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The Relationship between Mental Well-Being and Academic Stress with the Ability to Solve Social Problems in High School Students

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ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between mental well-being and academic stress with the ability to solve social problems in first and third grade students of the theoretical branches of the second-high school in Ivan Gharb in the academic year 1397-98. The research method was descriptive-correlational and in terms of purpose was considered an applied research. The statistical population of the study consisted of all first grade female students (210 students) and third grade students (190 students). Using cluster random sampling method, the sample size was 130 people for the first grade and 120 people for the third grade were selected and tested according to Morgan and Krejcie table. To collect data from the Questionnaire, Mental Well-Being (Dinner, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin), Life Satisfaction Scale of Watson, Clark, & Telgen (1988) Positive and Negative Emotion Scale (1988), Academic Expectations of Ang and Huan, the revised short form of Social Problem Solving Ability (SPSI-R) of Dezruila, Nezu and Meido-Olivares, were used. The reliability of the research tools was also confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of variance, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression) were used to analyze the data. Findings showed that mental well-being and academic stress predicted the ability to solve social problems. The results also showed that in some aspects of mental well-being and academic stress, there was a significant relationship with the ability to solve social problems. Also, there was no significant difference between educational level and research variables.

Keywords: Mental well-being, Academic stress, Social problem solving ability, Female high school student.

Introduction

Historically, philosophers in ethics, especially Epicurean hedonistic approaches, had widely addressed the concept of happiness and well-being. But for the first time in 1980, Dinner methodically studied the term mental well-being and related structures in the field of psychology and made it an alternative and a synonym for happiness (Ghasemi, Kajbaf, & Rabiei, 2011). Diener and Suh (2000) defined mental well-being as a multidimensional structure that, along with the presence of positive emotional experiences and life satisfaction, should show the absence of negative emotional states. People with high mental well-being were interested in taking on a role in society, creating more leisure time, participating in more public activities, having a more participatory spirit, and mostly positive emotions. They welcomed a positive assessment of what was happening. In contrast, people with low mental well-being evaluated situations and events as unfavorable and therefore experienced more unfavorable emotions such as anxiety, depression, and aggression (Chiara, 2002).

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Mental well-being is one of the stressors of stress in students. Stress is the "reaction to a perceived threat (real or imagined) to one's mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health that leads to a series of responses and physiological adaptations" (Wadephul, Glover, & Jomeen, 2020). Stress usually refers to a special relationship between a person and his environment, which considered as exhausting or beyond their capacity to endure, and it threatens their well-being. Most students had overwhelming experiences on a daily basis that, in many cases, they feel no control over. These everyday problems were one of the main causes of stress in this group (Kyriacou, 2002). The ability to solve problems and social problems was another vital skill in modern life. This skill was effective in promoting mental health, while inability to solve social problems was associated with some emotional problems (Davey, 1994). There were three basic concepts of problem-solving, problem, and solution in the social problem-solving model proposed. In the model of Coffman and Gilligan (2002), it was assumed that the ability to solve a social problem consisted of two independent components of problem orientation and problem-solving skills, which later became known as the problem-solving style. Problem orientation was a set of cognitive-emotional psyches that reflected a person's feelings and beliefs about life issues. Problem-solving skills referred to cognitive and behavioral activities by which a person tried to understand the problem and found an effective solution. According to this model, the four main skills of problem solving were: formulating and defining the problem, presenting different solutions, decision making and proving and implementing the solution.

Students are one of the most important groups in any country, because of the role they play in the future administration of the country. Basically, any attention to this group has important effects on their future and the country (Moosavi, 2016). One of the main and important goals of education is to prepare knowledgeable and capable people to face the problems of life and society as well as global issues that are rapidly evolving and changing. If the goal of the educational system was to deliver capable citizens to the society by training capable students, a suitable ground should be provided for the growth and promotion of scientific insight, problem-solving skills and scientific approach to problems. In addition, school curricula should focus on ways in which students learn the skills of how to learn through thinking and dealing regularly with issues and problems instead of learning and remembering (Adibnia, Mohajer, & Sheikh Pour, 2013).

The living conditions of the adolescent and those around him, the type of his relationship with others, etc., affected individual's adjustment. These stressful life situations and the continuation of these difficult conditions, in turn, caused the occurrence and aggravation of physical and mental disorders that were related to how to respond to these problems and seek effective solutions. Coping was an important issue that was strongly related to adolescent mental health. The problem-solving approach could be used as a useful tool to deal with and solve many situational problems. The flaw of problem solving concerned that it was a kind of goal-oriented thinking and its main advantage as a coping strategy was the feeling of control that a person found over his life. It could be said that problem solving was a skill that everyone needed because incomplete problem solving seriously threatened a person's mental health, while effective problem solving enabled the person to constructively face their own problems; at the same

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time, it was associated with the most positive excitement (Amani, Ahmadi, & Hamidi, 2008). Ghasemi et al. (2011) also stated in this regard that it was only by creating the ability to solve problems that people could be prepared to deal with changing conditions and new situations which they were constantly faced with.

A person with problem-solving skills is able to identify problems and problems in life more effectively and use his efforts to solve them. The ability to solve a problem allows a person to recognize their own and others' emotions, to know how emotion affects behavior, and to be able to respond appropriately to different emotions.

Mental well-being is one of the most important concepts and undoubtedly necessary for the development of students with desirable social skills and can have a wonderful and desirable effect on the process and the desired outcome of family life. Mental well-being involves the scientific analysis of how people evaluate their lives in the present moment, as well as longer periods such as a year ago. This assessment includes individuals' emotional reactions to events, their moods, and their judgments about life satisfaction, self-fulfillment, and satisfaction in areas such as marriage and employment (Diener, 2009). Although the issue of mental well-being has only been seriously considered by scholars since the second half of the twentieth century, it has nevertheless been addressed throughout history by the question of what a "good life" is. The issue of mental well-being was important because individuals, while living in an objectively defined world, responded to a world that was mentally defined (King, 2008). Mental well-being, in addition to increasing desirable behaviors in a society, facilitated the achievement of goals for individuals (Faraahani, Shokri, Geravand, & Daneshvarpour, 2008).

Having an optimal level of stress was necessary to create a sense of competition and learning, but if the level was too high, one dis not have enough time to balance. As a result, he would suffer from fatigue and experience the effects of stress. Severe or prolonged stress could lead to the onset, exacerbation and continuation of many mental and physical ailments. Adolescents are people who experience physical, psychological, intellectual and social crises during their critical period, and these critical stages constantly create tensions and problems for them. Therefore, it seems necessary to help adolescents in developing and developing the skills needed for a good life, dealing with problems, as well as helping them to develop the necessary emotions and social skills in an effective and constructive social environment and life (Hamarta, 2009). In the meantime, it was very important to pay attention to teenage girls, especially in high school. Because on the one hand, girls had reached physical maturity in this training course, and these physical changes resulting from puberty created problems for girls in dealing with and adapting to family, people around them and social issues, including issues that girls faced in this period such as unfamiliarity with some customs, shyness and isolation, problems in making friends, problems in adjustment and interpersonal relationships, lack of recognition of emotions and Lack of management of inappropriate emotions, underage marriage, incorrect competition in the classroom and the existence of an important issue called the entrance exam, which could be said disrupted the lives of many girls and their families (Shokri et al., 2008). Considering the presented materials and the importance of the mentioned categories, examining the relationship between mental well-being and

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academic stress with the ability to solve social problems was necessary in high school and especially among female students. This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between mental well-being and the ability to solve social problems in female students; the following hypotheses were developed:

1. There was a relationship between the dimensions of mental well-being and the dimensions of the ability to solve a social problem.
2. There was a relationship between the dimensions of academic stress and the dimensions of the ability to solve social problems.
3. The ability to solve a social problem was predicted by the dimensions of mental well-being and the dimensions of academic stress.

Material and Methods

The present study was a correlational description in terms of applied purpose and research method. The population of this study was all female students of the first grade (210 people) and the third grade (190 people) of the second year of high school in Ivan Gharb, studying in the academic year 2018-2019. According to the statistical population and using random cluster sampling method, the sample size of this study according to Krejcie and Morgan table for the first grade of 130 people and for the third grade, 120 people were considered. In this study, in order to analyze the data, first the data were analyzed, using descriptive statistics method, then the research hypotheses based on the results, obtained from examining the questions using statistical tests (Multivariate analysis of variance, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression), were tested.

Mental Well-Being Scale: For this variable, life satisfaction scale was used to measure "cognitive dimension", and positive and negative emotional scale was used to measure "emotional dimension" of mental well-being. It should be noted that mental well-being (ie, cognitive and emotional dimensions of mental well-being) and foreign research, also had the support of domestic research (Ghazanfari, 2006).

Life Satisfaction Scale: This scale was designed to measure life satisfaction by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), which measured a person's overall life satisfaction. It had five articles and each article had seven options that respondents indicated their satisfaction from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly agree). The range of scores in this scale was from 5 to 35, with a score of 1 indicating dissatisfaction with life and a score of 7 indicating complete satisfaction with life. The reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for nationalities American, German, Japanese, respectively, was 0.90, 0.82, And 0.79 (Dortaj, 2013). In Iran, Bayani, Koocheky, and Goodarzi (2007), also calculated the scale reliability coefficients using Cronbach's alpha method as 0.83, and the retest method as 0.69. The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was calculated through Cronbach's alpha and its value was 0.85.

Positive and Negative Emotion Scale: Positive and Negative Emotion Scale was used to measure the "emotional dimension" of mental well-being. This scale was designed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). This scale consisted of 20 items, which were considered for each positive and negative emotional

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dimension of 10 words. The items were given by the subjects on a five-point scale (1 = very low, by no means up to 5 = Very much) which were ranked as the subjects were asked to evaluate their feelings in four dimensions: past, future, present and in general (Bakhshipour & Dezhkam, 2005). The range of scores for each subscale was 0.10 to 0.50. The high score in both scales indicated high positive and negative emotion, and the low score indicated low positive and negative emotion in the individual. The psychometric properties of scale in the research of Watson et al. by calculating Cronbach's alpha for positive emotion was obtained 0.86 to 0.90. For negative emotion from, it was rated 0.84 to 0.87. In Iran, the confirmatory factor analysis of the positive and negative emotion scale has been found to be favorable by Mokhberi, Dortaj, and Darehkordi (2011). In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of both scales (positive and negative emotion) was 0.85. The scale was also able to distinguish well between patients with depression and anxiety. In Lotfi et al. (2020) research, the internal correlation coefficients of the components and the whole scale of positive and negative emotions were from 0.74 to 0.94. Also, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the overall scale was obtained 0.85. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was calculated through Cronbach's alpha, and its value for positive emotion was 0.82 and for negative emotion was 0.83.

Student Stress Expectation Questionnaire (Academic Stress): Currently one of the tools that could measure the role of expectations as a source of academic stress among Asian middle and high school students was the Academic Expectations scale of Ang and Huan (2006). This scale was a self-report inventory used to measure the stress perceived by middle school and high school students in academic situations. Sources of stress in this list included the expectations of teachers / parents and the expectations of the individual. This list contained 9 items and 2 scales. The first scale measures parent / teacher expectations through 5 items (4, 5, 6, 7, and 9) and the second scale measures self-expectations through 4 items (1, 2, 3, and 8). Each substance is answered in a range of 5 degrees (1 = never true to 5 = almost always true). In this tool, the range of scores for the first scale (parent / teacher expectations) was from 5 to 25 and for the second scale (individual self-expectations) was 4 to 20; the high score in each subscale indicated the experience of more stress. In the study of Shokri et al. (2008), Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the factors of parents / teachers' expectations, self-expectations and AESI overall score were equal to 0.81, 0.68 and 0.83. In a study that was initially conducted for the reliability of this tool, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of stress due to parent-teacher expectations was 0.66, Cronbach's alpha stress due to self-expectations was 0.76 and Cronbach's alpha of the whole questionnaire was 0.80**.**

Social Problem Solving Ability Questionnaire (SPSI-R): The Revised Social Problem Solving Ability Questionnaire is a self-report scale for measuring social problem solving skills. This scale is based on the previous work of the authors which examined and measured the major components of the theoretical model of social problem solving. This form had 5 dimensions and 25 questions that were graded on a five-point. This questionnaire included two subscales of constructive and efficient problem solving and incomplete problem solving. A constructive and efficient subscale that scored positively had two dimensions: positive orientation to the problem (including questions: 4-6-13), logical style of problem solving (including questions : 2-7-16-20-21-24-25), an incomplete problem solution that was scored

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negatively, three dimensions of negative orientation to the problem (including questions: 1-3-8-12-22), avoidance style (including questions: 5-10-14-19-23) and impulsive / inattentive style (including questions: 9-11-15-17- 18) were included. A high score in (SPSI) indicated an easy, efficient and constructive solution to the problem. While a low score indicated an incomplete, inefficient and malfunctioning solution to the problem. Retest for this questionnaire between 0.68 to 0.91 and its alpha coefficient between 0.69 to 0.95 has been reported. The construct validity of this questionnaire was also confirmed using exploratory factor analysis and correlation with other problem-solving scales and overlapping psychological constructs. In Iran, Mokhberi et al. (2011)) obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.85 for five factors and a retest reliability coefficient of 0.88 for the abbreviated social problem questionnaire. All narrative analyzes had confirmed SPSI as a scale of social problem solving. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was calculated through Cronbach's alpha, and its value for the constructive and efficient dimension was 0.82; and the incomplete dimension was obtained 0.74.

Results

Mean and standard deviation showed the minimum and maximum score for research variables and its subscales**.**

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of research variables

Variable		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Mental well-being	Life satisfaction	5	35	25.16	7.10
	Positive emotion	15	50	34.94	6.98
	Negative emotion	11	50	25.23	7.88
Academic stress	teachers-parents expectation	5	25	17.58	4.41
	Self-expectation	5	20	14.45	3.06
Ability to solve social problems	Constructive and efficient problem solving	10	50	32.20	7.18
	Incomplete solution	19	57	35.28	7.73

Hypothesis 1. There was a relationship between the dimensions of mental well-being and the dimensions of the ability to solve a social problem

Table 2. Correlation between the dimensions of mental well-being and the dimensions of the ability to solve a social problem

Variable	Constructive and efficient problem solving	Incomplete solution	Ability to solve social problems
Life satisfaction	.27**	-.20**	.03
Positive emotion	.49**	-.16**	.23**
Negative emotion	-.26**	.45**	.16**

** < .01

As shown in Table 2, the value of correlation coefficient of life satisfaction dimension with the constructive and efficient problem-solving dimension at the significant level (0.01) was equal to 0.27, and the incomplete problem-solving dimension at the significance level (0.01) was equal to -0.20. Therefore, there was a positive and significant relationship with life dimension and constructive and efficient problem-solving dimension, and a negative and significant relationship with incomplete

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problem-solving dimension, but there was no significant relationship with social problem-solving ability dimension. The value of correlation coefficient of positive emotion dimension with the dimensions of constructive and efficient problem solving, incomplete problem solving and social problem solving ability at a significant level (0.01) was equal to 0.49, -0.16. Therefore, there was a significant positive relationship with the dimensions of constructive and efficient problem solving, the ability to solve a social problem, and a negative and significant relationship with the dimensions of incomplete problem solving. The value of the correlation coefficient of the negative emotion dimension with the dimensions of constructive and efficient problem solving, incomplete problem solving and social problem solving ability at a significant level (0.01) was equal to -0.26, 0.45 and 0.16, respectively. Therefore, the dimension of negative emotion had a negative and significant relationship with the constructive and efficient problem-solving dimension, a direct and significant relationship with the dimensions of incomplete problem-solving and the ability to solve a social problem.

Hypothesis 2: There was a relationship between the dimensions of academic stress and the dimensions of the ability to solve social problems.

Table 3. Correlation between the dimensions of academic stress and the dimensions of the ability to solve social problems

Variable	Constructive and efficient problem solving	Incomplete solution	Ability to solve social problems
teachers-parents expectation	.11	.18**	.23**
Self-expectation	.02	.24**	.21**
Education stress	.09	.23**	.25**

** < .01

As shown in Table 3, the value of the correlation coefficient of the expectation dimension of teachers / parents with the dimensions of incomplete problem solving and the ability to solve social problems at a significant level (0.01) was equal to 0.18 and 0.23, respectively. Between the expectation dimension of teachers / parents, there was a positive and significant relationship with the dimensions of incomplete problem solving and the ability to solve social problems; there was no significant relationship between the expectation dimension of teachers / parents and the constructive and efficient problem solving dimension. The value of the correlation coefficient of the dimension of self-expectation with the dimensions of incomplete problem solving and the ability to solve a social problem at a significant level (0.01) was equal to 0.24 and 0.21, respectively. So between the dimension of self-expectation with incomplete problem solving and the ability to solve social problems, there is a positive and significant relationship, but no significant relationship was observed between the dimension of self-expectation and the constructive and efficient problem solving dimension. The value of the correlation coefficient of academic stress with the dimensions of the incomplete problem and the ability to solve the social problem at a significant level (0.01) was equal to 0.23 and 0.25, respectively; so in academic stress and the dimensions of the problem, there was a positive and significant relationship between incomplete and social problem solving ability; no significant relationship was observed between the dimension of academic stress and the constructive and efficient problem solving dimension.

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Hypothesis 3: The ability to solve social problems was predicted by the dimensions of mental well-being and the dimensions of academic stress.

Table 4. Summary of the regression model for Hypothesis 3

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Estimated error
1	.38	.14	.12	9.18

Table 5. Results of variance analysis related to regression model for Hypothesis 3

Model		SS	DF	MS	F	*p*
1	regression	3468.62	5	693.72	8.22	.001
	residual	20587.85	244	84.37		
	Total	24056.48	249			

According to Table 5 and based on multiple regression test, there was a significant relationship between the ability to solve social problems and the dimensions of mental well-being and academic stress. Based on the results, the multiple correlation coefficient in this hypothesis was equal to 0.38 with a significance of 0.001 (F test equal to 8.722). Also, the square of the multiple correlation coefficient was 0.14. Thus, the variables of negative affect, positive affect and expectation of teachers / parents together explained 14% of the variance of social problem solving.

Table 6. Significant coefficients related to regression variables for Hypothesis 3

Variable	B	standard error	Beta	T value	*p*
Life satisfaction	.008	.10	.005	.07	.94
Positive emotion	.33	.09	.23	3.54	.01
Negative emotion	.26	.08	.21	3.10	.002
Teacher’s expectation	.36	.15	.16	2.34	.02
Self-expectation	.25	.22	.07	1.11	.26

According to Table 6, life satisfaction and self-expectation did not achieve a significant regression coefficient. Therefore, the explanation was related to the variables of positive emotion (with beta coefficient of 0.23), negative emotion (with beta coefficient of 0.210) and expectation of teachers-parents (with beta coefficient of 0.16).

Discussion

In order to test the first hypothesis (there was a relationship between the dimensions of mental well-being and the dimensions of the ability to solve social problems), Pearson correlation coefficient was used. From the test results, it could be inferred that most correlation coefficients were significant. There was the ability to solve the social problem of the relationship, and the first hypothesis of the research was confirmed. In explaining this hypothesis, it could be stated that if students' mental well-being increases, their ability to solve social problems would also increase.

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Research on constructive and incomplete problem-solving styles with mental well-being had shown that there was a positive relationship between creative problem-solving styles, trust and tendency with mental well-being; there was a significance relationship, consistent with this research finding (Mahdavi & Jafari, 2004).

It was also consistent with that part of the results of Kaufman, Kosberg, Leeper, and Tang (2010) which showed that students with higher social support were more satisfied with life. Findings of Agha Yousefi and Sharif (2012) showed that among the problem-solving styles, three problem-solving styles of creativity, trust and tendency had a positive and significant correlation with mental well-being, which were consistent with the results of the present study.

In order to test the second hypothesis (there is a relationship between the dimensions of academic stress and the dimensions of the ability to solve social problems), Pearson correlation coefficient was used, and from the test results, it could be inferred that most correlation coefficients were significant; in other words, between the dimensions of academic stress, there was a significant relationship between the dimensions of the ability to solve a social problem; therefore, the second hypothesis of the research was confirmed.

The results of this research finding were consistent with that part of the results of Kaufman et al. (2010) which showed that students with high levels of social support and self-efficacy had less stress. The individual differences in academic stress and mental well-being showed that among coping styles, only problematic coping style significantly negatively correlated with academic stress and positive emotion scale and emotional coping styles alone significantly reduced the negative relationship between academic stress and the negative emotion scale. Problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping styles significantly reduced the relationship between academic stress and the life satisfaction scale.

In order to test the third hypothesis (the ability to solve social problems is predicted by the dimensions of mental well-being and dimensions of academic stress) statistical method, multiple regression and analysis of variance were used; from the test results it could be inferred that the correlation coefficients had become significant, in other words, there was a direct and significant relationship between the dimensions of mental well-being and academic stress with the ability to solve social problems; the third hypothesis of the research was confirmed. Also, the results of regression between the dimensions of mental well-being with the ability to solve social problems showed that a significant effect of positive and negative emotion variables in regression and life satisfaction did not have a significant effect on regression. Also, the results of regression between the dimensions of academic stress with the ability to solve social problems showed that a significant effect on the expectation of teachers-parents in regression and self-expectation did not represent a significant effect on regression. Multiple regression tests between social problem-solving ability and dimensions of mental well-being and academic stress showed that there is a significant relationship between variables. The effect of regression obtained at the relevant significance level is significant and shows that the dimensions of mental well-being and academic stress predict the ability to solve social problems.

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The results of Hamarta (2009) showed that self-esteem and life satisfaction were positively associated with a positive orientation to the problem and a logical problem consistent with this research were found. Considering that achieving the ability to solve social problems in the high school years could have a tremendous impact on the future life of students, both in the work environment and in the community where they lived; if education officials wanted this ability in nurturing students, they could prepare programs to increase mental well-being and create appropriate expectations appropriate to the student's circumstances.

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