

Explaining Wisdom Based on Moral Intelligence

Fariborz Dortaj*, Ph.D.

Department of Educational Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Moslem Daneshpayeh

PhD Student, Educational Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Michel Ferrari, Ph.D.

Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, University of Toronto, Canada

Abstract

Wisdom is one of the highest virtues and in a wide range of social activities, ultimately improves oneself and society. It is inherently involved in ethical behavior and the pursuit of social justice and equity for all. Moral intelligence is also one of the moral constructs that lead humans to perform great valuable actions. The purpose of this study was to explain wisdom based on the moral intelligence. For this purpose, a sample of 350 adults (220 females and 130 males) in the age range of 20 to 72 was selected by multistage cluster sampling method from different districts and communities. They answered the wisdom questionnaire of San Diego and the moral intelligence of Lennik and Kiel. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results of the analysis demonstrated that the model fits best for this purpose as the effect of moral intelligence and its dimensions on wisdom was confirmed. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that social and educational settings and environments, in addition to conventional intelligence, can benefit from moral intelligence where wise people with high wisdom can contribute effectively to a better community development.

Keywords: Wisdom, Moral intelligence, Structural model

Introduction

Although wisdom is an ancient and historical concept, there is new interest to wisdom in growth progress in recent years and researchers have been unable to achieve holistic agreement in the definition of wisdom (Kramer, 2000). There is no common definition for the concept (Ardelt, 2003; Kramer, 2000; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). There is an agreement in psychological literature that wisdom is multi-dimension and multi-faceted (Ardelt, 2003; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Webster, 2003). The identity of multi-faceted wisdom leads to different theories (for example Ardel, 2003; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Fang Yang & Hong, 2012; Strengberg, 1998). Theorists have suggested different definition of wisdom. The wisdom system of Berlin defined it as the special knowledge system in basic life system (Baltes & Staudinger, 1990). Ardel defined wisdom as cognitive, reflective, affective coherence (Ardelt, 2004).

In balance theory of Sternberg, wisdom defines as applying practical intelligence and implicit knowledge in intelligence to resolve the issues in way that lead to joint interest. In this theory, the goal accomplishment to joint interest is moral values that show which is right and wrong (Sternberg, 1998, 2001, 2019). Fang Yang and Hong (2012) defined wisdom as integrating intelligence and morality achieved through experience and action based on intelligence and knowledge (mainly personal).

Wisdom in comparing to knowledge, creativity, and intelligence (cognitive, social, and affective) is valuable and moral-based construct and related to values, goals, behavior (Grossman, 2017; Meeks & Jeste, 2009; Sternberg, 1998). Ardel (2011) explained that wisdom is related inherently to moral behavior and social justice. The researchers believe that in the conceptualization of wisdom, there is clear moral context and the judgement and moral reasoning identified as constructive element of wisdom (Killen & Smetana, 2008; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997). The empirical findings

*** Corresponding Author**

Email: f_dortaj@yahoo.com

Received: 02/15/2021

Accepted: 08/10/2021

shows that wisdom is related to moral reasoning positively (Gluck, 2015; Pasupathi, Staudinger & Baltes, 2001) and there is a little study about weather wisdom is related to moral structures (like moral reasoning, moral judgement, moral intelligence, practical morality) (Gluck, 2015). The moral intelligence is one of the related variable to moral structures that its relation with wisdom is acceptable but there is no empirical and theoretical study to examine the relationship between these two variables.

Narvaez (2010) believed that moral intelligence depends on feelings and wisdom and moral behavior to the united feeling, intuition and reason. The moral intelligence is defined as the ability of identifying the right and wrong, moral strong belief and applying them and behaving in a correct and respected way and include the principles of honesty (righteous action), responsibility (accepting action and its outcomes), sympathy (sympathetic attention to others), forgiveness (awareness of failing and wrongs and forgive self and others) (Brown, 2013; as cited in Sotoodeh et al., 1395). The moral intelligence is important and crucial because it influences other intelligences and guides them to valuable actions. Paolohos et al. (2002) defined moral intelligence as ability to understand and combine moral belief and apply them in existing situation and problems used in a reasoning process (Emmons, 2000).

From the other side, there is a relation between wisdom and moral structures and positive relation between wisdom and component of moral intelligence. Delfan and Noghabi (1395) cited responsibility, honesty, righteous as characteristic of wise Iranian people. Also, Leveit (1991) introduced honesty and righteous as personality and interpersonal characteristics. Several studies show the positive relationship between Wisdom and forgiveness and that if the forgiveness increases, the wisdom is increases too (Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Thompson, et al. 2005; Taylor, 2006; Tylor, Bates, & Webster, 2011). The other dimension of moral intelligence is sympathy and worrying that is aligned with foundation of wisdom and it is overlapped with the affective aspect of three-dimension wisdom of Ardel claiming that the wise people don't limit it when they communicate with all people in the world (Ardelt, 2003). So regarding this information, the aim of the study was to see if there is any relationship between moral intelligence, wisdom, and moral intelligence? And how do the moral intelligence and its components interpret the wisdom?

Method

Participants

The method of this research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive in nature. In the present study, available sampling was performed. It was sent online to all social groups (through WhatsApp and Telegram) and people voluntarily entered the relevant web page and responded to the items. At the end of the questionnaire, 305 people answered the questionnaire. In order to conduct the research, first of all, the subjects were assured that the answers to these questionnaires and their results will be only used for the purpose of research and are not related to their evaluation or selection in a specific period. The necessary explanations were then given to complete the questionnaires, and any explanations that were likely to create a biased response were refused. Finally, after administration of the questionnaire, the answers were entered to SPSS 24 software and then, in Amos24 software, modeling was performed. The criteria for entering the study were complete satisfaction and voluntary presence and, consequently, accuracy in answering the questionnaire.

Instruments

SD-WISE: This scale is developed by Tomas and his colleagues (2019) and includes 6 component: insight (it is important for me to understanding the reason of action), managing excitement (I can keep calm in stressful condition), desirable social behavior (I interact with other on way that I want), decisiveness (I decide on time), social counselling (I understanding the feeling), and relativism of values (I enjoy from learning different cultures). The questionnaire included 40 questions and it's scored in Likert's scale. The study of Tomas and his colleague reported the psychometric characteristics of the scale and convergent validity is $r=0.45$ in Ardel's three-dimension wise scale and $r=0.47$ in self evaluating Webster scale. The findings related to differential validity show that the score of the faculties is higher than that of students. Fitting model through the sampling is confirmed by confirmatory Factor analysis. The internal correlation coefficient is 0.70.

Moral competency inventory: This is developed by Lennik and Kiel in 2005. This questionnaire included 40 phrases. Lennik, Kiel and Jordan (2011) has accounted for moral intelligence structure including four main dimensions: honesty, responsibility, forgiveness, and sympathy. The reliability and validity are verified by Martin and Astin (2010). The reliability based on Cronbach's alpha is .85 and in the present study it is .91.

Results

The data were analyzed by SPSS 23 and AMOS. The mean, standard deviation, correlation between moral

intelligence and its components and wisdom are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Mean, SD, Correlation Matrix between Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	honesty	Responsibility	Forgiveness	Compassion	Moral Intelligence	Wisdom	Decisiveness	Emotional Regulation	Insight	Pro-social Behavior	Social Advising	Tolerance
Honesty	30.94	7.03	1											
Responsibility	22.60	5.63	.605**	1										
Forgiveness	14.78	4.22	.415**	.662**	1									
Compassion	7.92	2.29	.592**	.609**	.436**	1								
Moral Intelligence	76.24	15.85	.854**	.888**	.748**	.739**	1							
Wisdom	89.90	9.93	.510**	.482**	.425**	.322**	.557**	1						
Decisiveness	13.29	2.96	.209**	.238**	.152*	.037	.223**	.579**	1					
Emotional Regulation	12.63	3.12	.090	.184*	.188*	-.004	.155*	.575**	.527**	1				

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	honesty	Responsibility	Forgiveness	Compassion	Moral Intelligence	Wisdom	Decisiveness	Emotional Regulation	Insight	Pro-social Behavior	Social Advising	Tolerance
Insight	16.22	2.36	.323**	.264**	.257**	.068	.315**	.550**	.421**	.365**	1			
Pro-social Behavior	15.19	2.15	.409**	.272**	.196**	.268**	.369**	.434**	.191*	.219**	.349**	1		
Social Advising	15.55	2.33	.207**	.206**	.306**	.254**	.283**	.466**	.219**	.252**	.260**	.320**	1	
Tolerance For Divergent Values	16.98	2.20	.372**	.251**	.251**	.231**	.354**	.461**	.268**	.200**	.393**	.386**	.351**	1

As it is shown in Table 1, there is positive correlation between moral intelligence and wisdom. Except the sympathy that there doesn't have a significant correlation with insight (.068) decisiveness (.037) and

affective regulation (-.004), there is a positive and significant correlation between moral intelligence and its dimension and wisdom.

Table 2.
Fit Indices

indexes	CMIN /df	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	TLI	P-Value
Amount	2.273	0.07	0.92	0.90	0.92	0.92	0.90	000.0

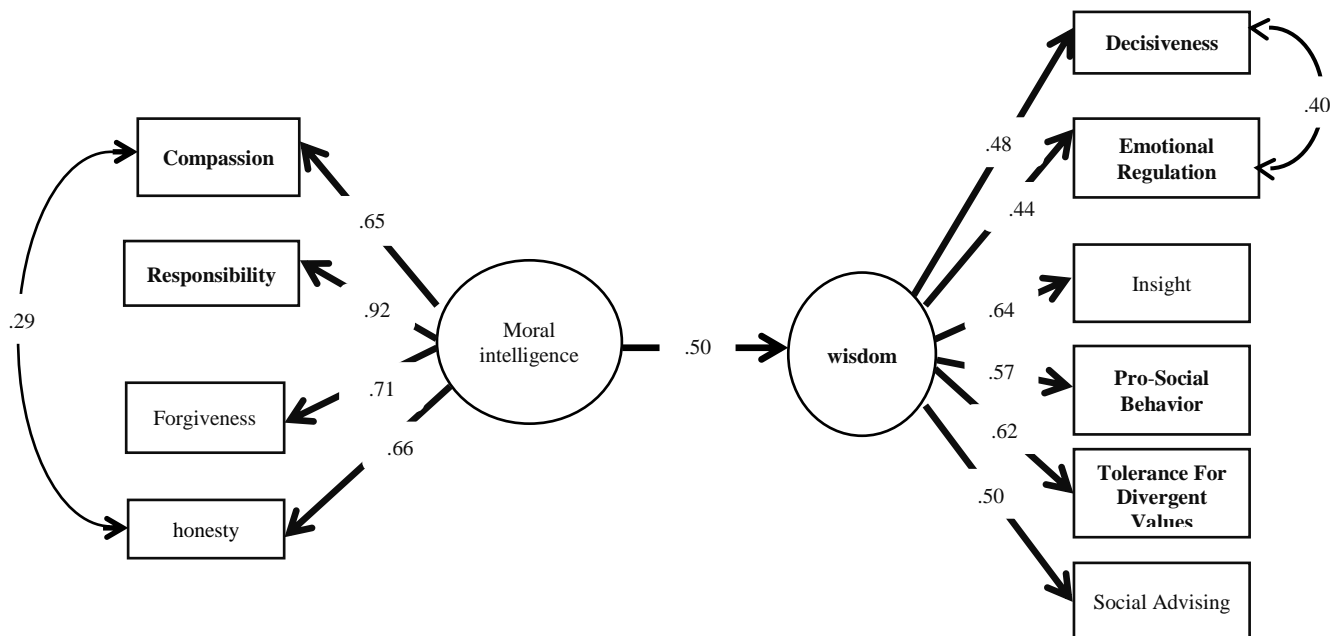


Figure 1.
The Hypothetical Model.

In analysis of the data, structural equation modelling was used to examine the fitting model and hypothesis. Based on it, the relationship between the variables is shown in Table 1. The examining effect coefficients show that there is a significant correlation between moral intelligence and wisdom in the significant level of .001.

The acceptable scientific criteria using “modelling fitting indexes” are shown in Table 2. The index of root mean square error is the main indexes of goodness of fit in the structural equation modelling used in all models. Based on the researcher’s view, if the amount of index is lower than 0.1, the fitting model will be confirmed. Based on Table 1 in the study, as the amount of the index is .07, it can be said that the fitting model is confirmed. Also one of the most important fitting indexes is the result of division CMIN / degree of freedom (DF) that if it's lower than 5, the fitting will be confirmed and in the study is 2.23. In addition, if the indexes are like goodness fitting index (GFI), normalized fitting index (NFI), comparative fitting index (CFI), increasing fitness index (IFI) is higher than an .09, the fitting model will be approved. Thus, because the indexes follow this rule, the fitting model is verified.

Discussion

From the beginning of the human culture, the wisdom is seen as final and ideal point in the growth of people (Kramer, 2000). The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between moral intelligence and wisdom in a model using a structural equation modelling. The finding of this study showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between moral intelligence and wisdom. We can improved intelligent learning by using moral intelligence and do the best actions. In reality, moral intelligence points to this fact that we are not born moral or immoral, but we learn how to be good (Beheshtifar, 2011). Also, trying to get the common interest is a key result for many moral theories and key characteristic of wisdom (Sternberg, et al. 2019), that is aligned with the final goal of wisdom that is achieving to joint interests to all people (Strengber, 1998).

The results showed that moral intelligence and its dimensions (forgiveness, sympathy, responsibility and honesty) are positive forecasting to wisdom that align with Ardel and Jacobe (2009); Tylor (2006); Tylor et al.(2011); Konstam, Chernoff, and Devaney (2001); and three dimension model of wisdom. Forgiveness and sympathy facilitate the kindness to others (Tylor, 2006), and increasing wisdom can occur through improving affective dimension. There is a significant and positive correlation between responsibility and wisdom. In fact, a person who has the highest possibility, accepts his functions and is able to assure that is adapt to the humanity moral principles in the world (Borba, 2005; Lennick & Kiel, 2005), when it is behaved on honesty, the person tries to behave and aligns with the humanity moral principle and with regard to the function of the

moral principles, it's a basic step to achieve to wisdom (Dyemon, 2000). Sternberg knows the necessity of the achieving wisdom is following the moral principles of the world (Sternberg, 1998); so increasing honesty and responsibility increase wisdom.

Conclusion

The result of the study can be applied theoretically and practically. There isn't any study that examines the relationship between moral intelligence and wisdom. So examining this relationship helps in the enrichment of the knowledge. Also, with regard to importance of wisdom as one of the most important constructs in a positive psychology in an educational system especially in the recent years, identifying the priority and related variables to wisdom has important message to the specialists in education. The school and the universities have to teach practical and mental skills and the theoretical knowledge, but they seldom emphasize on finding the meaning, deep understanding of the life and help to public interests. with regard to that the society is facing with some problems like social justice, terrorism and outcome of the climate changes and it's important to teach the leaders and the residents that in the future, there should be in a way that they will be intelligent and wisdom moral and worried about well-being of people, regardless of the context of ethnicity, race, gender, culture and religion (Dai & Cheng, 2017; Sternberg, 2018; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Reznitskaya, 2008).

With regard to training and improving forecasting variable, we can improve the wisdom that subsequently leads to improve well-being and health (Ardelt, 1997, 2000, 2011; Ardelt & Jeste, 2016; Ardelt & Ferrari, 2014; Kramer, 1997; Krause, 2016; Krause & Hayward, 2015; Thomas, Bangen, Ardelt, & Jeste, 2017). It is suggested that future researchers examine the other prior variables and their effect on the well-being and psychological health of people. We have to emphasize on moral intelligence in a social and instructional environments in addition to classical intelligence, in order to create environment that has moral characteristics and can help to the progress of the society and introduce wise people.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest declared.

References

- Ardelt, M. (1997). Wisdom and life satisfaction in old age. *Journals of Gerontology Series B-Psychological Sciences & Social Sciences*, 52B, 15–27.
- Ardelt, M. (2000). Intellectual versus wisdom-related knowledge: The case for a different kind of learning in the later years of life. *Educational Gerontology*, 26, 771–789.
- Ardelt, M. (2003). Empirical assessment of a three-dimensional wisdom scale. *Research on Aging*, 25(3), 275–324.
- Ardelt, M. (2004). Wisdom as expert knowledge system: A critical review of a contemporary operationalization of an ancient concept. *Human Development*, 47(5), 257–285. doi:10.1159/000079154
- Ardelt, M. (2011). The measurement of wisdom: A commentary on Taylor, Bates, and Webster's comparison of the SAWS and 3D-WS. *Experimental Aging Research*, 37(2), 241–255.
- Ardelt, M., & Ferrari, M. (2014). Wisdom and emotions. In P. Verhaeghen & C. Hertzog (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of emotion, social cognition, and problem solving in adulthood* (pp. 256–272). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ardelt, M., & Jacobs, S. (2009). Wisdom, integrity, and life satisfaction in very old age. *Handbook of Research on Adult Learning and Development*, 732–760.
- Ardelt, M., & Jeste, D. V. (2016). Wisdom and hard times: The ameliorating effect of wisdom on the negative association between adverse life events and well-being. *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*. doi:10.1093/geronb/gbw137
- Baltes, P. B., & Smith, J. (1990). The psychology of wisdom and its ontogenesis. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Wisdom: Its nature, origins, and development* (pp. 87–120).
- Baltes, P. B., & Staudinger, U. M. (2000). Wisdom: A metaheuristic (pragmatic) to orchestrate mind and virtue toward excellence. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 122–136. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.122
- Beheshtifar, M. (2012). *The impact of moral intelligence in organizations*. Islamic Azad University of Rafsanjan. Third National Conference of Sohrevardi to celebrate applied ethics.
- Borba, M. (2005). *The step-by-step plan to building moral intelligence*. Nurturing kids' heart & souls. National educator award, national council of self-esteem, Jessey-bass.
- Clarcken, R.H., (2009). *Moral intelligence in the schools*. School of Education, Northern Michigan University, 1–7.
- Dai, D. Y., & Cheng, H. (2017). How to overcome the one-track mind: Teaching for creativity and wisdom. *Roeper Review*, 39(3), 174–177. doi:10.1080/02783193.2017.1318659
- Emmons, R.A. (2000) Spirituality and Intelligence: Problems and Prospects. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10, 57–64
- Enright, R. (2011). *Psychological science of forgiveness: implications for psychotherapy and education*. Presented at the conference, neuroscience and moral action: Neurological conditions of effectivity, decisions, and virtue pontificia universita della santa croce roma, Italy .

- Fengyan, W., & Hong, Zh. (2012). A New theory of wisdom: Integrating intelligence and morality. *Psychology Research*, 2(1), 64-75. ISSN 2159-5542.
- Gluck, J. (2015). Wisdom, Psychology of. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 590– 597). doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.25042-3
- Glück, J., & Bluck, S. (2013). The more life experience model: A theory of the development of personal wisdom. In M. Ferrari & N. Weststrate (Eds.), *The scientific study of personal wisdom* (pp. 75–98). New York: Springer.
- Grossmann, I. (2017). Wisdom in context. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(2), 233– 257.
- Killen, M., & Smetana, J. (2008). Moral judgment and moral neuroscience: Intersections, definitions, and issues. *Child Development Perspectives*, 2(1), 1-6.
- Konstam, V., Chernoff, M., & Deveney, S. (2001). Toward forgiveness: The role of shame, guilt, anger, and empathy. *Counseling and Values*, 46, 26-39.
- Kramer, D. A. (1990). Conceptualizing wisdom: The primacy of affect- cognition relations. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Wisdom: Its nature, origins, and development* (pp. 279-313). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kramer, D. A. (2000). Wisdom as a classical source of human strength: Conceptualization and empirical inquiry. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19, 83–101.
- Krause, N., & Hayward, R. D. (2015a). Assessing whether practical wisdom and awe of God are associated with life satisfaction. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7(1), 51-59. doi:10.1037/a0037694.
- Krause, N. (2016). Assessing the relationships among wisdom, humility, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Adult Development*, 23(3), 140-149. doi:10.1007/s10804-016-9230-0
- Lennick, D., & Kiel, F. (2005). *Moral intelligence, enhancing business performance and leadership success*. New Jersey: Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Pearson education.
- Lennick, D., Kiel, F., & Jordan, K. (2011). *Moral intelligence 2, enhancing business performance and leadership success in turbulent times*. Associate Publisher: Tim Moore.
- Levitt, H. (1999). The development of wisdom: An analysis of Tibetan Buddhist experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 39(2), 85-104.
- Manallack, S. (2006). *Ethics, success and leadership. Public relations and financial communication*. 64 Tennyson St Elwood VIC 3184, 2.
- Martin, D.E., & Austin, B. (2010). Validation of the moral competency inventory measurement instrument: content, construct, convergent and discriminant approaches. *Management Research Review*, 33(5), 437-451.
- McCullough, M. E., Worthington, E. L., & Rachal, K. C. (1997). Interpersonal forgiveness in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 321-336.
- Meeks, T. W., & Jeste, D. V. (2009). Neurobiology of wisdom: A literature overview. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 66(4), 355-365.
- Narvaez, D. (2010). The emotional foundations of high moral intelligence. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 77-94.
- Noghabi, R. & Delfan Biranvand, A. (1395). Implicit theories of wisdom in Iran; a phenomenological study. *Journal of Islamic Psychology*, 3, 105-87.
- Pasupathi, M., Staudinger, U. M., & Baltes, P. B. (2001). Seeds of wisdom: Adolescents' knowledge and judgment about difficult life problems. *Developmental Psychology*, 37, 351–361.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sotoodeh, H., Shakerinia, A., Kheirati, M., Dargahi, Sh. & Ghasemi, Rr. (1395). The relation between spiritual intelligence and moral intelligence and psychological well-being of nurses. *Journal of Ethic and History of Medical Profession*, 9(1), 63-67.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1998). A balance theory of wisdom. *Review of General Psychology*, 2, 347– 365. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.2.4.347
- Sternberg, R. J. (2001b). Why schools should teach for wisdom: The balance theory of wisdom in educational settings. *Educational Psychologist*, 36, 227–245. doi:10.1207/S15326985EP3604_2
- Sternberg, R. J. (2003). What Is an “Expert Student?” *Educational Researcher*, 32, 5–9. doi:10.3102/001318 9X032008005
- Sternberg, R. (2019). Why people often prefer wise guys to guys who are wise: An augmented balance theory of the production and reception of wisdom. In R. Sternberg & J. Glück (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of wisdom* (pp. 16–181). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sternberg, R. J. (2018). Speculations on the role of successful intelligence in solving contemporary world problems. *Journal of Intelligence*, 6, 4.
- Sternberg, R. J., Jarvin, L., & Reznitskaya, A. (2008). Teaching for wisdom through history: Infusing wise thinking skills in the school curriculum. In M. Ferrari & G. Potworowski (Eds.), *Teaching for wisdom* (pp. 37–57). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Taylor, M., Bates, G., & Webster, J. (2011): Comparing the psychometric properties of two measures of wisdom: Predicting forgiveness and psychological well-being with the Self-Assessed Wisdom Scale (SAWS) and the Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale (3D-WS). *Experimental Aging Research: An International Journal Devoted to the Scientific Study of the Aging Process*, 37(2), 129-141.
- Taylor, M. (2006). *Giving wisdom back to the people: Laypeople and their Lay wisdom*. Master Thesis, University of Missouri.

- Thomas, M., Banagan, K., Palmer, B., Martin, A., Avanzino, J., Depp, C., Glorioso, D., Daly, R., & Jeste, D. (2019). A new scale for assessing wisdom based on common domains and a neurobiological model: The San Diego Wisdom Scale (SD-WISE)". *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 108, 40-47.
- Thomas, M.L., Bangen, K.J., Ardelt, M., & Jeste, D.V. (2017). Development of a 12-item abbreviated Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale (3D-WS-12): Item selection and psychometric properties. *Assessment*, 24 (1), 71e82.
- Thompson, L. Y., Snyder, C. R., Hoffman, L., Michael, S. T., Rasmussen, H. N., Billings, L. S., et al. (2005). Dispositional forgiveness of self, others, and situations. *Journal of Personality*, 73, 313-360.
- Webster, J. D. (2003). An exploratory analysis of a self-assessed wisdom scale. *Journal of Adult Development*, 10, 13-22.
- Webster, J. D. (2007). Measuring the character strength of wisdom. *Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 65, 163-138.

How to Site: Dortaj, F., Daneshpayeh, M., & Ferrari, M. (2021). Explaining wisdom based on moral intelligence. *Iranian Journal of Learning & Memory*, 4(14), 7-14. Dor: 20.1001.1.26455455.2021.4.14.4.6



Iranian Journal of Learning & Memory is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.