

The relationship between social skills and identity dimensions with problem solving process

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ABSTRACT : The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between social skills and identity dimensions with problem solving process. The subjects include all female high school students of Jam town (Bushehr province) in 1391-92 educational year. Using multi-stage sampling method based on Cochran formula, 150 students were selected as sample. The present research is of correlational and non-experimental type. Three standard normalized questionnaires including InderBitzen and Foster social skills questionnaire, Chick and Trap identity dimensions questionnaire and Hepner and Peterson problem solving questionnaire were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (regression) were used to analyze data. Supporting the hypotheses, the results showed that there is a positive meaningful relationship between social skills and problem solving ($P < 0.05$). Also there was a fairly strong relationship between students' identity dimensions and problem solving. Based on the results, the relationship between social skills and problem solving and the relationship between identity dimensions and with problem solving are meaningful supporting the research hypotheses.

Keywords: social skills, identity dimensions, problem solving.

INTRODUCTION

Based on Elliott, Sheridan, & McCloskey (2004) social skills include the behaviors which increase the probability of being supported by others and cause individuals' deserved performance in the society. Consideration of identity and its formation have been noted by different fields like psychology, sociology, political sciences and even literature and art. People reach a definition of themselves such as value, belief, attitude, culture and telecommunication by identity. If this definition is opposite of their social reality, they will experience states like lack of sophistication, mental pressure and behavioral problems.

Based on the previous research factors like social skills have contributing roles in making desirable relation, self-expression, self-disclosure, finishing, listening reward and reinforcement, reflection, explanation and problem solving, determination and identification of individual values in preventing or predicting teenagers' entrapment in different kinds of socio-behavioral abnormalities and behavioral-individual disorders. The importance of acquiring proper social skills to achieve success at schools and all stages of life are clear for all. Training social skills not only improves children's social compatibility and their abilities, but also promotes their academic performance. In the past the training of social skills was inferior to reading, writing and math in school curriculum but nowadays lots of trainers emphasize training social skills to prepare the person for real life and social growth of students with different abilities. Training of social skills should be done like scholastic training and be considered as supplementary aspects of training programs (Hosseini-Khanzadeh, 1388). Regarding social skills it is believed that group activities in completing assignments increase the discipline and thinking skills and decrease adaptive problems, improves social skills and interpersonal relationships and students' social relations. Five main factors have been noted for the lack of social skills including lack of knowledge, lack of exercise, lack of adequate feedback, lack of getting support and behavioral problems and not having enough time.

Speaking about social features, beliefs, values, behaviors and attitudes of different social groups mean speaking about social identity. In the simplest words, social identity is the definition a person has based on his/her group membership (Brown, 2004). Based on social identity, concept of the self has two dimensions. The first one is

personal identity independent of the person's beliefs about his abilities and skills. The other one is social or plural identity including that part of the self which is obtained from their awareness in one or some social groups accompanied with value and emotional importance of the membership. While personal identity is defined in referring to individual documents like talent and capability and reflex personal emotions and values, social identity is understood by inclusion of plural aspects of values and emotions referring to one or some social groups which the persons considers himself as one of the members. As respecting the individual self is understood as positive evaluation of personal identity, plural respect is the index of positive evaluation of the person from social identity. In their view some of the people generally evaluate their social groups positively and it is called respecting to plural self (Montgomery, 2005; Kroger and latnen, 2006).

Theoretically and experimentally the elements of social identity are different from personal identity. Some of the theoreticians like Taifel believe that social and personal identity are two sides of one continuum called social-individual continuum. Diener's social categorization theory emphasizes personal features at one end of the continuum not accepted by all theoreticians. They emphasize in the stress of two identities. Social caste and gaining social skills as a tool to determine social identity of the individuals is cultural superstructure of the society. Another structure which can play significant role in completing healthy and constructive social skills is problems solving and the leading processes. Problem solving is a behavioral-cognitive and creative process by which the person identify or invent effective and compatible mechanisms for daily problems. Problem solving skill is logical thinking helping to seek various solutions and selecting the best one when facing with problems (Marks, 2003; Kessidy and Long, 2003).

Dezurilla and Goldfried (1995) defined problem solving as a clear or cognitive behavioral process providing different kinds of alternative potential and beneficial responses to face with difficult situations and increasing the probability of selecting the most effective response among the different parts (Mohammadi and Sahebi, 1384). Problem solving uses information, techniques and ideas we know and remember from past memories. This process includes two main parts. One is forming a cognitive network opening the problem and forming a set of connecting relations of problem network and the desirable network or solution (Grino, 2004).

Six problem solving networks including creative, trust, orientation, insolvency, control and avoidance have been introduced. Creative problem solving shows programming and considering various solutions based on the conditions of problematic case. Trust style of problem solving states the person's ability to solve the problems. Orientation style shows positive attitude toward the problems and the face to face inclination to confront with problems. Insolvency style shows loneliness of the individuals in problematic situations. Control problem solving refers to internal and external controllers in problematic situation and avoidance style shows the inclination to neglect the problems instead of facing with them. The three first styles are called constructive and the last three ones are called non-constructive problem solving styles.

Constructive methods of problem solving have correlation with constructions like life satisfaction, positive affection, progress motivation and social support and non-constructive methods with variables like anxiety, depression, disappointment, hostility and work stress (Cassidy and Long, 2003; Burn side, 2003). Based on the existing evidences we are seeking answers about the relationship between social skills and identity dimensions with problem solving process.

The necessity of the present research is about the relationship of social skills and identity dimensions with problem solving process. Social skills as one of the fundamental features of individual differences can pave the individual's success and achievement way (Wong, Law, 2004).

Regarding the importance and the values of training social skills with prevention goals and promotion of mental health and effective presence of individuals in societies and their relationship with others, it can be said that evolution of all growth stages depends on superiority of social skills (Eliot, 2006). One of the important crisis of life is identity happening in juvenile times playing a significant disorder in personal adjustment, social relations, academic achievement and job planning of teenagers. "who am i?" is the question that occupies the mind of every individual specially the teenagers. This questions spurs the people to search the self and find an identity. In teen times, along with physical, cognitive, emotional and social growth, identity takes a significant importance and most of teenagers with alacrity and eagerness finds some questions in their minds about field of study, my social place, my future job, marriage and my life, my ethical and philosophical values (Erikson, 2004).

In this point we can say that identity is the difference and distinction individuals put between themselves and the others. Personal identity is a socio-psychological structure including the mentality and beliefs and the ways of making relations with others (Ahmadi, 1385). Identity is person's social role and his understanding about it (Corsini, 2003). To identify and mark the relationship of social skills and identity dimensions we can use problem solving process (Cessidy, Long, 2003). Problem solving applies the information, distinctions and ideas we know

and the past memories we remember (Greeno, 2004). Issuing these problems are not only to show their importance in human and behavioral sciences but also in growing the healthy personality of children and teens.

The main purpose of the present study on the relationship between social skills and identity dimensions with problem solving process is divided in two sub-purposes:

determining the relationship of social skills (evaluation of positive and negative relationships) with students' problem solving process.

determining the relationship of identity (personal identity, plural identity, social identity) with students' problem solving process.

Based on the purposes of this study, the followings are the research hypotheses:

there is a positive relationship between social skills (positive and negative behaviors) with problem solving.

there is positive relationship between identity dimensions (personal identity, social identity, plural identity) and problem solving.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is of non-experimental and correlational type because the researcher intends to specify the relationship between variables and determine the share of sub-scales.

PARTICIPANTS, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

The subjects include all female high school students of Jam town in 1391-92 educational year. Since measurement scale is continuous, research hypotheses are one range and the sample is determined at 95% level:

$$n = \frac{\sigma^y \times Z_{1-\alpha}^y}{d^y} = 150$$

N= number of sample

σ^y =subjects' variance based on the previous research equal to 9.1 (Shamlou, 1389)

σ^y

$Z_{1-\alpha}^y$ = 95% confidence level for directional hypothesis equal to 1.64

d^y = acceptable error equal to 5%

Instruments and data collection

Three instruments were used in this study

Teen's social skills questionnaire: Inderbitzen and Foster (2003) has 39 sentences of 6 likert point scale for positive and negative behaviors components. Arjmandi (1386) reported 0.084 cronbakh alpha reliability of the questionnaire

Cheek and Tropp identity dimensions questionnaire having 45 sentences of 5 likert point scale for four components of personal identity, relational identity, social identity and plural identity. Used by Cheek and Trop (2002) in America, Mexico, Australia and Phillipine, reliability coefficient of personal identity came 0.080 - 0.083, interpersonal relationship 0.082 - 0.091, social identity 0.080 – 0.082 and plural identity 0.067 – 0.077 showing high internal consistency of the instrument.

Heppner and Peterson's (2005) problem solving questionnaire having 35 sentences of 6 likert point scale for three components including trusting to problem solving, orientation-avoidance and personal controlling. Using test-retest method with two-week interval, Heppner an Peterson reported 0.083 – 0.089 Cronbakh alpha reliability for this instrument.

Research findings

Regression test of the effects of social skills on problem solving

Multi-regression analysis was used to investigate the effect of each of the sub-scales of social skills on problem solving. It shows that observed significance level value is less than 0.05 (table 1), so students' social skills (positive and negative) effective on their problem solving. This result is in line with correlation coefficient calculated before. Correlation test was performed for both of variables individually. Here some independent variables were entered and their effect was evaluated on dependent variable. Based on multi-regression result (table 1), 65% of students problem solving change is explained by their social skills

Table 1. multi-regression analysis. Social skills effects on problem solving

	Non-standard B	Standard B	t	sig
Fixed R	4.187	0.65	5.210	0.000
Positive behaviors	0.494	0.66	4.914	0.001
Negative behaviors	0.312	0.63	6.132	0.000

Normality of error

to ensure the accuracy of regression results, measurement error should be tested to verify its normality (Graph 1).

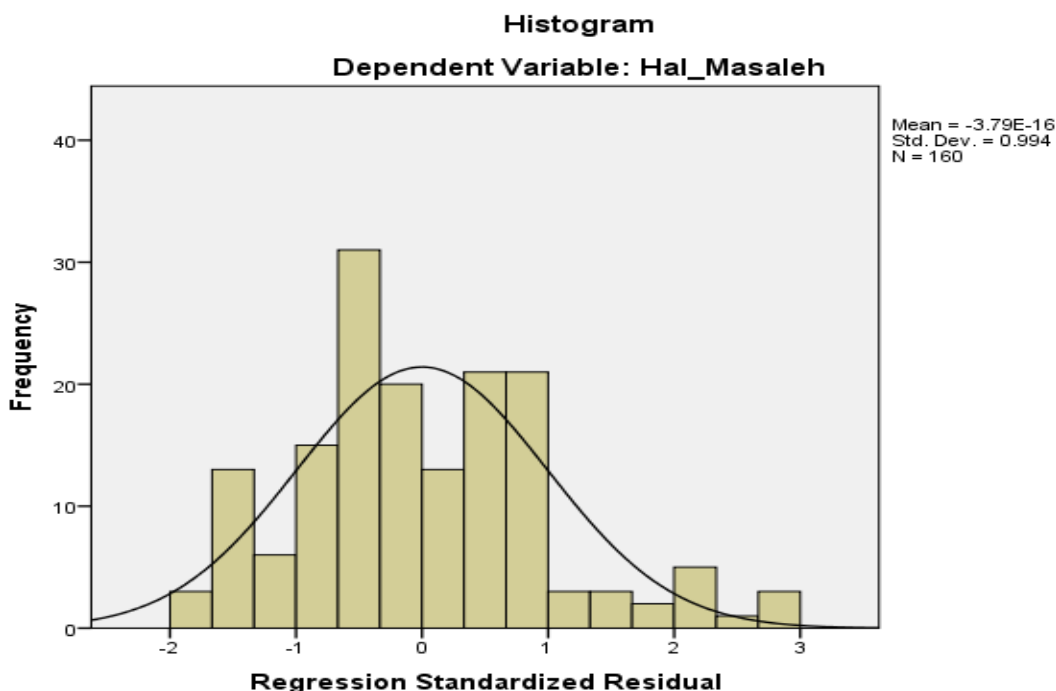


Figure1. Histogram of the investigation of normal supposition of measurement error in the effects of social skills on problem solving

As observed in the histogram, distribution form is nearly normal. So it can be said that error distribution is normal verifying the accuracy of the results.

Regression test for the effects of identity dimensions on problem solving

Multi-regression analysis was used to investigate the effect of each of the sub-scales of identity dimensions on problem solving. It shows that observed significance level value is less than 0.05 (table 2), so students' identity dimensions (personal, relational, social, plural) are effective on their problem solving. This result is in line with correlation coefficient calculated before. Based on multi-regression result (table 2), 76% of students problem solving change is explained by their identity.

Table2. multi-regression analysis. Identity effects on problem solving.

	Non-standard B	Standard B	t	sig
Fixed R	3.112	0.76	6.32	0.000
Personal identity	0.766	0.63	7.11	0.001
Relational identity	0.418	0.73	4.24	0.000
Social identity	0.534	0.75	3.97	0.000
Plural identity	0.452	0.81	4.10	0.001

Normality of error

Graph 2 ensures the accuracy of regression results. Based on graph 2, distribution form is nearly normal. So it can be said that error distribution is normal verifying the accuracy of the results.

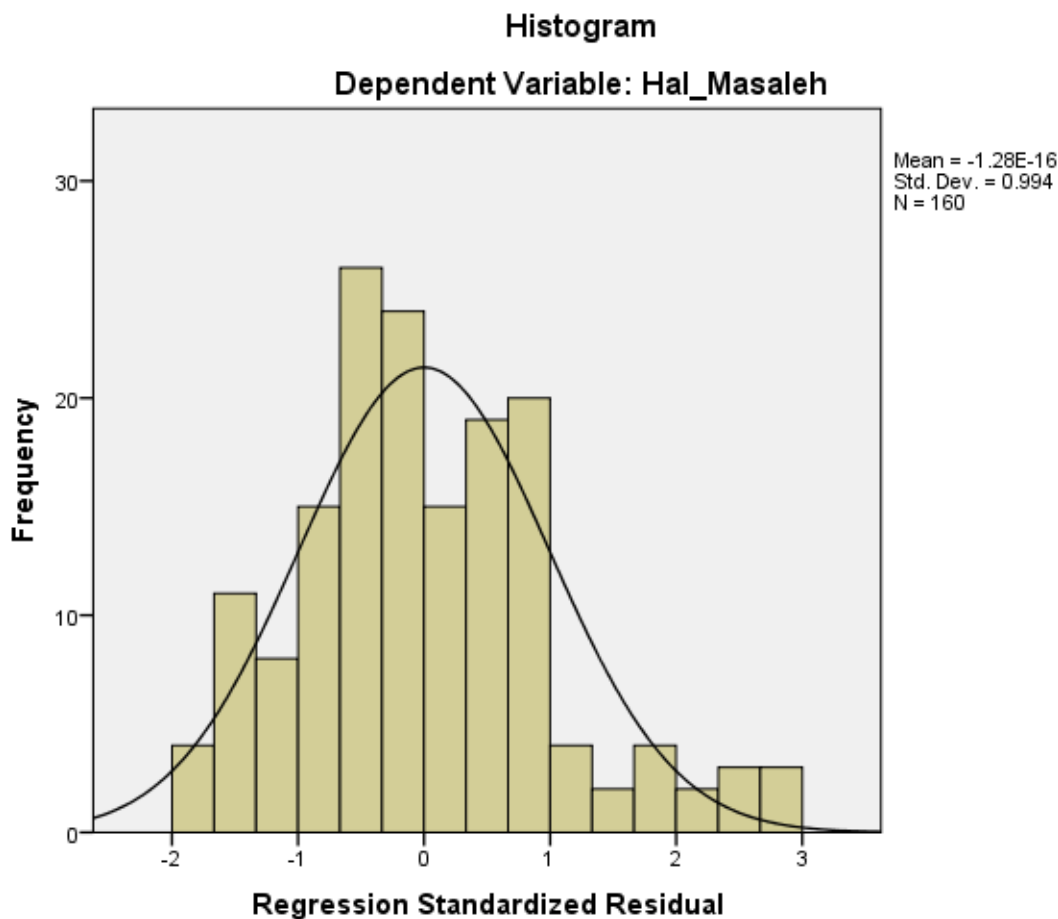


Figure2. Histogram of the investigation of normal supposition of measurement error in the effects of identity on problem solving

CONCLUSION

First hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between social skills (positive and negative behaviors) and problem solving. The first hypothesis is supported and it can be said that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between social skills (positive and negative behaviors) of female students of Jam town and their problem solving. As noted, social skills are those one which remove the obstacles of trained positive social relation and can assist problem solving process and effective performance.

Social skills are behaviors helping individuals to make proper reaction and interaction. In schools, interaction can be with classmates, teachers and other staff. This interaction causes students to solve the faced problems easily in their interactions (Jones and Blank,2008). In other words, understanding social skills enable students to understand and predict others' behaviors, control their own behavior and adjust social interactions. In fact these skills assist students to interact with each other leading to positive behaviors and preventing negative ones when facing with problems (Nazarinejad, 1386.106). on the other hand, social skills not only are effective in interacting with the people the person is dealing with but also in their future job success and social progress. In Sort (2006) it was stated that training of social skills lead to increase of social network (peers and teachers), social acceptable behavior, positive social behavior, rule-governed behaviors and initiation of speaking in teenagers.

Students who have acquired needed social skills can adjust well to his environment or he can prevent verbal and physical conflicting situations through making relationship with others.

These students show behaviors leading to positive socio-psychological outcomes like being accepted by peers and effective relation with others. To this end encouraging teens, making a successful behavioral pattern with supporting his social skills and preventing punitive and humiliating behaviors and teaching correct methods of life hardships are among the most important items which can be taught to solve teenagers' problems.

Aschler and Tiller (2004) also showed that training social skills to teenagers not only improves teens' social adjustment and their different abilities but also their academic achievement. Also in Luis and Timoti (2003) study it was stated that training social skills in schools decreases students' problematic behaviors and improves their social performance, decreases or obviates behavioral problems and issues.

Generally based on this study and other ones like Oslobi and govvara (2003), Eliot and Gerscham (2005), Luis and timoti (2007), Height anf Filler (2007), Kaplan and et al (2008), Morgan and Pearson (1999) and Aqajani (1383), it can be said that teenagers' social skills have a relationship with problem solving.

Second hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between identity dimensions (personal, social, plural) and problem solving. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between identity dimensions and problem solving supporting the second hypothesis. In other words it can be said that problem solving is a vital skill for students in the present education period. In most of the societies all believe that increase of problem solving skills should be emphasized. Since problem solving is a cognitive-behavioral process in which persons identify or discover effective strategies to face with problematic situations of life, they should understand their own identity to stride with a better cognition and awareness to adapt these strategies. So teaching the skills in relation to students' understanding of their own identity is one of the necessary needs because students face with different problems in their life and if not having the ability of problem solving, not only they may make the problems more complicated and bigger through selecting useless and juvenile solutions, but also endanger their whole life (Robinson et al, 2009). Also it can be said that students can have the opportunity and ability to consider problems and present new solutions when reached to a solidarity and unity or solved their problems.

On the other side, identity crisis is a time when teenagers take considerable doubt about their role in the society. On Erikson's view such crisis happens for every teen and its solving lead to finding an identity and intimacy. If not solved it leads to teenager's confusion having significant effects on problem solving. Students who have successful identity have commitment to themselves and schools assignments and do them well. They have high self-esteem and self-concept. They have known long term goals in life and they can solve their challenges. In some studies it's been shown that persons with known identities will have better academic performance in future. Based on the results, different identities of like personal, social, relational and plural which form students' identity dimensions have direct relationship problem solving. There aren't many studies in line with the present research except for Silverstone and Salsali (2008;2006), Smith and Alei (2004), Kaplan et al (2003), Nasiri et al (1389), Rezazadeh (1389) and Mohammadi (1382).

Regarding the existing theoretical spectrum and findings and limitations of the present study, the following suggestions are presented for further research:

Investigating the relationship between social skills and identity dimensions of male students and its comparison with females'

Investigating the factor which can have intervening roles like gender on research structure

Investigation of the relationship between the research structure in other schools and other grades and levels to gain more comprehensive results

Replicating the research in different levels to consider the results

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