THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SELF-ESTEEM AND LIFE SATISFACTION IN MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY OF FARHANGIA ZAHEDAN, IRAN

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Abstract

Background

Life satisfaction from the perspective of researchers identified several factors. In the world of psychology, including self-esteem and perceived social support was strong and significant relationship has created.

Methods

This was correlation study that research deals with self-esteem and perceived social support for Life satisfaction. Statistical universe of the present research is all Students studying farhangian Zahedan University in 2014-2015 that were selected by targeted sampling method. And 256 samples using Cochran's formul (166 girls and 90 boys) were selected. In this study the testees answered to 3 tools to collect information from self-esteem scale (RSES), perception of social support multi-dimensional scale (MPSSS) and satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) was used. In order to analyze data it was applied from T test, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression was performed using 18 spss software.

Results

The results showed that the correlation is with life satisfaction and perceived social support (r =0/31) with (p =0/001). Amount of determines coefficient is equal 9/61. the correlation is with life satisfaction and self-esteem (r = 0/50) with (p =0/001). Amount of determines coefficient is equal 25/3.

Difference in student scores on life satisfaction Using the t-test (t =2/84) in (p =0/05) indicates that female students scored significantly higher than male students. The results using multiple regression analysis on the scale of life satisfaction And 4 predictive variables (three scales of social support perceptions, which included social support from family, friends, and of particular person and self-esteem) Using the step-by-step method showed that girls in The life


difference
satisfaction scale by a factor of two variables, self-esteem (Beta =0/42) and perceived social support from family, a factor (Beta =0/24) is predicted.

The boys' life satisfaction scale by a factor of two variables, self-esteem (Beta=0/28) and perceived social support from friends, with a coefficient (Beta =0/25) is predicted.

**Conclusion**

The results indicate that this issue Increased of perceived social support and self-esteem to improve the health and performance is the quality of life. Health and performance is one important dimension of quality of life that Will be influenced by psychological factors. Increase the psychological variables increase the level of individual performance, and daily activities of life are feeling better.

**Keywords:** Perceived Social Support, Self Esteem, Life Satisfaction.

**Background**

Special attention to mental wellbeing during the last three decades has brought about significant consequences. Thus, considering man the most valuable creature, self-evaluation of life has gained considerable attention. Research has shown that though people live in objective (external) environments, they react to events based on their subjective (internal) world. This is so important that mental wellbeing has found a scientific definition "self – evaluation of life" [1]. This evaluation includes emotional reactions to events, mental states, judgements about life satisfaction, and absolute satisfaction with marriage or vocation [2]. Ryan and Deci (2005) reckon two considerations in defining mental wellbeing: 1) pleasure–oriented wellbeing and 2) virtue-oriented wellbeing. The first equals wellbeing with a feeling of joy; here, individuals feel well when experience personal pleasure rather than displeasure. This is called personal wellbeing. Those who believe in virtue-oriented wellbeing argue that desire satisfaction, although causing a feeling of pleasure, could not always entail wellbeing. Thus, wellbeing could not be defined as experiencing joy. Psychological wellbeing and social wellbeing can be considered as two examples of this type of wellbeing. This study aims to investigate how social wellbeing (perceived social support) and psychological wellbeing (self- esteem) might influence life satisfaction [3]. Social wellbeing and the concept of perceived social support are a function of cognitive evaluation of an individual about his/ her environment and relations with others. Theorists of perceived social support believe that not all interpersonal relations are considered instances of social support. In other words, relations per se are not sources of social support; they only are when the individual finds these relations always accessible and appropriate [4]. Therefore, it is not the
support but the feeling and certainty of it that count [5]. Self – determination theory emphasizes the role of social factors as the main catalyst for actualizing human potential and desires[6]. Receiving appropriate and supportive feedback from the outside world enhances the feeling of competence and facilitates innate disposition change and self-initiated order [7]. On the other hand, life satisfaction demands that the individual be satisfied with his "self as the most fundamental component of this life”. Thus, self-esteem meaning self-acceptance, self-respect, and admitting deficiencies is in line with the above concept [8]. Self-esteem is generally considered an evaluative component of self recognition which implies how great one may seem to himself. It includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains. It is also widely believed that self-esteem is a human trait which remains unchanged during life. Yet, it is a common term applied in various psychological issues such as personality (shyness), behavior (commitment), cognition (attribution bias) and clinical concepts (depression and anxiety) and a number of researchers emphasize adaptive and self-supportive functions of self-esteem[9]. Low self-esteem often has multilateral consequences resulting in self-devaluation, development of destructive thoughts, psychological vulnerability, social problems, and risky behaviors [10].

It could, therefore, be concluded that mental wellbeing is correlated with self-esteem and self-esteem has a variance with both components of wellbeing and happiness [11]. In sum, to reach a full understanding of life satisfaction rate for every individual, both their environmental conditions and innate features should be taken into account. It is also worth mentioning that these components receive different values in different cultures, a fact which affects predictability power of them for life satisfaction [12]. We know that a majority of Iranian population is composed of the youth. Learning about the causes of high or low life satisfaction rate can be a great step forward in life satisfaction enhancement in this young population, a point which could be used to prevent psychological disorders such as depression, pessimism, hopelessness, aimlessness, absurdity, family problems, professional problems, and educational failures. Therefore, we aim to investigate if there is: a) a relation between perceived social support and life satisfaction; b) a relation between life satisfaction and self-esteem; c) a relation between life satisfaction and gender.

Methods

Study design

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study aiming to investigate the relationship between perceived social support and self-esteem and life satisfaction in male and female students of University farhangian Zahedan in 2014-2015.
Participants and procedures

Statistical population included all undergraduate students in farhangian Zahedan during 2014-2015. To select the sample, convenience sampling method was applied. Using Cochran’s formulas, 256 students (166 girls and 90 boys) were selected. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling method of drawing representative data by selecting people because of their availability or easy access. All subjects entered the study after receiving briefing and expressing their consent.

Measurements

The tools used in the study were Rosenberg self-Esteem scale (RSES), Multidimensional Scale of perceived social support (MSPSS), and the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS). Devised by Rosenberg and widely used since 1960, RSES is a ten-item Likert scale with items answered on a four-point scale—from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It measures self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their current feelings. Scores range from 10 (the lowest self-esteem) and 40 (the highest) [13]. MSPSS which was devised by Zimet et al (1988) includes 12 items and measures three themes: perceived support from Family (four items), from Friends (four items), and from a Significant Other (four items). Respondents answer items on a 5-point Likert type scale (very strongly disagree to very strongly agree). Score range is from 12 to 60 [14]. SWLS was developed by Diener in 1985 and revised by Diener and Pavot in 1993. The original version consisted of 48 questions, which were revised into a 10 question version after factor analysis. The final version includes only 5 questions. It uses a 7-point Likert type scale (very strongly agree to very strongly disagree). It focuses on pleasant aspects of life experiences [15].

Internal consistency of the scale

a) RSES

Greenberger et al (2003) in a study on 197 Spanish students reported that internal consistency of this tool was 0.84; test-retest reliability coefficient (with a two-week interval) on 78 students was 0.84 and on 82 students (with a 5-month interval), it was 0.67 and on 81 students (with a one-year interval) 0.62, which were all significant (16).

b) MSPSS

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the three themes of this scale has been reported by Zimet et al (2002) as follows:
For Friends: 0.93
For Family: 0.95
For a Significant Other: 0.93[17].
Diener et al (1985) measured the validity of this scale in a study on 176 undergraduate students. Mean and standard deviation scores were 23.5 and 6.43, respectively. Test-retest consistency coefficient after a two month interval was 0.82 and Cronbach's alpha was 0.87 [18].

Statistical analysis

This study used SPSS v.18 for statistical analysis. To investigate demographic data, descriptive statistical measures of distribution frequency and percentile rank were used. Inferential statistical measures including T-test for independent samples, Pearson correlation coefficient, and linear regression were applied to investigate the relation between life satisfaction and self-esteem and perceived social support.

Ethics

The study was approved by farhangian Zahedan and all samples participated with consent.

Results

Respondents Characteristics

The sample of the study included 256 (106 girl and 90 boy) students of farhangian Zahedan with an average age of 22.8. All students participated voluntarily and were informed that all their information would be kept confidential.

Results of statistical analysis

Self – Esteem Profile and Perceived Social support profile

Table-1 illustrates the relation between self-esteem, perceived social support, and life satisfaction. Based on the tabulation, life satisfaction is correlated with self-esteem. It is a significant correlation \( r= 0.50 \) at \( p=0.001 \). Also, coefficient of determination is 25.3 which means life satisfaction distribution is 25.3% determined by self-esteem. Correlation between life satisfaction and total perceived social support is also significant \( r=0.31, P= 0.001 \), with \( r=0.30 \) for Family, \( r=0.19 \) for Friends, and \( r=0.21 \) for a Significant Other. Coefficient of determination is 9.61, which means life satisfaction is 9.61% determined by perceived social support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>22.14</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>29.49</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Social Support
Social Support from Family
Social Support from Friends
Social Support from a Significant Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>22.89</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows male and female scores on life satisfaction. Results indicate that girls’ scores are significantly higher than boys’.

Table 2: Mean differences of male and female students’ scores.

Table 3 tabulates the findings on predictors of life satisfaction in male and female students. Multiple linear regression was used to arrive at these findings. Based on the table, life satisfaction in girls is predicated by self-esteem (Beta=0.42) and perceived social support from family (Beta =0.24) (F=39.31, p=0.001) In boys, life satisfaction is predicted by self-esteem (Beta =0.28) and perceived social support from friends (Beta =0.25)(F=7.64, p=0=0.001).

Table 3:

Multiple regression analysis of four life satisfaction predictors in boys and girls.
Discussion

Worldwide research shows that social support leads to physical health and wellbeing. Some studies have also examined the role of gender. This study aims to investigate different dimensions of perceived social support and wellbeing in different genders of Iranian students so that by initiating further research on the subject, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction among the youth can be promoted. The finding showed there was a significant relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction. Research has shown that perceived social support can enhance self-protection and self-confidence, affect physical, mental, and social health positively, and improve one’s functionality and life quality dramatically [19,20]. Cohen and Antonesi [21] have shown that increased perceived social support results in health promotion and better quality of life. Health and functionality are important components of quality of life which are affected by social support. Perceived social support improves functionality, daily activities, and feeling of happiness. This is in line with many psychotherapists’ emphasis on social support as an important factor in mental health improvement. Mazlo, among those many, believes provision of social support promotes self-esteem and effective confrontation with hardships and personal and social conflicts. Naturally, with more sources of social support and more certainty about potential support, people’s ability to handle problems increases. Generally speaking, people are not only different regarding their life experience, they are also different in terms of their vulnerability to life events. People’s vulnerability to mental pressure is a function of their confrontation skills and available social support. Social support is a two–faceted favor which creates a positive self-image, self-acceptance, and worthiness and affection. All this provides an opportunity of self-actualization and growth.

Finding of this study showed a significant correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Various studies have shown a negative correlation between self-esteem and mental disorders [22]. Findings also indicate that inadequate self-esteem is the chief reason for people’s differences in health conditions. In other words, a decrease in self-esteem can be harmful to health [23]. Similarly, research has shown that low self-esteem leads to a feeling of failure, self-dissatisfaction, low interpersonal skills, and poor social interactions [24]. Harter et al [25] showed there is a correlation between social acceptance and self esteem. An explanation could be that high self-esteem enhances competence and causes life satisfaction. It diminishes passivity and increases adaptation power encouraging one to challenge hardships and manage interpersonal relations, which results in life satisfaction. However, self-esteem may be closely culture-bound. It seems one’s self is formed in two ways in different cultures: 1) independent self which is typical of western cultures, in which one’s self is separated from others and is based on independent attributes. 2)
In Iranian culture, because of an emphasis on homogeneity, quality and quantity of self-esteem is greatly dependent upon interpersonal relations. It seems self-esteem in Iranian culture has a significant relation with perceived social support from family, friends, and others, a fact which needs to be studied further. The data collected also show that life satisfaction in girls is significantly higher than in boys, which is in line with findings of Day and Livingstone [27]. One explanation is that women’s life experiences are generally more strongly felt, therefore, their positive experiences are also more heartfelt. On the other hand, concerns such as employment, military service, and setting up an independent life make boys undergo much more stress in Iran. Thus, their life satisfaction is lower than that of girls.

Findings also show that perceived social support from family and friends in girls and boys, respectively, are the strongest predictors of life satisfaction, a point which is in line with findings of Ghaedi and Yaghoobi [28]. This might be because perceived social support from family gives girls a sense of belongingness to their society, optimism about it, its acceptance, and willingness to participate in it. Boys, however, are affected by perceived social support from friends rather than family. Results of the study show the importance of quality family relations between girls & their families. If girls fail to establish high quality family relations at home, no friend or significant other can compensate for it. The fact that the quality of relations with friends among boys and family relations among girls are best predictors of wellbeing might be due to the point that average Iranian girls are more dependent on their families financially, emotionally, and behaviorally. Family is more influential on female offspring than male ones in Iranian culture.

Conclusions
Considering the results, it seems there is a correlation between perceived social support and self-esteem and life satisfaction. These findings entail more practical consequences. As for girls, mental health policies should be zeroed in on improving the relation between girls and their family members. This could be achieved through training, consultation, and treatment services for girls and families in high schools or even universities. As for boys, though the role of perceived social support from family could not be ignored, focus should be on teaching communication skills. Similarly, life skills and risk taking training courses could enhance self-esteem and social support in both girls and boys. This study faced some limitations, too; findings can not be generalized for the small sample size and limited coverage. Therefore, to come to more inclusive results, further studies with more variant samples seem
necessary. Also, there are limitations to quality of life. From a psychological point of view, quality of life is a multifaceted, complex, and comprehensive issue that includes subjective and objective factors needing to be more investigated.

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