



Research Article

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Investigating the characteristic of assertiveness and passivity in parents of addicted and non-addicted adolescent

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the characteristic of assertiveness and passivity of parents of addicted and non-addicted adolescents. The statistical population of the study consists of parents of addicted and non-addicted adolescents living in Tehran. Sampling method was convenience sampling. The sample size was 15 people in each group. To collect data, the qualitative (interview) method was used, so that, to evaluate the characteristic of assertiveness and passivity, considering the study literature review on the one hand, and Iranian religion and culture and on the other hand, some questions were designed on the concept of assertiveness and passivity and given to five experts in this field to declare their expert opinions through which its face and content validity to be examined. Data analysis method was also performed in a way that the data of describing couples interactions was analyzed to identify the characteristics of assertiveness and passivity using a grounded theory. The qualitative data from interviews analysis was released during the three stage of open, axial and selective coding. The results showed that, in the sample under study, most parents of non-addicted adolescents were assertive and passive against the parents of addicted adolescents.

Keywords: parents, adolescent, assertiveness, passivity

INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a problem that destroys the lives of many individuals and families, and spends the national macro funds on the costs of struggle, treatment and the injuries of it (Mollahzadeh, Ashoori and Mohammadi, 2008). Estimates show that the amount of direct and indirect economic-social damages of drugs and its trafficking is annually 700 billion Rial (2,300 USD) in the country. Research shows children's attitudes to addiction are formed before the third grade of high school. Therefore training programs for prevention and intervention should start early (Malekshahi and Roshanpour, 2010). Since man is a social being, being together and having contact with other people is inevitable for him. Therefore, the relationship is one of the most important areas of social life health and the origin of culture as a basis for human promotion and movement (Pirsaghi, 2012). One of the skills that are helpful in establishing healthy relationships with others is the skill assertiveness (Haji Hassani, Etemadi and Arian, 2012). Among the factors that seem to play a role in the tendency of adolescents to drug in the way of interactions in the family, especially behavioral characteristics of parents (Navabinejad, 2002). Therefore, we expect the family especially communicative styles of parents to have an important role in adolescents' interest or lack of interest in drugs. Many adolescents with substance abuse have reported that their family atmosphere has been in trouble (Goudarzi, Zarnaghash and Zarnaghash, 2004). Gerra, Leonarde, Corts (2009), have shown that childhood neglect and parents' poor communication with child leads to most children's tendency toward drugs. Also in the case of etiology of drug abuse several factors have been proposed such as social clutter, peers pressure, family factors, genetics, emotional and mental problems. Weakness of family functioning, family problems, conflicts are the other causes of tendency toward drugs (Demerouti, van Eeuwijk., Snelder & Wild, 2011). Much evidence shows that the experience of drug abuse in adolescence is often integrated with the experience of behavioral and communication neglect or damage in adolescence (Enoch, 2011). One of the behaviors and relationships is assertiveness and on the

contrary passivity of parents in relation to children. Assertiveness includes: self-adjudication, self-expression of ideas and feelings directly, honestly and appropriately, so that not to suppress the rights of others and such a behavior enables person to act in his favor, to have a self-reliant behavior any anxiety, to express his true feelings honestly and to acquire his right with respect to the rights of others (Haregie, 2010). The importance of assertiveness skill in interpersonal relationships and the increase of non-assertive behaviors in social interactions, its affecting impact on social, academic and occupational activities and success, as well as the assertiveness relationship with fear and anxiety and social incompetence are of the important factors to attract researchers' attention to the problem (Lee, Chang, Chu Yang and Chang, 2013). Someone who has an appropriate assertiveness not only shows a better performance facing with problems, but also because of competence and appropriate exposure with these issues, he has a proper cognitive assessment of him and therefore experiences more positive emotions (García-López, Gutiérrez, 2013). Assertive people have a clear definition of themselves and their faith, they choose their life path and in some cases that lead some people to have involuntary behaviors and make wrong decisions, taking into account their reason and logic, they make appropriate decisions (Wagener, Delvaux, Sarto, Roodthoof, & Blairy, 2013). With regard to cases mentioned on the role of parents' behaviors in the way of children growing, so it is essential to investigate behavioral characteristics of parents of addicted and non-addicted children. And since, in the past research most parenting styles have been examined and the variables of parental passivity and assertiveness have been less considered, thus the researcher in the present study sought to answer the question that: how is the passivity and assertiveness in parents of addicted and non-addicted adolescents?

Research questions

1. How is the passivity and assertiveness in fathers of addicted and non-addicted adolescents?
2. How is the passivity and assertiveness in mothers of addicted and non-addicted adolescents?

The statistical population of the study consists of parents of addicted and non-addicted adolescents living in Tehran. Sampling method was convenience sampling so that among the parents of addicted adolescents referred to Rahe Behtar clinic to receive better training on psychological health, a number of 15 couples who were willing to cooperate were selected. About non-addicted adolescents' parents, to choose parents with economic, cultural conditions, similar to the parents of addicted adolescents, we visited Khane Salamt located in the area 2 near the Rahe Behtar clinic, and among adolescents participated in the training programs of this neighborhood house, 15 of 30 adolescents whose parents have declared their willingness to cooperate were selected. To collect data, the qualitative (interview) method was used, and thus to evaluate the characteristics of assertiveness and passivity, considering the study literature review on the one hand and religion and culture on the other hand, some questions were designed on the concept of assertiveness and passivity. Three people were primarily interviewed and some of the questions that were inaudible in some respondents' idea were also edited. Then the results were given to five experts in this field to declare their expert opinions through which its face and content validity to be examined. In the present study the interview questions were designed so that not to cut the conversation thread in interviews, but when cooling conversation or talking about useless issues, the researcher guided discussions.

Interviewer (researcher) discusses the desired problem-based matter by guided questions to clarify the subject more closely, while he was sensitive to special procedures of participants in expressing their views. The question of perceptions and exposing the interviewee to his words contradictions and inconsistencies by the reflection of what was said made deeper understanding of the interviewer to the respondent. This later helped to interpret the words of the interviews.

Examples of questions: 1. Do you basically consider yourself friendly, shy (with embarrassment), outspoken, nervous? How? 2. Are you satisfied with your model? Would you like to change your model? How? 3. Have your model has been abused? How? 4. Have you incurred a loss because of this model? How?

Which are your partner (friendly, shy, outspoken, nervousness)? Explain how? How do you behave with your children? Have you been abused? Set an example. It's worth noting, however, these were additional questions examined after the detailed questions, and studying this characteristic with very obvious questions in some questionnaires about assertiveness. For example, if you buy stuff with defects what would you do? And etc.

Data analysis was also performed so that data of describing couples' interactions to identify the characteristics of assertiveness and passivity was analyzed using grounded theory. In this method, researcher analyzed data by a continuous comparative process. The comparison first took place at the level of words and sentences expressed in the contexts of interviews. Then, during the process of open coding, the concepts were incorporated and named as an independent code and ultimately the same codes formed the category and selective coding was carried out. Thereupon the qualitative data from analysis of interviews was released during the three-stage coding of open, axial and selective.

RESULTS

The first question: How is assertiveness and passivity in fathers of addicted and non-addicted adolescents?

What seen in the investigation of the characteristics of passivity and assertiveness in fathers of non-addicted adolescents was as follows: A. assertiveness by focusing on thoughts and behaviors (explicit response – expression of disagreement – self-confidence - respect in behavior - honesty in speech and behavior) B. assertiveness with regard to the situation and conditions (attention to keep the peace (behavior management) - attention to the continuity of life, respect for the rights of others C. assertiveness by focusing on the emergence of experiences (following personal experience - model role playing- expression of position and personal view) D. assertiveness by keeping the position (parental authority) (coordinated surveillance - personal sanctity maintenance - decisiveness). What seen in the investigation of the characteristic in fathers of addicted adolescents was as follows: A. aggression by focusing on self-centered (inflexibility - rapid response – earn respect - controversy - competition instead of collaboration) B. passivity and conditions and situation submission (despairs - resignation – self-disbelief – incriminate others - negative modeling) C. passivity and ambiguity of parental roles (lack of decisiveness - uncoordinated surveillance - intimidate and scare children).

The second question: How is assertiveness and passivity in mothers of addicted and non-addicted adolescents?

What seen in the investigation of the characteristic of passivity and assertiveness in mother of non-addicted adolescents was as follows: A. assertiveness by focusing on feelings (appreciation of others - friendly relations establishment - (love and passion expression - acceptance and respect - apology) B. assertiveness according to the situation and conditions (relying on personal force and power - (attention to keep the peace (behavior management) - attention to the continuity of life - attention to the feelings of others (modeling) C. assertiveness by keeping the parental position (authority) (coordinated surveillance - respect parents - firmly - support of spouse - moderation to encourage assertive behavior). What seen in the investigation of the characteristic in mother of addicted adolescents was as follows: A. passivity by focusing on the other-oriented (interests of others): obedient, acceptor -acceptance of others' words - escape response - victim role playing B. aggression with focusing on self-oriented (inflexibility - unkindly – controversy - dependence - competition instead of cooperation) C. passivity and submission of situation and conditions (despair - self-disbelief – incriminate others – modeling) D. passivity and ambiguity passivity of parental roles (lack of decisiveness - lack of supervision (uncoordinated surveillance) – lack of moderation to encourage assertive behavior (negligence) – inattention.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first question findings on the characteristics of passivity and assertiveness in fathers of non-addicted adolescents unwonted:

The study findings about assertiveness focused on the expression of thoughts and behavior are consistent with the results of research by Hargie (2010) in the definition of assertiveness. Hargie in his study findings defines assertiveness as: "assertiveness includes: the expression of ideas and feelings in an appropriate, explicit, direct and honest manner. So that not to suppress the rights of others. Also, Ryan, Anas and Miss (2008) consider assertiveness including being cool, having self-confident, and delivering clear messages and responses that are neither passive, nor aggressive. Mutual respect lies in assertiveness (Duck, Rhett and Mercer, 2006). Assertive behavior includes: speech with assertiveness, expressing feelings, greeting with others and expressing disagreement (Rockz, 1991). Also explicitly in thoughts and behavior and expressing opinions that are frequently mentioned in Islamic texts are fully consistent with the definition of assertiveness. "The passage of minor errors is good, but as some errors are about the basic principles and main pillars of the family, not only ignoring them is not advisable but also it will be usually followed by invariable damage. But at the same time, explicitly and leniency shall be observed" (Makarem Shirazi, 1995). Other main factors of assertiveness obtained is assertiveness due to the situation and conditions with subsets of (attention to keep the peace (behavior management) – attention to the continuity of life, respect the rights of others), which were observed in non-addicted adolescents' fathers. Assertive behavior promotes equality in human relationships, and enables us to act based on our best interests, to defend of our personal rights without ignoring the rights of others, defend (Alberti and Emmons, 2001). Assertiveness allows a person to honestly express his true feelings acquire his rights with regard to the rights of others (Hargie, 2010). Other major factors were assertiveness by keeping the position (parental authority) with subsets of (coordinated surveillance – respect parents - decisiveness) which were observed in non-addicted adolescents' fathers. As Townend (2007), pointed out that assertive relationships and behavior enhance the sense of solidarity and cooperation in the living environment and enable people to accomplish things together. The holy Quran has also delegated the role of controlling and maintaining family system to the man of family in allocating the role and position for the family healthy functioning to achieve funding, supporting of family members and family decision-making process and the protection of family borders (Javadi Amoli, 2008) that is consistent with the definition of assertiveness.

The first question findings on the characteristics of passivity and assertiveness in fathers of addicted adolescents unwonted:

The findings of this research on aggression with a focus on self-centered obtain the subsets of (inflexibility - quick response – acquire respect – controversy - competition instead of cooperation). As Rockz (1991), pointed out, people without assertiveness, when a subject is against their wishes, become passive or active (angry). They cannot express their disagreement without aggression. In non-aggressive behavioral pattern, inflexibility can lead to negative opinions and self-limitation in relation to its own and others (Strasser and Strasser, 1999). Among other major factor, passivity and conditions and situation submission with subsets of (despair- self-disbelief – incriminate other - negative modeling) were also observed in addicted adolescents' fathers. As Rockz (1991) pointed out unassertive people have low self-esteem and their experiences lead to the sense of self-disbelief and despair and the feeling that people get bored talking to them. Passivity and ambiguity in parental role of with the subsets of (lack of decisiveness - lack of supervision (uncoordinated surveillance) - intimidate and scare children) were also of other findings of this research seen in fathers of addicted adolescents. Assertive behavior creates problems for the individual, including the explosion of anger and problems relating to parenting and passive behavior of parents that lead them not to be able to act decisively against their children. As a result, children can break the severe rules of family and ignore the required discipline in the family. And on the other hand parents act as the models for children and can transfer their inefficient beliefs to their children (World Health Organization, 2006).

The second question findings on the characteristics of passivity and assertiveness in mother of non-addicted adolescents unwonted:

The findings of this study focusing on assertiveness by focusing on feelings with the subsets of (appreciation of others – friendly relationship establishment (love and passion expression) - acceptance and respect - apology) are consistent with the definition by Lazarus (1973 about assertiveness. Lazarus on the results of his research defines assertiveness as: "assertiveness includes expressing positive emotions, such as the expression of love, affection, happiness and other positive emotions, as a part of an emotional release, intimacy and respect. Also, "important and intimate relationships, the ability of being real in relationship are a part of feeling security as well as representing assertive behavioral patterns (Strasser and Strasser, 1999)." Assertiveness is a person's ability to express positive emotions such as appreciation of others; expressing love and passion, and expressing thank and praise (Masters et al., 1987). That the definitions are consistent with the principle of thank and the expression of love in Islam. Thanking is an emotional reflection of affection and good morals in human psyche. Imam Sadiq says: Thank someone who has benefited to be stable if you do not so he will not be last (Hur Aamili, 1995). Assertiveness according to the situation and conditions with the subsets of (relying on the strength and personal power - attention to keep the peace (behavior management) - attention to the continuity of life - attention to the feelings of others - (modeling) were the other findings of this research that are consistent with the definitions of assertiveness. Assertive behavior reflects the confidence and respect for both self and others, which requires flexible and appropriate response to different situations. In this case, the person control himself and acts in ways that promote his own and others (depending on situation and conditions) (Amanatullah and Tinsley, 2013)." In a transactional analytical theory, a person's assertiveness is to respect feelings of itself and others. Respect for others and knowing that others are existent (Bern, 1961). What mentioned as the definition of assertiveness according to the attention to situation and conditions is quite in line with the principle of negligence in Islam. The principle of negligence means pretending to forget. Negligence roots in neglect, but it is different from neglect in context. Neglect is against knowledge, but negligence means not seeing the error and fault and plays two essential roles in strengthening families: assertiveness in dealing with problems - improving relations and helping to keep the peace (Pasandideh, 2010). Assertiveness according to maintain the parental position (authority) with the subsets of (coordinated surveillance - respect parents-decisiveness- support of spouse - moderation to encourage assertive behavior) are also other findings that were seen in non-addicted adolescents' mothers. Assertive parents act decisively against children. And they are aligned and coordinated with each other in educational issues. And children cannot ignore the required discipline in the family (World Health Organization, translated by Fata et al., 1385). As the factor of assertiveness has been also explained in Islam in this way: the family system in Islam is not a unipolar system where the man is despot and the woman is sentenced and vice versa, but it's a bipolar system that the two complementary poles with the assistance and advice of each other and respecting and supporting of each other attempt to maintain and develop the family and their division of responsibilities has took place based on each one's capabilities as well as providing the family benefits (Sajedi, 2009).

The second question findings on the characteristics of passivity and assertiveness in mother of addicted adolescents unwonted:

Passivity with focusing on the other-oriented (interests of others) by the subsets of (obedient, acceptor - acceptance of others' words - escape response - victim role playing) was one of the research findings that are consistent with the definition of Frin et al. (2012) of the unassertive behavior. "Passive unassertive behavior is obedient, acceptor and prohibited. Person does not like the things that happened to him, but the person himself provides an opportunity to

continue them and he acquires his peace at the expense of denying the personal rights. "People, who have low self-expression, do not respect their rights in beliefs, feelings, and opinions and reject the principle of their emotional similarity with others. They are incapable in response to improper behaviors of others and they also know their demands less important than others (Otlar, 1991). Among other findings of his research was aggressiveness by focusing on self-oriented with the subsets of (inflexibility - unkindly - controversy – dependence - competition instead of cooperation), respectively. As it has been noted "non-assertive behaviors are preventive, avoidance and inflexible, and have a high positive correlation with fears and phobias, anxiety and kinds of aggression (Otlar, 1991). Passivity and conditions and situation submission with the subsets of (despair – self-disbelief - incriminate others - modeling) are also other findings of the study.

People without assertiveness consider themselves as the location and environment victims and submission, and they often suffer from hopelessness and despair, anxiety and internal anger (Norman, 2013). Another major factor was parental roles passivity and ambiguity with the subsets of (lack of decisiveness - lack of supervision (uncoordinated surveillance) – lack of moderation to encourage assertive behavior (negligence) - inattention) that was observed in addicted adolescents' mothers. The characteristic of passive behavior where people are indifferent, inattentive or extremely egalitarian, parents with this kind of behavior allow their children to do whatever they want (Mo'meni and Amiri, 2007). However, this factor is in line with a kind of parenting styles called neglectful parenting. Indifferent parents do not control their children. And they do not have any expectation of them and there is no clarity at house, they also not moderation to punish and reward children. In neglectful parenting style, children's desires and wishes are too important (Hayat Roshanei, 2012).

In overall conclusion we can say that, in the study conducted, the results suggest that in the sample under study, non-addicted adolescents' parents were often assertive people and on the contrary, parents of addicted adolescents were passive individuals. It's worth noting, however, this can be observed in the desired sample. It seems, assertiveness is in fact a set of traits, including self-esteem, honesty in speech and behavior, empathy, mutual respect, self-reliance, intimacy, expressing feelings and so on, that all of the characteristics on their own are explainable for healthy education and upbringing of children, it can be explained. And more importantly, it seems that assertiveness has a close relationship and similarity with the authoritative parenting style. However, the style has been repeatedly investigated and emphasized by experts. In contrast, during most of the interviews with passive parents some effects of neglectful parenting style was evident. In fact, passive parents have a neglectful behavior with children, and indifference and neglect to express their thoughts and inattention could be seen everywhere in their life. It seems that parents, especially the father is passive in the family, especially children and adolescents in uncertainty and confusion to take over. It seems that in families where parents, especially the father is passive, children and in particular adolescents live in uncertainty and confusion. Looking the other way, it seems that assertive parents, due to the characteristics of assertiveness transfer the characteristic to their children, and adolescents as their parents become assertive and decisive. And they are more resistant to social ills such as addiction. The adolescents have not the power to say no like their parents, which is an important factor in the prevention of addiction. In contrast, it seems that assertive parents also transfer characteristics such as the lack of lack of decisiveness and inability to say no and etc. to their children and unassertive adolescents are too talented for the tendency to addiction.

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