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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS AMONG EMPLOYEES OF SPORT AND YOUTH DEPARTMENTS IN KHUZESTAN PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts of the employees in Sport and Youth Departments of Khuzestan Province. Statistical population includes all employees of Sport and Youth Departments of Khuzestan (n=140). Using Morgan Table and simple random sampling method, the sample size of 103 (including 83 male and 22 female subjects) was achieved. To gather data, the questionnaire of Palmer and Stough (2001) was used for measuring emotional intelligence and a researcher-made questionnaire was utilized for measuring interpersonal conflicts. To make sure about the validity of questionnaires, a test was conducted on a 30-person sample whose results confirmed the validity of them. Calculated alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was 0.83. To describe data, descriptive statistics (variance, standard deviation, and etc) were used. To analyze data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation, and Friedman test were used. The results indicated a significant and positive correlation between some elements of emotional intelligence including emotion control and management, understanding external emotion and the factors of interpersonal conflict. But, the correlation between identifying internal emotion, emotion towards identification and interpersonal conflict was not significant.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Conflicts, Sport and Youth Departments, Khuzestan Province*

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence has been one of the most important and interesting research topics in recent years with many applications in social and professional fields. The theory of multiple intelligence of Gardner (1983) and emotional intelligence theory of Mayer and Salovey (2000) and Golman (1995) reveal the importance of emotional intelligence. It has increasingly become the important conception in work places, workshops, and conferences, helping the employees and managers in understanding mutual relations in organizations (Abraham, 2000). Many managers tend to be strict. They are not able to create good relations with their staff. They can't create organizational culture and innovation. Despite having good technical knowledge, they can't be successful managers. Researches show that expert managers with high emotional intelligence can deal with organizational conflicts, group weaknesses, extant errors, ambiguity in relationships, or blurry mutual understandings (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997). Such managers can acquire more awareness about conflict and recognize the conflicts faster and more accurate. They can lead affairs with confidence and empathy and there by create an environment in which the employees have more mental health. Emotional intelligence has had a significant growth with the advent of communication era, promotion of human relations, and incidence of strategic organizational positions. It has also become one of the hot issues in organizational discussions. In recent decades, emotional intelligence has attracted many scholars of scientific areas. Many researchers have indicated that emotional intelligence can predict various work consequences. Apparently, it can be an evolutionary form of attention towards human beings in organizations and a new and appropriate tool in the hands of business managers, experts, and market participants to conduct people inside the organizations and customers outside the organization, satisfying their needs to reduce their conflicts (Parsa, 2002). Emotional intelligence attempts to explain and interpret emotional positions and humans' capabilities and feelings. Managers with emotional

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intelligence are effective leaders that fulfill the goals with maximum staff productivity, satisfaction and commitment (Mokhtaripour, 2009).

An organization's growth depends on confrontation with conflicts. Reducing destructive conflicts provides the best conditions for survival. Thus, the goal of reducing conflicts is not avoidance from them but managing them implicitly. Decision-making during conflicts can be constructive or destructive. Constructive decision-making helps us look at success from different views; While, destructive decision-making can have negative consequences. Conflicts are inevitable aspect of organizational life, appearing for different personal qualities of the staff in the organization (Robinza, 1995).

Several factors can affect the performance of employees in an organization one of which is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is emotional information processing including correct assessment of emotions in one self and others and an appropriate tool for adoptive training of emotions (Mayer and Salovey, 2006).

Another effective factor in organizational behavior of the staff is organizational conflict. Proper exertion of this factor can improve the performance and health level of the organization. It necessitates understanding the nature and the reasons of its creation and getting skills in controlling it. Constructive conflicts induce new thoughts and innovation, revolving the organization. Since sport and youth departments are a part of social body consisting of people, the existence of conflicts in them is inevitable. The conflicts of responsible against laissez-fair staff, relation-oriented versus regulation-oriented staff, new staff versus old staff are some examples. Such conflicts occur for different personalities, needs, perceptions, and expectations of the staff in the organizations (Lotfi, 2010). As organizational conflicts have close relationship with emotions, to deal with them, we must first identify and then control them; individuals must have self-consciousness as well as self-control. Individuals with these features can acquire more knowledge about conflicts and therefore recognize them faster and more accurate with more confidence. This provides an environment in which the individual shave mental health and efficiency with awareness of their own emotions, controlling their interpersonal conflicts. Emotion is an in-born feature of every person. We cannot avoid emotions but we can control them properly (Golman, 1955).

Emotional intelligence is a collection of non-cognitive abilities and skills, increasing the success of the people in confrontation with environmental pressures and events (Rogers, 2006).

In a study titled "Investigating the effect of emotional intelligence and trust on banks performance", Zarepour and Mortazanezhad (2010) showed that increasing awareness of managers from their own emotions, and the ways of understanding and performing based on others' emotions in headquarters affects their financial efficiency in a desirable manner. In a study titled "The relationship between the effect of emotional intelligence of managers on job satisfaction of the staff", Banihashemian and Moazen (2011) found a positive and significant correlation between emotional intelligence of managers, their cooperative management style, and job satisfaction of the staff. Empathy, high motivation, and self-confidence are attributes of emotional intelligence and cooperative management style increasing self-esteem, motivation, and job satisfaction of the staff. In his work titled "Emotional intelligence, an effective tool in organizational management and leadership", Shirzadkhan (2011) showed that professional progress in the organization is correlated with factors of emotional intelligence and leadership development. The value of self-awareness, self-management, relationship development, intuitional perception, and emotional factors are unquestionable. As a panorama of all these attributes, emotional intelligence has great eminence in leadership. Bahrami (2013) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health of the students in Payamnour University of Sardasht, concluding both direct and indirect effect of emotional intelligence on mental health of the students. The significance of this correlation was also proved. Each element of emotional intelligence affects the quality of mental health and people's personalities, promoting general health for preventing from psychic disorders. The results showed significant difference of emotional intelligence and mental health of male and female students in Payamnour University of Sardasht. Pirmoradi (2009) studied organizational conflicts and personal qualities of the staff in public organizations. He found that there is a positive and significant correlation between control center and power-seeking qualities of the staff and organizational conflicts.

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There was a negative and significant correlation between self-esteem and adoption with position qualities of the staff and organizational conflicts. In another study on organizational conflicts and managerial strategies, Pirmoradi (2008) showed that organizational conflicts are natural and inevitable, appearing in different forms. Although personal qualities affect conflicts, their development can be for the lack of conductivity in communication system, organizational conditions, bad management, penetration of informal groups, organizational structure and etc.

Haji (2011) studied the relationship between applications of management principals of pervasive quality and organizational conflicts in Physical Education Department of East Azerbaijan Province. He found that a significant difference exists in personal and professional features such as major, employment status, service records, age, marital status, education level and organizational conflicts of the staff. But, there was no significant correlation between gender and organizational conflicts.

There was a significant and negative correlation between all principals of pervasive quality management (i.e. leadership and top management, customer-centrism, continuous improvement, staff training, staff involvement, strategic planning, information analysis, suggestion system, staff empowerment, team work, staff assessment) and organizational conflicts.

Kilduff *et al.*, (2010) studied usage of emotional intelligence in organization. He showed that people with high emotional intelligence benefit from focus on identifying others' feelings, expressing emotions for getting personality, and controlling relation flow full of emotions in attending to one's own benefits.

In another study titled "Calling team reaction to conflict and team's task and social outcomes: The moderation role of transformational and emotional leadership", Oluremi *et al.*, concluded a positive correlation between interpersonal conflicts and organizational factors. Attitudes toward organizational policies had facilitating role in the relationship between interpersonal conflicts and personal and organizational rejection at work. Attitudes toward organizational policies have a positive correlation with rejection at work.

Since organizational conflicts are closely correlated with emotions, for controlling them first emotions should be identified and then controlled. In this case, people should have self-awareness and self-control features. People with these features can gain more awareness towards conflicts and recognize them faster. Sport and youth departments are social systems in which all processes consist of humans and group activities. So, conflicts in them seem natural. Meanwhile, sport and youth departments look for competitive advantages they need an environment in which rational and emotional dimensions are balanced. Staffs in such contexts have higher mental health. Having healthy relations, validness feeling, acceptance, support understanding, and truth gives importance feeling to them. This provides mental health and efficiency for the staff. Regarding investigations in this field, the eminence of emotional intelligence in controlling conflicts is felt more than before. Thus, this study aims to examine this issue in detail in sport and youth departments in East Azerbaijan Province. This may lead to improvements in awareness and performance of managers and staff in those departments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive–correlation, using field method. Statistical population of the study includes all 140 employees and managers of sport and youth departments of Khuzestan Province in 2013. Sample size was achieved to be 103 people using Morgan Table and simple random sampling method. To describe variables, descriptive statistics including means, percentages, variance, and standard deviation were used. To analyze data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation test, and Friedman test were used. Measurement tool included two questionnaires: 1. the questionnaire of measuring emotional intelligence of Palmer and Stough (2001) with 4 dimensions. It used 5-point Likert scale (very little-very much), measuring the dimensions including identifying internal emotions (6 questions), emotion towards identification (6 questions), understanding external emotions (7 questions), management and control of emotions (12 questions); and 2. the researcher-made questionnaire for measuring interpersonal conflicts with 11 questions using 5-point Likert scale. To identify consistency of the questionnaire, it was

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conducted among 30 staff, randomly selected from study population. Alpha coefficient was 0.83 for the questionnaire. Its face validity was confirmed by the experts of sport management department.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Regarding the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that scores of the elements of the questionnaire have normal distribution since they are significant at 0.05% level. So, to answer the questions, parametric test was used.

Table 1 shows simple correlation coefficients of emotional intelligence elements and interpersonal conflict.

Table 1: Simple correlation coefficients of emotional intelligence elements and interpersonal conflicts

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	Correlation coefficient	Sig
Interpersonal Conflict	Identifying internal emotions	0.168	0.113
	emotion towards identification	0.170	0.109
	understanding external emotions	0.279	0.008
	Management and control of emotions	0.433	0.000
	Sum of emotional intelligence	0.370	0.000

*results are significant at 0.01%.

* results are significant at 0.05%.

Based on Table 1, there is no significant correlation between interpersonal conflicts and emotion towards identification and understanding external emotions (>0.05). But, the correlation between understanding external emotions, emotion control and management and interpersonal conflicts is significant and positive (0.05>).

Table 2 shows ranking the factors of emotional intelligence using Friedman test.

Table 2: Ranking the factors of emotional intelligence using Friedman test

Elements	Rank mean
Identifying internal emotions	1.54
emotion towards identification	1.64
understanding external emotions	2.82
Management and control of emotions	4.00

Based on Table 2, the factors of emotional intelligence including control and management of emotion, understanding external emotions, identifying internal emotions, and emotion towards identification achieved the ranks of 4.00, 2.82, 1.64, and 1.54 in respondents' ideas. So, there is a significant difference in ranking the factors of emotional intelligence among the staff of Physical Education Department.

Table 3 shows Friedman test statistics.

Table 3: Friedman test statistics

Squared Chi	220.93
df	3
sig	0.000

According to Table 3, degree of freedom is significant at 0.000 since it is below 0.05. Thus, in respondents' ideas, 3 elements of emotional intelligence are not similar in rankings.

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Discussion

This study was an attempt to examine the relationship between the elements of emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts among the staff of physical education department in Khuzestan Province. In an agreement with the findings of H1 implying positive correlation between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts, Smith *et al.*, (2008) showed that increasing emotional intelligence enhances interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. The results of this study agree with the study of Oluremi *et al.*, (2010), finding a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflict. But, Shirkhani (2012) found a different result with this study that can be for his different population. He found a negative and significant correlation between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts among bank staff. He suggests that increasing the factors of emotional intelligence decreases interpersonal conflicts. As it is known, banks have highly bureaucratic system in which the possibility of creating innovation in staff is taken from them. So, the grounds for appearance of conflicts among the staff are reduced. Another reason for such in consistency can be geographical location of that study because this study was conducted in Khuzestan Province while his study was done in Ilam Province. Since emotional intelligence can increase abilities of the staff, increasing their accountability and innovation, managers of the organizations should play the role of mentors and offer constructive feedback to them. Training programs need to be conducted for the managers to create the skills of emotional intelligence for benefiting from extant conflicts in a maximum way for their organizations. Managers of the organizations should identify the elements of emotional intelligence, their features, and effects on organizational results. Every counsel, comment, problem-solving via identifying these factors will be desirable. Managers can also use conflicts as the opportunities for revolution. In case conflicts and disagreements are dealt with insight, they can lead to organizational growth.

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