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THE INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATION BETWEEN HUMOR AND SOCIAL COMPATIBILITY AND FEELING OF LONELINESS IN NON-NATIVE STUDENTS OF WEST PART OF MAZANDARAN PROVINCE (IRAN)

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ABSTRACT

Annually, many students leave home to enter university. This will confront them with new challenges and stressful events. The aim of present study is to investigate the relation between humour and social compatibility and feeling of loneliness in non-native students of west Mazandaran province. This study is correlative. The statistical population of study includes all non-native students living in student dormitories of west part of Mazandaran province. 150 students were selected through simple random sampling as the statistical sample. The instrument used in this study includes Thorson humour scale, feeling of loneliness test and California Test of Personality. To test research hypothesis, Pearson correlation and regression method in meaningful level of 0.05 was used. The results showed that there is no significant relation between humour and feeling of loneliness and there is meaningful negative relation between social compatibility and feeling of loneliness, i.e. increase of social compatibility reduces the feeling of loneliness.

Keywords: *Humour, Social Compatibility, Feeling of Loneliness*

INTRODUCTION

Annually, many students leave home to enter university. This will confront them with new challenges and stressful events as well as bringing some challenges to them which are along with such displacement unavoidably (Ejeyi *et al.*, 2008). One of the problems which students, especially non-native students, confront with is the feeling of loneliness. This feeling has a short history in psychology, however, many cases can be found in philosophy, literature and religious (Hancock, 1986; quoted from Krause-, 2008). Feeling of loneliness requires individual perception and evaluation of his social relation and comparison of current status with desired and ideal condition. From point of view of some researchers, this comparison and the perception of social relation lead to emergence of feeling of loneliness (Heinrich and Gullone, 2006; Jones, 1981; Hawkley, Burleson *et al.*, 2003).

In most definitions provided about feeling of loneliness, It is explained as a unpleasant feeling and negative emotions which are something that individuals escape from it. Yet, some researchers consider feeling of loneliness as representing some negative emotions like anxiety, depression, unlikeliness... rather than considering it just a negative excitement. Based on this, feeling of loneliness is a pass way for domination of other negative feelings that individuals try to avoid consciously or unconsciously (Wright, 2005). Researchers believe that many factors are related to feeling of loneliness such as depression, anxiety, mental health, suicide thoughts, low support of family, low income, weak physical performance and disease and social compatibility. Social compatibility includes the compatibility of individual with his social environment that can be achieved by changing self or environment (Zahed *et al.*, 2012). Generally, compatibility has been defined as the ability to associate, compliance, compromise, cooperate and cope with environment and others (Foladi, 2004). Compatibility is a growing and dynamic process that involves a balance between what people want and what their community accepts. In other words, compatibility is a bidirectional process where, in one hand, the individual effectively communicates with the community and on the other hand, the community provides some tools through which the individual accomplishes his potential abilities. In this interaction, the individual community change and a relatively

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sustainable compatibility is achieved. Generally, compatibility refers to the dominance of individual on environment and the feeling of coping with self (Khodayari and Rahimi, 2006). One of the attributes of individuals that can be effective in making appropriate social relation and social compatibility is humour.

By realising the emotions without mental pressure and negative effects on others, humour helps individuals to overcome the traumatic and harms (Vaillant, 2000; quoting from Reph, 2006), reduces the interpersonal social distance and allows them to share their thoughts and emotions (Graham, 1995). Humour is a strong predictive of interpersonal attraction (Martin *et al.*, 2003; Reph, 2006). Findings have shown that individuals with high feeling of humour benefit from higher personal, family, occupational-educational and social performance, suffers less from physical problems, have lower mental disturbance and are socially more compatible and hopeful than individuals with lower sense of humour. This sense leads to removal of some communicative barriers such as intellectual ossification, negativism, personalization, extreme sensitivity, lack of constructive expression of anger, low self-esteem and ... and in sum, lower interpersonal problems (McGhee, 2002; Wooten, 1996; Sultanoff, 2002).

Various studies have investigated feeling of loneliness in various groups who were more susceptible to feeling of loneliness to identify the effective factors on it and use them in modification and reduction of harm due to it. Among the studies done in this area, Rahim *et al.*, (2011) can be referred to. This study has been done with the aim of identification of conceptual components of feeling of loneliness in Iranian students based on qualitative research and content analysis. Content data of feeling of loneliness has been gathered in three steps: first: the review of feeling of loneliness and its measuring instruments were comprehensively gathered.

Then, 10 consultants (four female and six male) and 10 students (six women and 4 men) were interviewed and their feeling about loneliness was recorded. At the end, 135 students (94 female and 41 male) completed feeling of loneliness scale. Content analysis of research background indicates seven components of feeling of loneliness including emotional, social, family, affective, friends and bigger groups (group linking) and existentialism. From content analysis of interview with consultants, five components of emotional/ individual, communicative/ social, communicative/ family, existentialism and religious/ intellectual were obtained. From interview with students, four components of emotional/ individual, communicative, affective and religious/ intellectual and from open- response scale, three components of emotional/ individual, communicative (communicative with others, family, friends, bigger groups) and religious/ intellectual were identified. Shahini *et al.*, (2012) showed that students who received sufficient social support from family and friends were more satisfied with life and suffered less from feeling of loneliness. The findings of Arslan *et al.*, (2010) study, investigating the feeling of loneliness and perfectionism in university students, showed that there is positive significant correlation between perfectionism and feeling of loneliness.

Kilpatric (2005) reported that individuals who experience feeling of loneliness better confront with problems when they benefit from social support and their mental health is better possible and they would be more compatible. Wang, Yuen and Slaney (2009) showed that compatibility, depression and feeling of loneliness always have high positive correlation with each other and have negative relation with life satisfaction. Studying feeling of loneliness and quality of life of olds' health, Lio and Guo (2007) showed that increase of feeling of loneliness in old people reduces the feeling of life satisfaction and quality of life physically, socially and emotionally.

Qalebi *et al.*, (2011) showed that humour styles modify the relation between personality traits and general health, furthermore, there is no meaningful relation between humour styles (linking, aggressive and self-reductionist) of male and female students, however, there was meaningful difference between self-increasing humour style in male and female students.

Since, non-native students are more susceptible to feeling of loneliness due to being far from family and friends and entering a new and culturally different environment and this phenomenon requires more investigation in students. The present study has been designed and performed for investigating the relation between humour and social compatibility and feeling of loneliness in non-native students of west Mazandaran province.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of present study is correlation. In this study, the statistical sample includes all non-native students of west Mazandaran province who are studying in this city. The statistical sample includes 150 non-native students of west Mazandazarn province. In this study, the sample size was estimated. That is, the researcher determined a certain percentage of statistical samples to obtain the sample size by consideration of time and limitations of study. The sampling method is random sampling.

Instrument

Thorson humour scale: in this system, measuring and evaluation have been performed using response packages and multi-option questions and some data has been gathered. This questionnaire includes 16 items which can be completed in 10 minutes. This questionnaire includes 16 items that measure and evaluate humour. This has distance scale and put the score of individual in four levels ranging from 16 to 64. The items of questionnaire are in form of response package and in four-point scale. The score of individual is calculated through the numbers obtained from all questions.

- **Feeling of Loneliness Scale:** this scale includes 11 items dealing with evaluation of social and emotional feeling of loneliness. This questionnaire is usable in form of self-report. The validity of this questionnaire has been reported as 0.97 through internal congruency (Cronbach's alpha) (quoting from Khalatbari *et al.*, 2011).

- **California Test of Personality:** this scale has been constructed by Clark *et al.*, (1953) to measure various life compatibility including individual and social compatibility.

This scale includes 180 items, 90 questions deals with personal compatibility and 90 questions deals with social compatibility. In this study, to measure social compatibility, social compatibility subscale of CTP was used. The questions of this scale is in form of yes- no and includes 90 items. The scoring system in this test is in form of zero and one (no and yes). Reliability and validity of this questionnaire have been evaluated in various studies. Masoud (1992) reported the reliability coefficient of this test for social compatibility as 0.78 (Masoudi, 1992; quoting from Meqres, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, 54% of respondents are men and 46% are women. The educational level of 67.33% of students is BA and 29.33% is BA and 3.33% is PhD. The research findings indicate that 54.66% of students are single and 45.33% are married.

Table 1: Pearson correlation between social compatibility and feeling of loneliness

		Social compatibility	Feeling of loneliness
Social compatibility	Pearson correlation	1	-0.187
	Meaningfulness	-	0.022
	Number	150	150
Feeling of loneliness	Pearson correlation	-0.187	1
	Meaningfulness	0.022	-
	Number	150	150

Table 2: Pearson correlation between humour and feeling of loneliness

		Humor	Feeling of loneliness
Social compatibility	Pearson correlation	1	-0.036
	Meaningfulness	-	0.661
	Number	150	150
Feeling of loneliness	Pearson correlation	- 0.036	1
	Meaningfulness	0.661	-
	Number	150	150

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The results of Pearson correlation coefficient in table1 show that the correlation of social compatibility and feeling of loneliness is -0.187, which is statistically meaningful in 0.05 and this relation is negative. The results of Pearson correlation coefficient in table2 show that the correlation of humor and feeling of loneliness is 0.36, which is not statistically meaningful below 0.05 and this relation is negative.

Table 3: Regression analysis

Model	R	R ²	Revised R ²	Estimation standard error
1	0.187	0.035	0.028	8.32

The results of step-by-step multivariate regression analysis show that obtained R= 0.187 is meaningful in reliability level of 95%. It means that by 95% reliability, it can be concluded that social compatibility is a good predictive for feeling of loneliness.

Table 4: Regression analysis

Index	Unstandardized coefficients B	Standardized coefficient Estimation β standard	t	Sig	
Social compatibility	-0.261	0.113	-0.187	-2.314	P<0.022

The data of above table shows that social compatibility (P< 0.022, t= -2.314, Beta= -0.187) is meaningful on feeling of loneliness.

Discussion

The aim of present study was to investigate the relation between humour and social compatibility with feeling of loneliness in non-native students of west Mazandaran. The results indicated that there is meaningful negative relation between social compatibility and feeling of loneliness which indicates that when the social compatibility increases, feeling of loneliness decreases.

The university studying period is a chance for students to search and satisfy feeling of individuality and uniqueness and also a chance for making social relation with others. Most studies might be far from their family and their social and emotional support for the first time and since they have left their close friends and family, they might have feeling of doubt, confusion and anxiety such that making close relation cannot prevent it (Ozdemir and Tanki, 2008). Coburn and Treeger (2003) describes the experience of university as a certain and unique time which never is repeated in an individual in a completely similar way. Thus, in the first years of university, the individual might loss his feeling of emotional dependency and security by losing social relation with others within local social networks. Lack of this intimate relation can leads to emotional and social feeling in them (Roux and Connors, 2001; Lindsey, 2000). According to Wiz (1973) and De Jong-Gierveld (1978), if the need of belonging to individuals is not satisfied and their social distance increases, negative feelings like feeling of loneliness would be created in them. The more is feeling of loneliness in individual, he would be more incline to distance himself from social relation and try less to change these conditions. According to Shufer and Shooben (1972; quoted from Ashrafi, 2013), compatibility is the incline of organism to change his activity to conform to environment which is in fact a response to change of surrounding environment. This feature is the interaction and compatibility of individual with other individuals and the value structures are in fact social skills, which supply the interaction of his links with others and the values of the society where he lives in. Thus, if the student who feels being lonely has not the incline toward chancing the environment, his social compatibility decreases. The other result of the study showed that there is no significant relation between humor and feeling of loneliness, meaning that humor is not good predictive of feeling of loneliness. This result contradicts with Hamps (1992) and Martin (2001) and is in line with the results.

The findings showed that individuals with high feeling of humor benefit from higher personal, family, occupational- educational and social performance, suffer from lower physical problems, suffers from low

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mental disturbance and are socially more compatible and hopeful rather than individuals with lower feeling of humor. This feeling removes communication barriers including intellectual ossification, negativism, personalization, extreme sensitivity, lack of constructive expression of anger, low self-esteem etc. and makes him have less interpersonal problems (McGhee, 2002; Wooten, 1996, 2006; Sultanoff, 1995).

Due to use of humor mechanism, humorous individuals try to hide their fear. The humorous individual goes toward humor due to high fear, since the humorous individual needs exhilarating events and happenings to make his sense of humor clear, he prevents from any sad event. Thus, the obtained result in this study can be explained in this way that non-native students of West Mazandaran show less sense of humor because of being far from their family and living in dormitories with inappropriate condition. Furthermore, individuals with higher sense of humor use humor as a defensive mechanism against unpleasant feelings and this sense of humor cannot reduce their feeling of loneliness. Furthermore, due to sample and cultural differences and evaluation scale, the results of these studies are not in line with each other.

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