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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF TEACHERS ON REDUCED SEPARATION ANXIETY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TEHRAN

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ABSTRACT
As parents are responsible for nurturing their children, teachers are responsible for personal development of the society. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher EI and reduced separation anxiety of primary school students in Tehran and evaluate the key role of teachers in reducing SAD which may result in school refusal and disrupted academic achievement. The studied population included 3432 teachers. For this purpose, schools were divided into five geographical categories (northeast, northwest, central, southeast and southwest). Then, 345 teachers were selected by Cochran's formula. Finally,280 students were selected for SAD. Bar-on's EQ-i and teacher evaluation form were used to evaluate teachers. Espada's CSAS as well as SCAS were used to measure student SAD. A post-test was performed for students with SAD. Data analysis and statistical calculations showed that teacher EI considerably influenced student SAD. The results showed a significant difference in pre-test and post-test scores of students and separation anxiety of students was reduced significantly. SAD is considerably prevalent among students; positive teacher-student interactions can reduce SAD symptoms in students. Primary school teaching is one of the most important professions in the world. Therefore, the teaching profession is a great responsibility, rather than a mere job.

KEYWORDS: emotional intelligence, separation anxiety, positive teacher-student interactions

INTRODUCTION

A significant portion of educational activities takes place in schools. Schools are of great importance as a sensitive and important social system (Bykzadeh at al., 2012). Children may experience separation anxiety disorder (SAD) in schools. Studies conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and other institutions show that untreated SAD may be followed by long-term complications throughout the life. A child who suffers from SAD may not be able to be independent and direct his life in adulthood (Diane Meyer, 2008). Therefore, teachers are responsible for fostering social and emotional skills of children. Teachers play an important role in the scientific future and success of students. Unpredicted and unplanned situations occurred in school require proper emotional adjustment (Kremenitzer, 2005). One of the most important factors in the success of teachers is how to deal with students in the first day of school and knowledge on SAD factors to improve the behavior of students. High IQ is not the only factor of success; instead, there are factors effective in improving professional activities (Sepehrian, 2007). One of these factors is emotional intelligence (EI), i.e. one's ability to monitor feelings and emotions of himself and others, ability to distinguish different emotions, and ability to use this information to direct thought and action (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). However, consequences of unlearned EI basic principles are becoming more and more apparent (Goleman, 1995). Recent studies show that the lack of EI can negatively influence the individual and social aspects (Fatemi, 2006).EI plays an important role in a successful profession, especially those requiring frequent contact with others. Nevertheless, little is known on the role of teachers in improving the status quo. Literature lacks a study conducted independently and directly on the relationship between teacher EI and SAD in primary school students. Although educators and practitioners have realized the significant role of EI, no great effort has been made so far. Thus, this study addresses the following questions. Can teachers be effective in reducing anxiety of students? Does their success depend on their EI skills?
The novelty of this study is that the reduced SAD in children is evaluated in relation to teacher EI. This implies the teacher-student interaction which promotes personal capabilities and solves the problems of students.

Theoretical Background

There is a noconsensusamong psychologist on the definition of intelligence. It is very difficult and controversial to define intelligence exactly. Currently, psychologists believe that intelligence is asset of abilities by which one understands, thinks and acts logically (Purafkari, 2008). Literally, emotional intelligence is defined as a set of emotions. Emotion refers to a short intense reaction of the organism to an unexpected situation associated with an emotional state (Khaef Elahiand Dustdar, 2003).Therefore, EI can be defined as learning and shifting emotions. In fact, a person with

high EI can define his emotions and perceive his feelings and experiences in a mutual relationship. He will be able to express and organize his emotions properly (Atashpour, 1998).Despite the increased focus on emotions and EI in the past two decades, understanding and management of emotions has been publicly neglected. Real life EI leads to success, efficacy, stability and promotion of human society and can change the future for generations (Goleman, 1995). EI plays an important role in successful professions, especially those in frequent contact with others. Successful performance of teachers is caused by their high EI (Pitt et al., 2007). Teaching is not an ordinary job; teaching is a combination of knowledge and emotion, effort and forgiveness, sacrifice and love. Using the golden and exceptional opportunities, the teacher can form children's personality since the first to the last grade of school (Haji Babaei, 2008), particularly children with SAD. Anxiety disorders, to the extent that disrupt the normal life and daily function (Spence and Spence, 1998), and particularly SAD are highly prevalent among children. Children SAD is associated with negative consequences for personal, academic and social adjustments. In addition, evidence suggests that children SAD is not a transient phenomenon; it will continue until adolescence and adulthood and will cause many problems in the future if left untreated (Spence, Paula, Barrett, 2003; Bernstein, Lynne and Egan, 2005; Ferdinand, 2007).SAD symptoms lead to certain clinical anxieties, social and academic problems, insecurity or other impaired functions of children (Kondal, 1917). Extreme SAD may cause school fear. Nevertheless, teachers can persist to eliminate emotional, psychological and educational problems of students and improve their quality of mental health.

Literature Review

Despite studies conducted on EI and SAD separately, no study was found on the relationship between teacher EI and reduced student SAD. Therefore, the present study addresses the studies conducted on the variables. Khanjani et al. (2014) determined the relationship between mother-child interaction and SAD and school phobia in children. Jafari Malek(2012)evaluated the relationship between cultural intelligence and EI and performance of SSO staff in Golestan Province. Abdekhodaei and Sadegh Ordubadi (2011) measured children's SAD and effectiveness of play therapy based on cognitive behavioral approach on reduced SAD. Razaghi (2008) examined the relationship between EI of performance on growth and reduction of resources among chairpersons of Saderat Bank branches in Tehran. Saedi Forukesh(2003) examined the relationship between parental attachment and personality traits of mothers and child attachment. Moura and Olivier (2008) conducted a study in Belgium on EI and cognitive evaluation in stressful situations; they evaluated performance of individual differences of 60 women under normal and mental conditions. Salami (2007) examined the relationship between EI and self-efficacy and attitudes of high school teachers in southwestern Nigeria. Hwang (2007) examined the relationship between EI and teaching effectiveness. Hood and Ibrg (2003) evaluated the results of parent-child interaction therapy; reports of mothers confirmed treatment after 3-6 years. Fox et al(2002)evaluated sibling interactions of anxious children. Türkbay and Söhmen (2001) conducted a study on the individual and family factors of children with SAD.

Applications and hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to examine EI theories in real situations. The findings of this study can be used to improve the current situation and promote the performance. The hypothesis is that there is a significant relationship between teacher EI and reduced SAD in the first-grade students.

Variables

This study examined the relationship between IE and other variables. Although variables such as gender, age, experience, education, marital status, etc. can also be effective, they are not considered here. EI is predictor and SAD is criterion.

Population, sample size and sampling method

The studied population includes all primary school teachers and students. There are 21 departments of education in Tehran (19 urban and 3 rural departments). The public and private first-grade classes include 1773 classes for boys and 1638 classes for girls. The first-grade students include 50244 boys and 46997 girls. Education level of teachers ranges from diploma (413), associate (1353), bachelor (1562) and master (105).The studied teachers include 3433 first-grade (3239 female and 194 male) teachers. Sample size (345) is determined by Cochran formula. Stratified sampling method is used with proportional assignment to assign random samples to different categories. Schools are divided into five geographical categories including northeast schools, northwest schools, central schools, southeast schools and southwest schools.

MATERIALS AND SCORING

In this study, a questionnaire is used to collect data. The questionnaire consists of three parts: a) description: this part describes the objective of the study and data collection, declares privacy and appreciates the respondents for their cooperation; b) general questions: this part contains two types of questions, demographics of teachers such as gender, age, experience, education and second, geographical category, demographics of parents and family; c) main questions: this part uses Bar-On's emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i) and evaluation form for teachers and Espada's CSAS (children's separation anxiety scale) and Spence children anxiety scale (SCAS) for students.

RESULTS

Descriptive and inferential analyses are used to analyze data. Normality test is performed for tests assuming normal data.

Descriptive analysis

In this section, descriptive statistics, including central and distribution parameters such as frequency, diagrams and tables are used to describe data. The samples include 324 (94%) female and 21 (6%) male teachers. Majority of samples (144, 42%) are 30-35 years old and minority of samples (7, 2%) are 45-50 years old. Most samples (145, 42%) have 5-10 years of experience and the least samples (20, 6%) have 15-20 years of experience. The highest number of samples (210, 61%) has bachelor degree and the lower number of samples (30, 9%) has master degree.
Schools are divided into five geographical categories (first category including districts 1, 3, 4 and 8; second category including districts 2, 5, 9 and 10; third category including districts 6, 7, 11 and 12; fourth category including districts 13, 14 and 15). The number of schools, students, classes and teachers as well as the prevalence of SAD is calculated for each category.

Comparison of SAD scores with CSAS and SCAS

To ensure the data, another test is performed on students with SAD and their scores are compared to CSAS and SCAS.

Inferential analysis

First phase

Paired sample t-test is used to examine hypothesis. Data related to students with SAD is examined in two periods after representing to the teacher; the feedbacks are used to evaluate the difference in the mean of traits(SAD). The significant difference in the mean of SAD data is examined in two periods for the studied categories first category including districts 1, 3, 4 and 8; second category including districts 2, 5, 9 and 10; third category including districts 6, 7, 11 and 12; fourth category including districts 13, 14 and 15).

In District 1, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-testis equal to 0.87, indicating a high correlation ($p = 0$) which is <0.05. In District 3, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.73, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$).In District 4, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.81, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between the two variables. Here, $p = 0$which is <0.05, indicating a significant difference in the mean of SAD in the first and second steps.

In District 8, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.57, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). In District 2, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.58, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). In District 5, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.62, indicating a high correlation ($p = 0$ which is<0.05). In District 9, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.80, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 10, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.83, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 6, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.71, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 7, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.88, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 11, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.95, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 12, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.97, indicating a high correlation ($p <0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two

variables. In District 13, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.96, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$).As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 14, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.05, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 15, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.87, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$). In District 16, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.85, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 17, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.98, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 18, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.83, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. In District 19, the coefficient of correlation obtained by paired t-test is equal to 0.05, indicating a high correlation ($p < 0.05$). As a result, there is a significant correlation between two variables. Moreover, the paired t-test is calculated for all districts.

Second phase

To test the hypothesis, SAD is initially compared in two periods. Then, significance of the relationship is determined by using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and coefficient of correlation. The collected data is related to five geographical categories for which SAD is calculated in relation to teacher EI.

Variance of teacher EI with student SAD

Total variance is calculated to find that whether the difference in second-phase SAD scores is contingent or is under influence of independent variable, EI. Calculating total variance of teacher EI and student SAD in two phases, intergroup sum of squares is equal to 1285.958 for the first phase and 496.107 for the second phase; intergroup sum of squares is equal to 7657.610 for the first phase and 1365.879 for the second phase. Intergroup mean square is equal to 24.730 for the first phase and 9.541 for the second phase. Intergroup mean square is equal to 33.734 for the first phase and 6.017 for the second phase. For significant F in0.05, F-value ≥1 in 52 degrees of freedom for intergroup and 227 degrees of freedom for intergroup. Clearly, there is significant difference in the second phase. Therefore, the difference in second-phase SAD scores is not contingent; it is influenced by the independent variable, teacher EI.

The relationship between teacher EI and student SAD

To examine the relationship between teacher EI and student SAD, descriptive characteristics of these two variables are given for the first and second phase; then, the correlation between EI and SAD is examined. Finally, the results of regression are presented for the teacher EI and student SAD in the second phase. The histogram had shown in Figure 1supports the assumed normal distribution of the population.

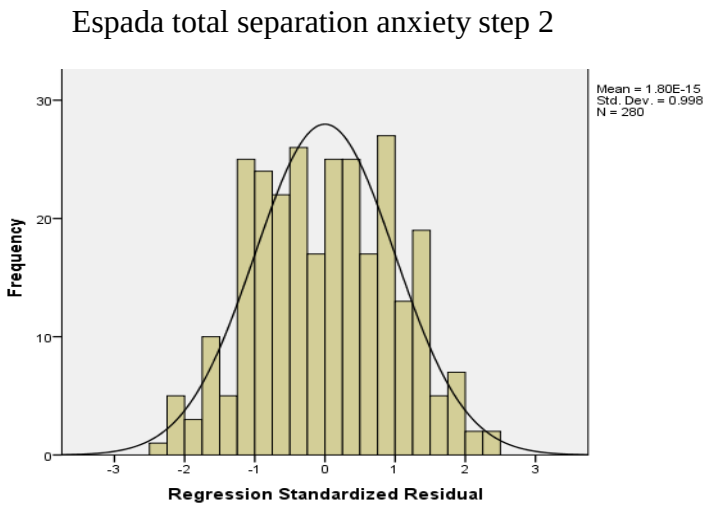

Figure 1:normal distribution of student SAD considering teacher EI

As Figure 2 shows, student SAD is normally distributed for any value of teacher EI. Therefore, residuals are normally distributed.

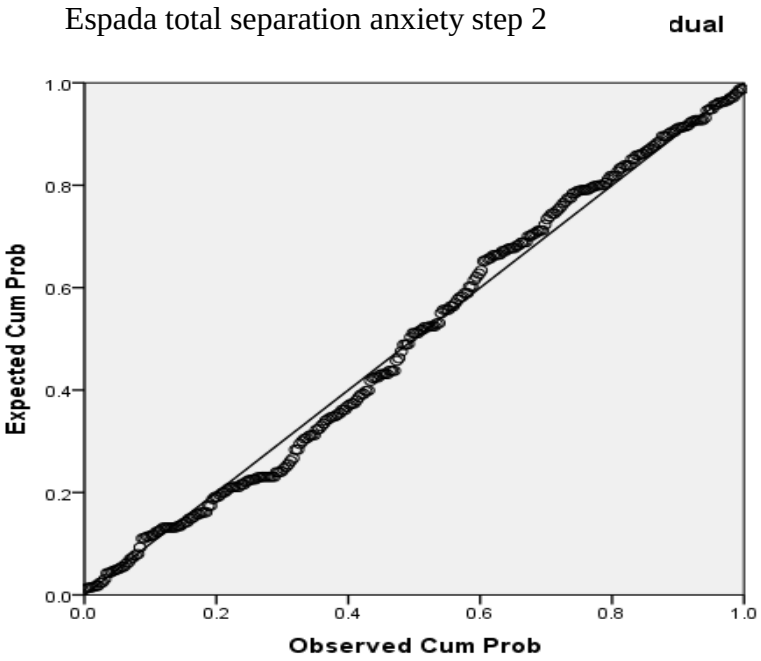

Figure 2: linear diagram for normal distribution of SAD considering teacher EI

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, it can be concluded that the teaching profession requires high EI. This factor will be effective on the relationship and interaction between teachers and students. Since the first grade of primary school is the first social and formal experience of children, teachers are the second most important factor, following family, to solve problems of students, particularly SAD. The hypothesis examined in this study is that there is a significant relationship between teacher EI and reduced student SAD. The mean of student SAD was significantly reduced in the second phase. Moreover, results of ANOVA indicate a significant reduction in the sum of squares and mean squares (inter-groups and intra-groups). As the results show, intergroup sum of squares is equal to 1285.958 for the first phase and 496.107 for the second phase; intergroup sum of squares is equal to 7657.610 for the first phase and 1365.879 for the second phase. Intergroup mean square is equal to 24.730 for the first phase and 9.541 for the second phase. Intragroup mean square is equal to 33.734 for the first phase and 6.017 for the second phase. For significant F in 0.05, F-value $\geq$1 in 52 degrees of freedom for intergroup and 227 degrees of freedom for intergroup. Clearly, there is significant difference in the second phase. Therefore, the difference in second-phase SAD scores is not contingent; it is influenced by the independent variable, teacher EI. Furthermore, there is a negative correlation (-0.110, P = 0.03) between teacher EI and student SAD in the first phase (P = 0.05) and a negative correlation (-0.248, P = 0.000) between teacher EI and student SAD in the second phase (P = 0.01). Therefore, there is a significance relationship between teacher EI and student SAD. The negative value indicates the negative correlation of EI in predicting regression equation. Results show a significant relationship between teacher EI and student SAD. EI involves a series of interconnected skills for accurate perception, assessment and expression of emotions, access to feelings to facilitate thinking, the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge as well as the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and rational growth. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people think, how they deal with problems, decide and behave. This suggests the effectiveness of this factor on improvement of students. Emotional skills play a critical role in working life of people, particularly teachers. These skills can considerably influence their success and generally education system. Children with SAD reflect their problems by inconsistency. This problem, if not solved, may cause anxiety in adulthood. Thus, teachers need their EI skills and self-efficacy to succeed.

Remarks

- This is a novel study; the studies conducted so far have examined SAD through parent-child interactions. Despite studies on EI, self-efficacy and SAD, no study was found on the relationship between teacher EI and self-efficacy and reduced student SAD in the primary school. Therefore, it is recommended to provide opportunities to for future works.
- It is recommended to extend the domain of studies to generalize the results.
- To generalize the results to other populations, it is recommended to conduct future studies on geographical regions with different cultural context.
- Considering the small number of studies conducted on children, particularly SAD, it is recommended to provide opportunities for future works.
- It is recommended to conduct studies on SAD, parental behaviors, genetic and environmental causes to provide practical solutions for reducing symptoms of children SAD.

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