

Predicting Self-Control on the Basis of Patience and Its Components Among High School Students



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ABSTRACT

Objective: The current study aimed at investigating the role of patience and its components in predicting self-control among high school students in Shiraz, Iran.

Methods: The statistical population of the study included all high school students of Shiraz. Three hundred and thirty-two students (161 females and 171 males) were recruited via cluster sampling method. The subjects participated in the study by completing the patience scale for children and adolescents and self-control scale. To analyze the data, mean, standard deviation (SD), and Pearson correlation coefficient were used. Moreover, to investigate the role of patience and its components in predicting self-control, simultaneous multiple regression analysis was utilized.

Results: The results showed that patience total score and the components of transcendence, contentment, persistence, and hesitation positively and significantly correlated with self-control ($P < 0.01$). Patience total score also positively and significantly predicted self-control ($\beta = 0.58$; $P < 0.001$). This variable explained 33% of the variance. Moreover, transcendence ($\beta = 0.18$; $P < 0.001$), hesitation ($\beta = 0.27$; $P < 0.001$), and persistence ($\beta = 0.35$; $P < 0.001$) positively and significantly predicted self-control. These variables explained 36% of the variance.

Conclusion: According to the role of patience and its components in predicting self-control, it is recommended to utilize educational strategies of patience to enhance self-control among high school students. To emphasize the components of patience in teaching educational strategies of patience is also suggested.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood dependency to adulthood responsibility and autonomy (Lotfabadi, 2013). In this period, adolescents reconstruct and reshape their relationship with their parents and other relatives, and are involved in recognizing themselves as independent persons and establishing their self-identity. Given the important responsibilities that adolescents should deal with, accomplishing these responsibilities requires self-control. Kanfer defines self-control as the processes through which a person changes the probability of a response occurrence in the absence of immediate external reinforcement (Neuringer & Michael, 1970). Hamama and Ronen-Shen

recognizing themselves as independent persons and establishing their self-identity. Given the important responsibilities that adolescents should deal with, accomplishing these responsibilities requires self-control. Kanfer defines self-control as the processes through which a person changes the probability of a response occurrence in the absence of immediate external reinforcement (Neuringer & Michael, 1970). Hamama and Ronen-Shen

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(2012) confirmed that self-control promoting interventions are important in reducing adolescents' aggression. In their study, higher levels of self-control reduced negative effects of parental divorce on adolescents' aggression. Hughes, Berg, and Wiebe (2012) showed that self-control is an important factor in promoting the health of diabetic adolescents.

Therefore, it is important to consider the issue of self-control in adolescents. Investigation of this issue and its predicting factors can develop interventions to ensure that adolescents at risk for poor self-control receive the necessary support to enhance their regulatory skills and, thereby, adolescent self-harm can be prevented. Considering the importance of religion and spirituality in human life and their important role in mental health, it is very important to investigate the issue of self-control in terms of religion and spirituality.

Patience is one of the psycho-religious variables that have an important role in promotion of mental health (Noori, 2008; Izadi-Tame, Borjali, Delavar, & Eskandari, 2008; Hossein-Sabet, 2008). Patience is a moral virtue and refers to the persistence, consent, transcendence, tolerance, and hesitation in unpleasant and difficult situations. Based on this definition, patience is an active process that makes the individual not complain, endure, and be stable when confronts situations that are difficult and sometimes impossible to change. Moreover, it makes him restraint against inner urges and use hardship and adversity as means to achieve transcendence (Khormaei, Farmani, 2014). Moral philosophers and religious writers emphasized the importance of developing patience as a desirable personality trait. Patience is considered as a trait and character strength that brings about various positive psychological effects, including well-being (Schnitker, 2012) and low negative psychological symptoms (Hossein-Sabet, 2008). Documented evidence shows that patience is positively correlated with positive coping, virtues, and thriving (Schnitker & Emmons, 2007).

Several studies evaluated the relationship between patience and different psychological variables (Hossein-Sabet, 2008; Schnitker, 2012; ShokoofehFard & Khormaei, 2012; Khormaei, Farmani, & Soltani, 2014a; Khormaei, Zareie, Mahdiyari, & Farmani, 2014; Khormaei & Farmani, 2014; Haghjoo, 2013; Ghobari Bonab & KhodayariFard, 2000; Ghobari Bonab, Khodayarifard & Shekahi Yekta, 2001; Farmani, Khormaei, & Dokoo-haki, 2014); some of them are presented below.

Conducting an empirical study on patience, ShekoofehFard and Khormaei (2012) found a significant negative

relationship between patience and aggression (verbal and physical), anger, and violence. Khormaei, Farmani, and Soltani (2014) found evidence for an inverse relationship between patience and hopelessness. In this study, 3 components of patience, including transcendence, persistence, and consent predicted hopelessness significantly and negatively. Patience and its components also correlated positively and significantly with hope and each of its 2 subscales, including pathway thinking, and agency thinking (Khormaei, Zareie, Mahdiyari & Farmani, 2014).

The big 5 personality factors, except openness to experience, predicted total score of patience. Moreover, these 5 factors also predicted patience components. Neuroticism predicted patience negatively, but agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness predicted patience positively (Khormaei & Farmani, 2014). Khormaei, Farmani, and Kalantari (2015) compared patience components among patients with major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and normal individuals. The findings of their study revealed significant differences between the 3 groups in terms of patience components. Results of a study conducted on the relationship between patience and suicidal ideation revealed that components of patience negatively predicted suicidal ideation (Haghjoo, 2013).

Another study also reported positive correlation between all patience components and positive reappraisal coping strategies. Patience was also negatively associated with escape-avoidance strategy (Keyhanfard, 2013). The research showed that patience training can be utilized as an intervention to reduce anxiety and depression, and increase the level of happiness in anxious, depressed, as well as anxious-depressed adolescents (Hossein-Sabet, 2008). Moreover, patience is associated with global health (Farmani, Khormaei, & Baneshi, 2013) resilience, and spiritual transcendence (Razmzan, 2011). As a result, patience is very important in reducing mental disorders. According to Schnitker and Emmons research (2014), patience has moderate correlation with self-control. Thus, there are similarities between patience and self-control, but patience has a meaning beyond self-control and is a discrete variable.

Although Schnitker and Emmons (2014) evaluated the relationship between patience and self-control, it is still necessary to conduct more studies to examine the relationship between these 2 variables in other populations, especially in Iranian population. Moreover, the relationship between patience and self-control was not examined among adolescents. Investigating the relationship between patience and self-control, and the role of patience as a psycho-religious variable in predicting self-control

can guide future research on the use of the educational strategies of patience to enhance self-control, treatment, and prevention of psycho-social trauma. Therefore, the current study aimed at investigating the role of patience in predicting self-control among high school students.

2. Methods

The current cross-sectional study employed the components of patience (transcendence, tolerance, contentment, persistence, and hesitation) as predictor variables and self-control as the criterion variable. The statistical population included all high school students of Shiraz, Iran. Three hundred and thirty-two students (161 female and 171 male) were recruited via random stage cluster sampling method. In other words, from 4 educational districts, 1 district was randomly selected. Then, 5 high schools were randomly selected from the district and in the high schools, several classes were randomly chosen. The samples age range was 15 to 20 years with the mean age of 16 years. Data collection tools included patience scale for children and adolescents and the Self-Control Scale (SCS).

The participants answered the patience scale for children and adolescents and SCS. In all cases, the questionnaires were administered in a counterbalanced order after students signed an informed consent form. Moreover, the cases were instructed how to answer the questions.

The Patience Scale for Children and Adolescents was developed by [Khormaei and Farmani \(2015\)](#) based on the patience scale for adults ([Khormaei, Farmani, and Soltani, 2014b](#)) using Quran components. Patience scale for children and adolescents contains 36 items. Items were scored based on Likert-type rating scale from completely true to completely false. The psychometric properties of this scale were evaluated in elementary, guidance school, and high school students. Results of factor analysis with varimax rotation confirmed 5 components i.e., transcendence, tolerance, contentment, persistence, and hesitation. To assess the reliability of the scale, Cronbach α coefficients were calculated. The Cronbach α coefficient for subscales ranged from 0.50 to 0.85. For the total scale, the Cronbach α coefficients was 0.88 ([Khormaei & Farmani, 2015](#)).

The Self-control Scale (SCS) was developed by [Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone \(2004\)](#). It is a 36-item scale rated based on the Likert-type rating scale from “not at all like me” to “very much like me”. The Cronbach α coefficient for the scale was reported 0.89 by [Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone \(2004\)](#). Moreover, test-retest reliability of the SCS was reported 0.89 ([Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone, 2004](#)). The Cronbach α coefficient for the

scale in another study ([Rafiee Honar & Janbozorgi, 2010](#)) on Iranian university students was 0.89. In the current study, the Cronbach α coefficient was 0.82 for total scale. Internal consistency was calculated through the correlation coefficient of the total scale with any of its items. It ranged from 0.25 to 0.55. Items 6, 15, 34, and 35 were excluded because of the low correlation with total score.

To analyze the data, descriptive statistics of mean, SD, and Pearson correlation coefficient were employed. To investigate the role of patience and its components in predicting self-control, simultaneous multiple regression analysis was used.

3. Results

Mean (SD) and correlation coefficients between patience and its components with self-control are presented in [Table 1](#). According to the correlation results, patience total score and components of hesitation, transcendence, persistence, and contentment showed significant positive correlations with self-control ($P < 0.01$). Prediction of self-control by patience total scores is summarized in [Table 2](#). According to these results, total patience score predicted self-control significantly and positively ($\beta = 0.58$; $P < 0.001$); it also explained 33% of total variance. Moreover, results of simultaneous multiple regressions between self-control and patience components are presented in [Table 2](#). Components of hesitation ($\beta = 0.27$; $P < 0.001$), persistence ($\beta = 0.35$; $P < 0.001$), and transcendence ($\beta = 0.18$; $P < 0.001$) predicted self-control significantly and positively. Totally, these factors explain 36% of the total variance.

4. Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the role of patience and its components in predicting self-control among high school students. Results showed that patience total score and the components of transcendence, persistence, and hesitation positively and significantly correlated with self-control ($P < 0.01$). In other words, patience is associated with increased self-control. To achieve their long-term goals, patients show more skills in controlling behavior, feelings, and thoughts. This result was expected and consistent with the findings of [Schnitker and Emmons \(2007\)](#).

One of the findings of the current study was the role of transcendence as a component of patience in predicting self-control. According to this finding, it can be claimed that enduring hardship, suffering, and adversity to get closer to God and spiritual growth is associated with increased self-control. [Tangney et al. \(2004\)](#) revealed that self-control was significantly and positively correlated

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients between patience and its components with self-control

Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation Coefficients
Total patience score	106.75	16.50	0.58**
Transcendence	21.33	5.43	0.26**
Tolerance	11.93	3.42	0.03
Contentment	9.68	2.84	0.16**
Persistence	31.49	7.89	0.53**
Hesitation	32.32	7.47	0.45**
Self-control	104.52	15.62	1

SD = Standard Deviation.

** P < 0.01.

with individuals' propensity to set high standards for themselves and motivation to reach these criteria (self-oriented perfectionism). [Achtziger and Bayer \(2013\)](#) also found that self-oriented perfectionism (setting high performance standards for oneself) significantly and positively predicted self-control. Therefore, obviously those who endure hardships to reach higher sublime goals (transcendence) have higher levels of self-control. Such people use self-control skills to achieve further development and growth. Hesitation component also positively predicted self-control. In other words, restraint against inner urges and internal desires is associated with higher self-control. Therefore, those who show self-control against inner desires, which are contrary to social expectations or moral standards and inhibit their impulses have higher self-control skills. In fact, targeted impulse inhibition is a way of promoting self-control ([Fujita, 2011](#)). In the current study, persistence also predicted self-control significantly and positively. Persistence is defined as stability in doing the activities. Therefore, those who are

stable in doing activities, pursue their goals, and endure hardships to make a better future, have higher levels of self-control. It should be noted that moderate correlation coefficients between patience total score and its components with self-control showed that the psycho-religious construct of patience is similar to that of self-control in some ways, but it is a distinct construct. This finding was consistent with those of [Schmitker and Emmons \(2007\)](#). Certain limitations of the current study were lack of generalizability of the findings to other populations since the sample of the current study was solely recruited from high school students.

Moreover, use of self-report measures such as the ones used in the current study can lead to certain potential biases. Researchers are suggested to study the relationship between patience and self-control in other age groups. We also recommend investigating the role of demographic factors, such as gender in the relationship, between patience and self-control. Results of the current

Table 2. Self-control prediction based on total patience score and its components

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variables	F	R	R ²	B	β	t	Sig.
Total patience score	Self-control	169.08	0.58	0.33	0.55	0.58	0.13	0.001
Transcendence		0.51	0.18	3.53	0.001			
Tolerance		-0.07	-0.01	-0.30	0.76			
Contentment		37.13	0.60	0.36	0.29	0.05	1.09	0.28
Persistence		0.70	0.35	6.68	0.001			
Hesitation		0.56	0.27	5.05	0.001			

study pave the way for future research and clinical practices to solve problems associated with self-control and prevent the negative consequences of losing self-control through psycho-religious constructs.

School psychologists and counselors and all psychologists and counselors working with adolescents are recommended to utilize educational strategies of patience to enhance self-control among high school students. It is also suggested to emphasize on the components of patience to teach educational strategies of patience.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interests.

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