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The Relationship between Irrational Beliefs and Social, Emotional and Educational Adjustment among Junior Students

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Abstract

The main goal of this research was to study the irrational beliefs and social, emotional and educational adjustment. Two hundred and ten Iranian junior high school female students were selected as the sample of the study. Irrational Beliefs (IB) and the adjustment questionnaire of secondary school's students (AISS) were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis techniques were used to analyze the data. The result showed that there is an inverse significant relation between irrational beliefs and general, social, emotional, and educational adjustment.

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Keywords: Irrational Beliefs, Social, Emotional and Educational Adjustment, Junior Students.

1. Introduction

Irrational beliefs are attitudinal beliefs that strongly emphasize sense of obligation and compulsion and result in emotional and behavioral disorders (Shafi Abadi and Naseri, 2002). Ellis (1994) has analyzed irrational beliefs and described them according to thinking type, dominancy, devastation, performance, fearfulness, and being judgmental.

Chan (2002), Mcdermut and Waga (2003), Cook and Peterson (2000) found that depressed individuals have various kinds of irrational beliefs and cognitive misperceptions in comparison to non-depressed people.

Adjustment is the most important sign of psychological health. It is related to human's affective, social, educational, marital, and occupational domains. Rogers (1961) believes that adjustment level and psychological health are the result of association between our ego and our experiences (Sarafino, 2002). Adjustment in adolescents can be analyzed from emotional, social and educational standpoints. Social adjustment is the individuals' adjustment with their social surrounding that can be gained by changing the self or the environment (Pourafkari, 2001). Emotional adjustment is the realization of one's emotions and feelings and controlling feelings when making relationships with others. It is worth to mention that social adjustment and effective and constructive interaction is a skill that should be acquired and its quality like other learning tasks is related to individual efforts for learning.

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Family environment, school and media have huge roles and responsibilities in helping people acquire social adjustment. In one study Equiseta (2007) found that irrational beliefs are a significant predictor of emotional adjustment. In another study Davies (2006) found that those who had unconditional and high level of self acceptance had lower levels of irrational beliefs.

DeBoard and Romans (2004) also reported that irrational beliefs and adjustment levels are inversely related. Mismatch between reality and individual schemes (individuals' patterns to encounter special events in the environment) lead to emotional breakdowns. The core element of emotional disorders is the feeling of isolation and loneliness. Human beings need support and sense of security that are provided by others. Many experts consider positive self respect as the major factor in social-emotional adjustment. It has been proposed that there is a reciprocal relationship between social-emotional adjustment and self confidence in a way that enhancement of one of them can affect the strength of the other one. In one study Afshar Niakan (2002) found out that there was no significant difference between male and female students' social and general adjustment but there was a significant difference between them with regard to emotional adjustment.

Educational adjustment is defined as the interest in study and school (Sinha and Sing, 1997 cited in Karami, 1998). Educational adjustment inspires activities that increase achievement and efficacy such as concentration and attention in the class, doing homework and assignments, planning, etc. Educational adjustment is influenced by factors such as motivation, mental capabilities, family condition, educational system, personal skills, social and cultural factors, and psychological factors. A strong correlation has been reported between students' adjustment at school and social and personal adjustment (Hartos & Power, 2000).

From what has been mentioned so far it can be concluded that some parts of students' educational problems can be related to their beliefs. Those students that are hardly aroused to reach a goal are coming from unhealthy families or from cultures in which belief systems are developed in an unhealthy manner. Combination of school experiences and unhealthy society would lead to enhancement of alienation and isolation from normal counterparts and normal life styles.

Many young people are exposed to the danger of chronic depression. They perceive events negatively and in a biased manner. Combination of perceptions, feelings, and unsecured behaviors creates problems such as failure at school, non-adjustment, and aggression. Decision making power, creativity, and innovation originate from healthy rational beliefs. Irrational beliefs and non-adjustment create anxiety and anxiety hinders learning. As there are lots of studies which dealt with irrational beliefs and other variables such as depression and self esteem or adjustment with other variables such as gender and communication patterns, the present study investigates the relationship between irrational beliefs and adjustment. So the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between irrational beliefs and social adjustment of female high school students?
2. Is there a relationship between irrational beliefs and emotional adjustment of female high school students?
3. Is there a relationship between irrational beliefs and educational adjustment of female high school students?

Method

Participants

The population of the present study was female junior high school students who were studying in Tehran's high school in academic year 2007-2008. Two hundred and ten students were selected according to Cochran's formula using multi process random sampling.

Instruments

2.2.1. Irrational Beliefs Test (IBT)

This test is made by Jones (1999). The test has ten sections and each section has ten questions. In each section one irrational belief is assessed. Validity of this test has been calculated by Cronbach's Alpha (0.71) (Taghipour, 1994). The reliability has been found to be 85%.

2.2.2. Adjustment Inventory for High School Student (AISS)

This questionnaire was developed by Sinha (1993). It has been translated into Persian and its psychometrical characteristics were tested by Karami (1998). It has 60 questions (20 questions for each domain of adjustment). The reliability of this questionnaire has been calculated by three techniques (Karami, 1998): 1- Split-half (95%), 2- Test-

retest (93%), and 3-Kurder and Richardson (94%). The reliability of the domains has been calculated to be 78% for general adjustment, 74% for emotional adjustment, 65% for social adjustment, and 73% for educational adjustment (Nickdel, 2006)

Results

To analyze the data, descriptive statistics and multiple regressions were used. To answer the main research question “Is there a relationship between students’ irrational beliefs and adjustment?” multiple regression technique is used (Table 1).

Table 1. Multiple regressions on dependent variable (adjustment)

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SD
0.61	0.37	0.23	6.59

Entering irrational beliefs variable -that has the highest correlation with the dependent variable (adjustment)- increases the variance to 0.37.

Table 2. Analysis of variance

Sources	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F value	P
Model	1188.51	10	118.85	2.73	0.010
Error	2002.05	46	43.52		
Total	3190.59	56			

As the results show, entering irrational beliefs into the model can significantly explain variance in adjustment. Thus, there is a significant relationship between irrational beliefs and adjustment.

Table 3- Regression analyses predicting adjustment

Variable	B	SEB	Standardized b	t	p
Demand of approval	0.09	0.30	0.04	0.31	0.754
High self expectation	0.15	0.26	0.09	0.58	0.560
Blaming proneness	-0.57	0.23	-0.39	-2.46	0.018
Frustration reactive	-0.36	0.22	-0.22	-1.58	0.12
Emotional irresponsibility	0.22	0.20	0.17	1.12	0.26
Anxious over Concern	-0.21	0.26	-0.14	-0.78	0.437
Problem avoidance	0.43	0.28	0.25	1.52	0.133
Dependency	0.11	0.28	0.08	0.49	0.620
Helplessness for change	-0.61	0.21	-0.44	-2.84	0.007
Perfectionism	2.46	0.22	0.01	0.11	0.913
Constant	4.53	11.56		0.39	0.697

As tables show, some factors of irrational beliefs have impacted students' general adjustment. "Helplessness for change" and "blaming proneness" are two factors from among irrational beliefs factors that impacted Iranian students' general adjustment with 95% confidence. As a consequence, Iranian students' irrational beliefs can be predicted from their "Helplessness for change" and "blaming proneness".

Table 3- Regression analyses

Variable	B	SEB	Standardized b	t	P
Blaming proneness	-0.57	0.23	-0.39	-2.46	0.018
Helplessness for change	-0.61	0.21	-0.44	-2.84	0.007

Other research questions

Is there a significant relationship between irrational beliefs and other factors of adjustment (social, educational, emotional)?

The results revealed that "high self expectation" and "anxious overcome corn" are two factors from among ten factors of irrational beliefs that significantly impacted students' social adjustment (with 95% probability confidence). As a consequence their irrational beliefs can be predicted from their "high self expectation" and "Anxious over Concern". Moreover, "Helplessness for change" has significantly influenced emotional adjustment (with 95% probability confidence). Consequently, students' irrational beliefs can be predicted from "Helplessness for change".

The results related to regression analyses also revealed that four factors including "High self expectation", "Blaming proneness", "Dependency", "Helplessness for change" from among ten factors of students' irrational beliefs have significantly impacted their level of educational adjustment (with 95% probability confidence). As a consequence, students' irrational beliefs can be predicted from their "High self expectation", "Blaming proneness", "Dependency", and "Helplessness for change".

Discussion

The result of analyses revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between irrational beliefs and adjustment in a sense that an inverse relationship between sample's "Blaming proneness" and "Helplessness for change" existed. This finding is almost in line with those research studies that indicated a significant positive relationship between irrational beliefs and adjustment (DeBoard and Romans, 2004; Fengwu and Meifen, 2008; Stackert and Bursik, 2003; Carone and Barone, 2001; Powell and Mccone, 2004; Vestre, 1984)

The results related to the first research question showed that there was an inverse significant relationship between irrational beliefs and social adjustment in a sense that an inverse relationship between "High self expectation" and "anxious overcome corn" was observed (Njus and Howard, 1999; Skinner & Hampson & Schaw, 2002; Smith et al., 1984).

The results with regard to the second research question revealed that there was a significant inverse relationship between irrational beliefs and emotional adjustment in a sense that an inverse significant relationship was found between "Helplessness for change" and "emotional adjustment". These findings are almost in line with the results of other studies that indicated a positive relationship between irrational beliefs and adjustment (Equiseta, 2007; Sudani, 1996; Gormally, et al., 1981; Halamandais and Power, 1997; Edelman, et al., 1994; Sharp and Curran, 2006). The level of stress that an individual feels in solving a problem depends on his or her cognitive evaluation of the problem and available sources to handle that situation. If the individual assesses the situation as a negative, uncontrollable, vague, and unpredictable event, the level of stress increases. Thus after the evaluation he or she shows some type of reaction. The individual's reaction can be physiological, emotional, cognitive, or behavioral. Research has shown that whenever we face something we immediately interpret that. Our cognitive interpretations determine our reactions (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Young children use emotional encountering methods but when they grow up their mental capabilities develop and they use cognitive methods for adjustment (Sarafino, 2002). The process of adjustment is a function of personality characteristics, environment and individual's perception of the situation (Frydenberg, 1997). Decreasing the stress level and enhancing adjustment skills, self esteem, and support groups would limit prevalence of mental

diseases. Adolescents are prone to strong physical, cognitive, and social changes and this makes them vulnerable to mental disorders (Mason et al., 1984).

Results with regard to the third research question revealed that there was an inverse relationship between irrational beliefs and educational adjustment because the sample's level of irrational beliefs was predicted from "High self expectations", "Blaming proneness", and "Helplessness for change".

These findings are in line with the results of other studies (DeBoard and Romans, 2004; Hakan and Jaei, 2000; Davies, 2006; Watson and Trap, 1998; Heppner and Lorson, 1982). As a consequence, when higher level of irrational beliefs is observed, lower level of adjustment is shown. Thus realization of adolescents' needs and showing respect to individual differences by parents and school administrators can contribute to their adjustment.

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