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A Study of the Relation between Mental health and Academic Performance of Students of the Islamic Azad University Ahvaz Branch

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Abstract

The relation between mental health and Academic performance has been reported variously in different studies. The present research aims to study the Relation between Mental health and Academic Performance in athletic and non-athletic Students of the Islamic Azad University Ahvaz branch, Iran. For this purpose, 200 students includes 100 athletic and 100 non-athletic were selected via random cluster sampling method. In order to collect data, the Goldberg general health questionnaire (GHQ-28) was used. The students’ total average score was used as an index of their Academic performance. Finally, the data were analyzed through using correlation coefficient and independent t-test at the level of confidence of 95%. The results showed that general health and some of its components, such as depression and anxiety, had a significant relation with educational performance, while no significant relation was observed between Academic performance and other components such as physical symptoms and social performance disorders. According to the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the higher the mental health of the students, the better their educational performance, although it seems that the students’ educational performance is also affected by other factors and their interactional effects as well.

Keywords: mental health, Academic performance, depression, anxiety

1. Introduction

University years are exciting and challenging years for students; it is essential for the students to overcome these challenges and stress-inducing factors in order to pave the way for their own educational achievement (Bahrami, 2007). Obviously, university students are one of the most sensitive strata of society, many of whom will become the future’s managers and planners, and the mental health of the society is contingent upon their mental health. One of the characteristics of a normal personality is having full mental health. Various definitions have so far been proposed for “mental health”, all of which emphasizing the integrity of personality. Goldstein defines mental health as the balance between organs and environment in the progress towards self-actualization. Chauhanss (1991) considers mental health as a state of psychological maturity defined as the maximum effectiveness and satisfaction obtained through individual and social opposition including positive feedbacks and feelings towards self and others. Challenges of the university years can bring students sources of anxiety, hence endangering their health. A study conducted by Yousofi and Amini showed that male and female students receive anxiety from different sources and respond to it differently (Amini and et al, 2001). Anxiety, depression, physical problems, and lack of health in...
general, lead to a decline in learning. In a study carried out by Abbasabadi, a reverse, significant relation was observed between hidden and obvious anxiety, on the one hand, and educational achievement, on the other (Abbasabadi, 1998). Many researchers have reported significant correlations between mental health and educational achievement (Muijs, 1997). Lee asserts that factors such as students’ lack of familiarity with the university environment upon their entrance, detachment from family, lack of interest in educational major, failure to get along with others, insufficient economic/welfare amenities, etc. can bring about mental problems and, consequently, a decline in students’ performance (Madadi, 2002). In his study, Asgari (2008) concluded that there is no significant relation between mental health and academic performance both among male students and among female ones. However, Sha’iri (2004) reported a significant relation between mental health and academic performance. Therefore, conflicting results have been reported in various studies on the relation between mental health and academic performance; the current research aims to examine the relation between these two factors among the students of Islamic Azad university of Ahvaz branch, Iran.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This research is a correlational study, the statistical population of which consists of the students of Islamic Azad university of Ahvaz branch, Iran; the sample comprised of 200 hundred students, selected through random cluster sampling. In order to examine their mental health, the general health questionnaire GHQ-28 was used; this questionnaire contains 28 multiple-choice questions, classified into four areas of depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, and disorder social performance, with a marking range of 0–3. The total sum of scores in this questionnaire equals the student’s mental health total score. Each area contains 7 questions with a maximum score of 28; hence the maximum of total score is 84. Higher scores indicate lower level of mental health (Goldenberg, 1997). The total reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was 0.96 and that of the subscales of depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, and disorder in social performance were 0.94, 0.90, 0.89, and 0.78, respectively (Bahmani, 2006). Also, students’ academic performance was measured against their total average grade.

2.1.1. Measurements

At first, the researcher explains the objective of the study to the testees and then asks them to fill out the required information (such as age, sex, year of university entrance, major, academic degree, and total grade-point average) and then to complete the mental health questionnaire. The respondents were told that mentioning their names was optional, and this enhanced both their sense of security and their truthfulness in answering the questions.

2.1.1. Procedure

Statistical analysis of data was carried out using SPSS-16 at the level of 95% and also using Pearson correlation coefficient and independent t-test. Furthermore, in order to examine the relation between educational status and variables of mental health, ‘multiple regression’ was applied.

3. Results

Statistical analysis showed that there was a significant relation between mental health and educational performance, that is, the higher the students’ level of mental health, the better their educational performance. Moreover, there was a significant relation between educational performance and certain components of mental health, such as depression and anxiety; however, no significant relation was observed between educational performance and other components of mental health.
performance and other components of mental health (physical symptoms and disorder in social performance). The data related to these findings is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The statistical data related to mental health, its components, and educational performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Average ± standard deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>15.9 ± 4.32</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>21.3 ± 11.9</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical symptoms</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>4.8 ± 9.2</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>5.2 ± 3.5</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorder in social</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>6.8 ± 3.7</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.0 ± 4.2</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, significant relations were found between educational performance and mental health and some of its components, such as depression and anxiety, while such relation was not observed between other components (physical symptoms and disorder in social performance). It seems that students who have a better mental health status, that is, those who obtained lower scores in the mental health questionnaire, have a better educational performance as well. These finding were not in agreement with findings of the study done by Asgari (2008), while they supported the findings of the research carried out by Sha’iri (2004) and others. This non-agreement can be ascribed to the difference among testees in terms of age, sex, living environment, social/economic conditions, etc. It seems that the students’ educational status is influenced by other factors as well. Depression and anxiety – which are psychological disorders – affect mental health and cause a decline in educational performance. As a result, it is recommended that educational centers apply recreational, counseling, and sports programs in order to enhance their students’ mental health and hence their educational performance.

References

