

Investigation of Relationship between Ego's Strength, Self-Control, and Self-Esteem in Students of Tehran's Shahed University

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Abstract

Given the importance of ego, coping styles and self-control in adjustment and mental health, this study aims to investigate the relationship between these three variables among university students for establishing psychological well-being. The present study is a descriptive-correlative study and its research population consists of all the students enrolled in the Master Plan of the Tehran's Shahed University in 1390. Using random sampling method, a proportion of 10% of the total number of enrolled students were selected as the samples. The sample size was 330 male and female students and the mean age of participants was 21.71. The questionnaires used consisted of three questionnaires: ego's strength, self-esteem and self-control, and demographic information (including gender, college, education, age, and marital status, etc). For data analysis, descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics, such as independent t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient, and SPSS software version 18 were used. The results showed significant relationship of between variables of difference means on the variable of ego's strength self-esteem, self-control and ego's strength ($p = 0/02 < 0/05$), and the ration for women is more than men. Also, from among the components of ego's strength, the level of care ($p = 0/000 < 0/05$), love ($p = 0/001 < 0/05$), loyalty ($p = 0/043 < 0/05$), competence ($p = 0/002 < 0/05$) and hope ($p = 0/049 < 0/05$) varies between the two groups. It is higher in women than men. However, the correlation coefficients of these variables of self-control, self-esteem and ego's strength indicate a significant relationship among variables ($p = 0/000 < 0/05$). According to the results, the levels of ego's strength, self-esteem and self-control were related. It is recommended that clinicians pay special attention to this result as secondary prevention in matters related to counseling and psychotherapy. And, thus by knowing the above personality traits, they can analyze the levels of ego's strength among them and to predict and complete health steps.

Keywords: Ego's strength, self-esteem, self-control, coping styles, mental well-being.

Introduction

According to ego psychologists, the ego's efforts for development, competency and proficiency continues after the first 5 years of life. Erickson points that ego's strong points manifest through every stage of life and the potential of each point of ego is developed in communication and coordination with the stages of life. Failure to successful resolution of crises and conflicts at every stage of growth may lead to stabilization in that stage. Inability to develop ego's processes, such as judgment and moral reasoning may lead to psychological damage like initial sexual stabilizations or aggression. Hence, one with immature ego will not be prepared to adapt to the reality¹. So, one who has insufficient ego' growth will be less ready to compromise with reality. On the other hand, Straface says some adverse situations and conflicts are associated with low self-esteem. These situations include dependency, need for approval, helplessness, numbness, sense of being lowered and made to obey².

According to Erickson, self-esteem is reinforced through the development of sense of mastery in the individual and identification of valuable cultural improvements (stage of

development versus inferiority)³. According to Markstrom, low self-esteem has correlation with personality disorders such as antisocial personality disorder, avoidant and dependent personality and impulsivity. Impulsivity may indicate a poor self-control. Man et al found that low self-esteem is associated with inconsistency. Thus, low self-esteem plays a significant role in depression, anxiety, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, violence, drugs abuse and risky behaviors. Today, it seems that many of the major social and interpersonal problems are caused by deficits in self-control⁴. Hasv and Bavld, in their study, showed that the locus of internal control can be used as a protective agent against environmental stresses. In line with this research, Ericsson says that the stages of the ego activated lead to integrated acting and more effective coping strategies when faced with the challenges of life⁵. It appears that more effective self-efficacy affects self-esteem and the mechanism of how it affects is seen in the theory of learned helplessness by Seligman. Seligman believes that lack of control over negative events and lack of self-efficacy lead to depression and depression is directly associated with low self-esteem⁶.

Ellison showed that the inability to control the changing and unstable environmental conditions caused low self-esteem and

threatened individual's ego. Many theorists have proposed ways of reinforcing ego which lead to increased self-esteem⁷. For example, Carich found that reinforcement of ego strengthens positive attributions to behaviors and emotions and this enhancement may lead to a change of the individual's self-perception. This change in the self-perception may lead to changes in self-esteem⁸. Callanan considers ego's strength as the ability to cope with the external demands and to comply with internal demands. Ego's strength also increases people's ability to cope with the environmental problematic demands. Another definition of ego's strength is related to the cognitive theory and behavioral theory called ego state developed as results of Milton Erickson's clinical work in hypnotherapy. He considers ego's strength in self-control over the positive aspects of the personality and summing conscious sources⁹.

Although there are various viewpoints on this subject, the common point of all of them in definition of ego's strength lies in increasing the ability of people to deal with internal and external stressful situations and also a further ability to resolve the stress and anxiety related to emotional problems and more coping function. When people are able to create a good harmony between themselves and their environment, they will be in the freshest and healthiest state and coping that can be increased by changing one's self in the direction of conformity with the world around. In addition, avoiding anti-social impulses result in concord with the needs of communal living which is an indication of civilized life¹⁰.

These kinds of multidimensional principles lead us to propose a model that has three elements. The first element is ego's strength, the second element, coping styles, and the other element, self-control. As in a system, each of the components, while affecting the other two components, is affected by them. For instance, high capacity of self-control result in desirable coping and the individual strengthened to live a happier life and high abilities in life in turn leads to improved and more effective use of coping styles. As such, given the importance of ego's strength, self-control and coping styles in psychological coping and well-being, it is necessary to study the relationship between these variables among the students of University of Shahed for the establishment of mental well-being and health psychology. Of all psychological factors affecting self-control and consequently coping styles, this research studies the role of ego's strength and those points of ego's strength which might be associated with these variables among the samples. Also, some studies have been conducted about coping styles, self-control and the importance of psychological variables like ego's strength, defective performance of ego, threatened ego, stabilization in the earlier stages of ego, and weak superego as factors affecting poor self-control and therefore inconsistent, low and ineffective coping styles.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive-correlative and the research

population consisted of all the students enrolled in the Master Plan of the Tehran's Shahed University in 2011. Using the method of random sampling, 10% of all students enrolled were selected as the sample. The whole sample were 330 male and female students, of whom 150 were studying in the Faculty of Humanities, 35 in the Faculty of Agriculture, 85 in Technical Faculty, and 60 in Basic Sciences. The mean age of all participants was 21.71. The tools used include questionnaires psychology of ego's strength, Eysneck's self-esteem, and self-control scale, and also demographic information (gender, school, education, age, and marital status, etc). For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics such as independent t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient and SPSS software version 18 were used.

Psychology inventory of ego's strength (PIES): The tool is self-report and was designed by Mark Strom et al in 1997 for measuring 8 parameters of Ericson's ego's, and totally, consisted of 64 questions on Likert's F-option scale. And, it measures 8 parameters of hope, desire, purpose, competence, loyalty, love, care, and wisdom. Mark Strom et al in 1977 used psychological Inventory of ego's strength (PIES) among European-American students and reported 68% for Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Mark Strom and Marshall in a study reported 94% of internal reliability for the total scales. The validity of the test was measured through examining the structure and comparing it with the test; (identity EOMEIS, Marcia, 1966). (Rosenberg's Self-esteem, 1965), (Davis's empathy, 1980), (Falkmn and Lazarus's ways of coping, 1980) and (Nvasky's place of control, 1973) and in all cases, there is an acceptable coefficient from 0.33 to 0.67 (Altafi, 2009). To assess the validity and reliability of the Iranian version, Altafi (2009) used psychology inventory of ego's strength (PIES) on the 30-subject sample of students, reporting the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 91% and the alpha of the two halves, respectively 74% and 90% and also the correlation between the two halves and Spearman- Brown were respectively reported 77% and 87%³.

The concurrent validity between Eysneck's self-esteem test and the scales of love ($r=58\%$), demands ($r=61\%$), competence ($r=79\%$), wisdom ($r=67\%$), loyalty ($r=67\%$), hope ($r=61\%$), and the purpose ($r=73\%$) indicates a significant positive correlation. However, there was no significant correlation between self-esteem and care².

Eysneck's Self-esteem Inventory Test: This test is a 30-item questionnaire and the answers are (Yes), (No), and (No Idea). Given the correct answer to each question with "yes" and "no", one score is assigned. And to all responses of (No Idea) 0.5 score is assigned. The final score of 5 or less shows feeling of inferiority and up to the score of 21, middle self-esteem, and the scores from 28 to 30, high self-esteem. The method used to obtain the validity of this test was empirical validity or predictive in a way the subjects' scores on this scale were compared with the scores of psychological inventory of mental

health dimensions and the correlation between the subscales of mental health and self-esteem was obtained as presented in the following:

To obtain the reliability of the mentioned test, Cronbach's alpha was used. The total alpha of for this test was 0.88, correlation of the first half 0.82, and the second half 0.76. The correlation of twice implementation with an interval of two weeks was 0.86 with 0.001 significant levels¹¹.

Self-control Scale (36-SCS): This test was developed in 2004 by Professor Tanjny et al and it has 36 articles. Inspired by previous tools, this questionnaire was prepared to overcome the shortcomings of the questionnaires made for self-control. Responses to 36 scale articles were used on Likert's 5-point scale. The total score of the subjects of the test could be 36 as the minimum and 180 as the maximum. In a study done by Cyrus Najaf-Abadi (2009), aimed to examine the reliability and validity of self-control test in Iran, the scale was implemented on 58 students for the first time and for the second time, it was used to assess the validity of test-retest after 4 weeks. 7 out of the subjects refused to answer it again. Also, the convergent validity of the scale, as a divergent type, was implemented with state inventory Trait Anger Expression. The Cronbach's alpha calculated for the Iranian kind was 87% for the first implementation and 87% for the second one, which is not much different from the original version. Also, its validity calculated by Spearman-Brown was 88% for the first time and 90% for the second time. The validity of test-retest was calculated 91%¹².

Results and Discussion

For data analysis and testing the research hypotheses, first the independent t-test was used for comparison of the means of

male and female students in the research variables and then, the Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the relationship between the variables. And the results obtained were as follows.

These results indicate that of the above variables, only the difference between means of the groups is significant in the variable of ego's strength. And it is higher in women than men ($p=0/02<0/05$).

The above table shows the relationships between the variables using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Based on the results obtained, there is a significant correlation between all the variables. ($p=0/000<0/05$). Table-4

Discussion: The results showed that there was a correlation between ego's strength and self-esteem; ego's strength and self-control, and self-esteem and self-control. The results of these hypotheses are consistent with the studies in which Istrafys considers ego's strength as the model ability to deal with the internal fact. Straface believes that ego's strength activates mechanisms in mind, reducing psychological conflict within. Milton, Erickson, McNeill and Fredric consider the ego's strength as in exercising control over the positive aspects of personality and in summing conscious sources¹³. Greenberg also says that the high capacity of self-control leads to good compatibility and individual strengthened for a more refreshed life. And, high ability of living, in turn, increases the individual's self-esteem.

McNeil, quoting Herber observed that strengthening the ego leads to increased insight and increased clarity in some thinking parts of patient, improving their self-esteem¹³.

Table-1

The table of divergent validity between Eysenk's self-esteem questionnaire and psychological inventory of mental health dimensions

Statistical Indices	Physical Symptoms	Stress and Insomnia	Dysfunction	Depression	Total
Self-esteem	-0.36 0.001	-0.49 0.001	-0.48 0.001	-0.55 0.001	-0.59 0.001

Table-2

Table of independent t-test for comparison of means of two groups of male and female students' self-esteem, self-control and ego's strength

	Mean		Standard Deviation		t	Pvalue
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Self-esteem	159	165	4.76	4.77	1.47	0.142
Self-control	112.43	111.56	6.92	7.37	-0.166	0.869
Ego's strength	247.67	238.08	25.09	28.31	3.57	0.002

($p<0/05$)

Table-3

Table of independent t-test for comparison of means of scores of two groups of female students in subscales of ego's strength

	Mean		Standard deviation		t-test	P value
	female	male	female	male		
Hope	29.59	28.68	3.83	4.32	1.97	0.049
Demand	30.68	30.24	4.62	4.89	1.24	0.213
Purpose	31.18	30.35	6.08	4.96	1.33	0.182
Competence	31.74	30.07	4.34	5.19	3.101	0.002
Loyalty	31.05	30.12	3.55	4.51	2.03	0.043
Love	31.18	29.39	4.99	4.02	3.45	0.001
Care	31.74	29.67	5.24	4.56	3.75	0.000
Wisdom	92.21	28.43	4.83	4.67	1.47	0.143

(p<0/05)

Table-4

Table of Pearson correlation coefficient of the variables of self-esteem, self-control and ego's strength in all subjects

Variable	Index	Self-esteem	Self-control	Ego's strength
Self-esteem	Correlation	1	0.55	0.58
	Level of significance		0.000	0.000
Self-control	correlation	0.55	1	0.053
	Level of significance	0.000		0.000
Ego's strength	Correlation	0.58	0.53	1
	Level of significance	0.000	0.000	

(p<0/05)

Straface stated that self-esteem is one of the results and outcomes of strong ego's strength. That is to say it indicates a high correlation between self-esteem and ego's strength, hence the results of this research being in this direction. Moreover, according to the results obtained, the difference between the two groups of males and females in self-control and self-esteem was not significant. But, a significant difference was observed in ego's strength between the two groups. Also, of the subscales of ego's strength, there was no significant difference in subscales of purpose and wisdom between the two groups of subjects, however, a significant difference was observed in hope, competence, loyalty, love, and care between the two groups³. The results obtained in this study are consistent with the findings of Mark Strom et al in 1997 and 2007 on ego's strength and its relationship with gender (male and female). In their

research, women obtained higher scores on the subscales love and care. They defined these subscales as feminine traits³. Moreover, the results of these hypotheses are in line with Carol Kilygan's conceptualization about ethics, responsibility and care that are associated with women, unlike men, who are associated with justice¹⁴. In our study too, women scored higher than men on the subscales of care and love. Furthermore, in the case of Iranian sample, the results of this study are exactly consistent with the results of the research done by Rahafar on male and female subjects. In Rahafar's research also, women scored higher than men on subscales of care and love².

Conclusion

Result of this study showed that there is a significant positive

relationship between ego's strength, self-control and self-esteem. As relationship between ego's strength, self-control and self-esteem is positive and according to the fact that this study was applied only on male and female students of Tehran's Shahed University in the BA and MA level, samples were over the age range of 18-28 years. These students were individuals who were studying in the fields of humanities, basic sciences, technical, engineering and agricultural sciences.

According to the results of the research, since low level of ego's strength correlates with the mental disorders listed, it is necessary that educational specialists pay attention to it as primary prevention so that by educating parents about the education of their children, the level of ego's strength in people is enhanced. On the basis of the results, the level of ego's strength is related to self-esteem and self-control. This it is recommended that clinicians pay attention to this result as secondary prevention in matters related to counseling and psychotherapy, and as such, by knowing the mentioned personality traits, investigates the levels of ego's strength among them and anticipates and completes health steps. Also, the ego's strength be investigated in other clinical situations, and given the relationship between this psychological structure and many of the positive components of personality, it is worth that in many areas and pathology (mental-social), this tool be used for foreseeing, foreknowing and cure.

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