

Family Structure and Multidimensional Adolescent's Life Satisfaction

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to comparative Multidimensional life satisfaction in adolescents living in intact and non intact families. The sample included 120 Iranian Middle school students administered the multidimensional students life satisfaction scale and one question about family structure that revealed whether students lived or non intact families. Result showed that there was a significant difference between adolescents from family structure type in family satisfaction but no significant difference in other sub-scale of life satisfaction was observed.

Key words: Family Structure • Multidimensional • Life Satisfaction • Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is stage of transition from childhood to adulthood and is along with various changes and ups and downs. Although focus on adolescents' problems is important but in current decades some of authorities have focused their attention on positive markers of welfare and try to direct general discussions and policy-makings toward a direction which leads to promotion of adolescents' health level [1]. Perception of this group of researchers about concept of health is not only lack of disease and injury as propounded by world health organization [2].

Life satisfaction is defined as cognitive evaluation administered by each individual about general life quality or its special domains [3]. Despite conceptualizations of health as lack of disease, recent studies indicated that some adolescents in spite of manifesting few psychological disorder signs have low life satisfaction [4]. These adolescents indicate low levels of social performance, physical health and educational progression in compared to adolescents having few disorders and high life satisfaction. Such findings suggest need of providing a universal model of health integrating positive and negative markers.

In longitudinal studies it has been indicated that adolescents' life satisfaction explains relation of low levels of life satisfaction with future internalizing and externalizing behaviors and damaging experiences with peers [5]. Also Suldo and Huebner [6] found out that adolescents with high life satisfaction have less

probability of manifesting externalizing behaviors after important stressful experiences of life. So life satisfaction as an important psychological variable can facilitate change process. Research evidences generally indicates positive significant between life satisfaction and variables such as documents methods [7], self-actualization and need of cognition [8], methods of confronting to stress [9], positive and negative emotion experiences [10] and substance abuse [11]. Results of performed research on many adolescents indicated that family relations have the highest correlation with life satisfaction in compared to peers, school and life environment [6]. Despite increase of spending time with peers, family relation quality is the most important factor of adolescents' life satisfaction. So it is necessary to determine that which special dimension of family acts as fundamental determinant of welfare including life satisfaction.

Researches indicate that there is relation between some of family features and life satisfaction including child-parent positive relation and parents' social support [6, 12].

Suldo and Huebner [6] considered relation of parents' support in adolescents having low, normal and high family satisfaction and resulted that level of parents' satisfaction is different in these groups. As parents' support increases, life satisfaction increases as well. Family psychological atmosphere has relation with welfare. Adolescents with low life satisfaction more experience lack of parents' consistency and high parents' dispute.

Family structure also is considered as a factor correlated with adolescents' welfare. Family structure can be categorized into injured and non-injured families. Non-injured families are families that children live with their parents however injured families are single-parent, without superintendant and newly structured (having step-mother or step-father) families [13]. In recent years researchers have paid attention to the relation of family structure and different dimensions of children and adolescents changes. In compared to adolescents living in injured families, adolescents who belong to non-injured families indicate higher educational progression and less aggression and have healthier living style [14]. Children in injured families have more negative emotions and adolescents living in single-parent families have reported less self-respect in compared to adolescents living in non-injured or newly structured families (having step-mother or step-father) [15]. As it is expected there is significant relation between family structure and child-parent relationship. Researches indicated that adolescents who have experienced separation or divorce of parents have weak relation with parents [16].

Results of researches about family and life-satisfaction are contradictory. For example Sastre and Ferriere [17] have compared life satisfaction in adolescents growing up in nursery and adolescents belonging to non-injured families and resulted that adolescents who have grown up in nursery have lower life satisfaction. In the same direction researches have shown that there is positive significant relation between family structure and life satisfaction [12]. On the other hand according to previous studies there is no significant difference between family structure and life satisfaction [16]. So effect of family structure on life satisfaction is still ambiguous. Current research was performed by the aim of comparing adolescents' multidimensional life satisfaction in injured and non-injured families and major question of this research was: is there significant relation between adolescents having injured and non-injured family structure in multidimensional of life satisfaction?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method of current research was comparative. Primary sample include 618 secondary school students who were selected by using multi level sampling method in north, center and south regions of educational regions of Tehran. Then 122 students were chosen randomly on the basis of family structure (61 students with injured family structure and 61 students with non-injured family structure).

- Family structure in this research was determined by using close questions. The question was "who are you living with?"
- Multidimensional life satisfaction scale (MSLSS) was used for measuring students' life satisfaction. This scale was provided by Suldo and Huebner [6] and has 40 items and measures 5 dimension of life satisfaction (including family, friends, living environment, school and self satisfaction). Life satisfaction scale have a 6-degree range (1 means completely disagree and 6 means completely agree). Score of each dimension is obtained through adding up scores and dividing on total number of items of that dimension. In current research Alfa coefficient for this scale was 0.84. Reliability of this scale is satisfying [18].

RESULTS

Mean and standard deviation for 5 dimensions and total life satisfaction is provided in Table 1 and it indicates that total life satisfaction for injured and non-injured families was 3.14 and 3.06, respectively.

In life satisfaction dimensions lowest mean was in school satisfaction dimension with mean of 2.86 in non-injured group and 2.75 in injured group and highest mean in family dimension in injured and non-injured groups were 3.46 and 3.20, respectively.

Correlation matrix of life satisfaction and its 5 dimensions are shown in Table 2. Results of correlation coefficient indicated that there is significant positive relation between scores of life satisfaction and its dimensions.

Results of Pierson correlation coefficient test indicate that there is significant positive correlation between scores of life satisfaction and its dimension as follow:

1. There are 0.73 significant positive correlations between life satisfaction and family dimension.
2. There are 0.66 significant positive correlations between life satisfaction and friend's dimension.
3. There are 0.34 significant positive correlations between life satisfaction and school dimension.
4. There are 0.58 significant positive correlations between life satisfaction and living environment dimension.
5. There are 0.58 significant positive correlations between life satisfaction and self dimension.

For the purpose of comparing dimensions of life satisfaction scale in students having injured and non-injured family structure single-variable variance analysis

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of life satisfaction dimensions and its total scores

| | Injured | | Non-injured | | Total | |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|
| | Mean | Standard deviation | Mean | Standard deviation | Mean | Standard deviation |
| Family satisfaction | 3.46 | 0.50 | 3.20 | 0.73 | 3.33 | 0.61 |
| Friends satisfaction | 3.16 | 0.56 | 3.10 | 0.61 | 3.13 | 0.58 |
| School satisfaction | 2.86 | 0.72 | 2.75 | 0.61 | 2.80 | 0.66 |
| Living environment satisfaction | 3.07 | 0.56 | 3.19 | 0.53 | 3.13 | 0.54 |
| Self satisfaction | 3.23 | 0.64 | 3.10 | 0.72 | 3.16 | 0.68 |
| Life satisfaction | 3.14 | 0.38 | 3.06 | 0.39 | 3.1 | 0.38 |

Table 2: Correlation matrix of life satisfaction and its dimensions

| Components | Life satisfaction | Family | Friends | School | Living environment | Self |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|--------|--------------------|------|
| Life satisfaction | 1 | | | | | |
| Family | 0.73** | 1 | | | | |
| Friends | 0.66** | 0.43** | 1 | | | |
| School | 0.34** | 0.06 | - 0.02 | 1 | | |
| Living environment | 0.58** | 0.21* | 0.27** | 0.14 | 1 | |
| Self | 0.58** | 0.30** | 0.21* | 0.01 | 0.13 | 1 |

p<0.05* p<0.01**

Table 3: Single variance analysis for comparing dimensions of life satisfaction scale in different kinds of family structure

| Life satisfaction dimensions | Sum of squares | Error of sum of squares | Mean square | Error of mean square | F | Significance level |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Family | 2.180 | 45.660 | 2.180 | 0.370 | 5.770 | 0.018* |
| Friends | 0.006 | 43.060 | 0.006 | 0.350 | 0.016 | 0.890 |
| School | 0.001 | 62.600 | 0.001 | 0.510 | 0.003 | 0.950 |
| Living environment | 0.220 | 39.160 | 0.220 | 0.320 | 0.700 | 0.400 |
| Self | 0.180 | 63.130 | 0.180 | 0.520 | 0.360 | 0.540 |

P<0.05 *

was used. Results of this analysis are indicated in Table 3 and it shows that there is significant difference between students having injured and non-injured family structure in family satisfaction dimension. Observed mean in family satisfaction dimension in students with non-injured structure (3.46) is more than mean of students with injured structure (3.19).

DISCUSSION

Current research was conducted for the purpose of comparing adolescents' life satisfaction in injured and non-injured families. Results of current research indicated that adolescents who live with their both parents (non injured families) have the highest life satisfaction in family dimension comparing to injured families (single-parent or restructured families) and this difference is significant. These findings are consistent with research of Diner, Fujita, 1995 which indicated that adolescents having

single parent families have lower family satisfaction because they experience less attention and lack of interaction with parents. Although family satisfaction in adolescents having restructured families (having step-father or step-mother) is a little higher than adolescents having single-parent families but it seems that living with both parents have the highest positive feeling for adolescents [1].

In the current research there was no significant difference between adolescents having injured and non-injured families in other dimensions of life satisfaction (including friends, school, living environment and self). This finding is consistent with research of Antramine and Huebner [1]. Lack of significant difference can be result of this fact that except family structure, other factors can influence adolescents' life satisfaction. Among these factors we can point to psychosocial processes in family such as high disputation between parents and parent-child disputation which can be a disadvantage for

adolescents having non-injured family structure [1]. So it is necessary that researchers recognize factors, mechanism and personality features which help adolescents having non-injured families through promoting life satisfaction and welfare.

Current research is consistent with researches highlighting importance of family role in facilitating optimum of welfare. Additionally paying attention to policies and programs providing required supports for families in health, social, psychological, economical contexts is necessary.

Current research has been faced to some limitations. First limitation of current research is that it is a sectional study. So it can't indicate affect of time on variables. However it is probable that adolescents adapt with new family structure during few years [15]. Another limitation of current research stems from this fact that most of adolescents having injured families had single-parent families and lived with their mothers and only a few number of them reported living with father and step-mother.

Determining differences in various age groups and considering gender in future studies seems necessary because importance of family structure changes with increasing or decreasing of age and changing of gender.

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