



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE, COGNITIVE-EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES, SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY AND INTERNALIZING-EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN FARS, IRAN***

**VAHID MOMTAZ**

**FEM 2016 19**



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**By**

**VAHID MOMTAZ**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**April 2016**

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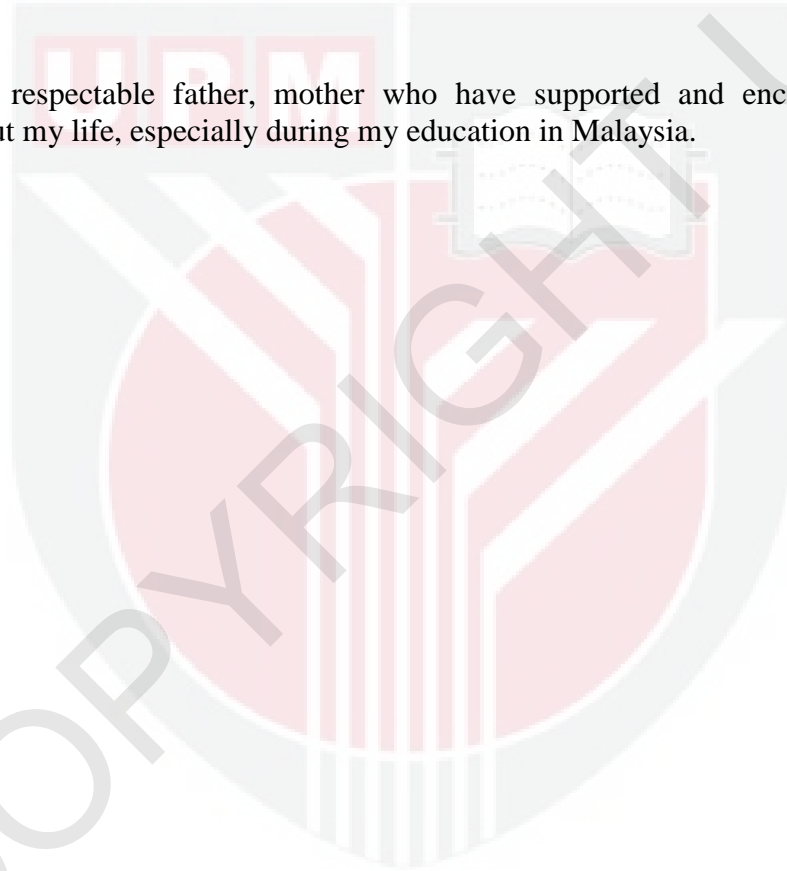
## DEDICATION

Dedicated to:

Specially My dear wife (Mahboubeh) for his love, moral support, patience and understanding during the course of my study; undoubtedly, I could not finish my education without her coordination.

My lovely children (Maryam and Pouria), who tolerate all hardships during my education.

My very respectable father, mother who have supported and encouraged me throughout my life, especially during my education in Malaysia.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE, COGNITIVE-EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES, SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY, AND INTERNALIZING-EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF FARS, IRAN**

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**April 2016**

**Chairperson : Associate Professor Mariani binti Mansor**  
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Adolescent behavioral problems are serious public health issues. It is reported that the prevalence of behavioral problem among Iranian adolescents in the age group 12 to 19 years old is the highest compared to other age groups. This showed that adolescents are at-risk populations for behavioral problems. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the relationships between psychological abuse, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, social self-efficacy with behavioral problems (internalizing and externalizing), and the moderating roles of cognitive emotional regulation strategies and social self-efficacy on the relationships between psychological abuse with internalizing and externalizing behavior problems among the adolescents of Fars Province, Iran. The present study employed developmental psychopathology approach of Rutter and Sroufe, Ecological-Transactional Theory of Cicchetti and Toth, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, and Self-Regulation Theory in providing a valid basis for explaining and predicting externalizing and externalizing behavior problems among the adolescents of Fars Province, Iran.

Simple random sampling method was used to recruit a total of 328 adolescents aged 12 to 19 years from psychological clinics of Shiraz, Iran. This study is a quantitative research with correlational research design. The respondents completed the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991), Psychological Abuse (Momtaz, Mariani, Mansor, & Rojanah, 2013), Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002), and Adolescent Social Self-Efficacy Scale (Connolly, 1989).

Structural equation modeling indicated that adolescents with psychological abuse, negative cognitive emotional regulation strategies, low levels of positive cognitive emotional strategies, and low levels of social self-efficacy were more likely to

report behavior problems. Social self-efficacy and cognitive emotional regulation strategies moderated the relationship between psychological abuse and behavior problems. These variables explained 49.0% of the variance in internalizing behavior and 30.0% in externalizing behavior.

The present study increases the understanding on the importance of psychological abuse and negative cognitive emotional regulation strategies as the risk factors, and social self-efficacy and positive cognitive emotional regulation strategies as the protective factors against internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. The findings of the present study can be useful for therapists, parents, students, counsellors, and policy makers.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA PENDERAAAN PSIKOLOGI, STRATEGI  
KOGNITIF PENGATURAN EMOSI, EFIKASI KENDIRI SOSIAL DAN  
INTERNALIZING-EXTERNALIZING MASALAH TINGKAH LAKU  
DALAM KALANGAN REMAJA DI FARS, IRAN**

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Masalah tingkah laku remaja merupakan satu masalah kesihatan awam yang serius. Dilaporkan bahawa prevalen masalah tingkah laku dalam kalangan remaja Iran dalam kumpulan umur 12 hingga 19 tahun adalah yang tertinggi berbanding dengan kumpulan umur yang lain. Ini menunjukkan bahawa remaja merupakan populasi yang berisiko untuk mengalami masalah tingkah laku. Oleh itu, kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara penderaan psikologi, strategi kognitif pengaturan emosi, efisiensi sendiri sosial dengan masalah tingkah laku (internalizing dan externalizing) dan peranan strategi kognitif pengaturan emosi dan efisiensi sendiri sebagai moderator ke atas hubungan antara penderaan psikologi dengan masalah tingkah laku externalizing dan externalizing dalam kalangan remaja di Wilayah Fars, Iran. Kajian ini menggunakan Pendekatan Perkembangan Psikopatologi oleh Rutter dan Sroufe, Teori Ecological-Transactional oleh Cicchetti dan Toth, Teori Sosial-Kognitif oleh Bandura, dan Teori Pengaturan Kendiri dalam menyediakan asas yang sah untuk menerangkan dan meramal masalah tingkah laku externalizing dan externalizing dalam kalangan remaja daripada Wilayah Fars, Iran.

Kaedah persampelan rawak mudah digunakan untuk mengambil seramai 328 remaja yang berusia 12 hingga 19 tahun daripada klinik psikologi di Shiraz, Iran. Kajian ini merupakan kajian berbentuk kuantitatif dengan menggunakan reka bentuk kajian korelasi. Responden telah menyempurnakan beberapa borang soal selidik seperti Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991), Psychological Abuse (Momtaz, Mariani, Mansor, & Rojanah, 2013), Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002), dan Adolescent Social Self-Efficacy Scale (Connolly, 1989).

Analisis Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) menunjukkan bahawa remaja yang mengalami penderaan psikologi, mempunyai strategi kognitif pengaturan emosi yang negatif, tahap strategi kognitif positif pengaturan emosi yang rendah, dan tahap efikasi sosial yang rendah, adalah lebih cenderung untuk melaporkan masalah tingkah laku. Efikasi sendiri sosial dan strategi kognitif pengaturan emosi menyederhanakan hubungan antara penderaan psikologi dengan masalah tingkah laku ini. Pembolehubah ini menerangkan 49.0% daripada varians dalam tingkah laku internalizing dan 30.0% pada tingkah laku externalizing.

Kajian ini meningkatkan pemahaman terhadap kepentingan penderaan psikologi dan strategi kognitif negatif pengaturan emosi sebagai faktor berisiko, dan efikasi sendiri sosial serta strategi kognitif positif pengaturan emosi sebagai faktor pelindung terhadap masalah tingkah laku internalizing dan externalizing. Hasil kajian ini adalah berguna untuk ahli terapi, ibubapa, pelajar, kaunselor, dan pembuat dasar.



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This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Adolescents' behavior problems are one of the most urgent health and social issues in the world, and it costs numerous for societies to control and treat these kinds of adolescents (Hopwood & Grilo, 2010). While adolescence is a period of life in which the teenagers should achieve the essential life skills, sometimes behavior problems lead them to maladjustment outcomes, such as failing in academic achievement, deteriorating in positive communication, and poor development of fundamental skills (Erath, Keiley, Pettit, Lansford, Dodge, & Bates, 2009; Kosterman, Hawkins, Mason, Herrenkohl, Lengua, & McCauley, 2010). Adolescent behavior problems are categorised as the internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Beg, Casey, & Saunders, 2007; Hughes & Gullone, 2008). Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior Problems (IEBP) cause aversive experience not only for the family and school members, but also all other social realms (Fanti & Henrich, 2010).

Evidences suggest that the rate of IEBP has been increasing among adolescents throughout the world (Gaik, Abdullah, Elias, & Uli, 2010). Also, Erath et al. (2009) in a cross-sectional study on secondary students in USA reported that nearly 20 percent of children and adolescents experience behavior problem symptoms, and five percent face extreme functional destruction. In another study, Farbstein, Mansbach-Kleinfeld, Levinson, Goodman, Levav, Vograft, Kanaaneh, Ponizovsky, Brent and Apter (2010) reported that the prevalence of child and adolescents' behavior problems varies from 7% to 16.4% in the middle east countries. The situation in Iran is apprehensive too. Emami, Ghazinour, Rezaeishiraz and Richter (2007) in a cross-sectional study on a sample of Iranian high school students reported that 19.5% of adolescents were above the cut-point score for mental disorders, and nearly 34% of girls and 24% of boys were recognized to have behavior problems in the form of internalizing or externalizing behavior problems. Consequently, internalizing and externalizing behavior problems are prevalent, especially among adolescents, and it is indispensable to study on the variables related to internalizing and externalizing behavior problems in order to prevent these problems among adolescents.

To distinguish between internalizing and externalizing problems, Hughes and Gullone (2008) explained that internalizing behavior problems illustrate, mainly, by disturbed emotion and mood, while externalizing behavior problems characterizes by a disruption in behavioral regulation. Anxiety, depression, withdrawal and fearfulness are common internalized behavior problems among adolescents, while aggressive behavior, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), destructive behavior, drug abuse and antisocial behaviors are the most

common forms of externalizing behavior problems (Chan, Dennis, & Funk, 2008; Medley & Sachs-Ericsson, 2009; Fanti & Henrich, 2010).

It is noticeable that IEBP can develop from early childhood to adulthood in different ways, but the main risk ages for IEBP are in adolescent period which is between 12 and 19 years old (Fanti & Henrich, 2010; Melançon & Gagné, 2011). Also, IEBP impacts all aspects of adolescents' lives adversely. For instance, adolescents who engage in anxiety and depression are more likely to develop high difficulties for themselves, their families and even their society (Bacchini, Miranda, & Affuso, 2011). They may establish low self-esteem, self-criticism, peer victimization, low educational achievement, and disruptive behaviors (Ranta, Kaltiala-Heino, Pelkonen, & Marttunen, 2009). For these reasons, IEBP is considered as an extremely serious and prevalent public health apprehension in all societies (Graves, Kaslow, & Frabutt, 2010) as well as Iran.

Who are at risk, and how the children and adolescents faced with IEBP; however, is a main and controversial issue that is followed by a body of research for long decades (Beg et al., 2007; Kosterman et al., 2010; Bacchini et al., 2011). To diagnose at risk adolescents, we should be knowledgeable about the factors and elements that lead the children and adolescents toward IEBP. Nevertheless, it is complicated to understand the development of adolescents' IEBP, due to multifactorial etiology and the wide range of adversities which are developed by these problems (Granmaye pour, Salehi Nezhad, Sabooni, & Mir ahmadi, 2011).

However, several scientific evidences show that psychologically abusive behaviors of caregivers play the pivotal roles in developing behavioral problems. Some researchers claimed that it is not possible to investigate on IEBP without considering caregivers misbehaviors (Nguyen, Dunne, & Le, 2010; Nederhof, Belsky, Ormel, & Oldehinkel, 2012). Furthermore, there are many investigations demonstrated that the experience of child psychological abuse is a known risk factor for the development of psychopathological IEPB (Lukasse, Schei, Vangen, & Øian, 2009; Miskovic, Schmidt, Georgiades, Boyle, & MacMillan, 2009; Nguyen, Dunne, & Le, 2009). According to Gunther, Drukker, Feron and Os (2007), negative experiences in life in the form of psychological abuse, like the exposure to bullying, and experience of adverse events in childhood and adolescence lead them to develop behavior problems symptoms not only in childhood and adolescence, but also in adulthood.

Nevertheless, not all people who faced with psychological abuse show the internalizing symptoms (like depression) or the externalizing (like anti-social personality disorder) in adolescence (Beach, Brody, Gunter, Packer, Wernett, & Philibert, 2010; Philippe, Laventure, Beaulieu-Pelletier, Lecours, & Lekes, 2011). Subsequently, it is implied that some other variables are playing an important role in the diversity of the responses to abuse. There are many studies claimed that cognitive factors have a significant role in both risk and resiliency of adolescents

(Murray, Macdonald, & Fox, 2008; Nancy Eisenberg, Carlos Valiente, Tracy L. Spinrad, Amanda Cumberland, Jeffrey Liew, Mark Reiser, Qing Zhou, & Losoya, 2009).

One of the most salient factors in the cognitive realm is cognitive emotional regulation strategies (CERS), which can also be named as cognitive emotional coping. According to Garnefski, Kraaij and Van Etten (2005) CERS has a significant prominence in the field of IEBP. CERS means the conscious cognitive methods by which a person manages the emotionally arousing information (Zlomke & Hahn, 2010). CERS is a subcategory of emotional regulation that focuses on the conscious mental process of regulating the stress. It is divided in nine strategies: 1- Self-blame 2-Blaming others 3-Acceptance 4- Refocus on planning, 5-Positive refocusing 6- Rumination or focus on thought 7- Positive reappraisal, 8-Putting in perspective, and 9- Catastrophizing (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001). Some scholars divided CERS into positive and negative strategies (Erk, Mikschl, Stier, Ciaramidaro, Gapp, Weber, & Walter, 2010; MonikaMiklósi, MariannaSzabó, TamasMarios, ElviraGalambosi, & DoraPerczelForintos, 2013; Karim, Sharafat, & Mahmud, 2014). They categorized refocus on planning, acceptance, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting in to perspective as the positive strategies, while self-blame, other-blame, rumination, and catastrophizing as the negative strategies of cognitive emotional regulation. They claimed that positive CERS can be considered as a protective factor against different psychopathological outcomes, while negative CERS is considered as an important risk factor in developing IEBP. Therefore, in the present study, positive and negative CERS were evaluated separately as the moderator variables that can affect the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP.

In the meanwhile, according to Wright, Wright, and Jenkins-Guarnieri (2013) it is not possible to talk about adolescents behavioral health and problems without considering their social efficacy. Therefore, adolescents' social self-efficacy is another significant factor that can influence the outcomes of psychosocial development (Thompson, Flood, & Goodvin, 2006). Social self-efficacy can decrease the adverse outcomes of psychological abuse in the form of internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. Adolescents with higher social self-efficacy can manipulate their hardship events through getting supports from their social networks better than that with low self-efficacy (Field, Tobin, & Reese-Weber, 2014). Thus, it is implied that social self-efficacy affects the relationship between psychological abuse and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.

In sum, this study attempted to investigate on IEBP emerged by psychological abuse, as one of the most significant risk factors, with the moderating role of CERS and social self-efficacy, as two very important elements can robust or decrease the severity of outcomes of psychological abuse, among the adolescents in Fars, Iran.

## 1.2 Statement of Problem

Internalizing and externalizing behavior problems is one of the most prevalent public health issues in all over the world (Oshri, Rogosch, Burnette, & Cicchetti, 2011) as well as in Iran (Momtazi & Rawson, 2010). There are many adolescents who are referred to clinics and health care centers with IEBP such as depression, anxiety, aggressive behavior and substance abuse (Leyfer, Gallo, Cooper-Vince, & Pincus, 2013). Stutzman, Bean, Miller, Day, Feinauer, Porter and Moore (2011) in a research on Latino and European adolescents of the United States reported that one of five adolescents faced the criteria of behavioral problem symptoms. Likewise, Wright, Jorm and Mackinnon (2011) in a survey on Australian adolescents reported that 1 of 4 or 5 adolescents faced IEBP. In Iran the situation is vague, and the research on IEBP in Iranian adolescents is extremely rare and sometimes different in the results. In a research on adolescents after 17, by Fakhari, Ranjbar, Dadashzadeh and Moghaddas (2007) the prevalence of IEBP reported 19.4% for females and 8.59% for males in north west of Iran, but it did not cover the adolescents ages completely. Another research that was conducted by Emami et al. (2007) on high school students between 17 and 18 years old from Tehran (Iran) reported that 34.1% of girls and 23.7% of boys achieved criteria of IEBP, which is a very apprehensive statistic on IEBP widespread among Iranian adolescents. These studies do not cover the adolescence period of life completely, while the present study was applied for subjects between 12 and 19 years old. Noticeably, adolescence arises by the start of sexual puberty which is happen around 12 years old in girls and around 14 years old in boys, and will be end up in around 19 in girls and 21 in boys (Lerner, Boyd, & Du, 1998). Furthermore, according to abovementioned studies in Iran, the statistics on IEBP among Iranian adolescents are very different. Moreover, none of the mentioned Iranian studies were conducted in the southern areas of Iran. Therefore, the current study attempted to address these issues by investigating on internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years old of Fars ( southern metropolis), Iran.

Although finding the reliable statistics on IEBP is valuable, it is not sufficient without clarifying the elements lead adolescents toward IEBP, which is another issue this study tried to investigate on it. According to literatures, the most important factor in this trajectory is encountering child abuse during childhood or adolescence (Moylan, Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Russo, 2010). Child abuse is occurred in different forms, but the most common and prevalent form of child abuse is Psychological abuse or emotional abuse. A total of 83 percent of children who faced other types of child abuse reported psychological abuse simultaneously (Melançon & Gagné, 2011). Nonetheless, less attention has paid on psychological abuse and its relationship with IEBP among adolescents for some reasons like difficulty of definition, lack of reliable instrument, and the wrong understanding about the importance of psychological abuse (Hornor, 2011; Slep, Heyman, & Snarr, 2011). The situation of child psychological abuse and its relationship with IEBP is unclear and nearly un-investigated in Iran. There is just a cross-sectional study on students between 11 and 18 years old in Kurdistan

province of Iran in different forms of child abuse including physical abuse, mental abuse and child neglect by Stephenson, Sheikhattari, Assasi, Eftekhar, Zamani, Maleki, & Kiabayan, (2006). They reported a concerning spread of psychological abuse among abused respondents which was 74.5 percent. Nevertheless, their statistic on psychological abuse was obtained by seven unstandardized researcher made questions which cannot cover all forms of psychological abuse.

Noticeably, psychological abuse concept is seemed to be significantly correlated with family status and family income. Recchia and Howe (2009) claimed that psychological abuse is highly correlated with the siblings' interactions and family status. They reported that child abuse is significantly higher in the divorced families. Also according to Eckenrode, Smith, McCarthy, and Dineen (2014) family Income inequity, as well as children poverty level, was significantly and positively associated with child abuse proportions at the county levels. Therefore, the present study tries to find out the relationship between psychological abuses, regard to family status and family income, as one of the most important factors, and IEBP among adolescents.

On the other hand, there are other factors that influence the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP. These factors may increase or decrease this relationship and some of these factors also may have their own ultimate impacts (Clemmons, Walsh, DiLillo, & Messman-Moore, 2007). Recognizing other factors, which can robust or decrease the association between psychological abuse and IEBP help us to manage and manipulate the aversive outcomes of psychological abuse. One of the concepts that try to explain the variety of adverse outcomes of psychological abuse is cognitive emotional regulation strategies. It is a part of emotional regulation that emphasize on cognitive procedures by which the emotions interfere (Garnefski et al., 2001). Noticeably, McCoy and Raver (2011) in a research on preschool children found the moderating role of CERS between family emotional atmosphere and IEBP, however, their research was not about psychological abuse exactly and the sample was preschool children. In another study on the relationship between CERS and IEBP in a sample of abused children, Muller, Vascotto, Konanur, and Rosenkranz (2013) reported that negative CERS are related with IEBP. Also Kim-Spoon, Cicchetti, and Rogosch (2013) reported an intervening role of CERS between abusing behaviors of caregivers and IEBP in children. Although these researches tried to clarify the role of CERS between maltreating and IEBP, none of them were focused on psychological abuse, as a specific kind of maltreating, and IEBP in adolescents, which is one of the issues the present research tried to figure out.

Beside CERS, Social self-efficacy is also recognized as a significant factor for both resilient and behavioral problems (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005; McLewin & Muller, 2006; Wu, Wang, Liu, Hu, & Hwang, 2012). However, the issue here is whether there is an inter-correlation relation between social self-efficacy of adolescents and psychological abuse in developing IEBP. In this area, Gardner (2011) in a research on children and their parents reported negative



moderating relation between child abuse and children social self-efficacy. Also, Çardak, İskender, and Koç (2010) in an study on university students of Turkey reported negative relation between social self-efficacy and IEBP. However, the samples of abovementioned studies were children and young adult respectively, not adolescents. Just Kim and Cicchetti (2003) tried to test the relation between parents maltreating, social self-efficacy and IEBP in children. According to their study maltreated children with higher social self-efficacy demonstrated lower IEBP. Nonetheless, the Kim and Cicchetti study were about all forms of abuse, not psychological abuse. Consequently, no research has been conducted to find out the role of social self-efficacy in the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP among adolescents, which is one of the gaps this study tried to fill out.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. Are there any significant differences in IEBP between male and female adolescents?
2. Are there any significant differences in IEBP between adolescents in different family status?
3. Are there any significant differences in IEBP between adolescents with different family income?
4. Is there any unique predictor for IEBP among adolescents?
5. Are there relationships between psychological abuse, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, social self-efficacy, and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems among adolescents of Fars province?
6. Do cognitive emotional regulation and social self-efficacy moderate the relationships between psychological abuse and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems among adolescents?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The current study is needed for various reasons. The findings of the present study added great values for theoretical expansion, prevention and intervention programs, and policy development. In addition, the findings of the present study are valuable for adolescents, families, treatment services, and societies.

Theoretically, this study develops developmental psychopathology approach of Rutter and Sroufe (1984) by integrating with Developmental perspective on internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems (Cicchetti and Toth; 1991), self-regulation theory (Johnson, 1999), and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) in order to clarify the relationships between psychological abuse, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, social self-efficacy, and internalizing, externalizing behavior problems.

Practically, since this study investigates the relationships between psychological abuse, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, social self-efficacy, and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems in prevention and intervention programs, specialists have to consider social self-efficacy, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, and caregivers' psychologically abusive behaviors in adolescents with internalized and externalized behavior problems. In addition, social self-efficacy training and cognitive emotional regulation strategies training can alter the effect of internalizing and externalizing behavior problem among adolescents.

The findings of this study can be useful for policy makers to prepare the training programs in order to enhance social self-efficacy and positive cognitive emotional regulation strategies to decrease internalizing and externalizing behavior problems among adolescents. Consequently, with providing these training for adolescents, the prevalence of behavioral problems among adolescents would be decreased in the society.

Also, the findings of present study, by clarifying the relationships among studied variables, equip family members with internalized and externalized behavior problems of adolescents in order to behave towards their children appropriately. Moreover, the findings of this study makes parents aware about different forms of psychological abusive behaviors, and these findings help to decrease abusive behaviors consequently.

Moreover, this research can be as a guideline for future investigations that try to clarify the intricacy situation about the effects of child abuse. Studying the literature in this field, we confront with an exact controversial and contradictory result about psychological abuse.

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to investigate the relationships between psychological abuse, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, social self-efficacy, and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems among the adolescents of Fars Province, Iran.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Compare the differences in IEBP between genders, family status, and family income among adolescents in Fars.
2. Determine the relationship between psychological abuse, CERS, social self-efficacy and IEBP among adolescents in Fars.
3. Determine the unique predictor for IEBP among adolescents in Fars.

4. Examine the moderating roles of CERS and social self-efficacy on the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP among adolescents in Fars.

## 1.6 Research Hypotheses

### Objective 1:

- H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference in internalizing behavior problems between male and female respondents.
- H<sub>a2</sub>: There is a significant difference in externalizing behavior problems between male and female respondents.
- H<sub>a3</sub>: There are significant differences in internalizing behavior problems between adolescents according to their family status.
- H<sub>a4</sub>: There are significant differences in externalizing behavior problems between adolescents according to their family status.
- H<sub>a5</sub>: There are significant differences in internalizing behavior problems between adolescents according to their family income.
- H<sub>a6</sub>: There are significant differences in externalizing behavior problems between adolescents according to their family income.

### Objective2:

- H<sub>a7</sub>: There is a significant relationship between psychological abuse and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a8</sub>: There is a significant relationship between psychological abuse and externalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a9</sub>: There is a significant relationship between positive CERS and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a10</sub>: There is a significant relationship between positive CERS and externalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a11</sub>: There is a significant relationship between negative CERS and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a12</sub>: There is a significant relationship between negative CERS and externalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a13</sub>: There is a significant relationship between social self-efficacy and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a14</sub>: There is a significant relationship between social self-efficacy and externalizing behavior problems.

### Objective3:

- H<sub>a15</sub>: The regression coefficient for all predictors are significant when regress against IEBP.

#### **Objective 4:**

- H<sub>a</sub>16: Positive CERS moderates the relationship between psychological abuse and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a</sub>17: Positive CERS moderates the relationship between psychological abuse and externalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a</sub>18: Negative CERS moderates the relationship between psychological abuse and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a</sub>19: Negative CERS moderates the relationship between psychological abuse and externalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a</sub>20: Social self-efficacy moderates the relationship between psychological abuse and internalizing behavior problems.
- H<sub>a</sub>21: Social self-efficacy moderates the relationship between psychological abuse and externalizing behavior problems.

### **1.7 Definitions**

#### **Behavior Problems**

**Conceptual definition:** Behavior problems are demonstrative for two main categories of internalizing behavior problems, and externalizing behavior problems. They are, mainly, representative for two scopes of psychopathology which are related to anxiety and depression in one hand and rule transgression and violating behaviors, on the other hand (Oshri et al., 2011). More specifically, Hopwood and Grilo (2010) suggested that internalizing behavior problems represents anxiety and unipolar mood disorder and externalizing behavior problems signifies the behaviors related to conduct disorder, oppositional disobedience, attention disorders, and substance abuse.

**Operational definition:** Behavior problems refer to the respondent's score on Youth Self-Report (YSR) which was developed by Achenbach (1991). It presents scores on internalizing behavior problems and externalizing behavior problems, as well as, total score for behavior problems. A respondent who gets a high score in IEBP means that he or she has higher levels of internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.

#### **Psychological Abuse**

**Conceptual definition:** Allen (2008) defined psychological abuse as the children's feeling that they are undesired and worthless, and also feeling that they cannot obtain caregivers' attention and warmth, due to their caregivers' abusive or/and neglectfully (commission or omission) behaviors.

**Operational definition:** Psychology abuse refers to respondent's score on Psychological Abuse Questionnaire, which was developed for the present study. Psychological Abuse Questionnaire (PAQ) is a 30 item Likert questionnaire aimed for 12 years old and above. A respondent, who gets a high score in PAQ, means that he or she has higher levels of psychological abuse.

### **Cognitive-Emotional Regulation Strategies (CERS)**

**Conceptual definition:** Cognitive emotion regulation strategies (CERS) can be defined as the cognitive method of managing the intake of emotionally arousing information (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002; Gross & Thompson, 2007). CERS were divided into positive and negative CERS. Positive CERS are the strategies that an individual confront with disaster events in a way that let him/her to prevent repetition, or bad effects on the behaviors, or solve the adverse if it is possible. On the other hand negative strategies would evoke stress, hopelessness, and self or other damage by them the disaster outcomes would be reinforced.

**Operational definition:** CERS refers to respondent' score on Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ; Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002). A respondent, who gets a high score in positive CERQ, means that he or she has a higher level of adaptive CERS, while respondent who gets a high score in negative CERQ, means that he/she has higher levels of maladaptive CERS.

### **Social Self-Efficacy**

**Conceptual definition:** Social self-efficacy is defined as the perceived extent of person's confidence on his/her ability to start, maintain or continue a social and interpersonal interaction (Smith & Betz, 2000).

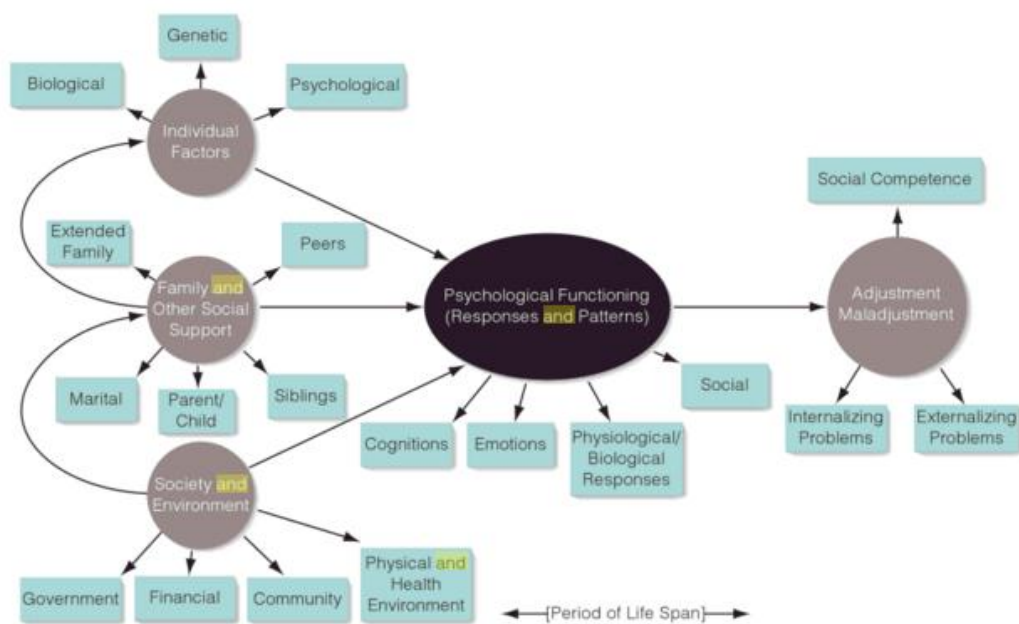
**Operational definition:** Social self-efficacy refers to respondent's score on Adolescent social self-efficacy questionnaire (S-EFF) that was developed by Connolly (1989). A respondent, who gets a high score in S-EFF, means that he or she has higher levels of social self-efficacy.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework demonstrates a deep understanding of theories and approaches that are relevant to the topic of research, and that relates to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. In the present study four theories were applied which are developmental psychopathology approach of Rutter and Sroufe, ecological-transactional theory of Cicchetti and Toth, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, and self-regulation theory.

### **1.8.1 Developmental Psychopathology Theory of Rutter and Sroufe (1984)**

Rutter and Sroufe (1984) define developmental psychopathology as “the study of origins and course of individual patterns of behavioral mal-adaptation” whatsoever the age of inception, whatsoever the reason, whatsoever the alteration in behavioral appearance, and regardless of intricacy of development configurations (Parritz & Troy, 2013). According to their approach functional adaptation and maladaptation of adolescents is a continues procedure, with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral transformational patterns in each stage of development. Accordingly, we can consider adolescents disorders in the form of “successions of deviations over time”, by which small problems may lead children and adolescents toward more serious problems. The deviations may occur via three developmental disadvantages which are (a) delay to acquire special developmental skills, (b) fixation in the character of one developmental stage, and (c) deviation apparently from appropriate behavior according to the developmental stage (Fischer, Ayoub, Singh, Noam, Maraganore, & Raya, 1997). These disadvantages may be emerged by different elements a child or adolescent is embedded in the person, environment and the stage of development. According to Sroufe and Rutter approach, thinking about children and adolescents’ disorders in the framework of delay, fixation, and deviation, gives us a deep insight toward their problems, instead of focusing in a special event at the specific time. This concept leads us to understand psychopathological disorders do not appear suddenly or unexpectedly, but rather forms over the time (Rutter & Sroufe, 2000). Importantly, They, regard to three framework, considered three process would affect development of children and adolescents, which are: individual factors (such as biological and psychological stressors), environmental factors (such as family function, parenting, peers, and other psychosocial realms), and longitudinal factors (such as the factor that are continues over the time development and leads to maladaptive function regard to the stage of development). Whitman, Merluzzi, and White (1998), in their book, presented a figure on the different process of developmental psychopathology of Sroufe and Rutter (Figure 1-1).



**Figure 1-1 Framework of the Developmental Psychopathology**

### 1.8.2 Ecological-Transactional Theory of Cicchetti and Toth

Cicchetti and Toth (1991) suggested a developmental theory based on Belsky's ecological model (1980) and ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1977). Bronfenbrenner theory provides a general ecological concept of development, and Belsky model emphasizes on the etiology of child maltreatment, while Cicchetti ecological-transactional approach concentrates on the psychopathologic problems that mainly were developed by child abuse during the development procedure (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005). Since this theory is a developmental psychopathologic theory, it mainly focused on IEBP among abused and maltreated children and adolescents. According to Cicchetti and Toth approach, likewise Bronfenbrenner, the developmental outcomes are influenced in an interactive context of different systems. The ecological systems are: 1- Macro-system: this system includes cultural attitude and standards that effect societal and family function. 2- Exo-system: that involves the social environment around the family like neighborhood and social situation in which the family is living. 3- Micro-system: the inter-family environment included all family members' functions. 4- Ontogenic: includes personal factors and individual adaptation (Cicchetti & Toth, 1991). They claim that although four systems interact with each other to contribute an outcome, macro system and some parts of exosystems are not investigable directly.

At first, Cicchetti and Toth argued that internalizing and externalizing are better concepts for children and adolescents' psychopathology for some reasons. According to their points of view, it is not acceptable to utilize the symptoms of

adult psychopathological disorders for children and adolescents, because some symptom in adulthood may be considered as an appropriate behavior in childhood and adolescence. For instance, when aggressive behavior may consider as a problematic symptom of some adult mental disorders, it may be a normal behavior of adolescents. Another reason for preferring IEBP is that, most of children and adolescents demonstrate different symptoms which are belong to different syndromes and disorders. So specifying the psychopathology of children and adolescents is not useful for diagnosis and treatment. Another assumption of Cicchetti and Toth theory is that, IEBP should be considered in a continual perception. They debated that according to the age of onset of pathological factors, the outcomes would be continual during the rest of life (Cicchetti & Toth, 1991). This assumption explains the role of childhood aversive experience in later psychopathology.

Furthermore, according to their theory, the components of ecological model interact with each other. They distinguished two types of interactions between components in their theory. If these elements interact appropriately, and expectedly regard to the stage of child development, it is named “experience-expectant”. On the other hand, an “experience-dependant” period is the period in the life during that period unexpected and specific experiences promote the developing of IEBP. According to this concept, the sensitive period of experience-dependant will happen when family members misbehave toward each other or behave towards their children inappropriately regard to his/her neurobiological, psychological, or behavioral level of development. Moreover, they debated that if the sensitive period of experience-dependant occurs for a child, the outcomes would be appeared in the future, on the base of continual perspective. So even if the aversive outcomes of these interactions are not immediately, IEBP symptoms will be demonstrated by suffered children in the next stages of development. This issue helps clinicians to predict the prognosis of IEBP from earlier ages.

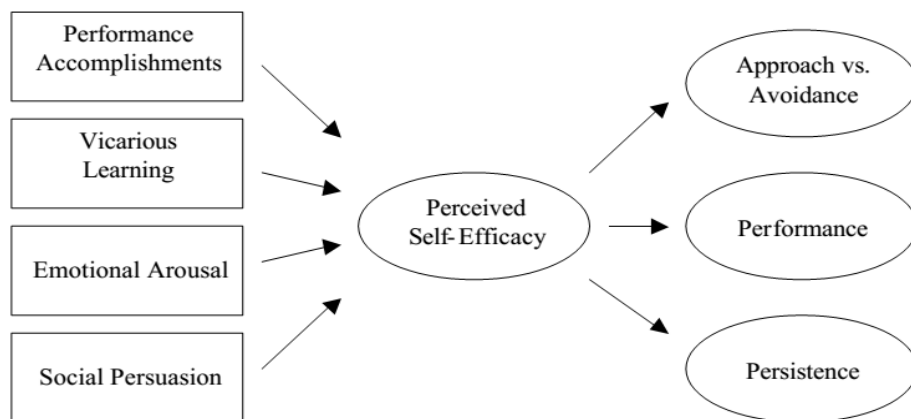
### **1.8.3 Bandura’s Social-Cognitive Theory**

Bandura’s theory of social-cognitive (1977-1997) is utilized as a basic theoretical framework for social self-efficacy. This theory postulates that individuals’ perceived believes about their self-competence and level of self-confidence influence their performance in a particular behavioral domain (Bandura, 1994). More precisely, these personal believes affect individuals attitude toward encountering with, or avoiding from, a challenging task (Figure 1-2). Bandura (1994) suggested four sources for the development of self-efficacy. The first one is “performance accomplishment” that is the previous experiences of a person in the domain of task. The second one is “vicarious learning” or modeling learning which defines as the level of exposure to other people who face and solve nearly the same task. The third one is “emotional arousal” which is the level of negative or positive emotions that a person feels during his/her performance. Finally, “social or verbal persuasion” is the level of encouragement from the other people when a person performs his/her task. According to Bandura, these factors are pivotal in all aspects



of self-efficacy, because if one source strengthens it causes increasing perceived self-efficacy at all (Steven L. Anderson & Betz, 2001).

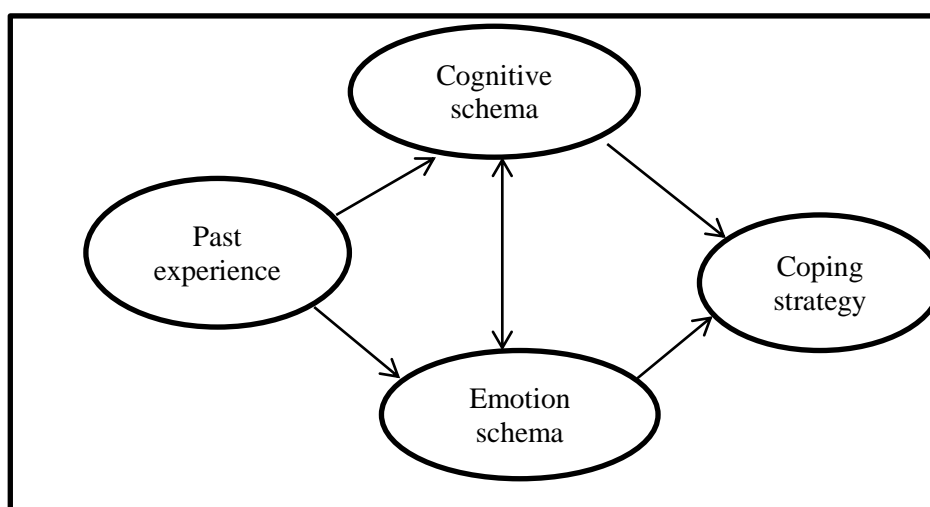
Social self-efficacy is a construct stems from the self-efficacy theory in the social domains (Hermann, 2005). It means that people perceive their self-efficacy in the social realms because in these situations, people demonstrate different perceptions of their competence to interact with the others successfully. In the other word, individuals' beliefs about their self-efficacy reflect the level of their social-confidence (Bandura, 1977).



**Figure 1-2 Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory**

#### **1.8.4 Self-Regulation Theory**

Self-regulation theory was conceptualized by Johnson and Leventhal (1983) in which the relation between past experiences, coping and health care consequences is explained. According to this approach, exposure to stressor events eventuates in developing schemes or cognition styles, and consequently, affect the strategies of encountering and coping with stressful textures in the future (Johnson, 1999). In another word, these perceptual and cognitive schemes lead the person to develop some coping strategies by them the individual is prepared to encounter with the forthcoming actual experiences (Leventhal & Johnson, 1983; Johnson, 1999). Furthermore, in this theory it is proposed that developing children with solid information about their experiences and feelings during the stressful situations and durations will lead them to develop a cognitive scheme by which they try to match the future events with their expectations, and it helps them to form the special coping strategies (Peek & Melnyk, 2014). These coping strategies lead the individual to select special events as stressful or less stressful, how to feel about it, and how to deal with it.



**Figure 1-3 Theory of self-regulation from peek and melnyk**

### 1.8.5 Integration of theories

In fact, there is no single theoretical approach explain the associations between psychological abuse, CERS, social self-efficacy, and IEBP among adolescents. Thus, the present study integrates four theories (Developmental Psychopathology Theory of Sroufe and Rutter, ecological transactional theory of Cicchetti and Toth, self-efficacy theory of Bandura, and self-regulation theory of Johnson and Leventhal) to explore developing of IEBP among adolescents, comprehensively.

Theory of Rutter and Sroufe explains the process of children and adolescents engagement in Internalizing and externalizing. This theory focused on the different processes which are individual factors, environmental factors and the factors belong to the stages of development. This approach, also, present the developmental insight toward IEBP. According to this theory IEBP is caused by different process during the development stages, not just as the outcome of an especial event or unexpected happening.

Ecological-Transactional theory of Cicchetti and Toth focuses on the psychopathological outcomes of child maltreatment (Scannapieco & Connell-Carrick, 2005), this theory tries to determine the multifactorial developing of IEBP throughout child maltreatment during development procedure; however, this theory cannot provide a full understanding of the diversity of psychopathological outcomes of maltreatment. Moreover, this theory are focused on environmental elements mainly, and paid less attention to personal factors (Cohen, 2006).

Social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994) provides further understanding of the moderating role of social self-efficacy. According to this theory people who perceived higher level of self-efficacy in different domains feel more competence to manage their hardships and disasters (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). In the other word, the people who perceived higher level of self-efficacy have more protective factor against family and environmental risk factors (Caprara, Steca, Gerbino, Paciello, & Vecchio, 2006) and it is postulated that this factor can be considered as a moderator in the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP among adolescents. Furthermore, Self-Regulation theory (Johnson and Leventhal, 1983) focuses on coping strategies by which people protect their selves against past disasters and miss-behaviors. So, this concept is considered as another important factor that moderate the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP.

Consequently, this study added social self-efficacy, and cognitive-emotional regulation strategies as moderators to the theoretical framework. Thus, Ecological-Transactional theory, self-efficacy theory, and self-regulation theory were adopted to complement Developmental psychopathology perspective on explaining the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP more precisely.

## **1.9 Conceptual Framework**

The positions of these variables are proposed in the research objectives; the research objective seeks to examine the relationships between psychological abuse, cognitive emotional regulation strategies, social self-efficacy, and internalizing, externalizing behavioral problems among the adolescents of Fars Province, Iran. The next research objective seeks to examine the moderating roles of CERS and social self-efficacy on the relationship between psychological abuse and IEBP among the adolescents of Fars Province, Iran.

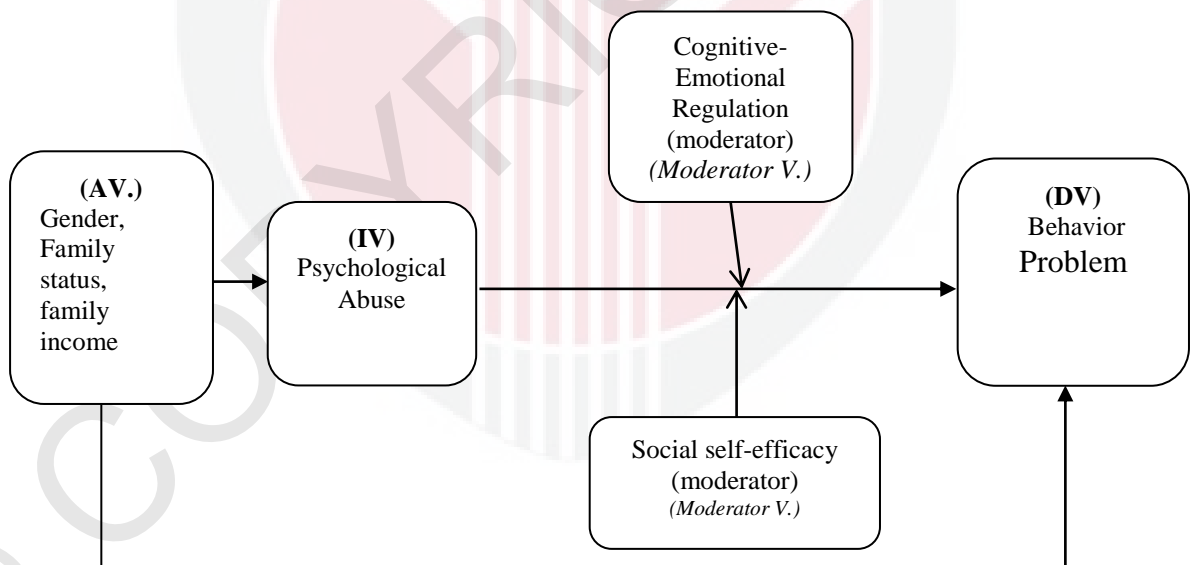
The studied variables were chosen based on theories and previous research studies. The independent variable includes psychological abuse and the moderating variables include social self-efficacy and CERS, and outcome variables are internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Figure 1-4). The framework of this study is supported by developmental psychopathology perspective on internalizing and externalizing, Ecological-Transactional theory, Bandura's social-cognitive theory, and self-regulation theory. This study expands developmental perspective on internalizing and externalizing by incorporating Cicchetti and Toth ecological-transactional theory, Bandura's self-efficacy theory, and self-regulation theory.

According to Sroufe and Rutter theory, IEBP should be considered in the process framework of interaction between personal, environmental, and psychological development factors. On the other hand, Cicchetti and Toth (1991) assumed that adolescents who are exposed to psychological abuse they may engage in internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. Therefore, this theory explains

the linear relationship between psychological abuse and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.

The Bandura’s social-cognitive theory highlights the role of social self-efficacy as a moderating variable between psychological abuse and IEBP (Stange, Hamlat, Hamilton, Abramson, & Alloy, 2013). Bandura (1997) proposed self-efficacy as a protective factor against internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. He suggested that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are able to find efficient solutions to avoid suffering from internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. Therefore, this theory explains the moderating role of self-efficacy between psychological abuse and IEBP.

Two mechanisms have been proposed to explain the effect of cognitive emotional regulation strategies as moderators: individuals with adaptive cognitive emotional regulation strategies carry on effective coping skills during stressful situations. Therefore, individuals with adaptive cognitive emotional regulation strategies are less likely to engage in IEBP, and they are more flexible in facing problems. In addition, individuals with maladaptive cognitive emotional regulation strategies are more likely to engage in IEBP. Therefore, the present study is designed to understand the role of CERS as a moderator between psychological abuses in relations to IEBP.



**Figure 1-4 Conceptual framework**

### **1.10 Scope of the Study**

Adolescents' behavior problems are a very important issue in the field of adolescents' health and psychopathology. The present study tried to investigate on adolescents' IEBP by considering the most important risk and protective factors. According to many studies a history of child psychological abuse is the most important factor in the etiology of adolescents' IEBP. Although other misbehaviors of care givers have aversive outcomes, according to the Hornor (2012) psychological impacts of these maltreating and abusing is the most important element that cause IEBP in adolescents. On the other hand, based on some research, adolescents' cognitive styles have a vital role to interpret the abusive behavior, and consequently, react to this maltreating in adaptive or mal-adaptive forms (Nancy Eisenberg et al., 2009). For this reason cognitive emotional regulation strategies (CERS) were selected as the moderator in this research by which the adolescents increase or decrease the severity of psychological abuse outcomes. Also, by means of Wright and colleagues (2013), it is not possible to consider adolescents' IEBP without their potential in social efficacy. Subsequently, social self-efficacy was chosen as another significant protective factor can moderate the association between psychological abuse and IEBP among adolescents. However, some other possible and important factors may be significant in this realm that the present research could not consider them.

### **1.11 Chapter Summary**

Chapter one introduced the research area by revealing the background of the study, statement of problem, research questions, and definition of terms. Theoretical background and conceptual framework that explained the links between studied variables are included.

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I have been university lecturer from 2005 until 2016 at Azad Islamic University of Jahrom, Iran. In the meanwhile I manage my own psychological clinic for children, adolescents and parents, and work as the psychotherapist.



## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Marziyeh NakhostRavan, Vahid Momtaz (correspondent author), Manijeh ShaniYeylagh, Gholamhosein Maktabi, (2014) "The Effect of Emotional Intelligence Training on Behavioral Disorders, Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance of Female Primary-School Students with Behavioral Disorders in Ahvaz" Reef Resources Assessment and Management Technical Paper, Vol. 40 (3), p. 832-843  
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Vahid Momtaz, Mariani Bt Mansor, Mansor Abu Talib, Rojanah Bt Kahar (2016) "The Role of Gender as Moderator between Cognitive-Emotional Regulation Strategies and Internalizing/Externalizing Behavioural Problems among Adolescents" Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology, vol. 5, no.1, P 9-21

### **Manuscript in Preparation**

Vahid Momtaz, Mariani Bt Mansor, Mansor Abu Talib, Rojanah Bt Kahar "Adolescents Psychological Abuse Questionnaire (APAQ) - A new scale for measuring psychological and emotional abuse"

Vahid Momtaz, Mariani Bt Mansor, Mansor Abu Talib, Rojanah Bt Kahar "Moderating Role of Social Self-Efficacy in the Relationship between Psychological Abuse and Internalizing/Externalizing Behavioral Problems among Adolescents"



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