Investigating the Empathy Relationship and Interpersonal Relationships Quality among Senior Managers

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study was to investigate the empathy relationship and interpersonal relationships quality among senior managers. The population was consisted of 140 senior managers in Tehran at 2015 that were selected based on simple randomized stratification sampling as sample volume. Used tools in this research were Inventory of interpersonal problems Scale (IIP-60) and emotional empathy questionnaire. The study research was descriptive and research design was correlation type. The results showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between the quality of management interpersonal relationships, and empathy (p<0.01). As far as, empathy explain a high degree of variability to the quality of interpersonal relations, attention to this factor can be important in quality of interpersonal relationships.

KEYWORDS Empathy, Quality of Interpersonal Relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Empathy concludes the range of social vision to the ability to understand and emotional and cognitive states and similar exiting experience with others (Eisenberg and Miller, 1987). Sympathy is institutional capacity of people in regulating relations, supporting common activities and group cohesion. This ability plays a fundamental role in social life (Rieffe et al., 2010) and is the motivating force of social behaviors and behaviors that lead to cohesion (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2004; Rieffe et al., 2010). Suitable expression of empathy requires social skills (Hunter et al., 2007). Empirically, it is confirmed that the quality of interpersonal relations have firm link with the psychological and physical well-being. Therefore, the quality and nature of personal relationships is determined and adjusted the relationship between social skills and psychological well-being (Segrin and Taylor, 2007). Based on inter-personal views, maladaptive interpersonal patterns are the results of the ongoing interaction of the
individual and his social environment. Interpersonal relations, not only form social behavior, but also affect the sense of self and others (Alden and Taylor, 2004). Studies results have shown that sympathy is considered for the functioning of successful interpersonal needs and empathy is an essential element for improvement in interpersonal functioning (Sosua et al., 2010).

Studies have shown that this structure acts as a preventive mechanism of aggression in the context of empathy (George and Dhal, 2002; quoted by Ali et al., 2009) and has negative relationship with child abuse (Leterno, 1981 quoted by Veihl, 2003). Kodabakhsh et al. (2012) found that the healthy and secure method of attachment had negative and positive relationship with empathy and interpersonal problems. Insecure attachment styles had positive and negative relationships with empathy and interpersonal problems, respectively. Sosua et al (2010) in the study on the possible relationship between empathy and social relations and narcissism and the quality of interpersonal relationships have stated that there is a significant relationship between empathy and quality of interpersonal relationships. In relation to the gender variable in determining the quality of interpersonal relationships was rejected i.e. role of gender in determining the narcissism and its impact on the quality of interpersonal relations was not confirmed significant relationship.

Fatfouta et al. (2015) during the study found out that praised by the show empathy rather than revenge and avoidance behavior has a negative relationship with the wrongdoer. Conversely, competition has positive relationship with revenge and avoidance behavior through rumination and more anger and less empathy. The findings also showed that the mechanisms are related to each other by narcissism and lack of forgiveness, if we give praise and competitiveness, and consider antecedents of perception and motivated feeling of narcissism people for disendow, will be understood better. Guo and Sanchez (2009) found out that competent manager interact with both positive and negative environmental factors to provide showing ways to study and discuss the positive and negative capital. Effective communication can become one of the most important goals of the organization.

in organizational communication, both managers and employees interact with others in two levels and communication layer. Part of these interpersonal communications is done on a horizontal surface that in this type of communication, individuals communicate with employees and managers in the same level. Another area that seems to be allocated the highest volume to communication is vertical communication that managers or employees have to communicate with subordinates and their upstream in this sector. It seems that in communication, managers with verbal skills, better communication and feedback, they will be able to communicate effectively. Among the problems that managers in sport organizations have less attention, is special attention to communication skills (Nazari et al., 2011). Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991), Mathis (2007) pointed out that the lack of communication skills, increases costs, and ultimately reduces effectiveness. Effective leaders build bridges of communication with words and actions, and connect past and present with inspiring vision about the future.

Yukl (2008) believe that usually leadership behaviors, program management, structural shape, external initiatives and how to use its influence are effective on organizational performance. Among the mentioned cases, programs and management systems are more effective. Tabaian (2002) in the research suggests that the effectiveness of managers with higher education is higher than managers who have not higher education. The effectiveness of managers who have more experience in practice is the most. Nazari et al. (2011) found that personality traits as a criterion in research has
effective role in the prediction of interpersonal communication and communication skills and organizational effective off managers. According to the provided information, this research seeks to answer this issue that whether there is significant relationship between empathy and the quality of interpersonal relationships among managers? Regarding to the purpose of study and research background, the following hypotheses were tested.
Hypothesis 1: empathy variable predict significantly the latent variable of interpersonal problems.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
This study was a descriptive study and research design was correlation type. The study population was comprised all senior managers in Tehran in 2015 that there is no accurate statistics on their number. Of these, 140 individuals were selected as the sample size using randomized sampling method, that all senior management of organizations and authorities such as ministries, sound and television and ... that for security reasons we are unable to name them and private organizations like factories, Irancell and etc. The questionnaires of Inventory of interpersonal problems (IIp-60) and emotional empathy scale were used.

**Inventory of interpersonal problems (IIp-60):** Short Form of 127 item Scale of interpersonal problems (Hervitz, Rosenberg, Bayer, Orono & Vilasnor, 1988) is a 60-item test and measures interpersonal problems in six areas of assertiveness, Sociability, Submissiveness, Intimacy, responsibility and Controlling of 5-point Likert scale from score 0 to 4 (very low = 0, low = 1, medium = 2, high = 3; very high = 4). In the reliability of Persian version of this scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each subscale was 0.86 to 0.89 for assertiveness, 0.90 to 0.91 for sociability, 0.82 to 0.84 for Submissiveness, 0.83 to 0.87 for Intimacy, 0.91 to 0.93 for responsibility, 0.91 to 0.92 for Controlling, and 0.93 to 0.95 for a total score of interpersonal problems, which represents the high internal consistency of the scale.

Correlation coefficients between scores of 112 and 123 individuals in the two samples within two to six weeks was achieved as following (p<0.001): 0.71 to 0.80 for assertiveness, 0.65 to 0.75 for sociability, 0.76 to 0.79 for Submissiveness, 0.74 to 0.75 for Intimacy, 0.77 to 0.78 for responsibility, 0.70 to 0.78 for Controlling, and 0.81 to 0.84 for a total score of interpersonal. These coefficients represent suitable test-retest reliability of 60-item Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (Besharat, 2009, Besharat, et al., 2012). To determine the validity of interpersonal problems scale, exploratory factor analysis with principal components analysis was used for all the participants in the two groups. In non-rotated analysis, factor loading of most scale items was used on a general factor (Total interpersonal problems). Scree test that suggests the approximate number of factors, showed that there are six factors of of assertiveness, sociability, Submissiveness, sincerity, responsibility and Controlling and determine 59% (in the case of students) to 63 percent (in the general population sample) of the total variance (Besharat, 2009, Besharat, et al., 2012).

Validity and discriminant Convergent of interpersonal problems scale was calculated through the implementation of concurrent mental health, self-esteem and emotional intelligence scale rating scale on the subjects of both groups. Correlation coefficients results showed that there is significant and negative correlation between the subjects' scores on measures of interpersonal problems with psychological well-being, self-esteem and emotional intelligence and there is a significant positive correlation with psychological stress. These results confirmed the validity and discriminant convergent of
Inventory of Interpersonal Problems. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 32-questions was 0.7 to 0.8.

**Inventory emotional empathy:** this tool (Mehrabian and Epstein, 1972; quoted by Ali et al., 2009) is a 33-item scale and measures emotional response of people to other people's emotional reactions in the whole 9 point Likert (from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 9). In grading, first, the score to question No. 2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 30, 32, 33 must be reversed (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = almost agree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = neither agree nor disagree, 6 = slightly disagree, 7 = almost disagree, 8 = disagree, 9 = strongly disagree). Then, the sum of scores should be calculated.

Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) reported 0.84 as the reliability of the scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Emotional Empathy Scale was obtained 0.91, that indicating good internal consistency. To determine the validity of the scale, exploratory factor analysis with principal components analysis was used for all participants. In non-rotated analysis, factor loading of most scale items was used on a general factor (Total interpersonal problems) that could explain 67 percent of the total variance. Validity and discriminant Convergent of it were calculated at the same time through the implementation of mental health checklist and a list of positive and negative affect.

The data analysis of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that participants score in subscale of emotional empathy was positively correlated with psychological well-being and emotions, was negatively correlated with psychological distress and negative emotions. These results confirmed the validity and discriminant Convergent of emotional empathy (Besharat, 2009). Finally, after collecting data, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

**RESULTS**

The descriptive findings of this study included statistical indicators of mean and standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha coefficients that is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal problems</td>
<td>assertiveness</td>
<td>16.40</td>
<td>7.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>12.63</td>
<td>6.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submissiveness</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>10.44</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>188.69</td>
<td>28.38</td>
<td>0.835</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the above table shows the Cronbach’s alpha related to accountability of interpersonal problems was very low and thus, it can be said that the participants did not reply the same to questions from interpersonal problems questionnaire. So in this study, the following variables were excluded from the questionnaire of interpersonal problems.
Table 2. Correlation matrix, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of each variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal problems</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. assertiveness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Sociability</td>
<td>0.697**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Submissiveness</td>
<td>0.409** 0.481**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Intimacy</td>
<td>0.643** 0.622** 0.551**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Controlling</td>
<td>0.555** 0.603** 0.545** 0.658**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Empathy</td>
<td>-0.349** -0.379** -0.350** -0.616** -0.484**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>skewness</td>
<td>0.149 0.246 0.128 0.436 0.322 0.011</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>kurtosis</td>
<td>0.227 0.284 -0.440 -0.856 -0.448 0.735</td>
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</table>

**P<0.01, *P<0.05

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**Hypothesis:** there is a positive relationship between the empathy and the quality of personal relationships among managers. Based on the table (2), the total path coefficient (total coefficients of direct and indirect path) of empathy with interpersonal problems was negative and significant at the level of 0.01 (β=-0.624, p<0.01). Accordingly, the H0 hypothesis was confirmed and the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that empathy variable predicit negatively and significantly latent variable of interpersonal problems. Therefore, an increase in standard deviation of the empathy variable scores was reduced -0.624 standard deviation of the latent variable, interpersonal problems. The results of the study hypothesis were in line with the results of Besharat et al. (2012) and Beigian-kolehmarz et al. (2013), Guo and Sanchez (2009), Nazari et al. (2011), Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991), Mathis (2007), Yukl (2008), Tabaiian (2002) and Nazari et al. (2011).

Besharat et al. (2012) in their study found out that the initial hypothetical model with observed data has good fit. All pathes coefficients were significant in the hypothetical model. Empathy had positive correlation with the quality of interpersonal relationships. Since, empathy explain a high degree of variability in the quality of interpersonal relationships, the attention to this factor can consider important in the quality of interpersonal relationships. Empathy allows the person to contact effective with the surrounding social environment, link him with the social environment, facilitate helping to other individuals and prevent damage to other people (Baron-Cohen and Wheel Wright, 2004). This unique feature helps to improve the quality of interpersonal relations to reduce the problems related to the quality of interpersonal relations.

Empathy is a personality trait that is associated with the quality of interpersonal relations. Therefore, it is expected to be a significant correlation between empathy and human relations. On the contrary, we can expect that the relationship between empathy and personality factors such as aggression and hostilitycan be negative that disrupt the quality of interpersonal relations (Hojat et al., 2005).
In other theory of empathy, according to the basic needs of Maslow's theory of empathy, that leads to empathy is something that needs love and security and each frame uses empathy therapy successfully and controls the therapy model that impact on the therapist and client, in fact, each client-centered therapy need to have empathetic relationships between client and therapist. Effective therapy system based on incentive model is prediction, attention and communication, which can be an effective method of treatment that is different from empathy steps and leads to reach their ultimate goal and mutual understanding the client and the therapist's. the treatment that can improve interpersonal relationships is the empathy that the findings of this research is consistent with the mentioned theory.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

REFERENCES


