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Investigation of the Relationship between Mental Health and Academic Burnout with Epistemological Beliefs of Students of Islamic Azad University, Garmsar Branch

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was studying the relationship between mental health and academic burnout with epistemological beliefs of students. Statistical population of this research includes all students of Islamic Azad University of Garmsar branch. 147 people were selected by convenience sampling method as a sample. The necessary data was collected using standard inventories of mental health, academic burnout, and epistemological beliefs. Then, data were analyzed using Pearson statistical test and stepwise multistage regression. Results showed the direct and significant relationship between total score of mental health and certain knowledge component. In addition, results showed the direct and significant relationship between anxiety symptoms components of mental health and certain knowledge component and quick learning components of epistemological beliefs. In addition, results showed the significant relationship among emotional exhaustion components, innate ability component, emotional exhaustion component, and quick learning, educational self-efficacy component, and quick learning. Therefore, results showed that anxiety symptoms significantly predict innate ability components of students' epistemological beliefs. Thus, it can be stated there is a relationship between mental health and academic burnout and epistemological beliefs.

Keywords: epistemological beliefs, mental health, academic burnout

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INTRODUCTION

In today modern world, the industrialization not only has change people life-stream, but also has had harmful effects on people mental health through these changes, while some other problems such as academic burnout, referring to exhaustion and burnout in education, shows a change in social and individual fields which has made a disorder in people educational field. On the other hand, based on the experienced cognition phenomena by people, it has always been interpreted that whatever influences on our emotions and spirits are our belief and perception from a situation and the main emphasis in these theories is on people cognition and beliefs about various situations. Meanwhile, one of the discussed beliefs in recent years which attract many people is epistemological beliefs indicating a person's approach to learning and has a determinant role in learning activity of that person in academic environments. The relationship between epistemological beliefs of people has been studied in this research in both individual and educational fields.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recent experts have more mentions of psychological aspects and epistemological beliefs besides philosophical aspects, and this concept has penetrated in various expressions including individual epistemology, and epistemological beliefs in psychological and educational sciences fields. How to achieve knowledge and what perceptions to have influences on cognition such as the person thought and argument, and these are individual discussions and beliefs. Schommer (1990) has defined epistemological beliefs as "what people believe about a specific reference, certainty, knowledge structure, and also earning control and speed, or knowledge achievement. Theorists such as Perry (1970) and Hofer & Pintrich (1997) believe that epistemological beliefs change learning policies, knowledge achievement procedure, problem-solving abilities, processing, and evaluation of information, comprehension, and academic achievement of learners. Hofer (2001) justifies and necessitates a conceptual link between epistemological beliefs and knowledge achievement and studying the relationships among them in educational field

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for three main reasons: A) epistemology is a development and education purpose is also the all-aspect development of all learners; B) epistemology as epistemological beliefs influence on learning procedure; C) epistemological beliefs has explicit and implicit presence and involvement in all learning activities and educational references theoretically and practically. Of course, according to his idea, universities have neglected to study the effective role in students' knowledge achievement procedure in spite of its importance. Bohel & Alexanders (2001) concluded by studying the published references about epistemological beliefs and learning that these beliefs are multi-aspect and multi-layer, and other educational and academic factors influence on them. Epistemological beliefs have been mentioned with the impression that they are a part of the infrastructural mechanism of cognitive and meta-cognitive involvement (Woolfoulk, 2004). Epistemology researchers believe that the personal belief system about the nature of knowledge and learning the epistemological beliefs is a field or collection of assumptions happening through thought and learning (Paulson & Welse, 1998). Epistemological beliefs have cultural and social nature (Bioul & Alexander, 2006; Hatami & Ameri Siahooei, 2013) and origin from educational and psychological view which is related to the formation of people images about knowing and knowledge and using them to perceive their surrounding (Chen & Parjas, 2010). Schommer (1990) showed that students' epistemological beliefs are effective on learning approaches and consequences. The development of epistemological beliefs has an important role in facilitation of conceptual changes, scientific knowledge organization in cognitive structures and learning opportunities of students (Elder, 2002) and understanding the relationship among students' beliefs and the effective factors in the environment helps to determine students' successes and problems in the classroom and effective to improve education (Buehl, 2008). The mental health based on WHO definition is having coordinated and balanced communication with others, change and modifying the individual and social environment, solving conflicts and personal intentions logically, fairly, and properly or "full physical-mental and social welfare, not disease and discomfort." Mental health means skill and

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dominance in correct communication with the environment, particularly in three important space of life, love, work, hobby, or having the talent or offering work, family, escaping law involved matters, and enjoying life" (Gizinberug quoted by Tavakoli, 2004). Campbell's Psychiatric culture has defined this expression as satisfaction from mental improvement and enough social adaptation with the acceptable standards of each society (Ahmadvand, 2003). Milanifar has defined mental health as "a person's feeling about himself, surrounding, life place, and people around, particularly based on his responsibility to others." In addition, his adaptation with his income, his cognition of local and time situation (Milanifar, 2003). According to Kaplan and Barron, mental health is the specific state of mind improving, growth, and perfection of the human characteristics and helps him to adapt to himself and others (Mirkamali, 1994), while there is various evidence based on the relationship between different aspects and mental health with educational and academic performance (Hassanpour, 2004). People with emotional disorders for some reasons and has weakened mental health express their disorders in different ways. These people mostly have problems including weak self-concept, academic failure, social exclusion, and disability in communication with peers, and lack of adherence to social rules, and these mental-social disorders directly influence on their learning process (Salahshur, 2003; Hatami & Shafieardekani, 2014).

According to the stated cases, this research tries to answer this question: Is there a relationship between academic burnout and mental health with epistemological beliefs? Thus, this cases can be referred to state the importance and necessity of this research. Since mental health influence on various mental fields, and studying period is so important for being stressful, and the significant importance of universities and students in production and growth of each society, it seems that studying the relationship between mental health and cognitive fields and the epistemological beliefs is significantly important. In other words, mental health indicates one of epistemological beliefs aspects in the extent of epistemological beliefs field. On the other hand, academic burnout implying education exhaustion condition in people which can relatively influence on the

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infrastructural cognitive beliefs of people, particularly epistemological beliefs can be one of the necessities of this research to indicate the academic burnout in the cognitive process of people. Moreover, the necessity of this research can be because of academic motivation reduction among students and decrease their academic performance that necessitates probing of students' academic processes.

2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

As this research studies the relationship, it is correlational, the correlational research tries to find the probable relationship between one variable with another. Therefore, subjects are investigated according to several features (Delavar, 2003).

3.1. Statistical population, sample group, and sampling method

Statistical population of this research includes all students of Islamic Azad University, Garmsar branch in 216-2017 in the second semester who was 6000. It is to be mentioned that the sample volume was estimated 371 persons by formula, but 147 persons were selected as sample volume because of the lack of cooperation and access to all people and 40 people per variable is adequate in correlational research (Gall, Borg, Gall, 2011, translated by Nasr et al.) Therefore, the sample volume was selected with 147 persons.

3. DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Epistemological Belief Inventory: epistemological belief inventory was introduced by Schommer (1993) for the first time with 63 questions to measure 5 sub-scales of innate ability, simple knowledge, quick learning, certain knowledge, and omniscient authority. Based on Ma'navipour normalization (2012), this changed to 30 questions and 5 sub-scales that measures epistemological beliefs in the seven-point Likert spectrum. Low scores in this inventory show the developed epistemological beliefs and high scores show immature epistemological beliefs in people (Schommer, 1992). Schommer et al (2001) stated that validity coefficient of this inventory for the high school students is in 0.51-0.78 range. Based on Manavipour normalization (2012), Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.53, 0.5, 0.57, and 0.57 for simple knowledge, certain knowledge, innate ability, and quick learning, respectively, and the omniscient authority has validity and the total test

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has validity by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78. The structure validity of quick learning, simple knowledge, and innate ability was confirmed and dimensions of certain knowledge and omniscient authority were confirmed relatively based on some fitting indexes.

Mental Health Inventory: general health inventory with 28 questions was used to collect data in this research to examine its hypotheses (GHQ28) to measure mental health, physical symptoms components, anxiety components, social performance, and depression that are mentioned in this research. This inventory is a specific tool to determine the mental health by Goldberg and Hiller in 1973 that was formulated in medical centers to screen the non-psychotic disorders. This inventory has efficient ability to measure psychiatric disorders. Benjamin, Declammer, and Haran (1983) recommended using the short 28-question form of this inventory to screen and investigate the general mental health of parents and people. 28-question form of this tool was formulated by Goldberg and Hiller (1979) and includes 4 sub-scales of physical symptoms, depression, anxiety symptoms, and social performance (Taghavi, 2001). Research results by Medina Mora et al., 1983; Benjamin et al., 1983; quoted by Hooman, 1997) showed the validity of this test. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this inventory has been reported 0.79-0.91 (Hooman, 1997).

Academic burnout: Maslach Raw Schaufeli prepared academic burnout inventory that measures three academic burnout fields of academic exhaustion, academic cynicism, and academic inefficiency. This inventory has 15 articles scaled by five-point Likert from fully disagree to fully agree with tests. Academic exhaustion has 5 articles (lessons are boring), academic cynicism has 4 articles (I think I don't interest in lessons), and academic inefficiency has 6 articles (I feel I can't solve my educational problems). Questions of 2, 5, 11, and 14 are about pessimism scale (cynicism), questions 1, 4, 7, 10, and 13 are about emotional exhaustion sub-scale, and questions of 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, and 15 are about academic inefficiency. Of course, the questions of academic inefficiency sub-scale are scored reversely because of using academic inefficiency scale (mean positive

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sentences) for this sub-scale. The reliability of this scale was reported 0.7, 0.82, and 0.75 by its makers for emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency. Rostami et al (2011) reported 0.89, 0.84, and 0.67 based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient for emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and academic self-efficacy, respectively based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

4. STATISTICAL METHOD

Pearson correlation test was used I this research to analyze the collected data and examine the relationship between variables and also stepwise multistage regression test was used to predict epistemological beliefs based on mental health and academic burnout. It is to be noticed that all statistical steps were conducted in SPSS24 software.

5. RESULTS

5.1.Testing hypotheses

First hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between mental health and epistemological beliefs of students.

The obtained results from testing this hypothesis by Pearson product moment correlation test are as follows in order to investigate the relationship between mental health and epistemological beliefs:

Table 1: the relationship between mental health and epistemological beliefs

Mental health / epistemological beliefs	Physical symptoms		Anxiety symptoms		Social symptoms		Depression		Total score	
	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P
Certain knowledge	0.109	0.019	0.212	0.01*	0.04	0.629	0.054	0.514	0.175	0.034*
Innate ability	0.075	0.268	0.041	0.619	0.121	0.146	0.13	0.116	0.051	0.542
Omniscient authority	0.007	0.936	0.001	0.999	0.122	0.14	0.141	0.089	-0.039	0.636

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Quick learning	0.127	0.126	-0.008	0.928	0.208	0.011*	0.115	0.166	0.011	0.898
Simple knowledge	0.055	0.507	0.015	0.858	0.011	0.895	0.146	0.077	0.043	0.605

*P<0.05, n=147

Results of Pearson correlation test showed that the direct and significant relationship was observed only between mental health score and certain knowledge (r=0.175, p<0.05). In addition, results showed the significant relationship between anxiety symptoms components and certain knowledge components (r=0.212, p<0.05), social symptom components and quick learning (r=0.208, p<0.05). The first hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, it can be claimed about the relationship between mental health and epistemological beliefs of students.

Second hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between academic burnout and epistemological beliefs of students.

The obtained results from testing this hypothesis by Pearson product moment correlation test are as follows in order to investigate the relationship between academic burnout and epistemological beliefs:

Table 2- the relationship between academic burnout and epistemological beliefs

Mental health / epistemological beliefs	Emotional exhaustion		Doubt and pessimism		Educational self-efficacy		Total score	
	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P
Certain knowledge	0.002	0.979	0.044	0.596	-0.049	0.552	0.073	0.379
Innate ability	0.211	0.01*	0.06	0.468	-0.062	0.453	0.052	0.535
Omniscient authority	-0.018	0.828	0.083	0.318	0.106	0.201	-0.143	0.085

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Quick learning	0.212	0.01*	-0.025	0.765	0.238	0.004**	0.124	0.135
Simple knowledge	-0.091	0.254	0.145	0.08	-0.06	0.473	-0.081	0.327

**P<0.01, *P<0.05, n=147

Results of Pearson correlation test showed that the significant relationship was observed only between emotional exhaustion score and innate ability (r=0.211, p<0.05), emotional exhaustion components and quick learning (r=0.211, p<0.05), academic self-efficiency components and quick learning (r=0.238, p<0.01). The second hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, it can be claimed about the relationship between academic burnout and epistemological beliefs of students.

Third hypothesis: mental health and academic burnout significantly predict the epistemological beliefs of students.

Since the variable in this research was epistemological beliefs, and this variable itself includes 5 components, regression test was conducted individually for each component which is stated later. It is to be noticed that components of omniscient authority quick learning and simple knowledge in epistemological belief clearly will not be discussed as any of the predictor variables enters to the equation and don't have a predictable role in these components.

Table 3- list of the entered variable in regression analysis of certain knowledge component based on the mental health and academic burnout

Model	Entered predictor variable	Criterion variable	Method
1	Anxiety symptoms components	Certain knowledge	Stepwise

Results of table 3 show that mental health and academic burnout variables entered to the stepwise regression analysis first of all, but only the anxiety symptom component of testing mental health has a predictable role.

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Table 4- summary of the regression model of certain knowledge component on the mental health and academic burnout

Model	Variable	R	R^2	AR^2	SE
1	Anxiety symptoms components	0.212	0.045	0.038	3.586

Based on testing the hypothesis, the moderated squared results of multiple correlation coefficient show that that first basic model of anxiety symptoms components determines 0.045 of certain knowledge component.

Table 5- summary of the predicting variables variance analysis of certain knowledge on the mental health and academic burnout

Model	Source of change	S.S	Df	M.S	F	P
1	regression	87.352	1	87.352	6.793	0.01*
	Remaining	1864.621	145	12.859		
	Total	1951.973	146			

**P<0.01, n=147

Results of variance analysis test show that anxiety symptoms (P<0.05, $F_{(1, 146)}$= 6.739) significantly predict certain knowledge from epistemological beliefs components in students based on the first model.

Table 6- predicting regression coefficients of certain knowledge based on mental health and academic burnout

Model	Coefficient	B	SE	Beta	t	P
1	Constant	10.894	1.109	-	9.821	0.001**
	Anxiety symptoms component	0.232	0.089	0.212	2.606	0.01*

**P< 0.01, n= 147

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Results of table 4-15, regarding the standardized beta weight, based on the first model shows that standard deviation of a change in anxiety symptoms component makes 0.212 standard deviation in certain knowledge scores.

Table 7- list of the entered variables in regression analysis of innate ability component of epistemological beliefs based on mental health and academic burnout

Model	Entered predicting variable	Criterion variable	Method
1	Emotional exhaustion component	Innate ability component	Stepwise

Results of table 7 show that mental health and academic burnout entered to stepwise regression analysis in the first step, but only emotional exhaustion component has the predicting role.

Table 8- summary of innate ability component regression of the epistemological beliefs based on the mental health and academic burnout

Model	Variable	R	R^2	AR^2	SE
1	Emotional burnout component	0.211	0.045	0.038	3.893

Regarding to this hypothesis test, moderated squared results of the multiple correlation coefficient show that emotional exhaustion component predicts 0.045 of the variance of innate ability component.

Table 9- summary of predicting variables variance analysis for the innate ability component based on mental health and academic burnout

Model	Source of change	S.S	d.f	M.S	F	P
1	regression	102.920	1	102.92	6.789	0.01**
	Remaining	2198.100	145	15.159		
	Total	2301.02	146			

**P<0.01, n=147

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Results of variance analysis test show that emotional exhaustion component ($P<0.01$, $F_{(1, 146)}=6.789$) significantly predict the innate ability component of students epistemological beliefs.

Table 10- regression coefficient of predicting the innate ability component based on mental health and academic burnout

model	Coefficient	B	SE	Beta	t	P
1	Constant	9.963	0.874	-	11.394	0.00**
	Emotional exhaustion	0.155	0.059	0.211	2.606	0.01*

**P<0.01, n=147

Results of table 10 by considering the standardized beta weight and based on the first model show that a standard deviation of a change in emotional exhaustion change 0.21 of standard deviation in scores of students' epistemological beliefs.

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

First hypothesis: there a significant relationship between the mental health and epistemological beliefs of students.

In testing the first hypothesis, results have shown the direct and significant relationship between the total score of mental health and certain knowledge component. In addition, results showed the direct and significant relationship between anxiety symptoms and certain knowledge components. Moreover, results showed the direct and significant relationship between anxiety symptoms component from mental health components and quick learning component from epistemological beliefs. These results were in agreement with a part of Amini (2007) research results which showed the significant relationship between the metacognitive beliefs with mental health and academic achievement of students. It can be inducted about the first part of findings that certain knowledge component from epistemological beliefs components show amount and way of certain knowledge in all situations, while this component as a certain knowledge in all situations shows that an individual thought doesn't have enough flexibility an may have this

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inflexibility on other situations, too. On the other hand, score increase in variables of mental health and anxiety symptom component shows the bad level of a person's mental health. Watson, the Founder of Behavioral School, believes that ordinary behaviors show the healthy characteristics of an ordinate person that adapts him to the environment and consequently his essential and main needs are satisfied. Such behaviors show mental health (Milanifar, 2003). Moreover, based on theorists like Ellis (1970; quoted by Dryden, 1991), inflexible and rigid beliefs disturb mental health in people and makes the roots of mental disorders. In addition, it is noticeable although the epistemological beliefs are about knowledge, our thoughts and images in each field can root in a general pattern which we defined for our life.

Second hypothesis: there a significant relationship between academic burnout and epistemological beliefs of students.

Results of studying the second hypothesis showed the significant relationship between emotional burnout component and innate ability component, emotional exhaustion component, and quick learning with academic self-efficiency and quick learning. Taheri (2008) in a research showed the positive relationship between academic burnout and self-regulatory of girl high school students. Rezaei and Khodakhah (2009) in a research studied the relationship between epistemological beliefs and students' academic achievement. Their results showed the negative and significant relationship between simple/certain knowledge and quick-constant learning and academic achievement. Salma-Arrow & Savolanen (2008) predicted academic burnout predictors and their results showed that the academic burnout has a correlation with stress and self-efficacy and academic burnout is more in girls than boys. It can be stated in explanation of this finding that innate ability in epistemological beliefs refers to the person view about knowledge achievement. In another word, whether that person believes in himself to be able to achieve the knowledge or not. Moreover, quick learning component in epistemological beliefs refers to the person's belief about his speed in learning. Whether he believes that knowledge can be achieved quickly or not, or he knows knowledge achievement process

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gradual and slow? That he finds emotional exhaustion on studying a subject is the main dimension of academic burnout with an apparent presence in this sophisticated matter. When people explain academic burnout to others, they mostly mean exhaustion factor. Exhaustion is the most reported cases of studies and analyzed by the evaluated people. Emotional exhaustion reflexes the resulted stresses by burnout. Emotional exhaustion is not easy to test but shows itself late in emotion and performance as a symptom to cope with extra academic activities (Wilcock, Dolly, Tenet, and Allard, 2004). It is notable that academic burnout is the result of extra exposure to the permanent stressful academic environments, and this burnout will stay relatively permanent (Tabachic and Fidel, 2007). On the other hand, studies have shown that the difficult academic condition difficulties are effective on academic burnout, particularly it is more on ones with more responsibilities (Diaz and Hydako, 1994). According to what was mentioned, it can be inferred that emotional exhaustion in academic field has cognitive aspect and content beliefs or at least makes these beliefs, images other beliefs in other fields like imaging knowledge achievement as an innate ability or expects to achieve the quick learning at once. Furthermore, the second part of this research is about the relationship between academic self-efficacy and quick learning of knowledge as it can be inferred as academic self-efficacy refers to the person's ability to see knowledge achievement in himself, his belief besides the parallel ones including quick learning refers to the person's image to achieve knowledge quickly or not. Therefore, it seems logical to have the image of learning quickly if a person has this view of himself.

Third hypothesis: mental health and academic burnout significantly predict the epistemological beliefs.

The third hypothesis of this research showed that the anxiety symptoms significantly predict the certain knowledge in epistemological beliefs of students. In addition, results showed that emotional exhaustion component significantly predicts the innate ability component of epistemological beliefs of students. Amini (2007) in a research showed the significant relationship between metacognitive beliefs and mental health and academic

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achievement of students. Schommer (1993) in a research claimed about the relationship between cognitive ability and academic condition of students. Epistemological beliefs are not exceptional and are always influenced by various individual, social, behavioral, and cognitive fields. Since anxiety symptoms show that a person is in the high level of stress, it is expected his anxiety and emotional exhaustion fields that was referred in the second finding influence on the other cognitive and behavioral fields and change people beliefs in other fields by these variables. Therefore, it is logical to expect anxiety symptoms and emotional exhaustion to have a relationship with people beliefs in knowledge fields as a part of academic burnout variable.

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