

## Comparison of personality traits and initial maladaptive schemas of addicts and non-addicts

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### Abstract

This study was done with the purpose of comparing the personality traits and early maladaptive schemas of addicts and non-addicts. The descriptive research method was causal-comparative. All addicts and non-addicts in Tehran in the period of 2016-2017 comprise the statistical population of this research. Among them, 100 individuals (50 addicts and 50 non-addicts) were selected as sample by using available sampling and completed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire and Young's Schema Questionnaire. One-variable analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. The findings showed that there was a significant difference between the level of personality traits (psychotic disorder, neuroticism and extroversion) and early maladaptive schemas (cuts and exclusion, self-regulation and impaired performance, disturbed restrictions, other directedness, over vigilance, and Inhibition) between two groups of addicts and non-addicts ( $P < 0.01$ ). Thus, the level of personality traits (psychotic disorder, neuroticism and extroversion) and early maladaptive schemas (cuts and rejection, self-regulation and impaired performance, disturbed constraints, other directedness, over vigilance and inhibition) of addicts was higher than non-addicts. Therefore, it can be concluded that the type of personality traits and the use of early maladaptive schemas is influencing the tendency toward addiction, somehow addicts have higher personality traits (psychotic disorder, neuroticism, and extraversion) and maladaptive schemas (cuts and Exclusion, self-regulation, and impaired performance, disruptive constraints, other directedness, over vigilance and inhibition) than non-addicts.

**Keywords:** personality traits, early maladaptive schemes, addicts, non addicts.

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### 1- Introduction

Addiction is a physical, psychological, social and spiritual illness (Galanter, 2014). Addiction is one of today's human dilemmas that is no longer a strange and unfamiliar phenomenon. Today, many people, either directly or indirectly, are dealing with drug abuse problems (Sadri Damirchi and Mohammadi, 2016). Addiction is an abnormality with clinical, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms that is created by social and psychological factors on one hand and biological and pharmacological factors on the other. The social factors are mostly effective in starting the use and biological factors in the continuation of dependency (American Psychiatric, 2013).

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report (2015), about 243 million people, or 5% of the world population aged 15-64, consumed narcotics in 2012. Meanwhile, the number of problematic drug users was 27 million, about 6% of the world's adult population, or 1 per 200 people. The findings show that drug addiction has fluctuated in Iran over the past four decades, in 2011, it was announced to be 1 million 325 thousand among the estimated population aged 15-64 (Shariati, 2013).

Many factors are involved in addiction. One of these effective factors in people's tendency to addiction is personality traits. Personality traits are among the most important determinants of the tendency toward high-risk behaviors such as smoking, alcohol, drugs and insecure sexual activity (Polimeni, Moore and Gruenert, 2010). Personality traits with other environmental factors play an important role in the onset and continuation of problematic use of drugs (Dermodi, Cheong and Munuck, 2014). Most people who have drug abuse problem, have distinct personality characteristics. These inherent characteristics and specific tendencies gradually expand

the way the drug is used, which means that people with vulnerable personality traits are more susceptible to drug use (Orki, Mokrie and Kiani, 1392). From the psychological point of view, drug abusers have a vulnerable personality trait.

Having necessary knowledge and awareness about personality, with possible actions can help the person in preventing the occurrence of some disturbances and personality disorders (Sarvghad, Barzegar and Bolaghi, 2011). The personality traits of drug addicts are not merely due to narcotics, but addicts have had many psychological and personality deficiencies that preceded the addiction which has appeared to be more harmful after the drug addiction, so, the addicts' problem is not only drug, but basically it is the mutual relationship between their personality and addiction (Ketabi, Maher alyusefi and Borjali, 2008), and the personality structure of some individuals is more favorable than others for admitting addiction (Baran Oladi, Navidian and Kaveh Farsani, 2013). Oladi et al. (2013) in a research aimed at investigating the addictive personality traits and the effect on post-treatment recurrence, studied 108 addicts by using the factor-5 personality test, the results showed that two personality traits, high neuroticism and low task performance have played an important role in addiction start and relapse after treatment.

Some scholars believe that the mentally handicapped are more likely to be attracted to drugs, and the possibility of addiction for these individuals is more than stable ones (Terrciano and Costa, 2004). People who get a high score in a neuroticism are usually anxious, fearful and susceptible to anxiety and usually feel uneasy, they may have irrational thoughts and have less power to control impulse. Also, these people have a weaker degree of adaptability with others and stress conditions, which may make those who are subjected to neuroticism ready for addiction. Mohammadi Fard, Zarei Motah Kalai, Najafi and Manteghi (2013) investigated the features of borderline personality, anger, hostility and aggression in addicted individuals with and without suicidal thoughts and found that the characteristics of borderline personality with anger, hostility and aggression in suicide oriented addicts are higher than non-suicide oriented addicts and it seems necessary to prevent suicide. Ali Mohammadi, Sheibani Noghabi and Zahedi Tarjreshi (2012) compared the character of addicted, depressed and anxious individuals with normal people. In the persistence dimension, the anxiety group, normal, has a significant difference in relation to addicted people. In the dimension of novelty, the addicted group compared to other groups and in the avoidance of harm the anxiety group had a significant difference compared to the rest. In the case of reliance on rewards, ordinary people earned the highest score and the difference between the normal people and the addict group was significant, but the results showed that there was no significant difference between the four groups in the self-strategic dimension. In the dimension of self-esteem, the group of addicts with normal group and in the group of anxiety and depression also there was a significant difference with the normal and in the case of collaboration, addicts group and depressed group had a significant difference with normal group. The findings of this study showed that in addition to considering the biological factors among addicted, depressed and anxious patients, the role of emotional and cognitive factors should be evaluated in order to provide more suitable solutions and treatment. Jihene, Olfa and Haifa (2017) concluded in their research that personality traits are among the most influential factors in the tendency toward addiction. Spielberg and Reheiser (2006) in their research showed that how personality, motivational and environmental factors differences are involved in tobacco use.

Other influential factors in addiction are early maladaptive schemas. Early maladaptive schemas arise when the basic universal psychological needs (secure attachment, autonomy, freedom in expressing the needs and excitement of the healthy, spontaneity, and realistic limitations) are not met (Thimm, 2010). Early maladaptive schemas, often underlying the symptoms of chronic-related disorders, are the same as drug abuse disorders, depression, anxiety and psychosis (Oveisy and Normohammad, 2012). Schemas are among the individual and psychological causes that are important in the study of drug dependence, have led to biases in individual interpretations of events and these biases are shown as distorted attitudes, false speculations, unrealistic goals and expectations, early maladaptive schemas, are patterns, or deep-seated intrinsic contents that are related to one's relationship with oneself or others and are highly ineffective (Yang, Coloscough and Vishar, Hamidpour and Andouz, 2014).

The results show that the higher the early maladaptive schemas are in one person, he is more prepared and ready for addiction. Drug-dependent individuals are more likely to be in schema domains of disconnection and rejection and have early maladaptive schemes, including abandonment / instability, mistrust / abuse, emotional deprivation, defectiveness / shame and social isolation (Brummt, Wade, Rivera-Mindt, and Cecero, 2007). Probably these are schemes that predispose people to drug abuse and other mental disorders. Also in the areas of personal autonomy and disruptive performance and disadvantages that include dependency / incompetence schemes, vulnerability to harm or disease, enmeshment/undeveloped self, defeat and entitlement/grandiosity and self-restraint, there is a high level of predictability for addictive behavior (Ball and Yang, 2000; quoted by Oveisi and Bakhshani, 2012).

In the field of over vigilance and inhibition, which includes NEGATIVITY / PESSIMISM, emotional inhibition, UNRELENTING STANDARDS / HYPERCRITICALNESS / PUNITIVENESS, these two schemes : emotional inhibition and punitiveness are more seen in the addict population (Loebstal, Arentes and Cisorda,

2005). Also, subjugation scheme in the range of other directedness schemes is also higher in dependent individuals (Broment et al., 2007). Beheshtian (2014), examined the early maladaptive schemas of addicted and non-addicted female students and concluded that maladaptive schemas of abandonment, instability, emotional deprivation, defectiveness and shame, social isolation, alienation, and insufficient self-control/self-discipline can have an important role to identify the different of addicted and non-addicted women to the Internet. Pour Mohammad, Yaghoubi, Yousefi, Mohammadzadeh and Najafi (2012) reported that there was a significant difference between the research groups in the early maladaptive schemas and life styles. The results showed that drug dependent people suffered from high levels of early maladaptive schemas and lifestyle is inappropriate in people who are dependent on drugs, and cognitive factors should be considered in preventing drug dependence and in treating it. Hedayatfar and Mahboub (2015) showed that people with drug abuse in comparison with normal people achieved high scores in maladaptive distortions and maladaptive schemas. In Rizu's research (2007), the schemas of 46 alcoholic patients was compared with 55 non-alcoholic people. Alcoholics had a higher score than all non-alcoholic ones in all of the schemes.

In the whole range of available researches psychological structures such as personality traits and maladaptive schemas of addicted and normal individuals are limited. Therefore, the present research tries to study some psychological conditions of addicts with ordinary people from another perspective, so, the present study aims to compare personality traits and early maladaptive schemes of addicts and non-addicts.

### **Methods:**

Regarding the aim the present research is functional and in terms of the method is a causal-comparative (post-event) description.

**Society, sample and method of sampling:** The statistical population included all addicts in Tehran. Of this population by available sampling method, 50 people were selected from among people who referred to addiction treatment centers. A total of 50 people were selected from ordinary men without a history of addiction that were among non-addicted relatives and families of those who were referred to rehab self-introduced centers. In order to increase the validity of the results, characteristics such as age, level of education and marital status were controlled in two groups. The age range of participants was between 30 and 50 years old.

### **Tools**

#### **Eysenck Personality Questionnaire**

Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire was designed to measure some aspect of personality. Two types of personality tests have been proposed from Eysenck, one for children aged 5 to 15, and another for people aged 16 and over, which latest form was used in the present study. This questionnaire has 90 questions, with yes and no responses (Fathi Ashtiani and Dastani, 2016). In order to determine the reliability and validity of this questionnaire, Eysenck implemented it on a single unit at two different times and obtained its reliability and validity. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for men in psychosis dimension was  $r = 0.78$ ,  $r = 0.90$  for extroversion and  $r = 0.88$  for neuroticism, and for women  $r = 0.76$ ,  $r = 0.85$  and  $r = 0.90$  respectively. In the Iranian sample, the validity of the test was reported in the interval of two months as follows: psychosis was  $r = 0.72$ ,  $r = 0.92$  for extroversions, and neuroticism  $r = 0.89$  (Kaviani, 2003).

#### **Young Schema Questionnaire (Short Form):**

This questionnaire (Yang and Brown, 2003) was developed to measure early maladaptive schemas. The short form of the questionnaire is also provided for measuring 15 maladaptive schemas based on the original form. Each score is graded on a 5-degree scale (completely false, almost false, slightly correct, almost correct, completely correct). In this questionnaire, high scores represent early maladaptive schemas. Baronov, Owie, Cho and Kan (2006) reported the psychometric properties of this questionnaire in both Australian and Korean groups, Cronbach's alpha was 0.94 (Korean group) and 0.96 (Australian group). In Iran, Zolfaghari, Fatehi Far and Abedi (2008) conducted a short form of questionnaire on 70 couples. In their research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.49, for the domain of exclusion-exclusion (0.91), personal autonomy and disruptive performance (0.90), domain of impaired constraints (0.73), domain of other directedness (0.67) and for over vigilance and inhibition (0.78).

Table 1- Descriptive statistics of research variables in two groups of study

Variables	addicts		non addicts	
	SD	M	SD	N
Disconnection and abandonment	5.54	69.49	4.54	4.54
Personal autonomy and disruptive performance	4.77	54.54	3.65	3.65
performance disruptive constraints	3.87	34.70	3.34	3.34
Other directedness	4.35	32.54	3.68	3.68
Over vigilance and inhibition	4.84	34.14	4.54	4.54
Schizophrenia	3.18	15.00	2.66	2.66

Neurosis	4.61	13.07	4.65	4.65
Extroversions	3.41	9.22	3.46	3.46

In order to compare personality traits and maladaptive schemas in addicted and non-addicted people, multivariate analysis of variance was used. One of the assumptions of this analysis is the equality of error variances. Levene's test results showed the equality of variances. The results of multivariate analysis of variance showed a significant difference ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $F = 8.65$ , Wilk's  $\lambda = 0.67$ ).

Table 2- The results of ANOVA test to compare personality traits and early maladaptive schemas

variables		Sum of squares	Openness degree	Mean of squares	F statistics	significance
Personality traits	Schizophrenia	13.43	1	13.43	1.43	0.001
	Neurosis	176.54	1	176.54	6.65	0.01
	extroversion	65.65	1	65.65	5.07	0.02
Early maladaptive schemas	disconnection and abandonment	2435.65	1	2435.65	124.546	0.001
	personal autonomy and disruptive performance	2156.07	1	2156.07	121.657	0.05
	disruptive constraints	2435.54	1	2435.54	63/034	0.002
	other directedness	2425.54	1	2425.54	39.013	0.001
	over vigilance and inhibition	768.65	1	768.65	18.436	0.01

As seen in the table above, there are two groups in all subscales of personality traits (psychotic disorder, neuroticism, disconnection and abandonment), and sub-scales of early maladaptive schemas (disconnection and abandonment, personal autonomy and disruptive performance, disruptive constraints, other directedness, over vigilance and inhibition), there is a significant difference. That is, in all sub-scales, in addicts, they are higher than non-addicts.

### Discussion and conclusion

The present study was conducted to compare personality traits and early maladaptive schemas of addicts and non-addicts. The results indicated that the two groups of addicts and non-addicts in personality traits (psychotic disorder, neuroticism, extroversion) and early maladaptive schemas (disconnection and abandonment, personal autonomy and disruptive performance, disruptive constraints, other directedness, over vigilance and inhibition) are significantly different. The first finding of the research is based on the fact that addicts have more personality traits (psychotic disorder, neuroticism, extroversion) than non-addicts, with the findings of Oladi et al (2013), Mohammadi Fard et al. (2012), Ali Mohammadi et al. (2011), Jeheine, Olfa and Haifa (2017) and Spielberger and Reheis (2006). In the present explanation, it can be argued that individuals who exhibit neuroticism, psychosis disorder, and extraversion; react to environmental stress with more severe emotional reactions and higher levels of brain arousal; In fact, they are provoked to become addicted in stressful situations to reduce their tension and arousal. It seems that people who have high levels of personality traits (neuroticism, psychotic disorder, and extroversion) are less able to control their impulses than others, and they are less able to deal with stress than others. As a result, at the time of facing problems rather than finding a solution, for adjusting their emotional state and reducing perceived tension they may turn into drug use (Olaadi et al., 2013). Aziz Mohammadi (2007) also showed that there is a significant difference between the personality traits of opium and heroin addicts and normal people and their neuroticism score is higher than that of ordinary people. In fact, the neuroticism agent is an emotional instability index. Emotions such as fear, sadness, arousal, anger and guilty feelings are the basis of this scale. Because having negative emotions has devastating effects on individual adjustment, high score of people in this factor and other factors of personality traits (psychosis disorder and extraversion) indicate poor adaptive status, especially if a person is under severe psychological pressure. All of these factors lead to addiction of people when they are under pressure and stressful conditions. The second finding of the research that indicates addicts have more early maladaptive schemas than non-addictive ones, is in compliance with the findings of Beheshtian (2013), Pourmohammad et al. (2012), Hedayat Far and Mahboub (2015) and Rizzo (2007). In the present explanation, it can be stated that schemas have cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. When early maladaptive schemas are activated, levels of excitement are released, and indirectly, they lead to various forms of psychological disturbances such as depression, anxiety, job incapacity, drugs abuse, interpersonal conflicts, and the like. Early maladaptive schemas do not directly lead to specific disorder, but increase individual vulnerability to disturbances (Hallinger and

Whitburne, Seyyed Mohammadi translation, 2013) Based on the findings, the high scores of early maladaptive schemata in the drug-dependent group probably indicate that these individuals have experienced traumatic experiences in their childhood and adolescence; experiences that lead to a negative and maladaptive views towards itself and surrounded world. The high scores of early maladaptive schemas in drug-dependent individuals indicate that these people experience non adaptive beliefs about lack of support and guidance from important people of their life, lack of trust in others and extreme pessimism about the people around, abandonment and incompetence and alienation. This finding implies a newer perspective neuroticism on addiction which suggests addiction as one of the major deficiencies in the growth and affection of a person (Rosenhan and Seligman, translated by Seyyed Mohammadi, 2012).

In general, according to the results of this research, addicts have a series of personality traits and early maladaptive schemas that tend to be prone to drugs abuse. So by addressing these features in rehab centers, effective steps can be taken to improve this group of people. One of the limitations of this research is to select a sample merely from the men's community and the city of Tehran, which limits the generalization of the results. Therefore, it is suggested that studies of this kind be carried out on the group of women and other cities in order to maximize the results.

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