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PREDICTING THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF CHILDREN BASED ON COHESION, SOCIABILITY, AND ENMESHED FAMILY BOUNDARIES

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ABSTRACT

Objective of this study was predicting the emotional intelligence of female high school students based on cohesion, sociability, and enmeshed family. In this study, 350 people were selected through cluster sampling method. Bloom Family Function Scale (1985) and Bar-on Emotional Intelligence Scale (1997) were used to collect the data (in three dimensions of cohesion, sociability, and stress). The method of study was correlational and the data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis. Findings revealed that there is a direct and significant relationship between family cohesion and family sociability and emotional intelligence of children. In addition, significant and reverse relationship was found between emotional intelligence and enmeshed family. Findings of regression analysis indicated that family cohesion and sociability positivity and enmeshed family negatively predict emotional intelligence in children.

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Introduction

Nowadays, despite great cultural changes and change in life style, and increased level of education of people in society, many people are not capable to cope with emotional situations of everyday life and to understand their own and others' emotions, and this had made them vulnerable. One's ability to perceive emotions and positively coping with emotional situations is called emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is one of the main determinants of social and emotional capabilities and competencies. Emotional intelligence as a scientific subject in psychology is the latest development and understanding the relationship between intelligence and emotion is considered as the trigger of a major revolution in mental health. Its importance is manifested increasingly in the social developments related to industrial age, especially in the context of interpersonal relations in different social environments (1). Emotional intelligence involves the ability to understand your and others' feelings, skills, controlling and regulating the emotions related to yourself and others and the ability for effectively managing of mood and controlling the impulses (2). In fact, emotional intelligence is the capacity to understand your and others' emotions and feelings and using these emotions to establish better communication with others (3). It is also the capacity of perception, expression, understanding, using, and management of emotions and using these skills to carry out adaptive behaviors (4). On the other hand, Bar-on, as one of the pioneers in this area, considers emotional intelligence as a group of skills, talents and non-cognitive abilities enhancing the ability of the person in successfully coping with environmental pressures and demands of (5). Studies conducted by on Meyer and Salovey and Crusu (2014)(6) reveal that emotional intelligence is effective in determining the success of a person in life from various aspects, so that people with high emotional intelligence are more successful in communicating with their surroundings and can better cope with stressful

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situations, and they are less affected by depression. Studies have also indicated that emotional intelligence plays key role in performing the adaptive functions (7). Sjoberg (2011)(8) argues that emotional intelligence is one of the most important and effective psychological factors and plays crucial role in social health and growth and predicting the life achievements. Emotional intelligence is also associated with decision-making processes (9), life satisfaction, and self-efficacy (10). Basharat (2015) concluded that emotional intelligence affects mental and academic achievement of adolescents positively. Emotional intelligence theorists argue that emotional intelligence growth begins since birth, and it is associated with education, and it increases with acquisition and education (2,11). The infrastructure of one's initial education is spent in the family environment and under influence of family function and the family interactive patterns and it continues always. Family function and its interactive patterns play key role in promoting social, psychological, social growth and supporting its members (12). Bloom (1998) (13) argues that family's functions include fifteen components, among which cohesion, sociability, and enmeshment have been always considered. Family function is one of the important indicators ensuring the quality of life and mental health of the children and affecting their emotional learning. Communicative-emotional patterns of family play key role in improving one's adaptability with himself and others, and the environment in which he lives, increasing one's awareness of his emotions and feelings, in managing emotions, in recognizing his emotions, in recognizing the emotions and feelings of others, and ability in controlling and directing their relationships with others. It also plays major role developing in behavioral and personality traits of the person and learning different skills. It can also affect the mental health of the children (14). Healthy function in a family environment is characterized with clear communication with the social environment (sociability), clear roles among family members (enmesh), and coherence and appropriate emotional regulation (coherence) (15). Family cohesion refers to the emotional bond and emotional closeness among the members of family, and in fact, it indicates solidarity in emotional relationships of family. Evaluating the family cohesion stresses on the point that what is the degree of emotional closeness family members. Restricting emotional constraints in the family communicative system disrupts the emotional closeness experienced by family members. (16). Bloom considers sociability as the level of family willingness and desire to establish relationships with the external environment and expanding the social interactions with others and obtaining satisfaction from this relationship. Sociability is one's conformity with group norms and each of new members of the group matches his behavior in accordance with group requirements and he consciously or unconsciously accepts the way of collective living. This process takes place through social interaction, by which the person acquires his own personality and learns lifestyle in his society. Sociability enables one to learn norms, values, languages, skills, ideas, and thought patterns and action, which all of them are necessary for social life (17). Enmeshment of family boundaries is close conflict in relation among the family members, so that boundaries are not clear and the family members do not have enough independence. Enmeshed family may paralyze its members, since sense of belonging and dependency to others will lose major part of one's independence (13). Much evidence and numerous studies indicate that there is a significant relationship between family function and its communicative patters and various psychological aspect of children such as emotional intelligence and creativity (18), psychological hardiness (19), happiness, preventing violence and crime (20), problem solving and social self-efficacy (21), improved physical health and disease (22), and development of interpersonal relationships. Findings of study conducted by Winefeld et al (23) revealed that family sociability has a significant relationship with degree of adaptability of subjects, and internal relation of family and dealing of members with each other in family leads to internalization of the concept of "self" in children (Lamborn et al., 1991, quoted by (23)). In addition, findings of studies conducted by Rahimi Nejad (2014)(24) and Kazemi (2017)(23) indicated that all fifteen components of family function (13) affect selection of different styles of identity. Considering problems in families and their negative individual and social consequences and their effective role on growth and educating various aspects of individual psychology and given emotional intelligence grows through learning and it is a strong predictor for success of people, hypotheses of this study were developed accordingly:

- 1-Family cohesion can be a proper predictor for emotional intelligence of children
- 2-Family sociability can be a proper predictor for emotional intelligence of children
- 3- Enmeshment of family boundaries can be a proper predictor for emotional intelligence of children

Methodology

The study is correlation type of study. Population of study included all pre-university female students of Mashhad city selected from a sample of 350 people using the Krejcie and Morgan formula in cluster sampling method. Bloom's family function questionnaire and Bar-on emotional intelligence questionnaire were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple-regression test) were used to analyze the data in this study.

Tool

A) Family Function Scale (FFS): This scale was developed by Bloom (1985)(17) by combining four common family assessment scales as the most comprehensive scale to evaluate the family's internal system in 15 subscales. It has 75 descriptive phrases, each of which evaluates one of the fifteen subscales. Considering the objectives of the study, scores that were obtained from the family cohesion subscales and enmeshment of family boundaries were evaluated. Based on the Bloom's report (1985), Cranbach's alpha coefficient of this scale was obtained 0.71(17).

B) Emotional Intelligence Scale: It was developed by Bar-on in 1980 based on his theory in the emotional intelligence area, which has 5 scales and 15 subscales. It was developed in 90 items. The test responses were also scored in the 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, relatively agree, disagree, and strongly disagree). Reliability of the test was investigated through internal consistency and retest reliability. The internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha method in seven samples of different populations indicates that the mean Cronbach's alpha coefficients are high for all subscales. In examining the reliability through re-test, mean of reliability coefficients was obtained 0.66 (11). This scale was normalized in Iran by Dashiri (2003) with Cronbach's alpha of 0.73.

Findings

Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses of the study. Findings of correlation between predictor variables and criterion variables are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1- findings of Pearson Correlation between family cohesion, family sociability, enmeshment of family boundaries, and emotional intelligence

Predictor variables	Correlation coefficient	p-value
family cohesion	0.667	0.000
family sociability	0.444	0.000
enmeshment of family boundaries	0.692	- 0.000

Findings of Table 1 suggest that among the three components of family function investigated in this study, there is a positive relationship between the component of family cohesion and emotional intelligence with a correlation coefficient of 0.667 and between family sociability component and emotional intelligence with a correlation coefficient of 0.444 and it is significant at the level of 0.000. However, the relationship between enmeshment of family boundaries and emotional intelligence (with correlation coefficient of -0. 692) is negative and it is significant at the level of 0.000, meaning that as the enmeshment of family boundaries is severe, emotional intelligence of children will at the higher level of risk. In order to examine the role of each of the variables of family cohesion, sociability, and enmeshment of boundaries in predicting emotional intelligence, multiple-regression test was used. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of analysis of variance and multiple-regression model in relation to variables of sociability, cohesion and family enmeshment and emotional intelligence

Model	Predictor variable	R square	F	B	SE	β	T	sig
□	Family cohesion	0.44	279.253	13.036	0.78	0.66	16.711	0.000
□	Family sociability	0.19	85.259	5.475	76.063	0.44	9.234	0.000
□	Family enmeshment	0.47	320.152	13.937-	0.779	0.69-	-17.893	0.000

Based on the Table 2, findings of simultaneous regression analysis of Model 1 indicated that the level of variance explained by emotional intelligence of children through the predictor of family cohesion was 0.44, suggesting that this variable could predict 0.44 of emotional intelligence variations. As seen in table, the variable of family cohesion with beta value of 0.66 is able to predict the emotional intelligence of children, so the fit hypothesis of study is confirmed at the level of $P < 0.000$. As shown in Table 2, findings of simultaneous regression analysis of Model 2 reported the value of the variance explained by the emotional intelligence of the children through the predictor variable of family sociability is $R^2 = 0.19$, suggesting that this variable is a able to predict 0.19 variations in emotional intelligence. As e seen in table, the family sociability variable with a beta value of 0.44 is able to predict the emotional intelligence of the children. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study was confirmed at the level of $P < 0/000$. As shown in Table 2 and Model 3 of simultaneous regression analysis, the value of variance explained by the emotional intelligence of the children through the predictor variable of enmeshment of family boundaries is $R^2=0.47$, so that this variable is able to predict 0.47 variations of emotional intelligence . This variable with a beta value of -0.69 can predict the emotional intelligence of children. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the study was confirmed at the level of $P < 0/000$. Analysis of simultaneous regression findings in this study suggests that the impact coefficient of family cohesion, and family sociability, and family enmeshment on emotional intelligence of is 13.036 and 5.475 and -13.937, respectively. In this regard, family cohesion and sociability positively and family enmeshment negatively predict the emotional intelligence, so that as family sociability and family cohesion increase, the emotional intelligence of the children increases and as family enmeshment increases, the emotional intelligence of the children decreases.

Discussion and conclusion

The current study was conducted to predict the emotional intelligence of children based on three components of family function, including family cohesion, family enmeshment, and family sociability. Results of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the three components of family function examined in this study and emotional intelligence of children, so that positive relationship was found between family cohesion and family sociability and emotional intelligence, while negative correlation was found between enmeshed family and emotional intelligence. In other words, family cohesion and family sociability greatly increase the emotional intelligence of children and enmeshment of family boundaries reduces it. These findings are in line with the findings of the studies conducted by (19,23,24,25,26). Implementing the proposed mode of study to determine the predictive role of family function components revealed that all components of family cohesion, sociability, and enmeshment of family were able to predict the emotional intelligence of children. These findings are in line with the findings of studies conducted on the role family cohesion by Biarnason et al (27), Hinde (28), Simone Barr and Rusel Hanson and Anjela (20), Melinda and Nansi (22), Asghari (29), Burnett Alis (26). Evidence shows that family cohesion refers to emotional closeness experienced by family members so that healthy relationship without restriction among family members and the emotional closeness among members of family cause better adaptation of people with individual and social life, leading to enhanced intelligence becomes (4). Based on the family therapy theories, especially Minuchin theory (2004, quoted by Sanaee, 2013), families have all effective components of mental health when there is emotional attachment and belonging among them. Findings of study conducted by DF Sacco (2016)(30) indicated that a balanced level of family cohesion and creating secure attachment in children cause modified emotional reactions of children and the lack of family cohesion is associated with emotional intelligence deficiency in children. Goldstein (2016)(31) considers the role of cohesion and strong bonds within the family and even between grandparents and grandchildren effective in predicting emotional intelligence. Other studies conducted on family cohesion shows the healthy and effective relationship among family members affects different psychological components such as mental health (32) and identity styles (24). Results of the study conducted on predictive role of family sociability are in line with findings of studies conducted by (33,34), Jonathan pettigrew (35), (24,25,32). Sociability is the level of family desire to establish relationships with the external environment and to expand social interaction with others, and the level of their satisfaction with this relationship. Family background is an important factor affecting the development of desired social behavior in children. Children with non-social behaviors are often seen in families where they have limited communication and relation with others and refuse social interacting with others. Parents refrain communicating with other people in the society and social environments foster introvert and non-social children. Their children are less likely become intimate with others, and show more negative emotions. The desire to communicate with environment out of the family by members of the family creates a sense of humor, responsibility, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Based on theoretical principles of the study, Bar-on (2000)(11) believes that emotional intelligence is one's ability to adapt to others and the ability to establish social relationships that is one of the factors effective in formation of the social interactions. Findings of the current study on the importance of family sociability in development of intelligence emotion is consistent with the views of Bar-on and leads to development of desirable interpersonal relationships. Findings of this study on the role of enmeshment o family boundaries in predicting the emotional intelligence revealed that as enmeshment in communicative boundaries of the members of family is stronger and more tangible, the emotional intelligence of children is expected to be weaker. These findings are in line with findings of (24,36). Enmeshment of family means extreme closeness of members and close conflict in the family so that the boundaries are not clear, leading to a lack of independence in the person (37). Enmeshed family creates insecure attachment among the members (38) and the presence of rational boundaries in the family leads to self-reliance and emotional and mental growth of children (39). Evidence indicates that the experience of enmeshed family and lack of individual independence has a negative impact on emotional self-reliance and emotional involvement of the person. In contrast, presence of natural boundaries and individual independence contribute to the development of emotional self-consciousness and self-esteem in the person, and more developed emotional intelligence. It should be noted that emotional intelligence due to its impact on other issues in the life of a person has crucial and vital importance and it facilitates one's coping with unpredicted problems. According to views of (40,41) and other family theorists, family relationships can be facilitating or preventive in adaptability and helping children in solving future life problems, developing their identity and developing desired relationships with others. It could also facilitate development of interpersonal relations and ability to solve the emotional crisis in children while growing. Consistent with theorists such as Goleman and Bar-on, improving interpersonal relations and the ability to solve the emotional crisis result in development of emotional intelligence in the person. Thus, it seems to be necessary to pay more attention to family interactions in all societies.

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