

Comparison of Worry, Psychological Distress and Social Adjustment of Mothers of Autistic Children and Hyperactive Children in Kerman

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Abstract: Current research aims at comparing the level of worry, psychological distress, and social adjustment in mothers of children with autism and hyperactive children in Kerman. The statistical population of research included all mothers of children with autism and mothers of hyperactive children who had cases in the treatment centers of these disorders in Kerman. The sample consisted of 140 people (70 mothers with autistic children and 70 mothers with hyperactivity disorder children) who were selected by convenient sampling method; Bell Social Response Questionnaire, Kessler's Psychological Distress Questionnaire, and Penn State Worry Questionnaire (PSWQ) were completed by the mothers. Following data analysis using multivariate analysis of variance, the results of the research hypotheses showed that the mothers of autistic children were more worried compared to the mothers of overactive children, the mothers of autistic children had more psychological distress than mothers of hyperactive children, as well as mothers of autistic children showed less social adjustment than mothers of hyperactive children.

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1. Introduction

Autism disorder is one of the diseases of the pervasive developmental disorders, which is characterized by persistent degradation in mutual social interaction, delayed deviated communication, and limited stereotypical communication patterns. The age of the disease onset is from birth to about three years old (Saduk, Saduk, 2009). Children and adults with this disorder have problem in verbal and non-verbal communication, social behaviors, fun activities, and play (Derakhshande, 2005). In addition to these characteristics, difficult and late diagnosis, the appearance of symptoms after a normal course of growth, lack of effective obvious treatments, and the less favorable prognosis of this disorder can impose severe psychological stress on the family and parents of these children.

Exceptional children and the parents not only have mutual interaction, but also other members of the family system, i.e., other children are also influenced. Presence of the exceptional child often creates irreversible damage for the family body. Vulnerability of the family against such damage is sometimes so that the mental health of the family is considerably harmed (Narimani, Aghamohamadian, and Rajabi, 2007). In fact, because of many problems of these children, their families and especially their mothers suffer from high level of stress and psychological pressures (Riyahi et al., 2011), which can influence mental health of the families and especially the mothers. Mental health is a specific state of mind that improves the growth and perfection of human

personality and helps the person to adapt to himself and others (Abolqasemi and Narimani, 2005). Many studies suggest that mothers with autistic children have lower mental health (Hubert and Smith, 2118; Riyahi et al., 2012; Pur Etemad, Khorami, Shimi, 2007). Parents as the center and the most important chain of care, education, and supervision of the child, should coordinate assessments, examinations, treatments, and simultaneously keep contact with specialists and different centers. They confront with important decisions in relation with the child, management of new conditions, and financial issues, which can influence the whole family (Candel, 2007). Parents of the children with disability face many problems such as coordination of their ordinary tasks with the medical plans of their children, great physical pressures, and emotional adaptation with different situation of their children, and their expectations as the parents from their children (Pin, 1999; quoted in Reis Dana et al., 2009). Various studies have been conducted about impacts of presence of disable children in the family and stress of their mothers. Mothers of disable children suffer from stress and psychological crises, and presence of disable child threatens their adaptability and physical and mental health, and often negatively influences them (Salovita, 2003; Ronit, 2002; Minis, 1985; Goptah, 2004; quoted by Kuhsali et al., 2008). The presence of a disable child in the family, due to the particular care needs of the child, is a source of stress for mothers who are more concerned with the child than others are, and

affects their mental health and compatibility (Tajeri and Bahraiee, 2008).

2. Review of Literature

Yektakhah et al. (2014) studied level of general health and quality of life in mothers of autistic children. Their findings indicated that mothers gained the lowest average score in depression sub-scale, and did not have acceptable status in social performance.

Mohamadpoor et al. (2014) investigated the way of using time by the mothers of autistic children and mothers of normal children. Their findings suggested that mothers of autistic children spent more time over the day on the affairs related to the sick children compared to mothers of normal children. However, no significant difference was observed in other areas between two groups. In addition, quality and pleasure of daily activities was significantly lower in mothers of autistic children compared to mothers of normal children. Paying attention to daily activities showed no significant difference for mothers of both groups.

Jadidi Fighan et al. (2015) studied level of anxiety and social support in mothers of children with special needs and mothers of healthy children. Results of multivariate variance analysis (MANOVA) indicated that there was significant difference between mothers of children with special needs and mothers of healthy children in terms of social anxiety and social support. Finally, mothers of autistic children experienced highest level of social anxiety compared to other mothers.

Khanjari (2016) compared quality of life and attachment styles between mothers of autistic children and mothers of normal children. Their findings indicated that there was significant difference in quality of life scale between mothers of two groups in terms of mental health, social communication, and social environment. In addition, results showed that there was significant difference in attachment styles scale between mothers of autistic children and mothers of normal children in terms of safe attachment and avoidance attachment.

Rabiee Kenari et al. (2015) studied effectiveness of positive parenting group program on reduction of stress in mothers of autistic children. The results of covariance analysis indicated that the positive parenting group program significantly reduced the parental stress in the parents' and the child domain, and there was a significant difference between the case and control groups in terms of reducing parenting stress.

Saleki (2014) investigated the relationship between quality of life and happiness with defensive styles in mothers of children with ADIR autism. The statistical population of the study included mothers of autistic children who had been diagnosed with autism

through a test of 92. In addition, the Fars Exceptional Education Organization in the academic year 2014 provided a sample of 71 of these mothers available whose children studied in Shiraz educational autism schools. Research findings showed that there was positive significant relationship between quality of life and happiness and defensive developed styles in mothers of autistic children, and there was negative significant relationship between quality of life and happiness and non-developed defensive styles.

3. Methodology

Current research is causal-comparative research. Causal comparative methods refer to the research in which the researcher investigates possible causes of the event considering dependent variables, and possible causal relationships are studied through the observation of existing conditions and causal factors in the past.

The statistical population of this study included all mothers of children with autism and mothers of hyperactive children in Kerman who had cases during 2018. It should be noted that the exact number of these individuals is not clear. Sample size is 140, which were selected using convenience sampling method. 70 ones were mothers of autistic children and 70 were mothers of hyperactive children.

Research hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is difference between worry of mothers of hyperactive children and mothers of autistic children.

Hypothesis 2: There is difference between psychological distress of mothers of hyperactive children and mothers of autistic children.

Hypothesis 3: There is difference between social adjustment of mothers of hyperactive children and mothers of autistic children.

Data collection tool was questionnaire including Bell Social Response Questionnaire, Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale, and Penn State Worry Questionnaire (PSWQ).

In this research, three questionnaires were given to the mothers of autistic children and hyperactive children by researcher. Questionnaires of mothers of autistic children were distributed in two autistic disorder centers and questionnaires of mothers of hyperactive children were distributed in two hyperactivity treatment centers. Prior to completing questionnaires, the purpose of research was explained to mothers, and then the required instructions for completing questionnaires were provided by the researcher.

Descriptive statistics methods and indexes were used for calculating mean and standard deviation in order to analyze the data. Then, using independent t-test, data were analyzed in SPSS Ver. 24 software.

4. Findings

Age range of sample was 25 to 52. Average age of participants was 35.12 with SD 4.67. The children's ages ranged from 6 to 14 years old with an average of 9.12 and a standard deviation of 2.14. Of the sample, 89 were male and 51 were female. In terms of education, 28 were had elementary education, 21 had secondary school education, 51 were high school

graduates, 36 were bachelors and 4 were masters and higher.

Hypothesis 1: There is difference between worry of mothers of hyperactive children and mothers of autistic children.

In order to test this hypothesis, t-test for equality of averages is used. Results are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of H1

Variable	Number	Average	SD
Worry of mothers of autistic children	70	20.863	0.324
Worry of mothers of hyperactive children	70	17.536	0.347

According to Table 1, the average worry of mothers with autism child is 20.863, which is higher than the average of 18.536 for worry of mothers with

hyperactive children. To test the significance of this difference, one-sample t-test was used, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Test of comparing averages of H1 samples

T test for equality of averages			Difference of averages	Confidence level 95%	
T statistics	Degree of freedom	Significance		Lower limit	Upper limit
27.54	68	0.0001	3.327	1.767	4.887

Considering Table 2 results, difference of averages for worry of mothers of autistic children and worry of mothers of hyperactive children is 2.327, which is significant at statistical level 95 percent given t-statistics as 27.54. In other words, first hypothesis is supported. That is, mothers of autistic children are more worried compared to mothers of hyperactive children.

Hypothesis 2: There is difference between psychological distress of mothers of hyperactive children and mothers of autistic children.

In order to test this hypothesis, t-test for equality of averages is used. Results are given in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of H2

Variable	Number	Average	SD
Psychological distress of mothers of autistic children	70	22.302	0.361
Psychological distress of mothers of hyperactive children	70	19.670	0.345

According to Table 3, average of psychological distress of mothers of autistic children is 21.302, which is higher than average of 19.670 for psychological distress of mothers of hyperactive

children. To test the significance of this difference, one-sample t-test was used, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test of comparing averages of H2 samples

T test for equality of averages			Difference of averages	Confidence level 95%	
T statistics	Degree of freedom	Significance		Lower limit	Upper limit
19.325	68	0.0001	2.632	1.108	4.156

Considering Table 4 results, difference of averages for psychological distress of mothers of autistic children and psychological distress of mothers of hyperactive children is 1.632, which is significant at statistical level 95 percent given t-statistics as 19.325. In other words, second hypothesis is supported. That is, mothers of autistic children

experience higher psychological distress compared to mothers of hyperactive children.

Hypothesis 3: There is difference between social adjustment of mothers of hyperactive children and mothers of autistic children.

In order to test this hypothesis, t-test for equality of averages is used. Results are given in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of H3

Variable	Number	Average	SD
Social adjustment of mothers of autistic children	70	17.104	0.319
Social adjustment of mothers of hyperactive children	70	20.672	0.368

According to Table 5, average of social adjustment of mothers of autistic children is 19.672, which is higher than average of 18.104 for social adjustment of mothers of hyperactive children. To test

the significance of this difference, one-sample t-test was used, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 6. Test of comparing averages of H3 samples

T test for equality of averages			Difference of averages	Confidence level 95%	
T statistics	Degree of freedom	Significance		Lower limit	Upper limit
29.480	68	0.0001	-3.568	-5.092	-2.044

Considering Table 6 results, difference of averages for social adjustment of mothers of autistic children and social adjustment of mothers of hyperactive children is 1.568, which is significant at statistical level 95 percent given t-statistics as 29.480. In other words, third hypothesis is supported. That is, mothers of autistic children have lower social adjustment compared to mothers of hyperactive children.

5. Conclusion

In the current research, which was conducted for comparing worry, psychological distress and social adjustment of mothers of children with autism and hyperactive children in Kerman, it was found that worry level of mothers of autistic children is higher than mothers of hyperactive children. Review of previous studies indicates that most studies addressed worry and its relationship with some variables such as hope in mothers. However, there was no study on comparing worry level between mothers of autistic children and mothers of hyperactive children. Thus, it was attempted to find answer for the question that if there is difference between these two groups of mothers.

In the current study, it was also shown that distress level is higher in mothers of autistic children compared to mothers of hyperactive children. These results are consistent with the findings of the Linhart (1999), which reported that the parents of children with autism disorder are more likely to be exposed to psychiatric stressors due to having a disable child than parents of children with other psychological disorders. These pressures can be caused by problems of incompatibility and anti-social behaviors, self-harm, stereotypical behaviors, or psychological pressures due to difficulty in communicating with the community, and the problems associated with attending in public places with special physical conditions of the child or high costs of educational and therapeutic services. Previous studies in western

countries such as America have reported that mothers of autistic children have shown a higher degree of anxiety and depression (Meltzer and Mandel, 2007).

Results of this research also suggest lower social adjustment in mothers of autistic children compared to mothers of hyperactive children. Zayeri (2014) investigated relationship between mental health and social adjustment and self-esteem in mothers of autistic children. Research findings indicated that there is significant relationship between mental health and social adjustment and self-esteem in these mothers. Kuestali et al. (2007) found that mothers of mentally retarded girl had less social adjustment than mothers of normal girls. In addition, Ebrahimi (2014) conducted a research to compare social adjustment, life satisfaction, and attachment styles in mothers of mentally retarded children and mothers of normal children in Arsanjan. The results of his research showed that there is a significant difference between the level of social adjustment of mothers of mentally retarded children and mothers of normal children in the components of daily social activities, extracurricular activities, marital relations, and family relationships.

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