

Surveying the Relationship of Family Emotional Atmosphere with Emotional Intelligence and Happiness of Students

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ABSTRACT— A descriptive-correlative study was carried out to survey the relationship among family emotional atmosphere, emotional intelligence, and happiness of students. Study population was comprised of all girls 9th graders living in Tehran City, in academic year 2015-2016. Sample group consisted of 188 participants who were selected through cluster, random and multistage sampling based on Kergesi and Morgan's method. Data gathering tools were Behill Bern's emotional atmosphere inventory, Shring' emotional intelligence scale, and Oxford happiness scale. The collected data was analyzed using correlational test methods. As the finding showed, there was a positive and significant relationship between emotional atmosphere in family and all its subscales (except for presenting gift) and emotional intelligence of participants. In addition, there was a positive and significant relationship between emotional atmosphere in family and all its subscales (except for shared experience) and students' happiness. Clearly, high emotional intelligence, happiness, and motivation for study among students depend on realization of their key needs in the family specially creation of a decent emotional environment in the family by the parents.

KEYWORDS: family emotional atmosphere, emotional intelligence, happiness, student

Introduction

Family environment is one of the key factors effective in human's development. Children experience affection and security and gain learning ability in the family. Based on the quality of their relationship with the parents, the children acquire the required behavioral skills for higher adaptability (Ward, 2004). Family is the first place that one's personality, values, and intellectual standards are formed; therefore, family plays a key role in one's fate, behavior, and mental health. The child's reaction to their environment is a function of social and cultural norms of their family. The nature of family emotional atmosphere, which is comprised of the relationship between the parents and the children, among the children, and between the parents, can function as a facilitator or an inhibitor in development of behavioral adaptation of children and adolescents (Roopnairine et al., 2006). Adolescents who grow in families characterized with suspicious, criticism, blaming, and lack of emotional attention experience problems in developing their identity and relationships with others. Uneducated parents neglect the importance of having close and warm relationship with their children and bring up children who are depressed due to lack of emotional relationships in their family (Rostami et al., 2011). There are several cases of children who demonstrate anti-social behaviors because of their problem in the family and being deprived of warm and secure family environment, and find their ways to correctional facilities. These children, usually, suffer from depression, Asperger's disorder, loss of self-confidence, maladaptation, aggressiveness, and educational underachievement (Michel, 2008). Several studies have shown that meeting emotional needs lead to psychological health and success in life and unmet emotional needs result in disorders and failure. Bloom (2000) examined emotional relationship between the parents and the children (e.g. support, motivation, inspiration) and its relationship with emotional intelligence and educational achievement. Heiy found considerable correlation between emotional relationship, educational achievement, and emotional intelligence. In light of increase in prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, and depression among children and juveniles, many parents and researchers have found it necessary to have decent emotional environment in the family and educate required skills regarding emotional intelligence to their children. These skills enable the children to adapt to their environment and enjoy higher chance of success even in risky situations. (Mozaian, 2003) Family environment is the first place that the children learn emotional skills. The training is in the form of behaviors and dialogues that the parents would have with the child and each other, through establishment of proper emotional atmosphere in the family, and copying emotional skills of the parents and other family members by the children. Emotional intelligence education gives more chance to the children to understand their feeling, express their emotions in a proper way, find the way to sooth and control their unpleasant feelings, and comprehend others' feeling and show sympathy. To actualize the training, the parents need

to create proper emotional atmosphere in the family (Sarkhoush, 2014). Although, emotional intelligence is mostly formed during the early years of life, the process never stops throughout one's life. Based on the early experiences of childhood, one learns to trust others and feel secure or alternatively, not to trust others and remain cautious about their environment. (Rook et al., 2007)

Studies on emotional intelligence have supported the correlation between this construct and other psychological constructs such as attachment (Bekendam, 2001; Besharat, 2005) and family factors (Algreh, 2011; Azadi and Tehrani, 2003). As to the effects of family on emotional intelligence, Algre (2011) found that there was a significant relationship between parenting methods and emotional intelligence of the children; so that there was significant and positive relationship between parenting responsiveness, parental emotion-related coaching, and parental positive demandingness (positive control), and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a source of social, cognitive, and biological advantages. Studies have shown that people with high emotional intelligence enjoy lower levels of stress hormones and other symptoms of emotional arousal. Children with higher emotional abilities are more capable to focus on problems and utilize problem solving skills, which in turn result in higher cognitive skills. (Azimi, 2014) Sabri et al. (2013) showed that there was a significant relationship between dialogue in family and emotional intelligence. This is consistent with Hikitin and Kelly (2008), Tajali (2007), and Wang et al. (2007). Parents in these family tend to talk more about emotional and feeling with their children, motivate them to express their emotions, and grab their attention to others' feelings and motivations. (Aloud and Eshradar, 1998; cited from Tajali, 2007) In addition, family can step toward its ideals and goals by enjoying happiness, welfare, and providing a decent emotional environment. Happiness plays a key role in improvement of physical and psychological health. Happy people are different from unhappy people regarding psychological constructs, judgment, and motivation and enjoy higher personal family, intelligence, educational, and social performance (Roopnarine et al., 2006). In general, people with higher welfare level experience more peaceful life, find decision making easier, and enjoy healthier and more energetic life. There are different definitions about welfare and all of them have positive emotions as a common element. Happiness is when the positive emotions surpass the negative emotions. In other words, welfare is comprised of positive emotions, satisfaction with life, and lack of negative emotions such as depression and anxiety. (Salami, 2008) Lweis and Wilson (2015) studied the relationship between the parents' conflicts and happiness in children and juveniles and found that self-reported welfare in the parents is positively and significantly related to their assessment of happiness in children and juveniles. That is, the happier and better the relationship between the parents, the better their relationship with children; which in turn leads to higher welfare experienced by the children. In addition, Bairami et al. (2012) examined the relationship between attachment styles and happiness and creating relationship; they found that there was significant difference between attachment styles and happiness. Children with safe attachment style are happier than those with unsafe attachment and those with avoidance attachment are happier than children with bilateral attachment. These findings indicate the importance of the way the parents interact with their children on their happiness. According to Bai and Niasi (2014), Extermar (2013), and Platsidou (2013), emotional environment of family is effective on the majority of personality traits. In addition, Furnham (2007) and Gheltash (2011) supported the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and welfare. One's achievements in education does not solely depend on intelligence so that emotional and social skills and emotional intelligence (e.g. motivation, welfare, decent emotional atmosphere, expression of emotional and education needs) are important as well. Given the key role of descent emotional atmosphere on having high emotional intelligence and welfare for children, the relationship family emotional atmosphere with emotional intelligence and happiness of students was examined. The results can be helpful in detecting ways to improve educational achievement of children. Children with higher emotional intelligence and happiness demonstrate higher educational achievements. (Mosavi, 2010)

Methodology

A descriptive-correlative study to survey the relationship of family emotional atmosphere with emotional intelligence and welfare in students was carried out. Study population was all girl 9th graders in Tehran City in academic year 2015-2016. Sample group (n = 188) was formed through random cluster multi-stage sampling based on Kerjesi and Morgan's Table. So that, based inquiry from Tehran Education regarding total number of girl 9th graders (n = 28773), 8 high schools were selected randomly and based on number of students in each high school, 7 classes with 188 students were selected. Data gathering tools were Biheil Bern's family emotional atmosphere inventory, Shring's emotional intelligence scale, and Oxford's welfare scale. Family emotional atmosphere inventory actually is the parent-child relationship scale designed by Alfred Bihil Bern to measure the level of kindness in parents-children's interactions. The inventory is comprised of 8 subscales including showing affection, caressing, approving, shared experience, giving present, supporting, trusting, and feeling secure. Each subscale is measured by two questions so that the odd questions deal with emotional tie between father and child and the even questions deal with emotional tie between mother and child. The questions are designed with a five-point scale. Mousavi Shoushtari (2002) reported reliability of the inventory equal with 0.81). Emotional intelligence scale was designed by Shring and normalized for Iranian population by Mansouri (2001) and the internal consistency was reported 0.85. Welfare scale was designed by Arjel and Lou (1999) with 29 – four alternatives - statements. Maximum and minimum scores of the scale are 87 (highest welfare level) and zero (lowest welfare level) respectively. Reliability of the scale was reported by Arjel and Lou equal with 0.78. The data was analyzed using Correlation tests.

Findings

Descriptive findings of the study including mean and standard deviation of the variables are listed in Table 1.

Table 1- Mean and standard deviation

Variables	Mean	SD	Variables	Mean	SD
Total score of emotional atmosphere	67.01	10.62	Supporting	8.42	1.51
Showing affection	10.14	1.15	Trusting	8.13	1.52
Caressing	8.28	1.56	Feeling secure	8.18	5.68
Approving	7.88	1.84	Emotional intelligence	98.52	11.48
Shared experience	7.62	2.25	Welfare	77.71	11.01
Giving gift	8.01	2.01			

Table 2- Correlation coefficients between family emotional atmosphere and its aspects with emotional intelligence in the students

Predictor variable	Dependent variable (emotional intelligence)	
	R	P
Showing affection	**0.272	0.001
Caressing	*0.188	0019
Approving	*0.197	0.019
Shared experience	*0.210	0.011
Giving gift	0.074	0.387
Supporting	*0.188	0.022
Trusting	**0.236	0.005
Feeling secure	**0.232	0.003
Total score of emotional atmosphere	**0.283	0.001

As listed in the table above, there is a significant relationship between total score of family emotional atmosphere and emotional intelligence of the students (sig. = 0.05). In addition, there is a significant relationship between the seven subscales of emotional atmosphere of the family (showing affection, caressing, approving, shared experience, supporting, trusting, and feeling secure) and emotional intelligence of the participants. However, the relationship between giving gifts and emotional intelligence is not significant.

Table 3- Correlation coefficients between family emotional atmosphere and its aspects with welfare in the students

Predictor variable	Dependent variable (welfare)	
	R	P
Showing affection	**0/263	0/001
Caressing	**0/232	0/001
Approving	**0/243	0/003
Shared experience	0/058	0/490
Giving gift	*0/175	0/028
Supporting	*0/213	0/007
Trusting	**0/264	0/001
Feeling secure	**0/228	0/004
Total score of emotional atmosphere	**0/276	0/001

As listed in the table above, there is a significant relationship between total score of family emotional atmosphere and welfare of the students (sig. = 0.01). The relationship between the aspects of family emotional atmosphere and welfare is also significant except for shared experiences.

Discussion and conclusion

The relationship of family emotional atmosphere with emotional intelligence and welfare in students was examined. The correlation analyses results showed a significant relationship between the two variables. This result is consistent with Bai and Niazi (2014), Extermier (2013), Platsid (2013), Roinring et al. (2006), and Robin and Milez (2008). In addition, studies on

emotional intelligence have supported correlation between emotional intelligence with other psychological constructs such as attachment (Benkdam, 2001; Besharat, 2005) and family factors (Alegreh 2011; Azadi and Tehrani, 2002). Savri et al. (2013) showed that dialogue in family is positively related to emotional intelligence. This is consistent with Hakeptin and Kelly (2008), Tajali (2007), Wong et al. (2007); cited from Sabri, 2013). Consistent results indicate that the emotional relationship between parents and children is a key factor in emotional intelligence of the students. Parents who create affectional relationship with their children tend to have sympathy and positive interaction with their children; and the children, in turn, tend to show positive and respectful behaviors toward others. Formation of the elements of emotional intelligence starts in early years of life. Family functions as a school for teaching emotions to the children. Results of studies have showed that the parents who manage to create a decent emotional environment for their children, pay attention to emotional needs of the child, and create plenty of situations to discover and explore, actual allow their child to learn how to express their feelings and emotions. Children of these parents have emotional maturity and well developed emotional intelligence. Therefore, when the parents pay enough attention to create decent emotional atmosphere and meet emotional needs of their children. These parents know how to treat their children depending on their age and growth based on the educational principles. Another finding of this study was significant relationship between family emotional atmosphere and welfare in children. This finding is consistent with Sarkhosh (2014) and John (2007). In addition, Lweis and Wilson (2015) showed that creation of a positive emotional environment in family between the parents and the children results in happy and joyful mood in children. Mayer (2000) argued that by creating an emotional atmosphere, the parents enable their children to control and recognize their feelings. Thereby, such children can recognize their positive and negative emotions and are better in controlling and coping with their negative emotions. This flexibility enable them to remain happy even when the environment send opposite signals. Bairami et al. (2012) showed that there was a significant difference between attachment styles regarding happiness. Students with safe attachment style are happier than those with unsafe attachment styles and students with avoidance attachment style are happier than those with bilateral attachment. This finding indicates importance of the way parents interact with their children and their happiness. Clearly, welfare is a condition for high emotional intelligence; in addition, having enough motivation for education and learning depends on provision of the main needs of the children in family and by the parents in particular. Unsatisfied or poorly satisfied physiological and psychological needs (e.g. feeling secure, receiving love and respect) create anxiety and insecurity in children at school. Instead of focusing on the school tasks, these children spend their time worried about biological and emotional needs and the unsafe and insecure class environment. One may say, therefore, that roots of many education and behavioral problems are in family. One way to solve this is to improve the parents' awareness and knowledge in this regard. To explain difference between different aspects of family emotional atmosphere as to their effect on development of emotional intelligence and welfare of children, one should pay attention to cultural differences and the style of family emotional atmosphere in the study group. For instance. Giving present did not explain considerable variance in emotional intelligence and nor did shared experience in happiness. This might be due to specific cultural factors in the sample group in which giving present to children by the parents is not very common.

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