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An Investigation of the differences between personality characteristics and mental immunity within addicts and non-addicts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference between personality traits and mental immunity of addicts and non-addicts. In so doing, forty addicts and forty non-addicts were selected using simple randomization sampling. The instruments employed to carry out the study was NEO-FFI questionnaire and Mental Immunity Questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, Regression and Independent t-test. The results of the study showed that there was no significant relationship between personality traits and mental immunity of the addicts. Among predictive personality variables of addiction, only responsibility taking has a strong predictive power. However, there was a significant relationship between those variables in non-addicts. The correlation coefficient of personality traits and mental immunity of non-addicts indicated that there was a significant relationship between mental immunity and responsibility taking at the level 0.05. Furthermore, there was negative correlation between mental immunity and openness at the level of 0.01. In addition, there was difference between addicts and non-addicts in terms of flexibility, openness and mental immunity.

Key words: personality characteristics, mental immunity, addicts, non-addicts.

INTRODUCTION

Iran has been a victim of drug trafficking because of being on a route for drug trafficking and having some historical and social issues. According to some statistics, about 1.2 to 6 million people take narcotics for pleasure or habitually. As forty percent of the population of Iran is estimated to be fewer than 15 and thirty five to forty million people over 15 years old, if we optimistically assess the number of addicts about 2 million, around five percent of the population in Iran face drug abuse. However, in industrial countries, the number of addicts has decreased and reached 2% in comparison with the last two decades [1]. On the other hand, some important questions for psychologists and researchers in the field of behavioral science is whether special personality traits distinguish addicts from average people, whether these traits arises from changes that occur because of taking narcotics over a long period of time, whether the addicts have had these traits before getting addicted, and how the a-fore-mentioned parameters are affected by different social and cultural factors of the society [2]. According to the results of some studies [3,4and 5], people aging 15 to 54 get addicted to narcotics more than any other mental and behavioral disorders and every year a large number of people die because of taking these illicit drugs. Being addicted to narcotics is a kind of rebellious behavior that emerges with a set of cognitive behavioral and psychological symptoms within a period of 12 months because of taking narcotics [6].

Another variable is mental immunity. It is a state in which meeting an individual's needs and demands come true and personal sense of importance, assurance, and self-confidence and acceptance from the group, which fulfill this need, is a state of relief and calmness. Martin describes mental immunity as "a guarantee for future welfare". Morz, also, sees mental immunity as "a relative relief from harmful threats". It can be said that a sense of security is necessary for being healthy both physically and mentally. Lack of sense of security always keeps a person in a defensive mode and disruption in body metabolism. If this state goes on, it leads a person to mental and physical illnesses because human body cannot tolerate perpetual tension [7, 8 and 9]. Much research evidence [10, 11 and 12] has supported that the effect of sense of insecurity on human is tension, arousal, and instability. These reactions make a person's body the least tolerant toward problems. Among the consequences of insecurity are worry, fear, panic and anxiety, tension, and nervousness. A person whose immunity needs are met feels a sense of friendship, love belonging, relief, acceptance self-esteem, hope, power, stable emotion, satisfaction, social interest, kindness, empathy, lack of tendency toward neuroticism and psychosis.

With regard to what has been mentioned the purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is a difference between personality traits and mental immunity of addicts and non-addicts or not.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Participants were 80 people (40 addicts and 40 non-addicts). The sample were randomly selected.

Measures

In order to collect data, the researchers used the following tools:

Mental Immunity Questionnaire. This questionnaire include 60 short questions standardized by [13]. Mental immunity inventory has been devised based on extensive theoretical and clinical studies by Maslow [14] and is used in assessment, evaluation and recognition of those individual traits that create a sense of security – insecurity. The inventory includes 71 items scoring in the form of yes/no questions. When the answer to the question is *yes*, the score will be **1** and when it is *no*, the score allocated will be **0**. High scores show higher mental immunity. The calculated validity by Maslow through the test re-tests was 0.84 and through split-half procedure was 0.83-0.91. The validity of the inventory achieved by [15] and [16] through Cronbach alpha procedure were 0.91 and 0.923 respectively. The internal correlation among the three subtests was ranging from 0.78 to 0.98. The correlation of these subtests to the overall test was ranging from .0.91 to 0.98.

Mack Crie and Kosta's **NEO-FFI** [17], this 60-item inventory was translated into Farsi and then validated by Garrusi Farshi [18]. The NEO Five-Factor Inventory is a brief and comprehensive measure of five personality dimensions, each being assessed by 12 statements. For each statement, the participants rated themselves on a 5-point Likert scale from zero to 4 (or from 4 to 0), with verbal anchors of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The inventory has been proved to reliably assess five personality dimensions in numerous studies [19] and has demonstrated good internal and external validity [20]. The reliability of the questionnaire for neuroticism, extroversion, flexibility, adaptation, and responsibility-taking subscales were respectively 0.79, 0.71, 0.72, 0.71, and 0.71 [21].

Procedure

All participants were asked to complete MIQ and NEO-FFI.

Statistical analyses

Statistical procedures involved in analyzing questionnaires i.e., Pearson's correlation coefficient, regression and independence sample t- test were conducted to assess the relationship between personality characteristic and mental immunity. Analysis of research data was performed using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Correlation between personality traits and mental immunity

	neurotic	Take responsibility	extroversion	openness	flexibility
Mental immunity	.259 ^a	.487 ^{**}	.069	-.158	.212
Sig.	.021	.0001	.541	.163	.059

. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Hypothesis1: There is a significant relationship between correlation coefficient of the studied variables.

As it can be observed in table 1, among personality variables (traits, flexibility, openness, extroversion, responsibility taking, and neurosis) there is a significant relationship (.487) only between mental immunity and responsibility taking at level 0.01. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between mental immunity and neurosis (-0.259) at level 0.05. However, the relationship between other variables (i.e. extroversion, flexibility, and openness) has not been significant.

Table 2: Results of the regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Change Statistics		
			R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.487 ^a	.237	.237	24.228	.001

a. *Predictors: (Constant), take responsibility*b. *Dependent Variable: mental immunity***Table 3. Results of the regression analysis**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	12.066	6.697			1.802	.075
	.977	.198	.487		4.922	.001

a. *Dependent Variable: mental immunity*

The results of regression analysis (tables 2 and3) show that responsibility taking with beta-value of 0.487 has the highest power of prediction at level 0.001. In other words, the more the amount of responsibility taking, the higher mental immunity by 0.487.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the variables of the study in addicts and non-addicts.

Table 3: Standard deviation, mean and t-test value among addicts and non-addicts

variable	subject	Std. deviation	mean	T	Sig.
Neurosis	Addict	5.72	27.87	1.162	0.248
	Non addict	4.48	23.75		
Extroversion	Addict	4.46	28.70	0.351	0.555
	Non addict	4.10	28.60		
Responsibility taking	Addict	7.11	34.62	0.074	0.787
	Non addict	6.70	31.40		
Openness	Addict	4.79	25.47	13.983	0.001
	Non addict	7.60	23.55		
Flexibility	Addict	4.10	29.57	4.473	0.038
	Non addict	5.08	26.70		
Mental immunity	Addict	14.23	52.10	0.197	0.658
	Non addict	11.49	36.52		

In order to study the difference between the mean values of the groups (addicts and non-addicts), independence t-test was used. The results indicates that the differences between these two group is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. The results of the study, further, show that there is a significant difference only between the two groups in openness (0.01) and flexibility (0.05) responsibility-taking.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicates that among predictive personality variables of addiction only responsibility-taking has a strong predictive power. Other variables, however, do not possess this quality. Therefore, those people who are weak in terms of responsibility taking are more likely to get addicted. In order to prevent these problems, a sense of responsibility taking should be promoted among individuals. These results, which are same the limited published findings [5, 3 and 4].

In addition, the results of the independent sample t-test showed that there is a difference in openness and flexibility among addicts and non-addicts. Flexibility component is an important personality variable that causes a person to adapt himself/herself to different situations and suffer less from mental problems [22 and 6]. This lack of flexibility causes an individual to turn to addiction.

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