



## An Investigation into the Relation between Family Chaos and Behavioral Abnormalities in Fifth-Grade Children

Eghbal Zarei, Maryam Sadeghifard and Taimour Hemmati Golsafidi\*

Hormozgan University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

\*Corresponding Author: Hemmati.Golsafidi@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** The present research investigates the relation between family chaos and abnormal behavior demonstrated by fifth-grade students in Gheshm (an Iranian island in the Persian Gulf). The statistical population consists of all fifth-grade students residing in Gheshm at the time of this study. A research sample size of 214 was selected through random sampling from among the students. The correlation survey method and the Person statistical correlation coefficient were used in the measurements related to this study. The findings pointed to the existence of a significant relation between children's abnormal behavior and various cases of family chaos as follows: Having no parents:  $r = 0.908$  at  $p < 0.001$ , Financial poverty:  $r = 0.839$  at  $p < 0.001$ , Lack of understanding between parents:  $r = -0.707$  at  $p < 0.001$ , Parents addiction:  $r = 0.701$  at  $p < 0.001$ , Family disintegration:  $r = 0.465$  at  $p < 0.001$ .

**Keywords:** Family Chaos, Behavioral Abnormalities, Children

### INTRODUCTION

As the purpose of this research is to measure various cases of family chaos, it would be necessary to first determine what is meant by the term "chaos". Chaos is usually interpreted in at least two different ways, namely, chaotic conditions arising from lack of wealth, power, and social status (mostly used to distinguish between different classes of society) or chaotic conditions demonstrated in the form of a new social problem that can only be defined via using terms in modern psychology. In this study, the latter case is used as a definition for "chaos"<sup>1</sup>. Theoreticians like Kendal<sup>2</sup>, Freud, and others have expressed views based on the behaviorist perspective in their discussions regarding chaos<sup>3</sup>.

Chaotic factors in families involve misfortunes such as divorce, drug addiction, death of a parent, etc. and their various adverse consequences effecting children's lives as well as mental health. As education as well as monitoring school children's social behavior (to prevent them, their families, and the society from possible harmful consequences thereof in the future), the author decided to investigate this subject through analyzing the effects of such

## **An Investigation into the Relation between Family ...**

variables as parent's loss, lack of understanding between parents, financial poverty, parents' addiction, and family disintegration. In their research titled "Etiology of Emotional and Behavioral Problems in School Children", Howarth and Fisher identified three causes, i.e., heredity, family, and society. School children might have inherited a genetic tendency that is exhibited as a disorder such as attention-deficit disorder, hyperactivity, personality disorder, autism, learning difficulties, deficient action, and disorders regarding language and communication. The other disorders might have been transferred to the child through his/her family or the society. These include: parents' drug addiction, family disintegration, and unhealthy family environment. Disorders demonstrated at school could involve aggressive behavior, opposition to difficult conditions, class disturbance by the delinquent child, and threatening/bullying other children<sup>4</sup>.

Emler studied the existing research evidence involving cases of low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is among the most well-known psychological explanations/justifications regarding social and behavioral problems<sup>5</sup>.

Kaveh<sup>6</sup> believes behavioral abnormalities and ethological disorders in children as well as adolescents to be the results of family chaos, the characteristics of which are described below:

- Members of a chaotic family cannot communicate well with each other ;
- They interfere too much in each other's affairs in an abnormal way ;
- They do not revere or respect one another;
- They do not accept responsibility for their own actions;
- They cannot tolerate one another's presence;
- They have no common purpose;
- There is much conflict, quarrelling, and fighting in the family;
- Family relations are characterized by enmity and aggressive behavior;
- Harsh aggressive behavior is always the last word; and
- One person is constantly making decisions for others.

An unhealthy family is formed by an unhealthy unsuccessful couple. Milanifar<sup>7</sup> enumerates ethological difficulties as: grouchy behavior, aggressiveness, disobedience, verbal abuse, stubbornness, negativism, weak reaction to discipline, and educational deficiencies including difficulty in reading and arithmetic in spite of being naturally intelligent. All these are manifested in the family environment. Family and home atmosphere play a great role in preventing behavioral abnormalities and disorders in school children. Most behavioral disorders originate at home due to lack of attention and various shortcomings<sup>7</sup>.

There are various theories on behavioral abnormalities each of which investigates from its own perspective the pathology of children's incompatible behavior. As a result, no theory can explain children's mental pathology as a whole. In the process of disorder typology and the follow-up thereof, all

perspectives must be duly considered since, collectively, they provide a satisfactory framework in the understanding of psychological disorders. For example, the cognitive-behavioral theory integrates the learning theory and the information processing process, or the diathesis-stress theory includes the interaction between biological fields and environmental stressor stimuli<sup>8</sup>.

In this perspective, it is emphasized that pathology should not be limited to individuals, and that a person's incompatible behavior can be attributed to the domestic problems that exist between family members. Behaviorists, who believe environment shapes human behavior, recognize the family system as one of the most significant environments. Through turning their own behavior into a sustainable behavioral pattern, selectively rewarding good behavior, and providing a social atmosphere at home, parents can create in their children a healthy/unhealthy attitude and shape their personality. Parents might be aggressive and rejecting, or warm and accepting. Complexity, conflict, and shaky foundations of a family are indicative of a situation where no family member can have a separate identity. In such a family system, the roles are disruptive and this provides the ground for emotional-behavioral problems for family members. On the other hand, stressful, disruptive, and chaotic relationships that exist among family members can threaten their very mental health. Family problems can affect a child linearly whereby pressuring the child afflicted with mental or biological problems induces a certain mental or physical disease in the child, or non-linearly, whereby the systemic view towards the family rules that different family units are related in a circular fashion, and that the problem in one member would inevitably affect others as well. Thus, the child's behavior cannot be solely attributed to biological issues or be considered as a mere reaction to external factors. Instead, the child is involved in a mutual relationship with the family organization which produces further difficulties by continually providing the stimuli for the child's problematic behavior. In this systemic perspective towards the family, family variables must be considered in solving the child's behavioral problems<sup>9</sup>.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This is a fundamental applied research using the descriptive correlational approach. The statistical population consists of all fifth-grade school children in the city of Gheshm. Random sampling and selection methods based on questionnaires were used to select the population from among the fifth graders. The relationship between the assumed parameters is investigated. Two questionnaires were used in this research. The questionnaire prepared by the researchers consisting of 29 questions. The reliability of these questions (answered by fifth graders) was established based on a value of 0.89 calculated for Cronbach's alpha. This questionnaire describes the status of the fifth graders' families (chaotic/non-chaotic). The Mortimore evaluation questionnaire was

## An Investigation into the Relation between Family ...

completed by the teachers and educators who were directly involved with the children. Mortimore introduced, through the Educational Council in London, an evaluation tool for primary and middle schools children based on their educational, behavioral, and emotional conditions. This questionnaire is well known as a tool for recognition of various incompatible behaviors in children<sup>10</sup>. the second questionnaire includes 38 questions. The two questionnaires were subsequently made available to the statistical sample.

**Table 1.** Correlation Coefficients and Significance Levels for Research Hypotheses

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Behavioral Abnormality
<b>Loss of Parents</b>	Person's Correlation Coefficient	0.98
	Significance Level	0.001
	Sample Size	214
<b>Lack of Understanding</b>	Person's Correlation Coefficient	0.707
	Significance Level	0.001
	Sample Size	214
<b>Financial Poverty</b>	Person's Correlation Coefficient	0.839
	Significance Level	0.002
	Sample Size	214
<b>Drug Addiction</b>	Person's Correlation Coefficient	0.701
	Significance Level	0.001
	Sample Size	214
<b>Family Disintegration</b>	Person's Correlation Coefficient	-0.465
	Significance Level	0.005
	Sample Size	214

## RESULTS

The first hypothesis stated that loss of parents was directly proportional to behavioral abnormality. According to the findings in Table 1, the correlation coefficient is obtained as 0.908 and confirmed by the 0.001 significance level. The second hypothesis stated that lack of understanding between parents was directly proportional to behavioral abnormality. According to the findings in Table 1, the correlation coefficient is obtained as 0.707 and confirmed by the 0.001 significance level. The third hypothesis stated that financial poverty was directly proportional to behavioral abnormality. Based on the findings in Table 1, the correlation coefficient is obtained as 0.839 and also confirmed by the 0.001

significance level. The fourth hypothesis stated that parents' addiction was directly proportional to behavioral abnormality. Based on the findings in Table 1, the correlation coefficient was obtained as 0.701 and the fourth hypothesis is thus confirmed by the 0.001 significance level. Ultimately, the fifth hypothesis stated that family disintegration was directly proportional to behavioral abnormality. Based on the findings in Table 1, the correlation coefficient was obtained as 0.465 and the fifth hypothesis is also confirmed by the 0.001 significance level.

## DISCUSSION

The obtained results show that there is a significant relation between the family chaos variables (parents' addiction, financial poverty, loss of parents, lack of understanding between parents, and family disintegration) and behavioral abnormality in school children. The findings from the first hypothesis were in agreement with those reported in Batlet and Haroks<sup>10</sup>. The second confirmed hypothesis findings were in agreement with those obtained by Milaanifar<sup>11</sup>. The third confirmed hypothesis (financial poverty) findings were in agreement with those obtained by Rother and Smith<sup>12</sup>. The fourth confirmed hypothesis (parents' addiction) findings were in agreement with those obtained by Kaveh<sup>6</sup>. The fifth confirmed hypothesis (family disintegration) findings were in agreement with those obtained by Lerner<sup>8</sup>.

As compared to children who live in normal families, children living in chaotic families suffer more from abnormal behavior. As Batlet and Haroks reported, children who have lost their parents have an insatiable need for affection, and therefore, try too hard to attract the attention of the opposite sex so as to compensate for their emotional deprivation<sup>9</sup>. Poverty can prepare the ground for many social perversions. Poverty provides a suitable environment for such perversions, just as standing on top of a cliff prompts the fall into the valley beneath. Poverty and disability are prerequisites for the deep fall into the abyss of social perversions.

The results of this study showed that the abnormal behavior exhibited by school children was mostly due to their parents' incompatibility or separation, family disintegration, poverty, etc. Due to their vulnerability, children's personality is often formed by their family life style, so that they would reflect their family conditions at school in various ways: sometimes through silence and avoiding others, sometimes through aggressive behavior and hurting their classmates, shouting, running away from class or refusing to do their homework .

In dealing with various behavioral disorders, methods such as raising awareness, offering advice, admonishing, verbal warning, and sending the child to disciplinary headquarters are among the most used methods. Conversely, methods such as dismissal, transferring the child to another school, threatening, punishment, or not paying attention have found little application. The method of

## **An Investigation into the Relation between Family ...**

dealing with disruptive behavior depends on such factors as type of disorder, teachers' experience, and school type. At times, educational centers behave differently in different regions though no difference was observed in the teachers' behavior towards students. Overall, in dealing with disruptive behavior, school authorities first try a guiding approach. However, disciplinary and non-interference approaches have also been significant depending on the type of disorder and the studied variables. It is hoped that the theme of this research will be continued by future researchers.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Naderianjahromi, M. (2004). "Sociology in Sports", Esfahan, Jahad Daneshgahi Publications.
2. Kendal, P.h.C. (2003). "Childhood Disorders", Translated by Kalantari M. and Gohari Anaraki, M. Esfahan, Jahad Daneshgahi Publications, pp. 12-56.
3. Afrough, E. (2000). "A Theoretical Perspective on Class Analysis and Development", Tehran, Farhang-ao-Danesh Publications.
4. "Investigation of Effective Factors in Educational and Behavioral Problems", Tarbiat Monthly, No. 3, April 1996, pp. 49-52.
5. Birou, A. (1991). "Dictionary of Social Sciences", Translated by Saroukhani, B., Tehran, Kayhan Publications, pp. 110-123.
6. "Kaveh, S.(2007). "Powerless Parents and their Incompatible Child", Psychological Education and Treatment, Tehran, Sokhan Publications.
7. Milanifar, B. (2001). "Psychology of Retarded Children and Adolescents", 10th Edition, Tehran, Naghsh Ghomes Publications.
8. Kendal, P.h.C. (2003). "Childhood Disorders", Translated by Rezazadeh H.R. and Tavakoli Y., Tehran, Shahid Saied Mohebi Publications, pp. 67-98.
9. Vix Nelson, R. & Israel A.C. (2005). "Disruptive Behavior in Children", Translated by Monshtousi M. T., Astan Ghods Razavi Publications, pp. 19-36.
10. Family: A Background for Honor or Perversion", Payvand Monthly, No. 84, September 1986, pp. 37-49.
11. "Chaotic Family", Payvand Monthly, No. 85, November 1986, pp. 56-88.
12. Yarmohamadian A. (2010). "Psychology of Incompatible Children and Adolescents (Behavioral-Emotional Disorders)", Tehran, Yadvare Ketab Publications .