Research Article

Determination of the Mental Health based on the Need for Intimacy, Self-knowledge, and Ego Strength among the Prisoners of Bandar Abbas City

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ABSTRACT

The current study titled "determination of the mental health based on intimacy, self-knowledge, and ego strength among the prisoners of Bandar Abbas city" aimed at establishment of mental well-being of the mentioned prisoners. This study is classified among the correlation studies and its statistical population included all the prisoners of Bandar Abbas city in 2014, among which 320 prisoners were chosen as the sample by the convenience sampling. The data collection instrument was the Revised Mental Health Questionnaire (SCL-25), Psychological Log of ego strength (PIES), and the Miller's Social Intimacy-Cohesive Self-knowledge. Finally, the collected data were analyzed using statistical procedures such as Pearson correlation coefficient, multiple regression and T-test. The results indicated that the correlation between the intimacy, ego strength, and self-cohesion with the r=0.022 and coefficient of determination (v=0.05), was not significant. The variables intimacy and self-cohesion with the coefficients (-0.02) and (-0.06) respectively, were excluded from the regression equation (step by step). Meantime, among the predictive variables, the ego strength variable (v=22%) could significantly predict the mental health of the prisoners. For further elaboration, it can be said that the main issue of the mentioned prisoners was the ego strength component which should be strengthened and more considered.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of health has been proposed from the dawn of mankind and continued to exist during the centuries. However, whenever it has been brought up, its physical aspect has been concerned and its other aspects, especially the mental aspect, has been less concerned. The WHO in 2001, besides reminding the governments to provide the physical, mental, and social health for people, has always emphasized that none of the three has priority over the others. The mental health concept includes mental comfort, sense of empowerment, autonomy, competence, understanding the intergenerational solidarity and recognition of his ability for realization of his intellectual and emotional ability. Mental health refers to the abilities of individuals and communities and enabling them to achieve their desired objectives (Arasteh & Sharifi, 2008). Creation of mental health is a goal all societies strive to achieve it. Mental health's fundamental values should be sought in improving the quality of life for women and men. Mental health is prerequisite of a fruitful, effective and satisfying individual life and the mental health of members of a community, especially effective and productive groups, is necessary for dynamism, development, and promotion of the community. The WHO considers mental health as an important part in the field of health and deems the planning and investigations for its promotion, necessary and effective (Mohseni, 2009).

Prisons are an important part of the justice system and every year, a large budget is allocated to them. In America, billions of dollars are annually spent for the maintenance of nearly two million prisoners. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010), at the end of 2009, the total number of inmates under state or federal jurisdictions was 1,613,740 people. All state and federal prisons across the country have hired more than 400,000 people. The prison staff, due to responsibility of managing the prisons' security, played a vital role in success or failure of them. At the same time, it is also true that the prisons have a significant impact on employees through the work-related emotional health, job satisfaction, and burnout and mutually affect the mental health of prisoners (Lambert et al., 2010).

Human, to achieve a better and healthier life, needs to create a proper coordination between his own thought and emotions and use them in accordance with the life situations. One of the variables that may be associated with mental health is ego strength. From the viewpoints of psychologists, ego strength is the efforts for building competence and mastery that continues after the first 5 years of life. The inability in education of ego strength processes such as the initial sexual stabilization or aggression, can lead to mental damage. Therefore, someone with an immature ego strength will not be prepared for adaptation of truth (Altafi, 2009). According to Erikson, the ego strength strong points are determined through each of the life stages and the potential of each point of ego strength is created by communication and coordination with the life stages. Inability in successful resolution of crises and conflicts at every stage of growth may lead to stabilization at that stage (Markstrom, 2007). So, someone with an inadequate growth of ego strength, will be less prepared for adaptation of the truth. Haniz found out that the low power of ego strength is connected to the symptoms of depression such as feelings of guilt and lack of effective ideas on environment (Hurber, 2006).

Erikson (1980), observed a connection between the strength of ego strength and social mental stages, since ego strength is promoted through the growth of sense of dominance in the individual and detection of culturally valuable improvements (the phase of construction against inferiority) (Markstrom & Marshal, 2007). Another variable that can be affected by the ego strength is self-cohesion. The capability of understanding of inner experience in an integrated and timely manner, in order to regulate itself, is called self-cohesion. This process which is an adaptive process, attempts to make sense of one's experiences during the time in a real-time awareness of psychological states and refers to the power of distinguishing and analyzing the contents of the current experiences and also active cognitive processing of the 'self' and the past events which combines its characteristics in a meaningful combination and leads to a wider vision for directing the behaviors and formation of more complex and more complete mental constructs. Ghorbani, Watson, and Hargeas (2008), in conceptualizing the self-knowledge, have considered it as an adapted, dynamic, and integrative construct (Ghorbani, 2008). According to studies, the cohesive self-knowledge is related to sense of self-determination (Ghorbani et al., 2008) and more complete satisfaction of basic needs and their satisfaction facilitator depends on the socio-economic conditions and is influenced by cultural and environmental factors such as ego strength (Ghorbani et al, 2006). One of the variables that can be correlated with the ego strength and self-knowledge, is the need for intimacy. Erikson defines the need for intimacy as follows: Willingness to participate in a supportive and kind relationship without losing the 'self' in a relationship. Therefore, development and extension of the 'self' is one of the key aspects of development of interpersonal intimacy (Ghorbani et al, 2008).

However, Erikson (1982), proposes the argument that despite the other types of intimacy is a part of the natural growth, only after the stabilization of the intellectual sense of identity, the grown and real intimacy with others can be experienced, since it is one of the conditions for a close relationship between two people (Montgomery, 2005).

According to the studies and related literature in the field of self-knowledge and mental health as well as the importance of psychological variables such as ego strength, my defective performance, threatened I, establishment in the earlier stages of I, and weak superego as the effective factors in low mental health and the consequent low self-knowledge and intimacy, the problem of the current study is to explain the role of ego strength, need for intimacy, and self-knowledge among the effective factors on the mental health and to investigate the points of ego strength that can be related to these variables, among the prisoners of Bandar Abbas City.

Method and Material

The current study is of predictive type and the method used for it is correlation. The convenience sampling was used for the data collection in the current study. By referring to the prisons of Bandar Abbas, 320 prisoners were chosen among 2000 prisoners, using Cochran sampling method, and after confirmation of the prisons authorities, the related questionnaires were handed over to the prisoners and the subjects responded to the questions. The data collection instrument was the questionnaire.

The Revised Mental Health Questionnaire (SCL-25): this questionnaire was used for measuring the mental health in the current study. It includes 25 questions. This scale is the shortened form of the revised version of the 90-sign list (SCL-90) which was prepared by Najarian & Davoodi (2001). The reliability coefficients were reported 0.78 by test-retest and 0.97 by the internal calculation. The validity, through the correlation using the public anxiety, ANQ, and Beck's depression tests, was calculated 0.69, 0.49, and 0.66 respectively (Asgari, Heidari, Naderi, 2009).

Psychological Log of ego strength (PIES)

The Psychological Log of ego strength (PIES) was used for measurement of ego strength which was proposed by Markstrom & Marshal in 1997 in order to measure 8 points of Erikson's ego strength and initially had 33 questions, increased to 64 at the next stage, in the Likert 5-scale. It measures the 8 points of ego strength as follows: Hope, desire, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care. They reported the Cronbach's alpha as 68%. Also, they confirmed the propriety of this instrument's face, content, and construct validity. For evaluation of the validity and reliability on the Iranian samples, Altafi (2009), conducted the ego strength questionnaire (PIES) for 30 university students and reported the Cronbach's alpha as 91%.

The Cohesive Self-knowledge Scale: this scale is the product of revision in the two-dimensional self-knowledge theory (Ghorbani et al, 2008) that measures the both aspects in an integrated and cohesive form and with a 12-article frame. The participants respond to each article in a Likert scale from mostly wrong (0) to mostly correct (4). All of the factors related to self-knowledge (Including awareness and efforts to understand emotions, behavior, intellectual functions, mood, personality, and physical states) have been considered in this scale. The intercultural evaluations are shown for Iran (723 persons) and America (900 persons), in three separate groups and this scale enjoys a proper internal validity, uniqueness of measurement, incremental and discriminant validity, criterion, and convergence. For the Iranian samples, the alpha coefficient of self-knowledge was 0.82 and the reflective and experimental self-knowledge were 0.82 and 0.87, respectively. Similarly, for the American samples, the alpha coefficient of self-knowledge was 0.82 and the reflective and experimental self-knowledge were 0.80 and 0.82, respectively.

Miller's Social Intimacy Scale: this scale includes two groups of questions. Six questions for description of the frequency of intimacy and the other 11 questions for intensity of intimacy. All of the questions will be responded in the Likert 10-scale from very rarely or few (1) to almost always or a lot (10). Questions 2 and 4 are responded reversed and the rest of the questions on a scale of 1 to 10 points. Miller and Lefkort (1982), have reported the Cronbach's alpha from 0.86 to 0.91 in different implementations. The descriptive statistics and the Pearson correlation coefficient, multiple linear regression, and the t-test using SPSS 16 were utilized for data analysis.

Findings

According to the descriptive statistics, it was revealed that the mean emotional intimacy was 32.49, mean psychological intimacy was 31.07, 7.the mean intellectual intimacy was 35.55, the mean sexual intimacy was 33.47, the mean physical intimacy was 40.18, the mean aesthetic intimacy was 35.03, the mean social intimacy was 32.81, and the mean total intimacy was 932.2. also, the mean love was 28.69, the mean equal requests was 26.71, the mean equal competence was 28.10, the mean equal intellect was 26.38, the mean equal loyalty was 24.29, the mean equal hope was 26.73, the mean equal care was 25.16, the mean equal fruitfulness was 28.50, and the mean equal ego strength was 622. Also, the mean equal self-cohesion was 38.08 and the mean equal mental health was 69.12.

Main Hypothesis: the need for intimacy, self-knowledge, and ego strength can predict the mental health of the prisoners of Bandar Abbas City.

The multi-variable linear regression was used for testing this hypothesis and after the analysis, the results were as follows:

Table 1: the determination coefficients of the main hypothesis

Coefficients of determination				
Standard error	Modified Coefficients of determination	Coefficients of determination	Correlation coefficient	Model
14.89	0.045	0.054	0.233	1

The evaluation showed that in this study, among the 100% of changes and the determinative probable variance in criterion variable, 0.05 belongs to the direct effects of the sum of the predictor variables.

Table 2: ANOVA

ANOVA test of significant relationship between dependent and independent variables					
Model		sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance level
1	Regression	4018.5	3	1339.5	6.0	0.001
	Remaining	70146.49	316	224.8		
	Total	74125.0	319			

The investigation indicated that the researcher, in terms of modelling and selection of the predictor variables and the criterion, has worked efficiently and has chosen the variables as the predictor variable that has a real effect on the criterion variable.

Table 3: Summary of regression model the research variables

Regression coefficients					
Non-standardized coefficients			Standard coefficients	T	The significance level
Variable B		standard error	Beta		
Constant	32.165	10.953		2.937	0.001
intimacy	0.001	0.018	0.002	0.041	0.968
ego strength	0.165	0.039	0.234	4.227	0.000
Self-cohesion	0.033	0.110	0.017	0.299	0.765

Tahvildar Bidrooni Nadiya et al   *Int. J. Pharm. Res. Allied Sci., 2016, (SI):67-73*

Special Issue 2016: Challenges and Current Research in Psychology

The investigations showed that among the predictor variables, the ego strength could predict 0.23 of the changes in the mental health variable separately, with the confidence level of 99%. The prediction level for the variables intimacy and ego strength was not significant.

Secondary hypothesis 1: the need for the intimacy can determine the mental health.

The investigations indicated that in this study, among the 100% of changes and the determinative probable variance in criterion variable, 0.027 belongs to the direct effects of the sum of the predictor variables. Ultimately, among the predictor variables, the emotional intimacy, could predict 0.17 of the changes in the mental health variable separately, with the confidence level of 95%. The prediction level of other aspects of intimacy were not significant.

Secondary Hypothesis 2: ego strength can determine the mental health.

The investigations indicated that in this study, among the 100% of changes and the determinative probable variance in criterion variable in this model, 0.22 belongs to the direct effects of the sum of the predictor variables. Ultimately, among the predictor variables, the request component, could predict 0.28 of the changes in the mental health variable separately, with the confidence level of 0.9%. The hope component, could predict 0.22 of the changes in the mental health variable separately, with the confidence level of 0.99%. The care component, could predict 0.15 of the changes in the mental health variable separately, with the confidence level of 0.99%. Finally, the goal component, could predict 0.28 of the changes in the mental health variable separately, with the confidence level of 0.9%.

The Secondary Hypothesis 3: self-knowledge can determine the mental health.

The investigations indicated that in this study, among the 100% of changes and the determinative probable variance in criterion variable in this model, 0.13 belongs to the direct effects of the sum of the predictor variables. Ultimately, among the predictor variables, the self-cohesive variable could not significantly predict the changes in mental health criterion.

Discussion and Conclusion

One of the major and constant issues human life is the issue of mental health and the individual and social functions of the society depends on the full health of its members in various contexts. On the other hand, the need for the current study was increasingly felt since the mental health is one of the fundamental and important components of the today's turbulent society and plays an important role in preventing the social disorders. If the issue of the health, specially the mental health, is not sufficiently considered, the social, individual, political, and cultural threats will be increased and paying attention to this subject, by extensive studies on this field, leads to predicting the upcoming threats and changing them into opportunities in most of the cases.

The results of the current study are in lines with those of Lyn Will (1987) and Wilson & Ross (2000). On the other hand, these findings confirm the importance of self-knowledge in effectiveness on psychological variables (Ghorbani et al, 2008). The results of the current study are in lines with those of Arculani et al (1999), in lack of elimination of mental turbulence, thus showing a negative relationship between self-knowledge and mental health (Ghorbani et al, 2008). The results of the study indicated that among the fundamental needs, the failure in satisfying the competence needs is a predictor of low mental health. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study is also confirmed as it predicts the failure in satisfying the fundamental need of intimacy and low ego strength as very low mental health. This finding is in lines with that of Ryan & Dessi (2000) in terms of satisfaction of the fundamental psychological needs and their motivational role. Also, the results are in lines with those of Henderson-king et al (2005). The result in lines with other studies, confirms the role basic psychological variables in mental health as the low mental health reflects the lack of high self-knowledge and intimate interpersonal communication and social support. It seems the failure of satisfaction of basic psychological need is the main motivational factor for this measure. Therefore, achieving the knowledge of this failure in satisfaction with the basis of 'self', is possible. In fact, how people treat us and our belief in how they will treat us in future, has important implications for how we think about ourselves. When we expect others disown us because of some of our characteristics, we can choose from among several possible responses (Tajfel, 1978). The

Tahvildar Bidrooni Nadiya et al   *Int. J. Pharm. Res. Allied Sci., 2016, (SI):67-73*

Special Issue 2016: Challenges and Current Research in Psychology

person can potentially choose this way to the extent there is the possibility we can change one of our aspects and prevent being disowned by others. The low mental health is a response to the low level of internal coordination and lack of social support of one of these choices. On the other hand, the negative antecedents such as failure in satisfaction of fundamental needs and low self-knowledge which were obtained in the current study, confirms an inflected path and unsatisfactory choice. According Wilson and Ross (2000), who believe most of the times, comparing the past 'self' with the 'current 'self' is satisfactory, since this state is indicative of a progress during the time. The potential future 'self' imagination can lead to reduction of mental health to the extent he can imagine such changes can lead to a new and better 'self'. The ability to this imagination requires an understanding of an equipped and satisfied 'self'. Lyn Will (1987) showed that people with more complex 'self' are less likely to respond to the identity threats.

The complexity of 'self' indicates the difference of the several dimensions of 'self' in person. High self-knowledge which is indicative of the person's understanding of himself, cannot be a concept unrelated to the complexity of 'self'. The low self-knowledge in this study which is indicative of low complexity of 'self', can also predict the high mental health. Straffin (2004), defines the ego strength as the ability of the pattern to face with the internal reality. In his view, ego strength can activate the mechanisms in mind and reduce the Intra-psychic conflicts. Milton, Erikson, McNeil, and Fredrick (1993) consider the ego strength power as application of control over the positive aspects of 'self' and recalling the conscious sources (Hurber, 2006). McNeil (1993) as cited in Hurber (2006), observed that strengthening the ego strength leads to the increase in insight and clarity, treatment of queries, improvement, and self-esteem (Hurber, 2006). Anyways, it seems that failure in satisfying the basic psychological needs is the root of all the abnormal and improper behaviors of the people, even if these needs are beyond the scope of the current study. On the other hand, the intermediary variable of this failure of satisfaction and the inappropriate behaviors such as the lack of mental health, can be other variables that is suggested to be explored in the future studies. The personality variables and the confronting styles are among the variables suggested to be explored in the future studies. Evaluations with the use of concepts such as self-acceptance in the future are also suggested (Zarandi, 2006).

According to the results obtained from the main hypothesis testing, it is suggested that workgroups be established in the prison management to teach the prisoners on strengthening their social communications and making intimacy among them, that can be a great help to them. It is suggested the psychotherapists deal with the investigation of the power self-knowledge and self-cohesion of the prisoners in order to, besides understanding the current status, offer solution for solving the behavioral problems resulting from the weakness of this variable and apply them in environments such as the prison, so it can be useful for better discipline and preventing the possible behavioral and personality issues. According to the obtained results, it is suggested the consulters and psychotherapists of prisons, besides paying attention to the ego strength and promoting it, also move towards to the other personality components such as self-cohesion and the need for different types of intimacy. Also, it is suggested that a study be conducted on the different personality aspects of the statistical population in order to use its results for promoting the normal personality of the prisoners. It is suggested that a study be conducted on the people suffering from social issues in order to find the factors that make them such issues. It is suggested that a study be conducted on the solutions for getting rid of problems such as inferiority, lack of self-knowledge, lack of empathy, and lack of proper social communication and offer these solutions to the people in order to enable them to compensate their personality shortages besides detection of the normal personality status.

Among the limitations of the current study was the presence of the researcher in the prison environment that by the questionnaire, made the location of the research artificial and made the researcher to be biased. The application of the questionnaire in such an environment was very difficult and problematic. The behavioral and normative problems of some of the prisoners made the problem of data collection more manifest since failure in giving the questionnaire back, led to the failing of the subjects and re-implementation of the questionnaire.

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