Original Article

Study of Family Influence on the Male - Female Students Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of present study was to study family influence on the undergraduate male – female student's relationships. This study used a descriptive correlational design and statistical population includes all students of Islamic Azad University of Kerman, Iran. 350 undergraduate students were selected using simple random sampling. Researcher made questionnaire was used for data collection. Results show that the family influence on the undergraduate male – female student's relationships. Results of this study may create necessary insight for family counselors in counseling with families.

Key words: family influence, male – female student's relationships, correlative study

INTRODUCTION

Unlimited freedom is a burning desire that becomes greatly forceful with youth. Young people despise any talk of reason, laws, regulations, or what is to their best interest; what appeals to youth is for them to freely fulfill their instincts, which they pursue with enthusiastically [1]. The family is the most important institution capable of feeding the society and affecting its well-being or lack of well-being as well as the society's compatibility or incompatibility. The family constitutes the first school of education and environment for growth. Therefore, its customs, patterns and laws are highly influential on people [2].

As the first environment in which children develop, the family is remarkably influential in their future behavior. In fact, some sociologists have even regarded the family as the factor leading to the well-being or ill health of individuals in the future, in particular its extreme consequences in youth. Sociologists have found deviations to be correlated with family life; people's destinies are affected by their family events [3].

Psychologists and sociologists believe that human societies consist of a variety of forms of families rather than a single kind. This variety lies in how families treat their children [4]. Some social schools of thought have paid special attention to the family, and have provided laws for the family; however, they have failed to achieve family prosperity and happiness. In Islam, on the other hand, the family is of high importance, and a system of laws has been set to ensure people's prosperity. The family is thus a member of the community, and cannot be happy unless the community is a happy one. Therefore, Islamic laws concerning the family are comprehensive. Nowadays, however, family bonds and relationships are insufficient, and the resulting division and separation are due to numerous factors. Perhaps one of the most significant of such factors is the weakness of modern developmental systems which, instead of taking religious and moral development into consideration, have focused wholly upon pure materialism, thus ignoring spiritual and mental issues as well as the modification and moderation of evil, animal instincts [5].

A variety of theories have been presented on the relationship between boys and girls; in general, they can be categorized into extremist, profligate and authoritative theories. As Freud, an extremist theorist has stated, "After a great deal of doubt and thought, I concluded that there are no more than two basic instincts: the instinct for life, or love, and the instinct for death, or destruction. The instinct for love aims to create and maintain bonds and enhance unity – in a word, to connect [6].

Feminists believe that sexual desires are formed by culture and socialization. They have drawn attention to some of the most important aspects of this in Western societies, i.e. the parents' critical role in the process of socialization. In Western cultures, the proper behavior expected of young girls often prevents them from having relationships with the opposite sex, whereas in boys, it is allowed or overlooked [7].

Radical feminists see deviant behaviors and maladjustments in women as an intellectual reaction to experiences of sexism in the workplace, marriage or interpersonal relationships. They believe some crimes

committed by women are brought about by illiteracy, the lack of job opportunities and clichéd expectations of women [8].

According to role theory, each individual in the society occupies a position, in proportion to which he/she will have a role. The family is like a theatrical play in which the members play and develop specific roles. The roles undertaken by family members vary with changes in conditions. When roles change or are transferred, the relationship between husbands and wives and also sons and daughters may be influenced, and even fall into conflict. Thus, based on this theory, if any of these individuals fails to play the role as well as expected, relationships will change, and conflict and violence may thus arise [9].

Durkheim aimed to find social reasons for social events; he did not see biological or mental reasons as having any role. He believed social factors such as unsuitable conditions of families, the lack of affection, incompatible parents, divorce, delinquent parents, immigration, mass media, weak beliefs and religious faith, unsuitable economic conditions in the family, political factors, war, etc. to have a critical role in the deviation of individuals [10].

Kozer's interpretation of conflict still stands as one of the most comprehensive of existing interpretations. Kozer et al see conflict as a way to enhance personal benefits rather than a consequence of differences in benefits. They also cite Wurf's opinion that organized groups make less use of rebellious tools than non-organized groups do [11]. According to the social learning theory, social damage is the result of learning deviant norms and values, in particular in subcultures and peer groups. This theory believes that boys and girls learn the pathology while interacting with others [12]. In the symbolic interactionism theory, on the other hand, the focus is on methods that establish communication between family members. Generally, dynamic interactions between family members can be achieved in two ways:

1. Dynamic interactions through establishing contact and rapport, by which each family member communicates with others.
2. Dynamic interactions through expressing affection, which varies among family members. In some families, due to the divorce or separation of the spouses, there is less affection in the dynamic interactions between family members, and the relationships between the parents and the children fall into conflict [9].

According to the theory of functionalism, a society consists of interrelated parts, and each society member has a function and contributes to the establishment of the society. Functionalists accentuate the importance of the family in maintaining social stability and the well-being of the members of the society, including boys and girls [5].

Based on extensive research on changes in individual and groups of people, the 3-step model presented by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin categorizes change into a process of three steps. The first step, known as freezing, is when people feel there is need for change in the existing situation. The responsibility in this step is to provide the necessary motivation for boys and girls to realize the need for change and also find new solutions to face the existing challenges and forms; thus, boys and girls will find in themselves the need to have relationships with the opposite sex.

In the second step, known as change, by using appropriate methods and techniques, the required changes are made in the aspects concerned; girls and boys are actually involved in these changes. The third step, freezing, is when it is assured that the changes have found order, and boys and girls interpret things differently.

The results of the study conducted by Weston et al, *Premarital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marriage Instability*, indicates that couples who have experienced premarital cohabitation face a higher risk of divorce compared to those who have not, contrary to the idea that premarital cohabitation provides couples with better opportunities to know each other better [12].

Yengton and Martin have pointed out those authoritarian parents, permissive parents and those who use punishment to establish discipline and education result in youth with anti-social behavior. On the other hands, warm, receptive parents who use reasonable dialog to establish discipline and convey rules raise children with the highest of social capabilities and control over their relationships [13].

In his research, Baumrind concluded that youth under strict scrutiny by their parents seldom find chances to make decisions, and are more eager to defy their parents' orders. He also concluded that the stricter the parents and the more limited the chances are for decision making, the more interest young people will find in their peers, the more distant they will become from their families, and the less consultation they will also seek from their families [14].

Moreover, in his study on the ways to fight cultural invasion in youth, Jencitrz found that the main reasons why young people undergo change in identity and relationships lie in the lack of attention to the youth's enthusiastic needs and desires, the lack of attention toward native and local cultures, access to mass media and particularly the Internet, and familiarity with numerous cultures [15].

This research aims, based on the results obtained from previous studies and the theoretical basics available, to study the role of permissive, authoritative and authoritarian families in the male – female student's relationships.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is of the descriptive type, and has been conducted by means of the correlation method. The statistical population consisted of students at the Kerman branch of Azad University during the academic year 2011-2012; 350 students were selected as the research study samples through random sampling methods. To collect data, documentary and field methods have been used. In the documentary method, in order to access background research and compile research literature, the latest possible sources of libraries, various articles, websites and also theses relevant to this study were used. On the other hand, a researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data in the field method. The questionnaire met the approval of our supervisors, advisors, and also four other professors in order to ensure its validity. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the research questionnaire, which led to a reliability coefficient of 0.722. Having collected the data from the questionnaires, the data were analyzed by using SPSS software. Means and standard deviation were used for the descriptive statistics, whereas the Spearman rank correlation was used for the inferential statistics section.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There is a correlation between permissive families and relationships between boys and girls.
The results displayed in the following table indicate a negative, -0.168-level correlation between permissive families and relationships between boys and girls. This correlation is significant with a 99 percent level of confidence (P=0.01).

Table 1. Correlation between permissive family and male – female student's relationships

Variables	R	P
Permissive family	-0.168	**0.01**
Male – female student's relationships		

Hypothesis 2: There is a correlation between authoritative families and relationships between boys and girls. The results displayed in the table 2 show a positive, 0.211-level correlation between authoritative families and male – female student's relationships. This correlation is significant with a 99 percent level of confidence (P=0.001).

Table 2. Correlation between authoritative family and male – female student's relationships

Variables	R	P
Authoritative family	0.211	**0.001**
Male – female student's relationships		

Hypothesis 3: There is a correlation between authoritarian families and male – female student's relationships. The results displayed in table 3 point out a positive, -0.379-level correlation between authoritarian families and relationships between boys and girls. This correlation is significant with a 99 percent level of confidence (P=0.001).

Table 3. Correlation between authoritarian family and male – female student's relationships

Variables	R	P
Authoritarian family	- 0.379	**0.001**
Male – female student's relationships		

DISCUSSION

This research has been designed to determine the role of the family in the male – female student's relationships. The results of this study showed that permissive families have a negative, significant relation with the male – female student's relationships. The results of this study show, as a matter of fact, that in regard to the first hypothesis, boys and girls raised in permissive families have fewer relationships with the opposite sex. These results are in agreement with those of studies conducted by Aghajani, Almond, Esmaili, Ramazan Nargesi, Gharibi, Mohebbi and Weston et al. This hypothesis is also in conformity with the interactionism point of view. Integrationists pay attention to the communicative processes in the family and the roles played by family members. They study the roles of husbands, wives and children involuntarily expressing their internal feelings among themselves and to others. As seen by sociologists such as Berger and Kolner, interactions between people lead to common realities based upon which they redefine their identities in the process. The development of this common reality is an ongoing process not only in the family but also in any group involving men and women.

Integrationists explain family relationships based on the mental concepts and interpretations people make of their everyday lives.

The results of the second hypothesis pointed out a positive, significant relation between authoritative families and the male – female student's relationships. This indicates, in fact, that boys and girls from authoritative families have higher tendencies toward relationships with the opposite sex. These results are in conformity with those of studies conducted by Esmaili, Hassani and Khalili. Moreover, this theory is also in accordance with the social learning theory. According to this theory, social pathologies are brought about by learning deviant norms and values, in particular in subcultures and peer groups. As seen in this theory, boys and girls learn pathologies during their interactions with others [16].

The results of the third hypothesis, on the other hand, indicated a negative, significant relation between authoritarian families and the male – female student's relationships. In other words, boys and girls raised in authoritarian families have less relationship with the opposite sex. The results of this study are in conformity with those of studies conducted by Baumrind), Ramazan Nargesi, Zinati, Sarvarian, Shayegan and Yengton. In his research, Baumrind concluded that youth under strict scrutiny by their parents seldom find chances to make decisions, and are more eager to defy their parents' orders. Furthermore, he concluded that the stricter the parents and the more limited the chances are for decision making, the more interest young people will find in their peers, the more distant they will become from their families, and the less consultation they will also seek from their families [14].

Finally, it is recommended that people strengthen their faith and beliefs in order to keep safe from social disorders and avoid simply falling for other people's tumultuous desires. It is the enhancement of piety and religious insight in youth, particularly in girls, that can provide their immunity.

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