Drawing characteristics of Iranian Children with dysfunctional parents

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to compare the drawing features of Children with dysfunctional parents (CDPs) and normal children aged 5 to 11 years old based on Corman Family Drawing Test. Method: In this ex post facto study 30 CDPs (15 boy and 15 girls) were randomly selected from a charity in Tehran (Capital of Iran) by simple sampling method. The Case group were compared with 30 children with normal parents (15 boy and 15 girls) who were randomly selected from preschools and elementary schools in Tehran by multistage cluster sampling method. The collected data were analyzed using Chi-squares test. Results: The results showed that there was a significant difference between drawings of CDPs and drawings of normal children in indices of the first drawn person, the biggest drawn person, complete elimination, conscious identification, devaluation, drawing levels of normal-abnormal extension, and right-left. There was no significant difference in drawing level indices of bottom and bold-pale. Conclusion: The presence of parents beside children is necessary for the emotional and social development, most of the parents due to some issues such as the lack of economic and cultural ability and behavioral problems cannot provide wellbeing facilities for their children and this is shown by children’s drawing.

INTRODUCTION

Freud believed that unique personality of a person is mostly formed of the interactions of parent-child in childhood [1]. The relationship between the child and parents leads to the development of emotional dependence of the child to mother or father. Most of the theorists believe that high dependency with safety feeling is the foundation of healthy emotional and social growth in the next period of childhood [2]. Based on John Bowlby attachment theory, primary experiences of the child namely primary experience in attachment relations are foundation of the next performance in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Based on this theory, parents caring quality in development of safe attachments of a child is very effective [3].

The researches have shown that the children who have had dysfunctional parents and grown up in boarding schools are exposed to more health risk and development problems compared to normal children. Some of the main problems of these children are due to the misuse and ignorance in home. These children have aggressive behaviors and emotional problems and parent-child dispute are observed. Thus, these children are exposed to chronic diseases, birth dysfunctions, emotional dysfunction and academic failure three or seven times more than normal children [4].

In definition, CDPs are Children who have to live in some places away from the family environment such as orpanages, charities, and adoption due to abnormal behaviors of their parents, a wide range of social and economic problems, divorce, addiction, imprisonment and etc. [5].

Identification is one of the main stages of emotional change and these children due to the lack of communication with their parents are deprived of it and the emotional change of these children are not normal. Social relations establishment is one of the training that child learns it in the family. Thus, in the future, the children of these centers due to being separated from the family cannot communicate with others correctly [6].

Obligatory separation from family is anxious at the best case and it is a destructive and annoying experience at the worst case. Indeed, it is possible that some of the children are considered as one of the most deprived people in each social class. Thus, for each person the experience of living in orphanage and boarding schools based on age, separation period from the family, the change in method of various nurses and his flexibility to
stress are different. It is proved that long-term and early residence in orphanage plays an inhibiting role in successful education of the child. Orphanage care has adverse effect on self-awareness development and identity of children. Because the child in orphanage has no special person to tell the most important memories with him, the person who can tell him whether his memories are real or unreal and imaginative or he needs a person who save his memories from forgetting before it is getting very late [7].

One of the tender motion skills among children is “drawing”. Children can take pencil and draw lines on paper from the early childhood [8]. The insecurity and restlessness of family hurts children and they are regretful of their family conditions. Even after a while children blame themselves. Here, children reaction is different. Some people express their hidden grief and pain and some others hide them. The counselors and experts should help the children to express their emotions via writing, drawing or even via music [9]. In a study done by Goldner and Scharf [10], the relation between special indices in family drawing of children and internalized problems of children were proved. One of the diagnostic methods of internalizing emotions of children was using drawing methods. Children drawing are a message. He draws what he cannot say. The child experiences all his life issues by drawing and tests himself and expresses his self. The drawing lines are reflection of his emotional world and drawing alone is the world that is changed by increasing intelligence and child changes. Drawing is important in personality and mental aspects of children [11].

Drawing is psychological projection of the childish world beyond the enjoyment created for the child and reveals his personality. The child drawing as encoded language or love cry or creative motivation is a fundamental message and if this unique message is decoded in disseminating and it is understood, our relationship with the child can be enriched and potential forces are fulfilled and affective balance is kept [12]. Drawing was applied at first about the children in the divorced family but later this method was also applied about any child who tolerated big changes as separation, loss or death. Indeed, drawing is a bridge between the inner world and external realities. Image is an intermediary in this distance and conscious and unconscious aspects of the past or present are said [13].

By considering the fact that according to psychologists and psychoanalysts, drawing projective tests are the best measurement tools of psychological dysfunctions in mental and affective evaluation of children, and no research is done about the impact of having dysfunctional parents on children drawings, the researcher to find the above relation attempted to answer this question that is there any significant difference between drawings of CDPs and normal children in terms of family drawing indices? Therefore, the researcher attempted that by drawing projective test (Corman Family Drawing Test), psychological, emotional and cognitive features of CDPs are compared with normal children drawings.

Method:

Statistical population and sample:

The statistical population of the present study was children aged 5 to 11 years old living in charities and also studying in normal preschools and elementary schools in district 1 of Tehran in 2013. The sample groups were consisted of 30 children (15 girls and 15 boys) aged 5 to 11 years old living in charity of Fatimah Zahra in Tehran and 30 normal children (15 girls and 15 boys) aged 5 to 11 years old studying in two preschools and elementary schools in Tehran. Two groups of children were matched to each other in terms of regional conditions. To select CDPs by a list of population, the simple random sampling method was used and for selecting normal children by multistage cluster sampling method among the schools of district 1 of Tehran, one preschool and an elementary school for girls and an elementary school for boys were chosen and in each school, some classes were elected and in every class some students were selected.

Instrument:

Family Drawing Test: This test was proposed for the first time by Appel and Wolf and later was revised as family drawing by Hulse. Family Drawing Test besides personal features of the subjects reflects their family needs and relations. This test is performed by two methods: Porot and Corman methods. In Porot method, the examiner asks the child draw his family but in Corman test, the examiner asks the child draw his favorite family. The difference between two methods is freedom of child in drawing. In Corman method, when the examiner asks the child to draw the family, the child is free to select his family or any other family he likes. This method causes that despite Porot method, the child don’t seems himself involved in specific issues of the family and defensive mechanisms of the children are not activated.

Regarding the validity testability of family drawing test, no study is conducted but the validity of results of family drawing is dependent upon examiner experience. Also, Corman in his results is dependent upon a sample of 1200 (800 boys, 400 girls aged 6-14 years old) and the results were different in terms of ordinary and specific cases or dysfunction [8].
Procedure:
In this study, for data collection, family drawing test of Corman was used. This test is done on individual base. Regarding each subject, an A4 paper (21*29 cm), an ordinary black pencil and seven colored pencils with red, blue, green, yellow, purple, brown and black were given to the subjects”. The instruction of the test is as: “Draw a family or imagine a family in your mind and draw it. If the child didn’t understand the instruction, this sentence is added: “draw what you like, the members of a family or if you want, objects or animals”. After the end of drawing, a semi-organized interview was done about child drawing.

When drawing was finished, before the test is finished, the personal aspect of the interpretations should be reduced because the child knows what he likes and expresses it in the drawing. Therefore, he should be asked and interview is done. At first we should praise the drawing of the child (we should say, it is good, without considering the value of drawing), then we say “define the family you drew” then we ask: where is this place? And what they do? Then we ask, tell me who these people are one by one? Start from the first person you drew. We ask about the gender and age of people. Then, we ask about the relationship between them and the following questions are asked:
1- Who is the kindest in this family? Why?
2- Who is the least kind? Why?
3- Who is the happiest? Why?
4- Who is the least happy? Why?
5- Who is the best in this family? Why?
6- Father recommends going on a picnic by car but the car is full, who should stay at home? Why?

If the father is not in the drawing, we can ask about the mother or “one of the children was noisy, who was he? How should we punish him? One of the important questions is that “think carefully, if you were in this drawing, who would you like to be? Why?

Scoring method:
The scoring was done based on the criteria in study hypotheses. At first, in response to the above questions, for father response, value 1, for mother, value 2 and for the subject, value 3 and brothers and sisters value 4, instructor value 5 were considered. Regarding playing, the number of people playing were registered. For the extension and shadowing 1/3 of the paper, value 1 and for 2/3 of paper, value 2 and for using the whole paper, value 3 and regarding the low extension of drawing, the opposite was performed and only value 2 was used to the same manner. Regarding high pressing the pencil, no pressing was 0, the press that was defined from the back of paper, 1 and in case of torn paper, value 2 were considered. Regarding the rest of variables, the same way was done as in case of absence, 1 and in case of each repetition, 1 score more was given.

Results:
Table 1 contains the Chi-square test results for 11 investigated aspects in family drawing test of CDPs comparing normal children. According to this table, in 9 aspects of family drawing test, there were significance difference between two groups of children. More precisely, the drawings of CDPs were significantly different than children with normal parents in terms of first drawn person, biggest drawn person, complete elimination, devaluation, and conscious identification (P<0.001). Drawing levels of CDPs also were different in some dimensions including Sensory-Intellectual (P<0.009), Right-Left (P<0.001), and Abnormal-Normal Extension (P<0.006).

These children drew their instructors and then themselves first of all, they also drew themselves and their instructors as the biggest person. Father or mother were the person who was eliminated or devaluated more in the drawing of these children. In contrast, they identified themselves and then their instructor consciously more than normal children. In the drawing level, they drew significantly the content of their drawings as intellectual, on the left side of paper, and also as abnormal extension.

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<th>P</th>
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Discussion and Conclusion:

The present study aimed to compare the drawing features of CDPs and normal children aged 5 to 11 years based on Corman Family Drawing Test. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the drawing features of CDPs and normal children in most indices.

It was found that CDPs drew their parents as the first drawn person fewer and identified unconsciously with their instructor more, whereas the most of the normal children drew the first person as one of their parents and had unconscious identification with them. It also was found that there was a significant difference between type of supervision and the biggest drawn person.

From psychoanalysis approach, idolized person is the one that child draws him first and bigger and the child focuses emotionally on him and due to this fact, as Porot said, conscious or unconscious identification issue is considered. In various studies have also found similar findings with respect to the first drawn person [4, 14-19] and the biggest drawn person [14, 17, 20-22].

Normal children mostly eliminated themselves, sister or brothers but CDPs eliminated mostly their parents. Elimination of the family members based on devaluation means passive aggressive reactions. Self-devaluation mildly reveals depressing reaction in child’s drawing. It means that his image is not drawn as well as the image of other family members [8]. The results of the study were consistent with the results of the studies of Ruei [15] and Salehi [20]. The results also showed that there was a significant difference between the drawing features of CDPs and normal children in terms of devaluation. Devaluation includes complete elimination, drawing smaller, and elimination of the family members based on devaluation means passive aggressive reactions. Self-

Concerning of the drawing levels, there was several differences between two groups. The drawings of CDPs were more intellectual than normal children in term of drawing level of sensory-intellectual. Formal structures level is one of the indices of family drawing and dynamics of drawing and interaction between people are subsets including sensory and intellectual forms. Sensory formation is including curve lines, flexible and intellectual formation is including straight and inflexible lines. The researches have showed that there is an association between children depression and separation from parents [9]. It can be said that drawing straight lines being dominant on curve lines show psychological inhibition of the child and intellectual formation and this was more observed in the drawing of CDPs with psychological vulnerability compared to normal children.

Finally, the results showed that there was no significant difference between CDPs drawing features and normal children in terms of drawing levels of top-bottom and pale-bold. By contrast, they were different in drawing levels of left-right and normal-abnormal extension. Drawing area is one of the branches of drawing level including top and bottom, and left and right. Top and bottom are regions between fundamental instinct and self-protection. The top area is including imagination development and idealist people. Left area is the past or returning to childhood, regression and right area is future. Drawing direction in the right-handed is left to right, natural progressive movement and from right to left as a regressive movement. In CDPs, drawing direction was

| 0.001 ** | 3 | 8.707 | 21 | 7.7 | 5 | 13.3 | 16 | Mother | Complete elimination |
| 0.001 ** | 4 | 13.697 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | Instructor | Devaluation |
| 0.001 ** | 4 | 24.93 | 8 | 3.9 | 0 | 4.1 | 8 | Instructor | Conscious identification |
| 0.009 ** | 1 | 6.787 | 26 | 13 | 18 | 13 | 8 | Sensory | Drawing level |
| 0.733 | 1 | 0.117 | 16 | 7.6 | 7 | 8.4 | 9 | Top | Drawing level |
| 0.001 ** | 1 | 11.065 | 35 | 15.9 | 10 | 19.1 | 25 | Left | Drawing level |
| 0.006 ** | 1 | 7.603 | 25 | 13.2 | 8 | 11.8 | 17 | Abnormal extension | Drawing level |
| 0.934 | 1 | 0.007 | 21 | 9.8 | 10 | 11.2 | 11 | Pale | Drawing level |

P<0.01 ** P<0.05*
right to left and it showed regressive and abnormal trend. The results of Aslipour [24] and Spigelman, Spigelman [22] study are consistent with the findings about drawing area. On the other side, bold lines showed freedom of instinct and pale lines showed the interruption of instinct. Bold lines indicated strong force being released and pale lines showed shyness and inability in self-appraisal. This result also is consistent with the results of Ghasemzade [25] and Aslipour [24] study. Drawing lines extension is the other branches of drawing level including high extension or being out of the page and low extension. High extension in the page shows the low affection, imbalance and attention-seeking. Low extension shows low motivation, low self-confidence and forbidden space. This result is in line with the results of Irvani, Valizade [17] and Faez [26].

Overall, the results of the present study showed that CDPs compared to normal children showed their emotional reactions to the family and members differently. In other words, children understanding in both groups of the existing condition of family were different. Hypotheses testing acknowledges that CDPs compared to normal children eliminated and devaluated of parents more, had negative attitude to them and identified to an alternative person. These findings is in line with the local and international studies. The presence of parents beside children is necessary for the emotional and social development, most of the parents due to some issues such as the lack of economic and cultural ability and behavioral problems cannot provide wellbeing facilities for their children and this will fall apart the family.

REFERENCES