

Investigating the Fit Pattern of Family Function and Relationship Beliefs mediated by Differentiation of Self with Social Interest

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Purpose: Present research was conducted with aim of investigating the fit pattern of family function and relationship beliefs mediated by differentiation of self with social interest.

Methodology: This study was cross-sectional in terms of purpose was applied and in terms of implementation method was quantitative from type of correlation. The study population was students of Islamic Azad University of Khomeini Shahr in the academic years 2019-20. The research sample was 300 people who were selected by cluster sampling method with respect to the volume of students in different faculties. To collected data were used from the family function questionnaire (Epstein et al, 1983), relationship beliefs questionnaire (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982), differentiation of self-inventory (Skowron & Fridlander, 1998), and social interest index (Greever et al, 1973). Data were analyzed by structural equation modeling method of path analysis in SPSS and PLS software.

Findings: The results showed that pattern of family function and relationship beliefs mediated by differentiation of self with social interest had a well fit. In addition, family function and relationship beliefs had a direct and significant effect on differentiation of self, differentiation of self-had a direct and significant effect on social interest and family function had a direct and significant effect on social interest ($P < 0.05$), but relationship beliefs had no a direct and significant effect on social interest ($P > 0.05$). Also, family function mediated by differentiation of self-had an indirect and significant effect on social interest ($P < 0.05$), but relationship beliefs mediated by differentiation of self-had no an indirect and significant effect on social interest ($P > 0.05$).

Conclusion: The results indicated the effective role of family function and differentiation of self in social interest. Therefore, to improve social interest can be improved the family function and differentiation of self.

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1. Introduction

Man is a social being and social interest is one of the most fundamental concepts of Adler's personality theory (1938) (Dobrev & Ivanova, 2016). Social interest is an ability that is formed during childhood, is stabilized during adolescence, and changes less and persists in other periods of life (Jones, Morrison, DeBrabander, Ackerman, Pinkham & Sasson, 2021). Social interest, as one of the main indicators of mental health, is a concept beyond cooperation, social relations and empathy, which indicates the effort of people to perform beneficial activities for the benefit of society (Zakai-Mashiach, Mati & Margalit, 2017). This structure means the active and dynamic effort of the individual to improve the level of well-being and comfort of all members of society or humanity in general (Nie, Ding, Fu, Zhou & Zhang, 2013). Social interest has three parts: cognitive (attributing importance to the personal growth of others), emotional (positive attitude towards others and concern for improving their well-being) and behavioral (movement and dynamics of the individual for the benefit of the members of the society) (Kim, Park & Hogge, 2015). This structure plays an effective role in the growth and flourishing of the talents of all members of the society, improving health and life satisfaction, improving the well-being and comfort of the society and socialization through the mutual relationship between the individual and the society (Giordano & Cashwell, 2014). People with low social interest usually have a low sense of equality, they feel inferior or superior, they spend a lot of their energy on feeling inferior or superior, they seek to achieve personal benefits, and they have a low sense of empathy and superiority of society (Sydorkina, 2020).

One of the factors affecting social interest is family function (Pourimohammad & Mirhashemi, 2019), which means the ability of the family in internal coordination in adapting to the changes, solving conflicts and family conflicts, solidarity between members and success in disciplinary patterns and compliance with the principles and The boundaries between family members are to maintain the balance and cohesion of the family (Thornock, Nelson, Porter & Evans-Stout, 2019). Family functioning has six parts: problem solving, communication, roles, emotional reactions, intercourse or emotional involvement, and behavioral control (Clements, Frazier, Moser, Lennie & Chung, 2020). In general, the functioning of the family depends more on the characteristics of the family system, systemic practices and exchange patterns between family members than on the individual, internal and psychological characteristics of each of its members (Burn, Knight, Taylor & Toumbourou, 2019). Families with poor functioning have many emotional problems, and in such families, communication is often neglected or inappropriate, role assignments and responses are not clear and clear, the range of emotional reactions is limited, family members have little interest in each other, and no emotional investment for They do not communicate with other family members (Bonnaire & Phan, 2017). On the other hand, families with strong or appropriate functioning have a high ability to identify family issues and problems, overcome problems and challenges with each other's help, have a desire and interest in each other, and adapt themselves to different family conditions (Sibo & Guo, 2018).). Therefore, family functioning plays an effective role in the health and quality of life of family members, and optimal family functioning increases the health and quality of life of family members (Zhai, Li, Jia, Liu, Sun & Wang, 2019).

Another factor affecting social interest is communication beliefs (Yosefi Maridani, Falahian & Mikaeili, 2020), which irrational communication beliefs refer to different values, attitudes, goals or communication preferences, which are considered a threat to security and friendly relationships (Zagefka & Bahul, 2020). Unfavorable communication beliefs cause important relationship issues to remain unresolved and increase conflicts (Hamameci & Esen-Coban, 2010). Cognitive theories attribute effective and ineffective communication beliefs to the different way people think about beliefs, feelings, actions and behaviors (Arnaez, Garcia-Soriano & Belloch, 2019). Communication beliefs can promote health if they facilitate the adaptation of people in relationships, and on the other hand, irrational and inappropriate communication beliefs such as dry and unreasonable opinions cause a decrease in adaptation and health (Yigitoglu & Keskin, 2019).

One of the mediating variables between family functioning and communication beliefs with social interest can be self-differentiation, which means a person's ability to achieve intimacy while maintaining independence

and communication with others (Talmon, Salomon & Ginzburg, 2020). Self-differentiation is one of the key concepts of Bowen's (1978) family therapy theory, which refers to the separation of rational and emotional processes (Sloan & Van Dierendonck, 2016). This construct refers to an individual approach to the relationship and an individual sense of ideal self-differentiation including the individual's capacity to maintain the relationship while respecting individuality (Peleg, Deutch & Dan, 2016). Self-differentiation has two parts, intrapersonal (a person's ability to distinguish between emotional feelings and rational thoughts) and interpersonal (a person's ability to balance independence and close relationships with others) (Lahav, Stein & Solomon, 2016). Differentiation allows people to maintain their independence and individuality without fear of becoming one while experiencing intimacy in close relationships and maintain or even improve their peace when their partner is anxious (Monaghan Simon, DiPlacido & Conway, 2019). People with self-differentiation have a clear definition of themselves and their opinions; they determine the direction and purpose of their lives and make appropriate decisions in emotionally stressful situations (Boyko-Head, 2020). No research was found on the relationship between family functioning and communication beliefs with social interest with the mediation of self-differentiation; although research has been conducted on the relationship between each of the variables and the results of the most important research are reported below. Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver (2021) concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between family functioning and self-differentiation. In another study, Shafiee, Dayariyan & Rezaei-Jamaloei (2021) reported that family functioning had a direct and significant effect on self-differentiation and social interest. The results of Keshavarz-Afshar, Ghanbarian, Jebeli & Saadat (2019) showed that there was a significant relationship between family functioning and differentiation. Ameri & Amooi (2016) concluded that family functioning and differentiation had a positive and significant relationship. In another study, Kim, Prouty, Smith, Ko, Wetchler & Oh (2014) reported that there was a positive and significant correlation between family ancestry and self-differentiation. In addition, Jani, Delavar, Karami & Shoghi (2021) concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication beliefs and differentiation. In another study, Mahmoudpour, Shiri, Ahmadboukani & Naeimi (2021) reported that self-differentiation and communication beliefs had a positive and significant relationship. Kurt & Gunduz (2020) research results showed that there was a negative and significant relationship between irrational communication beliefs and self-differentiation. Also, Pourimohammad & Mirhashemi (2019) concluded that the emotional atmosphere of the family had a significant positive relationship with social interest. In addition, Yosefi Maridani et al (2020) concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between communication beliefs and social trust. In another study, Guzick, Dorman, William, Groff, Altermatt & Forsyth (2004) reported that family responsibility and supportive interpersonal relationships with teachers had an effective role in adolescents' social interest. Social interest is one of the most important variables in education that affects many educational variables and even non-educational variables such as health and quality of life. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research with the aim of explaining social interest based on other variables in order to plan for its improvement. Based on the research conducted, among the variables affecting social interest, we can mention the family function and communication beliefs, and it seems that the self-differentiation variable can play an effective role in the relationships between the aforementioned variables. Another important point is that researches have been conducted on the relationships between family functioning, communication beliefs, self-differentiation and social interest, although few studies have been conducted on the relationships of the mentioned variables with social interest and no research has been found on the relationship between self-differentiation and social interest. In addition, no research was found on the relationship between family functioning and communication beliefs with social interest with the mediation of self-differentiation, which could fill the gaps in this field. The last thing about the importance and necessity of the current research is that the results of this research can have practical implications for specialists and planners, and they can take an effective step towards improving social interest and related variables with the help of the results of this research and similar research. As a result, the present research was conducted with the aim of investigating the fit of family functioning model and communication beliefs to the mediation of self-differentiation with social interest.

2. Methodology

This cross-sectional study was applied in terms of purpose and correlational in terms of implementation method. The research population was the students of Islamic Azad University, Khomeini Branch in the academic year of 2019-20. The sample of the research was 300 people who were selected by cluster sampling method according to the volume of students of different faculties. In the method of structural equations, the number of components is multiplied by 10 to 20 to determine the sample size. In this research, they were multiplied by 15, and according to that, a sample size of 300 people was obtained. The criteria for entering the study include willingness to participate in the research, no addiction and use of psychiatric drugs, no history of receiving psychological services in the last three months, no stressful events such as divorce and death of loved ones in the last three months, and no infection with Covid-19 in the last three months. Last month and the exclusion criteria included refusal to continue cooperation and failure to respond to more than ten percent of the items.

The process of conducting the present research was as follows: after the approval of the proposal and coordination with the officials of the Islamic Azad University of Khomeini Shahr for the implementation of the research and after coordination with the education officials of the university and determining the volume of students by faculties, sampling was done. For the samples, the ethical points were expressed and according to the importance and necessity of the research, they were asked to respond carefully to the research tools. In this research, the following four tools were used to collect data.

1. Family Function Questionnaire: Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop (1983) made the mentioned questionnaire with 60 items; So that the items are scored using a four-point Likert scale from one to four. Of course, some items, i.e. items related to unhealthy family functioning, are scored inversely. The score of the instrument is calculated through the total score of the items, so the minimum score is 60 and the maximum score is 240, and a higher score indicates a better family performance. The construct validity of the tool was checked by exploratory factor analysis method and the factor load of all of them was significant, and in addition, its reliability was 0.82 with Cronbach's alpha method and 0.73 with retest method. In the research of Ashoori, Moammeri & Saeedi (2015), the reliability value was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.85.
2. Communication Beliefs Questionnaire: Eidelson & Epstein (1982) made this questionnaire with 40 items; So that the items are scored using a six-point Likert scale from zero to five. Of course, some items are graded in reverse. The score of the tool is calculated through the total score of the items, so the minimum score is 0 and the maximum score is 200, and a lower score indicates more favorable communication beliefs. The convergent validity of the tool was confirmed with the Jones irrational beliefs questionnaire, and in addition, its reliability was found to be 0.76 with the test-retest method. In the study of TabatabaeiNejad & IbnYamin (2021), the reliability value was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.81.
3. Self-differentiation list: Skowron & Fridlander (1998) made this list with 46 items; So that the items are scored using a six-point Likert scale from one to six. Of course, some items are graded in reverse. The score of the tool is calculated through the total score of the items, so the minimum score is 46 and the maximum score is 276, and a higher score indicates better self-differentiation. The construct validity of the instrument was checked by exploratory factor analysis method and the factor load of all of them was significant, and in addition, its reliability was 0.83 with Cronbach's alpha method and 0.76 with retest method. In the research of Kazemian Moghaddam, Mehrabizadeh Honarmand, Kiamanesh & Hosseiniyan (2017), the reliability value was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.81.
4. Social interest index: Greever, Tseng & Friedland (1973) created the mentioned index with 32 items; So that the items are graded using a five-point Likert scale from one to five. Of course, some items (3 and 6) are scored inversely. The score of the tool is calculated through the total score of the items, so the minimum score is 32 and the maximum score is 160, and a higher score indicates more social interest. The convergent validity of the instrument was confirmed with Crandell's social interest scale, and in addition, its reliability was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.81. In the study of TabatabaeiNejad & IbnYamin (2021), the reliability value was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of

0.81. After collecting the data with the above tools, the data were analyzed by the structural equation modeling method of the path analysis type in SPSS and PLS software.

3. Findings

The results of mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix of variables can be seen in Table 1.

Table1. Results of mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix of family functioning, communication beliefs, self-differentiation and social interest

Variable	Average	standard deviation	1	2	3	4
1. Family function	166/26	20/03	1			
2. Communication beliefs	103/89	19/44	0/35*	1		
3. Self-differentiation	149/70	22/94	0/23*	0/31*	1	
4. Social interest	112/24	13/93	0/42*	0/24*	0/29*	1

*P<0/01

According to the results of Table 1, there is a positive and significant correlation between family functioning, communication beliefs, self-differentiation and social interest of students ($P<0.01$). Examining the assumptions of structural equation modeling showed that in addition to the existence of sufficient correlation between the variables, the assumption of normality for all four variables was not rejected based on the statistics obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test due to a significance greater than 0.05. The results of the fit indices of the current research model can be seen in Table 2.

Table2. The results of the fit indices of the family functioning model and communication beliefs to the mediation of self-differentiation with interest in social interest

Variables	R ²	Q ²	GOF
Self-differentiation	0/19	0/10	0/35
social interest	0/21	0/11	

According to the results of Table 2, the independent variables were able to explain 19 and 21% of the variance of self-differentiation and social interest, respectively. The Q2 and GOF index values indicate the moderate and good fit of the model, respectively. The results of the current research model in the form of standard coefficients can be seen in Figure 1 and the results of direct and indirect effects in Table 3.

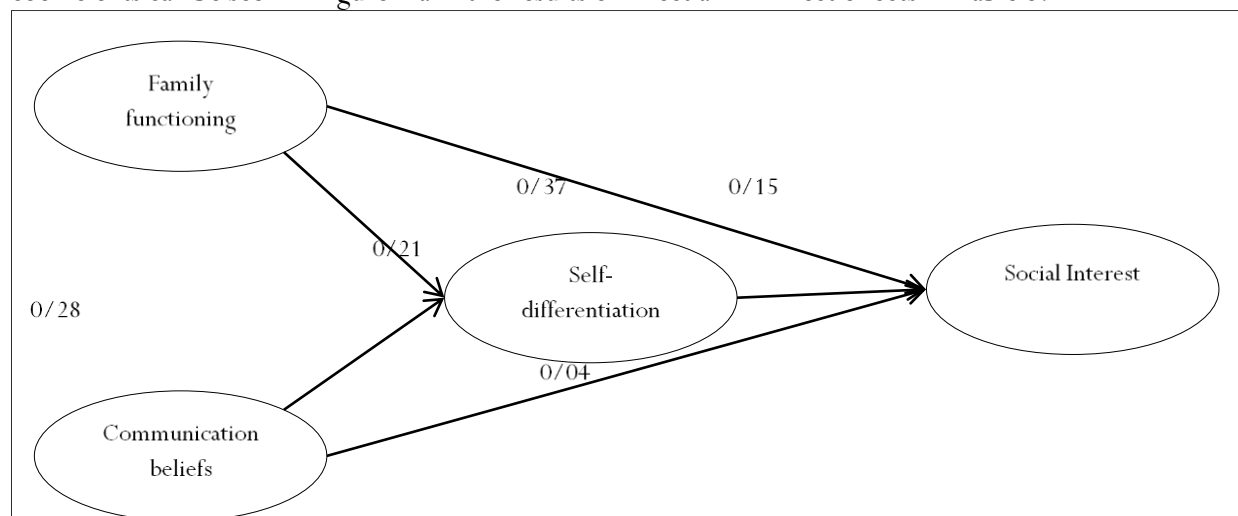


Figure1. The pattern of family functioning and communication beliefs mediating self-differentiation with social interest in the form of standardized coefficients

Table3. The results of direct and indirect effects of family functioning pattern and communication beliefs on the mediation of self-differentiation with social interest

The effects	Mediator	direct impact	Indirect effect	overall effect
Family functioning on self-differentiation	-----	0/15*	-----	0/15
Communication beliefs on self-differentiation	-----	0/28*	-----	0/28
Self-differentiation over social interest	-----	0/21*	-----	0/21
Family functioning on social interest	Self-differentiation	0/37*	0/02*	0/39
Communication beliefs on social interest		0/04	0/03	0/09

*P<0/05

According to the results of Figure 1 and Table 3, family function and communication beliefs had a direct and significant effect on self-differentiation, self-differentiation had a direct and significant effect on social interest, and family function had a direct and significant effect on social interest ($P<0.05$), but communication beliefs It had no direct and significant effect on social interest ($P>0.05$). Also, family performance had an indirect and significant effect on social interest through the mediation of self-differentiation ($P<0.05$), but communication beliefs did not have an indirect and significant effect on the mediation of self-differentiation on social interest ($P>0.05$).

4. Conclusion

Considering the importance of social interest and its effect on other variables, the present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the fit of family functioning pattern and communication beliefs to the mediation of self-differentiation with social interest.

The findings of the present study showed that family functioning had a direct and significant effect on self-differentiation and social interest. These findings in the context of the effect of family functioning on self-differentiation with the findings of Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver (2021), Shafiee et al (2021), Keshavarz-Afshar et al (2019), Ameri & Amooi (2016) and Kim et al (2016) 2014) and in terms of the effect of family functioning on social interest, it was consistent with the findings of Pourimohammad & Mirhashemi (2019). In explaining these findings based on the research of Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver (2021), it can be said that cohesive, flexible and high-functioning families have a high ability to solve problems, establish effective intimate relationships with family members, encourage and encourage children to express themselves. And they have independent decision-making and precise and specific determination of the roles and duties of the members. Many eastern families show proper functioning in close-knit members, respect for adults, respecting hierarchy, reacting to the emotions and feelings of members, and involving themselves in the issues of other family members. While many Western families emphasize autonomy, independence, non-dependence on support sources including the family, and adherence to personal beliefs. Since the current research was conducted on Iranian students, it can be expected that the level of self-differentiation and social interest will increase with the increase in family functioning.

Other findings of the present study showed that communication beliefs had a direct and significant effect on self-differentiation, but did not have a significant effect on social interest. These findings in the context of the effect of communication beliefs on self-differentiation with the findings of the researches of Jani et al (2021), Mahmoudpour et al (2021) and Kurt & Gunduz (2020) and in the context of the lack of effect of communication beliefs on social interest in some ways with the findings of the researches of Yosefi Maridani et al. al (2020) and Guzick et al (2004) were inconsistent. In explaining the inconsistency between the findings of the current research, that communication beliefs have no effect on social interest, with the findings of Yosefi Maridani et al (2020) and Guzick et al (2004), we can point to the difference in the research method. The current research was of the structural equation modeling type that measured the effect of communication beliefs on social interest, but the research of Yosefi Maridani et al (2020) was of the correlation type, which was the relationship between communication beliefs and social trust, and Guzick et al (2004) was of the correlation type that They evaluated the relationship between supportive interpersonal relationships with teachers and adolescents' social interest. The possible reason for the difference in the results can be the

difference in the analysis methods, because the effect becomes significant compared to the correlation when the correlation is very high. This explanation seems reasonable since in the present study the correlation between communication beliefs and social interest is significant. In addition to that, in explaining the effect of communication beliefs on self-differentiation based on the research of Mahmoudpour et al (2021), it can be said that irrational communication beliefs have a strong biological basis that having these irrational beliefs leads to more psychological problems and disruption in interpersonal relationships, while Rational beliefs play a special role in success in relationships. Releasing motivated people from self-deprecation and self-deprecation as manifestations of irrational thinking may raise the level of tolerance for failure, improve independence and autonomy, and lead people to success and progress. Consequently, it is logical that self-differentiation increases as relational beliefs increase.

Other findings of the present study showed that self-differentiation had a direct and significant effect on social interest, which was not found in this research field. In explaining this finding based on the research of Monaghan Simon et al (2019), it can be said that self-differentiation is a key indicator of family functioning and people who lack differentiation are emotionally dependent on others, can hardly make decisions for themselves, and in terms of thoughts and feelings Others are dependent, on the other hand, differentiated people are often self-directed, express their thoughts and feelings well, defend the correctness of their thoughts and feelings, and do not have to adapt themselves to the expectations of others. As a result, people with self-differentiation have a real desire and interest in others, and for this reason, an increase in self-differentiation causes an increase in social interest.

Also, the findings of the present study showed that family functioning had an indirect and significant effect on social interest through the mediation of self-differentiation. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the effect of family functioning on social interest is mediated by cognitive and motivational variables, which include cognitive variables such as belief in efficacy, self-esteem, etc., and motivational variables include positive attitude, positive beliefs, etc. Since self-differentiation has both cognitive and motivational dimensions, it can be expected to be a suitable mediating variable between family functioning and social interest. Another important point is that the effect of family functioning on social interest can be realized through the mediation of intra-individual and inter-individual variables, and since based on the research of Lahav, et al (2016), self-differentiation has two intra-individual parts (a person's ability to distinguish between emotional feelings and logical thoughts) and Interpersonality (a person's ability to balance independence and close relationships with others), therefore, can act as a suitable mediating variable between them. As a result, the family functioning variable had an indirect and significant effect on social interest through the mediation of self-differentiation.

In addition, the findings of the present study showed that communication beliefs did not have an indirect and significant effect on the mediation of self-differentiation on social interest. In explaining this finding, it can be said that in the research, the effect of communication beliefs on self-differentiation and the effect of self-differentiation on social interest is very low, and when the effect of communication beliefs on the mediation of self-differentiation on social interest is examined, its effect becomes insignificant. As a result, it is logical that self-differentiation is not a suitable mediator between communication beliefs and social interest and communication beliefs do not have an indirect and significant effect on the mediation of self-differentiation on social interest.

The first limitation of the present study was the use of self-report tools to collect data, based on which it is suggested that future researchers use interview and observation to collect data. The second limitation of this research was the limitation of the research community to the students of the Islamic Azad University of Khomeini Shahr, based on which it is suggested that this research be conducted on the students of the Islamic Azad University of other units and even other universities, including government, Payam Noor and non-profit universities, and its results with The results of the present study should be compared. Since there are differences in many psychological characteristics between women and men, it is therefore suggested that in future researches, the relationships between the mentioned variables be conducted separately by gender, and

if there is a difference in the results, different strategies to improve the social interest of women and men should be suggested. According to the results of the present research, that is, the effective role of family functioning and self-differentiation in social interest, it is suggested to improve the social interest in students. The results of this research had practical implications for the experts and officials of Islamic Azad University and it is suggested to them to continuously evaluate the level of social interest of the students and take an effective step towards improving their social interest through the improvement of other variables, especially the variables of family functioning and self-differentiation.

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