



Comparison of family content in families with Intellectual disability students and normal students

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ABSTRACT: The present research aims to compare the family content of students with and without intellectual disability. The statistical population included all the parents of students studying in the elementary schools of Shiraz City, out of which 469 parents (290 parents with intellectually disabled children and 179 normal parents) were selected through random stratified sampling. Samani Family Content Scale was used as the research tool. The aspects of family content included income, education, physical appearance, occupation, place of living and health (physical and mental). Results of t-test for independent groups indicated that, there is significant difference between the family content of intellectually disabled students and the family content of normal students. These differences were observed in the aspects of income, social status, physical appearance and health.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, Family content, Students, Mental health, Physical health.

INTRODUCTION

Family is a complex and ambiguous concept that has changed through social changes and has been affected by economic changes, different demographic features, change of gender roles and different family forms (Walsh, 2003; cited in Bayat, 2007). The concept of family has been defined in different forms and has over one hundred definitions (Bayat, 2007). According to Hanson and Lynch (1992), family is a unit that its members know themselves as a family and it includes individuals who are related either by blood or marriage. They cooperate at works and are committed to one another.

Leske & Jiricka (1998) define family as a group of individuals who are biologically, legally and socially linked. Family content refers to the qualitative level of family health, income, education, physical appearance, occupation and place of living. Most of these elements are demographic and can be either variable or fixed; for example, gender and ethnicity are fixed and income, education and health can be variable (Samani, 2011).

Different studies have independently assessed each of these variables (Kruger, 2008; Yen *et al.*, 2006; Castillon *et al.*, 2005; Drukker & Os, 2003; Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Salva Ahmed Mohamed, 1981). The research by Omid and Alborzi (2012) indicated that, occupation, place of living, income and education are all the predictors of the quality of life mild intellectually disabled students' parents. A review of the previous

studies regarding the family of intellectually disabled individuals demonstrate that, most research focus on the characteristics of family including socioeconomic status, ethnicity and gender and have also shed light onto the severity of the disability (Emerson *et al.*, 2009; Kersh *et al.*, 2006; and Herring *et al.*, 2006).

A recent national research on the families of intellectually disabled individuals in the United States indicates that, the family's needs include passing sufficient time with one another, not achieving the ideal occupational goals, peaceful night sleep, enough of money for caring and so on (Anderson, Larson & Wuorio, 2011). During the last decades, studies have focused on the negative effects of disability including mental pressure, depression, divorce and maladjustment (Bowlby, 1960; Sunlit & Stark, 1961; Wolfensberger, 1967). In later studies, the researchers highlighted the experienced positive results by families who have intellectually disabled children (Summers, Behr & Turnbull, 1988; Turnbull, Turbiville & Turnbull, 2000). A meta-analysis by Risdal, & Singer (2004) showed that, intellectual disability exerts little effect on couple's pathology. With regard to the importance of the aspects such as occupational status of family, education, the presence of members at home, place of living and mental health and also studies on the effect of the disability on family, the present research aims to draw a comparison of family content between students with intellectual disability and normal students

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The statistical population included all the parents of students studying in the elementary schools of Shiraz City, out of which 469 parents (290 parents with intellectually disabled children and 179 normal parents) were selected through random stratified sampling. Samani Family Content Scale was used as the research tool. The aspects of family content included income, education, physical appearance, occupation, place of living and health (physical and mental). This 39-item

scale measures the family content in 8 categories of income, togetherness, physical appearance, family status, occupation, education, place of living and condition of health. The Cronbach alpha of this scale has been estimated to be between .76 and .88 for the aspects of this scale. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha for the total questionnaire was obtained to be .88. T-test for independent groups was used to compare the family content between students with intellectual disability and normal students.

Table 1: t-test for the comparison of the family content between students with intellectual disability and normal students.

Variables	Groups	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Income	ID					467	
	Normal	290	10.979	4.893	2.166	467	.031
		179	11.983	4.847			
Togetherness	ID	290	17.013	5.650	.228	467	.82
	Normal	179	17.134	5.395			
Appearance	ID	290	14.106	3.082	2.161	467	.031
	Normal	179	14.743	3.121			
Social Status	ID	290	15.527	3.591	2.821	467	.005
	Normal	179	16.502	3.709			
Occupation	ID	290	11.579	3.974	-.68	467	.491
	Normal	179	11.318	4.003			
Education	ID	290	12.472	2.981	1.688	467	.092
	Normal	179	12.955	3.055			
Place Of Living	ID	290	13.820	4.144	-1.321	467	.187
	Normal	179	13.312	3.877			
Health	ID	290	18.500	5.057	6.530	467	.0001
	Normal	179	21.514	4.508			
Family Content	ID	290	114.600	20.783	2.977	467	.003
	Normal	179	120.324	19.294			

As observed in the table above, the results of t-test for independent groups indicated that, there is significant between-group difference in the family content of students with intellectual disability and normal students. It can be concluded that, the family content of normal students' parents is higher than the family content of intellectually disabled students. A comparison of different aspects of family content revealed that, this difference is observable in the aspects of income, appearance, social status and health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present research indicated that, there is significant between-group difference in the family content of students with intellectual disability and normal students. It can be concluded that, the family content of normal students' parents is higher than the family content of intellectually disabled students in the aspects of income, appearance, social status and health. It can be asserted that, the presence of intellectually disabled children at home imposes excessive cost on the family which results in higher expenditure and the lack of financial savings.

Dobson & Middleton (1998) introduce a number of matters that increases the cost of living in families with intellectually disabled children and even most families can't have access to the benefits they deserve (Dobson *et al*, 2001). The costs that a child can impose on his/her family can be either direct such as hygienic, clinical, behavioral, educational, etc. (Stabile & Allin, 2012); or indirect such as complete occupation (that can be missed due to the need to allocate more time to the disabled child, mother's occupation (that can be lost due to the time needed for taking care of the disabled child), mother's health, children's health and other socioeconomic factors such as mother's education (Remerman). Reichman, Corman & Noonan (2008) contends that, parents who have disabled children experience higher levels of mental pressure and benefit less mental and physical health. They can hardly provide their children with adequate level of care. Disability affects the decision making about job and education and makes them dependent on general support. The research by Seltzer *et al* (2001) indicated that, intellectually disabled children decrease their parents' level of social cooperation.

Social deprivation and isolation is one of the important issues in this realm which is the direct result of lack of flexible support by service providers (Watson, Townsley & Abbott, 2002).

Studies that have dealt with the comparison of intellectually disabled children's mothers and mothers who have normal children concluded that, disabled children's mothers tolerate more emotional disturbances, physical and mental health problems (Hodapp *et al.*, 2010). As asserted by Samani (2011), family content includes fixed (ethnicity, gender, so on) and variable (job, income, social status and education) features. With regard to the results of the present research, variable features can be regarded of more importance, because their increase can enhance the family content of such families. Organizations and institutes authorized for providing services can help these families have better education and more proper educational environment by providing better conditions and access to the existing facilities of society. Insurance institutes and medical services can also help these families have access to the existing services to achieve physical and mental health by providing consulting services and information regarding the way of using such services. It's finally recommended that, more studies particularly qualitative ones be carried out on intellectually disabled groups.

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