validated by 22 education specialists using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and evaluated through a one-sample t-test to determine its fit, comprehensibility, generalizability, and controllability.

Findings: The thematic analysis identified three main dimensions of spiritual education—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral training—along with four influencing factors: societal moral values and norms, educational policy and planning, teacher characteristics, and curriculum design. Results from the one-sample t-test showed that all model parameters were significant at the 0.01 level, confirming the model's strong structural validity. The mean ratings for model fit ($M=3.66$), comprehensibility ($M=3.89$), generalizability ($M=3.71$), and control ($M=3.85$) were all significantly higher than the expected mean (3), indicating expert consensus on the reliability and applicability of the proposed model.

Conclusion: The validated model demonstrates that spiritual education, as defined by the FRDE, is a multidimensional construct integrating moral cognition, emotional development, and ethical behavior. Its successful implementation depends on teachers' spiritual competence, value-based curricula, and supportive educational policies.

Keywords: *Spiritual Education, Fundamental Transformation Document, Emotional Education, Behavioral Education*

1. Introduction

The foundation of spiritual education in modern education systems rests on the cultivation of individuals who can harmonize cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions in both personal and social contexts. As global educational reforms increasingly move toward holistic paradigms, spirituality is now recognized as a crucial pillar of human development that enables learners to internalize ethical values and pursue meaningful lives (Paloutzian & Park, 2021; Petersen, 2022). Within this framework, spiritual education seeks not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to foster the moral and emotional capacities necessary for wisdom, empathy, and responsible citizenship (Salahshouri & Bahraman, 2020; Tahmasb Zadeh Sheikhlar & Jalil Zadeh, 2021).

Recent literature emphasizes that the objectives of education in the twenty-first century must extend beyond academic competence to include the moral and spiritual formation of learners (King, 2015; Miller, 2022). Global citizenship education and virtue-based pedagogies advocate for integrating compassion, justice, and reflective self-awareness into the teaching-learning process (Petersen, 2022). This approach resonates with psychological theories of religion and spirituality, which propose that human flourishing is grounded in the dynamic interaction between moral purpose and existential meaning (Paloutzian & Park, 2021). Therefore, spiritual education has emerged as a multidisciplinary construct encompassing psychology, pedagogy, theology, and philosophy.

In Iran, the *Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE)* represents a comprehensive effort to institutionalize spiritual education as the cornerstone of moral and intellectual development. This document positions education as a pathway toward nurturing individuals who embody divine values and social ethics (Haji Babaei, 2012). The FRDE envisions an education system that combines doctrinal understanding, emotional refinement, and behavioral discipline to achieve human perfection (Fatehi EbrahimAbad et al., 2015; Fazlollahi Qomshi & Maleki Tavana, 2017). Such a vision underscores the role of schools in cultivating spirituality through teacher guidance, curriculum design, and policy alignment (Bazrafshan Moghaddam et al., 2015; Masoumi & Ghasemi, 2014).

Spiritual education, as defined in Islamic and global contexts, integrates three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension emphasizes understanding moral and theological principles, the affective

dimension develops empathy and moral sensitivity, and the behavioral dimension translates these values into ethical conduct (Salahshouri & Bahraman, 2020; Varmazyar et al., 2021). In Islamic thought, this tripartite model is derived from Quranic teachings and the works of classical philosophers such as Farabi, who emphasized the unity of knowledge and virtue as foundations of moral growth (Abbasovna, 2022). In modern secular frameworks, spirituality is seen as a universal human capacity that fosters well-being and interpersonal harmony beyond religious boundaries (Hazlett, 2022; King, 2015).

Educational reforms around the world increasingly recognize the value of integrating spirituality into curricula. For instance, global initiatives such as the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)* call for “inclusive and equitable quality education” that promotes not only intellectual advancement but also moral responsibility and social justice (Miller, 2022). Likewise, *Global Citizenship Education* emphasizes virtue-based learning as a means to cultivate ethical leaders prepared for uncertain futures (Petersen, 2022). These frameworks collectively affirm that the true purpose of education extends beyond cognitive achievement to include the development of spiritually aware and morally responsible individuals (Chankseliani et al., 2021).

Empirical studies have shown that spirituality in education enhances teachers’ motivation, job satisfaction, and moral behavior. Research by (Wu, 2024) and (Ebrahimi & Mohammadi, 2024) demonstrates that workplace spirituality and psychological capital significantly influence teachers’ enthusiasm and resilience. Teachers who perceive their work as spiritually meaningful tend to create positive learning environments that nurture students’ ethical and emotional growth (Momtaz et al., 2025; Mousavi & Ghaderi, 2023). Furthermore, the integration of spiritual intelligence — a construct encompassing intuition, moral reasoning, and empathy — has been linked to effective teaching and leadership practices in schools (Mousavizadeh et al., 2021; Normuminovich, 2021).

In the Iranian context, the FRDE emphasizes the crucial role of teachers in shaping students’ spiritual identity. According to (Dibaei Saaber & Najafi, 2016), enhancing teacher competencies in both pedagogical and moral domains is vital for achieving the goals of educational transformation. Teachers serve as moral exemplars whose attitudes and behaviors deeply influence the ethical climate of schools (Niknam & Naseri, 2020). They are expected not only to transmit knowledge but to embody virtues such as

sincerity, justice, and self-discipline (Afriansyah & Arwadi, 2021). This notion aligns with the research of (Momtaz et al., 2025), who identified professional ethics and moral commitment as essential dimensions of effective teaching.

Several studies have explored how spirituality-based interventions can improve student outcomes. (Bagherpur et al., 2021) found that problem-solving training grounded in spiritual principles significantly enhanced students' moral responsibility and ethical awareness. Similarly, (Varmazyar et al., 2021) examined the role of detachment from materialism, as emphasized in *Nahj al-Balagha*, in promoting humility, self-regulation, and moral resilience among students. These findings correspond with the theoretical assertions of (Paloutzian & Park, 2021), who argues that spirituality strengthens psychological coherence and facilitates adaptive coping strategies in complex social environments.

Furthermore, effective spiritual education requires institutional and policy-level support. (Bazrafshan Moghaddam et al., 2015) highlighted the importance of instructional supervision and curriculum design in aligning educational practices with spiritual goals. Similarly, (Haji Babaei, 2012) described the ideal school envisioned by the FRDE as a "value-centered institution" where learning is integrated with moral and spiritual cultivation. At the managerial level, decentralization of decision-making and empowerment of teachers can help translate spiritual education principles into everyday practice (Jafari Moghaddam & Fani, 2002; Jahanian, 2008).

In addition, theological and philosophical perspectives deepen the conceptual understanding of spiritual education. The works of classical scholars such as Farabi, examined by (Abbasovna, 2022), illustrate how the fusion of intellect and spirituality can lead to moral enlightenment. In a modern context, (Fedorov, 2015) proposed theological media literacy as a pedagogical approach to cultivating critical spiritual consciousness in learners. Both perspectives affirm that spiritual education bridges intellectual inquiry and moral responsibility.

The role of family and community is equally important. According to (Fazlollahi Ghamshi & Maleki Tavana, 2015), parental influence and home environment play decisive roles in shaping children's moral and spiritual foundations. (Fazlollahi Qomshi & Maleki Tavana, 2017) further emphasized that educational systems should collaborate with families to reinforce religious and ethical values, ensuring continuity between school-based instruction and domestic moral training. These findings underscore that

spiritual education is most effective when it operates as a shared societal responsibility encompassing home, school, and community.

At the intersection of culture and globalization, scholars caution that spiritual education faces challenges from secularization and cultural homogenization. (Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2010) noted that globalization pressures education systems to prioritize utilitarian and market-oriented objectives, often at the expense of moral formation. Nevertheless, incorporating spirituality within modern pedagogical frameworks can preserve cultural identity while fostering intercultural empathy (Chankseliani et al., 2021; Petersen, 2022). In this regard, virtue-based education becomes a bridge between tradition and modernity, offering learners a framework for ethical decision-making in a rapidly changing world.

Research from diverse contexts also supports the universality of spiritual education. For example, (Solong, 2024) demonstrated that religious leadership in Indonesian *madrasahs* effectively nurtures Islamic ethics and discipline among students. Similarly, (Aryanpour & Khalili Bagheri, 2024) found that spirituality enhances teachers' job enthusiasm through the mediating role of moral virtue. These findings align with (Niknam & Naseri, 2020), who asserted that spirituality at work fosters intrinsic motivation and collective responsibility among educators. Together, they confirm that spirituality is not confined to religious instruction but is a transformative force in professional and personal development.

Creative approaches to teaching have also been shown to support the integration of spirituality into the curriculum. (Afriansyah & Arwadi, 2021) demonstrated that origami-based mathematical tasks can promote students' reflective and moral reasoning skills through experiential learning. This indicates that spiritual education can be embedded even within secular subjects, bridging rational thought and moral insight (Normuminovich, 2021). Such innovative methods align with the principle that spirituality, when operationalized through active and reflective pedagogy, leads to both cognitive and ethical advancement.

Moreover, institutional culture plays a decisive role in sustaining spiritual education. (Niknam & Naseri, 2020) argued that creating spiritually-oriented school environments enhances teachers' well-being and professional integrity. Studies by (Wu, 2024) and (Ebrahimi & Mohammadi, 2024) also found that workplace spirituality positively affects teachers' motivation and reduces burnout. These outcomes demonstrate that spiritual education is not

merely a pedagogical concept but a systemic value that must permeate organizational structures and leadership practices (Momtaz et al., 2025).

Collectively, the reviewed literature suggests that spiritual education represents an integrated and dynamic process that combines knowledge, emotion, and action to foster ethical, reflective, and resilient individuals. Achieving this vision requires coordinated efforts across curriculum development, teacher preparation, and educational policymaking. The FRDE provides a robust foundation for such an endeavor by linking national cultural identity with global educational ideals (Fatehi EbrahimAbad et al., 2015; Tahmasb Zadeh Sheikhlar & Jalil Zadeh, 2021).

Therefore, the present study aims to design and validate a comprehensive model of spiritual education based on the Fundamental Reform Document of Education, identifying its principal dimensions, influencing factors, and implications for improving the moral and spiritual quality of education in Iran.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The research method was applied in terms of purpose, qualitative in terms of data type, and based on content analysis in terms of data collection method. The statistical population consisted of scientific documents such as specialized books, completed studies, theses, and articles obtained from domestic and international databases in the field of spiritual education based on the Fundamental Transformation Document, covering the period from 2000 to 2022. The population also included education experts, school principals, and vice-principals. Using the principle of theoretical saturation and purposive non-random sampling, 20 participants were selected for interviews.

2.2. Measures

In the present study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. During the individual interviews, five main preliminary questions were used as the foundation of inquiry. After conducting 20 interviews, the researcher reached the point of data saturation, meaning that no new information or categories emerged from the additional interviews, and the collected data began to repeat. Therefore, the interview process was terminated at this stage. It is noteworthy that the duration of each interview ranged between 30 and 90 minutes.

To ensure the validity of the research instrument and the accuracy of the findings from the researcher's perspective, the valuable opinions of professors familiar with this field and educational experts with professional expertise were utilized. In addition, the participants were involved in the concurrent analysis and interpretation of data to enhance the credibility of the findings. Furthermore, to determine and ensure the validity of the content analysis checklist, the method of content validity assessment and expert review was employed. Specifically, the initial form of the document content analysis — regarding the extent of attention given to spiritual education — was provided to four experts in the field. After incorporating their feedback, the final checklist for content analysis was developed in the form of several dimensions and components.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis method was thematic analysis, consisting of basic, organizing, and overarching themes, conducted using MAXQDA software.

3. Findings and Results

To collect reliable data and achieve dependable results, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts. The interview data were analyzed using three approaches: quantitative, structural, and interpretive analysis. In the quantitative analysis, the transcribed interview texts were coded, counted, and analyzed through statistical methods. In the structural analysis, the written text was examined in terms of the number and frequency of words, terms, and concepts. In the interpretive analysis, the researcher aimed to uncover the implicit meanings and messages embedded within the textual data.

The semi-structured interview process was carried out with 20 experts, and data saturation occurred at the 20th interview. Additional interviews with participants numbered 21 and 22 did not generate new codes. Using thematic analysis and MAXQDA 2020 software, the data were collected and coded following content analysis.

In the final stage of the analysis process, the findings derived from data analysis were aligned with the main objective of the study, and by linking the basic themes, the organizing themes were identified. The following tables present the checklists related to the results of the content analysis of interviews using basic, organizing, and overarching themes. Data analysis began with the extraction of concepts and categories (basic themes), and irrelevant or

repetitive concepts and categories were eliminated. The results of the basic themes, along with the interview codes,

frequencies, and corresponding sources for each category, are presented in the table below.

Table 1

List of All Concepts Extracted from Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

Dimension	Component	Open Coding (Indicator)	Source	Interviewee Code
Spiritual Education Based on the Fundamental Transformation Document	Cognitive Education	Moral development	(Heslep, 2015)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Knowledge identity rooted in spirituality	Zare et al. (2018)	I2, I11, I5
		Planning based on achieving perfection and happiness	Zabani et al. (2017, p. 58)	I12, I8, I3
		Enhancing cognitive awareness of moral conduct	(Lupiano, 2020, p. 2)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Knowledge of moral authenticity	(Samadi et al., 2012)	I13, I4, I11, I5
		Understanding social spirituality	(Sadat Nojoumi, 2011, p. 21)	I12, I8, I3
		Understanding moral dimensions	(Hasani et al., 2019, p. 15)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Adherence to monotheism, resurrection, and prophethood	<i>Holy Qur'an</i> (Al-Tahrim: 6); (Ahmadifar & Amiri, 2017, p. 35)	I13, I2, I11, I5
		Enrichment of spiritual values (Bagheri, 2017); (Salajegheh & Safari, 2015, p. 106)	(Janet et al., 2022)	I12, I8, I3
			I3, I4, I11, I5	
Emotional Education	Honesty	Respect for others	(Didgah et al., 2018)	I6, I4, I10, I15
		Observance of social values and norms	(Didgah et al., 2018)	I12, I8, I3
		Justice orientation	(Ghazi et al., 2018, p. 63); <i>Al-Tahrim: 6</i>	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Loyalty	(Didgah et al., 2018)	I3, I7, I10
		Self-purification	(Ahmadifar & Amiri, 2017, p. 30)	I12, I8, I3
		Spiritual attitude	(Ahmadifar & Amiri, 2017, p. 30)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Moral virtue	(Wilson, 2016); (Safaei Moghadam et al., 2016, pp. 26–30)	I2, I4, I10, I5
		Faith	(Kiaei et al., 2021, p. 142); <i>Al-Tahrim: 5</i>	I12, I8, I3
		Altruistic spirit	(Koushi et al., 2018, p. 119)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Spiritual motivation	(Wilson, 2016)	I4, I11, I15
Behavioral Education	Moderation and balance	Self-reflection	(Heidarizadeh et al., 2020)	I12, I8, I3
		Spiritual responsibility	(Hatami et al., 2018)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Ethical discourse	(Mohebbi et al., 2011, p. 73)	I12, I8, I3
		Ethical performance	(Mohebbi et al., 2011, p. 73)	I3, I14, I11, I5
		Ethical communication	(Hatami et al., 2018)	I2, I4, I11, I5
		Moral behavior	(Rahbar, 2010, p. 15)	I12, I8, I3
		Self-control	(Rahbar, 2010, p. 15)	I3, I4, I11, I5
		Ethical leadership	(Goli et al., 2019, p. 38)	I4, I10, I5
		Fair behavior	(Rahbar, 2010, p. 16)	I12, I8, I3
		Expression of moral orientation in behavior	(Rahimi, 2011, p. 22)	I3, I4, I11, I5
Influencing Factors	Societal moral values and norms	Sense of collective identity	(Koushi et al., 2018, p. 119)	I3, I2, I11, I15
		Peaceful coexistence	(Koushi et al., 2018, p. 119)	I12, I8, I3
		Commitment to learning	Interview	I3, I4, I11, I5

Educational Policy and Planning	Belief in spiritual values among all societal groups	Interview	I4, I11, I5
	Adaptation to ethically-oriented educational conditions	Interview	I12, I8, I3
	Spirit of community participation	(Zaeem et al., 2021)	I3, I4, I11, I5
	Accountability and responsibility in decision-making	(Huda et al., 2020)	I2, I4, I5
	Educational engagement	Interview	I12, I8, I3
	Cultural-level planning for spiritual values education	Interview	I3, I4, I11, I5
	Attention to material and spiritual needs	(Ghasemzadeh & Heidarpanah, 2017)	I11, I15, I14, I2, I10
	Simplification of school administrative procedures	Interview	I12, I5, I14, I2, I11
	Decentralization of educational content determination	Interview	I12, I5, I14, I2, I11
	Teacher professional dynamism	(Sohrabi & Karimi, 2020)	I3, I4, I11, I5
Teacher	Adaptability of education to environmental dynamism	(Sohrabi & Karimi, 2020)	I12, I5, I14, I2, I11
	Transparent educational guidelines	Interview	I11, I5
	Extracurricular activities to promote ethical environments	Interview	I7, I11, I18
	Spiritual intelligence	(Green et al., 2019)	I5, I11, I4, I13
	Moral self-assessment	(Mousavi et al., 2021)	I3, I11, I5
	Consideration of teachers' individual differences	(Dehghan, 2016, p. 103)	I12, I8, I23
	Justice orientation	(Glenn Rowe & Laura, 2012, p. 490)	I3, I4, I11, I21
	Conscious self-control of teachers for moral excellence	(Turner et al., 2002)	I12, I14, I2, I22
	Peacefulness and psychological well-being	(Golmohammadian et al., 2015)	I12, I5, I25, I2, I11
	Application of ethical leadership styles	(Nastain & Houshmand, 2016)	I3, I4, I11
Curriculum	Establishing sincere, trust-based communication	(Golmohammadian et al., 2015)	I3, I5, I14, I2, I11
	Providing morally-oriented content	Interview	I2, I5, I12, I2, I11
	Encouraging trust in hidden and informal curricula	Interview	I12, I5, I2, I11
	Implementing curricula aligned with moral and spiritual values	Interview	I7, I11, I18
	Delivering justice-based instructional content	Interview	I13, I14, I15
	Reinforcing teachers' professional ethics	Interview	I12, I5, I14, I2, I11

The results of the analysis indicated that among the 60 identified indicators, seven main components could be distinguished. Ultimately, based on the literature, theoretical

foundations, and previous research, the dimensions, components, and number of items for the questionnaire were determined as shown below.

Table 2

Results of Qualitative Coding Derived from Interviews

Dimension	Component	Number of Items
Spiritual Education Based on the Fundamental Transformation Document	Cognitive Education	9
	Emotional Education	13
	Behavioral Education	11
Influencing Factors	Societal Moral Values and Norms	7

Educational Policy and Planning	7
Teacher	8
Curriculum	5

To examine the goodness of fit of the final model, a model evaluation questionnaire was developed to determine the degree of suitability of the proposed model. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale

and distributed among 22 specialists in the relevant field. The collected data were then analyzed using the one-sample t-test, and the results are presented in the table below.

Table 3

Results of the One-Sample t-Test to Determine the Suitability Degree of the Proposed Model for Presenting the Final Model (Expected Mean = 3)

No.	Item	Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-Statistic	df	Sig. Level
1	Fit	Were the concepts derived from the analyzed data?	3.66	1.21	9.68	21	0.000
2	Comprehensibility	Are the concepts identifiable and systematically related to one another?	3.89	1.27	11.83	21	0.000
3	Generalizability	Are the categories well-formulated?	3.64	1.34	8.62	21	0.000
4		Has the theory been developed to account for variations under different conditions?	3.73	1.29	11.17	21	0.000
5		Have the broader contextual conditions that may influence the studied phenomenon been described?	3.69	1.16	10.49	21	0.000
6	Control	Do the theoretical findings appear to be significant?	3.85	0.83	12.58	21	0.000

The results shown in the above table indicate the following:

1. Fit: In terms of *fit*, the calculated *t*-value (9.68) is significant at the 0.01 level. Comparing the mean of this component (3.66) with the expected mean (3) reveals that the model's fit is valid from the experts' viewpoint and is confirmed with 99% confidence.

2. Comprehensibility: Regarding *comprehensibility*, the calculated *t*-value (10.22) is significant at the 0.01 level. The comparison between the mean of this component (3.76) and the expected mean (3) indicates that the model is comprehensible and valid according to the experts, confirmed with 99% confidence. For the two comprehensibility-related questions, the calculated *t*-values were also significant at the 0.01 level, and the observed means for both questions were higher than the expected mean (3); therefore, this dimension was confirmed as part of the model by the experts.

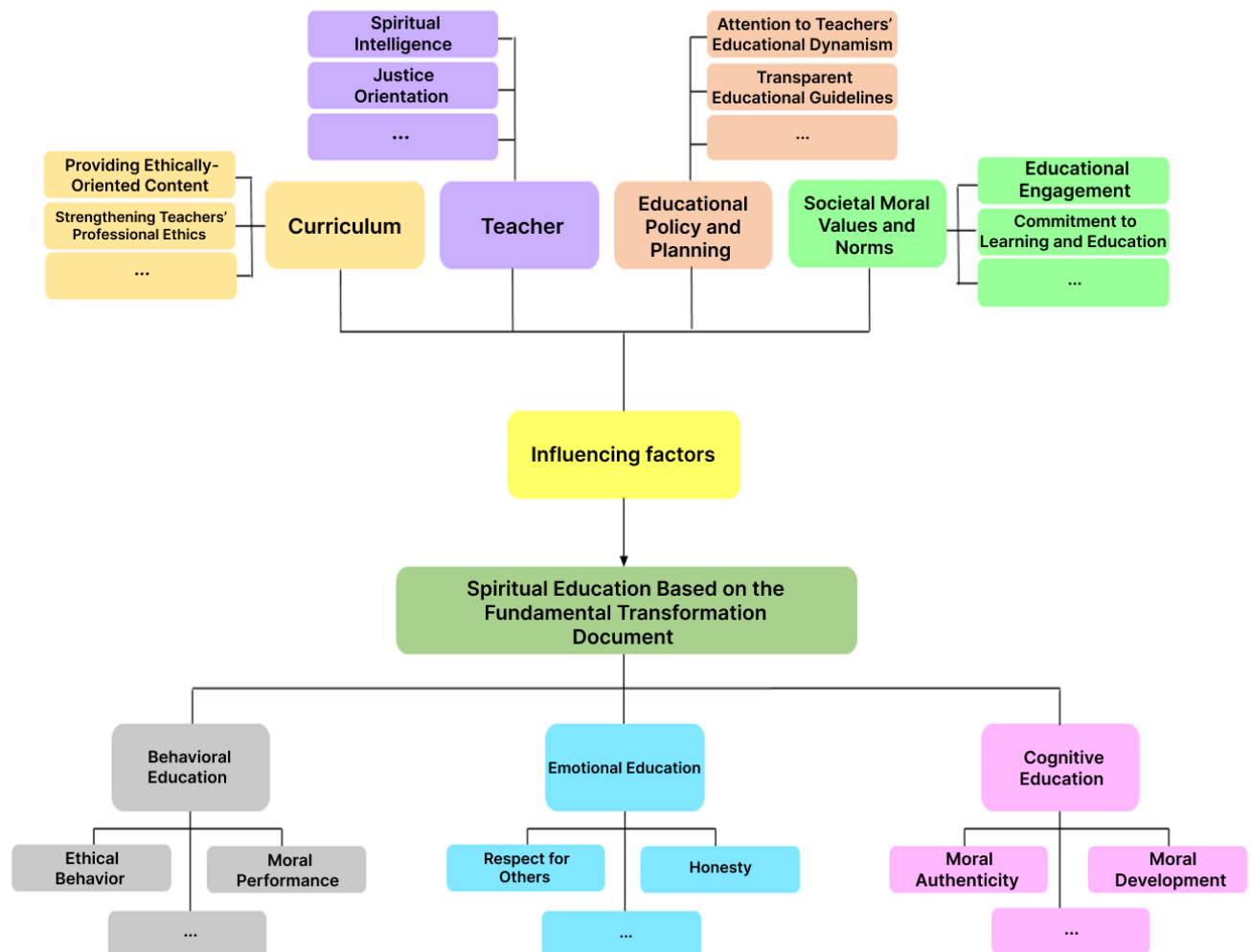
3. Generalizability: For *generalizability*, the calculated *t*-value (10.83) is significant at the 0.01 level. The

comparison between the mean of this component (3.71) and the expected mean (3) demonstrates that the model's generalizability is valid and has been confirmed with 99% confidence. For the two generalizability-related questions, the calculated *t*-values were significant at the 0.01 level, and their means exceeded the expected mean (3); hence, this dimension was also validated as part of the model by the experts.

4. Control: In relation to *control*, the calculated *t*-value (12.58) is significant at the 0.01 level. Comparing the mean of this component (3.85) with the expected mean (3) indicates that the controllability of the model is valid according to the experts' opinions and is confirmed with 99% confidence. For the control-related questions, the *t*-values were significant at the 0.01 level, and the observed means for both questions were above the expected mean (3); thus, this dimension was also validated as part of the model by the experts.

Figure 1

Final Model Derived from the Study



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to design and validate a comprehensive model of spiritual education based on the *Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE)*. The results revealed that the model consists of three principal dimensions—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral education—each supported by a set of specific components. Additionally, four major contextual and structural factors were identified as influential in the realization of spiritual education: societal moral values and norms, educational policymaking and planning, teacher-related variables, and curriculum design. The findings of the validation process demonstrated that all dimensions of the proposed model were perceived by experts as fitting, comprehensible, generalizable, and controllable, indicating its theoretical coherence and practical applicability within the Iranian education system.

From a theoretical standpoint, the emergence of *cognitive education* as a fundamental pillar of spiritual development corresponds with the philosophical and theological foundations emphasized in both Islamic and global educational traditions. The components identified under this dimension—such as moral reasoning, understanding divine principles, and intellectual reflection—confirm the necessity of a rational basis for spirituality (Abbasovna, 2022; Fatehi EbrahimAbad et al., 2015). In line with (Paloutzian & Park, 2021), spirituality involves cognitive processes that help individuals interpret experiences through moral and existential frameworks. The FRDE similarly situates moral cognition at the center of educational transformation, defining knowledge not merely as the acquisition of information but as the means to comprehend moral truths and human purpose (Haji Babaei, 2012). This convergence between philosophical reasoning and theological understanding underscores that spiritual education, when

grounded in cognitive insight, promotes intellectual depth and moral discernment.

The second major finding—*emotional education* as a core dimension of spirituality—reflects the recognition that moral behavior is inseparable from emotional awareness and empathy. Emotional components such as honesty, compassion, moderation, and altruism were frequently highlighted by experts as key indicators of spiritual maturity. This aligns with prior research suggesting that spirituality enhances emotional regulation and prosocial behavior (Salahshouri & Bahraman, 2020; Varmazyar et al., 2021). (King, 2015) described spirituality as an internalized virtue that inspires empathy and collective harmony, while (Miller, 2022) emphasized that quality education for sustainable development must engage learners emotionally to cultivate compassion and solidarity. The identification of emotional education within this study supports these perspectives, confirming that emotional engagement represents the bridge between moral cognition and ethical action. Furthermore, the FRDE's focus on nurturing moral feelings, humility, and respect for others parallels the psychological emphasis on empathy as a fundamental condition for moral growth (Paloutzian & Park, 2021).

The third dimension—*behavioral education*—illustrates the practical realization of spiritual and moral values in observable conduct. This dimension encompasses moral performance, ethical communication, social responsibility, and peaceful coexistence. According to (Bagherpur et al., 2021), spirituality-based interventions lead to significant improvements in students' moral responsibility and behavioral control, indicating that moral knowledge must be internalized through practice. Similarly, (Wu, 2024) found that workplace spirituality and ethical climate foster positive professional behavior among teachers. These findings are consistent with the emphasis of (Tahmasb Zadeh Sheikhlari & Jalil Zadeh, 2021) on the alignment between religious teachings and secular pedagogical strategies in facilitating ethical behavior. The behavioral aspect identified in the current study therefore confirms that spirituality achieves its fullest expression through deliberate and disciplined moral action, which is the ultimate goal of spiritual education according to the FRDE framework (Fatehi EbrahimAbad et al., 2015).

The contextual and organizational factors revealed in this study also corroborate the multidimensional nature of spiritual education. Among these, *societal moral values and norms* were found to exert substantial influence, indicating that spirituality cannot be isolated from the broader cultural

and ethical environment. (Fazlollahi Qomshi & Maleki Tavana, 2017) argued that spiritual growth among students depends heavily on the value orientation of society, while (Niknam & Naseri, 2020) highlighted the role of spirituality at work in reinforcing moral cohesion within institutions. These results suggest that a society's moral fabric, when aligned with educational goals, provides the necessary foundation for nurturing spiritual maturity. Moreover, as (Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2010) noted, in the era of globalization, education systems must balance the preservation of indigenous ethical traditions with openness to global values—a challenge that Iran's FRDE addresses through its emphasis on integrating faith, culture, and modern science.

The factor of *educational policy and planning* emerged as another determinant of spiritual education. Experts emphasized that the institutionalization of spirituality requires coherent policy frameworks that prioritize moral development alongside academic performance. (Bazrafshan Moghaddam et al., 2015) asserted that instructional supervision and planning are crucial mechanisms for ensuring the consistency of moral values in schools. Similarly, (Dibaei Saaber & Najafi, 2016) identified teacher competency policies as vital instruments for embedding spiritual education into classroom practices. (Chankseliani et al., 2021) further supported the link between higher education policies and societal development, demonstrating that policy coherence strengthens the alignment between local cultural objectives and national educational missions. The consistency between these studies and the present findings indicates that effective policy integration is indispensable for the sustainability of spirituality-based education.

The *teacher* dimension also proved to be a significant component influencing spiritual education. Findings indicated that teachers' spiritual intelligence, moral self-assessment, and personal integrity are vital to realizing spiritual objectives. This result is strongly supported by previous studies emphasizing the mediating role of spirituality in teachers' motivation and professional ethics (Aryanpour & Khalili Bagheri, 2024; Ebrahimi & Mohammadi, 2024). (Momtaz et al., 2025) noted that teachers' ethical challenges often stem from insufficient reflective practice and weak moral grounding. The present study's finding that teachers' emotional and moral self-regulation is central to spiritual education echoes (Mousavi & Ghaderi, 2023), who found a significant correlation between spiritual intelligence and professional performance.

Therefore, teacher education programs must move beyond technical competence to include spiritual and ethical development, enabling educators to serve as moral exemplars (Niknam & Naseri, 2020).

The *curriculum* factor was also identified as an essential structural element. The study's participants emphasized that curricula must be designed around moral, ethical, and justice-oriented themes to reinforce spiritual education. This aligns with the arguments of (Fatehi EbrahimAbad et al., 2015), who recommended embedding doctrinal and ethical values directly into textbooks and learning activities. Similarly, (Tahmasb Zadeh Sheikhlari & Jalil Zadeh, 2021) proposed integrating Quranic and secular teachings to provide students with balanced spiritual literacy. (Afriansyah & Arwadi, 2021) illustrated how innovative pedagogical designs—such as origami-based mathematical learning—can stimulate reflection and moral reasoning, indicating that spirituality can be effectively conveyed through creative, experiential methods. (Fedorov, 2015) also supported this notion by suggesting that hermeneutic and media literacy education enables learners to critically engage with spiritual and anti-spiritual narratives in modern contexts. Collectively, these findings confirm that curriculum design is a critical conduit for cultivating spiritual competencies through both content and pedagogy.

The confirmatory analysis results showed that experts rated the proposed model highly in terms of *fit*, *comprehensibility*, *generalizability*, and *control*. This outcome signifies that the model successfully integrates the philosophical, psychological, and managerial dimensions of spiritual education. The high scores on fit and comprehensibility demonstrate that the identified components accurately represent the lived realities of educators and policymakers within the Iranian education system. As (Haji Babaei, 2012) and (Masoumi & Ghasemi, 2014) emphasized, alignment between educational ideals and practical implementation is a core indicator of the FRDE's validity. Likewise, the model's generalizability reflects its potential applicability across different cultural and institutional contexts, a characteristic also recognized in (Chankseliani et al., 2021), who proposed that local education systems contribute to both national and global development through virtue-based learning.

The inclusion of control as a significant evaluation criterion further validates the model's operational utility. Control, in this context, refers to the ability of policymakers and educators to monitor, adjust, and sustain spiritual education initiatives. This resonates with the

recommendations of (Jafari Moghaddam & Fani, 2002) and (Jahanian, 2008), who argued for school-based management systems that empower teachers and administrators to implement moral objectives autonomously. Similarly, (Niknam & Naseri, 2020) highlighted that managerial spirituality strengthens organizational commitment and accountability. The convergence of these studies with the present findings suggests that spiritual education is not a static framework but an adaptive system requiring continual evaluation and feedback.

Furthermore, the integration of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions within a unified spiritual framework supports the argument that spirituality is a holistic construct. This aligns with the conceptual model developed by (Mousavizadeh et al., 2021), which drew upon *Sahifa Sajjadih* to emphasize the unity of intellectual, emotional, and moral education. It also corresponds with (Varmazyar et al., 2021), who viewed spirituality as the antidote to excessive materialism, asserting that ethical growth emerges when spiritual cognition and emotional sensitivity merge. From a psychological perspective, this synthesis mirrors the interrelation between moral reasoning and emotional empathy proposed by (Paloutzian & Park, 2021).

The findings of this research further confirm the essential role of cultural and societal alignment in fostering spirituality-based education. The emphasis placed by experts on contextual moral norms reflects the need for education systems to resonate with indigenous values and beliefs. (Sabouri Khosroshahi, 2010) warned that globalization often threatens moral diversity by promoting standardization, while (Petersen, 2022) and (Chankseliani et al., 2021) argued that virtue-based education can bridge global competencies with local ethics. This study's model supports these assertions, demonstrating that educational reform grounded in spiritual values can achieve cultural continuity while promoting openness to global ethical discourse.

In conclusion, the present research reinforces that spiritual education is a multidimensional and dynamic process encompassing cognitive understanding, emotional empathy, and behavioral application. It operates within institutional, cultural, and policy frameworks that either facilitate or hinder its implementation. The validation of the proposed model affirms its theoretical robustness and practical potential for guiding spiritual education reforms in Iran and comparable educational systems worldwide. The results are consistent with the FRDE's holistic approach, which regards spirituality not as a separate discipline but as

the ethical foundation of all learning processes (Fatehi EbrahimAbad et al., 2015; Haji Babaei, 2012).

Despite the theoretical and empirical significance of the findings, this study faced certain limitations. The qualitative nature of the research, based primarily on expert interviews and thematic analysis, limits the generalizability of the results to broader populations. While the expert sample provided in-depth insights, the perspectives might not fully represent the diversity of teachers, students, and administrators across various educational levels and regions. Furthermore, the model validation was based on statistical tests involving a limited number of respondents, which, though reliable, may not capture the full complexity of spiritual education across diverse sociocultural contexts. Another limitation pertains to the self-reported nature of expert evaluations, which can be influenced by subjective interpretations of spirituality and moral concepts. Finally, this study was conducted within the Iranian educational framework, and therefore, the model's applicability to other cultural or educational systems remains to be tested through cross-cultural research.

Future studies should consider employing mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine how the identified components of spiritual education evolve over time and across different educational settings. Quantitative surveys involving teachers, students, and parents could validate the model on a larger scale and provide comparative analyses between regions or educational systems. Researchers might also explore how emerging technologies, such as digital pedagogy and virtual learning environments, can be aligned with the principles of spiritual education. Cross-cultural studies would be particularly valuable in assessing the universality of the proposed model and identifying cultural nuances that influence spiritual development. Furthermore, future research could examine the long-term outcomes of implementing spirituality-based curricula on students' moral behavior, emotional regulation, and academic achievement, thereby linking spiritual education to measurable educational performance indicators.

Practically, the findings call for the integration of spiritual and moral education across all levels of educational planning and instruction. Educational policymakers should develop comprehensive training programs that enhance teachers' spiritual intelligence, ethical sensitivity, and reflective practice. Curriculum designers are encouraged to embed spiritual and moral themes into both formal and informal learning materials, ensuring that educational content

promotes self-awareness, empathy, and ethical reasoning. School administrators can foster spiritually enriched environments by promoting cooperation, respect, and community engagement among students and teachers. Finally, collaboration among families, schools, and community organizations should be strengthened to sustain the moral and spiritual development of learners, creating a cohesive ecosystem that supports both academic excellence and ethical growth.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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