



## Investigation of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health in the Elderly People of Bandar Abbas

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health in the elderly of Bandar Abbas County. The present study is a correlational research, whose statistical population includes the elderly (above 65) of Bandar Abbas County. The samples of this research consist of 256 individuals, calculated by Morgan's sample size table. A random sampling technique was used for sampling. Research tools included the Schutte emotional intelligence scale, social support questionnaire, and general health questionnaire (GHQ). Data were analyzed using a regression. There is a correlation between emotional intelligence and mental health (0.34), physical symptoms (0.23), anxiety symptoms (0.30), social dysfunction (0.36), and depression symptoms (0.21). Moreover, emotional intelligence can predict 11% of the variance in mental health, 5% of the variance in social cues, 8% of the variance in anxiety symptoms, 13% of the variance in social dysfunction, and 4% of the variance in depression symptoms. The elderly people with a higher level of emotional intelligence enjoyed a higher level of mental health, and those with a lower level of emotional intelligence enjoyed a lower level of mental health.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health, Elderly people

### INTRODUCTION

Today, we live in an age that mental health is of particular importance. In parallel with technological, industrial, economic, and social advances, mental disorders are increasing day by day. Many people who suffer from this type of disorder cause trouble both for families and consequently, societies [1].

One of the important areas of mental health is the elderly's mental health. The phenomenon known as increasing elderly population is one of the most important economic, social, and health challenges in the present century. Considering the rapid growth of elderly population and with regard to the fact that the elderly's mental and physical abilities reduces due to senility, various diseases and mental problems threaten their health. Given that the elderly's health is of particular importance, mental aspect is one of the important aspects requiring special attention to prevent the disorders such as depression and anxiety. In terms of mental health, elderly people are highly vulnerable for a variety of reasons. About 15 to 25% of the elderly suffer from serious mental problems so that their depression disorders increase with each decade of life [2].

Emotions are among the important factors in people's mental health. Generally, emotional abilities play an effective role in detecting appropriate emotional responses in the face of everyday events, broadening the vision, and creating a positive attitude towards events and emotions. Therefore, those who can control and use these emotional abilities will enjoy a greater social support, feeling of satisfaction, and mental health. Today, many researchers believe that people with emotional abilities could better face the challenges of life and consequently, enjoy a better mental health [3].

Despite various studies and research on the elderly's mental health, no research has been carried out to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, social support, and mental health in the Iranian elderly. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, social support, and mental health in the elderly of Bandar Abbas County.

Karsson et al. [4] evaluated emotional intelligence and its relationship with self-control and verbal abuse in two studies. According to the findings of these two studies, emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with

self-control, and a negative relationship with verbal abuse. In a study, Siaruchi et al. [3] found that despite being a separate and important construction, emotional intelligence is also related to mental health.

The results of the study of Ahmadi Raghavadi [5] showed that emotional intelligence acts as the predictor of mental health. In a study, Amini et al. [6] concluded that there is a significant difference between the emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and mental health of top and regular students. Moreover, their results showed that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health.

In a study, Khosravi Kabir et al. [7] showed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health is -0.445 among addicts. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health, regardless of being addicted or normal. Based on earlier researches, the present study was carried out to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health in the elderly of Bandar Abbas County.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is a correlation-predictive (regression) study. The statistical population includes elderly men and women (above 65) of Civil Servants Pension Fund in Bandar Abbas County in 2012. According to the statistics, this organization includes 758 elderly people. The sample of this study includes 256 elderly people of Civil Servants Pension Fund in Bandar Abbas County, which has been calculated by Morgan's sample size table. Simple random method was used for sampling.

### Research Tools

1) Schutte emotional intelligence scale: Emotional intelligence scale of Schutte et al. (1998) was used to calculate emotional intelligence. This scale includes 33 questions evaluated based on the five-point Likert scale from score 1 (completely disagree) to score 5 (completely agree). Schutte et al. (1998) reported the test-retest reliability coefficient of this scale as 0.78. Based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient Astine et al. [8] obtained the internal consistency of the questions of this scale as 0.84 to 0.90. Validity of the emotional intelligence scale was also reported to be enough through measuring its correlation with related constructs [8]. Besharat [9] calculated the Cronbach's alpha as 0.83 for the Persian version of this scale.

2) Social Support Questionnaire: Social support scale was developed by Sherborne and Stewart in 1991. This test consists of 19 items, whose subscales' reliability has been reported to be in the range of 0.74 to 0.93 using Cronbach's alpha [10].

3) General Health Questionnaire (GHQ): This questionnaire was developed by Goldberg. Today, this questionnaire has been translated into 36 languages. The original version of this questionnaire included 60 questions, and there is also its shortened form with 28 questions. According to Goldberg et al. the correlation between the data obtained from the implementation of the two questionnaires (general health and psychiatric symptom checklist (SCL-90)) was 78%. Chan and John [11] (mentioned by Mehrabizadeh Honarmand) reported that the internal consistency coefficient of this scale was 85% based on the simple Likert scale scoring. Descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics including regression analysis were the methods of statistical analysis used in the present study.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables of emotional intelligence, mental health, and mental health subscales for the subjects. As seen in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence, mental health, physical symptoms, anxiety symptoms, social dysfunction, and depression symptoms are 129.50 and 16.91, 51.00 and 11.68, 13.50 and 3.90, 13.47 and 4.10, and 13.92 and 3.13, respectively. Table 2 includes the information about the regression analysis on the role of emotional intelligence on mental health and its subscales.

The results of table 2 show that the correlation between emotional intelligence and mental health, physical symptoms, anxiety symptoms, social dysfunction, and depression symptoms is 0.34, 0.23, 0.30, 0.36, and 0.21, respectively.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Data of the Study

| Variable               | Mean   | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| Emotional Intelligence | 50.129 | 91.16              |
| Mental Health          | 00.51  | 68.11              |
| Physical Symptoms      | 50.13  | 90.3               |
| Anxiety Symptoms       | 47.13  | 10.4               |
| Social Dysfunction     | 92.13  | 13.3               |
| Depression Symptoms    | 08.10  | 45.3               |

**Table 2.** The Results of Regression Analysis on the Role of Emotional Intelligence on Mental Health and its Subscales

| Predictor Variable<br>Criterion Variables | Emotional Intelligence |                |       |         |       |       |
|---|------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
|   | R                      | R <sup>2</sup> | B     | $\beta$ | t     | p     |
| <b>Mental Health</b>                      | 34.0                   | 11.0           | -0.23 | -0.34   | -5.82 | 0.001 |
| <b>Physical Symptoms</b>                  | 23.0                   | 05.0           | -0.05 | -0.23   | -3.87 | 0.001 |
| <b>Anxiety Symptoms</b>                   | 30.0                   | 08.0           | -0.07 | -0.30   | -4.99 | 0.001 |
| <b>Social Dysfunction</b>                 | 36.0                   | 13.0           | -0.06 | -0.36   | -6.11 | 0.001 |
| <b>Depression Symptoms</b>                | 21.0                   | 04.0           | -0.04 | -0.21   | -3.47 | 0.001 |

## DISCUSSION

The results of the present study indicated that emotional intelligence could predict the mental health of the elderly of Bandar Abbas County. That is, those with a higher level of emotional intelligence enjoyed a higher level of mental health.

These results are consistent with the results obtained from the studies of Ahmadi Raghabadi [5], Mehrabian [12], Amini et al. [6], and Khosravi Kabir et al. [7]. The results of this hypothesis are also consistent with the foreign studies conducted in this field, such as the studies of Enjelbarg et al. [13] and Siaruchi et al. [3].

Although the IQ remains roughly constant throughout life, emotional intelligence could be learned and enhanced. Goleman believes that emotional intelligence can be practiced and trained by organizations as well as schools. While unconfirmed by a number of psychologists, most psychologists believe that Goleman's ideas could provide a fertile ground for the development of strategies for emotional intelligence skills over time. According to some theories, a defined emotional intelligence can be taught. However, some believe that technical and cognitive skills train people, make them ready for a better life, and help them reach prosperity and success in their life. Goleman believes that emotional intelligence is highly dependent on people's personality and mood, which can't be changed very much. He also believes that people's levels of literacy and analytical skills in emotional skills are different. However, the best way to increase mental health is often cognitive [14].

This theory concludes that people with high emotional intelligence will enjoy appropriate mental health, probably threatened by less physical symptoms of diseases (depression, anxiety, hopelessness, insomnia etc.). The study of Kafetsios [15] is another study carried out in this field, in which a number of tests were performed on 239 adults aged 19-66 to investigate emotional intelligence abilities and attachment in life. In this study, the relationship between perception and recognition of attachment, social intelligence, and social skill has been tested, such as the abilities of management, perception, social skill, and facilitating the understanding of emotions.

After the results were analyzed, it was found that emotional intelligence predicts all the components of mental health. According to the results of this study, a person with high emotional intelligence will enjoy good mental health.

In summary, there is a relationship between mental and physical health. There is also a relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health. A person with high emotional intelligence will have a high ability to solve social problems, and consequently enjoy enjoys higher mental health.

If there are high emotional intelligence and social problem-solving ability, people will be able to reduce psychosocial vulnerability. In other words, emotional intelligence could play an effective role in increasing social problem-solving ability and mental health. Experimentally, both of these structures are related to each other, effective in treatment or in physical and mental illnesses.

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