

# The Impact of Father's Addiction on His Supportive and Economic Role in the Family and Social Relations and Socialization of the Family Members: The Case of Shiraz, Iran

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## Abstract

Father as one of the elements that affect family relationships plays a fundamental role in the family interactions. So that his addiction could lead in disruptions in relations with his wife and children, disruptions in the family's social relations and non-regulated situation of the family. The aim of this research is to study the effect of father's addiction on family social relations and socialization and his economic and supportive role in the family. The research method is causative - comparative and the statistical population includes families of addicted fathers (with a background of over 5 years of drug abuse with above 7-year-old children) and also families of non-addicted fathers in the city of Shiraz. By stratified sampling, a number of 120 families were selected as samples and the following results were obtained: father's addiction: 1). Will affect negatively the socialization of children. 2). Will negatively affect the social relationships of family members. 3). Will disrupt the family's economic status. 4). Will decrease the father's supportive role in the family.

**Keywords:** Father's addiction, Family's social relations, Family's socialization, Economic role, Supportive role

## 1. Introduction

Historically, addiction has been defined as physical and psychological dependence on psychoactive substances (for example alcohol, tobacco, heroin and other drugs) which cross the blood-brain barrier once ingested, temporarily altering the chemical milieu of the brain (Note 1). Addiction can also be viewed as a continued involvement with a substance or activity despite the negative consequences associated with it. Pleasure and enjoyment would have originally been sought; however, over a period of time involvement with the substance or activity is needed to feel normal (Morrissey, Jenm, Keogh, Doyle, 2008). Some psychology professionals and many laypeople now mean 'addiction' to include abnormal psychological dependency on such things as gambling, food, pornography, computers, internet, work, exercise, idolizing, watching TV or certain types of non-pornographic videos, spiritual obsession, self-injury and shopping (Teylor, 2002; Depression, 2008; Nowack, 2006; Beck, 2007).

The number of families across the world affected by addiction (including alcohol, drugs, gambling, and many other 'excessive appetites') is huge. Families, and individual members of those families, can be, and often are, affected in a plethora of ways, with addiction negatively impacting upon communication, roles, responsibilities and dynamics within those families. Amongst those most affected are children, where there are often major impacts on their health, well-being, and development. On the other hand, not all children are so badly affected, and there has been increasing interest in resilience: the fact that some children who have upbringings which are predicted to cause them major problems are not as badly affected as expected, and may even be strengthened by their experiences (Note 2).

Families where addiction is present are oftentimes painful to live in, which is why those who live with addiction may become traumatized to varying degrees by the experience. Broad swings, from one end of the emotional, psychological and behavioral spectrum to the other, all too often characterize the addicted family system. Living with addiction can put family members under unusual stress. Normal routines are constantly being interrupted by unexpected or even frightening kinds of experiences that are part of living with drug use. What is being said often doesn't match up with what family members sense, feel beneath the surface or see right in front of their eyes. The drug user as well as family members may bend, manipulate and deny reality in their attempt to maintain a family order that they experience as gradually slipping away. The entire system becomes absorbed by a problem that is slowly spinning out of control. Little things become big and big things get minimized as pain is denied and slips out sideways.

During early childhood years, living in this intense emotional environment can set up a fear of feeling or patterns of attachment that are filled with anxiety and ambivalence. In their youth, children of alcoholics or drug dependent parents (COAs) may feel overwhelmed with powerful emotions that they lack the developmental sophistication and family support to process and understand. As a result, they may resort to intense defenses, such as shutting down their own feelings, denying there is a problem, rationalizing, intellectualizing, over-controlling, withdrawing, acting out or self medicating, as a way to control their inner experience of chaos. The COA may be difficult to identify. They are just as likely to be the president of the class, the captain of the cheerleading squad, or the A student, as they are to act out in negative ways. This article is mainly considered with the problems that father's addiction brings to family members including their socialization and social relations as well as father's economic and supportive role in the family.

## 2. Socialization and Social Life

Socialization is a developmental process in which an individual comes in contact with people and things that allow them to be "socially acceptable". This process begins at birth and is constant throughout a person's entire lifespan. There are many things that can factor a person's perception of the world as they see it and how they behave in it. These influences are known as socializing agents, which are determined by the surroundings and experiences the individual has been exposed to. Socializing agents can bring both positive and negative impacts for an individual. Also, these impacts are likely to have life-long effects (Note 3). Socialization is the primary means by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as a functioning member of their society, and are the most influential learning processes one can experience (Billingham, 2007). Franco Bianchini has also argued that 'public social life' is "the interacting of socializing or socialization that occurs within the public realm" (Bianchini, 1990). The concept of public social life is a much wider concept than the public spaces or places in the city, but refers rather to a distinctive set of social relations (Montgomery, 2006, Masoud et al, 2011). Socialization may provide the individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within their own society; a society develops a culture through a plurality of shared norms, customs, values, traditions, social roles, symbols and languages. Socialization is thus 'the means by which social and cultural continuity are attained' (Clausen, 1968).

Socialization, however, is not a normative term: it describes a *process* which may or may not affect the reflexive agent, and which may or may not lead to desirable, or 'moral', outcomes. Individual views on certain issues, such as race or economics, may be socialized (and to that extent *normalized*) within a society. Many socio-political theories postulate that socialization provides only a partial explanation for human beliefs and behaviors; that agents are not 'blank slates' predetermined by their environment (Pinker, 2002). Scientific research provides strong evidence that people are shaped by both social influences *and* their hard-wired biological makeup (Dusheck, 2002. Carlson, *et al*, 2005. Ridley, 2003. Westen, 2002).

Genetic studies have shown that a person's environment interacts with their genotype to influence behavioral outcomes (Kendler and Baker, 2007).

However, the family is the earliest of agents and one of the most effective. During the early stages of an individual's lifespan they are vulnerable and dependant on others to guide them. This responsibility comes to the parents to teach their children right from wrong according to their socially acceptable attitudes. A child can also learn things from other members of the household such as siblings or other relatives. However, the predominant influence is that of the parents. Parents play a big role because they are primarily in control of the individual during childhood and adolescent years. The involvement of parents can be, "a good ground for model behavior however, it can also have a negative impact on the child. Things such as, violent environment can greatly impact how they think, act and emotionally feel." (Hawkes, 2001). During these early years children generally rely on their parents and need to be supported by them.

In social relations among family members of an addict father, violence is dominant rather than love and kindness. Addicted family members have very little relations with relatives and in gatherings where addicted father is present, they feel shame and embarrassment rather than having a feeling of comfort and pride (Qomi, 1996).

### **3. Problems Raised in Families with Addicted Parent**

When alcohol or drugs are introduced into a family system, the family's ability to regulate its emotional and behavioral functioning is severely challenged. The family will generally reach as a unit to balance itself. Family members can become subsumed by the disease to such an extent they lose their sense of normal. Their life becomes about hiding the truth from themselves, their children and their relational world. Trust and faith in an orderly and predictable world can be challenged as their family life becomes chaotic, promises are broken and those they depend upon for support and stability behave in untrustworthy ways. Both children and adults in this family may lose their sense of who and what they can depend upon. Because the disease is progressive, family members seamlessly slip into patterns of relating that become increasingly more dysfunctional. The children are often left to fend for themselves and anyone bold enough to confront the obvious disease may be branded as a family traitor. Family members may withdraw into their own private worlds or compete for the little love and attention that is available.

Because family members avoid sharing subjects that might lead to more pain they often wind up avoiding genuine connection with each other. Then when painful feelings build up they may rise to the surface in emotional eruptions or get acted out through impulsive behaviors. The guilt and shame that family members feel at the erratic behavior within their walls, along with the psychological defenses against seeing the truth, all too often keep this family from getting help. The development of the individuals within the family, as well as the development of the family as a resilient unit that can adjust to the many natural shifts and changes that any family moves through, becomes impaired.

It is no wonder that families such as these produce a range of symptoms in their members that can lead to problems both in the present and later in life. Children from these families may find themselves moving into adult roles carrying huge burdens that they don't know exactly what to do with and that get them into trouble in their relationships and/or work lives (Note 4).

### **4. Research Method**

The research method is causative-comparative as two groups of families with addicted and non-addicted fathers are compared in Shiraz City.

#### *4.1 Research Statistical Population and Sample*

In this study, two groups of similar families (each group including 60 people) with fathers addicted to Heroin and Opium were selected as the independent variable and the effects of this independent variable on the four dependent variable of children's socialization, father's supportive role, father's economic role and the social relations of the family members were studied.

The 60 addicted people were kept in rehabilitation centers and had the following conditions:

- 1). They had been abusing drugs for over 7 years.
- 2). They were married and had children of over 7-year old.

#### *4.2 Research Tools*

Research tools included 4 questionnaires which were designed to study the effect of fathers' role (addicted and non-addicted) on children's socialization, father's supportive role, father's economic role and the social relations of the family members.

### 4.3 Research Hypotheses

- 1). Is the socialization of children of addicted fathers less than the socialization of non-addicted fathers?
- 2). Is the social relations of children of addicted fathers less than the social of non-addicted fathers?
- 3). Is the effect of addicted fathers on the decrease in economic conditions of the family more than the effect of non-addicted fathers on the issue?
- 4). Is the family support of addicted fathers less than non-addicted fathers?

### 4.4 Data Analysis Method

To analyze the data collected and in order to compare the two groups of families, the following actions were taken:

The difference in functions of the two groups were obtained in terms of each variables of children's socialization, father's supportive role, father's economic role and the social relations of the family members in separate tables and their non-equal indicator was determined by calculating the difference of the amounts obtained from each group.

### 4.5 Validity and Reliability of Questionnaires

To assess the validity of questionnaires, the formal validity and to assess their reliability, the retest methods were used. As a result, the following family function indicators were selected:

#### 4.5.1 Indicators for the concept of socialization

1- Respect for parents of 2- Following the orders of the parent 3- Voluntary participation in housework 4- Compatibility with peers 5- Relationship with school custodians 6- Physical status 7- Educational status 8- Reaction of children to father's presence at home 9- The kind of children's socialization

#### 4.5.2 Indicators for the economic role

1 - Employment status 2- Condition of going to work 3 - Income status 4- Income amount 5- Home property sales 6- Forcing wife to work 7- Forcing children to work

#### 4.5.3 Indicators for the supportive role

1- Reliance of children on their fathers in facing problems 2- Reliance of the wife on her husband in facing problems 3- Children feeling at home with their father 4- Wife feeling at home with her husband

#### 4.5.4 Indicators for social relationships of family members

1- Children's feeling of shame of their father's attending the social relations 2- The wife's feeling of shame of her husband's attending the social relations 3- Children's feeling of pride of their father's attending the social relations 4- The wife's feeling of pride of her husband's attending the social relations 5- Father's status of presence at home 6- Amount of conflict among family members 7- Feeling blue with the lack of father's presence at home

## 5. Findings

To compare the socialization of children, father's supportive role, father's economic role and the social relations of the family members in the two studied groups, according to the following tables, each of the indicators related to the above variables were compared separately:

### 5.1 Indicators for the children's socialization

Indicators of non-equality of the two main groups (addicted father) and the comparison group (non-addicted father) in the indicators for socialization are shown in table 1.

The two groups of main and comparison are different in terms of the mentioned indicators for the children's socialization and in families with addicted father, the children's socialization decreases.

### 5.2 Indicators for economic role

Each indicators related to the father's economic support role were compared with one-another and the differences between them were determined which is shown in table 2.

The two groups of main and comparison are different in terms of indicators for the economic role of father and in families with an addicted father, the father's economic role decreases.

### 5.3 Indicators for the supportive role

Each indicators related to the father's supportive role were compared with one-another and the differences between them were determined which is shown in table 3.

The two groups of main and comparison are different in terms of indicators for the supportive role of father and in families with an addicted father, the father's supportive role decreases.

### 5.4 Indicators for the social relations of the family members

Each indicators related to the social relations of the family members were compared with one-another and the differences between them were determined which is shown in table 4.

The two groups of main and comparison are different in terms of indicators for the social relations of the family members and in families with an addicted father, the social relations of the family members both within and outside the family environment are disrupted. Attentions are paid to other people rather than to father and relations in the presence of the father decreases as the family members do not feel comfortable in their relationships at the presence of the father.

## 6. Summary of the findings

The outcome of calculation the average of non-equal indicators is summarized in table 5.

## 7. Conclusion

The importance of family in an individual's life is the earliest and one of the most effective of socialization agents to help them explore the outside world and become "socially acceptable". And the father is a major factor in the family affecting the social relations of the family members. So that his addiction will lead in disruption in his relation with his wife and children, as well as disruption in the family's social relations, socialization of the family and economic and supportive disorders in the family.

This article aimed to study the effect of father's addiction on family social relations and socialization and his economic and supportive role in the family. Findings from the research showed that an addicted father rather than having a supportive and economic role in the family and strengthening the social relations in the family, turns into a supportable and controllable person. In many cases his bread owning role shifts to a bread consuming one and he even attempts to sell the furniture to provide himself with drugs and as result, the children grown in such families gain a discrete or long-term shaped identity.

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[Online] Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>

### Notes

Note 1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>

Note 2. [http://www.aerc.org.uk/documents/pdfs/AERC\\_Addiction\\_and\\_Family.pdf](http://www.aerc.org.uk/documents/pdfs/AERC_Addiction_and_Family.pdf)

Note 3. <http://www.xomba.com/socialization>

Note 4. <http://www.nacoa.org/pdfs/The%20Set%20Up%20for%20Social%20Work%20Curriculum.pdf>

Table 1. Indicators for children's socialization

Indicator	Difference extent %
Respect to father	64
Respect to mother	24
Respect to school custodians	45
Contribution in house chores	31
Reaction of children to father's presence at home	61
Interest of school custodians in children	39
Fighting peers	47
Getting along with peers	20
Educational status being worse	32
Following the orders of the father	84
Following the orders of the mother	21
Hiding from the school custodians	64
Listening to the school custodians	52
Children's relationship with non-standards peers	42
Conflicts with peers	54
Children's reaction to the presence of the father at home	64
Comparison of children's total condition	23
Educational status	36
Average of the non-equal indicators for socialization	44.61

Table 2. Indicators for the economic role of father

Indicator	--- %
Employment status	88
Conditions of going to work	80
Income status	61
Income amount	74
Property sales	32
Forcing the wife to go to work	24
Forcing the children to go to work	15
Average of the non-equal indicators for the father's economic role	49.75

Table 3. Indicators for the supportive role of father

Indicator	Non-equality %
Feeling at home with the husband	89
Relying on the husband	90
Feeling at home with the father	80
Relying on the father	78
Average of the non-equal indicators for the father's supportive role	84.25

Table 4. Indicators for the social relations of the family members

Indicator	Non-equality %
Children's feeling of shame	98
Children's feeling of comfort	90
Children's feeling of pride	91
Children's feeling of blue with the father's absence	89
Wife's feeling of shame	97
Wife's feeling of pride	98
Wife's feeling of comfort	95
Wife's feeling of blue with the husband's absence	88
Husband's presence at home during the last year	70
Conflict with husband	54
Average of non-equal indicators of the social relations of the family members	87

Table 5. Average of non-equal indicators of the two main and comparison groups in major functions of the family

Average of the non-equal Indicator	Children's socialization	44.61%
Average of the non-equal Indicator	Father's economic role	49.75%
Average of the non-equal Indicator	Father's supportive role	84.25%
Average of the non-equal Indicator	Social relations of the family members	87%
Average of the non-equal Indicator	Family function in the two groups	66.40%