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PREDICTION OF COPING STYLES BASED ON THE IDENTITY STYLES ACCORDING TO PROCRASTINATION AND SELF-CRITICISM VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the coping styles due to the importance of stress, its determinants and destructive consequences in modern society in addition to its deep-rooted effects on the identity. Therefore, a research is conducted on 400 male and female samples at the age ranges of 23 to 60 years in order to investigate the roles of procrastination and self-criticism among coping and identity styles. The research has prediction method and the subjects are evaluated according to Endler and Parker's Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS), Berzonsky's Identity style inventory, Lay's procrastination scale, and Thompson and Zuroff's self-criticism scale. Data is analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics, and multivariate regression analysis.

According to the results of statistical analyses, there are significant relationships between informative, diffused, and normative identity styles and commitment with procrastination; and also between the informative style and internalized self-criticism (ISC), between diffused identity style and Comparative Self-Criticism (CSC), between procrastination and emotion-focused and problem-focused coping styles, and between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping styles and internalized self-criticism (ISC).

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Introduction

In this century, when the psychological pressures have overshadowed the human lives, it is significantly important to control negative emotions in mental health. Most of the researchers believe that if a person is emotionally empowered, he will be easily faced with life challenges, and thus he will have better mental health [1]. The individual way of reaction to stress is associated with numerous issues due to its complexity, and this leads to trouble prediction of these reactions. This study is conducted with the aim at predicting the coping styles with stress. Among the variables associated with this structure, the identity styles are selected as they have richer research background; and the identity is an important part of human existence; and every individual's personal and social life is affected by his identity [2]. According to conducted studies on the relationship between coping styles with stress and identity, people who are successful in obtaining identity, utilize more appropriate coping styles.

Despite the fact that the previous studies have examined the relationship between coping styles and identity styles, the question is whether the variables, which can be predicted by identity, can be the predictors of coping styles with stress?

We have selected the procrastination and self-criticism among the variables associated with identity styles. Since the procrastination is known as a habitual behavior which has high prevalence in different communities and it leads to delay in completion of work and responsibility, and the negative consequences of this habit may not be significantly felt in daily

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life, the losses arising from the spread of this behavior are considerably important among individuals; and we have investigated it as the effective variable in this regard. On the other hand, the self-criticism variable, which is defined as a negative critical self-view and is among the self issues associated with identity, is utilized among the procrastination variable for better prediction of coping styles. The coping style refers to "the continuous and variable behavioral and cognitive efforts for managing the internal or external demands which are assessed as very difficult or beyond the personal resource demand". [3]

According to the review of research on coping styles, the styles, by which a person copes with stress and threats in his life, are related to his identity style [4]. The identity refers to self-building and dynamic organization of motivation, abilities, beliefs and personal history which uniformly and independently lead the individual growing lifestyle. [5]

As mentioned earlier, this study seeks to investigate the following hypotheses with the aim at predicting the adults' coping styles based on their identity styles and according to procrastination and self-criticism variables.

Main hypothesis

Identity styles predict the individual coping styles according to procrastination and self-criticism variables.

Sub-hypotheses

- 1- Identity styles predict the procrastination.
- 2- Identity styles predict the self-criticism.
- 3- Procrastination predicts the coping styles.
- 4- Self-criticism predicts the coping styles.

1. Theoretical principles of research

2.1. Coping styles

Comprehensive Glossary of Psychiatry and Psychology literally defines coping as successful dealing and encountering. According to this definition, the coping mechanisms include the personal conscious and unconscious ways to adapt to environmental demands without changing the objectives and they refer to strategies for combating the anxiety source. According to Terry (1994), the coping strategies are as the behavioral and psychological efforts to face with pressure and deal with stressful situations; and they are effective in prevention, regulation, and mitigation of stress [6].

According to the research literature on coping styles by Folkman and Lazarus (1980), there is a difference between two types of coping including the problem-focused (management or change in stressors) and emotion-focused (reduction of emotional distress associated with stressful situation) coping styles [7]. The effectiveness of coping styles is different in various situations, and not only sometimes they do not reduce stress, but also they enhance it [8]. Endler and Parker (1990) also introduced three types of coping style including the problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping styles. In problem-focused style, the person focuses on the problem and tries to solve it, and collects data on the stressful situation. The emotion-focused coping focuses on the control of emotions and emotional responses; and finally, in the avoidance coping style, the person seeks to make cognitive changes and become away from stressful situation, and tries to get emotional support by getting away from the situation [9].

2.2. Identity styles

The identity is associated with how a person builds his position in the world. The motivation for acquisition of identity is not only the need for biological and social adaptation, but it is also the need to have a meaningful world. [10]

Berzonsky (1990) suggests three identity processing styles as follows:

- Informative style
- Normative style
- Diffused/ avoidance style

People with informative identity styles are actively searching and evaluating information about themselves. They are trying to be the thinkers and aware of and open to new experiences. They consciously solve problems and are considered as the conscious decision-makers [11]

On the contrary, the normative style refers to the identity issues and decisions, the conformity with expectations, and the orders by the most important people and reference groups. They automatically accept and internalize the values and beliefs without conscious evaluation. They have little tolerance for encountering with new and ambiguous situations and show high needs for being undiscovered [12]

People with diffused-avoidance styles mainly deal with their stress by emotion-focused styles. People, who use emotion-focused strategies, take considerable efforts to reduce, deny or escape from stressful and emotional pressure. The use of these methods will lead to the lack of feeling about the need to reform their existing structures. These people try not to face with contradictions of identity as far as possible [13]

Marcia (1966) assumed the exploration and commitment as two initial dimensions of identity development. Exploration is a scale in which people are involved in a personal quest for values, beliefs and different goals [14], while the commitment is the practice of selecting and joining a specific set of goals, values and beliefs [15].

2.3. Procrastination

Procrastination is generally defined as the behavioral orientation or a trait to postpone or delay a task or decision [16].

Procrastination is basically a sequence of behavior for postponing, and it leads to a sub-standard behavioral result. It contains a task which a procrastinator thinks is important to be done. It leads to emotional confusion [17].

Three components of procrastination including the decision-making, avoidance and motivation are first introduced by Ferrari (1992). According to Lee, the identity has a specified and limited place in procrastination literature. Avoidance procrastination is positively related to diffused, but negatively to informative identity. This suggests that the avoidance procrastinators' cognitive styles reflect their motivational and behavioral profile in which they actively prevent processing the objective and real information about themselves and their environment since they are likely to face with their own shortcomings. [18]

Avoidance procrastination refers to the individual tendency to delay the activities which are unpleasantly experienced in order to prevent the negative information about self-worth or personal performance. These people do the procrastination to inhibit the threatening feedback. Other studies have shown two types of procrastination: behavioral procrastination which means delays in completing the major assignments; and decision-making procrastination which refers to deliberate delay in decision-making within the time framework [19]

2.4. Self-criticism

According to Blatt and Zuroff (1992, 2002), the self-criticism reflects the inner tendency including the focus on achievement of personal goals and comparison at a large scale. The feeling of inferiority, guilt and low self-worth are the individuals' characteristics with high self-criticism and they are partly originated from their tendency to try out for perfectionist standards [20]. Self-criticism is a personality trait which is characterized by self-assessment and scrutiny and is related to negative consequences such as depression, weak interpersonal relationships, negative emotions, and high levels of distress [21].

Thompson and Zuroff described two levels of self-criticism as follows:

Comparative self-criticism (CSC)

The comparative self-criticism is the first level of self-criticism and it is defined as a negative self-view in comparison with others. This level focuses on undesirable self-comparison with other people who are superior, enemy and critic; hence, this will lead to discomfort when being evaluated and dealing with others. [22]

Internalized self-criticism (ISC)

The internalized self-criticism is another level of self-criticism and it is defined by negative self-view compared with personal and internal standards. These internalized standards tend to be continuously regressive at a high level, and this leads to the chronic failure in dealing with individual standards. The focus of this self-criticism is not on comparison with others or their views, but on the individual self-view as an ineffective person [22].

Research Methodology

3.1. Research method

The research method is predictive and correlational. Therefore, the multivariate regression method is utilized to find the impact of identity styles on coping styles and also to achieve the effect of procrastination and self-criticism variables in explaining this relationship. In this study, the procrastination and self-criticism variables are first predicted according to identity styles, and then the coping style variable is predicted according to procrastination and self-criticism variables.

3.2. Statistical population

The statistical population of this study consists of the male and female adults in Mashhad City during the summer of 2012. Given the identity style variable, since the process of identity formation should be completed in under-investigation people, people older than 23 are used for this purpose and this age range is up to 65 years.

3.3. Sampling size and method

In this study, since we do not have access to all population members, and it is impossible to perform the random sampling, the non-random and convenience sampling method is used in this regard.

According to correlational research method and multiple-regression as the statistical test method, the prediction studies can use the multiple-regression analysis in order to clarify whether a combination of two or more variables can better predict the criterion variable than one variable [23]. The sample size is considered equal to 400 according to the number of questionnaires, the volume of questions and for enhancing the validity of research findings.

3.4. Research tools

This study uses the questionnaire implementation method for assessing the subjects and collecting data. The research utilizes four questionnaires namely Berzonsky's Identity style inventory, Endler and Parker's Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations, Lay's procrastination scale, and Thompson and Zuroff's self-criticism scale.

3.4.1. Endler and Parker's Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS)

This questionnaire is used to evaluate a variety of coping strategies in stressful situations. This test consists of 48 items scored based on five-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very high). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of main three subscales of test (problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping styles) is over 0.80 in various samples including teenagers, students and adults. Furthermore, the test-retest reliability coefficient of subscales is from 0.51 to 0.75 within 6 weeks [24].

3.4.2. Berzonsky's Identity style inventory (ISI)

This inventory evaluates three identity styles including the informative, normative and diffused-avoidance styles and consists of 40 items. The answer to each item is determined on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = partially agree, 4= agree and 5=strongly agree). In the final revised version, Berzonsky (1992) reported the validity coefficients of each subscale of informative, normative and diffused-avoidance styles equal to 0.62, 0.66, and 0.73 respectively [25]. The research results indicate the total reliability of questionnaire and subscales of informative, normative, diffused-avoidance identity styles, and commitment equal to 0.73, 0.67, 0.52, 0.62, and 0.57 respectively.

3.4.3. General procrastination scale (GP)

This scale, which is designed by Lay for measuring the procrastination trait based on the desire for procrastination in everyday life, includes 20 items [26]. Cronbach's alpha is reported equal to 0.82. The internal consistency of this scale is 0.78 and its validity is 0.80 [27]. This study uses the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) to determine the reliability of test and it is obtained equal to 0.85.

3.4.4. Levels of Self-Criticism Scale (LOSC)

The self-criticism is measured according to the Levels of Self-Criticism Scale (LOSC) by Thompson and Zuroff [28]. People are asked to rate their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale from very bad to very good [28]. Self-criticism has two subscales: comparative self-criticism (CSC) and internalized self-criticism (ISC). The internal consistency and validity of this scale are obtained equal to 0.81 and 0.92 for comparative self-criticism and 0.87 and 0.93 for by internalized self-criticism by Thompson and Zuroff.

3.5. Method of research implementation

Different regions of Mashhad City are identified in order to collect data, so that the target sample covers all social classes. Afterwards, each questionnaire is given to all qualified individuals who received the same description for responding to the questionnaire in order to avoid the possible mistakes, and thus for more careful response to questionnaires by participants.

Results

4.1. Demographic characteristics

According to demographic findings of this research, more than 64% of research participants are female, and the remaining 35% are male. The studied age range of this research is 23 to 65 years, so that 70% of participants are between 23 to 40 years old and about 30% of people are 40 to 65 years old. Furthermore, about 24% of participants have diploma, 6% have associate degrees, 22% have master's degrees, and 2% have doctoral degrees.

4.2. Descriptive findings

This section reviews the scores of studied groups in terms of main research variables as follows.

4.2.1. Identity styles

Based on the observed statistical indices, the mean of commitment and then the informative identity is higher than the other dimensions, but the mean of diffused identity is less than the other dimensions. The standard deviation of "normative identity" dimension is higher than other dimensions. In other words, the dispersion of subjects' scores in this dimension is more than other dimensions. The skewness and kurtosis of distribution is very low in all aspects (normal distribution) and they cannot be interpreted. The minimum values of diffused identity style have significant difference with other dimensions.

4.2.2. Procrastination

The mean scale is 50.2 in target variable. The median, mean, and mode of distribution are almost equal to each other; however, the skewness and kurtosis indices confirm that the distribution of subjects' scores is complied with normal distribution.

4.2.3. Self-criticism

The self-criticism scale is raised as the dependent middle variable in this research. According to statistical findings, the mean comparative subscale is higher than the internalized subscale. This subscale also has higher median and mode, but the standard deviation of "internalized" subscale shows higher dispersion in this subscale. The distribution of these two subscales is very different in terms of skewness and kurtosis, while the comparative subscale does not have skewness, and it is higher than the normal distribution in terms of kurtosis. This confirms that the dispersion of subjects' scores is low in distribution. In contrast, the internalized subscale is approximately equal to normal distribution. The distribution of "self-criticism" main scale is not far from the normal distribution. The minimum and maximum of distribution are also equal in two subscales.

4.2.4. Coping styles

Coping styles variable is considered as the dependent variable in this study. Statistical findings suggest that the mean problem-oriented style is higher than the mean of other two styles. The emotion-focused style distribution has higher score dispersion. Skewness and kurtosis of distribution indicate that the distribution of subscales is not much different from normal distribution. The minimum and maximum of "problem-focused" distribution are higher than the other subscales.

4.3. Inferential findings

Research hypothesis review

The identity styles predict the individual coping styles according to self-criticism and procrastination variables. This hypothesis means that the identity styles can predict the procrastination and self-criticism. Similarly, the procrastination and

self-criticism can predict the coping styles. Therefore, the effect of identity styles on the procrastination and self-criticism variables and then the impact of procrastination and self-criticism variables on coping styles are determined through regression in order to test this hypothesis.

4.3.1. Explanation of procrastination and self-criticism variables by identity styles

4.3.1.1. Procrastination

According to the results of regression analysis (by the same data inclusion method) for explanation of procrastination by identity styles, the regression coefficient is equal to 0.44 and the coefficient of determination indicates that 20% of variance in criterion variable is explained by identity styles. The significance level of F test ($P=0.0001$) is significant. It should be noted that the identity styles are able to explain the procrastination, or in other words, the identity styles explain about 20% of variance in procrastination.

Table 1: Impact factors (prediction share) of identity styles in prediction of procrastination

	Identity styles	Impact factor (Standardized beta)	t-value	Significance level	Intercept
Procrastination	Informative	0.076	1.365	0.173	67.07
	Normative	-0.298	-5.013	0.0001	
	Diffused	.218	4.581	0.0001	
	Commitment	-0.162	-2.742	0.006	

(Table 1) shows the beta coefficients of prediction share for each identity style on the procrastination. The significance level of t-test ($P \leq 0.5$) confirms that the normative and diffused styles and commitment have significant effects on the procrastination. The significance level of test does not confirm the impact of informative identity style on the procrastination.

4.3.1.2. Self-criticism

According to the regression analysis results for explaining the self-criticism subscales by identity styles, the regression coefficient is about 0.21 for internalized prediction and 0.25 for comparative prediction. Despite the significance level of F-test, the R-squared factor is weak for explaining the criterion variables. According to the coefficient of determination, which determines the predicted variance of dependent variable by predictor variables, 4.3% of variance in internalized subscale is explained (predicted) by identity styles. Similarly, 6% of variance in comparative subscale is explained by identity styles.

Table 2: Impact factors (prediction share) of identity styles in predicting the self-criticism

Criterion variable (Self-criticism)	Identity styles	Impact factor (Standardized beta)	t-value	Significance level	Intercept
Internalized scale*	Informative	0.180*	2.954	0.003	25.43
	Normative	0.074	1.147	0.252	
	Diffused	0.017	0.334	0.738	
	Commitment	-0.056	-0.866	0.387	
Comparative scale*	Informative	0.105	1.740	0.083	30.51
	Normative	0.089	1.379	0.169	
	Diffused	0.178*	3.463	0.001	
	Commitment	-0.086	-1.347	0.179	

(Table 2) shows the impact factors of each identity style in predicting the criterion variable. It is found that the highest impact factor (prediction share) belongs to the informative style in internalized scale, but the highest impact factor in prediction of comparative scale belongs to diffused style.

4.3.2. Explanation of coping styles by procrastination and self-criticism

4.3.2.1. Problem-focused coping style

At this stage of regression analysis, the problem-focused coping style is predicted by self-criticism and procrastination variables. According to results, the regression coefficient and coefficient of determination are weak for predicting the problem-focused style, but F-test confirms the significance at the error level of 5%. Therefore, it can be argued that the self-criticism and procrastination variables have significant impact on the problem-focused style, but the explanation of variance in dependent variable by predictive variables is less than 1% (0.7%).

Table 3: Impact factors (prediction share) for problem-focused coping style

Criterion variable (problem-focused mechanism)	Predictive variables	Impact factor (Standardized beta)	t-value	Significance level	Intercept
Problem-focused style *	Procrastination	-0.266	-5.488	0.0001	61.06
	Internalized	0.007	0.126	0.9	
	Comparative	0.023	0.447	0.655	

(Table 3) shows the impact factors. It is observed that only the procrastination variable has a significant impact on the problem-focused style, but the other variables have insignificant share in predicting the problem-focused style.

4.3.2.2. Emotion-focused style

This stage of regression analysis predicts the emotion-focused coping style by self-criticism and procrastination variables. According to results, the regression coefficient is about 0.52 for predicting the emotion-focused style. The coefficient of determination (which determines the predicted variance of dependent variable by predictive variable) is also equal to 0.27. F-value is significant for investigating the significance at the error level of 5% of regression; hence, it can be argued that about 27% of variance in emotion-focused style is explained (predicted) by self-criticism and procrastination variables.

Table 4: Impact factors (prediction share) for emotion-focused coping style

Criterion variable	Predictive variables	Impact factor (Standardized beta)	t-value	Significance level	Intercept
Emotion-focused style *	Procrastination	0.187	4.348	0.0001	0.55
	Internalized	0.453	9.800	0.0001	
	Comparative	0.077	1.665	0.097	

(Table 4) shows the impact factors of procrastination and self-criticism variables in predicting the criterion variable. It is shown that the highest beta coefficient (prediction share) belongs to the internalized variable for predicting the emotion-focused style. T-test confirms the significant impact of procrastination and the internalized self-criticism subscale on the emotion-focused style, but the comparative variable does not have any significant impact on the criterion variable (emotion-focused coping style).

4.3.2.3. Avoidance-focused coping style

At this stage of regression analysis, the avoidance coping style is predicted by self-criticism and procrastination variables: According to results, the regression coefficient is equal to 0.094 for predicting the avoidance style. The coefficient of determination (which determines the predicted variance of dependent variable by predictor variables) is also a low value; and the F-value confirms the significance of regression at the error level of 5%. It should be noted that the procrastination and self-criticism variables are not able to explain the variance in avoidance coping style, or in other words, they do not have any impact on the avoidance coping style.

Table 5: Impact factors (Projection share) for avoidance coping style

Criterion variable	Predictive variables	Impact factor (Standardized beta)	t-value	Significance level	Intercept
Avoidance style	Procrastination	0.079	1.583	0.114	7.22
	Internalization	0.014	0.251	0.802	
	Comparative	0.046	0.862	0.389	

(Table 5) shows the impact factors. It is shown that none of the internalized and comparative self-criticism and procrastination variables affects predicting the avoidance coping style.

Conclusion

Prediction of coping styles based on the identity styles according to procrastination and self-criticism variables:

First and third sub-hypotheses review

First sub-hypothesis: The identity styles (according to informative, normative, diffused and commitment subscales) predict the procrastination.

Third sub-hypothesis: Procrastination predicts the coping styles (according to problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance subscales).

The results of above-mentioned hypotheses indicate the prediction of coping styles based on the identity styles according to procrastination variable.

Results of first and third sub-hypotheses

The following result is obtained based on the above-mentioned hypotheses. According to [Figure 1], the normative and commitment subscales are inversely related to procrastination, but the diffused style is directly related; on the other hand, the normative identity style is a better prediction for procrastination. Accordingly, the first sub-hypothesis of research is confirmed. On the other hand, the procrastination directly predicts the emotion-focused coping style; in other words, people with high levels of procrastination make great use of emotion-focused styles in coping with problems. On the contrary, the procrastination has an inverse relationship with problem-focused coping style. This means that a high level of procrastination will lead to the less of problem-focused coping strategies, and thus the third sub-hypothesis of research is also confirmed.

According to the approval of first and third sub-hypotheses, people who have high scores in normative sub-scale or those people, who automatically internalize the important people's criteria and expectations and adapt to them [30], will have less procrastination. Commitment, which is defined as a coherent set of objectives and beliefs [31], is negatively associated with procrastination.

Diffused identity is along with procrastination and effort to dodge the identity conflicts and decision-making positions as much as possible [29], and also the maladaptive decision-making strategies such as procrastination before deciding, reasoning for decision-making and apology [29]. This finding is consistent with research in which the procrastination is positively related to diffused identity, but negatively related to informative identity [4]. This corroborates that the cognitive style in avoidance procrastinators reflects their behavioral and motivational profile in which they actively inhibit the real and objective information processing about themselves and the environment since they may face with their personal weaknesses [18]. These findings indicate that the people with high levels of procrastination make greater use of emotion-focused styles and try to control their emotion and reactions.

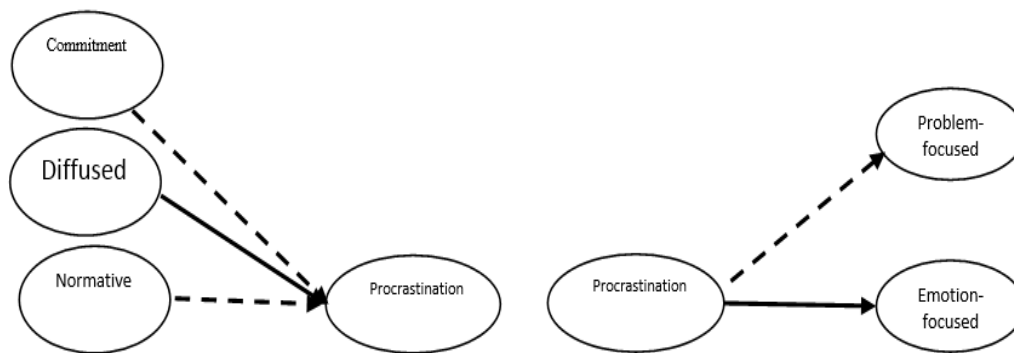


Figure 1: Results of studied procrastination variable

Study on the second and fourth sub-hypotheses

Second sub-hypothesis: The identity styles predict the self-criticism (according to internalized and comparative subscales).

Fourth sub-hypothesis: Self-criticism predicts the coping styles.

Results of second and fourth sub-hypotheses

Considering the fact that the self-criticism variable is divided into two sub-scales of internalized and comparative self-criticism and this research utilized them for investigation, the second and fourth sub-hypotheses are divided into two parts of first and second results.

First result

Based on the above-mentioned hypotheses, the research results are as follows. According to the relations of [Figure 2], the informative identity style is directly related to internalized self-criticism. In other words, if a person has higher levels of informative identity style, he will have higher internalized self-criticism. As a result, the informative identity style predicts the internalized self-criticism, and thus the second sub-hypothesis is confirmed. Furthermore, the internalized self-criticism has a direct relationship with emotion-focused coping style; in other words, if a person has higher internalized self-criticism, he will make greater use of emotion-focused and problem-solving escaping styles. Therefore, the internalized self-criticism predicts the emotion-focused coping style, and thus the fourth sub-hypothesis is also confirmed.

According to the confirmation of second and fourth sub-hypotheses, it is inferred that there is direct and significant pairwise and separate relationships between three variables namely the informative identity style, internalized self-criticism, and emotion-focused coping style. Those people who have higher scores in informative styles and actively search for evaluation of self-information [32] and define themselves based on the personal and internalized characteristics [13], are more likely to suffer from the internalized self-criticism which is a negative self-attitude compared to personal and internalized standards [28]. This finding is consistent with research based on the relationship between the internalized self-criticism and

informative identity. On the other hand, people who have the informative identity styles are those who explore and evaluate the self-information, are open to new information, and tend to review various aspects of their identity. [28]



Figure 2: Results of studied internalized self-criticism variable

Second result

According to results of (Figure 3), the diffused identity style is directly related to comparative self-criticism variable. In other words, the more a person has gained the diffused identity style, the more he uses the comparative self-criticism. Therefore, the second sub-hypothesis is confirmed. On the other hand, the comparative self-criticism variable does not have any relationship with none of the coping styles, and thus the second sub-hypothesis is confirmed, but the fourth sub-hypothesis is rejected.

According to the approved second sub-hypothesis, it seems that people with diffused identity avoid facing with identity contradictions, and set their behavior based on the situational and moment factors [33]. It is more likely that they search for information and comparison bases outside themselves, and thus they have higher self-criticism. This findings are consistent with research [28] based on the relationship between the comparative self-criticism and diffused identity style.



Figure 3: Results of study on comparative self-criticism variable

Finally, it is hoped that the result of this research will take the effective steps in developing the psychology enthusiasts' knowledge about identifying the details of research variables as well as the further studies on this field.

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