

## The Relationship between Normative Identity Style and Differentiation of Self and Psychological Well-Being of the Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between normative identity style and differentiation of self and psychological well-being of students in the Valiasr University of Rafsanjan in 2015. The research method is descriptive and correlational. Statistical population consisted of all 1900 students in dormitories of Valiasr University of Rafsanjan of whom 320 students from eight dormitories were selected as the sample using the stage random sampling and based on Morgan's table. Skowron and Friedlander's Differentiation of Self Inventory- Revised (DSI-R), Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale, and Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory (ISI) were used. For data analysis, Pearson correlation and regression methods were used. Based on the research findings, the Pearson correlation coefficient between normative identity style and differentiation of self and psychological well-being is significant. Value of the Sig that is less than 0.05 and equal to 0.018 between variable of normative identity style and differentiation of self shows a significant correlation between these two variables. Moreover, Value of the Sig that is less than 0.05 and equal to 0.000 between variable of normative identity style and psychological well-being shows a significant correlation between these two variables. Results revealed that there was a significant relationship between normative identity style and differentiation of self. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between normative identity style and psychological wellbeing.

**Keywords:** *Normative Identity Style, Differentiation of Self, Psychological Well-Being, Students*

Leaving home and entering the college is most challenging and difficult for most of the students and they seek to try different solutions to overcome this challenge inside and outside of the university; although a variety of factors affect this (Ghaderi, 2011). One of the important issues of youth, particularly early years of the University is differentiation or achieving the emotional independence. The differentiated people clearly define themselves and their beliefs, they can

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navigate their life and control themselves and rationally decide in most problematic situations in which most of the people show unintentional behaviors and make illogical decisions.

In contrast, the undifferentiated people that have no defined identity of self are affected by the emotional wave of their surrounding people notably family and experience high chronic anxiety and are vulnerable to the psychological problems and symptoms (Skian, 2015). Differentiation is one of the most prominent concepts of the Bowen's family systems theory that represents the individual ability to distinguish the rational and emotional processes. In other words, it means achieving a degree of emotional autonomy, by which people can autonomously and rationally make decisions in emotional situations, without drowning in an emotional atmosphere (Sharifi, 2014). Prevention of mental and behavioral disorders in the lives of students is a kind of precautionary measures that should be particularly taken into consideration and this can be conducted by promoting the psychological well-being of the students.

Psychological well-being is defined as the growth of individual real talents (Dastjerdi et al. (2011). According to the Ericsson's theory, identity styles are one of the factors affecting the psychological well-being and mental health (Veiskarami, 2014). Positive prospective approach and mental health in recent years has been highly developed and accordingly, concept of psychological well-being has emerged that defines mental health as the positive attributes such as self-esteem, good social relations and satisfaction rather than suffering from no disease (Mikaeili, 2010).

Students as young people encounter with many mental and social problems. For example they seek to find the answers for questions such as “Who am I? What is my role in society? What are my goals in my life?” answering these questions is of great importance on mental health of people. Erikson stated that the main duty of the people in this period is to explore their identity and believes that whatever people experience in this period will affect their adulthood (BIGloei et al. 2015). He defines identity as the organized and fundamental principle that evolves throughout the life and provides a sense of continuity of interaction with others (self-similarity) and a framework for distinguishing between self and others (integrity) (Gutt et al., 2012). Berzonsky and kook (2005) believe that identity style refers to those strategies that people definitely use them in making decisions and problem solving and analyzes the relevant information. When they face with the inappropriate information on self-concept, they are ready to revise and accept the new concept.

Identity formation is influenced by interpersonal factors that includes individual inherent capabilities and the acquisition of personality traits; so as the person makes himself similar to those that respects them and accept their advices and as he follows the cultural factors that include extensive social values and he is exposed to them during his growth, his identity

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formation will be successful (Adams et al., 2000). Successful achievement of identity causes the first adulthood task namely growing the feeling of true intimacy (Beirami, 2010). The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between normative identity style and differentiation of self and psychological well-being of the students in the Valiasr University of Rafsanjan.

### METHODOLOGY

Statistical population consisted of all 1900 students in dormitories of Valiasr University of Rafsanjan of whom 320 students from eight dormitories were selected as the sample using the stage random sampling and based on Morgan's table.

#### *Data collection tools*

- 1. Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory (ISI):** Berzonsky proposed this questionnaire in 1989 with 40 items based on five point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, and reported four styles of informational, normative, diffuse and avoidant identity as 0.62, 0.66 and 0.73. White et al. (1998) confirmed the Validity of the questionnaire by factor analysis (Begloi et al. 2015). Sharifi (2015) investigated the construct validity of the questionnaire using factor analysis through principal component and varimax rotation and analyzed the validity and reliability by Cronbach's alpha and retest.
- 2. Skowron and Friedlander's Differentiation of Self Inventory- Revised (DSI-R):** Skowron and Friedlander designed and implemented this questionnaire with 43 items in 1998. Then, in 2003, Skowron and Smith revised it and the final questionnaire with 46 questions and 4 factors was designed based on the Bowen's theory. This questionnaire is a self-report that is used to assess the differentiation of the people and focuses on the adults, main life relationships and ongoing relationships with their original families. The responses were scored on a 6-point Likert scale with five options from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* and includes four subscales of emotional reactivity, "I" Position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. The results of researches conducted by Skowron and Smith (2003) showed high reliability and validity. The reliability of its revised form by Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was 0.92. Consistency factor of subscales of the questionnaire was reported as follows: emotional reactivity = 0.89; emotional cutoff = 0.84; "I" Position = 0.81; fusion with others = 0.86 (Habibipour et al., 2013).
- 3. Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale:** Carol Reef developed this questionnaire in 1989. It includes 84 items and 6 factors. Items are scored based on 6-point scale; 47 questions are directly scored and 37 questions are indirectly scored. To investigate the validity of the questionnaire, its relationship and measures that investigated the personality traits and also were considered as psychological well-being index such as Bradburn's emotional balance scale, Newcarton's satisfaction with life scale and Rosenberg's self-esteem were used. The correlation results of Ryff's test was acceptable with each of the scales, so this tool had construct validity. Cronbach's alpha obtained in the Ryff's study riffs was 0.93, 0.91, 0.86,

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0.90, 0.90 and 0.87 for self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, having purpose in life, and personal development, respectively. For data analysis, descriptive statistics and statistical index such as mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation coefficient, and regression were employed. Data were analyzed by SPSS software.

### RESULTS

*Table 1: Descriptive statistics*

Variable	Mean	SD	K-S
Normative identity style	32.4125	4.91289	0.000
Differentiation of self	170.7875	15.34591	0.003
Psychological well-being	3146875	42.22416	0.000

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, skewness, K-S and K-S significance (Sig). K-S significance means that if the Sig is less than 0.05, so there is a significant relationship, otherwise it is not significant. According to the Table 1 and the Sig values, all research variables are significant.

*Table 2: The correlation between variables*

Variables	Sig Differentiation of self	PC Pearson correlation coefficient	Sig Psychological well-being	PC Pearson correlation coefficient
Normative identity style	0.018	0.132*	0.000	0.305**

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient and Sig. However, since the value of the Sig is less than 0.05 and equal to 0.018 between normative identity style and differentiation of self, therefore, there is a significant correlation between these two variables.

Also, since the value of Sig is less than 0.05 and equal to 0.000 between variables of normative identity style and all its dimensions with psychological well-being, therefore, there is a significant correlation between these variables and psychological well-being.

*Table 3: Regression of differentiation of self*

Differentiation of self	F= 5.154	P= 0.000	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.061
Variables	B	Sig	Beta
Normative identity style	0.718	0.001	0.23

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As shown in Table 3, the value of the Sig is less than 0.05 between variables of normative identity style and differentiation of self. Therefore, there is a linear relationship between these variables and differentiation of self.

**Table 4: Regression of psychological well-being**

Psychological well-being	F= 40.230	P= 0.000	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.338
Variables	B	Sig	Beta
normative identity style	0.674	0.180	0.078

Table 4 shows that value of Sig is more than 0.05 between normative identity style and psychological well-being, so there is no linear relationship between these variables and psychological well-being. As a result, there is a linear relationship between these variable and psychological well-being.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

*There is a relationship between the normative identity styles in predicting the differentiation of self.* According to Table 3, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to show how much normative identity styles predict the self-differentiation. Results reveal that there is a relationship between normative identity styles and differentiation of self (0.132).

Given that a significant level was obtained for the correlation between variables (0.018); it can be said that there is a significant relationship between normative identity styles and differentiation of self and research hypothesis is confirmed.

The findings of Skian and Changizi (2015) showed that there was no significant relationship between differentiation of self and normative identity style. Jamshidi and Sarveghad (2015) concluded that there was a significant negative correlation between normative identity style and differentiation of self. People's beliefs with normative identity styles depend on others' expectations, they do not actively search for information, imitate more than others and are impatient when facing the problems (Berzonsky, 2003). Educational goals and career of people with this style of identity are externally controlled and are less flexible (Berzonsky and Cook, 2000).

*There is a relationship between the normative identity styles in predicting the psychological well-being.* According to Table 4, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to show how much normative identity styles predict the psychological well-being. Results reveal that there is a relationship between normative identity styles and psychological well-being (0.305). Given that a significant level was obtained for the correlation between variables (0.000); it can be said that there is a significant relationship between normative identity styles and psychological well-being and research hypothesis is confirmed.

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Shokri et al. (2007) and Rezaeian et al (2010) in their study entitled *Individual differences in identity styles and psychological well-being, the role of identity commitment* concluded that the results of the correlation matrix showed that there is a positive relationship between normative identity style and scales of Psychological (except for independence scale that showed a non-significant negative relationship). Adolescents with normative identity style follow expectations and instructions of the main people and reference groups on identity and decision-making. They automatically accept and internalize the values and beliefs without informative evaluation; they show low tolerance in facing the ambiguous and new situations and have a high requirement for keeping their structure closed (Berzonsky, 1992). In the normative orientation, "premature cognitive commitments" may be formed; these commitments are formed without mental operations and processing and evaluating the information; commitments are based on the shallow emotions, however, little evidence support them and show them justifiable. Stepwise regression analysis showed that normative identity style and identity commitment could predict psychological well-being. Most studies (Berzonsky 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2003) were consistent with the result of this finding that there is a direct relationship between normative style and psychological well-being.

### ***Limitations***

This study was carried out only on undergraduate and postgraduate students. So, the generalization of the results to all educational levels must be conducted with care. Self-report tests were used in this study that shows the possibility of response bias.

### ***Suggestions***

It is suggested that other measurement tools such as interviews and observations also be used for other educational levels.

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