



COMPARING THE GENERAL HEALTH, LIFE EXPECTANCY AND HAPPINESS OF MOTHERS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN WITH MOTHERS OF NORMAL CHILDREN

Hamid Reza Khorshidianⁱ,
Yarali Dousti

Faculty of Social Science Art and Humanities,
Lincoln University College,
Malaysia, Branch Iran

Abstract:

This study compares life expectancy, public health and happiness of mothers of normal students with mothers of autistic children. Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder that is yet unknown as most serious and most childhood disorders. As long the incidence of autism is increasing, the focusing on the needs and experiences of parents is urgent. This study compared general health, happiness and hope to the lives of mothers of children normal with mothers of autistic children. Participants in the study were mothers of autistic and normal school students in Mazandaran Province, Iran. 112 mothers were selected through cloning method. Miller hopes questionnaire, a questionnaire with 28 questions GHO, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire used as research tools for statistical analysis of data, descriptive statistics (such as frequency tables, charts, etc.) and inferential statistics, independent t-test to compare two groups were used. The results showed that hope, health and happiness of mothers of autistic and normal students the difference was significant. The results showed that students' disabilities and autism has negative effects on their mothers' general health, hope, and happiness.

Keywords: hope, happiness, general health, autism

1. Introduction

Autism is one of the pervasive disorders of growth that is considered as one of the worst and most unknown disorders of childhood (Volkmar, 2007). The prevalence of autism is increasing then emphasis on the need and experiences of the parents of these children is essential. The conditions and special needs of autistic children not only influence the child but also the family will be involved. The parents of autistic children

ⁱ Correspondence: email khoshidianh@gmail.com

are exposed to multiple tasks and problems with mothers playing an important role. With respect to these texts, we can find that studying the amount of public health and life quality of mothers with autistic children with respect to this issue that mother is a member of family that has highest communication with child is very influential and help the family in accepting the autistic children (Asqan Nekah, 2013). These parents rather than those parents who haven't autistic children report less marital satisfaction and a sense of belonging (Higness, 2005) and this problem exists in various societies and cultures with a few differences. In a comparison for stress of mothers parenting in a Malaysia region with those mothers in a China region, researchers found that, although Chinese mothers rather than Malaysian mothers experience more parenting, but that difference wasn't meaningful. Researchers considered this problem because of the cultural differences between the two societies. Differences of cultures with changing the attitudes and values causes' person can't control him/herself in coping with problems. (King, 2006).

On the other hand, a significant amount of families suffer from the negative effects of having a disabled child; then must accept this reality that their child has an especial conditions that will engage him until the end of life the performed studies have shown that; the negative effects of having a disabled child lead to tension and pressure among family members, especially for mothers (Tajeri & Boheyraei, 2008). Because, mother is the first one, who communicate with child directly some feelings such as sin, guilt, frustration and deprivation can result in mothers with drawl and lack of interest for communicating with environment and lowering her self-esteem, inferiority complex and sorrow because of child abnormality that its consequence, are low self-esteem, depression and the risk of mother's mental health. Totally, most of mothers, at the moment of recognizing the autism disorder deny it then become confused, angry and depressed. In Soleimani (2010) research, the difference of mental health status of mothers with disabled children rather than non-disabled was meaningful. Afshari (2009) in his research has found that 27/5% of mothers with autistic children have the signs of mental disease (Soleimani, 2010). In Shoe et al (2003) study, it was identified that mental pressure and stress of mothers with autistic children is more than mothers of children with another chronic diseases. (Tajeri & Boheyraei, 2008). In a new research, Fiqan, Safari, Jamali (2013), selected 90 mothers randomly who have children with special needs (30 syndrome downs, 30 autism, 30 cerebral palsy) and 30 mothers of normal children from elementary schools of Esfahan County. The results have shown that there is a meaningful difference between the mother's children with special needs and mothers of normal children in terms of social anxiety and mothers of autistic children more than mothers of mentally retarded children and cerebral palsy have social anxiety (Tajeri & Boheyraei, 2008). In Yektakhah Sarvar, (2015) research, which was done on 30 mothers of autistic children in Shahriyar schools in academic year 2012 – 2015, the results have shown that, there isn't any meaningful relationship between mothers education and their age and among all of them these relationships are negative and inverse. Also, the results have shown that with respect to the effect of mental health

in the life quality of mothers with autistic children, providing appropriate consulting services in this regard will be influential. In fact, an autistic child, as a factor of mental pressure for parents can affect their emotions and reduces their abilities for coping with problems. As a result, identifying the need of mothers with autistic children and setting education and rehabilitation programs is essential.

The purpose of study is comparing the general health of autistic children's mothers with normal children's mothers, comparing the life expectancy of autistic children's mothers with normal children's mothers, and comparing the happiness of autistic children's mothers with normal children's mothers.

2. Statement of the problem

According to the fourth revised text of statistical and diagnostic guide of mental disorders DSM – IV, autism is one of the diseases of growth pervasive disorder that is known with constant destruction in mutual social interaction, delays or communicational corruption and limits on stereotype communicational pattern. The characteristic of this disorder and abnormal functions should exist from 3 years old (Sadok, 2009). Some of the symptoms of autism can be lack of reaction to the sound, delayed speech, failure to follow instructions, throwing objects, poor play with toys, lack of eye contact, solo playing and lack of interest in others (Yektakhah, 2015). American psychiatric association estimates the frequency of autism one in 150 births and it seems that this statistic is increasing. According to the research of this association, the prevalence rate in boys is 4 to 5 times than the girls. From each 10 autistic children or adult, 7 ones have mental retardation and some problems related to brain reactions and performances. The numbers of autistic children with mental retardation symptoms in the Mazandaran exceptional schools are 59 ones (Mazandaran exceptional education, 2016). We know that, both environment and person's biologic structure are involved in the problems of exceptional children. Some of the biologic reasons are genetic, lack of chemical balance and damage to central nervous system. These reasons in the science of medicine are called «neurobiological disorder». With respect to special needs and conditions of autistic child, not only child but also their family will be involved then, there is the need to scheduling for representing the various and wide educational and rehabilitation services to these families the parents of autistic children are exposed to many mental tasks and problems that mother more than others should tolerate them (Kohler, 1999). Prevalence of autism is increasing then requires the emphasizing on parents needs and experiences (Asgari Nekah et al., 2011). In Iran the wide variety of clinical referrals to specialists and psychological service centers and rehabilitation requires identifying the parents education and rehabilitation (Seyyed Abayd, 2012). Protection of a disabled child is accompanied with high level of stresses (Tahmasiyan et al 2012). Mothers rather than fathers are exposed to more stress problems, most mothers at the time of autism diagnosis were denied it, and then became confused, angry and depressed. (Chimch, 2008). In fact, an autistic child as a mental pressure agent for parents can affect their emotions and reduces their abilities to cope with child

problems (Terry Varsen, 1998). From this point of view, identify the needs of autistic children's mothers and setting suitable educational and rehabilitation programs is essential disappointment put the disabled children's mothers in an inactive status that can't evaluate their various situations and make a decision. Therefore, one of the important problems for the mothers of autistic children is life expectancy. Generally, disappointment caught the mother of autistic children against stressors then makes her defenseless. Over time, person loses his/ her hope completely and deep depression will be replaced. His/her ideology has inflexible all – or – nothing male that prevents from solving problem, also mother evaluates her experiences negatively and incorrectly permanently then consider worrying consequences for her problems (shams et al, 2007). One of the important tendencies of mental health is family- oriented trend. In family-oriented trend, the emphasis is that destructive factors of mental health in the family must be identified so that family represents its effective functions. Parent, awareness from their child's disability may be gradually or suddenly, but their initial reactions are similar. Two types of reactions will be created; «transient response» such as anger, regret, anxiety and patency of activities and «sustainable response» such as; feel guilty, failure, pious grief, disappointment and lack of continuity of generations. In fact, birth of autism child is indicator of parents dreams collapse (Mohammadi et al, 2001). Most researches emphasize that the problems of exceptional parents is more than normal parents but it is not clear that what disorders and mental problems in this group is more than normal group. On the other hand, scientific and complied research's which were done by researches about this matter and personality characteristics of parents of autistic children in the country are very low. Also, most researches are done about exceptional children's rehabilitation and a few researches are paid to comparing the health group parent, with disabled group. On the other word, this research analyses some psychological conditions of parents who have the highest emotional and behavioral problems of such children. As a result, we identify the problems and reflect the results to relevant authorities. Therefore, this study identifies the maladaptive factors of mental health in the family environment so that the family can show its effective functions. Also, by identifying the model of effective relationships of life expectancy, general health, happiness, and anxiety and depression in students' scales of autism To increase the general health and life expectancy and to reduce the anxiety and depression of mothers of autism, I will present the research model for suggestion to planners and officials of exceptional education and welfare.

3. Methodology

Research method in all hypothesizes is cause – comparative. In order to statistically analyze the data the methods of descriptive statistic (such as tables of frequency distribution, diagrams...) are used and in inferential statistic, the method of independent is used for comparing two groups. Method was used to investigate the relationship between general health and happiness and life expectancy correlation, and

regression analysis using SPSS software. This research in terms of situation is field study and required tools as questionnaire are given to parents. Present research is a post-event descriptive research which was done in academic year 2015 – 2016. In terms of its executive situation is a field study and according to quantity and data collection method is a qualitative research. This research in terms of goal is applicative for using in exceptional education. In this research is pain to studying the public health, life expectancy and happiness of autistic children's mothers and comparing with normal children's mothers also samples was selected in coordination with the normal and exceptional education office. Mothers of autistic children who are studying in Mazandaran exceptional schools are 56 ones. In normal group, all mothers of normal students in Mazandaran are selected. In this research, the sample number of autistic children's mothers are 56, that is equal with society volume sample of normal mothers are 56 ones which are selected by matching method. In the selection of normal mothers, the factors of economic, educational, social and living conditions were controlled through the matching method.

4. Findings of the study

The purpose of this study is to compare the general health and happiness of life expectancies of mothers of normal students with mothers of autistic students in Mazandaran province. In the present chapter, the results of research data are descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics of Independent T-test and regression were used. A sample of 56 mothers of autistic students in Mazandaran province was selected and in the normal sample, 56 mothers of normal students were selected through matching method.

Hypothesis 1: There is difference between the republic health of autistic children's mothers and normal children's mothers.

Table 1

Std. Deviation	Variance	Median	Mean	Group
7.17949	51.545	16.0000	16.2679	Normal children's mothers
11.05510	122.215	19.5000	22.5536	Autism children's mothers

With respect to the table 1, in comparison with the public health of normal children's mothers and autistic children's mothers, the public health average score of autistic children's mothers was 22.553 and public health of normal children's mothers was 16.267 and the standard deviation in normal mothers was 7.179 and for autistic mothers was 11.055. The results have shown that the public health of normal mothers has attained lower score then has higher health. On the basis of Skewness of table 1 (.747) is between 2 to -2 that shows that the scores are normal.

Table 2

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Emtyaz	Equal variances assumed	10.747	.001	-3.568	110	.001	-6.28571	1.76149	-9.77658	-2.79484
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.568	94.387	.001	-6.28571	1.76149	-9.78302	-2.78841

Based on table 2 in order to analyzing the above hypothesis, independent statistical t-test was used and the results have shown that the difference of public health of normal students' mothers and autistic students' mothers became meaningful. $p = .001$.

Hypothesis 2: There is difference between the life expectancy of autistic children's mothers and normal children's mothers.

Table 3

Std. Deviation	Variance	Median	Mean	Group
19.80827	392.368	177.0000	175.8214	Normal children's mothers
25.01822	625.911	171.5000	167.3750	Autism children's mothers

Table 3 has shown that in comparison to the hope of normal children's mothers and mothers of autistic children, the hope average of autistic mothers was 167.375 and for normal children's mothers was 175.821 that according to the results normal children's mothers have higher hope.

In table 4, for studying the above hypothesis, independent statistical t-test was used and the results have shown that hope in the life of normal students' mothers in comparison to autistic students' mothers had a meaningful difference. $P = 0.05$

Table 4

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
emtyaz	Equal variances assumed	5.835	.017	1.981	110	.050	8.44643	4.26422	-.00425	16.89711
	Equal variances not assumed			1.981	104.503	.050	8.44643	4.26422	-.00920	16.90205

Hypothesis 3: There is difference between the happiness of autistic children's mothers and normal children's mothers.

Table 5

Std. Deviation	Variance	Median	Mean	Group
13.25788	175.771	39.0000	39.2857	Normal children's mothers
14.50069	210.270	30.0000	31.1429	Autism children's mothers

With respect to table 5, in comparison to the happiness of normal students' mothers and autistic students' mothers, the average score for the happiness of autistic mothers was 31.1429 and for normal students' mothers were 39.2857. The results have shown that normal mothers had higher score in happiness then had more happiness.

Table 6

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
<i>Emtyaz</i>	Equal variances assumed	.820	.367	3.101	110	.002	8.14286	2.62557	2.93960	13.34611
	Equal variances not assumed			3.101	109.128	.002	8.14286	2.62557	2.93914	13.34658

In table 6, for analyzing the above hypothesis, independent statistical t-test was used and the results have shown that happiness of normal students' mothers in comparison to autistic students' mothers had a meaningful difference. $P= 0.002$

5. Discussion

In the studying of first hypothesis of research, there was a meaning full difference between the public health of the mothers of autistic children and normal children. The results of this research with the findings of Hastinger et al (2005) who found in their researches that the mothers of autistic children are highly depressed (Gray, 2003) is favorable with oyster,. Also research Is the same with Koosha research (2010) which was done on 127 mothers with autistic children in Shafa psychiatric center, %4/7 of mothers had anxiety and half of them were depressed and it amount was more than mothers with normal children. Khazaei (2015) in a research which was done on 121 mothers with mentally retarded and normal children has shown that, mothers of exceptional children enjoy less mental health rather than mothers of normal children. (Poweretamad, 2006) has shown that the score of anxiety for mothers of children with cerebral palsy is more than the mothers of normal children. Therefore, above researches is similar with this research. Also, this research is the same with Beyramietal research which was done in Tabriz.

In this study which the difference between life expectancy of mothers with normal students and mothers with autistic students was meaningful and results with Ogstre, Mcintach and Mayzer (2011) have shown that mothers with autistic children rather than ether children's mothers have lower hope and higher anxiety about future, is the same. Also, this research is the same with Gary (2003) research that found that the mothers of autistic students have very high mental pressure and low hope. Also, this research results are the same with Pouretamad et al. research and the results have shown that the mothers of autistic children have experienced more stresses and can have negative effect on parents' reactions and increase the parents' anger and frustration (Poweretamad, Afshari. F. Moradi, 2006). Also, this research is favorable with Leoid and Hastings (2009) who paid into the relationship of hope and mental health among198 mothers with mentally retarded children, autism and syndrome down and found that mothers of autistic children against with two another group has shown that the status of hope and mental health of mothers with autistic children less than mothers with syndrome down and normal children. The results of this research is favorable with khoram Abadi et al. (2009) research have shown that the parenting stress among mothers with autistic children is meaning fully more than the mothers with n normal children. But, findings of Koid Mir and Tosan research (2009) in which is paid to the studying of the effect of having an autistic child on mother life to semi-structure interviews, has shown that the psychological experiences of these mothers is similar to the experiences of ether mothers with another disabilities. Therefore, this research has shown that is not the same with finding of this research.

The hypothesis 3 have shown that there is a meaningful difference between the happiness of mothers with autistic children and mothers of normal children and this research Is the same with Mohammadizade research who has expressed that because of so many problems of autistic children, their family and especially their mothers suffer from many tensions and mental pressures then have less happiness (Mohammadizade et al., 2005). Another studies have shown that the negative effects of having a mentally retarded or disable child result in tension and pressure among family member specially their mothers then, others happiness will be low. Therefore, above results are the same with this research's results. The results of this research are also the same with Narimani et al. research about mental health and happiness of the mothers of exceptional children which is less than mothers of normal children (Narimani et al, 2007).

References

1. Abedi M. (2006) Self-esteem predictors of happiness and depression among High School Student in Iran. *Personality, Interdisciplinary*.
2. Al-Sayyed Obaid M., Al-Kadoumi K. (2012), Family Member Needs of Autistic Children. *American Journal of Health Sciences* 2012; 3 (4): 291-300.
3. Asghari Nekah S. M., Afrooz G. A., Bazargan A., Shokohi M. A probe in play of autistic children through of mothers' lived experiences: A case of a mixed method research. *Journal of Psychology & Education* 2011; 41 (4): 28- 411.
4. Chimeh N., Pouretamad H., Khoram Abadi R. Need Assessment of Mothers with Autistic Children. *Journal of Family Research* 2008; 3(3): 697-707.
5. Gray, D. (2003). Gender and coping: The parents of children with high functioning autism. *Social Science and Medicine*, 56, 631-642.
6. Hastinger, R. P., & Johnson, E. (2005). Stress in UK families conducting intensive home-based behavioural intervention for their young child with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 31, 327-336.
7. Hastinger, R. P., Kovshoff, H., Ward, N. T., Espinosa, F.D., Brown, T., & Higness D. J., Bailey S. R., Pearce J. C. Factors associated with functioning style and coping strategies of families with a child with an autism spectrum disorder. *Autism* 2005; 9(2): 125-137
8. Khazaei, Sara (2015), Comparative analyzing between mental health of mothers of normal children with exceptional children the conference of stubble development in education sciences, P.1.
9. King A. et. al. (2006) "Positive Affect and the Experience of Meaning in Life", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2006, Vol. 90, No. 1, 179- 196.
10. Kohler F. W. Examining the services received by young children with autism and their families: A survey of parent responses. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities* 1999; 14(3): 150-158.

11. Koosha Maryam (2010), Studying the anxiety, depression and life quality of mothers with autistic children, psychology journal. Tehran
12. Koydemir, Selda & Tosun, Ulka. (2009). Impact of autistic children on the lives of mothers. *Procedia and Behavioral Sciences*, 1, 2534- 2540.
13. Mohammadi M, Dadkhah B. (2001). Psychological and social problems compared to parents of mentally retarded children under the welfare of Ardebil. *Journal of Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences*; 1(3): 206-20.
14. Mohammadi-Zade A, Pooretamad H, Maleck-Khosravi G. (2005). The primary examination of effect of guided imagination by music on reduction of depression, anxiety, & stress in mothers with autistic children. *Journal of Research Family*, 3: 289-92.
15. Narimani. Mohammad, Aga Mohammadian, Hamid Reza, Rajabi, Sooran (2007) comparing the mental health of mothers with exceptional children and mental health of mothers with normal children, Tehran, *Quarterly of mental health principles*. Period 33 434.p. 15 – 24.
16. Pour Etemad, Hamid Reza, Afshari, Reza, Moradi, Shahram (2006). Coping strategies and mental health in the mothers with autistic children, *quarterly*, 2 (7): 285 – 292
17. Sadock, BG. Sadock, V.A. (2009). *Comprehensive Text Book of Psychiatry* 9th ed Philadelphia: Volkmar, Klin, Robert, Schultz & Matthew: 3540.
18. Shams Esfandabadi H., Hashemian K., Shafiabadi H. [Effectiveness of teaching methods on the despair and sense of humor social adjustment of depressed students in Tehran]. *Journal of new ideas in educational sciences* 2007; 3(1): 81-99. (Persian).
19. Snyder C.R., Ritschel L.A., Ravid, L.K. and Berg C.J. (2005). Balancing Psychological Assessments: Including Strengths and Hope in Client Reports. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62(1), 33-46.
20. Soleimani Mehran (2010) comparing the characteristics of demography and biologic of exceptional parents. Tehran: *rehabilitation journal*. Period 5.
21. Tahmassian. K, Khorram Abadi. R, Chimeh. N. The Effectiveness of Behavior Management Training on Parental Stress of Autistic Children's Mothers. *Journal of Family Research* 2012; 8(31): 269-278.
22. Tajeri. Biouk; Boheiraei, Ahmad Reza (2008) Studying the relationship of stress, religious attitude and awareness with accepting the male mentally retarded children in mothers. Tehran: *research about exceptional children*.
23. Trevarthen C., Aitken K., Papoudi D., Roberts J. *Children with autism: Diagnosis and interventions to meet their needs*. 2 nd ed. London: Jessica Kingsley; 1998.
24. Volkmar F. R. *Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders*. 2nded. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 2007.
25. Volkmar F. R., Rutter M. Childhood disintegrative disorder: results of the DSM-IV autism field trial. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 1995 Aug; 34(8):1092–5.

26. Yekta Khah, S. (2009). Comparing The Amount Of Complexity And The Coping Method With It In The Mothers Of Mentally Retarded, Blind, Semi-Hearing And Normal Students Of Karaj Elementary School. *Mentally exceptional education*. No. 89. April and May. P. 3.
27. Ogeston, Paula, L., Mackintosh, Virginia, H. & Myers, Barbara, J. (2011). Hope and worry in mothers of children with an autism spectrum disorder or Down syndrome. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 5(4), 1378-1384.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).