

The relationship between the autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom among higher education teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the levels of autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom among higher education instructors and examine the relationship between both variables. The study adopted the descriptive correlational approach as the most suitable method for achieving its objectives. The sample consisted of 400 male and female instructors from the University of Anbar selected through stratified random sampling. To achieve the aims, researchers verified the psychometric properties of the two scales. Findings showed above-average levels of autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom. No statistically significant gender differences were found. However, significant differences appeared by specialization favoring scientific disciplines. Differences also appeared by academic rank particularly between professors and assistant lecturers with professors scoring higher on both variables. Furthermore, results confirmed a positive statistically significant relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom. These findings indicate strong internal motivation balanced use of knowledge and emotional experience enhancing teaching effectiveness, research performance, and educational goals among faculty members at the university when dealing with different academic situations and supporting sound decisions in professional practice daily responsibilities and continuous development opportunities across departments for all staff members in general context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

University faculty encounter diverse stressors and changing conditions that require positive personal traits for effective adaptation. The autotelic personality encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics that promote a positive life orientation and balanced coping. Higher levels are linked to greater life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and positive social functioning, whereas lower levels are associated with poorer adjustment, higher anxiety, and reduced coping ability [1]. A deficiency in purpose-oriented traits can adversely impact professional outcomes by weakening organizational skills and student engagement. Furthermore, it creates significant challenges in navigating professional stressors and maintaining a healthy balance between work and social responsibilities [2]. Despite the increasing demands of higher education, attention remains limited to the role of internal factors among faculty members, particularly a purpose-driven personality and cognitive wisdom, in improving their ability to manage complex academic situations and make balanced educational decisions. A purpose-driven personality

contributes to enhancing self-regulation, flexibility, and coping with pressures [3]. While an autotelic personality generally fosters personal growth and motivation, it can paradoxically become a source of psychological stress for academics struggling with a lack of purpose or poor self-regulation. In such cases, this disposition may lead to 'purpose anxiety', a state characterized by persistent confusion and self-doubt regarding one's professional direction [4]. Engagement associated with a purpose-oriented personality may sometimes turn into excessive immersion in flow experiences, leading to neglect of important external demands, conflict with professional and social obligations, and difficulty maintaining balance between life roles [2].

University instructors with low autotelic personality levels tend to be more influenced by external pressures, showing a weakness in making professional and personal decisions aligned with their internal value systems. This limits their cognitive and emotional autonomy, resulting in lower cognitive wisdom, defined as the capacity for deep understanding and sound judgment, thereby increasing the likelihood of anxiety and internal conflict [5]. According to Yazar [6], individuals lacking an autotelic personality are significantly more susceptible to emotional disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms, than those with a purposeful self-orientation. Furthermore, a lack of self-purpose serves as a critical indicator of psychological maladjustment and is a primary risk factor for compromised mental health.

Autotelic personality is a contemporary psychological construct characterized by intrinsic motivation, where individuals engage in activities primarily for inherent interest and enjoyment. Rather than relying on external reinforcements, such individuals derive satisfaction and psychological well-being directly from the process of the activity itself [7]. These individuals exhibit a pronounced tendency toward creativity and experimentation, underpinned by high self-efficacy that bolsters their confidence in navigating complex situations. By maintaining a strong sense of autonomy over their activities, they effectively calibrate self-imposed challenges to align with their skill levels, thereby fostering sustained intrinsic motivation [8]. Wisdom helps in employing knowledge and experience in a reflective and rational manner that serves the educational process [9].

Asakawa [10] suggests that an autotelic personality is positively correlated with engagement in rewarding life experiences, which significantly enhances overall quality of life. This disposition is fundamentally rooted in reflective self-awareness, a proactive willingness to embrace risks, and a balanced sense of self-acceptance. It also includes perseverance in pursuing goals despite difficulties and creativity as an expression of original ideas [11]. Autotelic personality is a key factor in the success of modern institutions, as it is linked to strong intrinsic motivation that enhances performance and productivity. In academia, it contributes to improving teaching quality, motivating students, and fostering an innovative and supportive university environment [12]. Autotelic personality denotes a positive psychological state characterized by heightened satisfaction and well-being derived from personally meaningful activities. This disposition fosters total task immersion, where focused attention leads to a distorted perception of time and a significant reduction in fatigue and anxiety [13].

Cognitive wisdom is a fundamental pillar arising from the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical experience. It enables individuals to handle ambiguous life situations with balance and depth. However, indicators suggest a decline in this wisdom in some academic environments, attributed to limited reflective thinking and weak analytical depth [14]. While cognitive wisdom serves as a protective factor against stress, it does not always guarantee effective adaptation, as high levels of perceived stress or maladaptive traits like neuroticism can undermine its positive impact [15]. Cognitive wisdom among university faculty members plays a significant role in enhancing analytical thinking and balanced educational decision-making. Conversely, low cognitive wisdom is associated with poor academic planning, impulsive teaching behavior, increased susceptibility to external pressures, and limited academic and social adjustment within the university environment [16]. Cognitive wisdom is defined as the ability to engage in deliberate thinking and analyze complex situations based on one's cognitive structure and level of awareness. It is not just about possessing knowledge, but the effective application of that knowledge to provide appropriate solutions [17]. Ardelet [18] conceptualizes cognitive wisdom as an intrinsic drive to pursue a profound understanding of life, characterized by an acknowledgment of human complexity, inherent uncertainty, and the boundaries of one's own knowledge.

In educational settings, cognitive wisdom supports critical thinking and rational. A high level of cognitive wisdom is linked to adopting human values that foster care for others and using effective negotiation and conflict-management strategies, enabling efficient handling of social challenges and promoting understanding and cooperation within society [19]. Decision-making, helping faculty members navigate academic ambiguity and uphold ethical standards, which enhances the quality of the educational process [9]. Sternberg [20] defines it as the ability to make wise judgments and solve problems with flexibility and a broad vision, balancing personal goals with the common good.

Existing literature underscores both purpose-driven personality and cognitive wisdom as pivotal traits associated with motivation, performance, and adaptation within academic and professional spheres. Specifically, Abuhamdeh [21] research demonstrates that a purpose-oriented disposition enhances commitment, academic achievement, self-esteem, psychological resilience, and overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, Ullén *et al.* [22] elucidated that individuals with a purpose-driven personality proactively seek out situations characterized by high skill demands and continuous challenges, navigating them with robust intrinsic motivation. The study by Gao [23] showed that weakness in these traits is associated with avoidance and increased psychological stress. While the study by Kantén and Arda [24] found a positive effect of it in enhancing work engagement. Despite this, studies related to self-purpose personality among faculty members in Arab higher education are still limited. As for cognitive wisdom, the study by Guthrie [25] showed that it is represented in the proper use of knowledge and experience to understand complex situations. The study by Thomas *et al.* [26] revealed that individuals possess a good level of different dimensions of wisdom. While study by Rashid *et al.* [27] indicated that there is a relationship between artificial intelligence and cognitive wisdom, which enhances the role of modern technologies in developing wise thinking and making sound decisions. However, studies that addressed cognitive wisdom among faculty members in higher education institutions are still few, especially in the Arab environment.

Although previous studies have addressed purpose-driven personality and cognitive wisdom each independently, knowledge is still limited regarding the nature of the interaction between these two variables and its effect on the quality of teaching and academic decision-making. This deficiency is considered more significant in Arab higher education contexts, as their institutions face professional and organizational challenges that require the availability of integrated personal and cognitive traits among faculty members. Therefore, examining the relationship between these two variables contributes to filling a theoretical gap related to understanding their integration, and an applied gap associated with developing academic and educational performance.

The novelty of the study lies in demonstrating that its scope extends beyond a descriptive analysis of purpose-driven personality and cognitive wisdom among faculty members. It provides a scientific contribution by examining the correlational relationship between these two psychological constructs within the context of higher education, where this relationship has received limited direct attention in previous research. The study also shows that self-motivation, as represented by purpose-driven personality, may be associated with the ability of faculty members to think in a balanced manner and deal wisely with complex academic situations, thereby offering a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms that may support teaching effectiveness, professional success, teaching quality, student engagement, and the efficiency of academic and administrative decision-making in higher education institutions.

The theoretical contribution of the study is represented in supporting and expanding the explanatory frameworks of purpose-driven personality and cognitive wisdom within the educational context, by showing that effective professional behavior does not depend on technical skills alone, but is also influenced by higher psychological and cognitive traits, such as intrinsic motivation, purposeful engagement, and balanced reflective thinking. Therefore, the study adds a theoretical dimension linking theories of motivation and psychological flow on the one hand, and models of wisdom and rational decision-making on the other hand, in a way that contributes to enriching the psychological and educational literature related to faculty members in higher education.

As for the applied contribution and practical implications, they are manifested in the possibility of benefiting from the study results in designing professional development programs aimed at developing self-motivation and enhancing reflective thinking and cognitive wisdom among faculty members, which is positively reflected in the quality of teaching and scientific research. The study also provides two scientific instruments that can be benefited from in subsequent research and institutional evaluation. At the policy level, the results indicate the importance of including psychological and cognitive competencies within the criteria for selecting faculty members, training programs, and university evaluation systems, in a way that supports the orientation of higher education institutions toward excellence, creativity, and academic sustainability. The current research aims to:

- Identify the level of autotelic personality among University of Anbar faculty.
- Identify statistically significant differences in autotelic personality based on gender (male-female), specialization (scientific-humanities), and academic title (professor, assistant professor, lecturer, and assistant lecturer).
- Identify the level of cognitive wisdom among University of Anbar faculty.
- Identify statistically significant differences in cognitive wisdom based on the aforementioned variables (gender, specialization, and academic title).
- Reveal the nature of the correlational relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom.

2. METHOD

2.1. Study design

The study adopted a descriptive-correlational approach to examine the relationships among the study variables. This design is appropriate as it allows for investigating associations without manipulating variables. It also helps in understanding the nature and direction of these relationships within higher education.

2.2. Population

The target population comprised the entire faculty body at the University of Anbar, consisting of 2,383 members, including both male and female faculty. The population also represented both scientific and humanities specializations. In addition, it included various academic ranks, namely professor, assistant professor, lecturer, and assistant lecturer.

2.3. Sample

A stratified random sampling method was used to select the study sample, which consisted of 400 faculty members, providing a highly representative view of teaching staff in higher education institutions. The participants included 294 males and 106 females. They were distributed across scientific specializations (238) and humanities specializations (162). In terms of academic rank, the sample comprised 68 professors, 90 assistant professors, 110 lecturers, and 132 assistant lecturers. This sampling method enhanced the accuracy of representation across gender, specialization, and academic rank.

2.4. Instruments

For the purpose of achieving the study objectives, two scales were applied: one to assess autotelic personality and the other to assess cognitive wisdom. These scales were used because they directly measure the main variables of the study. Their use helped examine the relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom more clearly.

2.5. Autotelic personality scale

The researchers adopted the autotelic personality scale developed by Tse *et al.* [28]. The scale consists of 26 items distributed across seven dimensions: persistence and perseverance; low self-centeredness; intrinsic motivation; transforming challenges into enjoyable experiences; transforming routine situations into enjoyable experiences; attentional control; and curiosity and interest. The items were formulated as single statements, and respondents are required to answer based on the degree to which each statement applies to them. Responses are recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1–5, where a score of 5 represents the highest level of applicability and 1 represents the lowest for positive items; conversely, scores are reversed during the scoring process for negative items.

2.6. Validity procedures for the study

2.6.1 Construct validity

To verify construct validity, the researchers determined the correlation values linking each individual item's score with the overall score of its corresponding domain, aiming to examine how well the items represent the domains of the autotelic personality scale. The total score of each domain was adopted as an internal criterion for validity verification. After applying the Pearson correlation results showed that all obtained coefficients were statistically significant when compared to the critical threshold value of 0.098 at the 0.05 level, with 398 degrees of freedom. These findings confirm that the scale items adequately capture the constructs they were developed to measure, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between each item and its respective domain for the autotelic personality scale

Persistence and perseverance		Low self-centeredness		Intrinsic motivation		Transforming challenges		Transforming boredom		Attention control		Curiosity and interest	
Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>
1	0.723	5	0.592	9	0.66	13	0.719	16	0.762	20	0.719	23	0.752
2	0.711	6	0.581	10	0.6	14	0.575	17	0.667	21	0.722	24	0.71
3	0.632	7	0.68	11	0.577	15	0.772	18	0.711	22	0.696	25	0.560
4	0.665	8	0.699	12	0.608			19	0.684			26	0.650

2.6.2. Scale reliability

To verify the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was applied, producing a coefficient of 0.88, which reflects a satisfactory level of consistency. Furthermore, reliability was examined

through the test–retest approach by administering the scale to a group of 40 faculty members and repeating it after a 14-day interval. The Pearson correlation between the two sets of scores reached 0.92, indicating a high level of stability in participants' responses across time.

2.7. The cognitive wisdom scales

In the present study, the researchers utilized the cognitive wisdom scale originally developed by Sternberg [20]. It consists of 30 items distributed across five dimensions: the individual dimension; the social dimension; the human/universal dimension; the environmental interaction dimension; and the temporal and value dimension. The items were formulated as single statements, and respondents are required to answer based on the degree to which each statement applies to them. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1–5. In this scale, a rating of 5 indicates the maximum degree of applicability, whereas a rating of 1 reflects the minimum level.

2.8. Validity procedures for the current study

2.8.1. Construct validity

To verify the construct validity of the cognitive wisdom scale, the relationship between each item score and the overall score of its respective domain was analyzed to ensure that the items accurately reflect their intended theoretical dimensions. The total domain score served as an internal benchmark for assessing item validity. Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed, and the results showed that all coefficients were statistically significant when compared to the critical value of 0.098 at the 0.05 level of significance with 398 degrees of freedom. These findings indicate that the items are well aligned with the domains they are intended to measure, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Presents the correlation coefficients between each item and the total score of its corresponding domain in the cognitive wisdom scale

Individual dimension		Social dimension		Human/universal dimension		Environmental interaction		Temporal and value dimension	
Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>	Item	<i>r</i>
1	0.526	7	0.626	13	0.58	19	0.651	25	0.609
2	0.516	8	0.722	14	0.652	20	0.53	26	0.694
3	0.644	9	0.627	15	0.629	21	0.696	27	0.668
4	0.576	10	0.618	16	0.615	22	0.616	28	0.568
5	0.537	11	0.69	17	0.661	23	0.638	29	0.602
6	0.603	12	0.643	18	0.632	24	0.539	30	0.549

2.8.2. Scale reliability

To assess the scale's internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was applied, resulting in a coefficient of 0.87, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability. In addition, stability was examined through the test–retest procedure by administering the instrument to a group of 40 male and female faculty members and repeating it after an interval of 14 days. The Pearson correlation between the two sets of scores was then computed and reached 0.89, suggesting that the scale demonstrates a satisfactory level of consistency in responses over time. The SPSS program was used to perform the statistical analyses for the current research.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Results related to the first question

To address the first research question concerning the identification of autotelic personality among faculty members at the University of Anbar, the autotelic personality scale was administered to a sample of 400 male and female faculty members. The results showed that the sample achieved a mean score of 86.312 with a standard deviation of 18.476, which exceeded the hypothetical mean of 78. In addition, the calculated t-value was 8.998, which is higher than the tabulated t-value of 1.96 at the significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference in favor of the sample mean, suggesting that faculty members at the University of Anbar possess an above-average level of autotelic personality.

3.2. Results related to the second question

This objective aimed to determine whether autotelic personality differs significantly among University of Anbar faculty according to gender (male–female), field of specialization (scientific–humanities), and academic rank (professor, assistant professor, lecturer, and assistant lecturer). To accomplish this, data were gathered from a sample of 400 male and female faculty members using the

adopted measurement instrument. To test for differences across these variables, a three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with interaction effects was conducted. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Three-way ANOVA for autotelic personality according to the variables of gender, specialization, and academic title

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	F-Value		p-value
				Tab.	Calc.	
Gender	700.818	1	700.818	3.84	2.194	N.S
Specialization	1419.649	1	1419.649	3.84	4.444	Sig
Academic title	4805.985	3	1601.995	2.60	5.015	Sig
Gender * specialization	11.475	1	11.475	3.84	0.036	N.S
Gender * academic title	1681.081	3	560.360	2.60	1.754	N.S
Specialization * academic title	645.859	3	215.286	2.60	0.674	N.S
Gender * specialization * academic title	567.377	3	189.126	2.60	0.592	N.S
Error	122656.618	384	319.418			
Total	132488.862	399				

Note: N.S.=Not significant; Sig.=Significant

3.3. Academic title variable

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in autotelic personality levels associated with academic title, as the obtained F-value exceeded the critical value at the 0.05 significance level. To identify the specific direction of these differences, Scheffé's post hoc test for unequal sample sizes was applied. The results showed significant variations between certain academic ranks, as presented in Table 4. This may indicate that advancement in academic title, together with the related increase in professional experience and academic responsibilities, plays a role in shaping differences in autotelic personality among university faculty members.

Table 4. Arithmetic means and the calculated and critical Scheffé values

Comparison	Comparisons (groups)	N	Mean	Calculated Scheffé value	Critical Scheffé value	Significance level (0.05)
1st	Professor	68	91.206	2.073	8.048	Non-significant
	Assistant professor	90	89.133			
2nd	Professor	68	91.206	6.024	7.733	Non-significant
	Lecturer	110	85.182			
3rd	Professor	68	91.206	8.395	7.403	Significant for professor
	Assistant lecturer	132	82.811			
4th	Assistant professor	90	89.133	3.951	7.059	Non-significant
	Lecturer	110	85.182			
5th	Assistant professor	90	89.133	6.322	6.807	Non-significant
	Assistant lecturer	132	82.811			
6th	Lecturer	110	85.182	2.371	6.450	Non-significant
	Assistant lecturer	132	82.811			

3.4. Results related to the third question

To address the third research question concerning the identification of cognitive wisdom among faculty members at the University of Anbar, the cognitive wisdom scale was administered to a sample of 400 faculty members. The results indicated that the sample obtained an arithmetic mean of 96.942 with a standard deviation of 21.677, which is higher than the hypothetical mean of 90. Furthermore, the calculated t-value reached 6.405, exceeding the tabulated t-value of 1.96 at the significance level of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference in favor of the sample mean, suggesting that faculty members at the University of Anbar possess a level of cognitive wisdom above the average.

3.5. Results related to the fourth question

Detecting statistically significant differences in cognitive wisdom among University of Anbar faculty based on the variables of gender (male-female), specialization (scientific - humanities), and academic title (professor, assistant professor, lecturer, and assistant lecturer)? To achieve this objective, the researcher relied on data collected from the 400 male and female faculty members of the study sample on the cognitive wisdom scale. To determine the differences in this variable based on gender, specialization, and academic title, the researcher employed the three-way ANOVA with interaction. The results are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Three-way ANOVA for cognitive wisdom according to the variables of gender, specialization, and academic title

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom (df)	Mean squares	F-value		Significance level (0.05)
				Cal	Tab	
Gender	972.568	1	972.568	2.195	3.84	N.S
Specialization	1915.911	1	1915.911	4.324	3.84	Sig
Academic title	6316.915	3	2105.638	4.752	2.6	Sig
Gender * Specialization	3.69	1	3.69	0.008	3.84	N.S
Gender * Academic title	2083.06	3	694.353	1.567	2.6	N.S
Specialization * Academic title	760.708	3	253.569	0.572	2.6	N.S
Gender * Specialization * Title	579.78	3	193.26	0.436	2.6	N.S
Error	170144.108	384	443.084	—	—	—
Total	182776.74	399	—	—	—	—

Note: N.S.=Not significant; Sig.=Significant

Regarding the academic title variable, the results indicated statistically significant differences in cognitive wisdom, as the obtained F-value exceeded the critical value at the 0.05 significance level. To determine the direction of these differences, the researcher used the Scheffé test, and its results showed differences between academic titles. This reflects the impact of accumulated academic experience and the progression of the scientific career path in developing cognitive wisdom among faculty members. In general, the results indicate that cognitive wisdom among faculty members is influenced more by the professional context, the nature of academic practice, and cumulative experience than by individual variables such as gender, which is consistent with the nature of contemporary university work. Table 6 illustrates the arithmetic means, and the calculated and critical Scheffé values.

Table 6. Arithmetic means, and the calculated and critical Scheffé values

Comparison	Comparisons (groups)	N	Mean	Calculated Scheffé value	Critical Scheffé value	Significance level (0.05)
1st	Professor	68	102.471	2.238	9.479	Non-significant
	Assistant professor	90	100.233			
2nd	Professor	68	102.471	6.807	9.107	Non-significant
	Lecturer	110	95.664			
3rd	Professor	68	102.471	9.554	8.719	Significant for professor
	Assistant lecturer	132	92.917			
4th	Assistant professor	90	100.233	4.569	8.314	Non-significant
	Lecturer	110	95.664			
5th	Assistant professor	90	100.233	7.316	8.018	Non-significant
	Assistant lecturer	132	92.917			
6th	Lecturer	110	95.664	2.747	7.597	Non-significant
	Assistant lecturer	132	92.917			

To address the fifth research question concerning the nature of the correlational relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom among faculty members at the University of Anbar, participants' responses on both the autotelic personality scale and the cognitive wisdom scale were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results revealed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.599, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. Moreover, the calculated t-value reached 13.311, which exceeded the tabulated t-value of 1.96 at the significance level of 0.05. This demonstrates that the relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that higher levels of autotelic personality are associated with higher levels of cognitive wisdom among faculty members at the University of Anbar.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Results of the first objective

The result indicates that faculty members at the University of Anbar demonstrate a high level of purpose-oriented personality. This finding can be interpreted in light of flow theory proposed by Mirvis and Csikszentmihalyi [13], which explains that individuals are more likely to experience deep engagement and optimal performance when there is a balance between personal skills and task challenges. Faculty members often work in environments that require continuous problem solving, independent thinking, teaching effectiveness, and scientific productivity, all of which create suitable conditions for flow experiences. Repeated engagement in such experiences strengthens intrinsic motivation, perseverance, enjoyment in work, and commitment to meaningful goals, which are core characteristics of a purpose-oriented personality.

This result can also be understood within the specific context of the University of Anbar, where academic staff members operate in a demanding environment that requires adaptation to teaching responsibilities, research productivity, administrative duties, and changing educational needs. In such a context, possessing a purpose-oriented personality becomes especially important, as it helps faculty members sustain motivation, remain psychologically resilient, and continue performing effectively despite professional pressures. The autonomy available in academic work, together with the intellectual stimulation of university life, may further reinforce self-directed engagement and a stronger orientation toward achievement and professional meaning [7].

The results of the current study highlight the importance of a purpose-driven personality as a key factor guiding behavior, consistent with the literature on purpose in life. A study by Olčar [29] showed that psychological flow is associated with autotelic personality traits, especially conscientiousness, and Barcaccia *et al.* [30] confirmed its association with positive health outcomes and its role as a protective factor against psychological disorders. A study by Joshanloo [3] indicated that an increase in the sense of purpose predicts positive changes in personality traits, including higher openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion, along with lower neuroticism. A study by Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi [31] indicated that goal-directed activities, which are characterized by an appropriate level of challenge, represent a primary source of intrinsic motivation and enjoyment, where the relationship between challenge and enjoyment is stronger in activities with clear goals. A study by Pfund [32] also indicated that purpose in life is considered an individual trait integrated within personality components, and it contributes to guiding thoughts and feelings and regulating behavior over time.

4.2. Discussion of the second objective

The results of the three-way ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences in purpose-oriented personality according to gender, as the calculated F-value was lower than the tabulated value at the 0.05 level. However, statistically significant differences were found according to specialization and academic title, since the calculated F-values exceeded the corresponding tabulated values. The interaction effects among gender, specialization, and academic title were not statistically significant. This result indicates that purpose-oriented personality may not differ by gender, but it may vary according to specialization and academic title. These differences may be attributed to variations in academic tasks, professional responsibilities, research requirements, and levels of academic experience. In light of flow theory, such differences can be understood through the varying degrees of challenge, skill, autonomy, and meaningful engagement experienced by faculty members in different specializations and academic ranks [13].

4.3. Results of post hoc comparisons and interactions

According to Table 4, the results of Scheffé's post hoc test revealed statistically significant differences in purpose-oriented personality in the comparison between the academic titles (professor, assistant lecturer), where the calculated Scheffé value was greater than the critical value at the significance level (0.05), and the difference was in favor of the title of professor. This may be interpreted as the higher academic rank usually being associated with longer academic experience and deeper professional accumulation, both of which contribute to enhancing intrinsic motivation and continuity in striving toward scientific goals. The professor also undergoes research and teaching experiences that require a high level of self-regulation, independence in decision-making, and the assumption of greater cognitive responsibilities, which strengthens the internal orientation toward achievement as an intrinsic end rather than merely a response to external requirements. In contrast, the results of the other comparisons did not show statistically significant differences in purpose-oriented personality among the academic titles (assistant professor, lecturer), (assistant professor, assistant lecturer), and (lecturer, assistant lecturer), as the calculated Scheffé values were lower than the critical values at the adopted level of significance. This indicates the closeness of purpose-oriented personality levels among these titles, reflecting the similarity in the nature of professional roles and job requirements across these academic stages.

At the level of interactions, according to Table 3, the results of the three-way ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences in purpose-oriented personality attributable to the interaction between gender and specialization, or between gender and academic title, or between specialization and academic title, as all calculated F-values were lower than the tabulated values at the significance level (0.05). Likewise, no statistically significant differences were found for the three-way interaction among gender, specialization, and academic title. These results indicate that the effect of each independent variable was relatively independent and was not influenced by the overlap with other variables, suggesting that purpose-oriented personality is mainly shaped in light of individual characteristics and general professional experience rather than being affected by joint interactions among gender, specialization, and academic title.

4.4. Results related to the third question

The result indicates that faculty members possess a high level of cognitive wisdom. This finding can be interpreted in light of Ardeli [33] three-dimensional wisdom model, which explains wisdom through the integration of cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions. The cognitive dimension involves deep understanding and sound judgment, the reflective dimension refers to examining situations from multiple perspectives, and the affective dimension relates to empathy and balanced interpersonal responses. Because faculty members frequently encounter complex academic situations, these dimensions may develop through continuous professional practice.

In the context of the University of Anbar, academic staff members are required to manage teaching, research, student guidance, and administrative responsibilities within a dynamic educational environment. Such demands require thoughtful decisions, flexibility, and responsible interaction with students and colleagues. Continuous engagement in these tasks may enhance critical thinking, emotional regulation, and the rational use of knowledge, which explains the importance of cognitive wisdom for effective academic performance and sound decision-making [18].

The results of the current study indicate that faculty members possess a high level of cognitive wisdom, which can be interpreted in light of contemporary psychological literature. The study by Jeste and Lee [14] indicated that wisdom is a multidimensional trait that includes cognitive and emotional processes, such as social decision-making, emotion regulation, self-reflection, and acceptance of uncertainty. The study by Ardeli [33] also indicated that wisdom represents an integration of cognitive, reflective, and emotional dimensions, and contributes to a deeper understanding of life and the regulation of behavior. In the same context, study by Thomas *et al.* [26] indicated that wisdom is positively associated with mental health, life satisfaction, and quality of life, reflecting its role in enhancing psychological adjustment. The study by Belangi *et al.* [16] also indicated that wisdom consists of two integrated dimensions: cognitive and emotional wisdom, where this integration contributes to improving the ability to understand complex situations and make balanced decisions. Finally, study by Naseer *et al.* [34] indicated the importance of wisdom as a factor that contributes to improving psychological performance and effectively dealing with the demands of the academic environment.

4.5. Results related to the fourth question

According to Table 5, the results of the three-way ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences in cognitive wisdom according to gender, as the calculated F-value was lower than the tabulated value at the 0.05 level of significance. However, statistically significant differences were found according to specialization and academic title, since the calculated F-values exceeded the corresponding tabulated values. The results also indicated that the interaction effects among gender, specialization, and academic title were not statistically significant.

These findings suggest that cognitive wisdom among faculty members is not substantially influenced by gender, but it may vary according to the nature of academic specialization and academic title. The differences related to specialization may be attributed to variations in academic tasks, thinking patterns, and problem-solving requirements across scientific and humanities disciplines. Similarly, the differences according to academic title may reflect the role of accumulated academic experience, research involvement, teaching responsibilities, and participation in academic decision-making.

In light of the balance theory of wisdom, cognitive wisdom develops through the integration of practical knowledge, professional experience, and balanced judgment in dealing with complex situations. Therefore, faculty members' specialization and academic title may provide different levels of exposure to academic challenges that enhance wise thinking and decision-making. The absence of significant interaction effects indicates that these variables did not jointly produce additional differences beyond their separate effects [18].

4.6. Results of post hoc comparisons and interactions

According to Table 6, the outcomes of Scheffé's post hoc analysis indicated the absence of statistically significant differences in cognitive wisdom across most academic ranks. However, a significant difference emerged between the ranks of professor and assistant lecturer, favoring professors. This distinction may be explained by the extended academic tenure of professors, their accumulated scholarly expertise, and their engagement in advanced academic and administrative duties, all of which may enhance the quality of cognitive evaluation and judgment. Conversely, comparisons between professor and assistant professor, professor and lecturer, as well as among the other academic ranks, did not reveal significant variations, suggesting relatively comparable levels of cognitive wisdom across these groups.

4.7. Discussion of the result related to the fifth question

The correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between purpose-oriented personality and cognitive wisdom among faculty members. This result indicates that as levels of purpose-oriented personality increase, levels of cognitive wisdom also tend to increase. In other words, faculty members who possess stronger intrinsic motivation, perseverance, and meaningful engagement in their professional roles are more likely to demonstrate balanced judgment and thoughtful decision-making. This finding can be interpreted through flow theory, which proposes that individuals who are internally motivated and deeply engaged in meaningful activities are more likely to experience concentration, persistence, and continuous skill development. Repeated involvement in such experiences may help faculty members accumulate practical knowledge, regulate their behavior effectively, and respond to academic challenges with greater awareness. As a result, this sustained engagement may contribute to wiser judgments and more rational responses when dealing with complex educational situations [13].

The result is also consistent with Ardel's three-dimensional wisdom model [18], which explains wisdom through the integration of cognitive, reflective, and affective dimensions. Purpose-oriented personality may strengthen the cognitive dimension by encouraging deeper understanding and problem analysis, enhance the reflective dimension by promoting careful evaluation of situations from multiple perspectives, and support the affective dimension through responsible, balanced, and empathetic interactions with students and colleagues. In the context of the University of Anbar, faculty members work within an environment that requires continuous adaptation to teaching responsibilities, research productivity, student guidance, and administrative duties. Such demands make both sustained motivation and wise judgment essential for effective performance. Therefore, the positive relationship between purpose-oriented personality and cognitive wisdom reflects the importance of combining motivational and cognitive strengths in supporting academic success, professional effectiveness, and sound decision-making in higher education institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

Faculty members at the University of Anbar possess an above-average level of autotelic personality, and no significant difference appears in this variable according to gender. However, a significant difference exists based on specialization in favor of scientific specializations, and another significant difference appears according to academic title, specifically between the titles of professor and assistant lecturer in favor of the professor. The results also indicate that faculty members at the University of Anbar possess an above-average level of cognitive wisdom, with no significant difference according to gender, while a significant difference appears based on specialization in favor of scientific specializations. In addition, a significant difference emerges according to academic title between professor and assistant lecturer in favor of the professor. Finally, the results reveal a positive correlational relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom. In conclusion, the results of the study showed that faculty members have a clear level of autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom. The findings also revealed a correlational relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom among faculty members. This indicates that self-motivation and purposeful engagement may be associated with balanced thinking and wise handling of academic situations.

The study contributes to the literature by clarifying the relationship between autotelic personality and cognitive wisdom in the context of higher education. It also highlights the importance of these two variables as psychological and cognitive factors that may support faculty performance, teaching effectiveness, and educational decision-making. These findings are particularly relevant to the University of Anbar and similar academic contexts.

Based on these findings, universities are encouraged to include psychological and cognitive development in faculty training and professional development programs. Such programs may help strengthen self-motivation, reflective thinking, and wise judgment among faculty members. Future research is recommended to examine these variables in other educational settings and to explore additional factors related to academic excellence in higher education.

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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

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Vi : Visualization

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this manuscript.

INFORMED CONSENT

The authors confirms that the manuscript represents an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study conducted; that no significant aspects of the research have been omitted; and that any deviations from the originally planned study have been properly disclosed and explained.

ETHICAL APPROVA

The research project was formally approved by the University Council of the University of Anbar in accordance with the official administrative order issued by the College of Education for Humanities (Administrative Order No. 1373, dated 1 August 2025), based on the resolutions of the University Council session.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [MRH], upon reasonable request.

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