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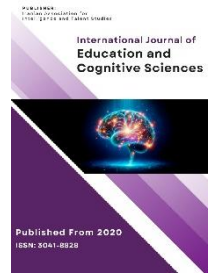
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## A Phenomenological Study of the Spiritual Education Curriculum in Lower Secondary Education with a Dynamic Lifestyle Approach

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### Article Info

### ABSTRACT

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**Purpose:** The present study aimed to explore and explain the structure and components of the spiritual education curriculum in lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach from the perspective of experts and specialists.

**Methods and Materials:** This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The participants consisted of eight experts and specialists in the field of spiritual education curriculum, who were selected through purposive and sequential sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. To ensure rigor, criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied through strategies including member checking and expert review. Data analysis was carried out using Colaizzi's seven-step method (1978), involving extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of themes, and validation of findings.

**Findings:** The analysis revealed that the spiritual education curriculum in lower secondary education is a multidimensional and integrated construct comprising eleven main themes and fifty-eight sub-themes. These themes include rationale, general principles, objectives, content, teaching strategies, evaluation, teacher role, learner role, family, environment, and time. The findings indicate that effective spiritual education is grounded in nurturing innate tendencies, value internalization, and meaning-making processes, while requiring coherence among curricular components, learner-centered approaches, contextual alignment, and continuous, dynamic implementation across educational settings.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that the spiritual education curriculum, when framed within a dynamic lifestyle approach, functions as a holistic and context-sensitive system that integrates philosophical, pedagogical, and environmental dimensions to support adolescents' identity formation, moral development, and existential understanding. The proposed framework highlights the necessity of aligning curriculum design with learners' lived experiences and developmental needs, emphasizing flexibility, interaction, and sustained engagement to enhance the effectiveness of spiritual education in contemporary educational systems.

**Keywords:** curriculum, spiritual education, dynamic lifestyle, phenomenology, lower secondary education

## 1. Introduction

The contemporary educational landscape has increasingly recognized the necessity of addressing not only cognitive and academic dimensions of development but also the spiritual and existential aspects of learners' lives. In this regard, the concept of spiritual education has emerged as a critical component of holistic education, particularly during adolescence, a developmental period characterized by identity formation, meaning-making, and value internalization. Adolescents actively seek coherence between their internal beliefs and external realities, and educational systems are expected to provide structured opportunities for nurturing this process. The integration of spiritual education within formal curricula reflects a paradigm shift from purely knowledge-based instruction toward a more comprehensive approach that encompasses moral, emotional, and existential dimensions of human development (King & Boyatzis, 2023; Kosarkova & Roubalova, 2024; Underwood & Vagnini, 2024).

Spiritual education, as a multidimensional construct, involves the cultivation of values, beliefs, and experiences that contribute to individuals' sense of purpose, connectedness, and transcendence. It is not limited to religious instruction but extends to fostering meaning in life, self-awareness, and ethical responsibility. Empirical studies have demonstrated that spirituality is significantly associated with psychological well-being, resilience, and adaptive functioning in adolescents, indicating its central role in promoting mental health and identity coherence (Heydari et al., 2022; Kosarkova & Roubalova, 2024; Underwood & Vagnini, 2024). Moreover, the development of spiritual capacities enables learners to navigate complex life challenges, regulate emotions, and construct meaningful interpretations of their experiences, thereby contributing to their overall psychosocial adjustment (Isra et al., 2024; Vaughan, 2019).

The theoretical foundations of spiritual education are deeply rooted in both psychological and philosophical traditions. From a psychological perspective, theories of motivation and self-determination emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and internalization of values as essential components of meaningful learning experiences. According to self-determination theory, individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors aligned with their internal values when educational environments support autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Soenens et al., 2019). Similarly, social cognitive

theory highlights the role of observational learning, self-regulation, and moral agency in shaping individuals' behavior and ethical decision-making (Bandura, 2018). These theoretical perspectives underscore the necessity of designing educational programs that facilitate active engagement, reflection, and personal meaning-making in the process of spiritual development.

In addition to psychological theories, philosophical and cultural perspectives play a significant role in shaping the conceptualization of spiritual education. The notion of human nature as inherently oriented toward growth, transcendence, and moral perfection forms the basis of many educational frameworks that emphasize spirituality as a fundamental dimension of human existence. Educational theorists have argued that curricula should be aligned with the innate tendencies and existential needs of learners, thereby fostering a harmonious development of cognitive, emotional, and spiritual capacities (Beheshti, 2016; Marzouqi & Hadadniya, 2017). Furthermore, value theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals prioritize and internalize values, highlighting the dynamic relationship between personal beliefs and behavioral outcomes (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Within the context of curriculum studies, the integration of spiritual education requires a systematic and comprehensive approach that addresses multiple components, including objectives, content, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. Previous research has emphasized the importance of designing curricula that are coherent, contextually relevant, and responsive to learners' developmental needs. For instance, studies on religious and spiritual curriculum models have identified key components such as value orientation, experiential learning, and contextualization within real-life situations as essential elements of effective spiritual education (Adib-Manesh et al., 2018; Najafi et al., 2021; Rezaei et al., 2021). Similarly, the development of religious identity curricula has highlighted the role of meaning-making processes and reflective practices in facilitating students' internalization of spiritual concepts (Maleki, 2021a, 2021b).

Recent empirical investigations have further demonstrated the positive impact of balanced and integrative spiritual curricula on adolescents' development. Such curricula, which combine cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of learning, have been shown to enhance spiritual identity, social adjustment, and moral reasoning among students (Ahmad et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2023). In addition, holistic educational approaches that

integrate spiritual and moral dimensions into the broader curriculum framework contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals capable of navigating the complexities of modern life (Saepudin, 2024). These findings highlight the necessity of adopting dynamic and flexible curricular models that can accommodate the diverse needs and experiences of learners.

The role of individual differences in the process of spiritual learning is another critical consideration in curriculum design. Adolescents vary in their cognitive abilities, emotional dispositions, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences, all of which influence their engagement with spiritual content. Research indicates that effective spiritual education must be tailored to accommodate these differences, providing differentiated learning opportunities that support personalized meaning-making processes (Hosseini et al., 2023; Smith & Snell, 2022). This perspective aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that emphasize learner-centered approaches and the importance of fostering active participation and agency in the learning process.

Furthermore, the relationship between spiritual education and identity formation has been extensively examined in the literature. Adolescence is a critical period for the development of personal and social identity, during which individuals explore and internalize values, beliefs, and roles. Spiritual education plays a pivotal role in this process by providing a framework for understanding oneself and one's place in the world. Studies have shown that engagement with spiritual and religious content contributes to the formation of a coherent identity and a meaningful lifestyle, thereby enhancing individuals' sense of purpose and direction in life (King & Boyatzis, 2023; Naghibi et al., 2023a, 2023b).

In the context of educational policy and practice, the importance of spiritual education has been increasingly recognized in national and international frameworks. Policy documents and reform initiatives have emphasized the need for integrating spiritual and moral dimensions into educational systems as part of a broader effort to promote sustainable development and social cohesion. For example, macro-level educational policies have highlighted the role of curriculum transformation in fostering holistic development and aligning educational practices with societal values and cultural contexts (Motavalli & Shiri, 2026). Additionally, approaches that emphasize a theocentric and nature-oriented perspective have been proposed as effective frameworks for integrating spirituality into the curriculum, reflecting a

synthesis of traditional values and contemporary educational needs (Shirvani-Shiri, 2025).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of spiritual education, several challenges remain in its implementation. These challenges include conceptual ambiguities, lack of standardized frameworks, and difficulties in operationalizing spiritual constructs within formal educational settings. Moreover, there is a need for more empirical research that explores the lived experiences of educators and learners in relation to spiritual education, providing insights into the practical implications of theoretical models. Qualitative approaches, particularly phenomenology, offer valuable tools for addressing these gaps by capturing the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals involved in the educational process (Bazargan Harandi, 2015; Haj Bagheri et al., 2019).

In addition, the dynamic nature of contemporary lifestyles necessitates the development of curricula that are adaptable, context-sensitive, and responsive to the evolving needs of learners. A dynamic lifestyle approach emphasizes flexibility, continuous growth, and the integration of various life domains, including personal, social, and spiritual dimensions. Such an approach aligns with the principles of holistic education and supports the development of competencies required for navigating complex and rapidly changing environments (Alipour et al., 2022; Bagheri, 2022). By incorporating these principles into curriculum design, educators can create learning environments that foster resilience, adaptability, and meaningful engagement with life.

Overall, the integration of spiritual education into the lower secondary curriculum represents a critical step toward achieving a balanced and holistic educational system. It requires a comprehensive understanding of theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of educational practices. By examining the perspectives of experts and specialists in the field, it is possible to gain deeper insights into the essential components and characteristics of an effective spiritual education curriculum. Therefore, the present study aims to conduct a phenomenological analysis of the spiritual education curriculum in lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach.

## 2. Methods and Materials

The present study was conducted using a qualitative approach and a phenomenological design. Phenomenology

is the scientific study, description, and precise interpretation of various life phenomena, emphasizing all domains of lived experience. In phenomenological research, individuals' experiences, perceptions, and feelings are examined. According to Astraubert and Carpenter, phenomenology is an approach aimed at describing specific phenomena or the appearance of things and lived experiences. The central focus of phenomenology is lived experience, as these experiences construct the meaning of each phenomenon for individuals and determine what is perceived as real and authentic in their lives (Haj Bagheri et al., 2019). Since phenomenology seeks to describe human experiences within the context in which they occur and provides the richest and most descriptive data, its application is appropriate for exploring and explaining the perspectives of experts and specialists regarding the spiritual education curriculum and for offering a deeper clarification and description of the phenomenon under study.

The participants of the study consisted of experts and specialists in the field of spiritual education curriculum. Considering the aim of the study, which was to explain the perspectives of experts and specialists regarding the spiritual education curriculum, eight participants were selected based on theoretical saturation through purposive sampling and a sequential sampling strategy. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The duration of each interview ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, after which content analysis was conducted on the expressed viewpoints. Among the eight participants, in terms of work experience, five individuals had between 11 and 20 years of experience, and three had more than 20 years of experience. In terms of age distribution, three participants were between 36 and 40 years old, three were between 41 and 50 years old, and two were over 51 years old.

Qualitative content analysis involves a systematic classification process in which codes and categories are directly and inductively derived from raw data. Data analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's seven-step method (1978), which includes reading significant statements and achieving empathic understanding with participants, extracting important statements related to the phenomenon, formulating meanings from these statements, organizing meanings into clusters and categories, returning to the original data for comparison, describing the phenomenon under study, and finally validating the findings by returning the descriptions to participants. Subsequently, coding and extraction of main categories and subcategories were performed. Given that the criteria for rigor in qualitative

content analysis include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, strategies such as member checking and expert review were employed. For member checking, in addition to returning participants' statements during interviews, the full set of codes and categories was provided to three experts, and their feedback was used for revision or confirmation. For transferability, the complete data along with codes and categories were shared with three additional reviewers. Regarding confirmability, all research activities were carefully documented. Ethical considerations were observed by establishing a supportive and respectful interview environment and obtaining participants' consent. Due to participants' refused to consent for audio recording, data collection relied solely on note-taking during interviews.

### 3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants indicated that the mean age of women in the experimental group was 46.82 years (SD = 7.91), while in the control group it was 45.67 years (SD = 8.14), suggesting relative homogeneity between groups in terms of age distribution. The majority of participants in both groups were married (experimental: 72.22%; control: 66.67%), and the rest were either widowed or divorced. Regarding educational level, most participants had completed secondary education (experimental: 50.00%; control: 44.44%), followed by university education (experimental: 27.78%; control: 33.33%) and primary education (experimental: 22.22%; control: 22.22%). In terms of employment status, a substantial proportion of participants were housewives (experimental: 61.11%; control: 66.67%), with the remaining participants engaged in part-time or full-time employment. The mean duration since diagnosis of breast cancer was 2.84 years (SD = 1.21) in the experimental group and 2.91 years (SD = 1.35) in the control group. All participants had undergone surgical treatment involving partial or total mastectomy and reported experiencing varying degrees of amputation-related grief symptoms and death anxiety at baseline. Overall, the two groups were comparable across demographic and clinical variables, indicating that any observed post-intervention differences could be attributed with greater confidence to the treatment effect.

From the analysis of the text of the semi-structured interviews with 8 experts and specialists regarding the spiritual education curriculum, 11 main themes and 58 sub-

themes were identified as follows: rationale (3 indicators), general principles (6 indicators), objectives (6 indicators), content (7 indicators), teaching strategies (6 indicators), evaluation (6 indicators), teacher role (6 indicators), learner role (5 indicators), family (3 indicators), environment (5 indicators), and time (5 indicators). Each of these is discussed below.

**1. Rationale:** The first theme, titled the domain of rationale-related factors, included diverse viewpoints. In this regard, 3 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the rationale in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. This theme itself includes the following sub-themes:

### **1-1. Necessity of Nurturing Innate Tendencies During Adolescence**

Nurturing innate tendencies during adolescence is a fundamental necessity for the healthy development of personality and individual identity, because this period is accompanied by the intensification of internal needs such as autonomy, meaning-seeking, competence, and social relatedness, and neglecting these needs may lead to identity confusion and reduced intrinsic motivation. According to self-determination theory, the satisfaction of innate psychological needs plays an essential role in the formation of intrinsic motivation, mental health, and adolescent well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Research also shows that adolescents who are provided with opportunities in educational settings to express and cultivate their innate tendencies demonstrate higher self-regulation, greater purposefulness, and more desirable social adjustment (Soenens et al., 2019). Attention to human nature in the educational process of adolescents can provide the foundation for their balanced cognitive, emotional, and moral growth and can prevent psychological and behavioral harm. Therefore, the deliberate cultivation of innate tendencies in adolescence is not merely an educational option, but a scientific and educational necessity (Bagheri, 2022). Accordingly, one of the experts (P6) stated: “Nurturing innate tendencies in students is one of the necessities to which the curriculum system must pay attention.”

### **1-2. The Need to Strengthen Values and Attitudes**

Strengthening values and attitudes during adolescence is one of the essential requirements of human and social education, because this period is the most sensitive stage in the formation of an individual’s cognitive, moral, and

identity frameworks, and the attitudes formed during it determine future behavioral orientations and decision-making. Developmental psychology research indicates that values, as stable cognitive-emotional constructs, play an important role in regulating behavior, assigning meaning to experiences, and increasing adolescents’ sense of personal coherence (Schwartz et al., 2012). From the perspective of social learning theory and moral development, strengthening positive attitudes and internalized values lays the groundwork for social responsibility, reduction of high-risk behaviors, and increased moral commitment (Bandura, 2018). Domestic research findings also indicate that the deliberate teaching of values and attitudes within the educational system has a significant effect on identity formation, self-control, and adolescents’ mental health, and neglecting it may lead to value confusion and identity conflict (Naghbi et al., 2023b). Therefore, the purposeful strengthening of values and attitudes during adolescence is not only an educational goal, but also a scientific necessity for ensuring balanced individual and social development. Accordingly, one of the experts (P3) stated: “Strengthening values and attitudes lays the groundwork for the growth of students’ personalities; therefore, if the curriculum system does not move toward reinforcing values and attitudes, holistic development will not be possible.”

### **1-3. Spiritual Capacities Across Various Domains**

Spiritual capacities, as a set of human inner potentials for meaning-seeking, self-awareness, moral orientation, and transcendent connection with oneself, others, and existence, play an important role in personal, social, educational, and professional domains. Research shows that spiritual capacities, by strengthening meaning in life, psychological resilience, and emotional regulation, contribute to the promotion of mental health and individual adjustment (King & Boyatzis, 2023). In the field of education, the cultivation of spiritual capacities is associated with increased intrinsic motivation, ethical responsibility, and deeper learning (Vaughan, 2019). Domestic research findings also indicate that strengthening spiritual capacities in adolescents and young people can play an effective role in the formation of spiritual identity, the reduction of social harms, and the promotion of mental health (Heydari et al., 2022). Therefore, attention to spiritual capacities in different domains of life is not merely a value-based approach, but rather a scientific necessity for balanced human growth across cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions. Accordingly, one of the experts (P4) stated: “Today’s students need to enhance their

spiritual capacities in different domains so that, through spiritual growth, they can live calm and healthy lives.”

**2. General Principles:** In the next theme related to principles, 6 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the principles in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators, in order, include:

### 2-1. Religion-Centeredness

Religion-centeredness in the spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach for lower secondary students plays an essential role in directing adolescents’ moral identity, attitudes, and behavioral patterns, because this period coincides with the formation of lasting beliefs, values, and lifestyle orientations. Educational research indicates that integrating religious teachings with the goals of spiritual education can strengthen meaning-seeking, self-control, and social responsibility in adolescents and guide them toward an active, committed, and ethically grounded lifestyle (Bagheri, 2021; Naghibi et al., 2023a). From the perspective of official educational documents in Iran, religious and spiritual education is considered one of the main missions of the national curriculum, and emphasis is placed on the pervasive presence of religion across all domains of education (Alipour et al., 2022; Motavalli & Shiri, 2026). International studies also show that meaning-oriented spiritual and religious education is significantly associated with increased psychological well-being, a greater sense of meaning in life, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle in adolescents (Kosarkova & Roubalova, 2024). Accordingly, one of the experts (P2) stated: “Religion-centeredness in the spiritual education curriculum is not merely the transmission of doctrinal concepts, but a scientific strategy for cultivating a dynamic and meaningful lifestyle in adolescents.”

### 2-2. Comprehensiveness

In designing a spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, comprehensiveness means addressing learners’ cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously so that they not only learn religious concepts, but are also able to apply spiritual values and behaviors in their everyday lives. Research has shown that integrated and comprehensive approaches in spiritual education, which combine religious and ethical content with educational materials and life behaviors, improve students’ moral development, spiritual awareness, and lifestyle empowerment (Saepudin, 2024). In other

words, although religious teachings are important, they become truly internalized and dynamic only when they are integrated comprehensively into the curriculum alongside other areas of learning (Alipour et al., 2022). Accordingly, one of the experts (P5) stated: “From the perspective of official educational documents, religious and spiritual education are recognized as essential domains of the national curriculum, and emphasis is placed on the comprehensive presence of religion and spirituality in the teaching-learning process, because such comprehensiveness can contribute to the formation of a dynamic, value-oriented, and responsible lifestyle in adolescents.”

### 2-3. Dynamism

Dynamism in the spiritual education curriculum means designing and implementing educational activities and content in ways that do not remain fixed and rigid, but rather possess flexibility, responsiveness to the changing needs of adolescents, and direct relevance to their lived experiences. This dynamism, which is considered one of the essential components of successful spiritual education programs, transforms spiritual learning into an ongoing and evolving process and directly influences the formation of a dynamic lifestyle and meaning-seeking in adolescents (Saepudin, 2024). According to scholarly analyses of spiritual education, spiritual curricula must go beyond the transmission of fixed information and provide opportunities for experience-based activities, reflection, and value-based connection so that students can apply spiritual meanings and values in their real lives. The educational literature also emphasizes that more dynamic spiritual curricula, by attending to the multiple cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of the human being, encompass a broader range of learning experiences and contribute to adolescents’ holistic development (Adib-Manesh et al., 2018). Accordingly, one of the experts (P6) stated: “Dynamism in the spiritual education curriculum is not a decorative choice, but a necessity of contemporary instructional design for promoting a dynamic lifestyle in students.”

### 2-4. Balance

Balance in the spiritual education curriculum means simultaneous and balanced attention to the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions of learning so that lower secondary students do not merely memorize religious concepts, but can apply those concepts in their dynamic everyday lifestyles. Educational studies have shown that the absence of balance among the various domains of spiritual education disconnects learning from

real life and reduces educational effectiveness, whereas balanced spiritual curricula strengthen students' meaning-related and ethical capacities (Ahmad et al., 2023). Mohammadi et al. also reported that balanced spiritual curricula, by integrating content and diverse learning methods, contribute to the development of spiritual identity, ethical decision-making, and social adjustment in students (Mohammadi et al., 2023). Accordingly, one of the experts (P8) stated: "Balance in the design and implementation of the spiritual education curriculum is a scientific principle for realizing a dynamic lifestyle in adolescents."

### 2-5. Attention to Differences

Individual differences, including variables such as value-oriented beliefs, learning styles, level of meaning-seeking, and psychological-emotional capacities, play a determining role in the effectiveness of spiritual education curricula based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, because these personal variations can alter the way students understand and interpret spiritual concepts, their motivation to participate in religious activities, and their ability to generalize teachings to real life. Educational psychology research has shown that programs that take individual differences into account in their design and implementation are more effective in promoting spiritual well-being, moral self-awareness, and meaning-oriented behaviors (Smith & Snell, 2022). Likewise, individual components such as initial spiritual orientation, cognitive styles, and personality differences in relation to spiritual and religious content have been identified as intervening factors in spiritual learning, and attention to them in curriculum development contributes to better adolescent adjustment and spiritual growth (Hosseini et al., 2023). Accordingly, one of the experts (P4) stated: "The spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach must have a flexible design that is responsive to students' individual differences so that it can lay the groundwork for balanced and meaning-oriented spiritual growth among diverse groups of lower secondary learners."

### 2-6. The Central Role of the Teacher and the Educator

The role of the teacher and educator in achieving the goals of the spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach for lower secondary students extends beyond the mere transmission of religious information and includes creating a supportive learning environment, behavioral modeling, meaning-guidance, and facilitating value-oriented lived experiences. Educational research has shown that the teacher, as a central agent in strengthening spirituality and ethical values, can enhance students'

motivation for meaning-seeking and expand their spiritual behaviors through participatory and supportive methods (Saepudin, 2024). In fact, teachers do not merely teach content; they act as guides, mentors, and role models so that learners can implement the meaning of teachings in real life. Adib-Manesh et al. also emphasized that the role of the educator in spiritual education includes creating the conditions for spiritual experience, developing value identity, and cultivating ethical behaviors, and that attention to students' individual differences and spiritual questions contributes to the dynamism and effectiveness of the curriculum (Adib-Manesh et al., 2018). Accordingly, one of the experts (P1) stated: "The teacher and educator are not merely transmitters of knowledge; rather, they are central to the design and implementation of spiritual education strategies that strengthen a dynamic and meaning-oriented lifestyle in adolescents."

**3. Objectives:** In the next theme related to objectives, 6 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the objectives in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

#### 3-1. Cultivating a God-Oriented, Self-Aware, and Dynamic Human Being on the Path of Holistic Growth

Cultivating a God-oriented, self-aware, and dynamic human being on the path of holistic growth can play a central role in the spiritual education curriculum. In this regard, one of the experts (P5) stated: "Cultivating a God-oriented, self-aware, and dynamic human being on the path of holistic growth can play a central role in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach; therefore, the lower secondary curriculum should take this matter into account and pay attention to it." Another expert (P8) stated: "Curricula in our educational system should primarily move in the direction of holistic growth, with attention to the cultivation of a God-oriented human being and spiritual education."

#### 3-2. Internalization of a Monotheistic Worldview and Meaning-Seeking Across Life Domains

Another sub-theme related to the main theme of objectives was the internalization of a monotheistic worldview and meaning-seeking across the scope of life. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: "The internalization of a monotheistic worldview and meaning-seeking across life domains can play a central role in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach; therefore,

the lower secondary curriculum should take this matter into account and pay attention to it.”

### **3-3. A Sense of Responsibility Toward Self, Others, and the Environment**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of objectives was a sense of responsibility toward self, others, and the environment. In this regard, one of the experts (P4) stated: “The curriculum must create a sense of responsibility in students; this responsibility should not be limited to the self, but should also extend to others and even the surrounding environment.” Another expert (P1) stated: “A sense of responsibility toward self, others, and the environment should be intrinsic to curricula in our educational system.”

### **3-4. Acquiring the Ability to Bring Balance to Life**

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of objectives was acquiring the ability to bring balance to life. In this regard, one of the experts (P7) stated: “Having a balanced life and acquiring the ability to maintain such balance is highly important and should be taken into account in the curriculum, because balance in life provides the foundation for learners’ growth.” Another expert (P2) stated: “The absence of balance in life can lead an individual astray; it should be noted that both excess and deficiency are the result of imbalance in life. Therefore, the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should create the conditions for learners to acquire the ability to bring balance to life.”

### **3-5. The Ability to Recognize Specific Moral Situations and Make Spiritual Decisions**

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of objectives was the ability to recognize specific moral situations and make spiritual decisions. In this regard, one of the experts (P2) stated: “One of the objectives of the spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should be attention to students’ ability to recognize specific moral situations and make spiritual decisions.”

### **3-6. Developing a Lively and Dynamic Spirit in Facing Life Issues**

The final sub-theme related to the main theme of objectives was developing a lively and dynamic spirit in facing life issues. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: “One of the objectives of the spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach is attention to the development of a lively and dynamic spirit in students when facing life issues. If students do not possess a lively, active, and dynamic spirit in confronting life issues, they will not be able to succeed, continue the path, or attain

perfection and holistic growth, and they will distance themselves from problems and problem-solving.”

**4. Content:** In the next theme related to content, 7 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of content in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

#### **4-1. Linking Content to a Monotheistic View of Existence**

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of content was linking content to a monotheistic view of existence. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “Content should be developed on the basis of a monotheistic view of existence and a monotheistic orientation. In other words, content specialists should not neglect the principle of monotheism-centeredness in the content of textbooks for this level.” Another expert (P2) stated: “Linking content to a monotheistic view of existence should be one of the important principles in developing and producing content at the secondary level.”

#### **4-2. A Maximal View of Religion and the Broad Dimensions of Life**

Educational activities, and especially religious education, have an undeniable influence on human individual and collective life. In order to achieve intended goals, such activities are governed by principles. Identifying and specifying the principles and dimensions of education in any field—religious, social, ethical, rational, and so forth—is among the essential actions that must be undertaken before any educational activity (Adib-Manesh et al., 2018; Bagheri, 2021). Therefore, the content of the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should be grounded in religion and its principles across all dimensions of life. In this regard, one of the experts (P5) stated: “Having a maximal view of religion and the broad dimensions of life in developing the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach is a necessity.”

#### **4-3. Connection With Real Life**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of content was connection with real life. In other words, the content of the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should be connected to students’ real lives. In this regard, one of the experts (P6) stated: “The content of the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a

dynamic lifestyle approach should be connected to students' real lives; the absence of such a connection will lead to fragmentation and students' inability to engage with educational content."

#### **4-4. Benefiting From Learners' Spiritual Experiences in the Formation of Emergent Content**

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of content was benefiting from learners' spiritual experiences in the formation of emergent content. In this regard, one of the experts (P7) stated: "Learners' experiences play a central role in their learning process; therefore, in developing the content of the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, learners' spiritual experiences should be utilized in shaping emergent content."

#### **4-5. Coherence of Content Components**

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of content was the coherence of content components. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: "Curricular content should be coherent and interconnected. Incoherent content disperses students' minds and will not have the necessary effectiveness; therefore, the components of content in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach must enjoy sufficient coherence."

#### **4-6. Attention to Dynamism in Confronting Life Issues and Obstacles**

The sixth sub-theme related to the main theme of content was attention to dynamism in confronting life issues and obstacles. In this regard, one of the experts (P6) stated: "Attention to dynamism in confronting life issues and obstacles plays a vital role in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach."

#### **4-7. Attractiveness and Diversity of Learning Opportunities in Strengthening Spirituality**

The seventh sub-theme related to the main theme of content was the attractiveness and diversity of learning opportunities in strengthening spirituality. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: "Attractive content engages students more deeply; therefore, in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, attention to the attractiveness and diversity of learning opportunities in strengthening spirituality is undeniable."

**5. Teaching Strategies:** With regard to the element of teaching strategies, 6 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the

status and conditions of teaching strategies in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

#### **5-1. Attention to Learner Characteristics and Content Characteristics**

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of teaching strategies was attention to learner characteristics and content characteristics. In this regard, one of the experts (P1) stated: "Effective teaching strategies must be based on learner characteristics and the principle of individual differences; therefore, in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, sufficient attention must be paid both to learner characteristics and to content characteristics, otherwise teaching will not be effective."

#### **5-2. Emphasis on the Modeling Method**

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of teaching strategies was emphasis on the modeling method. Modeling is one of the most effective teaching methods in the spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. In this regard, one of the experts (P6) stated: "Presenting appropriate models in teaching plays a central role in instruction."

#### **5-3. Presence of Teachers With Spiritual Competence**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of teaching strategies was the presence of teachers with spiritual competence. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: "The shortage of teachers with the necessary competence in the field of Islamic education is one of the major obstacles to the growth of students' spiritual education."

#### **5-4. Practices of Meditation and Personal Reflection**

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of teaching strategies was practices of meditation and personal reflection. In this regard, one of the experts (P5) stated: "Meditation and personal reflection should be incorporated into spiritual education curricula, especially at the secondary level, so that students can better achieve self-knowledge."

#### **5-5. Discussion, Dialogue, and Persuasion in Spiritual Matters**

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of teaching strategies was discussion, dialogue, and persuasion in spiritual matters. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: "For a better understanding of topics related to spiritual matters and spiritual and religious education, it is better for students to engage in discussion, dialogue, and persuasion in spiritual matters so that they can gain deeper understanding through this process."

## 5-6. Qur'anic, Narrative, and Literary Interventions in the Teaching Process

The sixth sub-theme related to the main theme of teaching strategies was Qur'anic, narrative, and literary interventions in the teaching process. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: "Qur'anic, narrative, and literary interventions in the teaching process can create stronger inclination among learners and foster willingness to learn and reflect on spiritual and religious issues; therefore, in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, efforts should be made to ensure that Qur'anic, narrative, and literary interventions are taken into consideration in the teaching process."

**6. Evaluation:** With regard to the element of student evaluation, 6 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of evaluation in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

### 6-1. Stage-Based and Formative Evaluation

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of evaluation was stage-based and formative evaluation. In this regard, one of the experts (P6) stated: "In the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, stage-based and formative evaluation should be used."

### 6-2. The Method of Observing Spiritual Behavior

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of evaluation was the method of observing spiritual behavior. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: "In the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, the method of observing spiritual behavior and spiritual behavioral exemplars in learners should be used."

### 6-3. Self-Evaluation

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of evaluation was self-evaluation. In this regard, one of the experts (P1) stated: "In the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, self-evaluation should be used in the curriculum so that the learner can evaluate the extent of his or her own progress."

### 6-4. Evaluation Through Classmates

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of evaluation was evaluation through classmates. In this regard, one of the experts (P1) stated: "In the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a

dynamic lifestyle approach, evaluation through classmates should be incorporated into the curriculum."

### 6-5. Evaluation Through the Family

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of evaluation was evaluation through the family. In this regard, one of the experts (P7) stated: "The family is one of the important components of the curriculum, and its interaction with the school and the educational system is important throughout the entire process; this is especially evident in the element of evaluation."

### 6-6. Avoiding Behavioral Comparison of Individuals in Spiritual Matters

The sixth sub-theme related to the main theme of evaluation was avoiding behavioral comparison of individuals in spiritual matters. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: "Not comparing students within the evaluation system is one of the most important issues that must be considered in curricula, especially in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach."

**7. Teacher Role:** With regard to the element of teacher role, 6 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the teacher's role in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

### 7-1. Creating Spiritual Opportunities

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of teacher role was creating spiritual opportunities. In this regard, one of the experts (P4) stated: "The teacher's duty and role is to provide opportunities for learning; in other words, in the spiritual education curriculum, the teacher should be a provider of spiritual opportunities."

### 7-2. Spiritual Self-Development

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of teacher role was spiritual self-development. In this regard, one of the experts (P5) stated: "The teacher's duty and role involve spiritual self-development and creating and understanding meaning in life."

### 7-3. Facilitating Spiritual Experiences

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of teacher role was facilitating spiritual experiences. In this regard, one of the experts (P7) stated: "The teacher is considered a facilitator of students' spiritual experiences."

### 7-4. Participation in Designing the Spiritual Curriculum

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of teacher role was participation in designing the spiritual curriculum.

In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “The teacher’s duty and role include participating in the design of the spiritual curriculum.” Another expert (P1) stated: “The teacher should participate in designing the spiritual curriculum.”

#### **7-5. Communication With the Family**

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of teacher role was communication with the family. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “Communication with the family is part of the teacher’s duty and role in the spiritual education curriculum, because the family can play a central role in the curriculum.”

#### **7-6. Strengthening Students’ Knowledge, Values, and Skills in Spiritual Education**

The sixth sub-theme related to the main theme of teacher role was strengthening students’ knowledge, values, and skills in spiritual education. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: “Strengthening students’ knowledge, values, and skills in spiritual education is among the teacher’s duties.”

**8. Learner Role:** With regard to the element of learner role, 5 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the learner’s role in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

##### **8-1. An Active Agent in Meaning Construction**

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of learner role was being an active agent in meaning construction. In this regard, one of the experts (P7) stated: “In the spiritual education curriculum, the learner must be an active agent in constructing meaning and creating effective experiences.”

##### **8-2. An Experiencer and Responsible for One’s Own Inner Growth**

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of learner role was being an experiencer and responsible for one’s own inner growth. In this regard, one of the experts (P1) stated: “The student must be an experiencer and responsible for his or her own inner growth so that he or she can establish a meaningful connection with real life.”

##### **8-3. Self-Evaluation and Realistic Understanding of One’s Own Position**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of learner role was self-evaluation and realistic understanding of one’s own position. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “In the spiritual education curriculum, learners must evaluate themselves and attain a realistic understanding of

their own position so that they can properly fulfill their essential role as students.”

#### **8-4. High Learner-to-Learner Interaction**

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of learner role was high learner-to-learner interaction. In this regard, one of the experts (P5) stated: “Peer interaction and high learner-to-learner interaction in the spiritual education curriculum create attractiveness within the curriculum.”

#### **8-5. Participation in Creating Spiritual Opportunities**

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of learner role was participation in creating spiritual opportunities. In this regard, one of the experts (P4) stated: “Participating in the creation of spiritual opportunities is the duty of every student; if they do not participate in this matter and do not take action to create opportunities, this program may not be properly implemented.”

**9. Family:** With regard to the element of family, 3 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the family in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

##### **9-1. Participation in Enriching Content**

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of family role was participation in enriching content. In this regard, one of the experts (P6) stated: “The family should participate in developing content and should strive to play a central role in enriching content and presenting spiritual content.”

##### **9-2. Alignment With the School in Addressing Spirituality**

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of family role was alignment with the school in addressing spirituality. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: “Alignment with the school in addressing spirituality is a necessary task of the family in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach; the family should not consider itself separate from the school curriculum, but should remain in close and aligned interaction with it.”

##### **9-3. Sensitivity to Spiritually Significant Situations**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of family role was sensitivity to spiritually significant situations. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: “Another role of the family in the spiritual education curriculum is being sensitive to situations that are conducive to spiritual growth.”

**10. Environment:** With regard to the element of environment, a total of 5 sub-themes (indicators) were

identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of the environment in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

#### **10-1. An Influential Physical Environment**

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of environment was an influential physical environment. In this regard, one of the experts (P7) stated: “In the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, the design of the physical environment affects learners. The physical environment should not be traditional, dry, and limited only to the classroom; rather, a spiritual environment filled with spirituality should be created.”

#### **10-2. A Space for Dialogue and Reflection**

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of environment was a space for dialogue and reflection. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “In the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach, the learning environment should be a space for dialogue and reflection.”

#### **10-3. Spiritual Relations in Speech and Action**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of environment was spiritual relations in speech and action. In this regard, one of the experts (P1) stated: “In the spiritual education curriculum, spiritual relations must be taken into account; these relations should become manifest both in speech and in action.” Another expert (P5) stated: “In the spiritual education curriculum, merely presenting content in the form of a textbook is not sufficient; rather, spiritual relations must reveal themselves in speech and action.”

#### **10-4. Spiritual Ceremonies and Events**

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of environment was spiritual ceremonies and events. In this regard, one of the experts (P2) stated: “Spiritual ceremonies and events should become manifest in this program, and the school environment should be filled with spirituality and vibrant spiritual ceremonies in the classroom and school.”

#### **10-5. Appropriate and Timely Opportunities for Spiritual Participation**

The fifth sub-theme related to the main theme of environment was appropriate and timely opportunities for spiritual participation. In this regard, one of the experts (P4) stated: “Creating appropriate and timely opportunities in the spiritual education curriculum can provide a suitable context

for students’ participation so that they become more familiar with Islamic and religious teachings.”

**11. Time:** With regard to the element of time, a total of 5 sub-themes (indicators) were identified. The nature and content of the findings reflect the status and conditions of time in the spiritual education curriculum for lower secondary education based on a dynamic lifestyle approach. These indicators include:

#### **11-1. Flexibility**

The first sub-theme related to the main theme of time was flexibility. Curricula in general, and the spiritual education curriculum in particular, must be flexible. In this regard, one of the experts (P5) stated: “Lack of flexibility in the curriculum creates a rigid and lifeless program. Therefore, an appropriate curriculum is one that possesses dimensions of flexibility.”

#### **11-2. Continuity and Consistency**

The second sub-theme related to the main theme of time was continuity and consistency. In this regard, one of the experts (P6) stated: “Fragmentation in the curriculum is one of the major harms of curricula; therefore, every program, especially a spiritual education program, must follow the principle of continuity and consistency.”

#### **11-3. Extension Across Time Rather Than Restriction to a Single Period**

The third sub-theme related to the main theme of time was extension across time rather than restriction to a single period. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “The spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should not be limited only to one stage, grade, or level; rather, this curriculum should be presented across time and not be confined to one specific period.”

#### **11-4. Integration With Evaluation**

The fourth sub-theme related to the main theme of time was integration with evaluation. In this regard, one of the experts (P3) stated: “The spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should be connected to the evaluation of students’ academic progress.”

#### **11-5. The Linkage of Past, Present, and Future**

The final sub-theme related to the main theme of time was the linkage of past, present, and future. In this regard, one of the experts (P8) stated: “The spiritual education curriculum based on a dynamic lifestyle approach should encompass past, present, and future, and should not be limited to only one specific time.”

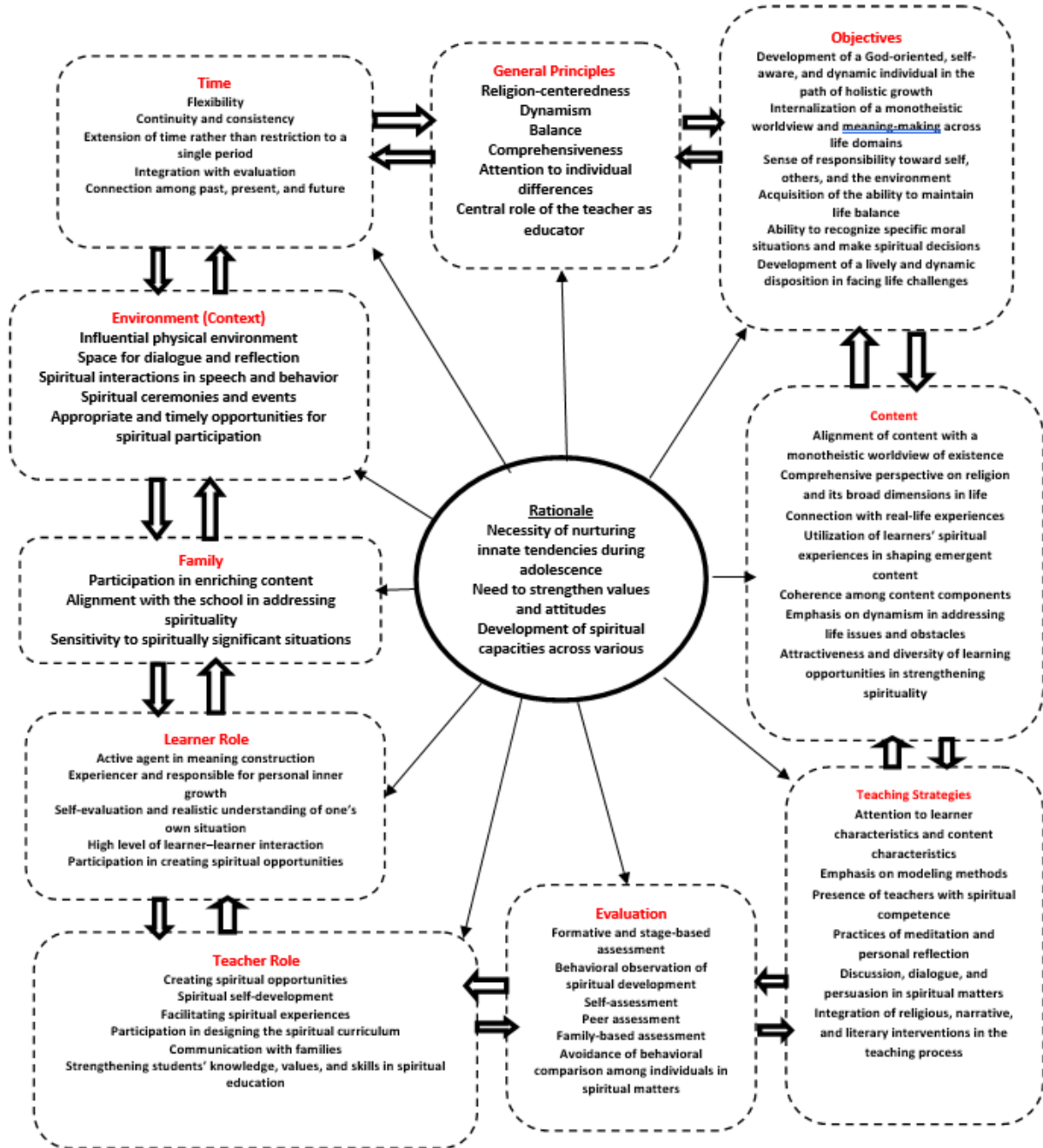
**Table 1***Extraction of Main Themes and Sub-Themes*

Main Theme	Sub-Themes
1. Rationale	1-1. Necessity of nurturing innate tendencies during adolescence 1-2. Need to strengthen values and attitudes 1-3. Development of spiritual capacities across various domains
2. General Principles	2-1. Religion-centeredness 2-2. Dynamism 2-3. Balance 2-4. Comprehensiveness 2-5. Attention to individual differences 2-6. Central role of the teacher as educator
3. Objectives	3-1. Development of a God-seeking, self-aware, and dynamic individual in holistic growth 3-2. Internalization of a monotheistic worldview and meaning-making in life 3-3. Sense of responsibility toward self, others, and the environment 3-4. Ability to maintain life balance 3-5. Ability to recognize moral situations and make spiritual decisions 3-6. Development of a vibrant and dynamic attitude in facing life challenges
4. Content	4-1. Alignment of content with a monotheistic worldview 4-2. Comprehensive perspective on religion and life dimensions 4-3. Connection with real-life experiences 4-4. Utilization of learners' spiritual experiences in emergent content formation 4-5. Coherence among content components 4-6. Emphasis on dynamism in addressing life challenges 4-7. Attractiveness and diversity of learning opportunities to enhance spirituality
5. Teaching Strategies	5-1. Attention to learner and content characteristics 5-2. Emphasis on modeling methods 5-3. Presence of spiritually competent teachers 5-4. Practices of mindfulness and personal reflection 5-5. Dialogue, discussion, and persuasion in spiritual matters 5-6. Integration of religious, narrative, and literary interventions in teaching
6. Evaluation	6-1. Formative and stage-based assessment 6-2. Behavioral observation of spirituality 6-3. Self-assessment 6-4. Peer assessment 6-5. Family-based assessment 6-6. Avoidance of behavioral comparison in spiritual matters
7. Teacher Role	7-1. Creating spiritual opportunities 7-2. Personal spiritual development 7-3. Facilitating spiritual experiences 7-4. Participation in curriculum design 7-5. Communication with families 7-6. Enhancing students' knowledge, values, and skills in spiritual education
8. Learner Role	8-1. Active agent in meaning construction 8-2. Experiencer and responsible for personal growth 8-3. Self-evaluation and realistic self-awareness 8-4. High level of learner-learner interaction 8-5. Participation in creating spiritual opportunities
9. Family	9-1. Participation in enriching content 9-2. Alignment with school in addressing spirituality 9-3. Sensitivity to spiritually significant situations
10. Environment (Context)	10-1. Influential physical environment 10-2. Space for dialogue and reflection 10-3. Spiritual interactions in speech and behavior 10-4. Spiritual ceremonies and events 10-5. Timely and appropriate opportunities for participation
11. Time	11-1. Flexibility 11-2. Continuity and consistency 11-3. Extension beyond a single time period

11-4. Integration with evaluation

11-5. Connection among past, present, and future time

Figure 1

*Conceptual Model of the Spiritual Education Curriculum in Lower Secondary Education Based on a Dynamic Lifestyle Approach*

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that the spiritual education curriculum in lower secondary education, when conceptualized through a dynamic lifestyle approach, encompasses a multidimensional structure consisting of

interconnected components such as rationale, general principles, objectives, content, teaching strategies, evaluation, and the roles of teacher, learner, family, environment, and time. These results indicate that spiritual education is not a discrete or isolated domain but rather an integrated and systemic construct embedded within the

broader educational experience. The identification of these eleven main themes and their associated sub-themes demonstrates that effective spiritual curriculum design requires coherence across philosophical foundations, pedagogical practices, and contextual conditions. This systemic nature of the findings aligns with previous conceptualizations of spiritual education as a holistic and integrative process that addresses cognitive, emotional, and existential dimensions of development (Adib-Manesh et al., 2018; Saepudin, 2024).

The emphasis on the rationale of nurturing innate tendencies and strengthening values and attitudes highlights the foundational assumption that spirituality is rooted in human nature and developmental needs. This finding is consistent with theoretical perspectives that consider spirituality as an inherent dimension of human existence, which must be cultivated through appropriate educational experiences. The recognition of innate tendencies and their development during adolescence corresponds with the view that education should align with learners' natural dispositions and existential quests for meaning (Beheshti, 2016; Marzouqi & Hadadniya, 2017). Furthermore, the focus on strengthening values and attitudes reflects the central role of value internalization in shaping behavior and identity, as emphasized in value theory and moral development frameworks (Bandura, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2012).

The results related to general principles, including religion-centeredness, dynamism, balance, comprehensiveness, and attention to individual differences, suggest that spiritual education must be grounded in coherent philosophical orientations while remaining flexible and responsive to learners' needs. The principle of dynamism, in particular, underscores the necessity of adapting educational processes to the evolving contexts of learners' lives, which is consistent with contemporary approaches to curriculum design that emphasize flexibility and contextualization (Motavalli & Shiri, 2026; Shirvani-Shiri, 2025). Additionally, the attention to individual differences reflects the importance of learner-centered approaches in spiritual education, as supported by empirical findings indicating that adolescents' engagement with spiritual content varies based on their personal characteristics and experiences (Hosseini et al., 2023; Smith & Snell, 2022).

The objectives identified in the study, such as fostering self-awareness, meaning-making, responsibility, and ethical decision-making, further reinforce the role of spiritual

education in identity formation and psychosocial development. These objectives are consistent with developmental theories that highlight adolescence as a critical period for the formation of personal and social identity. The findings align with previous research demonstrating that spiritual and religious education contributes significantly to adolescents' sense of purpose, moral reasoning, and social adjustment (King & Boyatzis, 2023; Naghibi et al., 2023a, 2023b). Moreover, the emphasis on developing the ability to make ethical and spiritual decisions reflects the importance of cultivating moral agency and self-regulation, which are key components of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2018).

The content-related findings indicate that an effective spiritual curriculum must be connected to learners' real-life experiences, integrated with a comprehensive worldview, and enriched by learners' personal spiritual experiences. This emphasis on experiential and contextualized learning corresponds with constructivist approaches that view knowledge as actively constructed through interaction with the environment. The incorporation of learners' lived experiences into the curriculum enhances the relevance and authenticity of learning, thereby facilitating deeper engagement and internalization of spiritual concepts (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Soenens et al., 2019). Additionally, the focus on coherence and dynamism within content reflects the need for curricula that are both structured and adaptable, enabling learners to navigate complex and changing life contexts (Alipour et al., 2022; Bagheri, 2022).

The findings regarding teaching strategies emphasize the importance of modeling, dialogue, reflection, and the presence of spiritually competent teachers. These strategies highlight the interactive and relational nature of spiritual learning, which is facilitated through meaningful interactions between teachers and learners. The emphasis on modeling aligns with social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviors and values through observation and imitation of significant others (Bandura, 2018). Similarly, the use of dialogue and reflective practices supports the development of critical thinking and self-awareness, which are essential for meaningful engagement with spiritual concepts. The inclusion of mindfulness and reflective exercises further supports the development of emotional regulation and self-understanding, which have been linked to positive psychological outcomes in adolescents (Kosarkova & Roubalova, 2024; Underwood & Vagnini, 2024).

The evaluation component identified in the study reflects a shift from traditional assessment methods toward more formative, process-oriented approaches that emphasize self-assessment, peer assessment, and behavioral observation. This shift is consistent with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize continuous feedback and learner involvement in the assessment process. The avoidance of comparative evaluation in spiritual matters highlights the importance of respecting individual differences and promoting intrinsic motivation, as emphasized in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Furthermore, the inclusion of family in the evaluation process underscores the significance of contextual and social factors in shaping learners' spiritual development.

The roles of teachers and learners identified in the findings further emphasize the interactive and participatory nature of spiritual education. Teachers are expected to create meaningful learning opportunities, facilitate spiritual experiences, and engage in continuous self-development, while learners are viewed as active agents in constructing meaning and taking responsibility for their personal growth. This conceptualization aligns with learner-centered approaches and emphasizes the importance of autonomy, agency, and active engagement in the learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Soenens et al., 2019). Additionally, the emphasis on teacher-family collaboration highlights the need for a supportive and cohesive educational environment that extends beyond the classroom.

The inclusion of family, environment, and time as essential components of the spiritual curriculum reflects the recognition that learning is situated within broader social and temporal contexts. The role of family in reinforcing and supporting spiritual learning is consistent with research indicating that parental involvement and alignment with educational values significantly influence adolescents' development (Ahmad et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2023). Similarly, the emphasis on creating supportive and reflective environments highlights the importance of contextual factors in facilitating meaningful learning experiences. The consideration of time as a flexible and continuous dimension further underscores the need for sustained and integrated approaches to spiritual education that extend beyond isolated instructional periods.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive and contextually grounded framework for understanding the components and processes of spiritual education in lower secondary education. By adopting a phenomenological

approach, the study captures the lived experiences and perspectives of experts, offering valuable insights into the practical implications of theoretical models. These findings support the growing body of evidence emphasizing the importance of integrating spiritual dimensions into educational systems to promote holistic development and well-being among adolescents (King & Boyatzis, 2023; Saepudin, 2024).

The present study, however, is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. One of the primary limitations is the relatively small sample size, which, although appropriate for phenomenological research, may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the reliance on expert perspectives may not fully capture the experiences of other stakeholders, such as students and parents. The use of note-taking instead of audio recording during interviews may also have resulted in the loss of some nuanced data. Furthermore, the study was conducted within a specific cultural and educational context, which may influence the applicability of the findings to other settings.

Future research is recommended to expand upon the findings of this study by including a more diverse range of participants, such as students, teachers, and parents, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of spiritual education in practice. Quantitative and mixed-methods studies could also be conducted to examine the effectiveness of the proposed curriculum components in promoting specific developmental outcomes. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in exploring the long-term impact of spiritual education on identity formation and well-being. Comparative studies across different cultural and educational contexts could further enhance the generalizability of the findings and contribute to the development of universal frameworks for spiritual education.

In terms of practical implications, educators and curriculum developers are encouraged to adopt a holistic and integrated approach to spiritual education that considers the interplay of various components identified in this study. Emphasis should be placed on creating supportive and reflective learning environments, fostering meaningful interactions between teachers and learners, and incorporating experiential and contextually relevant content into the curriculum. Educational policies should also support the integration of spiritual dimensions into the broader educational framework, providing resources and training for teachers to effectively implement such programs. By

addressing these considerations, educational systems can better support the holistic development of learners and prepare them to navigate the complexities of contemporary life.

### 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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