



## **Relation between self-esteem and identity styles with mental health of students majoring in Psychology, University of Payame Noor, Mahabad center**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The goal of the present research was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and identity styles and mental health of students majoring in Psychology, University of Payame Noor, Mahabad center (Psychology department, 2011-2012). The statistical population of this paper was constituted by students majoring in Psychology who were admitted to the Payame Noor University in 2011-2012, Mahabad center. The number of people in the population under study was 95 people in accordance with the University's computer center from which the sample under research was 76 people in accordance with the Morgan Table. In the present research, the in access sampling method was applied. Tools for gathering date consisted of Cooper Smith's Self-esteem, Berzonsky's Identity Styles and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). The methodology of the current paper was of a correlation type which falls under the category of applied researches. Also, in order to analyze resulting data, the Pearson correlation coefficient and Multivariate regression methods were utilized. Results revealed that there was a relationship between mental health and self-esteem.

**Keywords:** Identity styles; Self-esteem; Mental health

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

"Identity" is among the pithy and meaningful terms in the adolescence and youth literature. The meaning of this term is the simultaneity of the start of reflection and thinking of one's own identity and start of adolescence; a phenomenon which aspects later and in youth years in form of identity evolution along with crisis of identity. Thus, the most important years of life, i.e. adolescence and youth years are thought of the arena for manifestation and formation or collapse of identity. Marcia, also considers identity as internalized and organized which involves a system of beliefs, wishes, values and experiences and creed. According to the Erikson's theory, the fifth social-mental stage is identity against role confusion. In this stage which starts along with adolescence brings about a new cognitive structure in the adolescent by which one can think of philosophical affairs and face with such questions as "Who am I", and "Where am I heading for?". Half of the essential needs of humans in the position of scientific and moral classes and degrees are the need for having a certain degree of identity. Mack and Fanning (2000) have described self-esteem as an emotional affair; a component which is indispensable for the mental survival. They argue that without the value of one's own, essential needs will not be met and life might seem very dangerous.

Self-esteem or the same self-nobility is one of the major and fundamental characteristics of any person's personality that certainly affects other aspects of human's life while its loss will engender non-growth of other aspects of personality or their non-harmonization. This will also lead to such mental diseases as depression, shyness, aggression and fear (Bibangard, 2009). Self-esteem means degree of approval, confirmation, acceptance and valuation man has about himself where this feeling could be in comparison to others or independent from them (Shamloo, 1997). Lack of mutual understanding, incompatibility, and behavioral differences in human societies, families, offices, workshops, factories and universities and social groups are evident and all people risk the danger of affection with mental discomforts. Mental and physical health, open-mindedness and in the end happiness are phenomena which are fulfilled in connection with the human's environment; appropriate and inappropriate functions of economic, social, cultural and health entities are in a direct relationship with the mental health of that society.

In accordance with the World Health Organization's definition, health means full state of physical mental and social welfare not lack of illness or inability. We can state that mental health involves not only lack of mental disorders but they also include aspects of promotion and improvement of mental health situation. Watson, the founder of behaviorism school of thought argues that normal behavior is a manifestation of a normal healthy human which results in his compatibility with the environment and as a result removal of his main and necessary needs. Such a behavior is a sign of mental health. For Kinsberg, mental health denotes dominance and skills in establishing proper relations with a special setting in three major spaces of life: love, work and recreation. For him, the talent of finding and continuing work, having a pleasant familial setting, escaping from issues which contradict with the laws, taking pleasure of life and using opportunities properly are the criteria for mental health and balance (Milani Far, 1999). Given the fact that no human is immune from mental illnesses, mental health is considered to be prevention from occurrence of mental illnesses and making social-mental setting healthy so that people in the society could establish proper compatibility with environmental factors and reach higher goals. Mental health secures the health of all people in the society and it is a universal affair that is related to all groups and classes.

What kind of person are you and how does each one perceive him/her? What is the view of anyone regarding himself/herself? What might be found in any person? Answering such questions will clarify impression and perception of each person of himself. Anyone has a perception and impression of himself that could be called personal identity or "self". This term has been raised in the theory of psychology, particularly in the area of psychosociology, evolutionary psychology, personality and morbid psychology. Theories of Self in psychology, especially in discussion related to psychology of personality refer to explanations and justification of creation and formation of personal identity and self. On this basis, humans' awareness and consciousness about himself is based on two pillars of unity and identity. Identity is a theory that man has about himself which is a sublevel of consciousness unless when it is exposed to an experience that disrupts the balance created. It is here when the person becomes aware of his identity and gives a new structure to his own identity in line with this experience. Identity has various components which include gender, social, physical, psychological, moral, ideal and professional characteristics which generally constitute individual's totality. Thus, people might be different in terms of professional characteristics, progress or political factions, religious interactions, moral, value based, philosophical values and ethnic identity. Personality characteristics, psychological compatibility and mental health are distinct from others. Identity is a personal and collective category. Identity is not only limited to "I" rather it involves some social and contributory dimensions and the "We" inside groups is also included. An adolescent who accepts himself and maintains a positive identity for himself/herself is thought or be healthier in terms of mental view compared to people with negative personality (Berk, 2011). Self-esteem is a degree of value which the person regards for his own personal and subjective characteristics. Self-esteem is referred to value of the individual's information and beliefs concerning all things resulting from hi (Shamloo, 1997). A person who enjoys higher self-esteem assesses himself positively and has an appropriate contact with the world. He makes efforts while despair so to show him to others that he is deserved person or he is isolated and distances from others. The issue of self-esteem and self-valuation are among the most fundamental factors in the favorable growth of personality (Biabangard, 2009). Self-esteem usually manifests in reciprocal relations of people. People who have a good view to others also love others and accept them and thus acquire the best friends. In fact, people who are positive and comfortable will be liked by others (Ganji, 2003).

Overall, valuation of oneself could be called self-esteem. Smith and Rosenberg consider self-esteem as a self-perception which implies judgment about us and potential d actual abilities. An individual enjoying higher self-esteem is self-valued and self-accepting. Social psychologists consider self-esteem as positive and negative evaluation. Generally, it is assumed self-esteem is to some extent stable. Some factors refer to individual differences with regards to self-esteem; for instance, among children of 4-10years of age, being a sports champion brings about increased self-esteem. Mental health is referred to the ability to communicate harmoniously with others, changing and reforming personal and social environment and resolving contradictions and personal tendencies rationally, fairly and appropriately. As a result, concept of mental health is securing mental health of person and society and preventing from affection to mental disorders. Mental health is a body of knowledge for living better and more social welfare which involves all angles of life including the very first moments of fetal life to the last moments including life inside the fetal life, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and elderly. Mental health is knowledge and

art which help people to adapt to their own environment via creating proper ways mentally and emotionally and choose rational solutions for their own problems. Various definitions exist in regards to mental health. Husseini (1999) states that: "mental health is guidance and making people familiar with principles and proper human relations and preventing from risks which threaten mental health". Psychologists consider an individual being health mentally who enjoys a balance between behaviors and his control in facing with problems. From this viewpoint, man and his behaviors are considered to be a system in general who acts based on qualities of reciprocal effects. Having said this, it is observed that how human's living factors affect his own mental and social factors and vice versa. In other words, in regards to mental health, man is not solely raised rather that which is discussed is phenomena which exist in the surrounding and affect his system and are affected by it. Researches have indicated that the mental health situation is related with the identity situation of people; in other words people who have reached successful identity have reported more mental health and level of commitment. Also, the general health situation is negatively correlated with unsuccessful identity and confusion and commitment of identity.

Berzonesky (2003) addresses examination of relationship between identity styles and general health level of students. Results implicated that people with information identity styles were having the highest commitment of mental health within the two groups. In people with normal identity style, the level of commitment was high however, mental health was higher. People with avoidance-confusing identity style enjoyed lowest level of commitment and general health and mental health. In this research no significant difference was observed between men and women in acquisition of identity and enjoying mental health. Meows (1996) addressed the relationship between identity style and mental health and self-esteem among adolescents. The results of this research implicated that there was a significant and positive correlation between information identity style and mental health and self-esteem and enjoying appropriate identity style in different situations would lead to higher self-esteem and mental health. The significance of self-esteem in any person in any way he himself perceives and thinks will certainly manifest in works, daily duties, love, sexual affairs, and in role of a mother or a father. Reaction to events that occur to us indicates that to what extent we think and judge about ourselves. Reaction to life events will show our viewpoints against them; thus we observe that having self-esteem is not only the key to success and its loss will end up in failure, rather it causes us to know ourselves and others better. Regardless of the issues which have manifested in the individual biologically, one cannot perceive that there has been an obstacle in the human being in terms of mental problems.

The more our self-esteem is higher, the more the likelihood of our psychological nurturing will be and will attempt to avoid its destructive impacts, because these two are interrelated. Safe mind is in sound body and life, freedom and open-mindedness get preferred over vanity and vacuum in life. The level of our self-esteem affects all of our existential aspects; the way we do work in the workshop, our meeting with people, size of progress and promotion, the level of success and the fact how we should attach to someone in a personal territory, how we establish with our spouses, how we behave with our friends and children and what level of happiness we can achieve. There is a correlation between healthy self-esteem and many of other characteristics that affect success and happiness. Healthy self-esteem is in a direct correlation with rational behavior, realism, cleverness, creativity and independence, resilience, the ability to accept change, tendency to admit mistakes and reforming them, benevolence and coordination and collaboration.

However, low self-esteem is related with irrational behaviors, inattention to realities, join-resilience, fear of innovative and unfamiliar things, inappropriate compatibility or illogical rebellion, defensive conducts, overprotection and highly controlled behaviors and fear of enmity.

Highly organized self-descriptions and feeling of self-confidence in the self being distinguished for adolescents will ring about a cognitive foundation for the formation of identity. Using clinical interview methods invented by James Marcia (1980), or through short questionnaire, researchers assess progress in formation of identity based on two criteria acquired from the Erikson's theory: Exploration and feeling of commitment. Their various combinations will bring about four identity situations: achievement of identity, which is feeling of commitment towards opinions and goals after a period of exploration; Identity moratorium, which is exploration without reaching sense of commitment; Identity foreclosure, which is sense of commitment without exploration and Identity diffusion which is a state of indifference whose feature is loss of exploration and sense of commitment (Berk, 2011). Many researches confirm that identity achievement and moratorium are thought of healthy paths psychologically which are aimed at some full blown identity. In contrast, Identity foreclosure and diffusion are incompatible in the long run. Although adolescents in the situation of moratorium of identity are mostly concerned about the challenges they are faced with, while making decisions and resolving problems, like people who achieved identity use information gathering cognitive style. In other words, they search for relevant information, assess them accurately and think of them pensively and thus reform their own problems. Adolescents who have acquired identity or explore it have higher self-esteem and they feel they have more control over their own lives; they are highly likely to consider school and work as possible ways for reaching their own wishes and are more brilliant in terms of moral arguments.

Adolescents who are in the foreclosure and diffusion identity situation are reactive while facing with issues of identity and have problems with compatibility. People of identity foreclosed have a non-resilient and biases cognitive style by which they internalize parents' values and opinions without evaluation and are dependent on the information which might threaten their situations. Most of such people fear that some other people being dependent on them for affection and self-esteem will ever ostracize them. A few numbers of adolescents who have got their own identities foreclosed might join other extremist groups or factions and accept life styles without care. People who are faced with diffusion for a long time are least mature in terms of identity growth. They unusually utilize avoiding-diffused cognitive styles by which they avoid addressing problem solving and allow environmental pressures to determine their reactions. They who have chosen the attitude of "I don't care" have surrendered to chance and destiny and follow whatever the "masses" do. As a result, they are faced with time and academic problems and turn to drug misuse more than other adolescents. There is a sense of despair and frustration in their minds (Berk, 2011). The goal of the present research was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and identity styles and mental health of students majoring in Psychology, University of Payame Noor, Mahabad center (Psychology department, 2011-2012).

### ***Research hypotheses***

1. There is a multiple relationship between students' self-esteem and identity styles with mental health

2. There is a relationship between students' information identity and self-esteem with mental health
3. There is a relationship between students' normal identity and self-esteem with mental health
4. There is a relationship between students' confused or avoidance identity and self-esteem with mental health
5. There is a relationship between students' identity of commitment and self-esteem with mental health
6. There is a relationship between students' styles of identity and mental health
7. There is a relationship between students' self-esteem and mental health.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The present research uses correlation method, because it studies relationship between styles of identity and self-esteem with mental health. The statistical population of this paper was constituted by students majoring in Psychology who were admitted to the Payame Noor University in 2011-2012, Mahabad center. The number of people in the population under study was 95 people in accordance with the University's computer center from which the sample under research was 76 people in accordance with the Morgan Table. In the present research, the in access sampling method was applied.

### ***Tools for gathering data***

Cooper Smith's Self-esteem Questionnaire: It includes 58 items which are answered in form of yes and no. Items of each of the subscales are: 26 item general scale, 8 item social scale, 8 item familial scale, 8 item professional-educational scale and lie scale with 8 items. Scores of subscales and also the overall score allows for the possibility of specification of a ground in which people are qualified with a positive picture of them (Ostadian et al, 2010). Cooper Smith et al (1990) have reported the retest coefficients of this questionnaire in two turns after five weeks to be 0/88 and 0/70 after three years (Ostadian et al, 2010).

Identity styles measurement tool: in this research, identity style (SIS) (Berzonsky, 1992) has been applied. This questionnaire is a 40 question scale where 11 questions of which are related to information scale, 9 questions to normal scale, 10 questions to the confusion and avoidance scale while 10 questions are related to the scale of commitment, which are used for secondary analysis and is not considered to be an identity style.

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ): It was developed in 1972 by Goldberg. This test has 28 questions including four scales of physical complaints, anxiety, social function and depression (Goldberg et al, 1978). The simple Likert method (0.1.2.3) was applied for scoring. In this test, the cutoff point for screening was considered to be 23. This means that participants who scores less than 23 were not diagnosed to be ill (Hemayat Talab et al, 2005). While examining fourfold subscale of physical signs, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and intense depression, if the score of the participant in any of the fourfold scales is above 14, he or she has problems in that scale (Khaledian et al, 2012). The reliability of the GHQ questionnaire in various researches was thought of 81% (Seyed Ahmadi et al, 2010). Reliability of the questionnaire in the current research was obtained to be 0/78. In the current research, inferential and descriptive methods were used for analyzing data.

Descriptive statistics are applied for describing data which include dispersion indices (averages and standard deviation) for identity styles, self-esteem and mental health. Inferential statistics are applied for testing research hypotheses used in the paper which include Pearson correlation coefficients for assessing the relationship between styles of identity, self-esteem and mental health of students where this was done through SPSS software.

### 3. FINDINGS

*First hypothesis:* There is a multiple relationship between students' self-esteem and identity styles with mental health

**Table 1.** Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between styles of identity, self-esteem and mental health of students.

Sources	Sum of squares	Df	Average squares	F	Sig.
Regression	1245/634	2	622/817	6/716	0/002
Residual	6769/471	73	92/732		
Total	8015/105	75			

Table (1) indicates that Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between styles of identity, self-esteem and mental health of students of Payame Noor University has been significance at the 0/002 level where the way in which style of identity and self-esteem have affected students' mental health are provide in the following table.

**Table 2.** Regression coefficient of the relationship between students' identity style, self-esteem with mental health.

Model	Value of B regression coefficient	Error	t	Sig.
Constant model	56/588	11/441	4/946	0/000
Identity style	0/049	0/093	0/527	0/600
Self-esteem	0/610	0/200	3/041	0/003

Table (2) indicates that according to the value of statistic  $t = 0/527$ , the effects of identity style on students' mental health, Mahabad University of Payame Noor with the regression coefficient equaling 0/049 was not significant at the 0/600 level, because the

significance level obtained is greater than 0/05 and also according to the value of statistic  $t = 3/041$ , the effects of self-esteem on students' mental health with the regression coefficient equaling 0/610 was significant at the 0/003 level where the significant level of the variable of identity style implicates lack of relationship and significance level of self-esteem indicates its positive relation with students' mental health at the Mahabad University of Payame Noor.

*Second hypothesis:* There is a relationship between students' information identity and self-esteem with mental health

**Table 3.** Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between information identities, self-esteem with mental health of students.

Sources	Sum of squares	Df	Average squares	F	Sig.
Regression	1222/025	2	611/013	6/566	0/002
Residual	6793/080	73	93/056		
Total	8015/105	75			

Table 3 indicates that Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between information identity, self-esteem and mental health of students of Payame Noor University has been significance at the 0/002 level where the way in which information identity and self-esteem have affected students' mental health are provided in the following Table (4).

**Table 4.** Regression coefficient of the relationship between students' information identity, self-esteem with mental health.

Model	Value of B regression coefficient	Error	T	Sig.
Constant model	50/865	8/081	6/294	0/000
information identity	0/030	0/202	0/150	0/881
Self-esteem	0/669	0/201	3/321	0/001

Table (4) indicates that according to the value of statistic  $t = 0/150$ , the effects of information identity on students' mental health, Mahabad University of Payame Noor with the regression coefficient equaling 0/030 was not significant at the 0/600 level, because the significance level obtained is greater than 0/05 and also according to the value of statistic  $t = 3/321$ , the effects of self-esteem on students' mental health with the regression coefficient equaling 0/669 was significant at the 0/001 level where the significant level of the variable of

information identity implicates lack of relationship and significance level of self-esteem indicates its positive relation with students' mental health at the Mahabad University of Payame Noor.

*Third hypothesis:* There is a relationship between students' normal identity and self-esteem with mental health

**Table 5.** Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between normal identities, self-esteem with mental health of students.

Sources	Sum of squares	Df	Average squares	F	Sig.
Regression	1219/957	2	609/978	6/553	0/002
Residual	6795/149	73	93/084		
Total	8015/105	75			

Table (5) indicates that Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between normal identity, self-esteem and mental health of students of Payame Noor University has been significance at the 0/002 level where the way in which normal identity and self-esteem have affected students' mental health are provided in the following table.

**Table 6.** Regression coefficient of the relationship between students' normal identity, self-esteem with mental health.

Model	Value of B regression coefficient	Error	T	Sig.
Constant model	51/484	8/619	5/974	0/000
normal identity	0/005	0/265	0/020	0/984
Self-esteem	0/657	0/199	3/299	0/002

Table (6) indicates that according to the value of statistic  $t = 0/20$ , the effects of normal identity on students' mental health, Mahabad University of Payame Noor with the regression coefficient equaling 0/005 was not significant at the 0/984 level, because the significance level obtained is greater than 0/05 and also according to the value of statistic  $t = 3/299$ , the effects of self-esteem on students' mental health with the regression coefficient equaling 0/657 was significant at the 0/002 level where the significant level of the variable of normal identity implicates lack of relationship and significance level of self-esteem indicates its positive relation with students' mental health at the Mahabad University of Payame Noor.

Fourth hypothesis: There is a relationship between students' confused or avoidance identity and self-esteem with mental health

**Table 7.** Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between avoidant/confusion identities, self-esteem with mental health of students.

Sources	Sum of squares	Df	Average squares	F	Sig.
Regression	1437/049	2	718/525	7/974	0/001
Residual	6578/056	73	90/110		
Total	8015/105	75			

Table (7) indicates that Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between avoidant/confusion identity, self-esteem and mental health of students of Payame Noor University has been significance at the 0/001 level where the way in which avoidant/confusion identity and self-esteem have affected students' mental health are provided in the following table.

**Table 8.** Regression coefficient of the relationship between students' avoidant/confusion identity, self-esteem with mental health.

Model	Value of B regression coefficient	Error	T	Sig.
Constant model	63/331	9/857	6/425	0/000
avoidant/confusion identity	0/336	0/216	1/552	0/125
Self-esteem	0/768	0/192	3/993	0/000

Table (8) indicates that according to the value of statistic  $t = 1/552$ , the effects of avoidant/confusion identity on students' mental health, Mahabad University of Payame Noor with the regression coefficient equaling 0/336 was not significant at the 0/125 level, because the significance level obtained is greater than 0/05 and also according to the value of statistic  $t = 3/993$ , the effects of self-esteem on students' mental health with the regression coefficient equaling 0/767 was significant at the 0/000 level where the significant level of the variable of avoidant/confusion identity implicates lack of relationship and significance level of self-esteem indicates its positive relation with students' mental health at the Mahabad University of Payame Noor.

*Fifth hypothesis:* There is a relationship between students' identity of commitment and self-esteem with mental health

**Table 9.** Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between commitment, self-esteem with mental health of students.

Sources	Sum of squares	Df	Average squares	F	Sig.
Regression	1221/522	2	610/761	6/563	0/002
Residual	6793/584	73	93/063		
Total	8015/105	75			

Table 9 indicates that Analysis of variance of examining the significance of relationship between commitment, self-esteem and mental health of students of Payame Noor University has been significance at the 0/002 level where the way in which commitment and self-esteem have affected students' mental health are provided in the following table.

**Table 10.** Regression coefficient of the relationship between students' commitment, self-esteem with mental health.

Model	Value of B regression coefficient	Error	T	Sig.
Constant model	50/915	8/288	6/143	0/000
commitment	0/033	0/254	0/131	0/896
Self-esteem	0/672	0/223	3/010	0/004

Table (10) indicates that according to the value of statistic  $t = 0/131$ , the effects of commitment on students' mental health, Mahabad University of Payame Noor with the regression coefficient equaling 0/033 was not significant at the 0/896 level, because the significance level obtained is greater than 0/05 and also according to the value of statistic  $t = 3/010$ , the effects of self-esteem on students' mental health with the regression coefficient equaling 0/672 was significant at the 0/004 level where the significant level of the variable of commitment implicates lack of relationship and significance level of self-esteem indicates its positive relation with students' mental health at the Mahabad University of Payame Noor. Hypotheses correlation coefficients:

*Sixth hypothesis:* There is a relation between identity style and mental health of students.

To test the existence of relationship between identity styles and mental health of students, the Pearson correlation test was applied where the results obtained indicated that there is no relationship between the mentioned variables at the significance level of 0/056. Because, according to the fact that the significance level obtained is greater than 0/05, there is no relation between these two variables.

**Table 11.** Correlation analysis between identity style and mental health of students.

Independent variable Dependent variable	Identity style	
Mental health	Correlation coefficient	0/220
	Sig.	0/056
	Freedom degree	75

*Seventh hypothesis:* There is a relation between self-esteem and mental health of students.

**Table 12.** Correlation analysis between self-esteem and mental health of students.

Independent variable Dependent variable	Self-esteem	
Mental health	Correlation coefficient	0/390
	Sig.	0/01
	Freedom degree	75

Results indicate that there is a significant relation between self-esteem and mental health of students at the significance level of 0/01 which implicates the positive effects of self-esteem in mental health of students.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As data analysis demonstrated there is a negative relationship between styles of identity and self-esteem with mental health while self-esteem has a positive relationship with mental health. In this research, effects of identity styles on general health of students were considered and the findings revealed that there is no statistical relationship between identity styles and general health of students. Results if the seventh hypothesis stating there is relationship between self-esteem and mental health indicates are in line with Ellison and Schwartz's researches (2001) where they also confirmed these findings. Given the results found we can

conclude that identity styles and their enhancement cannot serve as an increase of students' mental health, though it cannot be generalized to all students because in this research, few people have been addressed. However, students' self-esteem will cause mental health to rise in an educational setting. Thus, with an increase of educational programs and appearance of an appropriate setting for mental health, we can increase self-esteem.

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