

**Research Article**

## **COMPARING THE DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, STRESS, SHYNESS, AGGRESSION AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SINGLE AND TWO-PARENT MALE STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study is conducted with the aim at comparing the depression, anxiety, stress, shyness, aggression and educational attainment in single and two-parent male students. The statistical population of this study consists of all male high school students in Karaj City and 190 subjects are selected as the samples through the cluster sampling and then the research questionnaires are given to them. Among them, 184 samples filled the questionnaires and those ones are investigated. The depression, anxiety, stress (DAS) scale, Cheek-Buss Shyness Scale, and aggression questionnaire (SGO) are utilized for data collection. The research has the descriptive-comparative type. The statistical indexes of mean, standard deviation and t of independent groups are utilized for data analysis. The research results indicate that there is a difference between the single and two-parent students according to the mean of educational attainment, depression, anxiety, stress, and shyness, but there is no significant difference between them in terms of anxiety and aggression. The research findings indicate that the absence of each parent has the negative effect on the children's mental health and educational attainment.

**Keywords:** *Educational Attainment, Depression, Stress, Aggression*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The family is one of the most important educational spaces which plays a considerable role in maintaining the individual mental, social and physical health. The psychological conditions of family such as the parents' emotional relationships with children, the children's relationships with each other, and the parents' relationships with each other play facilitating or inhibitory roles in creating the mental health and consistency, growth of social skills, and educational and job success and attainment in children. According to this educational system, the parents have a decisive role in their children's lives and the lack or absence of each one has the destructive effect on the children and family. Since the past, the mother's role has been often more taken into account, but the father's role has been recently identified (Keramati *et al.*, 2005).

The children need the certain parents' presence and accompany at different ages. The children first model the parents at early ages and if the acceptance of these models and roles is faced with problem, their process of consistency and identity-building will be disturbed. Furthermore, the lack of each parent causes the problems. The economic problems are usually associated with the lack of father and the emotional distress largely associated with the lack of mother. On the other hand, one of the parents is usually under the pressure of managing the life in different fields in single-parent families and necessarily a part of these pressures is transferred to the children and this makes them more vulnerable. The children's vulnerability in single-parent families is partly dependent on the absence of a parent. In this regard, the parental separation (divorce) has the highest vulnerability for children (Eig *et al.*, 2008).

The family is one of the factors affecting the individual behavior. Since the birth, the child inherits the characteristics from their parents and the bases of his growth are provided. The parental influence on children does not have only the hereditary and genetic aspects, but the family and parents play the key roles in the child's understanding of social life and his acculturation. The structure and form of family and the family members' communication with each other and the community where the family lives are not consistent in most of the cases, thus the families have different behavior and impact on people. In the family, the child learns how to have the intimate relationship with others, and thus the family has the

### **Research Article**

essential impact on creating and developing the child's personality. It is essential to identify the role of family as an institution from which the parental concept is first originated and thus it indicates the parents' influence on the children (Shafiabadi and Naseri, 2001).

Nowadays, the existence of students who deprive of any parent due to any reason is one of the issues in the society and particularly the education. The deprivation of parents is a specific circumstance which can have the direct and indirect effects on the general growth and various aspects of child behavior especially in the field of mental and physical health and educational attainment as an important environmental variable. The effect of parents' absence on the childhood problems is significantly important. During the past, the father was responsible for fulfilling the family needs as a source of livelihood and moneymaker and the mother sought to take care of children. In recent years, some of the hypotheses on the father's role in child upbringing, which has had the long history, have been changed (Mojtahedzadeh and Nissi, 2009). The conducted studies on the father's role indicate that the child reaction to the father's presence or absence is like his reaction to mother's, but the dependence on father is created slowly (Chak, 1976). It seems that the lack of significant association due to the death both in terms of physical health (Wivla, 1968; Riss and Lutkins, 1976) and mental health (Parkis, 1963) will have widespread negative effects (quoted by Makvandi *et al.*, 1996).

The children who live with their mothers and are faced with poverty and father's absence, have higher educational failure, commit the child crime, are expelled from school, take drugs and commit the crimes as adults more than those with both parents. Therefore, the child's physical and mental health is at risk and the child's going to school and coming back has become a difficult affair. The poverty and father's absence have such these effects on the child's life (Burke, 2009).

The maternal and paternal absence has different effects. During the childhood, the maternal absence makes numerous problems for child; in other words, the child loses the kindness and friendship center, while the paternal absence becomes important at adolescence and youth ages (Beyer and Stafford, 1998).

The pathology of matriarchy hypothesis, obtained from the report by Moynihan, indicates that the paternal absence (father absence) is very destructive for children especially the boys because it means that the children suffer from the lack of financial resources, role model, discipline, structure and guidance by father (Biblarz and Raftery, 1994). According to Lewis and O'Brien (1987), it is now believed that the fathers play different roles in children upbringing in comparison with the past perceptions and assumptions. In general, it is accepted that the personality growth is affected by the strong and weak aspects like the parents and the absence of one or both has the adverse effect on the personality growth and makes the person prone to mental illness or subsequent behavioral problems. The studies indicate that the children have less capacity to cope and deal with a parent's absence, e.g. death, compared to the adults. The stressful situations can lead to this children's severe dependence. A parent's absence at the early ages can make the children vulnerable to depression caused by the dreadful stressors. In a longitudinal study of 197 fourth grade elementary school students, Kierman *et al.*, (1995) have found that the boys' aggression in single-parent families is more than two-parent families. Kasen *et al.*, (1996) have concluded in their studies that the single-parent children are more likely to have depression and anxiety disorders compared with children who live with both parents. Some studies have indicated that certainly the children in single-parent families (with mother) have obtained lower scores than their counterparts with two-parent families (Marison and Cherlin, 1995; Entowisel and Alexander, 1995; Long and Zagroski, 2001; Aginbakh *et al.*, 2001); (Keramati *et al.*, 2005). According to the control of high school students' age, genders and grades, who lived in single-parent families, their scores were about 1.3 standard deviation lower in mathematics and science tests than students who lived in two-parent families (Pang *et al.*, 2002). Despite the fact that the children with their stepfathers had higher scores than those in single-parent families, their scores were more than 1.4 of standard deviation lower than those living with both parents (quoted by Thompson *et al.*, 1994).

The family is one of the factors which affect the creation of shyness and it can be effective in various forms (Omidvar, 2010). The factors such as the parental separation or divorce affect the creation or intensification of shyness in the family (Chartir *et al.*, 2001).

## Research Article

Therefore, given the importance of issue, this study is conducted with the aim at comparing the depression, stress, anxiety, shyness, aggression and educational attainment in single and two-parent students.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has descriptive comparative method. The statistical indices of mean, standard deviation and t of independent groups are utilized for data analysis.

### Statistical Population, Sample and Sampling Method

The statistical sample of this study consists of all high school male students in Karaj City and 190 samples are selected through cluster sampling and then the research questionnaires are given to them; among them, 184 ones filled the questionnaires and these ones are investigated in this research.

### Research Tools

The following tools are utilized for data collection:

1- Depression, anxiety, stress scale (DASS): This questionnaire has 21 questions. Anthony et al (1998) have analyzed this scale and have found that three effective factor. The alpha coefficients are equal to 0.97, 0.92 and 0.95, respectively, for these factors. This questionnaire is studied by Samani and Jokar (2007) and its retest-test reliabilities are equal to 0.80, 0.76 and 0.77 and the alpha equal to 0.81, 0.74 and 0.78, respectively, for depression, anxiety, and stress, respectively.

2- Cheek-Buss Shyness Scale (revised scale): This questionnaire consists of 14 questions in the form of a 5-point scale. (1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3-indifferent, 4- agree, 5-strongly agree). The internal consistency of test is reported equal to 0.94 by Melicior and Cheek (1990) and 0.92 by (Cheek and Krasnoperova, 1999).

3- Aggression Scale: Aggression questionnaire consists of 30 items of which 14 ones assess the anger factor, 8 ones the invasion and 8 ones the malice. This is a self-reporting scale and the subjects respond the items by four options of never, rarely, sometimes, and always and the scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 are considered for four items except for the item 18 which has a negative factor loading and its scoring is inversely done. The total score of this questionnaire is from 0 to 90 and is obtained by summing the scores of these questions. Those with scores lower than the mean have lower aggression.

4- The student's grade point average (GPA) is considered as the educational attainment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The data results indicate that the sample mean age is obtained equal to 15.22. From 184 samples, 85 students are single-parent and 99 ones two-parent. The grade point average (GPA) is equal to 15.74 in the total sample. The mean and standard deviation of studied variables are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and variables in studied sample**

| Variables  | Mean  | Standard deviation |
|------------|-------|--------------------|
| Age        | 15.22 | 1.50               |
| GPA        | 15.74 | 1.86               |
| Depression | 7.30  | 4.95               |
| Anxiety    | 6.50  | 4.55               |
| Stress     | 8.28  | 4.12               |
| Shyness    | 32.57 | 10.01              |
| Aggression | 45.46 | 12.84              |

The results of data analysis indicate that there is a significant difference between the single and two-parent students in terms of educational attainment; in other words, the educational attainment in students who live with both parents is higher than those with a parent. Furthermore, the results indicate that significant difference between the single and two-parent students in terms of depression, stress and

**Research Article**

shyness. In other words, the rate of depression, stress and shyness is higher in single-parent students than two-parent ones, but there is no significant difference between them in terms of aggression and anxiety ( $P > 0.05$ ). The comparison and rate of mean for both groups are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Comparison of mean in both groups (single and two-parent students)**

| Type of family |               | Mean  | Standard deviation | t     | Significance level |
|----------------|---------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|
| GPA            | Single parent | 15.22 | 1.64               | -3.39 | 0.001              |
|                | Two parent    | 16.16 | 1.95               |       |                    |
| Depression     | Single parent | 8.69  | 4.89               | 3.64  | 0.00               |
|                | Two parent    | 6.11  | 4.71               |       |                    |
| Anxiety        | Single parent | 7.04  | 5.13               | 1.48  | 0.13               |
|                | Two parent    | 6.03  | 3.65               |       |                    |
| Stress         | Single parent | 10.07 | 3.8                | 5.90  | 0.00               |
|                | Two parent    | 6.75  | 3.78               |       |                    |
| Shyness        | Single parent | 35.65 | 11.12              | 3.94  | 0.00               |
|                | Two parent    | 29.91 | 8.10               |       |                    |
| Aggression     | Single parent | 43.75 | 13.85              | -1.68 | 0.09               |
|                | Two parent    | 46.93 | 11.78              |       |                    |

**Discussion**

This study is conducted with the aim at comparing the single and two-parent students in terms of depression, stress, anxiety, shyness, aggression and educational attainment. The research results indicate that the rates of depression and stress are higher in single-parent students than the two-parent ones. The numerous studies indicate that there is higher probability of depressive symptoms in children who have lost one of their parents. When the children have aggressive natures or they are faced with the stressful events in the life, their problems become doubled. On the contrary, the submissive children better cope with the life adversity. The girls often response by internalizing the reaction such as crying, self-blame and isolation. They often expect to get more attention, but in families where the mother has the custody, the boys experience more serious compatibility problems. The mother-children coercive interaction and the boys' impulsive and rude behavior are more common in single-parent families. Most of the studies on the single-parent families emphasize on the negative effects of father absence and they more emphasize on the negative consequences of severe economic situation in children who live away from their fathers. These studies emphasizes on conducting the comparative studies about the impact of poverty on single and two-parent families. The researchers believe that the loss of father absence in single-parent families where the mother has the custody is not only the loss of husband's revenue. The fathers, who have divorced their wives, do not accept to provide the children's livelihood and force the mothers to undergo all financial affairs of families including her and children, thus these mothers have less time to take care of their children due to the high economic pressure. In fact, the children will deprive of the presence of both parents. The result of this study on the depression is consistent with the research finding by Kass *et al.*, (1996).

Numerous recent studies on the single-parent families (especially the single mothers and divorced families) suggest that the effects of this phenomenon can be very stable and long term. The adjustment of other factors and variables indicate that the children, who live with only one parent, are two times more likely to be diagnosed with mental illness than the children who live with both parents. They are also two times more prone to the risk of suicide and alcohol-related diseases. The risk of taking drug is three times the boys in single-parent girls. The boys in single-parent families are more likely than girls to have emotional- mental problems and take drug. Furthermore, due to a variety of reasons, there are high numbers of deaths in this case. Most of the alcohol and drug-related problems in single-parent families are due to the less supervision and upbringing of these children than others. The single parents usually are

### Research Article

always working due to the lack of supporter for life survival. This makes the low care and supervision of children.

The research results indicate that there is no significant difference between the single- and two-parent students in terms of anxiety. This finding is inconsistent with the findings by Kass *et al.*, (1996).

Most of the conducted studies indicate that there is high aggression in children with single parent, but the findings of this study indicate that there is no significant difference between these two groups. This research finding is inconsistent with the findings by Kierman *et al.*, (1995). According to the explanation of this finding, since the male high school students are the studied samples and the social behavior is highly affected by the peers at this age, the single parent reason has not been able to be effective and thus the aggression is influenced by the social factors, media and peer group.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that the single-parent students' educational attainment is significantly lower than the two-parent ones. This finding is consistent with the research results by Mcclanahan and Sandfos (1994). Furthermore, the research results indicate that there is a significant difference between both groups in terms of shyness. Chartier *et al.*, (2002) has argued that the separation or absence of a parent exacerbates or even creates the shyness.

According to the research results, it can be concluded that the deprivation of a parent has a negative effect on the children's mental health and educational attainment. Therefore, the educational authorities should take this into consideration. However, we should be careful in generalizing the research findings to other communities because the statistical sample in this study covers the male high school students, thus it is suggested investigating both genders and the lower ages in future studies on these variables.

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**Research Article**

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