

**Prediction of mental health based on fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem**Samira Gholami<sup>\*1</sup>, Manijeh Firoozi<sup>2</sup>**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Examining the state of mental health of students, who are the young and active segment of the society and have a special place in the health programs of the society, is very important. The purpose of this study is to investigate the state of mental health of students and also the factors affecting it.

**Research method:** The current research is a correlational study in terms of methodology, and the statistical population of this research includes students of Shiraz University who were studying in 2022, and the statistical sample of this research consisted of 267 people (128 boys, 139 girls) who were Available sampling was selected from the students of humanities, basic sciences, agriculture and technical engineering faculties. The tools of this research included Lavibond and Lavibond mental health questionnaires, Watson and Friend's fear of negative evaluation scale, Cheek and Bass shyness scale, and French and Shields' body esteem scale. For data analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were used SPSS version 22 software.

**Findings:** The results showed that all three variables of shyness, fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem simultaneously predict 22% of the variance of depression, 31% of the variance of anxiety and 20% of the variance of stress at a significance level of  $p=0.01$ . Also, among the three predictor variables, the contribution of the shyness variable in predicting mental health is higher than the other two predictor variables ( $r=0.56$ ,  $p<0/01$ ).

**Conclusion:** According to the results, it can be said that all three variables of reducing shyness and fear of negative evaluation and increasing body self-esteem are effective factors in mental health (anxiety, depression, stress), which considering the importance of mental health among students, it is suggested that efforts More should be done to reduce shyness and fear of negative evaluation and increase body esteem in this important segment of society.

**Keywords:** body esteem, fear of negative evaluation, mental health, shyness

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## Introduction:

Students are faced with various consequences and challenges in the field of academic, social and personal adaptations, which affect their independence, lifelong friendships, acquisition of new skills and employment (1), which in turn can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety to create in the person (2). Therefore, this period of life is the period of increased risk of the onset of mental health problems (3). According to recent research, it is estimated that up to 50% of university students may be affected by mental health problems (4). Mental health is defined as "a person's emotional, psychological and social well-being" (5). In fact, mental health is a state of psychological well-being that causes improvement, growth and perfection of human personality and helps a person to be compatible with himself and others (6). Therefore, mental health seeks to reduce negative feelings such as anxiety, depression and hopelessness and to prevent the occurrence of morbid symptoms in people (7). Meanwhile, body esteem, which has a great impact on the level of motivation, perseverance and learning, can be one of the most important factors affecting the mental health of students (8). Body esteem is the emotional dimension of body image and is related to the feeling a person has about his body and his level of satisfaction about the various functions of his body (9). A decrease in body self-esteem leads to an increase in emotional and psychological stress and sleep problems (10), as well as the initiation of high-risk behaviors for health, such as drug and alcohol abuse (11).

Fear of negative evaluation is also one of the other factors affecting mental health (12), which is a clear and continuous fear of one or more situations or social functions in which a person is faced with unfamiliar people or may be the subject of their curiosity. (13). Also, fear of negative evaluation, apprehension and anxiety caused by worries about disappointing judgment or opposition from others are also defined (14), which leads to social withdrawal and various negative consequences such as depression, low self-esteem and more social isolation (15). Therefore, in the context of interpersonal relationships, people's concern about others' inappropriate evaluation of them (as an intra-individual inhibiting factor) and its reflection in a range of social-psychological phenomena such as homogeneity, self-expression, social anxiety, self-impairment and social isolation (16) and then the negative consequences in mental health deserve attention.

Hypocrisy is also one of the factors affecting mental health, which refers to extreme self-attention and fear of facing others, which is a type of fear or social anxiety in which a person avoids facing unfamiliar people and social connections (17). In fact, shyness is excessive caution in interpersonal relationships, which leads shy people to be afraid of expressing themselves, to be very sensitive about the way others react to them, and to get flustered quickly, and physical signs of anxiety such as increased heart rate, blushing, and experience (18).

Considering the importance of mental health among students and examining the role of negative evaluation factors, shyness and body esteem in predicting mental health and its components, there are currently few studies in this field, among which the researches of Naz et al. (19) ) pointed out that in a study aimed at investigating the effect of body acceptance and social appearance anxiety on satisfaction, they showed that social appearance anxiety negatively and body acceptance positively and significantly predict life satisfaction. Vasudeva (20) also showed in a research that there is a significant and positive correlation between

shyness and depression symptoms ( $p < 0.01$ ). Swamy et al (21) also showed that body image is related to dating anxiety. Also, Liu et al. (22) reported that the fear of negative evaluation leads to an increase in social anxiety symptoms. Maleki (23) also reported the role of self-esteem in predicting depression symptoms in university students in a study conducted on university students. Therefore, considering the importance of this research and the role of negative evaluation components, shyness and body esteem in predicting mental health, this research seeks to find out whether each of the negative evaluation factors, shyness and body esteem separately can affect mental health and its components. Predict it among students? Also, can all three variables of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem simultaneously predict mental health?

### Research method:

The research method was a correlational study, and the statistical population of this research included students of Shiraz University who were studying in 2022, and the statistical sample of this research consisted of 128 male students and 139 female students, who were selected from among the students using available sampling method. Faculties of humanities, basic sciences, agriculture and technical engineering were selected. Data analysis was done using multiple linear regression test and the following tools were used to measure research variables.

1- Mental health scale (depression, anxiety and stress): this questionnaire was designed and presented by Lavibond and Lavibond1 (24). It contains 21 questions and three equal parts (7 questions for each subscale). Abroad, the validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed by Anthony et al. (1998) and Cronbach's alpha values of depression, anxiety and stress components have been reported as 0.97, 0.92, and 0.95, respectively In Iran, the validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been investigated by Samani and Jokar (25) who found the retest validity for depression, anxiety and tension scales to be 0.80, 0.76 and 0.76, respectively 0.77 and Cronbach's alpha for depression, anxiety and stress scales have been reported as 0.81, 0.74 and 0.78, respectively (26). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.78.

2- Scale of fear of negative evaluation: it is a self-report scale designed by Watson and Friend (27) and includes 30 items. Participants must answer each item by marking the correct and incorrect options. In 1969, Watson and Friend reported the reliability coefficients of this scale as 0.78 and 0.94 and Cronbach's alpha as 0.78 and 0.94, respectively, and its concurrent validity by calculating its correlation coefficient with the general anxiety scale was 0.6. The scale of fear of negative evaluation in Iran was translated and prepared for implementation by Mehrabizadeh Artman, Najarian and Baharlo in 1378. These researchers have reported the reliability coefficient of this scale with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.86. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.67.

3- Shyness scale: This scale includes 20 items that Cheek and Bass (29) made to evaluate shyness. Subjects report their shyness by answering each of the items of this questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 for completely agree to 5 for completely agree). Articles 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 and 19 are scored inversely. The studies of Cheek and Bass indicate the high

internal consistency of this scale (0.94) and its good validity in 1983. They obtained the reliability coefficient of this scale in the Iranian society using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 and used the factor analysis method to measure the construct validity, and this analysis indicated the construct validity of this scale (30). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.71.

4- Body esteem scale: This questionnaire was prepared by Francois and Shields (31) in order to measure body esteem and includes a list of 35 aspects of the body (such as, rump, body odor and nose) which are measured using a 5-point Likert scale is evaluated. Grade one indicates a strong negative feeling and grade five indicates a strong positive feeling. This questionnaire includes 3 subscales of sexual attractiveness, concern about weight and physical condition. In the initial study by Francois and Shields in 1984 on the reliability of the test with the retest method after 3 months on a group (75 men and 145 women), the correlation coefficient obtained for the scale in the subscales of sexual attraction was  $r=0.82$ , concern in The case of weight  $r=0.87$  and physical condition  $r=0.75$  were obtained, and all the coefficients were significant at the level of 0.001. In Iran, during a preliminary study conducted by Najafi in 2000, a body esteem test was administered to a group of 100 female students, and after four weeks, the test was administered again to the same group. The correlation coefficients between the two tests were calculated, and in the female scale, the total score was  $r=0.72$ , gender segregation  $r=0.52$ , weight concern  $r=0.63$ , and physical condition  $r=0.66$  was used from the Cooper-Smith self-esteem questionnaire to determine the convergent validity of the body esteem test (32). The correlation obtained in the present study was also reported with Cronbach's alpha of 0.81.

### Findings:

Demographic findings of the participants in the research in terms of age, the highest frequency was 20 to 30 years old (62.5%), the lowest frequency was 40 years and above (5.7%) and 30 to 40 years old (31.8%). In terms of education, they were 68.8, 20.2 and 11% respectively in three levels of bachelor's, masters and doctorate. Table 1 shows the results related to the descriptive indicators of fear of negative evaluation, shyness, body esteem, mental health, depression, anxiety and stress.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables**

variables	Abundance	Average	The standard deviation	minimal	Maximum
Fear of negative evaluation	267	43	89 / 4	33	56
shyness	267	77 / 51	38 / 12	20	79
body esteem	267	42/125	25/17	77	169
DASS total score	267	18/52	14	24	94

depression	267	52 / 12	39 / 5	6	28
anxiety	267	78 / 20	70 / 6	8	39
Stress	267	81 / 16	50 / 4	7	29

As can be seen in Table 1, the average and standard deviation of the research variables are reported. Also, the skewness and elongation of the variables and components are in the standard range (-2 and 2), so the distribution of the scores of the studied variables is normal and one of the assumptions of using the Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression has been met. In Table (2), the correlation between variables and components is reported at a significant level ( $p < 0.01$ ). Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with mental health and its components (depression, anxiety and stress).

**Table 2. Correlation matrix between research variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1- fear of negative evaluation	1						
2- shyness	۰/۲۳	1					
3- body esteem	۰/۳۵	۰/۴۰	1				
4- depression	۰/۲۵	۰/۴۵	-۰/۳۰	1			
5- anxiety	۰/۴۴	۰/۵۰	-۰/۱۶	۰/۸۸	1		
6- stress	۰/۳۷	۰/۳۵	-۰/۳۷	۰/۸۶	۰/۹۲	1	
7- mental health	۰/۴۵	۰/۵۶	-۰/۱۱	۰/۸۹	۰/۹۱	۰/۸۷	1

As can be seen in Table 2, all correlations are statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). In order to check other assumptions of multiple regression, the tolerance coefficient (more than 0.1) was used to check the non-collinearity between the predictor variables and Durbin Watson (1.5-2.5) to check the lack of correlation between the errors. Its value was confirmed in this study. Table 3 presents the results of multiple regression analysis of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with mental health.

**Table 3. Results of multiple regression analysis of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with mental health (DASS)**

Criterion variable	predictor variables	B	T	P
mental health	Fear of negative evaluation	۰/۲۵۴	۴/۶۹	۰/۰۰۰۱
	shyness	۰/۴۴۸	۷/۷۵۹	۰/۰۰۰۱
	body esteem	-۰/۲۲	-۳/۲۸۸	۰/۰۰۴

Table 3 shows that the variables of shyness, fear of negative evaluation and body esteem have the ability to explain the variance of mental health ( $p < 0.01$ ), among which shyness plays a greater role. Also, regarding the multiple regression of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and

body esteem with the mental health score, the obtained multiple F is equal to 52.59, which is significant at the level ( $p < 0.01$ ) and shows that the predictive variables are 37% They explain the variance of the total mental health score. The results of multiple regression between fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with depression are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Results of multiple regression analysis of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with depression**

Criterion variable	predictor variables	B	T	P
depression	Fear of negative evaluation	٠/١٧١	٣/١٨	٠/٠٠٠١
	shyness	٠/٣٦١	٥/٦٤	٠/٠٠٠١
	body esteem	-٠/١٥٦	-٢/٦٨	٠/٠٠٤

As can be seen in Table 4, the amount of beta related to negative evaluation, shyness, and body esteem are significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the role of shyness variable in predicting mental health was greater than other variables. Also, multiple regression was reported equal to 0.47, which is significant with F equal to 26.18 at the level ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, these variables together explain 22% of the variance of depression. The results of multiple regression between fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with anxiety are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Results of multiple regression analysis of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with anxiety**

Criterion variable	predictor variables	B	T	P
anxiety	Fear of negative evaluation	274/0	٤/٨٤	٠/٠٠٠١
	shyness	389/0	٦/٤٥	٠/٠٠٠١
	body esteem	121/0-	-٣/٣٧٦	٠/٠٠٧

As can be seen in Table 5, the amount of beta related to negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem are significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the role of shyness variable in predicting mental health was more than other variables. Also, the value of multiple regression is equal to 0.56, which is significant with F equal to 40.66 at the level ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, these variables together explain 31% of the variance of anxiety.

**Table 6. The results of multiple regression analysis of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with stress**

Criterion variable	predictor variables	B	T	P
stress	Fear of negative evaluation	0/260	٤/٢٦	٠/٠٠٠١
	shyness	0/296	٤/٥٤	٠/٠٠٠١
	body esteem	-0/144	-٢/٤٤	٠/٠١٥



As can be seen in Table 6, the amount of beta related to negative evaluation, shyness ( $p < 0.01$ ) and body esteem ( $p < 0.05$ ) are significant, and the role of shyness variable in predicting mental health is greater than other variables. Was. Regarding the multiple regression of fear of negative evaluation, shyness and body esteem with stress, the obtained multiple F was equal to 22.40, which is significant at the level ( $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, predictor variables explain 20% of stress variance Discussion and

### Discussion and Conclusion:

The findings of the present study showed that all three variables of fear of negative evaluation and shyness are predictors of mental health and its components (depression, anxiety and stress). et al. (21), Liu et al. (22) and Maleki (23) are consistent. In the explanation of these findings, it can be said that due to the importance of social interaction among students in order to improve their psychological, physiological and social responses (22), the role of evaluation of oneself and others is highlighted, which in turn can be associated with social anxiety, poor academic performance, disruption in interpersonal relationships, and as a result, negative consequences in mental health. Fear of negative evaluation is a psychological condition characterized by distress caused by negative evaluations by others regardless of judged qualitative performance (33). In relation to the university population, students' fear of negative evaluation in various areas of social status appearance, test, class discussion, dating, talking to their professors, job interview or speech and so on. Therefore, negative evaluation for a long period is related to anxiety (34) and social withdrawal. Socially withdrawn people are often rejected by their peers and because these people experience more rejection and victimization, they feel and think less than what they are. Also, due to anxiety caused by negative social evaluations, they are less present in social organizations and activities and criticize themselves, and these factors lead to various negative consequences such as depression, anxiety and more stress (35). Also, in explaining the role of shyness, which was the strongest predictor of mental health in this research, it can be said that shyness can be the result of strong concerns about being approved and not being approved (36). And in fact, it is an extreme "self-attention" and fear of encountering others, because it is considered a form of fear or social anxiety in which a person avoids encountering unfamiliar people and social connections (37). Therefore, shyness is excessive caution in interpersonal relationships that can occur at some or all cognitive, emotional, physiological, and behavioral levels (38). Therefore, people often suffer from anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness, and face serious problems in establishing and maintaining emotional ties (16). Also, in general, shy people are seen as ineffective and inconsistent people in the society, and even their silence and silence in the first meeting may cause the misunderstanding that they are cold or arrogant, and this causes them to be rejected by their peers who are isolated leads to (39) that this can cause an increase in stress, anxiety and depression in a person. Therefore, if shyness is not controlled, it turns into a vicious cycle that displays its symptoms in the person and causes critical experiences from others, and this problem causes problems in his current and future decisions and disturbs the mental health of the person (40).

Also, the results showed that body esteem can negatively and significantly predict mental health problems. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the fear of others' judgment leads to a feeling of inadequacy and inadequacy, shame and humiliation in the individual and withdrawal from social interactions and ultimately leads to negative feelings such as stress, anxiety and depression. Avoiding social situations has negative consequences in one's work, social and financial life. A plausible reason for this result is that having a poor perception of self-esteem leads to poor interpersonal relationships by creating negative feelings of self-esteem, therefore, students with low body esteem experience body dissatisfaction and, as a result, they are vulnerable to social anxiety, which is often associated with social adjustment problems and distress (8), which can lead to negative consequences on mental health and its components also, since the appearance is an important part of a person's identity and in social situations, it is immediately visible when dealing with others, therefore, the importance of this personality structure is very obvious; Because dissatisfaction with the body (negative body esteem) will have important psychological consequences that will have an impact on people's evaluation of their appearance, and self-affirmation and self-acceptance and having a sense of value that a person feels about himself are among the characteristics of a healthy and normal personality. It is considered that he has high mental health (41).

### **Research limitations**

This study was accompanied by limitations, the most important of which was the collection of information based on a questionnaire, as a result, some people may have refused to provide real answers and provided unrealistic answers. In addition, considering that the present research was conducted on Shiraz University students, it limits the ability to generalize the results to other students and non-students in other cities.

### **Conflict of interest**

This article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

### **Application of research**

This research has important results in the field of prevention, treatment and counseling services of the patients and based on this, guidelines can be provided for the implementation of future research.

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