



The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Mental Health among Iranian Mothers of Mild Intellectually Disabled Children

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine the influence of emotional intelligence on mental health among mothers of mild intellectually disabled children in special school of Tehran-Iran. The sample of the study will be selected by a purposive sampling method. All respondents will complete the questionnaires of MHC-SF and AES. Structural equation modeling (SEM) will be used to analyze the data. The finding is expected to show the level of mental health among the respondents and the impact of emotional intelligence on mental health among the respondents.

Keywords: mental health, emotional intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Mental health or mental well being is something we all have and seek to improve. Mental health has been found to be associated with gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, employment, income, physical illness and disability. The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in WHO's definition (2007) of health as contained in its constitution: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Humanity has always been in search for well-being, happiness, and the good life. Studies indicate that, mental disability produces psychological, physical, social and financial distress to the whole family, particularly parents, as they are virtually the only constant care givers (Schwartz & Tsumi, 2003). Several studies have indicated that the presence in a family of a child with a physical and mental disability may be detrimental to maternal mental health.

Mothers of intellectually disabled children showed more psychological distress than mothers of normal children and other family members, as they are the primary caregivers for their children (Hastings & Taunt, 2002; Pelchat, Lefebvre, & Perreault, 2003; Weiss, Sullivan, & Diamond, 2003). Becoming a mother is a major life event and has great importance not only for the individual family but also for the society and the survival of humankind (Farajzadegan et al., 2009). This research will study the variable, which plays an important role in people's life, especially among the mothers who have intellectually disabled children, which is mental health. It is shown that when people are happy they are more creative, more decent and even live longer. Research has revealed that psychiatric morbidity (depression, anxiety, experiencing high levels of stress) is common in mothers of mentally disabled children (Al-Kuwari, 2007). Studies from different countries on parents of children with disabilities

suggested that 35-53% of mothers of children with disabilities have symptoms of depression (Emerson, 2003). Women's health promotion is one of the serious challenges of health care providers due to its effect on community health. The parental experience of having a child with intellectual disability has long been the topic of researches. Researchers have reported that raising a child with an intellectual disability can increase the distress experienced by mothers (Crnic, Friedrich, & Greenberg, 1983) and fathers (Bristol, Gallagher, & Schopler, 1988). Many parents of children with intellectual disability report increased problems, higher levels of stress or negative feelings. However they simultaneously report positive perceptions, increased familial closeness, personal growth and enrichment in their lives as a result of their experiences with their children (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Hastings, 2003; Hornby, 1992; Stainton & Besser, 1998).

Another important variable in this research is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, recognize and express emotions, to assimilate emotions in thought, understanding and trying to help regulate emotions and feelings of self and others (Mayer & Cobb, 2000; Salovey & Mayer, 1989). Emotional Intelligence could be considered as a factor, which could be learned and taught as a mediator, which could preserve and improve mental health. The findings of previous researches show that society members' mental health could be affected by many factors. Therefore, learning about these factors, which could improve or worsen the mental health is very important. This research will be addressing the gap in the literature by investigating these hypotheses: 1-there is the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health among Iranian mothers of mild intellectually disabled children. 2-emotional intelligence has influence on the level of mental health of Iranian mothers of mild intellectually disabled children. Thus the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between mental health and emotional intelligence of Iranian mothers who have mild intellectually disabled children. Also to examine whether emotional intelligence has influence on the level of mental health among the respondents. The result of this research will provide more information about this group of mothers.

MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This research is based on Keyes's model of mental health as a mental health continuum. Influenced the positive psychology, (C. L. Keyes, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007) proposed one multidimensional model of mental health. Continuum model is made up of positive emotions, which includes the variables of emotional well-being and positive psychological functioning, which includes variables of psychological well-being and social well-being. Positive psychology has many similarities with humanistic psychology. Mental health continuum is impressed by positive psychology as a new approach and humanistic theory. According to K. M. Keyes, Grant, and Hasin (2008) mental health is a measure of how people, organizations, and communities think, feel, and function, individually and collectively. (C. L. Keyes, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007) conceptualized a mental health continuum

that includes three levels: Flourishing, Moderate and Languishing Mental Health. Salovey and (Salovey & Mayer, 1989) defined emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feeling and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". According to (Petrides, 2011) "Trait EI (or trait emotional self - efficacy) concerns emotion - related self - perceptions measured via self - report, whilst ability EI (or cognitive - emotional ability) concerns emotion - related cognitive abilities that ought to be measured via maximum - performance tests". In reviewing the literature, (Austin, Dore, & O'Donovan, 2008) indicated that emotional intelligence is related to health (physiological and psychological).

Researchers have shown that there is a relation between emotional intelligence particularly trait emotional intelligence and mental health (Bar-On, (1999); Bar & Parker, 2000; Bastian, Burns, & Nettelbeck, 2005; Brackett & Salovey, 2006; Ciarrochi, Chan, & Bajgar, 2001; Johnson, Batey, & Holdsworth, 2009; Liao, Liao, Teoh, & Liao, 2003; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008; Platsidou, 2010; Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003). Emotional health consists of several factors, where each factor plays a role in versifying emotions and excitements (stresses), of which impulse control, stress tolerance, emotional self regard, self actualization, optimism and, etc., could be mentioned. As it could be seen, each of these factors could play a significant role in people's well being and mental health.

METHODS

This research is a quantitative and survey research. In this research, the researcher will be testing all hypotheses by using structural equation modeling (SEM) Amos.

Sampling Method: According to target of study, the participants will be selected and investigated based on purposive sampling from the mothers of mild intellectually disabled children, who study in special schools in Tehran-Iran. This group of mothers will be selected according to the valid report's statistic of children with mild intellectual disability. According to SEM in order to avoid the problem of over fitting, a ratio of at least 5:1 is recommended (Hair, 1998).

Pilot testing: The sample for this pilot study will consist of 35 mothers from two schools in Tehran, capital of Iran. The sample will be provided with a self report questionnaire. Prior to administration, the questionnaire will be translated into the native language of the sample population and will be distributed among within them.

Data analysis: considering the validity of the measurement model, researcher will proceed to test the structural model by converting the measurement model to structural model as well as assessing GOF and significance, direction and size of structural estimates. The researcher will use correlation design, which means that two or more variables are systematically measured, and the relationship between these variables will be assessed as well.

Research Instrument: The questionnaire has three parts; the first part is a demographic questionnaire, second part is MHC-SF, and AES is the final part of the questionnaire.

The demographic questionnaire includes questions about the age, level of education, occupation, ethnicity, level of income, and the number of children with mild intellectual disabilities. The Mental Health Continuum (MHC-SF): Corey Keyes has developed a model of a mental health continuum from languishing to flourishing in life. The model proposes that mental health consists of components of emotional, psychological and social well-being (K. M. Keyes et al., 2008). The MHC-SF covers three dimensions of wellbeing: emotional (hedonic) consist of 3 items, psychological well being (positive functioning in individual life) with 6 items and social wellbeing (in community life) with 5 items. The short form of the MHC has shown excellent internal consistency (>0.80) and discriminate validity (C. L. Keyes, 2005, 2006; K. M. Keyes et al., 2008; G. J. Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). According to G. Westerhof and Keyes (2008), the total reliability is 0.89 for MHC-SF. The Assessing Emotions Scale Schutte et al. (1998): This scale prepared by Nicola Schutte and his colleagues (1998). It is a 33-item self-

report inventory and is focused on typical emotional intelligence. Respondents rate themselves using the items on a five-point scale. Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 ($n = 346$), 0.87 ($n = 32$) and 0.89 were found for 33-item scale (Schutte et al., 1998).

CONCLUSION

The majority of studies have focused on the increased risks associated with parenting a child with intellectual disability. Parents especially mothers have more mental health problem. They have higher parenting stress, and lower levels of social participation than parents of children without disabilities (Baker, Blacher, Crnic, & Edelbrock, 2002; Herring et al., 2006) Very little is found in the literature on the question of the influence of emotional intelligence on mental health in mothers who have mild intellectually disabled children in Tehran- Iran. This study represents an effort to address this void in the literature.

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