A survey on the relation between social support and mental health in students shahid rajaee university

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Abstract: This study sought the relationship between social support, mental health and demographic factors in new students of shahid rajaee University (2010-11). This cross-sectional descriptive study enrolled 1242 university students. Subjects were General Health Questionnaire-12 and social support scale. Statistical analysis was performed by chi-square, Regression and two sample t-tests. This study showed that there was significance relationship between social support and mental health (PV<0.001). Students with high social support had high mental health. Social support and mental health have significant and positive relationship. Change policies aimed at improvi.ng quality and quantity of supportive networks, especially for vulnerable students can strengthen the protective effect of social support.

Keywords: General Health Questionnaire, Social Support, Mental Health

1.Introduction

Universities absorb a great number of young individuals annually and bring up their scientific, practical potentials in a special period of time and finally send these educated and specialist forces to the society. The university education is really stressful due to existence of various factors, so it is not possible to run away from stress factors and face with dramatic changes. In these situations, people can be ready to confront with stressful condition of life in which the rehabilitation possibility, mental and physical health supply have been determined. Mental and physical reinforcement, personality factors strength, quality improvement of relations and social support by deepening the relationships and reducing the complaints are main strategies which greatly guarantee the human`s health. How does social support affect mental health position? Kohen and Wales have stated two types of main and distinctive models for the relation between social support and physical, mental and social health. A. a model with protective effects and a model with fundamental and essential effects. The model with protective effects states that social support improves the position of a person`s health by having effects on stress outcomes. It means that when life becomes stressful, those who have less social support show more signs of disorder. Second model with fundamental effects states that social support influence those who experience stress without considering its amount.

George indicated that enough provision of social support has considerable and direct effects on mental health in a way that higher social support is accompanied with lower mental disorder.

Cho and Chi have inspected the effects of stress events on changes of depression signs. They figured out that social support balances the life events which affect depression. They stated following dimensions for social support:

1- Expanding the social network
2- network combination
3- social contact frequency
4- social support satisfaction
5- emotional support
6- effective financial support

Student life is a stressful period. The factor which makes the atmosphere of student life full of stress and makes it different from the other aspects of life is the existence of determined expectations in the field of social and educational function. It means that the parents and university responsible expect the students to terminate the educational course efficiently. There are two positive and negative aspects in assessment of social relationships on mental health. Many researches show the positive effects. But it`s better to inspect both positive and negative aspects. Some studies show that in the situation in which support is done reluctantly or the emotions of the receiver are not considered can have detrimental effects. In the other words, it annoys the person and finally his health will be endangered. Negative interactions in a social support network is accompanied with satisfaction reduction and increases the depression. Worry and annoyance of people are involved with positive effects of social support because increase the stress.

The main issue which is being followed currently is the inspection of mental health condition of new

comer students in Shahid Rajaee teacher training college in years 2011-2012 and also the social support effect assessment on mental health. The present research follows to answer this question whether it can be possible to recognize the mental health of students from social support indexes and some demographic variables. in other word, which group of students are exposed to high risk and vulnerability based on this feature?

2. Methods

This study is a kind of cross-sectional descriptive and sampling census method. Thus, the research sample equals the research society. The sample volume is 1242 students in this case.

2.1. Tools:

2.1.1. General features of the respondent:

This part is arranged by the researcher. Personal and demographic features of respondents have been questioned.

2.1.2. 28- question questionnaire of general health or GHQ-28 questionnaire.

Main text of this questionnaire has been designed by Goldberg. These tools can be used to inspect the mental health as a screening tools for mental disorders. In this questionnaire, high scores implicate general health condition. These tools have appropriate justifiability and stability features. The research of Montazeri et al stated the alpha correlation of Chroonbach in this questionnaire 87% and its converged assurance with total criterion of life quality. r = 56 percent (p < 0.0001)

2.1.3. The questionnaire of social support criterion or sss questionnaire(Stanford social scale):

This scale has 12 items and each item has two choices yes / no. The score domain is between 0 to 12. High score implicates high imaginary social support and low score implicates low imaginary social support. The alpha correlation of Chroonbach for these tools has been 62 percent which has acceptable internal homogeneity and at present, the alpha correlation of Chroonbach of tools has been gained 76 percent which indicate appropriate internal parallelism. The descriptive statistic method was used for information statistical analysis (abundance, percentage and average) and analytical statistic (ANOVA test).

3. Results

1242 new students for educational year 2011-2012 (711 boys and 531 girls) were inspected in this study. The age average of these students is 8/1 + - 24 with at least 17 years old and maximum 62 years old. The most important research question: is there a relationship between mental health and social support of students? To answer this question, a linear regression test of a variable was used In which social support was considered as independent variable and mental health as dependent variable. The test result showed that the more social support score goes up, general health score goes down (p< 0.0001, B = 27 percent, b= - 63 percent, t= - 15/75) and it means general health position will be improved. The inspection of social support variables based on marriage showed although married people had more imaginary social support, this difference is not statistically meaningful. (p < 0.5).

ANOVA test showed a meaningful statistical difference in the amount of social support based on the residential location. (p < 0.0001, df = 3/1354, f= 12/4). The following test of TUKEY signified that those students who are supposed to live as home stay (to live with a family) have more social support toward the students who settle in dormitory and the students of dormitory toward the students who are supposed to rent a house have more social support.

Also, the inspection of social support based on gender signified that female students had more social support toward male students (10/48 percent among girls toward 9/65 percent among boys) and this difference was statistically meaningful. P < 0.001

The inspecting of the relation of students settlement style (home stay, dormitory) indicated that the highest amount of social support was the students who had lived with their families. In this study, the mental disorder outbreak was 8/2 percent which was much less than the other studies in this field. In the study of Yaghoubi and et all 18 percent and Bagheri and et all 16/5 percent was reported. The comparison of mental health among students based on marital status showed that the married people had less mental disorder toward single ones which is coordinated with research result of Bagheri et al. (p < 0.01)

4. Discussion

Stress and bitter events of life is related to social damages and sickness outbreak. However, similar experiences of life can have negative effects on different individuals. Everybody experiences some crises such as death of family members, economic problems, changing the residential location but they have different reaction toward stress. One of the protective factor of mental health against stresses is social support. Researches on the relation between social support and mental health of people reaches two decades. Social support is defined differently because various fields and tools have been created for its assessment. For instance, Castle defines social support as a social solidarity and Koob defines social support as a protective factor against stress in a way that has a significant effect on mental health and social application. He states that social support makes a

person feel to be loved, cared respected and belonged to a network of relations. The current research assessed the relation between social support, mental health and also social support and demographic variables among new students in teacher training college of Shahid Rajaee in the years 2011-2012. assessment of the social support scale based on gender indicated that female students have more social support (10/48) toward male students (9/ 65) which is a meaningful difference. Velmoos and Betz have found out similar results in their research as well. Researches done on Iranian students such as Bolhari and et all and Hooman indicated that girls have more social support more than boys (1383), so they have a remarkable protective factor. social support comparison between single and married students showed that average scores of social support among married students was more than single ones but this difference was not statistically meaningful. The researches of Cho, Chi and George show that social support can confront with emotional problems specially depression as a protective factor. On the other hand, Kohen and Wales showed in their researches that social support can affect positively on mental, physical and social health by two ways: protective effects and fundamental effects. So it is expected that the married students have more imaginary social support after marriage due to new family relation and network establishment and according to its fundamental and protective effects. they face less emotional and excitement problems. The average score of social support based on residential location prediction signifies that the highest scores of social support relate to the students who are supposed to live with a family. Recoona figured out based on his research on Spanish and American students that social support network of family and friends in both cultures are related to mental health and happiness. Also, in Spain sample, the amount of happiness and, mental health was more than Americans due to higher degree of intimacy in family. It is predictable that non-native students who are living in their own house or dormitory or even far away from their families have lower imaginary social support and more vulnerable toward those who are supposed to live with a family.

5. Conclusion
Results show that there is a meaningful relation between general health scores and social support scale scores but it is a reversed relation. It means when social support scores increase, general health scores decrease and this decline shows the improvement of mental health. Thus, the results of recent researches have shown that female married students with predicted residential location with family have higher

social support which is a protective factor itself against crises and stresses.

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