



# Conscious Psychological Balance Encompasses Resilience, Other Self-Regulation Processes, and Justice

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to define Conscious Psychological Balance as an essential dimension of mental health. This type of Balance is a product of self-regulatory processes providing productivity and satisfaction. Self-regulatory processes such as resilience are based on cognitive, emotional and behavioral strengths, and should happen adequately within time and different contexts. The concept of Balance emphasizes justice implicitly. This definition is constructed by the comparison of the ideas of different pioneer thinkers in psychology and other disciplines. There are great similarities between the definitions of positive mental health and psychological balance on the subjective and functional aspects of mental health. However, Balance perspective draws attention to a holistic perspective on mental health and can contribute to prevent social problems by emphasizing justice.

**Keywords:** Conscious Psychological Balance, self-regulation, resilience, justice, resilience.

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## INTRODUCTION

Scientific concepts and constructs underpin intervention programs. The planning of mental health programs based on adequate constructs of mental health in different countries, and in developing countries in particular, can prevent the waste of financial and human resources. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), aspects of culture, values, and spirituality are key aspects of overall quality of life. Importantly, research shows that socio-cultural factors can shape psychological constructs such as the factors that determine how people respond to health messages. We can see that Balance, equilibrium and other similar concepts are central to many cultural contexts. We see similar concepts such as equilibrium which are relevant in some cultures. According to Prasadarao (2009), Chilean culture equates mental health with factors such as equilibrium, quality of life,

and well-being. Family members generally entrust persons with mental illness to psychiatric settings in order to restore their "equilibrium". Interestingly, there is no phrase equivalent to "mental health" in Chinese traditional literature; instead, words or phrases such as *sin on* (internal sense or security), *tin yu* (relaxed), *falok* (happiness) and *wor* (harmony) are used. Muslims, Christians and Jews hold a similar view toward God's justice. For example, in the Bible (Isa. 1:17, New International Version) is said: Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. Or it is said in (Deut. 16:20): "Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you". We can also read in (Deut. 32:4): "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God

who does no wrong, upright and just is he". Similarly, in the Quran (16:90, Saheeh International) it is said that: "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded". Another example is (Quran, 5:8): "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness". In addition, one of the ten commands in Quran (6: 152) is: "And when you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative".

One of the meanings of justice is harmony (Mutahhari, 2004). As an influential contemporary Muslim philosopher, Mutahhari demonstrates that harmony cannot be defined only in terms of personal internal balance, but in terms of fairness (2004). Beside monotheists who hold such a belief, Aristotle also emphasized justice as a principal virtue (Aristotle, 1996).

Concepts such as harmony, justice and balance are important concept among many countries. Justice can improve mental health programs in Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other cultures such as traditional Chinese and Chilean. In interviewing 89 youths from different countries, Ungar et al. (2007) found out that the resolution of seven tensions is foundational to experiences of resilience. These seven tensions were social justice, access to material resources, relationships, identity, cohesion, power and control, and cultural adherence. Moreover, Toporek (2009) as a social justice counselor explains that issues such as discrimination could function as barriers for well-being interventions.

Thus, the main purpose of this theoretical work was to define mental health in terms of Balance. This is because the concept of Balance can improve individual mental health and decrease social problems caused by issues such as different types of discriminations and injustice. In this study, Psychological Balance has been defined as a state, i.e. the product of self-regulation processes such as resilience. This state provides a person with relative calm/satisfaction and relative positive performance, and requires several psychological strengths and virtues such as justice. This definition has been evaluated and improved gradually during approximately ten years. Specific empirical studies have shown significant correlation between Balance concept and mental health. Enshā' (2007) and (Jafari Roshan, 2011) are some of these studies. This definition accords with World Health Organization's definition of mental health: "Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (World Health Organization [WHO], 2012).

This interesting definition is taken up by positive psychologists. Our age being in the age of Positive Psychology, according to Abdel-Khalek (2013), such a definition of mental health assumes particular relevance. However, such a rational definition of WHO and interesting formulation of positive mental health could be framed in terms of Balance, and bring mental health advantages along

with many others. To define psychological Balance, the common concepts explained by different pioneer thinkers of psychology have been used within a holistic framework, acknowledging the relevance of other dimensions, such as biological, social, spiritual, and chronological dimensions, albeit focusing more closely on psychological Balance and specifically Conscious Psychological Balance. The following sections cover these subjects:

- Define Conscious Psychological Balance
- Compare concept of Balance with positive mental health
- Describe Balance perspective advantages

## DEFINITION OF CONSCIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL BALANCE

In this study Balance was defined based on concepts such as justice, equilibrium, homeostasis, resilience, and self-regulation. All of them are related to psychology, for example: Homeostasis is emphasized by Freud, the pioneer of psychoanalysis (Miller, 1943), Gestalt therapy (Perls, 1947), Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1985), Self-regulation and Justice by Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005), and Resilience by mental health model thinkers such as Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Dryden (2011). Some of these thinkers, such as Rogers (1989), and Allport (1961) totally oppose the use of homeostasis or equilibrium concepts, which associate static conditions or inertia with a healthy personality. However, they do value consciousness or awareness, calmness and positive performance, which are themes that pervade the concepts of Homeostasis, Self-regulation and Equilibrium. Maslow (1973), (Fromm, 1955) and Jung (1999) interpret these three themes differently; but, they all admit their relevance.

Justice is also similar to the previously mentioned concepts. It helps with the adequate regulation of a given society, bringing to it peace and positive performance. In Mutahhari's writings (2004), justice has four meanings: a) balance; b) equality and non-discrimination; c) emanation or bestowal of being on merit, i.e., benefiting others in terms of what they merit, so that they can exist and evolve; and d) giving everything its due; i.e., respect for the rights of others. To explain balance, Mutahhari (2004) says: "Justice in its meaning propriety and balance corresponds to the Divine attributes of wisdom and omniscience. For it is the wise and omniscient God who, due to his comprehensive knowledge and eternal wisdom, knows what component elements are needed and in what amounts and commissions those exact same amounts". Then he talks about Mulla Sadra's view point and says: "Divine justice then-as we saw in the quote from Mulla Sadra-is the bestowal of universal grace to all existents that have the possibility of existence or further existential perfections, without the least bit meanness or discrimination. "Aquinas (n.d.) the Christian philosopher, defines justice in a way similar to Mutahhari (2004): "Therefore the proper act of justice is nothing else than to render to each one his own" (Aquinas, n.d., II-II: Q.58, A.11). He also says: "justice, the virtue which is about due actions between equals" (Aquinas, n.d., I-II: Q.61, A.3), and when talking about God's justice, Aquinas repeats the statement of Dionysius, by saying: "We

must needs see that God is truly just, in seeing how He gives to all existing things what is proper to the condition of each; and preserves the nature of each in the order and with the powers that properly belong to it" (Aquinas, n.d., I: Q.21, A.1). Finally, Aquinas considered legal justice as a general virtue: "Legal justice is said to be a general virtue, inasmuch, to wit, as it directs the acts of the other virtues to its own end, and this is to move all the other virtues by its command" (Aquinas, n.d., II-II: Q.58, A. 6). It is necessary to mention that Aquinas also agrees also with the concepts of harmony or balance, although he may not define them as meaning justice: "All evil of sin, though happening in many ways, agrees in being out of harmony with the divine will" (Aquinas, n.d., I: Q.19, A. 12). Aquinas (n.d.) believes that Justice not only helps a society, but an individual. According to him, Justice directs man in his relations with other men. Now this may happen in two ways: First as regards his relation with individuals, secondly as regards his relations with others in general, in so far as a man who serves a community, serves all those who are included in that community. Accordingly justice in its proper acceptation can be directed to another in both these senses...so that all acts of virtue can pertain to justice, in so far as it directs man to the common good. (Aquinas, n.d., II-II: Q.58, A. 5).

Interestingly, western thinkers such as Crethar and Ratts (2008), as western social justice counselors, say that harmony, equity, access, and participation are four critical principles that guide counselors' work within the mental health domain. Equity is defined as the fair distribution of resources, rights, and responsibilities to all members of society. Access is a principle of social justice that includes notions of fairness for the common good based on the ability of people to access the knowledge, power, resources, and services that are crucial to realizing a standard of living that allows for self-actualization and self-determination. Participation refers to the right of every person in society to participate in and/or be consulted on decisions that affect their lives as well as other people in their environmental systems. The term harmony is defined as a principle of social adjustment wherein the self-interest of any individual or group produces results that afford the best possible outcomes for the community as a whole. These principles –equity and access, participation and respect for other's rights –are important from social justice counselors' perspective, since they provide a satisfied and fruitful environment, where people can avoid unfair treatments and discriminations. It seems that monotheistic philosophers and social justice counselors do not disagree greatly on the concepts of equity, access, participation, or harmony. The only clear difference is on the frame of interpretation of justice. Social justice counselors rely on social contracts as a reliable framework of interpretation of justice. Monotheistic philosophers do not necessarily deny social contracts, but they have an additional main framework (e.g., Holy scriptures and/or natural and evolutionary conditions of creatures). The similarities between principles of social justice in the West and the meaning of justice in monotheistic philosophers' writings can provide a cross cultural basis for the understanding of mental health and balance. At least, two meanings of justice can

influence the definition of Balance different aspects (psychological, social, spiritual, chronological and physical/biological): Inner harmony and fairness. It may be useful to mention that the concept of fairness is able to compass three meanings of justice (equality and non-discrimination, bestowal on one's merits, and respecting other's rights), as two important monotheistic philosophers mentioned above (Aquinas, n.d.; Mutahhari, 2004) described.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTHS

Psychological strengths are important to psychological Balance. Here, we talk about some important issues such as mindfulness, positive emotions and attitudes, emotional management skills, pursuing a desirable state, and living virtues.

### Mindfulness

One of the most important psychological strength emphasized in psychological Balance is consciousness or mindfulness. In Maslow's words (Maslow, 1973) consciousness or awareness can be understood as a vivid and selfless understanding of oneself based on realities; in Fromm's words (Fromm, 1955), it can be understood as the grasp of reality, as it is inside or outside of oneself and as an objective understanding of world realities; in Jung's words (1999), it is to be understood as coming to selfhood. Not only pioneers but recent researchers such as Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, and Oh (2010) argue that mindfulness-based therapy is a promising intervention for treating anxiety and mood problems in clinical populations. According to Gremer (2009), "Clinical scientists discovered meditation in the 1970s, and it's now one of most thoroughly researched of all psychotherapy methods. Over the past 15 years, research has focused primarily on 'mindfulness', or awareness of the present experience, with acceptance." Other researchers such as Kabat-Zinn (as cited in (Baer (2003)) define mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally".

### Pursuing A Desirable State

Aspinwall (2011) tried to analyze the processes through which people anticipate or detect potential stressors and act in advance to prevent them or to mute their impact (proactive coping). Mindful individuals, who have an increased capacity of self-regulation, may even be able to prevent stressors consciously. Trying to achieve goals, or live in harmony with one's values, are some other ways to prevent an undesirable future state.

### Positive emotions and attitudes

Positive emotions are definitely associated with numerous benefits related to health, work, family and economic status (Kobau et al., 2011). Moreover, positive attitudes are also important. Neenan (2010) encourages the reader to have balanced, flexible and realistic beliefs and attitudes. He considers attitude (meaning) as the heart of resilience, since balanced and positive attitudes toward adversities give rise to positive emotions.

### Emotional Management Skills

Psychological strengths also include skills in managing one's emotions. Emotions such as fear and sadness are rooted in cognition, but could be healed by several skills such as turning rapidly to positive ideas, being flexible, being creative in interpreting negative life events positively, and smiling to life in spite of all difficulties. All these strengths contribute to maintain patience and calm, in spite of all life difficulties or tragedies. It is necessary to mention that one of the most important indicators of a well-balanced person is the flexibility and the brief space of time s/he requires to return to a Balance state. These skills could be even more strengthened by mind nurturing, such as constructive book reading and utilizing useful experiences of healthy individuals. For example, books about nonjudgmental thinking may facilitate more fluid understanding and improved self management. Rational Emotive Behavioral Theory contributes to mental health through non-rigid interpretation of events. In REBT theory, there are four types of rational beliefs which promote healthy functioning in individuals: Flexible preferences, non-awfulizing beliefs, high-frustration-tolerance (HFT) beliefs, and acceptance beliefs (Ellis, 1996). American Psychological Association [APA] (2014) introduces ten ways to construct resilience, which are helpful as Balance strengths:

- Make connections.
- Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.
- Accept that change is a part of living.
- Move toward your goals.
- Take decisive actions.
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery.
- Nurture a positive view of yourself.
- Keep things in perspective. Maintain a hopeful outlook.
- Take care of yourself.
- Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.

At least seven ways of the above (i.e. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems, accept that change is a part of living, move toward your goals, take decisive actions, look for opportunities for self-discovery, nurture a positive view of yourself, keep things in perspective, and maintain a hopeful outlook) could easily be categorized as psychological strategies. 'Making connections' could be classified in the domain of social dimension, 'taking care of oneself' could be classified partially in physical/biological domain, and 'additional ways of strengthening resilience' may include some strategies of spirituality, etc. Each dimension of Balance could be considered specifically, and could provide a broad variety of helpful strategies for a counselor.

### Living Virtues

In this paper, living virtues are considered as an important psychological strength, which contribute to maintain both psychological and social balance. In this regard, Positive Psychology Institute (2012) describes virtue as a core characteristic that is universally valued. Virtues are helpful to encounter meaning in our lives. Even other types of values play an important role to pursue meaning. Frankl (1992) recommends three different courses of action to pursue meaning: through deeds, experiencing values through some kind of medium or suffering. If a value such as 'beauty through art' could bring meaning to one's life, virtues or core values such as justice are highly loaded in terms of meaning

and let the individual get highly resistant to life difficulties (Frankl, 1992). But living according to virtues such as justice or love is not always easy. On many occasions one needs to ignore one's interests to the benefit of others or of ethical norms. This naturally may occur since virtues and ethical values constitute common borders along psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of mental health. In some situations, one's society may not value virtues and creates barriers such as economic and political injustice, racial discrimination, etc. Thus, living virtues might not lead to immediate lower need level satisfaction, but rather to long term satisfaction. This is natural, since one ought to ignore some of her/his commodities for the sake of virtues which help others. Undoubtedly, here is a highly essential element: Aiming above lower needs satisfaction.

### POSITIVE PERFORMANCE

Positive performance in a healthy individual can be understood as fruitful activity for oneself and others. Maslow's self-actualized individual is dedicated to an ideal or activity he loves (Maslow, 1973); Fromm's healthy personality (Fromm, 1955), is constructive and loves whatever s/he does. According to (Jung, 1999), an individuated personality has a more balanced and integrated personality and displays a better social performance. On the whole, a balanced individual is not only is productive in his/her personal life, but also in the social aspects of life, such as work and family.

### CALMNESS/SATISFACTION

The above mentioned thinkers also differ on the issue of 'calm'. Calm can be understood in different ways of needs satisfaction at different life stages. These authors emphasize some kind of ease, relief and calm, which help an individual to quit struggling. However, this is never absolute, since the needs that motivate human progress are never completely relinquished but undergo constant alteration. Maslow's self-actualized individual should at least be satisfied in the area of basic needs; although in the self-actualized state, the individual is meta-motivated by "Being-Values", such as justice or truth (Maslow, 1973); Fromm (1955) believes that these needs are satisfied by an individual's actions, social structure, and the quality of social relationships within this structure. Similarly, Jung (1999) believes that when the consciousness of Jung's individuated personality is unified and balanced by the treasure of the unconscious, the person enjoys greater calm and is free of neuroses.

### CONSCIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL BALANCE

Psychological strengths, positive performance, and relative calmness are of great importance in the Conscious Psychological Balance definition proposed in this paper. As already explained, these concepts are interpreted in a particular way within a holistic framework, acknowledging the relevance of other dimensions (physical/biological, social, spiritual, and chronological). Focus on psychological Balance in this paper does not ignore these other aspects. Such a

specification is necessary because of the difficulty of evaluating all these dimensions in one empirical study. Several empirical and theoretical studies are needed to explore each one of these dimensions and their relationships. For defining Conscious Psychological Balance, this type of Balance is a desirable state of calm or satisfaction and productivity, which are nonetheless continuously influenced by life difficulties or one's own goals or challenges. Many self-regulatory processes are needed for the recovery or maintenance of this state. Thus, Conscious Psychological Balance is strongly dependent and based on self-regulation processes which result in productivity and satisfaction. These processes should happen adequately within time and across different contexts. The most important type of self-regulation is resilience. The psychological Balance state requires several mental strengths, such as self-awareness, positive attitudes, living in the flows of virtues, especially justice. Justice results in respect for other people's rights. However, in societies such as Iran or any other monotheistic society, justice could mean and result in respecting other types of rights: a) one's own rights (not harming one's body or mind), and b) the universe or God's norms (such as respect toward environmental issues, human or animal rights). Secular societies may emphasize principles than those emphasized in religious societies; however, common fields of respect for rights and ethics can be observed in many societies. Thus, we need to emphasize that in a monotheistic society, like Iran, or any other society that believes in Justice, in terms of respecting laws and duties, justice also connotes powerful instruments for people's self-care and environmental protection. Philosophers such as Mutahharī (2004) and Aquinas (n.d.) agree: "The act of justice is to pay what is due". Thus, justice in such a society is an important instrument for achieving individual and social balance. Since this virtue encourages people to care about themselves, others, and environmental issues. Many societies such as monotheistic communities go further and promote other virtues such as love, which promote satisfaction and productivity in a society. Although ethical values are important, they should be incorporated into one's lifestyle in a non-radical manner and within the limits of one's possibilities, so that they do not increment anxiety inappropriately. Obsessions about ethical behaviors and expecting oneself to respect others' rights more than one's capacity are examples of radical behaviors. It is necessary to mention that people construct their own meaning of mental or psychological Balance. They construct it within a set of norms and standards, under a set of limitations. Some of these norms, standards and limitations are chosen and some are imposed by social and cultural environments, and even one's physical conditions. However, people decide on the level of energy they want to spend on different life issues, and they determine the level of calm/satisfaction and the level of positive performance they want to achieve. In other words, they construct their acceptable level of satisfaction and positive performance within a relatively chosen framework, and within a set of cultural, social and individual values and limitations. Thus, people understand, interpret, and construct balance, satisfaction and productivity differently. Having

different constructions of these elements, they assume divergent level of responsibilities, enjoy distinct types of need satisfaction, and struggle in different ways, even though all this variability and human choice is not infinite. They are bounded by physiological, social, spiritual and other limitations. For example, one might postpone one's own journey to help others in a meaningful humanitarian cultural ceremony. S/he has chosen a higher need satisfaction such as self-actualizing need (in Maslow's terminology), and performed positively in a one's own social environment. But if s/he continues working for a long time without any vacation, then s/he would suffer burnout. Thus, it is necessary to mention that one's own meaning, standards and tolerance levels evolve, mature and undergo serious changes over time. In spite of these differences, people desire to return to their acceptable level satisfaction and productivity after an adversity. Thus, resilience is one of the most important self-regulation processes in psychological Balance.

What is the precise meaning of Resilience? Briefly, Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress, such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences (APA, 2014). As Cárdenas-Jiménez and López-Díaz (2011) explains, Resilience can be defined in at least four ways: a) Personal ability or capacity, b) positive characteristics of personality, c) transactional process, and/or d) coping capacity. In accordance with the above holistic framework, the definition of resilience put forward by Allen, Haley, Harris, Fowler, and Pruthi (2011) seems plausible: "... an encompassing the developmental process of being mindful of and prioritizing those behaviors, thoughts and feelings that facilitate the contentment of developmental, physical, emotional and spiritual context." It seems that this developmental process could develop into an ability within time. Resilient people regain satisfaction and positive functioning after a period of adversity or change. However, as Neenan (2010) explains, "..., being resilient does not restore the status quo in your life prior to the adversity ... , but rather, what you have learned from the tackling the adversity changes you for the better and helps you become more keenly aware of what is important in your life, and as we said, encourages you to pursue it." Thus, it is a kind of a conscious self-regulation that brings about the possibility of further flourishing. Mindful individuals, who have an increased capacity of self-regulation, may even be able to consciously prevent stressors. Aspinwall (2011), tried to analyze the processes through which people anticipate or detect potential stressors and act in advance to prevent them or to mute their impact (proactive coping). Thus, a conscious self-regulation could prevent stressors before the need for resilience even arises. Such a proactive protection is also emphasized by Gardner, Dishion, and Connell (2008), although for them self-regulation lies within the domain of resilience, and they consider "self-regulation as a form of resilience". In this paper, self-regulation is a more encompassing and primary concept, since there may be many other indirect self-regulation processes such as spiritual,

habitual or social self-regulations, which allow the prevention and avoidance of many adversities and difficulties. Praying to God in a well-ordered manner, and feeling a strong connection to his powerful protector energy, caring about having a safe, conscious and responsible behavior such as drug avoidance, having a fair and harmonious behavior toward others, or organizing one's own plans for next month are examples of these behaviors. On the whole, resilience is one kind of psychological self-regulation. This consists of being mindful of and prioritizing those behaviors, thoughts and feelings that facilitate contentment, in different contexts. Thus, Balance perspective admits the presence of many self-regulatory processes, such as psychological, social, spiritual, physiological and chronological processes. These dimensions are briefly defined as follows.

While Conscious Psychological Balance is about the self-regulatory process rooted in emotions, cognitions and behavioral strengths, Physical Balance is about bodily strengths, resistance and care against disease and physical problems. Spiritual Balance relates to a peaceful and fruitful connection to the spiritual power of universe, which not only results in observing ethics, but also becomes an endeavor for virtues and good deeds. This infinite power in monotheistic religions is a unique, vivid, conscious, merciful, and just entity named God. Social Balance is about being effective and satisfied in social environment, being able to communicate adequately, especially when dealing with or preventing conflicts. Chronological dimension relates to the capability of following an order or incorporating different programs within a life order. In understanding a person's total Balance, it is highly important to acknowledge that these dimensions are closely interconnected and difficult to separate. It is important to mention the relative separation of dimensions and this manner of theorizing these dimensions is useful, at the time of understanding the Balance maintenance resources an individual uses. Moreover, it is also helpful to empirical studies, since it permits a relatively independent measurement of each dimension.

It is certainly necessary to admit that the human capacity for resilience is both natural and normal, part and parcel of the innate health built into all human beings. Thus, it is probable that some homeostatic processes, such as forgetting adversities through time, are unconsciously at work, similarly with other unhealthy homeostasis processes, such as ego defenses, as stated by Perls (1947). Gestalt therapists try to bring the latter to awareness. One of the best strategies for understanding them is through mindfulness and spiritual practices. Summarizing what has been said about Conscious Psychological Balance, it is necessary to emphasize that mindfulness and consciousness of one's own conditions and other kinds of awareness are extremely important in the resilience process. The possession of positive attitudes and beliefs, such as 'Every cloud has a silver lining', living in the present in spite of one's future plans or past adversities, deriving nurture from constructive knowledge or wisdom, being informed about a problem and its different solutions, are all important cognitive strengths in the process of developing psychological Balance. On the whole, an adequate pathway to a good life requires psychological strengths such as meanings and virtues. Moreover, emotional flexibility and skills, behavior in support of emotional flexibility and self-control skills are also important (e.g., using specific skills to change one's own attitudes rapidly, distancing provisionally from a disturbing situation, etc.). In order to be a psychologically or generally balanced individual, one not only needs to be resilient, but to be resilient as soon as possible.

#### COMPARING BALANCE PERSPECTIVE AND POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

This section compares Balance perspective and positive mental health. Table 1. briefly illustrates the dissimilarities between these two approaches.

**Table 1.** The dissimilarities between Balance perspective on mental health and positive mental health

	<b>Balance perspective on mental health</b>	<b>Positive mental health</b>
<b>Cultural and social background</b>	It is formed in a collectivist and spiritual-religious background	It is formed in an individualistic and non religious background
<b>Mental health factors</b>	Two important components of psychological Balance: ✓tranquility-satisfaction ✓Positive performance (People freely choose the level of these two issues within some limitations). •The following dimensions are preferred to be evaluated specifically: Physical/biological, social, spiritual, and chronological self-regulatory processes.	Three types of variables are to be considered (Seligman, 2008) ✓Subjective (different categories of need satisfaction) ✓Functional (positive performance in individual and social/environmental levels) ✓Biological (physiological indicators, such as electrocardiogram)
<b>Virtues</b>	All virtues are valuable, but justice is more important.	All virtues are valuable.

No matter where the definition of Conscious Psychological Balance is rooted, and in spite of all dissimilarities in epistemological roots and contextual backgrounds, this definition is similar to that of the World Health Organization's and the conceptual framework of positive mental health, but emphasizes Justice. Here we compare this definition with that of Seligman's (2008). Seligman's text was chosen as he is a pioneer of Positive Psychology, although other scholars describe similar concepts (e.g., a positive good life) differently. For example, according to Compton (2005): "In positive psychology, the good life has been seen as a combination of three elements: positive connections to others, positive individual traits, and life regulation qualities". The dissimilarities of Balance perspective compared to Seligman's description (2008), are described under three subsections:

- Cultural and social background
- Mental health factors
- Virtues

### CULTURAL AND SOCIAL BACK GROUND

As already mentioned, the first dissimilarity relates to its cultural context. The cultural background where the definition of psychological Balance is constructed, is a collectivist and spiritual/religious (monotheistic and holistic) one. Emphasis on justice can prevent many problems in many monotheistic societies on many occasions. An example from Iran may make it clearer. In Iran when a religious man mistreats his wife in such a way that the victim's body bruises minimally because of physical violence, he knows that he should ask God's remission, and ask for his wife's forgiveness in such a way as to reinstate her contentment. Such forgiveness might take the form of the man paying an amount of money to his wife, or by making any other reasonable amends that she deems necessary to feel an emotional ease. The Iranian man has learned that God may forgive him, but he knows that if his wife does not, he is not immune to the negative consequences of his violence, and that he should tolerate any calamity that may befall him throughout his life or in the hereafter, although not necessarily through legal processes. In other words, people believe that God may forgive what depends on him, but he does not forgive what depends on the violated individual. Thus, the belief in justice can help towards observing ethics and human rights. In a society such as Iran, true believers know that they do not have the right of endangering their own life or that of any other creatures unreasonably. For example, to those who endanger environmental standards the Quran (2: 204-206, Itani) says: "Among the people is he whose speech about the worldly life impresses you, and he calls God to witness what is in his heart, while he is the most hostile of adversaries. When he gains power, he strives to spread corruption on earth, destroying properties and lives. God does not like corruption. And when he is told, "Beware of God," his pride leads him to more sin. Hell is enough for him-a dreadful abode". Neither in Muslim understanding of God's Justice, nor in any other monotheistic religion is God's Justice carried out along with discrimination. Jonas' story, related in both the

Old Testament and the Quran, demonstrates God's equitable treatment even when a prophet such as Jonas is guilty of wrongdoing. This way of understanding God's Justice contributes towards the establishment of a fair society. Hence, here in defining psychological Balance we focus on observing ethics, especially justice. In spite of all similarities, we should remember that different cultures place emphasis on distinct kinds of observing others' rights when they practice ethics in daily life. For example, Iranian, as a collectivist society may be keen to emphasize the ethics of acceptable and reliable interactions, while Americans living in an individualistic society may be keener to emphasize the ethics of solid compromises and pay more attention to individual responsibilities. These different ways of practicing ethics may get closer through cross-cultural interactions in different contextual backgrounds. In addition, the common ground of Holy Scriptures is a valuable field for the contemplation of ethical priorities, although the presence of differences is a quite natural phenomenon. Definitely, this perspective respects the diversity and the personal choice of individuals. Any practice could be valuable, if it is carried out mindfully, thoughtfully, sincerely and responsibly.

### MENTAL HEALTH FACTORS

The next dissimilarity relates to mental health components. According to Seligman Seligman (2008), positive health consists of subjective, biological, and functional variables. Positive psychology is contextualized in the West and has studied different kinds of low and high need satisfaction over many years. Moreover, according to positive psychology, a positive, healthy person has high-functions and high individual physical and ecological (person-environment fit) capabilities (Seligman, 2008). It is evident that Seligman (2008) exercised care in his classification of different functions. However, in the Balance perspective, one's balance is not just caused by psychological self-regulatory processes. Physical/biological, social, spiritual and chronological self-regulatory processes exert some influence. We acknowledge the importance of individual, biological and social processes as Seligman (2008) noted. In considering a human being's influence by the spiritual and chronological dimensions, as already explained, we include these two issues in our construction of Balance perspective. I recall a client who did not seem religious in terms of external appearance saying that only prayers and some traditional rituals could calm her down. The musical rhythm of such traditional rituals could even be considered boring. However, no matter what a person's appearance and preferences may be, if they believe and talk to God, they feel calm, and God plays a very important role even in the life of non-traditional religious people. Just over 95% of people in Iran, believe in God in different ways (religious-spiritual or other forms of spirituality). Hence, not only do I ask clients questions about personal care, family and social strategies in feeling calm/satisfied, but I also ask them about their connections to spiritual beliefs. Moreover, I ask them about the chronological dimension, the time and trend of changes in their lives. In many cases, when commonplace events cause

stress in a person at the same time, they can affect his/her balance. For example, psychological instability may be caused by paying less attention in caring for ourselves (such as giving up exercise), along with experiencing limitations in social skills at certain times such as at the end of the year, when people are stressed because of economic problems or other responsibilities. Thus, chronological trends of different stressors (even non-stressing issues which require energy) are also important. Some clients might prevent problems on this dimension by programming their lives adequately and by self-regulating themselves mindfully and proactively. In spite of all these differences, I must acknowledge that positive psychology has taken great steps to help people towards high levels of self-adaptation. However, as already explained in the definition of Conscious Psychological Balance, ethical values, especially fairness and justice are highlighted as individual and social regulators.

### VIRTUES

On the whole, important values such as justice and fairness, love and passion, wisdom, fortitude, and temperance have always been considered important with different intensity in both Eastern and Western contexts for a long time. But why is such emphasis placed on Justice? As previously explained, one of the most important reasons for upholding justice is prevention of harmful unethical issues and unhealthy social relations. A just society is peaceful and productive, in the same way as a psychologically balanced person is peaceful and productive. This similarity can help societies advance, as people themselves advance. Moreover, no virtue is as powerful as justice in regulating other virtues. For example, a very generous person may sometimes be imbalanced, but a just person needs to act moderately to provide the best efficiency and tranquility in his/her environment. As Thomas Aquinas (n.d.) says: "... Hence, since justice regulates human operations, it is evident that it renders man's operations good, and, as Tully declares (*De Officiis*, 7), good men are so called chiefly from their justice, wherefore, as he says again (*De Officiis*, 7) the luster of virtue appears above all in justice." (Aquinas, n.d., II-II: Q.58, A.3). The person who acts justly knows that for the sake of justice, she/he has to obtain wisdom so that s/he can struggle for productivity and calmness. S/he needs to avoid discrimination and exercise love and philanthropy towards all, and needs to have an acceptable level of determination and courage in defending different kind of rights. Therefore, justice leads people towards the acquisition of other virtues such as love, courage and wisdom.

### ADVANTAGES OF BALANCE PERSPECTIVE

Balance can improve many programs of mental health, since it is central to many cultural contexts. An analysis carried out by Arcury, Quandt, and Bell (2001), on different ethnic populations in North Carolina demonstrated the relevance of this theme. The analysis revealed the ways that individuals' narratives included seven salient health maintenance domains (e.g., taking care of oneself, being sociable, trusting in God and church participation, etc.).

Interestingly, four themes intersect the domains: 'balance and moderation', 'the holistic view of health', 'social integration', and 'personal responsibility'.

Balance, harmony, equilibrium, and justice have immense similarities, and touch profound cultural beliefs in different countries. For example, Prasadarao (2009) mentions that Chile has two principal cultures, the Chilean and the Mapuche. The Chilean culture equates mental health with factors such as equilibrium, quality of life, and wellbeing. According to the Mapuche culture, health is dependent on the "harmony and equilibrium of the universe", and any act that threatens this equilibrium can lead to illness. Social justice counselors such as Toporek (2009) talk about justice, and explain that issues such as discrimination can function as barriers in the way of mental health and well-being interventions. Moreover, belief in Justice is a central tenet in all monotheistic religions. It is necessary to mention that if concepts such as justice, equilibrium, harmony, homeostasis, resilience and self-regulation occur frequently in the definition of the healthy state of a system within different cultures and eras, then they should be considered as valuable concepts. If a reality is reported in similar terms in numerous studies by different investigators working at various times with different social contexts, then this reality is definitely an important part of a Reality (Jafari Roshan, 2008). Moreover, Balance concept remind us of justice. The name of Balance was chosen for a healthy state of mind, since the concept of Balance is reminiscent of the two equal pans of the scale of justice, an image that is widely accepted as the symbol of justice. In addition, from the viewpoint of Balance perspective, if positive psychology emphasized balance and justice, it would receive less criticism on this issue, while maintaining all its valuable advantages. According to Gable and Haidt (2005), Positive psychology is sometimes criticized for its failure to recognize the very real negative sides of life, preferring a Pollyanna view of the world. We have to admit that on many occasions positive acts do not result in positive outcomes. An unfair social context may not value and recompense such acts as it ought to.

### CONCLUSION

In summary, the concept of Balance can accord with the cultural beliefs of different ethnic groups and is reminiscent of harmony and fairness. Among different mental health approaches, only some specific tendencies such as resilience perspectives or positive psychology are highly concerned with the concept of Balance e.g., (Dryden, 2011; Kobau et al., 2011). This article set out to construct and test a definition of Conscious Psychological Balance. Conscious Psychological Balance is a collection of self-regulation and developmental processes, the most important component of which is resilience. Thus, Balance is a set of self-regulation processes within time and different contexts. These self-regulatory processes provide a person with relative calm/satisfaction, and relative positive performance, and require several cognitive, emotional and behavioral skills, cognitive potential, such as positive attitudes, acceptance, and goal pursuing orientation; emotional elements, such as

emotional flexibilities, and behavioral skills such as deep breath. A healthy individual is positive, has high levels of tolerance, is emotionally flexible, is focused on her/his goals, behaves fairly toward others and is satisfied and productive, while an unbalanced individual, lacks at least some of these characteristics, and does not enjoy a level of satisfaction and productivity she/he considers adequate. The general Balance of an individual consists of different Balance dimensions: psychological, physical, social, spiritual and chronological dimensions. In spite of the different social contexts in which positive psychology and Balance definition are constructed, the latter is very similar to the positive mental health in functional and subjective dimensions of mental health. However, it highlights other issues, such as spiritual and chronological dimensions and justice.

On the whole, the concept of Balance draws attention to a holistic perspective, which examines the interaction between individual and environment and has positive implications for the promotion of mental health programs among different ethnic groups, especially those suffering social problems. Many domestic violence, social discriminations, socio-economic inequalities, discrimination and unfairness in educational and organizational settings could be prevented by promoting the concept of justice along with mental health

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