The correlation between identity styles with loneliness feeling and social anxiety

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ABSTRACT: Social anxiety is a psychological disorder which is affected by cognitive and identity style of person. This research targets is the correlation between identity style with loneliness feeling and social anxiety amongst students. This research is a correlation study and statistical community of the research comprises students of Payam Noor University of Kermanshah, Iran, 2014 and 2015. By cluster sampling 100 students were selected to conduct the research. Berzonsky identity style questionnaire (1992), loneliness feeling questionnaire (UCLA) and Liebowitz social anxiety test (1984) were used to gather data. For analyzing data, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were employed. Results indicate that there was a significant and positive correlation between loneliness feeling and social anxiety. There was a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and informational style and normative identity style; Meanwhile, there was a positive significant correlation between social anxiety and diffuse style/ avoidant style(P<0.001). Loneliness feeling and informational and normative styles can predict the variance of social anxiety, while diffuse/ avoidant identity styles at significant levels cannot predict the variance of social anxiety. Therefore, based on the findings, appropriate training methods can be realized to improve normative and informational identity style and to reduce loneliness feeling amongst the students.

Keywords: Identity style, Loneliness feeling, Social anxiety, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Concerning about mental health and its effects on growth and performance of people and simultaneous perceptible anxiety disorder, has increased in recent years. Thus, specialists emphasize on assessment and treatment anxiety disorder. Human is a social animate and needs to establish communication with other people. To reach to this intention, people should be without panic of criticism, exclusion or being evaluated by other people, and come in to social situations and consider himself/herself as a respectful and estimable person. Anxiety in social situations is not rare, however, it is not tough problem amongst all people and even improves performances, but in some people as attend in a social situation, social; anxiety is very intense and person become extremely anxious. In this case, one shows some physiological and emotional anxiety signals caused by panic of criticism, and false evaluation by other people. Social anxiety is recognized by a continuous panic of one or several social; situations in which people think their performances and behaviors are monitoring by other people, thus, they refrain from social situations. Social anxiety is recognized by some physiological traits (red cheeks, perspiration dried mouth and trembling bodies when attending in a stressful social situation) psychological traits (sham, embarrassment, panic of possible mistakes and negative judgment and criticism by other people) and behavioral traits(aloofness, refraining from visual contacts, panic of self-expression and talking in a social situation or being addressed by other people) (Strawinsky, Bond & Amado, 2004).

Social anxiety includes panic of social situations like a public speech, eating at the presence of other people, attending in a party and so on, in which person is faced to potential risk of the ridicule by other people and also embarrassment in a social situation. People with social anxiety always have the panic of wrong behaviors in a social situation and other people consider them a weak, no smart and clumsy recognizing their anxiety. Basically, main anxiety in this kind of disorder is a negative assessment in social situations and panic of wrong behavior leading to negative evaluation (Mohammadi, 2014). People with this disorder, are at the risk of tougher disorders like schizophrenia and schizoid, personality disorders, drug addiction, suicide and being hospitalized in psychiatric clinics even in adolescence and youthfulness ages.

This disorder appears in the rang of 7 to 12 years of age (Wigen & Fehem 2001; Furmark, 2002; Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin & Merikangas, 2005), at high level of emotional performance, professional and interpersonal life is related to (Ledly and Heimberg 2005, Katzelnick, Koback, Deleir, Henck, Greist, Davidson et al 2001) life quality (Lochner, Mogotsi, Du Toit, Kaminer, Niehaus and Stein 2003) friendship and romantic relationships (Antony, Roth, Swinsom, Huta & Devince, 1998; Wishman, Sheldon & Georing, 2000) and even is former to other anxiety disorders, temperament disorders and disorders caused by drug abuse (Lampe, Slade, Issakidis and Andrew, 2003).

Therefore, before getting a chronic disorder, the reasons should be identified. Loneliness feeling is a major reason of structures related to social anxiety which has been discussed ancient times. In ancient times, it was regarded as a positive concept and prevention from daily struggle to reach to glorious goals in life(Like rumination, mental attention and praying), nowadays in psychological term, it is not a positive concept but is considered as a situation devoid of communication(De Jong Gierveled, 1998). Loneliness feeling means difference between desired level and actual level of social relationships, and increase in this difference leads to increase in loneliness feeling. Some researchers consider the loneliness feeling as a particular psychological situation caused by qualitative and quantitative defaults in social relationships. This feeling is evinced when the level of exciting relationships is lower that desired level or required friendship is not realized, and may make person to refrain from social situations (Peplau & Perlman, 1982).

Weiss (1973) based on the characteristics of social relationships defaults (for example cordial or social relationships) introduced two kinds of loneliness feelings and also two originations for them:

1) Emotional loneliness: loneliness feeling caused by emotional isolation that is appeared by emotional devotion or a cordial relationship (normally with spouse, parents, friends or children). This kind of loneliness is removed by a new emotional devotion, absurdity, exclusion, anxiety, stress and panic are a number of traits caused by emotional loneliness.

2) Social loneliness: loneliness caused by social isolation appeared by lack of appropriate and interesting social web, tiredness, aimlessness, worthlessness and being marginalized are caused by social loneliness (Gierveld, Triburg & Dykstra, 2006).

People with loneliness feeling are failed in friendship and social relationships because they enter to debates with a negative expect ion and prediction. These people are anxious in social relationships and are more vulnerable to exclusion leading to anxiety in social situation and avoidance of society(Russell, Peplau & Curtona, 1980). Also, these people have disaster with friendship settlement, social activities, group partnership, enjoying party and monitoring milieu(Salimi, Jokar & Nikpoor, 2009).

Another psychological factor associated with anxiety is identity style. Erikson (1963) defines the identity as a relative stable feeling of isolation, thus, in spite of behaviors, thoughts and feelings, personal perception is always same. Berzonsky (2004) called the identity as being self-made. Self hypothesis inclusive of principals and structures are counteracting with the environment and world and creates referring framework to variable information process associated with the identity. In his view identity is a personal framework used as a source of experiences. He represented a social-cognitive view to define the identity in a different way clarifying the differences of processes uses in various situations to make decision, solve problems and discover information. He, therefore, introduced three alignments, informational styles, normative styles and diffuse/ avoidant styles. People with informational identity are suspicious about their observations and are interested in delaying judgment ambient events until they be able to evaluate and process the information. Informational style is correlated directly to self reflection, focus on the problem, style of rational cognizance, urgent need to cognition, decision making based on the plan, vigilance and acceptation communication experience. These people would like to review these concepts when are faced to inconsistent personal information and its result is distinction and wholeness of the identity (Ongen, 2011). Contrarily, people with normative style are consistent with other people's values and expectations. These people use previous responses to cope with potential threats and pervert cognition and try to sustain previous existences (Omidian, 2009). Moreover, because of inconsistency in information about them and norms of society, a sense of qualm of sin and anxiety of defeat are inspired to them (Vaziri, Lotfi Kashani, 2012).

People with normative identity obey the views and expectations of important people in their lives, so are faced to inconsistencies of identity. These people are very defensive, sensitive to ambiguity and need structure whereas people with diffuse avoidant style response continuously to situation demands. by a weak organized hypothesis about these people, they derelict and refrain from inconsistencies and personal decisions (Hashemi, 2014).

Studies and investigations on the variables in this research have not been conducted so far. Thus, similar investigations are considered. Russell (1996) states that there is a correlation between loneliness feeling and social-mental problems like alcoholism, suicide, depression, anxiety, drug addiction, lack of self confidence, negative ascribe, delinquency and academic regression.

Deljoo, Janbozorgi, Bazazyan & Mousavi (2013) in a research conducted on Bsc students, stated that there is a significant correlation between existential and loneliness feeling and can predict the variance of existential. Rahiminejad, Borjaliloo, Yazdani, Farahani & Amani (2012) in a research stated that informational styles and normative styles have indirect negative effect on the anxiety because of obligation of identity and indirect effect diffuse avoidant style on anxiety, is positive and significant. Vaziri & Lotfi Kashani (2012) in a research conducted on identity style and psychosis, showed a negative correlation between psychosis scores and informational and normative styles and also a positive correlation between diffuse avoidant style and psychosis.

Stein, Torgrud & Walker (2000) showed that people with social anxiety show double disorder in academic performances and three time professional none-efficacy than other people. These problems reduce the socio-economic status amongst anxious people. Since academic life is a challenging time being faced to stressful situations and appropriate compromising to achieve academic and professional succeeds shows the necessity of high level of mental health amongst this social group (Zare, Daneshpajoh, Amini, Razaghi & Fallahzadeh, 2007). Thus, investigation on social anxiety which is an effective factor to mental health and related factors can improve significantly mental health amongst the students.

Therefore, by considering the importance of the topic and lack of similar research, researchers conducted an investigation to detect the correlation identity styles together with loneliness feeling and social anxiety amongst the students of Payam Noor University. Thus, this research yields an answer to the questions below:

- Is there correlation between identity styles with loneliness feeling and social anxiety?
- Can identity styles and loneliness feeling predict the social anxiety?

MATERIAL & METHOD

According to the topic, the methodology of this research is descriptive-correlative. The community of research includes whole students of Payam Noor University of Kermanshah in 2014 & 2015. By clustering sampling, one hundred students were selected because based on Lindeman, Merenda & Geld (1980) the volume of sample in regressive and correlative studies should be at least 100 (Hooman, 2011). To start the research after persuading the students to collaborate for answering questionnaires, the procedure of respond was instructed to them. Pearson correlation coefficient test and simultaneously multiple regression were utilized to study the correlation between variables. The software used in this

research is SPSS19. Tools below were used to gather data:

-Berzonsky identity styles questionnaire(1992): This questionnaire includes 40qustions and evaluates the level of obligation of people and identity styles when questionnaire is initiated. These 40items include 11 items related to the informational identity (2,5, 6,16,18,25,26,30,33,35,37), nine items related to the normative identity style (4,10,19,21,23,28,32,34,40), ten items related to the diffuse avoidant style (3,8,13,17,24,27,29,31,36,38), and ten items evaluate the level of personal obligation used for secondary analysis and is not an identity style, thus, it was not used in this research. The answers include Five-Degree Lickret spectrum, completely, completely agree, agree, no idea, nay & completely nay. Scores of items are 9,11,14 and 20, conversely. White, Wampler & Win (1992) checked the validity of this questionnaire and findings were as follow: informational identity style correlation was 81%, normative identity style was 85%, perplexed identity style was 85% and obligation was 86%. Vaziri & Lotfi Kashani (2012) reported the general stability of scores in informational identity style; 0.841, normative identity style; 0.696 and diffuse avoidant style; 0.534.

-loneliness feeling questionnaire (UCLA): This questionnaire was designed by Russell and *et al* (1980) including 20 items. It comprises 9 negative and 11 positive sentences. The subject determines the degree of correspondence of each item to their states in four-option Lickret spectrum. In this scale, items 1,5,6,10,15,16,19 and 20, conversely. General score of subject is related to the sum of the scores of the test in rang of 20 to 80 (Bahiraei, Delavar & Ahadi, 2006). A reason of utilizing loneliness feeling test is the validity of the test. The stability of this test was retested again by Russell, Paupl & Ferguson (1978) and the calculated amount was 85%. Russell scale is the most convenient tool to evaluate the level of loneliness feeling with an item for all dimensions. Also, this test is highly correlated with other loneliness tests, social support tests and personality test (Porshahryari, 2007).

-Social anxiety questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed by Liebowitz, Quitkin & Stewart (1984) including 24 items to investigate on anxiety in social counteractions (11 items) and social situations (13 items). This questionnaire comprises six micro scales including panic of social counteractions, refraining from social performance situations. The items relevant to the social counteractions evaluate two aspects of panic of social counteractions. in the questionnaire that evaluates panic, score (0) was assigned for NEVER (lack of panic) and score (3) was assigned for INTENSE (intense panic). In the questionnaire that evaluates refraining, score (0) was assigned to NEVER (no refraining) and score (3) was assigned to NORMALY (intense refraining).

The sum of scores relevant to social counteractions and panic of performance situations, general panic and sum of scores of items related to refraining from social counteraction and refraining from performance situations indicated general refraining. This questionnaire reports the social anxiety at four levels, MIDDLE (55to 65), CONSIDERABLE (65 to 80), INTENSE (80 to 95) and VERY INTENSE (over 95). To evaluate the scientific validity of the tools, casual validation and content method was used and was verified by specialists and Chronbach Alpha coefficient in prescription of social anxiety was 97% (Ghezelbash, Peyravi, Inanloo & Haghani, 2015).

RESULTS

According to the research, seventy percent of students were single and thirty percent were married. The mean and deviation of their ages were 23.87 and 2.67, respectively. Descriptive indices of identity styles, loneliness feeling and social anxiety are given in Table 1.

Results showed that 50% of students have anxiety below MIDDLE. Also, 46% CONSIDERABLE and 4% MIDDLE anxiety (Table 2).

The results showed that loneliness feeling is correlated to social anxiety with coefficient of r = 0.974, positive and significant at P<0.001. It means increase in loneliness leads to increase in social anxiety. Social anxiety is correlated to informational identity styles with coefficient of r = 0.888, normative r = 0.864, negative and significant correlation and with diffuse/ avoidant style, positive correlation significant at P<0.001(Table 3).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of variables.

Variables	Mean	SD
Social anxiety	41/51	28/8
Loneliness	46/09	18/07
Informational identity style	32/54	4/96
Normative identity style	26/20	3/94
Diffuse avoidant identity style	29/76	4/31

Table 2: The prevalence of anxiety among students.

Anxiety Category	Frequency	Percent
Anxiety lower than average	50	50
Moderate anxiety	4	4
Significant anxiety	46	46
Severe anxiety	0	0
Too much anxiety	0	0
Total	100	100

Table 3: Results of the correlation of social anxiety, loneliness and identity styles.

Variables	Social Anxiety	
	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
Loneliness	0/974	0/001
Informational identity style	-0/888	0/001
Normative identity style	-0/864	0/001
Diffuse avoidant identity style	0/881	0/001

Table 4: Summary of regression and analysis of variance of loneliness and identity styles in prediction of social anxiety.

Model	R	R^2	SE	Source variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Loneliness				Regression	78742/82	4	19685/70		
Identity Styles	0/97	0/95	6/12	Residual total	3568/16 82310/99	95 99	37/56	524/11	0/001

The results of Table 4 show that the amount of observed F (P<0.001 and F = 524.11) was significant and 95% of variance of the social anxiety is predictable by loneliness feeling and various identity styles (R^2 = 0.95).

Loneliness feeling (t = 12.31 and B = 0743) was able to predict the variance of social anxiety variable positively and significantly at P<0.001. Various information styles (t = -2.29 and B = 0.107) and normative (t = -2.29 and B = 0.09) were able to predict the social anxiety negatively and significantly at P<0.05. However, diffuse /avoidant identity style was not able to predict the social anxiety at significant statistical levels (Table 5).

Table 5: Evaluation of variables Beta coefficients for loneliness and identity styles in prediction of social anxiety.

Model	B	Beta	T	Sig
Constant	37/812	-	2/56	0/02
Loneliness	1/18	0/743	12/31	0/001
Informational identity style	0/624	0/107	-2/29	0/02
Normative identity style	0/675	0/09	-2/20	0/03
Diffuse avoidant identity style	0/435	0/06	1/38	0/1

DISCUSSION

Results showed there is a positive and significant correlation between loneliness feeling and social anxiety. The results of this research are consistent with the results of Russell (1996) and Deljoo *et al* (2013). People with loneliness feeling have a particular qualitative and quantitative insufficiency in social relationships, thus, these people experience panic and anxiety in a social situation because of defaults and deficiency refrain from social situations. On the other hand, fail in social relationships leads to stress and anxiety and subsequently refraining from social situations.

There was a negative and significant correlation between informational style and social anxiety. The results of this finding was consistent with the results of Rahiminejad *et al* (2012), and Vaziri & Lotfi Kashani (2012). People with informational style use problem-oriented approaches to cope with anxiety and try to solve the problem rationally. Due to rational insight, aims and values, these people establish appropriate relationships with other people and believe that human relationship includes mistakes. These people can reduce anxiety in social situations. There is a significant and negative correlation between normative identity style and social anxiety. The results of this finding was consistent with the results of Rahiminejad *et al* (2012), and Vaziri & Lotfi Kashani (2012). Personality traits like integrity in difficulties, reducing complications and ambiguity of problems and refraining from problems when faced to difficulties cause people to reduce anxiety in performances and social situations. This traits provides an inner and outer consistency. although, refraining from social situations is not appropriate it appears that can reduce stress and anxiety of social situations.

There is a positive and significant correlation between diffuse/ avoidant and social anxiety. The result of these findings was consistent with Rahiminejad *et al* (2012), and Vaziri & Lotfi Kashani (2012). To clarify this subject, we can claim that people with this identity style because of impulsive reaction in social situations and performance and unlike normative and informational styles do not rely on themselves or other people's information and evaluate agitatedly without stability of situation, thus, they experience much stress and anxiety.

Loneliness feeling and informational identity styles can predict the social anxiety. The results of the research are consistent with the results of Russell (1996), Deljoo *et al* (2013) and Rahimi Nejad *et al* (2012). People with social anxiety would not like to begin relationship with other people and refrain from situations in which they may be judged by other people. This kind of loneliness increases anxiety. Using normative and informational styles lead to receive unification and distinction from information sources and subsequently suffer from lower level of social anxiety. In diffuse/ avoidant styles because of refraining from social situations and experience no social anxiety.

Statistical community of this research includes students of Payam Noor University of Kermanshah and cannot generalize the results of the research to all students. On the other hand, this research is a correlative study and the association between cause and effect cannot be extracted. This research was conducted by responding to the questionnaires and includes some limitations related to questionnaire-based studies particularly credit and validity of the subject.

It is suggested that in universities and academic centers with appropriate self-examination opportunities and also since during education appropriate social and personal identity can be formed, it would be suitable that academic programs be conducted to improve normative and informational identity styles and reduce loneliness feeling amongst students to reduce social anxiety. It is suggested also in future studies different identity styles and loneliness feeling with disorders like depression, obsession and so no.

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