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Comparative Study of Obsessive Beliefs and Social Anxiety of Divorced Teenagers

Fatemeh Abazari Rad[1], Roghayeh Kohansal[2], Somayeh Ghaderi[3]

[1]*Master of General Psychology, Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas, Bandar Abbas, Iran.*
[2]*Master of Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University of Marand, Tabriz, Iran.*
[3]*Master of Educational Psychology, Islamic Azad University of Hamedan, Hamedan, Iran.*

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Abstract

Background: The purpose of this research is to compare the obsessive beliefs and social anxiety of divorced teenagers. **Method:** The basic design of this research is of comparative causal type, and the statistical population is the group of divorced teenagers, at least one of whose parents is a nurse. 50 teenagers were selected as a sample using the available sampling method. The data collection tool includes the Connor's Social Anxiety Inventory and the Obsessive Beliefs Inventory. In order to analyze the research data, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics have been used. **Results:** The obtained results show that compared to others, divorced teenagers had significantly higher fear, behavioral avoidance, social avoidance, physiological discomfort and total social anxiety index. There was no statistically significant difference between obsessive beliefs and its factors in divorced teenagers and others. **Conclusion:** This means that divorced teenagers have more fear, behavioral avoidance, social avoidance, physiological discomfort and total social anxiety index compared to others in this job category. Divorced teens are more likely to feel fearful and anxious when faced with social or work situations. They may avoid tasks or activities that require social interaction, tend to avoid social situations, and avoid being in groups or making social connections. These teens may experience physical symptoms of anxiety in social situations, such as heart palpitations, sweating, or muscle tension.

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Introduction

Adolescence is one of the most important and decisive stages of life. During this period, the physical and mental changes of a person are accompanied by intense emotional changes. Since paying attention to the physical, mental and social health of teenagers and preparing them to achieve a healthy and joyful life is one of the necessities of having a healthy society, therefore, nowadays, trying to identify the mental injuries of teenagers is considered one of the important goals of research (1). Divorce is an individual and social problem that, in addition to imposing huge economic costs, threatens the foundation of the family, and its psychological effects are different during age and developmental periods. Studies have shown that divorced teenagers have more psychiatric symptoms compared to other peers and suffer from mental disorders such as depression and anxiety (2). Also, this group of teenagers has emotional immaturity, over-supportiveness, emotional duality, masculinity, aggressiveness and dominance. In fact, divorce affects people's health and well-being, and its consequences depend on the time of its occurrence (3). Parental divorce is a complex crisis that has many psychological-emotional consequences, and helping to solve these psychological issues is a scientific and educational necessity. Since the divorce of parents is a relatively constant stress for teenagers and has multiple effects, it is one of the important issues in the field of mental health (4). One of the important components of teenagers' psychopathology in facing family problems is the issue of anxiety and specifically social anxiety.

Correspondence:
Fatemeh Abazari Rad
Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas, Iran
E-mail: Fatemehabazarirad@gmail.com

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Social anxiety is one of the most debilitating types of anxiety that is characterized by constant and excessive fear in social interactions and negatively affects the quality of a person's life (5). People with this problem avoid any social situation in which they think they may have an embarrassing behavior or be negatively evaluated by others (6). Social anxiety is one of the most common mental disorders in the world, the prevalence of which is between 0.2 and 12.1% (7). This disorder is more visible in teenagers and young people and causes high levels of psychological disturbances, helplessness and negative emotions in social communication and interpersonal relationships, which ends up creating obsessive beliefs in them (8).

Obsession is one of the most important and common psychological disorders that manifests itself in a chronic and debilitating way. In fact, obsession is a common neurocognitive disorder in people, characterized by two distinct types of symptoms: Obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors. Disturbing thoughts and actions, which are always repetitive and annoying, are the cause of wasting time, creating problems in the natural process of life and disrupting a person's relationships with others (9). In this disorder, the person recognizes that her/his obsessions are unreasonable and extreme, and in order to reduce the suffering caused by it, she performs a series of coping efforts to correct this stressful situation (10). These are unwanted thoughts or intrusive cognitions that cause confusion and compulsive behaviors. The main process of transformation of ordinary intrusive thoughts into obsessions is the interpretation based on which an intrusive thought is considered to be very important and has personal meaning, threatening and catastrophic (11). In other words, obsession is a manifestation of the intermingling of perfectionism and the need to gain confidence, as well as the belief in the necessity of completely correct and definitive solutions to problems. The symptoms of more than half of patients with obsessive beliefs begin suddenly after a distressing event. Because many of these patients try to hide their symptoms from others, often the patient is five to ten years late in seeing a psychiatrist and of course, with the increase of specific and general awareness of this disorder, the said delay has probably decreased (12). Divorce of parents can provide stressful conditions for teenagers, which, if neglected, will lead to serious mental disorders at this age. Therefore, in this research, obsessive beliefs and social anxiety of divorced teenagers are examined and compared.

Jafarzadeh et al. (2021) in a research described the lived experience of children of parents who suffered emotional divorce. The findings led to the extraction of 96 sub-themes and 13 main themes, including: children's communication and emotional void, the family's immersion in negative emotions, children's psychological disturbances, role model problems, and children's coping methods with mental pressure. The results show that as a result of the unhealthy functioning of families with emotional divorce, instead of considering the family as a relaxing refuge, the children consider it a cause of confusion and tension; Therefore, it is recommended to educate parents about the toxic effects of emotional divorce in order to empower and improve the psychological capital of children of emotional divorce (13).

Abbasi-Abrazgeh et al. (2019) compared perceived stress, depression and anxiety in teenage girls from divorced families who experienced the death of their parents. The results of the research showed that there is a significant difference between teenage girls from divorced families and those who have experienced the death of their parents in terms of perceived stress, depression and anxiety and the amount of perceived stress, depression and anxiety in teenage girls from divorced families is higher than teenage girls who have experienced the death of their parents (14).

In their research, Moradi and Akhani (2019) compared the psychological disorders of children of divorce with normal peers. The findings showed that between the two groups of divorced children, there is a significant difference between the two groups of psychological disorders of anxiety, isolation, social problems, attention problems and thinking problems compared to normal children. According to the obtained results, it can be said that divorce is a factor for the emergence or exacerbation of children's psychological and behavioral disorders, so it is important to pay attention to divorced children (15).

Nielsen et al. (2020) concluded in a research that there is a negative relationship between parental divorce and GPA among teenagers. So that children with divorced parents had a worse situation than their counterparts with a close family environment (16).

During a research, Demir-Dagdas et al. (2018) concluded that parental divorce is associated with significant adversities in their mental health, family relationships, and education, and these negative effects increase in the long term (17).

Research method:

The current research is causal-comparative. The statistical population includes the group of divorced teenagers whose at least one parent is a nurse. 50 teenagers were selected as samples. The study sample was selected using available sampling method. This group was compared with teenagers who had at least

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one parent who was a nurse but who were living together. The data collection tools are:

- **Connor Social Phobia Inventory:** The Social Anxiety Inventory, developed by Connor et al. (2000), is a self-report scale that includes 17 items and is designed to assess the subscales of fear, avoidance, and physiological distress. In this Inventory, each item is graded on a 5-point Likert scale from zero (not at all) to 4 (very much). The obtained scores range from zero to 68 (18). In the present study, the reliability of the social anxiety scale was estimated at 0.81 using Cronbach's alpha method.

- **Obsessive Beliefs Inventory:** The OCCWG group has compiled the Obsessive Beliefs Inventory (OBQ-44) as a tool to evaluate the role of cognitions in the etiology and maintenance of obsessions. OBQ-44 includes dysfunctional beliefs, sense of responsibility/risk and threat assessment, perfectionism/need to gain assurance and certainty (PC) and importance and control of thoughts (ICT). The total score of obsessive beliefs is obtained from the total scores. 44-OBQ has good internal consistency (0.92) and reliability coefficient (0.82) (19). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for obsessive beliefs was calculated as 0.78.

In order to analyze the research data, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics have been used. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to answer the research hypotheses.

The Results of Research:

Table 1. Descriptive indices of the components of social anxiety and obsessive beliefs in the studied sample

Comparison index	Factors	Groups					
		Divorce teenagers		others		Total	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
social anxiety	the fear	10.24	4.58	6.75	4.47	8.49	4.82
	behavioral avoidance	10.45	5.06	6.67	4.58	8.54	5.12
	social avoidance	8.67	3.73	7.33	2.53	8.08	3.26
	Physiological disorders	9.01	5.71	6.60	4.40	6.19	5.47
Obsessive beliefs	responsibility	5.63	2.10	5.51	1.57	5.75	1.84
	Perfection	9.93	6.61	10.51	3.74	10.20	5.35
	Make sure	11.23	6.48	11.83	4.02	11.14	5.37
	Thought control	8.25	5.34	9.03	3.05	8.60	4.50
	Dealing with threat and danger	9.05	5.09	9.29	3.46	9.17	4.36

Multivariate analysis has been used to analyze this hypothesis. Therefore, parental divorce was included as an independent variable and the four factors of social anxiety (fear, anxiety, behavioral avoidance, social avoidance and physiological discomfort) were included in the analysis as dependent variables. The results of MANOVA analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of the effect of parental divorce on social anxiety

Independent variables	Wilks lambda value	F	df	P
Status in the group	0.073	8.22	4.84	0.0001

As Table 2 shows, the parents' divorce status had a significant effect on the components of social anxiety.

Finally, to follow up on how the group status variable (parental divorce) affects the components of social anxiety, the study investigated the effects between the subjects, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

According to the findings presented in Table 3, there is a statistically significant difference between divorced teenagers and others in the component of social anxiety and its factors. The follow-up of these differences using the F test has shown that in fear, [F(1,99)=14.22, p≤.0.01], behavioral avoidance, [F(1,99)=70/14, p<0.001] and social avoidance, [F(1,99)=4.18, p<.05], physiological discomfort, F(1,99)=26.73, p<0.01] Divorced teenagers have significantly higher social anxiety compared to others. Therefore, the findings of the multivariate analysis (Tables 2 and 3) indicate the confirmation of the first hypothesis of this research.

The second hypothesis of the research is that there is a significant difference between divorced teenagers and others in the components of obsessive beliefs. Multivariate analysis has been used to analyze this hypothesis. In this analysis, parental divorce as an independent variable and five factors of obsessive beliefs (sense of responsibility, perfectionism, gaining confidence, controlling thoughts, dealing with threat and danger) are included in the analysis as dependent variables. The results of this MANOVA analysis are presented in Table 4.

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Table 3. The test of effects between subjects in social anxiety components in divorced teenagers and others

Dependent variables	factors	Degrees of freedom	mean square	F	P
social anxiety	the fear	1	307.82	14.22	0.0001
	behavioral avoidance	1	355.75	14.70	0.0001
	social avoidance	1	46.76	4.18	0.04
	Physiological disorders	1	679.72	26.73	0.0001

Table 4. Multivariate analysis of the effect of parental divorce on obsessive beliefs

independent variable	Wilks lambda value	F	df	P
Status in the group	0.966	0.29	6.80	0.79

Table 5. Test of effects between subjects in the components of obsessive beliefs in divorced teenagers and others

Dependent variables	Factors	Degrees of freedom	mean square	F	P
Obsessive beliefs	responsibility	1	0.57	0.16	0.58
	Perfection	1	0.326	0.19	0.55
	Make sure	1	9.82	0.30	0.48
	Thought control	1	9.30	0.42	0.42
	Dealing with threat and danger	1	0.671	0.03	0.76

As Table No. 4 shows, the factor of group status did not have a significant effect on obsessive beliefs and its factors in the studied subjects. And this hypothesis is rejected. The results of the effects between the subjects for the factors of obsessive beliefs in the second hypothesis are presented in Table No. 5.

As Table No. 5 shows, the five factors of obsessive beliefs among divorced teenagers and other effects are not significant among subjects.

Discussion:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the obsessive beliefs and social anxiety of divorced teenagers. The research findings are as follows:

The first hypothesis of the research was that there is a difference between divorced teenagers and others in the components of social anxiety. The findings of the present study confirm this hypothesis. In other words, divorced teenagers have more significant fear, behavioral avoidance, social avoidance, physiological discomforts and total social anxiety index compared to other teenagers who have nursing parents [11]. Because divorced teenagers in this category (having at least one parent who is a nurse) have a kind of limitation and inadequacy in playing family-related roles; It is possible that these people will feel less social support from the community with the passage of time and eventually this will lead to psychological problems in their personal and social peace.

The second hypothesis of the current research is that there is no significant difference between divorced teenagers and others in the components of obsessive beliefs. The findings of this research showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the components of obsessive beliefs (sense of responsibility, perfectionism, gaining confidence, controlling thoughts, dealing with threats and danger, and the total score of obsessive beliefs in two groups of divorced teenagers and others. It shows that the second hypothesis is not confirmed [5].

Conclusion:

By examining the components of social anxiety and obsessive beliefs in a sample of divorced teenagers and others who have nursing parents, this research has shown that these two groups have a statistically significant difference in social anxiety. This means that divorced teenagers have more fear, behavioral avoidance, social avoidance, physiological discomfort and total social anxiety index compared to others in this job category. However, there is no statistically significant difference between these two groups in the components of obsessive beliefs (sense of responsibility, perfectionism, gaining confidence, controlling thoughts, dealing with threats and danger).

The use of self-assessment scales to measure variables can be considered as one of the limitations of the research. Also, the limitation of the statistical population has also been mentioned. The use of group psychotherapy sessions for treatment and their comparison is proposed as a suggestion for future research.

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The author contributed to the data analysis. Drafting, revising and approving the article, responsible for all aspects of this work.

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Ethical Consideration:

The research data and literature have not been copied from any worksauthor upon reasonable request.

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