



# The Mental Health of Preschool Children and the Role of Instructors on them

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## Abstract

Mental health is the term used for every human who can cope with his own deep-seated issues, can adapt with himself and others, does not get paralyzed by his inevitable internal conflicts, and is not rejected by the society. The aim of this study was to evaluate the mental health of preschool children (first and second year of preschool) in Parand city and the role of instructors on these children. This research is a cross-sectional study. The statistical population of the study consisted of pre-school children who were studying between the years 2016-2017 in Parand city. Samples were selected from public and private schools with a multi-stage cluster sampling. The data was collected through a mental health standard questionnaire of Pediatric Symptom Checklist (psc), which was published as a valid and international test for the screening the social-behavioral disorders of children and adolescents. Questionnaires were completed by parents and teachers in a separate meeting. Afterward, according to the score, the clinical examination was conducted by psychiatrists on cases who showed PSC. Then, the results were analyzed by descriptive statistics and testing.

**Keywords:** Mental Health; Preschool Children; Parand

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## 1. Introduction

Mental health and recognizing a way to achieve it are one of the most important issues in human life. The issue of health always has been at the center of focus from the emergence of mankind and gained much more attention in the following centuries [1]. Mental health is an issue that may influence family and community growth and is considered as one of the critical psychological concepts, to the point, Keyes has defined it as a combination of positive emotions (emotional well-being) and positive performance (social and psychological well-being) [2].

Every society has a specific concept of health as a part of its culture. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers mental health as the ability to have a coherent and harmonized communication with others, changing the individual and social

environment, and resolving conflicts and personal preferences in a fair and appropriate manner (Sharifi & Ranjbar, 2003).

Mental health was defined in the Larose's grand culture of psychology as a "mental talent to work in a harmonized, pleasant, and effective way in difficult situations, which have the flexibility to retrieve its balance" (Ganji, 2003).

Mental health means having a healthy mind and soul. Mental health can help in personal and social development and creating progressive movements. The path of personal and social development is open for a person who is mentally healthy [3]. It can be said that the purpose of mental health is to prevent and reduce the prevalence of mental disorders and prevent complications [4].

Human development during the childhood period, in terms of social, emotional, cognitive and physical

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growth, has characteristics that can make a child vulnerable to mental health [5].

Many types of researches have shown that teachers play a critical role in children's mental health and social development. The relationship between the teacher and the child has many properties and functions of positive parental relationship [6].

Childhood education, which is during the child's personality and habit formation and problem prevention, can build the future of the individual and society. Paying attention to children's issues and problems lead to the societies' progression and development. Additionally, negating or not solving their problems can cause irreparable damage to the society, hence the investment and planning in the children education is one of the most sensitive and important tasks of the officials and should be given special priority [5].

Researches have that many emotional-psychological problems are a product of poor living skills that requires attention and intervention [7]. Mahdavi Nia and Samavati (2010) in a study entitled "teaching love to children" that was carried out in a part of northern Tehran, found that creating such a learning environment would help children to have good teamwork and also help them to learn through a game [8].

Lewy, Bridges, Basuk, Fuller, and Rambierger (2007) in a study with the title "The Impact of Preschool Centers on Cognitive and Social Development of Children", highlighted the long-term effects and intensity of participation in children [9]. Mahrez & Peterson (2000) suggested that happiness can improve physical and mental health; those who are happy are more likely able to decide easier and have a more cooperative spirit (Abedi and Mirzaie, 2006).

Rahimian Booger et al. (2010), in research with the title "The Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on Students' Mental Health" found that the independent variable of group membership (control group and experimental group) was effective on the general health of students [7].

Educating children in their early years of life is critical. Educating children through friendly games provides an environment for children to learn directly and indirectly. One way to achieve this is to use the game for educational purposes. The game involves the mind, body, and heart. It also creates opportunities to learn how they can act as a member of a group [8].

## 2. Methodology

The present study is an epidemiology study that is conducted with a cross-sectional descriptive method in 2017 and investigated the mental health of preschool children and the role of preschool teacher on children's mental health in Parand city. In order to obtain the statistical population, first, a

list of all public and private boys' preschools of Parand City was provided. Parand has a total of 81 primary schools out of which 42 of them are boy's school (26 public and 16 private schools) and 39 of them are girl's school (28 public and 11 private schools). In general, Parand has 54 public preschools and 27 private preschools. Then, 14 public and private schools (7 girl's school and 7 boy's school) were selected through a random cluster sampling method in different parts of the city. The statistical population of this study was all preschool students (first and secondary year) in Parand city in the academic year 2016-2017. The total number of preschool in Parand city in the academic year 2016-2017 was about 3016 children, out of which 249 people were the first year of pre-school girls, 224 people were the first year of pre-school boys, 1155 people were second year of pre-school girls, and 1275 people were the second year of pre-school boys. The statistical population of the study was all preschoolers (primary and secondary year) in the Parand city, out of which ..... People were studying in public schools and ..... people were studying in private schools. 950 pre-school students were selected through random sampling by considering the distribution in different parts of the city. Among them, 720 children were studying in public schools and 250 children were studying in private schools. 250 pre-school children were selected randomly based on distribution patterns in different parts of the city.

## 3. Research Instruments/Materials

Mental Health Questionnaire for Children aged 3 to 18 years old (psc): This questionnaire was prepared by Jellinek, Murphy & Borenz (1986) and translated by Sadeghi (2009). Pediatric Symptom Auditory Checklist is a 35-item questionnaire that was published with critical changes as a valid and international test for screening social-behavioral disorders in children and adolescents. Each question has three options, never, sometimes, and often, with the scores of 0, 1, and 2 respectively. The total score of this questionnaire indicates that the child is likely to have a psychosocial problem. Several studies have proved the validity and reliability of this questionnaire. For example, Jellinek, Murphy, Robinson, Feins & et al (1988) reported the reliability of the questionnaire between 84%-91%; Murphy, Ichinose, Hicks, Kingdon & et al (1996) reported that the Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was about 91%; Pagano, Murphy, Pedersen, Mosacher & et al (1996) reported that Cronbach's alpha was 87%; and Polaha, William, Allen (2011) reported the Cronbach Alpha of 94% for this questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was Cronbach Alpha of 87%.

#### 4. Findings

Out of a total of ..... students that were investigated in this study, ..... percent were girls and ..... Percent were boys. Also ..... students were studying in the primary year of pre-school and ..... students were studying in the secondary year of pre-school. ....% of these children were studying in public schools and ..... % were studying in private schools. ....% of children had illiterate or low literacy parent, ..... % parent had a diploma or higher degrees. Also, .....% of parents had self-employment jobs, .....% were workers, ..... were military people, .....% were employees, and .....% were unemployed. Furthermore, .....% of students with financially poor, .....% had a moderate financial status, and .....% had a relatively good financial situation. Also, ..... % of parents had an illness and psychiatric problems.

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