Comparing the perceptions of Heroin-Abusers and Non-Abusers from their parental discipline

Maryam Zarnaghasha*, Mohammad Ali Goodarzi, Meisam Mohseni

*MA in Educational Psychology, Shiraz University, Shiraz 7174775988, Iran
**PHD in Clinical Psychology, Shiraz University, Shiraz 7194684759, Iran
***MA in TEFL, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran 7176817688, Iran

Received January 1, 2010; revised February 12, 2010; accepted March 14, 2010

Abstract

The aim of this project was to compare the perceptions of heroin abusers with those of non-abusers regarding their parental discipline. In this project, the perceptions of two groups, each comprised of 120 subjects (60 substance abusers of heroin and 60 non-abusers) of their parental discipline were evaluated by means of Family Environmental Questionnaire through a retrospective and comparative method. Parental disciplinary method has significant effect on tendency to substance abuse in children.

Keywords: Addiction, substance abuse, family environment, family environmental questionnaire.

1. Introduction

Family is the most important unit of society which has the most effect on children’s personality shaping. Children at the time of birth do not have any full understanding of themselves but little by little they develop a kind of primitive knowledge about themselves by shaping cognitive structural interaction with environment. Father and mother through their behavior and their life style teach cultural, familial values and social life models to their children. Studies show that parents’ disinterestedness in training children, unkindness, and high level of reproaching children, harsh behavior, uncoordinated discipline and suitable communication with their children are powerful anticipations for children’s abnormal behaviour (White, 2000). Numerous young abusers have reported that their family environment has problems (Adler, Lotecka, 1973) and weak family communication have had important role on their tendency to drug abuse (Svobodny, 1982). In this regard, different variables such as cohesiveness, adaptability, attachment, the time family members spend together, the degree of social support, and discipline are put into consideration.

Studies indicate that lacking a supportive heartfelt relation on the part of the family is related to the consumption of alcohol or other substances (Lee, Streit, Halted, Pascal, 1974) and if person has this understanding...

* Maryam Zarnaghash. Tel.: +987116476804; fax: +987112231206.
E-mail address: mzarnaghash@yahoo.com.
that father and mother are separate from other family members, the drug abuse increases (Brook, Lukoff, & Whiteman, 1980).

A lot of studies show that family members of drug abusers show lower flexibility in problem solving and decision-making in comparison to the family of non-abusers (Smart, Chibucos, 1990; Frisen, 1983; Brook & other, 1980; Tec, 1970). Flexibility provides more level of freedom for expressing emotions, worries and leads to decision-making and resolving of difficulties freely in their family. Eiden et al. (1999) found that father's alcoholism was associated with lower paternal sensitivity and positive affect cross-sectionally in a sample of 12-month old infants. They also found that father's alcoholism was associated with lower verbalizations and higher negative affect among fathers. Furthermore, Eiden, Edwards, and Leonard (2007) found that paternal alcohol use when children were 12 months old predicted lower maternal and paternal warmth and sensitivity when children were 2 years of age. That paternal alcoholism is associated with lower levels of parental warmth and sensitivity is important given that these behaviors are believed to be central to competent parenting and have important implications for child development (Grych, 2002). Teenager abusers have a sense of being a stranger in their own families (Tolon, Dermott, Wechsler, Thum, 1973) and they consider their own parents unsupportive and self-interested (Wilborn, 1983).

Wilborn (1983) reported that drug-abuse teenagers consider their parents, on one hand, as permissive, egotistic, unkind and, on the other hand, controller and interferer. Shenberg (1999), evaluated 83 parents and 113 children of 7-12 years old and he found that drug-abuse parents are colder, more permissive and more rejecting than non-abuser parents. Some researchers have reported high level of ignorance by parents while some other parents had high level of control on their children. Jurich et al. (1985) and Rees and Wilborn (1983), understood some parents cannot determine rules and restrictions for their children’s behaviour.

In general it seems special kinds of family relations cause teenagers to reject their families and gain a tendency towards other sources providing their needs, considering family interaction correlation and drug abuse can be used as one interaction preventive factor in education of methods with child and styles of interactions safer with children.

Present research is based on a retrospective approach that makes a comparison between the discipline styles of addicts and non-addicts. Goal of this research is to determine which discipline factors are related to drug abuse in Iran. And what are the differences of these discipline styles with finding results of other countries.

2. Method

In this project, by means of family Environmental Questionnaire (FEQ) (Schaefen, 1965) the perception of two groups’ substance-abusers of heroin and non-abusers were studied. Participants of this study were 120 person divided into two 60 person groups, group 1: drug-abusers and group 2: non-abusers. 25 females and 35 males were randomly selected among the clients of Self-Reference Center of Welfare Department of Iran coming there to cure their addiction. For the non-abuser group, primarily, a bank branch was randomly selected from official centers of Shiraz. Then, 32 males and 27 females were randomly selected among the employees of this bank. The age mean of this group was selected based on the age mean of the drug-abuse group, hence, no difference in the age mean of the two groups. The questionnaire was provided to the participants by the present researcher herself. Participants that didn’t have enough education received clarifying explanations from the researcher. For studying parenting styles Family Environment Questionnaire was used. Family Environment Questionnaire has 18 item and two factor kindness-coldness and control-freedom. Reliability and validity were accepted. (Cronbach alpha =0.85)

3. Finding

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations of age, education and parents’ education for two groups. T-test shows that there is no significant difference between the mean of two groups. Results show that education and mother education in non-abuser groups are higher than other group. Two groups don’t have significant difference with each other regarding father education mean.
T-test was used to analyze the mean of the groups in 18 sub-sections of the Family Environment Questionnaire. Two groups were compared in discipline styles. Result of this analysis showed a significant difference for every factor presented in table 2. Results show in the subscale of high level of freedom, there is significant difference between scores of heroin-abuser families in comparison to the non-abuser families. In other words, in comparison to the non-abuser families, the families of the heroin abusers give lower level of freedom to their children and they have higher control on their children. Heroin abuser group had lower score in subscale of mild discipline in comparison to the non-abuser group. This shows that substance-user families exerted higher disciplinary control over their children in comparison to the non-abuser families.

Heroin abusers group gave greater score to their parents than the non-abusers in subscale of extremist freedom. Otherwise stated, parents of the drug-abuse group have attempted more in imposing their expectations on their children. The score of heroine-abuse group was significantly lower than the non-abuser group, which means they received less affective support from their families. In the subscale of positive view, the drug-abuse group scored lower to their parents which means it is statistically significant. The subscale of negative view, the drug-abusers scored higher to their parents. In other words, parents of the drug-abusers express negative ideas about their children in comparison to the non-abuser group.

In the subscale of “participation”, heroin abuser group has less participation in affairs than non-abusers group, because in this group, parents don’t involve their children in the house affairs. In the subscale of “kindness”, the score of the drug-abuser group was lower than the non-abuser group and this indicates that in these groups, parents express little kindness to their children. In subscale of “aggression and anger” also substance abusers’ score is higher in comparison to the non-abuser group and we can say that their parents express higher level of aggression and anger in their parenting style. Heroin abuser group have had greater score in “reject” subscale than non-abuser group and this result shows that drug abusers parents reject their children too much. In the subscale of “ignorance”, parents of heroin abusers group ignore their children greater than non abusers group parents.

### Table 1 - Result of samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Non-abuser</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Heroin abuser</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father education</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother education</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the subscales of “aggression control”, “control of guilt feeling”, “discipline”, “expectation of behaviour development” and “connection” there was no significant difference between the groups. Family Environment Questionnaire has 4 discipline style based on samples score mean in control factor and kindness factor: 1- high control-high kindness 2- high control-less kindness 3- less control-less kindness 4- less control-high kindness.

### Table 2 - comparison of mean and standard deviation between groups in family environment questionnaire subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Non-abuser</th>
<th>S-D</th>
<th>Heroin abuser</th>
<th>S-D</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme freedom</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>12.36</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mild discipline</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme intervene</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of guilt feeling</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kindness</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>-4.26</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reject</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children participating</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>-2.92</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative view express</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children ignoring</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affectionately support</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>-2.66</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discipline style in groups analyzed based on t-test. This analysis shows significant difference between two groups in the field of parenting style.

3. Result and Discussion

Present research shows that perception of substance abusers regarding their parental discipline differs from non-abusers in the following areas: kindness expression, expression and confirmation of positive view, aggression and anger, rejection, ignorance of children and children participation in family affairs.

In other word, heroin abusers have evaluated expression of kindness, positive view expression and confirmation and cooperation request in house activities by their parents are less than non-abuser persons. They have considered their parents’ rate of aggression and more anger, more reject and more child ignoring own than non-abuser persons parents.

Heroin abusers evaluated their families in a lower level in subscales of “extremely free”, “mild discipline” and regarding “directing” they evaluated their parents higher than non-abuser group. In other words, non-abuser group provide their children with higher level of freedom and they have less control on children’s behaviour.

Researchers believe that young abusers brought up in controller families tend to consider themselves without independence and self-reliance. Based on result of Rees and Wilborn (1983), these young people have described their parents as hostile, ownership taker, extremist supporter and controller having guilt feeling.

On the other hand, Rees and Wilborn (1983), reported that parents of abusers persons don’t have enough ability for acting to regulate their children’s behaviour.

Heroin abusers have recognized their family as less supportive in the emotional aspect and they evaluated their parents based on “ignoring their children” and “expression of negative view” higher in comparison to the non-abuser persons.

This research shows that parents of heroin abusers exert more control and less kindness. This research is supports some researches in which substances abusers youth described the environment of their families as unkind, cold, and rough. Quarrelsome parents (cold or unkind) and limitation-maker (extreme control) create sense of strong hatred in their children without letting them show they feeling. So their children combine hatred factors and limitation to form detestation a part of which returns towards them and creates conflict and discomfort. These senses may be effective in person’s tendency toward addiction.

References


