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A Comparative Survey on the Mental Health of First Grade Students of High Schools (Second Course) in *Malayer City*

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Abstract

The present research was conducted aiming at comparing the mental health of girl and boy students in the first grade of high schools (second course) in Malayer city.This research was of descriptive and surveying type. The population under study included all students who were studying in Malayer high schools in the school year 2014-15. In this research, all girl and boy students of Malayer city who included 2717 students were selected as samples by using census method. Measurement instrument of research data was questionnaire scl.90.R. Content validity and Cronbach's alpha were used to verify the questionnaire validity and reliability, respectively. Independent T test was used for data analysis to compare the two groups of girls and boys in mental health subscales. The findings showed that there is a significant difference between girls and boys in all mental health subscales except for anger and psychosis. Moreover, in all mental health subscales, girls' scores were significantly higher than those of the boys ($P<0.05$). Considering the higher level of symptoms in girl students, this group of teens needs to be more addressed and it is required that the factors relevant to their mental health are dealt with in future studies.

Keywords: Mental Health, Students

Introduction:

Dramatic increase of mental - social damages including suicide, running away from home, delinquency, dropout, depression, anxiety, etc. makes serious the necessity to immune students against such problems and to campaign them. In other words, establishment of appropriate situations to promote mental health and to strengthen the students against the aforesaid problems is among the missions of education. Based on this approach, schools are the best and most appropriate place to execute preventive programs. Unfortunately, execution of preventive programs in the nation schools face some problems because of several reasons including lack of sufficient resources. Since these programs are generally costly and their consequences appear in long term, most individuals are not prepared for execution of this type of programs. Design and formulation of a comprehensive preventive program requires a correct

understanding of the existing condition, adopting a suitable strategy based on the present problems and coordination of other social organizations and institutions with education in this way.

Theoretical basis of research:

Mental health

Mental health is one of the axes for evaluating the health of different communities. Mental health plays an important role in guaranteeing the dynamism and efficiency of each community (Hosseini et al., 2003). Adolescence is one of the important and critical stages in the process of man's growth and development and it has been reminded of the period of crisis, storm, stress, period of regeneration, identity-seeking and the like (Asteen, 2015).

However, adolescence is often considered as health period and this class of community has been deprived of preventive care services with the very assumption (Bizir and Marshal, 2014). As spiritual resources of community who make the future of the country, students are top forces with respect to talent, creativity and diligence. The requirements for their educational progress and successful life include enjoyment of comfort and peace of mind in all aspects and attention to other interventions affecting learning environment.

High school period has often been accompanied by pressures, concerns and excitements specific to that period due to several factors.

Research Background:

The findings of the research conducted by McMartin (2014) showed that 56.2% of the students lacked mental health.

As for mental status of university students, Balmer (2015) concluded that 42% of the studied individuals have suffered from sadness and depression.

In their study, Vizer et al. (2014) have shown that 25.8% of the units had a good mental health, 49.3% were average and 24.8% had an unsuitable mental health. Considering the extent of prevalence of mental disorders among the adolescents, there is the question if there is any difference between mental health of girl and boy students of high schools? The present study has been conducted to answer the above question and its results can be effective in promotion of mental health of adolescents.

Research methodology:

The population, sample and sampling

This descriptive research was conducted by census method in the school year 2014-15 on all the first grade students of high schools (second course) in Malayer city who included 2717 students.

Research tools:

Data was collected by using a questionnaire that consisted of personal questions and the revised mental symptoms checklist SCL.90.R (Sympton checklist 90 Revised) on a self-completion basis and within a certain time. The checklist was prepared by Dragotis and Lipman (1994) and was revised by Dragotis and Rickles in 1976. The questionnaire consists of 90 articles measuring 9 aspects of mental symptoms including somatic complaints, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, aggression, phobia, paranoid thoughts and psychosis in Likert 5-point scale (0 = Nothing, 1 = Slightly, 2 = Somehow, 3 = High, 4 = Strongly). There are 7 additional articles in that

scale not classified in any of the aforesaid dimensions and are called as *others*. To calculate the mark of each aspect, the sum of total mark of that question's aspect was first calculated and was then divided by its total questions. This test evaluates an individual's moods as of one week later. Several studies confirm the desirable validity and reliability of this test. In 1983, Dragotis has reported the reliability of the instrument between 0.77 and 0.9. Reliability of this instrument has been confirmed in Iran in all aspects except for phobia and paranoid thoughts more than 0.8 (Noorbala, 2008). In the present study, reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha and was obtained at 0.68 to 0.89 in all aspects. The questionnaires were input to the computer after completion and the obtained data was analyzed for all variables by using SPSS statistical software and independent t test by considering a confidence factor of 95%.

The Analysis of Data:

The analysis of data have been used by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as independent t test by considering a confidence factor of 95%.

Research Findings:

In the present research, 0.55 of the population of first grade of high school included girls and 0.45 included boys. The dimensions the extents of which were higher than the cutting point 1 included somatic complaints, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and paranoid thoughts. Indexes of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to compare the aspects of mental health in the two genders. As it is seen in the following table, means of all aspects are higher in girls than in boys.

Table 1. Mean of different aspects of mental health in girl and boy students

The 9 aspects	Sex	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Somatic complaints	Girl	1497	1.5	0.85
	Boy	1220	0.8	0.69
OCD	Girl	1497	1.2	0.86
	Boy	1220	0.7	0.63
Interpersonal sensitivity	Girl	1497	0.81	0.71
	Boy	1220	0.65	0.67
Depression	Girl	1497	0.89	0.7
	Boy	1220	0.63	0.62
Anxiety	Girl	1497	0.84	0.56
	Boy	1220	0/73	0.63
Aggression	Girl	1497	0.67	0.66
	Boy	1220	0.69	0.65
Phobia	Girl	1497	0.33	0.51
	Boy	1220	0.28	0.48
Paranoid thoughts	Girl	1497	1.3	0.81
	Boy	1220	0.85	0.61

Psychosis	Girl	1497	0.6	0.63
	Boy	1220	0.52	0.58
Scl 90-R	Girl	1497	0.78	0.63
	Boy	1220	0.69	0.65

Mean of obtained marks of research subjects in all subscales and GSI was analysed in SCL.90.R questionnaire by t test in independent groups to find the difference between girls and boys. A significant difference was obtained in the general index in the prevalence of mental symptoms between girls and boys (P<./05 , t= -2.35). It can be said that means of marks for girls in all disorders were significantly higher than those of boys which indicated a higher mental damage among the girls (table 2).

Table 2. Results of t test in independent groups to compare the means of two groups of girls and boys in the marks of subscales and general indexes of questionnaire SCL.90.R

The 9 aspects	Levene's test significance	Freedom degree (df)	T test statistic	Significance
Somatic complaints	0.158	2715	3.5	0.001
OCD	0.057	2715	2.1	0.02
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.147	2715	0.85	0.031
Depression	0.617	2715	3.5	0.001
Anxiety	0.061	2715	2.3	0.025
Aggression	0.073	2715	0.2	0.51
Phobia	0.11	2715	1.5	0.045
Paranoid thoughts	0.131	2715	1.5	0.048
Psychosis	0.055	2715	0.4	0.65
GSI	0.09	2715	-2.35	0.023

Conclusion:

In the present research, different aspects of mental health including somatic complaints, OCD, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, aggression, phobia, paranoid thoughts and psychosis were measured. Results of this research showed that somatic complaints, paranoid thoughts and OCD were higher than the cutting point 1. This finding is contradictory to the results of the research which was conducted on the students of medical sciences of the University of Tehran in which the lowest amount was for somatic complaints (Ziaei et al., 2001). Moreover, level of phobia was lower than other aspects. In another research which was conducted on the students of Golestan University, paranoid thoughts,

depression and obsession disorder had the highest amounts (Taziki et al., 2005). Moreover, the results of the present research showed that there is a significant difference between mean scores of girl and boy students in all aspects of mental health. This means that the girls enjoyed a lower mental health as compared to boys the reason of which may include several factors including social restrictions and lack of any entertainment. The results of the research made by Zamani et al. which was conducted on high school students in Markazi province conformed to the findings of the present research. The results of the research which was conducted on the schools were in contradiction with the present research. In Hosseini's research, anxiety and depression were higher in boys than girls (Hosseini et al., 1997). These different results can be due to different sample individuals and defects in the measuring instrument. Considering the obtained results, the necessity of importance and more attention to mental health of girls who will be the future mothers and their health is related to the health of community and future generation is made clear. To assist in solving this problem, the factors which contribute in the prevalence of those symptoms should be identified and necessary measures should be taken to remove them.

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