Research Article

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Attentional Control and its Relationship to Persuasive Intelligence among Students of the College of Education, University of Maysan

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Abstract

The current research aimed to identify the level of attentional control, the level of persuasive intelligence, and the relationship between them among students of the College of Education, University of Maysan. The research population consisted of all students of the College of Education, University of Maysan for the academic year (2025-2026), numbering (2,406) male and female students (1,913 females and 493 males). The researcher adopted the descriptive correlational approach and selected a stratified random sample of (300) male and female students, representing (12.47%) of the original population. To measure the research variables, the researcher constructed a scale for attentional control in its initial form consisting of (32) items, and a scale for persuasive intelligence in its initial form consisting of (30) items. The results showed that College of Education students possess a high level of attentional control and a high level of persuasive intelligence. A statistically significant positive correlational relationship was found between attentional control and persuasive intelligence, indicating that as attentional control increases, persuasive intelligence increases. The research concluded with a set of findings, recommendations, and suggestions.

Keywords: Attentional Control, Persuasive Intelligence, University Students

Introduction

Psychological and educational science always seeks to understand the higher mental processes that enable humans to interact productively with their environment, and attentional control is one of these essential processes. It represents an individual's ability to direct their attention and maintain it on the required tasks while resisting distractions and unwanted influences. Attentional control reflects the efficiency of the individual's executive system and their ability to regulate their behavior and thinking [1].

In a world characterized by complexity and numerous temptations and distractions, attentional control becomes a crucial tool for academic, professional, and social success, especially for university students who face multiple and diverse pressures. The College of Education at the University of Misan is considered a fundamental resource for preparing teachers and educators, who will bear the responsibility of educating generations. Therefore,

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possessing a high level of attentional control is essential for them to be able to focus during learning and teaching processes and to face classroom challenges.

As for persuasive intelligence, it represents one of the types of complex intelligences that combine cognitive and social skills. It refers to an individual's ability to influence others and persuade them of an idea or position using convincing verbal and non-verbal methods, along with a deep understanding of the listeners' psychology and needs. Persuasive intelligence relies on communication skills, empathy, strategic thinking, and social awareness [2].

It is important for students of the College of Education, as future teachers, to possess persuasive intelligence that enables them to convey knowledge to students, motivate them to learn, manage classrooms effectively, and gain the trust of parents and the community. The question arises about the nature of the relationship between these two variables: Does attentional control—as an indicator of cognitive performance efficiency—contribute to the development of persuasive intelligence? And does it make students more capable of noticing details in the social environment and constructing convincing arguments? Hence, the idea of this research emerges, aiming to uncover the relationship between attentional control and persuasive intelligence among students of the College of Education at the University of Misan.

Secondly: The Research Problem and Its Questions

In light of the rapid developments in the world of education and communication, the need for competent teachers capable of attracting students' attention and convincing them of scientific content and positive values is increasing. The College of Education at the University of Misan is responsible for preparing these teachers. Through initial observations of some students, it appears that there is a clear disparity in their ability to control attention and in their persuasive skills, whether in classroom discussions or extracurricular activities.

It is noted that some students have difficulty maintaining focus for long periods and get easily distracted during lectures or study sessions, which may negatively affect their academic achievement and their ability to employ their knowledge effectively. Some of them also lack the essential skills to influence and convince others, whether in teamwork or during field applications. Accordingly, the research problem can be formulated in the following main question: What is the relationship between attentional control and persuasive intelligence among the students of the College of Education at the University of Misan?

From this main question, the following sub-questions arise:

1. What is the level of attentional control among the students of the College of Education at the University of Misan?

2. What is the level of persuasive intelligence among the students of the College of Education at the University of Misan?

Fourth: Significance of the Research

The significance of the current research arises from several considerations, which can be summarized as follows:

First: Theoretical Significance

1. The research deals with two variables that, to the researcher’s knowledge, have not received sufficient attention in previous studies and research in the Iraqi and Arab context, especially persuasive intelligence as an independent psychological concept.

2. The research contributes to enriching the Arab library with new knowledge about the concepts of 'attentional control' and 'persuasive intelligence,' and provides standardized measurement tools that can be utilized in subsequent research.

3. The research sheds light on the students of the College of Education as an important group, focusing on essential cognitive and communicative skills for preparing an effective teacher.

Second: Practical Importance

1. The research provides an accurate diagnosis of the levels of attentional control and persuasive intelligence among the students of the College of Education, giving a clear picture to educational and university decision-makers regarding the availability of these two important skills.

2. Academics and psychological counselors can benefit from the research results in designing guidance and training programs aimed at developing attentional control and enhancing persuasive intelligence among students.

3. The research helps direct attention to the importance of including persuasive communication skills and attention concentration training in teacher preparation curricula.

Fifth: Research Objectives

The current research aims to:

1. Identify the level of attentional control among the students of the College of Education at Misan University.

2. Identify the level of persuasive intelligence among the students of the College of Education at Misan University.

3. Reveal the nature of the relationship between attentional control and persuasive intelligence among the students of the College of Education at Misan University.

Sixth: Research Boundaries

The current research is limited to:

1. Subject Boundaries: The research is determined by two main variables: (attentional control) and (persuasive intelligence).

2. Human Boundaries: The research is determined by a sample of students from the College of Education, University of Misan, for the academic year (2025-2026 A.D.).

3. Spatial Boundaries: College of Education, University of Misan, main campus in the city of Amarah.

4. Temporal Boundaries: The second semester of the academic year (2025-2026 A.D.).

Seventh: Research Terms and Their Operational Definitions

1- Attentional Control

Derryberry and Reed [3] define attentional control as: "The individual's ability to regulate their attention in the face of conflicting stimuli, including focusing (the ability to maintain attention), shifting (the ability to move attention from one task to another), and inhibiting (the ability to ignore distractions)" [4]. Operationally: In this research, attentional control is measured by the student's total score on a scale developed by the researcher for this purpose.

2- Persuasive Intelligence

For the purposes of this research, persuasive intelligence is operationally defined as: "The student's ability to employ a set of cognitive, social, and linguistic skills to influence others and persuade them of an idea or position by understanding their psychology,

constructing logical arguments, and using an engaging communication style." (This operational definition is formulated by the researcher and is based on the theoretical frameworks of social intelligence and persuasive communication.) Operationally, persuasive intelligence in this research is measured by the student's total score on a scale developed by the researcher for this purpose.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

First: Theoretical Framework

Section One: Attentional Control

First: History and Emergence of the Concept

Attention has occupied a central place in cognitive psychology since its inception. William James considered it one of the most important mental processes, defining it as "the clear and vivid appropriation by the mind of one of what appears to be several things or lines of thought crowding together" [5]. However, the modern concept of attentional control developed significantly with the emergence of cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience in the second half of the twentieth century.

Posner and Raichle [6] are among the leading theorists in this field, having developed a model of attentional networks in the brain, including the alerting network, the orienting network, and the executive network. The executive network is the most important component of attentional control, as it controls the inhibition of distracting stimuli, conflict resolution, and the shifting of attention between tasks [7].

Second: Definitions of Attentional Control

The definition of attentional control varies depending on the perspective:

• Sternberg (2009) defines it as: "A part of the executive functions that enables an individual to control and flexibly direct their attention towards stimuli appropriate to achieving their goals" [8].

• Miyamoto & Seo (2020) define it as: "An indicator of the cognitive ability to regulate attention in the face of distractions and impulses, and it includes three main processes: focusing attention, shifting it, and inhibiting it" ([9].

• Al-Zubaidi (2020) defines it as: "An individual's ability to willfully direct their attention and divert it from unwanted stimuli." This enables him to perform cognitively effectively" [10].

Third: Dimensions of Attentional Control

After reviewing the theoretical literature and previous studies, the researcher believes that the concept of attentional control consists of the following dimensions:

1. Attention Focusing: This refers to an individual's ability to maintain their attention focused on a specific task or stimulus for a period of time, without being easily distracted.

2. Attention Shifting: This refers to an individual's ability to flexibly shift their attention from one task to another or from one stimulus to another, and to adapt to new developments.

3. Attentional Inhibition: This refers to an individual's ability to ignore distracting or irrelevant stimuli and to inhibit automatic or impulsive responses in order to maintain attention. Focus.

Fourth: Theories Explaining Attentional Control

1. Buzan's Attention Networks Theory: This theory divides attention into three separate but interacting neural networks: the alertness network, responsible for maintaining a state of readiness; the steering network, responsible for selecting information from sensory input; and the execution (attentional control) network, responsible for detecting and resolving conflicts and inhibiting responses [11].

2. Kahneman's Limited Capacity Model: This theory proposes that humans possess a limited amount of cognitive resources (attention) that can be allocated to tasks. Attentional control is manifested in an individual's ability to effectively allocate these resources to priority tasks and avoid wasting them on distractions. [12].

3. Executive Functions Theory: Attentional control is considered one of the main executive functions, along with working memory and inhibition. This theory suggests that the prefrontal cortex plays a crucial role in regulating these functions [13].

Section Two: Persuasive Intelligence

First: Roots of the Concept

The concept of persuasive intelligence is not entirely new. Ancient Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle, were interested in the art of persuasion or "rhetoric," identifying three main methods of persuasion: ethos, which relies on the credibility of the speaker; pathos, which relies on arousing emotions; and logic. (Logos) which relies on rational argument [14].

In modern psychology, the concept developed within the framework of Thorndike's study of social intelligence, which he defined as "the ability to understand men and women, boys and girls, and to act wisely in human relationships" [15]. Furthermore, Goleman's emotional intelligence is considered an important component of persuasive intelligence, as understanding and managing one's own and others' emotions enhances the ability to persuade [16].

Second: Definitions of Persuasive Intelligence

• Sternberg (2004) defines it within the framework of practical intelligence as: "The ability to influence others and get them to adopt your point of view or take a certain action, using a combination of linguistic, social, and psychological skills" [17].

• Cialdini (2009) defines it within his six principles of persuasion as: "The ability to employ the principles of influence (repetition, scarcity, authority, consistency, empathy, consensus) in an ethical way to get others to agree" [18].

Third: Dimensions of Persuasive Intelligence

The following dimensions were adopted to construct the Persuasive Intelligence scale:

1. Logical Argumentation (Constructing Arguments): This refers to the student's ability to present their ideas in a logically sound manner and to use evidence and proof to support their viewpoint.

2. Empathic Understanding (Understanding Others): This refers to the student's ability to understand the feelings, needs, and values of others and to empathize with them, enabling them to tailor their message to suit them.

3. Communication Skills (Language and Body): This refers to the student's ability to communicate effectively, both verbally (choosing impactful words) and nonverbally (tone of voice, body language, eye contact), to enhance their persuasive message.

Fourth: Theories Explaining Persuasive Intelligence

1. Cialdini's Social Influence Theory: This theory presents Six universal principles of influence: reciprocity (the desire to return a favor), scarcity (appreciating rare opportunities), authority (favoring experts), consistency (the desire to be consistent with our commitments), empathy (the desire to say yes to those we care about), and consensus (following the majority) [19].

2. Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence: Persuasive intelligence is a component of practical intelligence that enables individuals to adapt to and shape their real-world environment. It requires the integrated application of analytical intelligence (to understand the situation), creative intelligence (to design an innovative message), and practical intelligence (to implement it effectively) [20].

3. Processing model Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM): This model explains how individuals process persuasive messages. They either follow the central pathway (analyzing arguments in depth) or the peripheral pathway (relying on superficial cues such as the speaker's credibility). Persuasive intelligence requires knowing the pathway the listener will follow and designing the message accordingly [21].

Second: Previous Studies

First: Previous Studies on Attentional Control

1. Al-Zubaidi's Study (2020): This study aimed to measure the level of attentional control among a sample of university students in Iraq and to identify differences in it according to the variables of gender and specialization. The study was conducted on a sample of (450) male and female students from the Universities of Baghdad and Al-Mustansiriya. The study used A scale for attentional control was developed by the researcher. The results showed a high level of attentional control among the sample, with statistically significant differences attributable to gender favoring females in the attention focus dimension, while no significant differences were found in the other dimensions. No significant differences were found attributable to specialization.

2. Abdul-Hay's study (2022): This study aimed to reveal the relationship between attentional control and working memory among students at the College of Education, University of Mosul. The sample consisted of (320) male and female students. An attentional control scale and working memory scales were used. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between attentional control and both working memory capacity and accuracy.

Second: Previous studies on persuasive intelligence

1. Al-Samarrai's study (2021): This study aimed to develop a scale A study was conducted to measure the level of persuasive intelligence among secondary school principals in Nineveh Governorate. The study was applied to a sample of 250 principals. The results showed that the principals possessed a high level of persuasive intelligence, with significant differences attributed to years of experience, favoring those with longer experience. No differences were found based on gender.

2. Al-Husseini's study (2023) aimed to investigate the relationship between social intelligence and persuasive intelligence among a sample of social workers in Iraq. The sample consisted of 200 social workers. Two scales were used, one for social intelligence and the other for persuasive intelligence.

The results showed a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables.

Commentary on previous studies: The current research benefited from Previous studies informed his design of a descriptive correlational approach and the development of measures for attentional control and persuasive intelligence. The results of these studies also helped him formulate his hypotheses, rule out the influence of gender and specialization, and predict a positive relationship between the two variables. The research gap lies in its being

the first Iraqi study to link these two variables on a sample of students at the College of Education, University of Misan, while also providing appropriate standardization tools.

Research Method

First: Research Methodology

The researcher adopted the descriptive correlational approach, as it was suitable for the research objectives. This approach aimed to describe the level of the two research variables (attentional control and persuasive intelligence) among a sample of students, and then to investigate the nature of the relationship between them.

Second: The Research Population

The current research population consists of all students of the College of Education, University of Maysan, for the academic year (2025-2026). They are distributed across the various scientific and humanities departments and the four academic years, totaling (2406) students, including (1913) female students and (493) male students, according to the statistics of the Student Registration Division at the college.

To ensure representation of all segments of the original population, the researcher selected a stratified random sample. The research population was divided into strata based on the variables of (specialization: scientific/humanities), (gender: male/female), and (academic year: first, second, third, fourth). Sample members were then randomly selected from each stratum.

Sample Size

To determine the sample size, the following was adopted The researcher used the Richard and Javior formula to calculate sample size from large populations, which recommends a sample size of at least 10% of the original population to be representative. Applying this to the research population of 2406 students, the sample size represents 12.47%, or approximately 300 students (see table 1).

Table 1. Stratified Random Sample Distribution

Total	Fourth stage	third stage,	second stage	first stage	**Gender**	**Specialization**
24	6	6	6	6	Males	scientific
93	23	24	23	23	Females	
117	**29**	**30**	**29**	**29**	**Total**	
37	9	10	9	9	Males	humanitarian
74	36	37	36	37	Females	
183	**45**	**47**	**46**	**45**	**Total**	
300	**75**	**74**	**77**	**74**	Total sample size	
12.47%	12.44%	12.50%	12.48%	12.46%	Sample size to population ratio	

Fourth: Research Tools

To measure the research variables, and since the researcher could not find—to the best of her knowledge—ready-made and standardized scales that met the scientific requirements for measuring both variables simultaneously in an Iraqi context, the researcher developed two scales: one for attentional control and the other for persuasive intelligence.

First: The Attentional Control Scale

1. Sources for Construction: The researcher reviewed the theoretical literature and previous studies that addressed attentional control [22][23], and derived the scale's main dimensions from them [24].

2. Dimensions and Item Formulation: The scale, in its initial form, consisted of (32) items, distributed across three dimensions (focusing attention: 11 items; diverting attention: 11 items; inhibiting attention: 10 items). All items were formulated as declarative statements, and the five-point Likert scale was adopted: (Strongly Agree = 5 points, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). All items were positive.

3. Expert Validity (Validity) (Al-Dhahiri): The scale, in its initial form, was presented to (12) expert reviewers specializing in psychology, measurement, and evaluation. They were asked to provide their opinion on the suitability of the items for measuring the dimension they were designed for, and on the accuracy of the linguistic formulation. A minimum agreement rate of (80%) among the reviewers was adopted as the criterion for item acceptance. This resulted in the deletion of (5) items, leaving the scale consisting of (27) items.

4. Pilot Application of the Scale: The scale, after modification, was administered to a pilot sample of (50) male and female students from the College of Education, randomly selected from outside the original research sample. The objectives of this were: to ensure the clarity of the instructions, to calculate the discriminatory power of the items, to calculate construct validity, and to calculate reliability.

5. Psychometric Properties For the scale:

A. Item Discriminatory Power: The discriminatory power of each item was calculated using the extreme comparison method (upper quartile and lower quartile) and the t-test. The results showed that all calculated t-values were greater than the critical value (2.02) at 38 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05, indicating that all 27 items are valid and have high discriminatory power. The t-values for the items ranged between 4.50 and 12.10.

B. Construct Validity (Internal Consistency): Correlation coefficients were calculated between the score of each item and the total score of the dimension to which it belongs. The results showed that all correlation coefficients were statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05, ranging between 0.38 and 0.76. Correlation coefficients were also calculated. The correlation between the score of each dimension and the total score of the scale was significant and high.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients of the dimensions of the Attentional Control Scale with the total score

Level of significance	Correlation coefficient	Distance
Significance in 0.01	0.83	Focusing attention
Significance in 0.01	0.77	Diverting attention
Significance in 0.01	0.80	Inhibiting attention

C. Scale Reliability

The scale's reliability was verified using:

Table 3. Reliability Coefficients of the Attentional Control Scale

Value of the stability coefficient	Method for calculating stability
0.88	Cronbach's Alpha
0.85	Half division (after correction)

Second: The Persuasive Intelligence Scale

The researcher followed the same steps in developing the persuasive intelligence scale as she did in developing the attentional control scale.

1. Sources for Construction: The researcher reviewed theoretical literature and previous studies.

2. Dimensions and Item Formulation: The scale, in its initial version, consisted of 30 items distributed across three dimensions: logical argumentation (10 items), empathic understanding (10 items), and communication skills (10 items). It employed a five-point Likert scale, and all items were positive.

3. Expert Validity: After review by the same panel of experts, four items were removed due to insufficient agreement (85% as a criterion), resulting in a scale consisting of 26 items.

4. Psychometric Properties of the Scale: The researcher administered the scale to the same pilot sample (50 students). (and a female student).

A. Discriminatory Power: All (26) items of the scale were discriminating, with t-values ranging between (4.12) and (11.30), which are greater than the critical value.

B. Construct Validity: All correlation coefficients between the item and the dimension, and between the dimension and the total score, were statistically significant.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients of the Dimensions of the Persuasive Intelligence Scale with the Total Score

Level of significance	Correlation coefficient	Distance
Significance in 0.01	0.79	Logical argument
Significance in 0.01	0.82	Empathetic understanding
Significance in 0.01	0.86	Communicative skill

C. Scale Reliability

- Cronbach's Alpha: The reliability coefficient was (0.90).
- Split-Half: The reliability coefficient after correction was (0.87).

Table 5. Reliability Coefficients of the Persuasive Intelligence Scale

Value of the stability coefficient	Method for calculating stability
0.90	Cronbach's Alpha
0.87	Half division (after correction)

Fifth: Instrument Application

After confirming the psychometric properties of the two scales, the researcher combined them into a single questionnaire, which was then administered to the original research sample of (300) male and female students. The application process took three weeks during the second semester of the academic year (2025-2026). The questionnaire was distributed to students in their classrooms. The number of valid questionnaires was (290) after excluding incomplete ones.

Sixth: Statistical Methods

To analyze the data, the researcher used the SPSS package and employed the following methods: the one-sample t-test, Pearson's correlation coefficient, the independent samples t-test, Cronbach's alpha, Spearman-Brown rank correlation coefficient, and percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations.

Results and Discussion

First: Verifying the Research Questions

Question One: What is the level of attentional control among students at the College of Education, University of Misan?

The arithmetic mean of the sample's scores (n=290) on the scale was calculated and compared to the theoretical mean. To determine the significance of this difference, a one-sample t-test was used (Table 6).

Table 6. T-test for the difference between the mean attentional control scores and the theoretical mean

Significant	Calculated value "of "t	Degree of free	Standard deviation	Theoretical average	arithmetic average	No.	variable
Significant at 0.05	33.5	289	10.2	81	105.3	290	Attentional control

The results in Table (6) indicate that the calculated t-value of (33.5) is greater than the critical value of (1.96) at a degree of freedom of (289) and a significance level of (0.05). This means there is a statistically significant difference in favor of the arithmetic mean. This indicates that students at the College of Education possess a high level of attentional control. This can be explained by the fact that the university environment requires students to maintain a high level of concentration to keep up with lectures and assignments, which enhances this ability.

Question 2: What is the level of persuasive intelligence among students at the College of Education, University of Misan?

The arithmetic mean of the sample's scores on the persuasive intelligence scale was calculated, and a one-sample t-test was used (Table No. 7).

Table 7. T-test for the difference between the average score of persuasive intelligence and the theoretical average

Significant	Calculated value "of "t	Degree of free	Standard deviation	Theoretical average	arithmetic average	No.	variable
Significant at 0.05	39.2	289	9.5	78	98.7	290	Persuasive intelligence

Table (8) shows that the calculated t-value (39.2) is greater than the critical value (1.96), indicating that students at the College of Education possess a high level of persuasive intelligence. This is attributed to the nature of study at the College of Education, which provides numerous opportunities for discussion, presentation, and classroom interaction, thus contributing to the development of this skill among students.

Conclusion

In light of the research findings, the following can be concluded:

1. Students at the College of Education, University of Maysan, possess a high level of attentional control, indicating cognitive competence that enables them to focus and resist distractions.

2. Students at the College of Education, University of Maysan, possess a high level of persuasive intelligence, meaning they have a solid foundation of communication and argumentation skills.

3. There is a relationship A statistically significant and positive correlation exists between attentional control and persuasive intelligence. This means that students who are better able to control their attention are more capable of persuading others.

4. The research instruments (the attentional control and persuasive intelligence scales) developed by the researcher demonstrated a high degree of validity and reliability, making them suitable for use in other research and studies.

Second: Recommendations

In light of the results and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Developing students' attentional control by incorporating specific training activities (such as mindfulness exercises) into student activities or even as standalone courses.

2. Encouraging students to participate in debates, presentations, and classroom discussions, and providing them with feedback on their persuasive performance.

3. Designing workshops Specialized training courses and workshops in communication and persuasion skills, and in techniques for improving focus and attention control.

4. Raising students' awareness of the importance of attentional control in improving their academic performance and enhancing their ability to interact effectively in social settings.

Third: Recommendations

To complement the current research, the researcher suggests conducting the following studies:

1. Conducting an experimental study to measure the effectiveness of a training program based on mindfulness techniques in developing attentional control and persuasive intelligence among university students.

2. Studying the relationship between attentional control and other variables such as: exam anxiety, achievement motivation, and academic achievement.

3. Studying the relationship between persuasive intelligence and variables such as: emotional intelligence, social responsibility, and self-efficacy.

4. Conducting a comparative study among students of the College of Education. Students in other faculties (such as Media and Law) also demonstrate a high level of attentional control and persuasive intelligence.

5. A study of the familial and social factors influencing the development of persuasive intelligence among students.

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