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Comparison of Symptoms of Anxiety and Emotion Disorders in Children of Divorced Families and Children of Normal Families

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A B S T R A C T

The aim of this study was to compare the symptoms of anxiety disorders and emotion expression in children of divorced families and children of normal families. The research method was causal-comparative. In this study, 120 children of divorced and normal families aged 9 to 14 years (60 children of divorced families, 60 children of normal families) were selected through available sampling method. To collect the data, child anxiety screening questionnaires related to emotional disorders and emotion expression scale for children were used, and for data analysis, a multivariate analysis of covariance test was used. The results showed that the symptoms of anxiety disorders (panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, avoidance disorder, social anxiety disorder, school avoidance disorder) and emotion expression (weak emotion expression, reluctance to express emotion) in children of divorced families were more than they were the children of a family. According to the research results, the use of psychological training and therapies to reduce psychological problems (symptoms of anxiety disorders) and express emotion in students with parental divorce experience is recommended.

Keywords: Expression of Emotion, Anxiety Disorders, Divorce.

INTRODUCTION

The family is made up of a group of people that blood, marriage or parenting and communicate with each other over a period of living together indefinitely virgin (Wagner, 2010). The family is a safe place to satisfy a variety of physical, mental, and emotional needs. Therefore, it is very important to be aware of biological and psychological needs, and to know how to satisfy them (Edalati & Redzuan, 2010). Usually, various personal, social, emotional and psychological factors undermine the stability and cohesion of this long-standing and constructive social institution (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Among these factors is divorce. Statistics show that the divorce rate is increasing in different parts of the world, including Iran. In this regard, the Iranian society in the last two decades, despite all the policy-making, Social and cultural planning is moving in a direction that is increasing the number of divorces day by day. Iran ranks fourth in the world in divorce, which is a warning sign for society and families (Saleh & Luppacini, 2017).

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The consequences of divorce on parenting are complex; some researchers have pointed to findings on the effect of divorce on moral development in terms of age (Collin, 2014). Other studies, however, cited economic and behavioral problems, social isolation, poor academic performance, and adjustment in children, psychological trauma, and parent-child communication stress as negative consequences of divorce (Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015; Thompson Jr, Alonzo, Hu, & Hasin, 2017). The negative effects of divorce on children are much guilt, sociability, low, great depression, low self-esteem, criminal behavior and, low self-esteem, mimicking an unhealthy pattern like: Lying and stealing, aggression, denial, high anxiety, stomach aches and recurrent headaches (Atkeson, Forehand, & Rickard, 1982; Fagan & Churchill, 2012; Thomas, 2020). Among these variables can be noted in anxiety disorder symptoms and emotional expression.

Anxiety disorder is one of the most common psychiatric symptoms in childhood, affecting about 15-20% of children (Bernstein, Layne, Egan, & Nelson, 2005). This disorder, with its early onset and its effect on a person's developmental trajectory, increases the likelihood of developing adult disorders (Benga, Tıncaş, & Visu-Petra, 2010). Anxiety disorders have impaired academic, social, and family functioning (Essau, Muris, & Ederer, 2002). Children who are experiencing anxiety, stresses and concerns dumped into them large enough sometimes seems as if unable to do anything (Ruscio et al., 2007). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders lists six symptoms for anxiety in children, including restlessness, extreme tiredness, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances (Avni, Ben-Itzhak, & Zachor, 2018; Layne, Bernat, Victor, & Bernstein, 2009). Research has shown that children from isolated families experience high levels of anxiety problems, which can be due to the stress and stressors that these children face in their families. They have encountered (Lan, Marci, & Moscardino, 2019; Lohr, 1988; Salahian, Rahimyan, & Gharibi, 2021; Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015).

Other variables examined in this study expressed excitement. Emotion expression includes behavioral changes associated with emotion such as changes in face, voice, gestures, and body movements. Smiling, frowning, crying, or running away are examples of expressing emotion (Gross & John, 1997). King and Emmons (1990), have introduced three basic dimensions in emotional expression. These three dimensions include expressing positive emotion, expressing negative emotion, and expressing intimacy. Studies have shown that emotional problems are more common in children of broken families and separated parents than in children from normal families (Kring, Davison, Neale, & Johnson, 2007; Rosenhan & Seligman, 1989; Wagner, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The method of this research is descriptive and causal-comparative research. The statistical population of this study consisted of children aged 9 to 14 years in 2020. According to the prevalence of Covid-19, 120 people (60 children of divorced families and 60 children of normal families) were selected. and according to the online questionnaire was distributed in groups lessons with the help of school teachers.

Child Anxiety Screening Questionnaire Related to Emotional Disorders: This questionnaire has 41 items that examine various emotions and behaviors that are related to anxiety symptoms; This questionnaire is used to assess children in anxiety disorders and measures 5 anxiety disorders, which are: physical symptoms or panic disorder (13 items), generalized anxiety disorder (9 items), separation anxiety (8 items), social anxiety (7 items), and avoiding school (4 items). The cut-off point for all anxiety disorders is a score greater than 25 in

all items; Scores greater than 7 on items related to physical symptoms or disorder Panic, scores more than 9 items on symptoms of anxiety, scores more than 5 items of the symptoms of separation anxiety, scores more than 8 items of the symptoms of separation anxiety and More than 3 grades in school as cut-off items related to abstain from any of these symptoms are considered.

Its validity data show a sensitivity of 71% for this questionnaire; Its internal consistency is reported between 0.78 to 0.87 set; In the study of its differential validity, it has been shown that this questionnaire can significantly distinguish between anxious and depressed children. In this research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was equal to 0.86; Also, between physical symptoms or panic disorder ($r=0.88$), generalized anxiety disorder ($r=0.80$), separation anxiety ($r=0.76$), social anxiety disorder ($r=0.46$) and school avoidance ($r=0.80$) a significant positive correlation was obtained with the score of the whole scale. In addition, in examining the reliability of halving this questionnaire, the results showed that there is a significant positive correlation between the items of couple and individual ($r=0.68$ and $p<0.01$).

Emotion Instrument Scale for Children (EESC): This scale has 16 items; The method of responding to its statements based on the five-point Likert scale is not correct at all = 1, slightly correct = 2, somewhat correct = 3, very correct = 4 and very correct = 5. The range of scores in this scale is from 16 to 80. High scores on this scale indicate difficulty in expressing emotion. This questionnaire measures two factors: poor emotional awareness (eight items) and reluctance to express emotion (eight items). In this study, the internal reliability coefficient of the above two factors through Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.83 and 0.81, respectively. Also, in examining the criterion validity of this scale, a significant negative relationship was found between the dimensions of this scale and the Children's Depression Scale, the Child Trait Anxiety Questionnaire.

RESULTS

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of anxiety disorders and emotional expression in children of divorce and the children of ordinary family

Variable	Divorce group		Normal group	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Panic disorder	11.88	4.69	4.85	3.64
Pervasive anxiety	9.68	3.74	4.85	2.23
Separation anxiety	8.35	4.42	5.41	4.04
Avoid school	8.13	2.55	5.35	2.37
Poor emotional awareness	2.74	2.26	1.39	1.23
Reluctance to express emotion	25.53	6.60	19.65	6.28

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation Panic disorder, generalized anxiety, avoidance disorder, social anxiety and avoidance of school and poor emotional intelligence and emotional expressiveness and divorce are different in the two groups of children has it.

Levin test was performed to examine the condition of equality of variances. The results showed that the condition of equality of variance was observed using the Levin test for symptoms of anxiety disorders ($p < 0.059$) and emotion expression ($p < 0.077$) as a result, it can be said that the condition of equality of variances were not met and the p-value is greater than 05/0.

It should also be noted that Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed and the results of this test showed that the level of significance obtained is higher than 0.05 and parametric statistical tests can be used to test the research hypotheses.

Table 2. Results of two-way analysis of covariance with age controls for anxiety disorders in children of divorced families and children of the ordinary

group	Variable	Sum squares	DF	Mean squares	F	p	Effect size
group	Panic	1312.707	2	1312.707	34.725	0.001	0.286
	GAD	709.930	2	709.930	34.096	0.001	0.283
	Separation	300.118	2	300.118	12.707	0.001	0.128
	Social	238.673	2	238.673	17.550	0.001	0.169
	Avoid school	63.646	2	63.646	9.919	0.001	0.103
Gender	Panic	378.187	1	378.187	20.008	0.001	0.104
	GAD	168.812	1	168.812	14.215	0.001	0.086
	Separation	193.307	1	193.307	16.369	0.001	0.086
	social	65.448	1	65.448	9.625	0.002	0.053
	Avoid school	31.490	1	31.490	9.815	0.002	0.054
Group * Gender	Panic	42.929	2	21.465	1.136	0.324	0.013
	GAD	21.634	2	10.817	1.039	0.356	0.012
	Separation	19.807	2	9.903	0.839	0.434	0.010
	Social	33.990	2	16.995	2.499	0.85	0.028
	Avoid school	17.477	2	8.739	2.724	0.68	0.031

As can be seen in Table 2, between the children of divorced and normal families in the dimensions of anxiety disorders, namely panic ($P < 0.001$ and $F = 34.725$), GAD ($P < 0.001$ and $P = F$), separation anxiety ($001/0 > P$ and $707/12 = F$), social ($001/0 > P$ and $55/17 = F$) and avoid school ($001/0 > P$ and $919/9 = F$), There is a significant difference. The effect of gender on the dimensions of anxiety disorders has also been significant. But the effect of group and gender interaction was not significant.

As shown in Table 2, the mean score of symptoms of anxiety disorders in the divorce group was higher than the normal group. Also, according to the table of means, the average anxiety disorders in girls were higher than boys.

Table 3. Results of multivariate analysis of covariance with age control to compare the mean of emotion expression in two groups of children of divorced and normal families

group	Variable	Sum squares	DF	Mean squares	F	p	Effect size
group	Poor awareness Reluctance to express excitement	1028.665	2	1028.665	14.586	0.001	0.144
		567.243	2	567.243	4.098	0.018	0.045
Gender	Poor awareness Reluctance to express excitement	372.513	1	372.513	10.564	0.01	0.058
		522.005	1	522.004	7.543	0.07	0.042
Group * Gender	Poor awareness Reluctance to express excitement	67.691	2	33.845	0.960	0.385	0.011
		140.797	2	70.399	1.017	0.364	0.012

As shown in the table above, the mean score of difficulty in expressing emotion in the divorce group and normal is significantly different. The effect of gender was also significant. But the interaction effect of group and gender was not significant.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to compare the symptoms of anxiety disorders and expression of emotion in children of divorced families and children of normal families. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the symptoms of anxiety disorders and the expression of emotion in the group of children of divorced and normal families. This means that the mean total score of anxiety disorders and its dimensions (panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety, social anxiety and school avoidance) in the group of children of divorced families was higher than the group of normal children. The results also show that the

average weakness in expressing emotion and poor awareness of emotion in the group of children of divorced families is higher than the normal group.

It can also be said that this result is in line with previous findings that showed that some people with certain personality types are more prone to anxiety; People with unmet needs, such as having a close relationship that is unsatisfactory, may feel less secure and at greater risk for developing generalized anxiety disorder. The results of this study are also consistent with the results of Schimmenti and Bifulco (2015), which show that negative childhood experiences such as the absence of a caring parent is one of the causes of anxiety. Researchers have also found that children who experience the death of a parent are much easier to deal with than children who are victims of divorce. Some common feelings in such children Denial and denial, feelings of loss, anxiety, incompatibility, loneliness, violence, instability and physical pain such as headaches, nausea, nausea and vomiting (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Regarding the divorce and death of parents and its impact on children, it can be said that due to the importance of the child's relationship with his parent and the attachment between parents and children if the child's emotional needs are not met dependent on growing up in healthy families, the child as a result He may experience stress and negative emotions as a result of the experience of lack and failure, which manifests itself in the form of anxiety or dysfunction in academic and social functioning, or in the form of physical pain and physical complaints.

This result is consistent with the findings of Rosenhan and Seligman (1989), who showed that divorce, is associated with internalized problems, including a major disturbance in emotions and moods. Researchers have also found that children of divorce have lower mental health than normal children. And they use more emotional and avoidant coping methods.

Explaining this finding, it can be said that according to previous research, the absence of parents due to divorce and separation has short-term and long-term psychological effects on children (Wagner, 2010). Therefore, children with parental divorce experience may choose to be alone and isolated, which in itself can lead to a decrease in their expression of emotion, especially in social situations. In other words, children of divorce may show parental absence through low emotional expression in social relationships.

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