A social work study on relationship between thinking styles, self-esteem and socio-economic conditions among university students

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CHRONICLE	ABSTRACT
	This paper presents a social work study on relationship between thinking style and self-esteem as well as socio-economic conditions among university students. The study selects 512 students from Islamic Azad University of Najafabad in province of Esfahan, Iran and distributes a questionnaire, which measures creativity and self-esteem. We also collect students' socio-economic conditions and analyze the information. The results of our survey disclose that thinking style and self-esteem have overlap with each other. In addition, students with better socio-economic conditions are more creative and use complex style of thinking. The study also provides some guidelines for practically implementing the results of our survey among other students.

1. Introduction

Thinking styles and self-esteem play important role on people's personal characteristics and there are literally different studies on the relationship of these two items on other personal factors such as socio-economic one. Zhang and Postiglione (2001), for instance, investigated the nature of thinking styles. They performed a survey among 694 students at the University of Hong Kong. The participants replied to the Thinking Styles Inventory and the Self-Esteem Inventory (Adult Form) and provided a range of socio-economic status (SES) indicators. They reported that when age was controlled, thinking styles and self-esteem overlap. Furthermore, regardless of age, those students who claimed using thinking styles that are creativity-generating and more complex, and those who reported higher self-esteem tend to be students from higher SES families.

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Zhang (2002) discussed about thinking styles and personality traits and whether thinking styles must be measured in addition to the measurement of personality traits or not. The means to reach this objective was to provide empirical evidence as well as to review other studies in the literature. The results demonstrated that thinking styles and personality traits statistically overlap but it was limited and two major arguments were made. First, thinking styles made a unique contribution to the understanding of human individual differences and second, the necessity for computing thinking styles apart from measuring personality traits relies on who implements the inventories and for what purposes.

Watkins and Yu (1993) investigated possible gender differences in the source and level of self-esteem of 99 male and 90 female under-graduate students from mainland China. The survey found little evidence of a gender difference in the level of overall self-esteem, but gender differences were evident in the subjects' ratings of the relative importance to their self-concept and their self-satisfaction with lower order facets of the self, implying the necessity for applying multidimensional measures of the self and for keeping the self-concept/self-esteem distinction.

Watkins et al. (1997), in other survey, studied age and gender differences in the self-esteem of Chinese children. Watkins and Dong (1994) studied the appropriateness for Chinese students of a translation of the Self-description Questionnaire and the Shavelson model of self-concept. They reported that there was a tendency for the Australians and the Nigerians to have relatively higher non-academic self-esteem than the some other nationalities. The Nigerians seemed to have significantly higher opinions of their physical appearance than did the other nationalities. Tsai et al. (2001) investigated how specific domains of cultural orientation such as language, social affliction, etc. were associated with self-esteem for some Chinese-American college students and reported some differences between cultural predictors of self-esteem between female and male students.

Grumm et al. (2009) investigated predictions on asymmetrical patterns of implicit and explicit self-esteem change and studied the effect of knowledge about the own self. They reported that while evaluative conditioning changed implicit but not explicit self-esteem. Lundeberg et al. (2000) investigated gender differences in confidence judgments when they were correct and incorrect on exam items with postsecondary students in five countries. They reported large and significant differences in overall confidence, confidence when correct, and confidence when wrong, associated primarily with country and culture.

According to Negga et al. (2007), college students are vulnerable to experience stress and it could cause bad consequences such as health and academic performance. However, there is a dearth of research investigating African American college students and stress. They studied the relationships between self-esteem, social support, school racial composition, age and gender on students' stress using the Student Stress Survey. They reported that the top five reported sources of stress were: Death of a family member (Intrapersonal Stress) 82%; low grades (Academic Stress) 69%; time management (Academic Stress) 61%; boyfriend/girlfriend problems (Interpersonal Stress) 57%; and missed classes (Academic Stress) 55%. Besides, they detected some significant correlations between self-esteem, social support and stress for all students except African Americans at PWIs.

In this paper, we present a social work study on relationship between thinking style and self-esteem as well as socio-economic conditions among university students. The organization of this paper is presented in section 2 while the results of our investigation are given in section 3 and the paper ends with concluding remarks to summarize the contribution of the paper.

2. The proposed study

The study performs a social work study on relationship between thinking style and self-esteem as well as socio-economic conditions among university students. The study selects 512 students from Islamic Azad University of Najafabad in province of Esfahan, Iran.

The proposed study of this paper chooses 512 students where 296 were male and 216 were female 80% of the participants were less than 23 years old. In our survey, 425 participants were undergraduate students, 81 were masters student and 6 were PhD student. The survey uses thinking style inventory test proposed by Sternberg and Wagner (1992), the Self-esteem inventory questionnaire was adopted from Coopersmith (1981) and 3 scales were used as socio-economic indicators. The first scale was associated with student's parents' educational backgrounds. We considered four educational backgrounds including those who only finished high schools, parents with bachelor degrees, master or PhD degrees. The second item was associated with family income categorized into six groups. Finally, we asked students whether they have a reading room in their house or not, which measures students' physical environment. Fig 1 demonstrates details of these characteristics. In our survey, 247 students maintained private reading room and the other 265 students did not have private room.
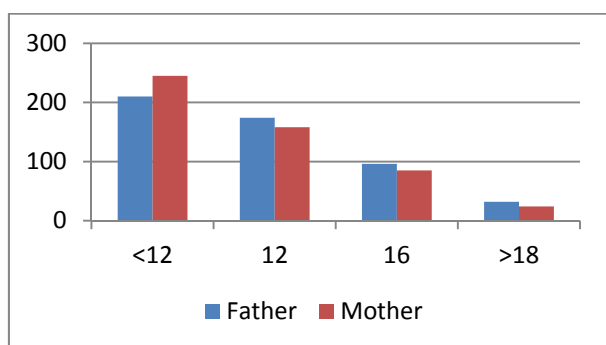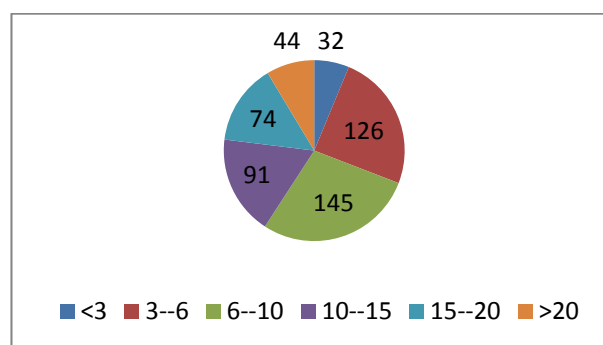
Fig. 1(a). Years of educational background | **Fig. 1(b).** Average monthly income (million Rials)

Fig. 1. Educational background of participants

The study uses Pearson correlation ratio to study the relationship among various variables of the study such as age, self-esteem, etc.

3. The results

In this section, we present details of our findings on testing the relationship between thinking style and self-esteem as well as socio-economic conditions among university students. We performed Pearson correlation test between each pairs. The correlation ratio between age and self-esteem was 0.22 with P-value <0.01, which means there is a positive and meaningful relationship between these two factors. In addition, the correlation ratio between age and rule-oriented thinking styles was 0.14 with P-value <0.01 and this means that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between these two items. Similarly, the correlation ratio between age and judgment oriented thinking styles was 0.11 with P-value < 0.01 and finally, the correlation ratio between age and hierarchical thinking styles was calculated as 0.15 with P-value < 0.01. The overall correlation between age and thinking style was 0.13 with P-value < 0.01. Table 1 demonstrates the correlation ratio between age and different styles of thinking.

Table 1
The correlation ratios between age and style of thinking

Scale	self-esteem	Scale	Self-esteem
Rule-oriented	0.13**	General	0.08*
Executive	0	Local	0.05*
Judgmental	0.15**	Minded	0.17**
Hierarchical	0.26***	Conservative	-0.10**
Group oriented	0.12**	Internal	-0.01
Individual	0.01	External	0.29**
Anarchic	0.12**		

a.*p<0.05.**p<0.01.***p<0.001

As we can observe from the results of Table, except one case, in all other cases, there are some meaningful relationship between age and self-esteem. In addition, the correlation ratio between self-esteem and student with private room was 0.11 with P-value <0.05 and the correlation ratio between self-esteem and the educational background of students' fathers was calculated as 0.08 with P-value <0.05, the correlation ratio between judgmental thinking style and the educational background of students' fathers was calculated as 0.11 with P-value <0.01. Finally, the correlation ratio between thinking style and the educational background of students' fathers was calculated as 0.08 with P-value <0.05.

4. Conclusion

This paper presented a social work study on relationship between thinking style and self-esteem as well as socio-economic conditions among university students. The study selected 450 students from Islamic Azad University of Najafabad in province of Esfahan, Iran and distributed some questionnaires, which measured creativity and self-esteem. Based on the results of this survey we can conclude that when age was controlled, thinking styles and self-esteem overlap. Furthermore, regardless of age, those students who claimed using thinking styles that are creativity-generating and more complex, and those who reported higher self-esteem tend to be students from higher self-esteem style families.

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