

## Abstract

**Objective:** The aim of present study was to evaluate the prediction of tendency to substance abuse on the basis of self-esteem and components of emotional intelligence. **Method:** In this descriptive-correlational study, the sample included 153 students of Azad university of Ghorveh who were selected by simple random sampling. Addiction Potential Scale, Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, and Bradberry's emotional intelligence questionnaire were administered among selected sample. **Results:** Research findings represented that there is a negative significant correlation between tendency to substance abuse and self-esteem and also between tendency to substance abuse and self-management and relationship management. **Conclusion:** Results of this study show the predictive role of self-esteem, self-management and relationship management in tendency to substance abuse.

**Key words:** Tendency to Substance Abuse, Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence

# The Prediction of Tendency to Substance Abuse on the Basis of Self-Esteem and Components of Emotional Intelligence

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## Introduction

Substance abuse is one of the growing health-related problems of human society (Hyman & Malenka, 2001). For years, in all countries, the issue of narcotics has become one of the major social problems and global concerns about addiction have increased in recent years (Serajzadeh & Feizi, 2007). Addiction is a biological, psychological and social disease and several factors are effective in the etiology of drug abuse and addiction that initiate drug use and, then, lead to addiction in interaction with each other (Galanter, 2006). Friends' offers, sensation seeking, and a lack of impulse control are among the important factors that increase the possibility of drug use. Studies have shown that people who do not have the ability to inhibit their impulses will possibly become permanent drug users. On the other hand, these individuals are involved in such emotions and feelings that have prevailed their lives and do not allow them to have any control over their emotional lives (Doran, McChargue & Cohen, 2007). Accordingly, emotional intelligence is a construct that probably plays a role in the development of substance abuse. Bar-on believes that emotional Intelligence is a set of non-cognitive skills, talents and abilities that increase a person's ability to cope with environmental pressures. Therefore, those who are not able to use their emotional intelligence skills are likely to take advantage of other less effective methods to manage their mood states and they are also likely to become anxious, depressed and addicted. In fact, emotional intelligence is an important protective factor against psychological pressure (Bradberry & Greaves, 2003). When a person is placed under friends' pressure to use drugs, the effective management of emotions as one of the components of emotional intelligence reduces risk of drug use. The ability to manage emotions can make one use appropriate coping strategies in high-risk situations. People with high emotional intelligence are more able to predict the desires of others. They harness unwanted peer pressure and their own emotions more appropriately and, thereby, show more resistance to drug use (Trinidad & Johnson, 2002). In contrast, those with low emotional intelligence generally turn to drug use in order to cope with their negative emotions (Trinidad, Unger, Chou & Johnson, 2004). Relationship management is one of the other features of emotional intelligence which affects one's ability to provide more abundant and stronger emotional support resources, to avoid stressful situations, and to create pleasant emotional states. Emotional intelligence can also act as a protective factor against stress (Ferrandez & Extremera, 2006). People who earn a high score on this component show more resistance to the others' pressures for drug use (Trinidad & Johnson, 2002).

Another factor influencing tendency to substance use is low self-esteem. Self-esteem is a psychological phenomenon that has a strong influence on the emotional and cognitive aspects of humans and its function to deal with the pressures of life is known as an effective and important source. Self-esteem is

the most important factor in one's mental growth. Therefore, as a person experiences failure in acquiring self-esteem, he/she will undergo anxiety, emotional instability, self-doubt, and feelings of insufficiency in life (Mcauley, Mihalko & Bane, 1997). The related studies implicate the existence of a positive relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies (Shope & Coplend, 1993). In this regard, some other studies have also reported a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and welfare indicators (Cheng & Furnham, 2001). Self-esteem is the result of social life and its values, and is reflected in the daily activities of human. For this reason, it is regarded as one of the most important aspects of personality and a determinant of human behavior characteristics (Kubota & Sasaki, 2002). Addicts are essentially dissatisfied with themselves or environment or both of them and mostly suffer feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, loneliness, hatred, depression, severe anxiety, emotional sensitivity, and especially interpersonal conflicts. They feel unable to solve problems and live in relative peace and comfort (Steven, Hosier & Miles, 2011). These cases, as shown in several studies, can all be the negative consequences of low self-esteem. Negative consequences of self-esteem are often multifaceted. Low self-esteem can lead to personal humiliation, destructive attitudes, psychiatric vulnerability, social problems and high-risk behaviors such as tendency to drug use (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma & De Vries, 2004). Review of the clinical literature on self-esteem suggests that low self-esteem is correlated with depressed mood (Franck & De raedt, 2007), hopelessness, suicidal tendencies, and even suicide attempts (Martin, Richardson, Bergen, Roeger & Allison, 2005). In another study, it was shown that self-esteem plays an important role in the emergence of a series of mental disorders and social problems such as anorexia, nervosa, violence, and high-risk behaviors (Mann et al 2004). In fact, low self-esteem is the most common justification of drug use as per the statements made by clients referring to treatment centers (Kim & Davis, 2009). A number of studies have reported an association between low self-esteem and Internet addiction (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe, 2008). Researchers have referred to high self-esteem as an important source of support by means of which people can react to negative events in everyday life and overcome undesirable life events (Dumont & Provost, 1999).

Since emotional intelligence and self-esteem play an important role in tendency to drug use and the identification of risk factors and causes of addiction can lead to goal-oriented programs for the prevention of addiction, the present study was aimed at evaluating the prediction of tendency to substance abuse on the basis of self-esteem and components of emotional intelligence.

## **Method**

In terms of design, the present study falls into descriptive-correlational (prediction) categories. The statistical population of the study included the

students of Azad university of Ghorveh in 2011-2012, among whom the number of 153 students (73 males and 80 females) was selected as the participants of the study via simple random sampling.

### Instrument

1. Addiction Potential Scale: this questionnaire consists of 39 yes/no items. The reliability coefficient of this scale was evaluated on normal samples and was obtained as .69 and .77 in males and females, respectively (Graham, 2000). This questionnaire was also validated in Iranian contexts and its reliability was obtained .53 through both Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability methods (Minooei & Salehi, 2003).

2. Bradberry's emotional intelligence questionnaire: this scale was developed by Bradberry's & Greaves (2005) and contains 28 five-choice items which measure four subscales, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. In fact, this questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section includes the personal skills of self-awareness and self-management (personal function), and the second section includes social awareness and relationship management that focuses on relations with others (social function). The reliability of this questionnaire was obtained as .88 on an Iranian context (Ganji, 1999). Similarly, its reliability was reported to be .78, .86, .70, .73, and .89 for the four aforementioned components of the scale and the total scale, respectively.

3. Rosenberg self-esteem scale: this scale consists of 10 items which are scored based on a 4-point Likert scale. Mohamadi (2004) evaluated the psychometric characteristics of this scale on an Iranian context and calculated the reliability of this questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha, test-retest, and split-half methods and came to the coefficients of .69, .78, and .68, respectively.

### Results

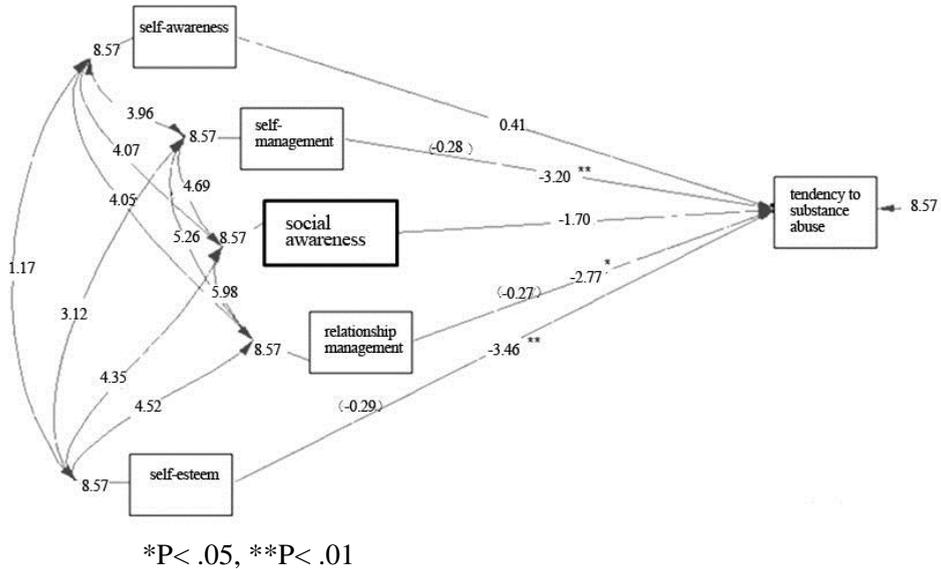
The descriptive statistics of the variables of the study are presented in the following table.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the variables of the study**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max</i>
<b>Addiction potential</b>	153	19.10	3.39	12	29
<b>Self-awareness</b>	153	4.12	2.46	16	36
<b>Self-management</b>	153	6.50	1.90	18	54
<b>Relationship management</b>	153	6.19	2.02	17	46
<b>Emotional awareness</b>	153	21.66	3.64	11	29
<b>Self-esteem</b>	153	18.73	4.49	10	29

The path analysis as per the following figures was used to investigate the relationship between the variables. Path analysis result, as can be seen in

Diagram 1, shows that potential addiction is negatively correlated with self-esteem at the significance level of .01. Therefore, self-esteem is a predictor of tendency to substance abuse; they have a significant negative relationship with each other. On the other hand, addiction potential is negatively correlated with self-management at the significance level of .01 so that the possibility of tendency to substance abuse increases with the decrease of self-management scores.



**Figure 1: Path analysis results of tendency to substance abuse, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence components**

The last finding of the present study is the significant relationship between addiction and the subscale of relationship management at the significance level of .05. Thus, relationship management is another predictor of addiction potential. In other words, the lower level of relationship management is equated with higher degree of tendency to drug abuse.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence is crucial to personal, social, and professional success, and plays an essential role in the regulation of negative emotions. Emotional intelligence is positively associated with the range and quality of social networks and better job management but has a negative correlation with psychological distress and depression (Austin, Soklfske & Egan, 2003). The negative relationship between self-management and tendency to substance abuse was amongst the findings of this study. People with low self-management skills are less skilled in regulating their emotions, show less social and emotional

adaptation, and take advantage of less social support and satisfaction (Bradberry & Greaves, 2003). Results of a study on a group of addicts showed the existence of a significant difference between addicts and non-addicts in the components of emotional intelligence, that is, the attention to and identification of emotions, emotional facilitation of thoughts, perception of emotions, and management of emotions (Khodayi, 2005). This result is consistent with that of the present study. In another study carried out on 111 high school students aged 12 to 15 years, it was shown that adolescents with destructive behavior are weak in emotional intelligence, especially in the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions (Ciarrochi, Deane & Anderson, 2002). Thus, as self-management decreases, the possibility of tendency to substance abuse increases. The other finding of this study was that there was a significant association between relationship management and tendency to substance abuse. Another study found a negative relationship between the management of the relationship with the propensity to consume. People who get high scores in relationship management, benefit from greater flexibility and higher degree of conscientiousness; and such people move towards success. This characteristic also influences people's ability to provide more abundant and stronger emotional support resources, to avoid stressful situations, and to create pleasant and desirable emotional states (Bradberry & Greaves, 2003). Such characteristics are not usually found in addicted people.

Addicts are essentially dissatisfied with themselves or environment or both of them and mostly suffer feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, loneliness, hatred, depression, severe anxiety, emotional sensitivity, and especially interpersonal conflicts. They feel unable to solve problems and live in relative peace and comfort (Steven, Hosier & Miles, 2011). Addicts mostly suffer feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, loneliness, hatred, depression, severe anxiety, emotional sensitivity, and especially interpersonal conflicts and tensions and feel unable to solve problems (Steven et al., 2011). Results of the related studies show that those who are not able to take advantage of their emotional intelligence skills are likely to resort to less effective methods to manage their mood states (Bradberry & Greaves, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that as an individual gains lower scores in relationship management, his/her tendency to substance abuse will be higher.

Problems arising from poor self-esteem not only lead to personal pain and discomfort, but also impose costs on society. Empirical research in the last 15 years has shown that self-esteem is an important psychological factor for health and quality of life and is considered as an important source of support against risky behaviors (Evans, 1997). So far, several studies have been undertaken to evaluate this factor and its relationship with mental health as well. One of the areas being touched upon as the main focus of such studies has been the relationship between self-esteem and substance abuse. In the present study, a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and tendency to drug abuse

was found so that the decline of self-esteem is tantamount to higher levels of tendency to substance abuse. This finding is consistent with that of other related studies (Dekkel, Benbenishty & Amram, 2004; Wilke, 2004). Griffiths (2004) indicated that self-esteem and personality traits are associated with Internet addiction. In the same way, as per the studies conducted by Donnelly, Young, Pearson, Penhollov & Hernandez (2008), Jimenez, Musitu & Murgui (2008), and Kokkevi et al (2007); those who heavily used drugs received lower scores in self-esteem. Another study carried out about Internet addiction suggests that people with low self-esteem spend more time on the Internet (Armstrong, Phillips & Saling, 2000). Based on the findings of this study and other research in this area, the predictive role of self-esteem and its effect on the initiation of drug use is proved. The devastating effects of drug addiction has become so widespread that not only the addicted individual is affected by its grave consequences, but also his/her family members, friends and colleagues, and generally the entire society are terribly affected. Therefore, the identification of predictive factors and, then, dealing with them make a great contribution to addiction prevention and treatment of these people. Overall, findings obtained from this study suggest the significant role of self-esteem and some components of emotional intelligence in predicting tendency to substance abuse. Since addiction causes different culturally, socially, politically, and economically negative effects and also affects various physical and mental aspects of drug users, studies on its causes can play a pivotal role in the identification of predictive factors and, thereby, planning for dealing with such problems. Such measures can lead to the establishment of health promoting programs and employment of predictive approaches. Having revealed some predictive factors of tendency to substance abuse, findings of this study open up new horizon to the experts and officials and, thereby, signal the importance of developing emotional intelligence and promoting self-esteem as two main strategies to prevent addiction and protect people against tendency to substance abuse.

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