

SOCIAL SCIENCES. Education & Educational Research

ORIGINAL RESEARCH**Behavioral Tendencies of Single Parent Students****Author's Contribution:**

- A** – Study design;
B – Data collection;
C – Statistical analysis;
D – Data interpretation;
E – Manuscript preparation;
F – Literature search;
G – Funds collection

Usakli H.¹ ABCDEFG¹ Sinop University, Turkey**Received:** 20.09.2018; **Accepted:** 12.10.2018; **Published:** 30.11.2018**Background and Aim of Study:****Abstract**

A Family is social unit of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption and having a shared commitment to the mutual relationship. The definition of single parent is someone who has a child or children but no husband, wife, or partner who lives with them. Death of a partner and divorce are main causes of being single parent. Children are affected by divorce in many different ways, varying by the circumstances and age of the child. Children whose ages are seven to twelve are much better at expressing emotions and accepting parentage breakage, but often distrust their parents, rely on outside help and support for encouragement, and may manifest social and academic problems.

The aim of the study: to find out teachers opinion of single parents' students' behavioral tendency.

Material and Methods:

This qualitative study represents 30 teachers' opinions on single parent students' problems.

Results:

Not only in deep theoretical framework but also recent studies underline the importance of healthy family relation on child wellbeing. Every child may have potential for single parent in nowadays society. Experienced elementary teachers claim that single parent students are more submissive and aggressive. In addition of this, they are less assertive when comparing to their two parents counterparts.

Conclusions:

Not only school psychologists and guidance practitioners but also teachers and school principles should be aware of the potential single parent students' needs. Being more assertive or aggressive creates fewer opportunity for single parent students. Productive society will be raised with only equal sublimation of all children's developments.

Keywords:

single parent students, elementary teachers, behavioral tendencies; assertiveness; aggressiveness; submissiveness.

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Introduction

Behaviour can be defined as the way in which an individual behaves or acts. It is the way of an individual's conducting herself/himself. Behaviour should be viewed in reference to a phenomenon, an object or person. It can be seen in reference to society norms, or the way in which one treats others or handles objects. Therefore, behavior is the way of an individual's acting towards people, society or objects. It can be either bad or good. It can be normal or abnormal according to society norms. Society will always try to correct bad behaviour and try to bring abnormal behaviour back to normal (UNESCO, 2000, p. 9).

The behavior can be defined as the movement of the organization that can be viewed or measured in any way. Learning is relatively permanent change in an organism's behavioral repertoire as a result of experience.

The family, which consists of parents and children, is very important for human life. Starting from loving and loving the child who comes from within a family in the world develops a healthy personality in accordance with the needs of his/her physical, mental and mental needs and obtains the most comprehensive information about the society to live in. The child, who has completed the socialization and education process with the help and contributions of the parents of the parents, gains a successful social life. A child observes a family communication based on mutual love, respect, sharing and solidarity, has a better relationship with the people around him (Şentürk, 2012, p. 124).

Pre-school children learn about social behaviour in the family, where rules of behaviour are specified according to the family structure. These rules determine the social behaviour of the child. Families apply various kinds of control when educating their children about social behaviour. Parents sometimes explain why the child must abide by a rule and other times they just demand that she/he does it. The relation between the self control of the adult and her control over the child may be of interest.

Deficiency of mother or father can cause lack of behavioral performance for any children. What is the reason of any children's having single parent?

Nowadays, divorce is a very ordinary event. In each state in the United States, every two new marriages result in a divorce (Schaie and Willis, 1996). Also in Europe, the rate of divorce has increased in the last two decades (Jonsson, Njardik, Olafsdottir, and Gretarsson, 2000, p. 101).

The family is defined as a complex social structure consisting of a common past, shared association, emotional attachment, individual members of the family, and individuals who plan action to meet the needs of the entire family (Nazli, 2003). The family is one of the effective institutions that guide children on social development, adaptation and socialization (Yavuzer, 2001). Feldman and Wentzel (1990) argue that families can provide their children with social acceptance thanks to the child-centered education they will give their children. The core of family that constitutes the smallest unit of social structure can

sometimes be seen as an institution where parents and children are together. Due to different reasons, the family cannot fulfill its function fully, and as a result, it can lead to a bad situation. Familial changes; due to death, divorce, temporary and persistent divisions are called fragmented or single-parent families (Soyaslan, 1998). Broken family cannot fulfill its expected responsibilities due to its fragmented structure and some reasons.

Children who grow up in fragmented or single-parent families fail to fulfill their socialization tasks (Uluğtekin, 1991). The violent conflict created by the incompetence in the family causes the divorce by weakening the relationship between the parents, and as a result of these divorces, a number of anti-social behaviors such as high anxiety, aggressiveness and shyness are observed in children (Ulug and Candan, 2008). A child who cannot see as much support and love in a single parent will go on to show this need constantly (Yörükoğlu, 2004).

A child belonging to a broken family has constant internal conflict. At the end of these conflicts, they accused the family of children and showed an attitude towards them (Wolf, 1998). Without the ability to solve the problem, the child will face deeper problems in the future because he cannot solve his anti-social behavior (Morganett, 2005). The research revealed that divorce has negative consequences on children such as depression, stress, loneliness, irritability, and lack of attention (Herwig, Wirtz, and Bengel 2004; Jackson, 2000).

The effects of divorce on children:

Wade and Tavis (1990) investigate this issue from the attachment frame.

Thirty years ago, divorce was rare and shameful. Today, divorce is as common as the flu and often strikes as unpredictably, to couples married only a year as well as to couples married for decades, affecting 1 million children a year. A child born today has a 40 percent chance of living through a second parental divorce by age 18. At least, the stigma of being different is no longer a matter; we know a child who complains that she has "only" one set of parents (Wade and Tavis, 1990, p. 485).

Despite its increasing prevalence, divorce continues to be troubling, difficulty, and painful for children of all ages – just as it is troubling for most divorcing couples. One reason is that human beings do not break their attachments lightly, even bad attachments (Berman, 1988; Bowlby, 1988). Married couples who fought constantly are often surprised to discover, once separated, how emotionally attached they remain to each other. Children often persist in their attachment to cold or abusive parent long after the parents have abandoned them.

According to longitudinal studies, the effects of divorce depend on the child's gender, age, at the time of the parents' divorce, and whether you are looking at immediate or long-term reactions (Wallerstein, 1984; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989):

Preschool-age children (ages 2 to 6) are the age group which most immediately distressed by their parent's

divorce, yet this group does best in the long run. Preschoolers become extremely needy and anxious. Being egocentric in their thinking, they blame themselves for the divorce (“Daddy is leaving because I left my toys on the stairs”). A year and a half later, about half of these children, especially the boys, are still deeply troubled. After five years, more than a third of them are still moderately to severely depressed. However, most have forgotten the distress and fears they felt at the time of the divorce and are less burdened by the divorce than older children until adolescence. Yet most of them still speak sadly of the disruption and some of them still have fantasies of their parents’ reconciliation. Almost all of them remain emotionally attached to their fathers, whether the father visits them often or rarely, predictably or erratically.

Elementary – school age children (ages 7 to 12) are not as likely to blame themselves for the divorce, but most feel abandoned and lonely nevertheless. They are better than preschoolers at expressing their feelings, but they have trouble in managing conflicting emotions toward the custodial parent, such as anger and sadness. They often fear that if they make that parent angry, he or she will leave them too.

Adolescents (ages 13 to 18) report frequent feelings of anger, sadness, shame, helplessness, and a sense of betrayal by the parents. They tend to cope with distancing themselves from their parents, remaining aloof even a year or more later. Girls may respond to parental divorce by becoming sexually precocious (Hetherington, M. Cox, and R. Cox, 1985). Boys may become sexually insecure and threatened, acting out their feelings through drug use and aggression. Other boys become “supermacho,” exaggerating the male role. Because of their greater cognitive maturity, adolescents are better able than younger children to see the divorce as mainly the parents’ problem. But for the same reason, they often become more distrustful of the institution of marriage itself.

College – age students (ages 18 to 22) intellectually understand and accept the reasons for their parents’ divorce, but this understanding does not reduce their emotional upheaval. Many of them report depression, stress, and feeling of insecurity. They are old enough to feel empathy for their parents, yet they often worry that no one appreciates their own grief and confusion (Cooney, Smyer, Hagestad, and Klock, 1986).

Overall, girls adjust to divorce more easily than boys, and one reason seems to be that boys suffer more by being separated from the father when the mother has custody (Beech-Lublin, 1985; Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985). Children who live in joint custody or in custody of the same-sex parent show significantly more competence, maturity, cooperativeness, and self-esteem than children living with the opposite-sex parent (Meyer and Simons, 1998).

A child’s ability to cope with divorce also depends on whether the parents settle into amicable (or at least silent) relations or continue to feel angry and conflicted. Children will eventually recover from the parents’ divorce, unless the parents continue to quarrel about visitation rights, take each other to court, or fight

with each other at every visit (Ash and Guyer, 1988; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). From the standpoint of children’s adjustment, an amicable divorce is better than a bitter marriage, but a prolonged and bitter divorce is worst of all (Wade and Tavris, 1990, p. 485-486). Divorce not only negatively affects children but also unwanted side affect for woman (Kader, 2018).

Not only divorce but also incertion is another issue for single parenting. Hairston (2007) highlights this issue. Prisoners are not lone individuals operating without social ties or consequences. They are members of families, and have family roles, commitments and obligations. Incarceration involves not only the physical separation of prisoners from society, but separation from their families, children and friendship networks as well. Research shows that prisoners and their families identify numerous financial, social and emotional issues associated with parental incarceration. Incarceration of a parent is very much a family matter. It has long-range economic, emotional and social consequences that affect prisoners, families and that can affect children’s well-being.

Every year, millions of parents separate, divorce, or remarry. Many writer have focused on the negative reactions (e.g., depression, anxiety, conduct problems) that children sometimes exhibit in response to these changes, but marital transitions are stressful for both parents and children (King, 1992). Therapists and others often focus on the divorce itself without considering the experience that predict and follow the event. Clinicians who have this restricted view tend to conceptualize a child’s psychology.

During this period (infantile – genital period ages 3-4 or so) the child experiences strong ambivalent feelings, seeking the parent of the opposite sex as a lover, but at the same time both fearing and loving the parent of the same sex. An adequate resolution of the Oedipus situation occurs when the child rejects the sexual and at the same time, identifies with the parent of the same sex. By identifying with the same-sex parent, the child both assuages feelings of fear of reprisal and incorporates the traits of the same-sex parent, the traits that made that parent win the love of the other. In effect, the boy identifies with his father and seeks to adopt his father’s characteristics. This means that the boy identifies with his father and seeks to adopt his father’s traits, the traits of masculinity. In like fashion, the girl identifies with the mother and tries to behave in those feminine ways that apparently have made her mother successfully attractive. The girl does the same with her mother. This is the way Freudian theory accounts for the development of masculine and feminine characteristics that fit the mode of the society into which the child is raised (Thomas, 1983, p. 242).

If the quality of affectional relationships at this time (basic trust versus basic mistrust ages between 0 and 1) is poor, with the mother emotionally rejecting the baby while tending to its physical needs, the sense of trust is damaged. This sets a poor foundation for the trust-mistrust ratio on which the child is to build the rest of his life (Thomas, 1983, p. 270).



Children's Behavioral Tendencies.

The work on assertiveness is the book "Your Perfect Right. A Guide To Assertive Living" written by Alberti and Emmons which is used as a source in many research. In this book, the authors state that a behavior can be in three different forms: assertive, aggressive, and non-assertive (submissive). The aggressive behavior in these forms of behavior is described as follows:

"The form of assertive behavior makes it possible for us to defend ourselves, to express our feelings fairly and comfortably, and to use our rights without violating others' rights" (Alberti and Emmons, 1998, p. 6) and to free from equality and unnecessary worries in human relations.

Aggressive behavior leads to the feeling of being trivial and hurt by anyone who is against this behavior (the buyer itself). As the other person does not recognize his/her rights, the receiver feels himself broken, humiliated and defensive (Alberti and Emmons, 1998, p. 44).

In aggression, the goal is to go our own way to win whatever it is. So aggression is usually destructive both physically and psychologically. Aggressive people are not interested in the interests, rights, desires and needs of others. With regard to aggression, the following points should be considered:

- Aggression usually leads to aggression (violence raises violence).
- Aggressive people are one who are undesirable, unwilling and unpopular.
- People do not want to have relation with aggressive people. They are hesitant to help them when they need it.
- Aggression allows a person in aggressive behavior to feel good for a very short period of time, but over time the person feels bad (Sorensen, 2005).

People who are often in abstinent behaviors are those who deny themselves, are arrested, broken, worried, allow others to make choices on their behalf, and cannot reach the target they desire (Alberti and Emmons, 1998, p. 45).

Submissive people cannot tell their true thoughts, contribute to the formation of an idea, and feel themselves worthless. Thus, the general conclusions of shy behavior can be summarized as follows:

- Not able to really meet what you want or what you need.
- Less respect from others.
- Short-term stress reduction (Sorensen, 2005).

The basic goal in assertiveness is to find the best solution for all people. Assertiveness takes into account that everyone has equal rights and responsibilities. That is why the form of aggressive behavior is based on win-win solution. Possible key outcomes of an assertive behavior may be like this:

- It is possible to meet the needs of a person exhibiting a form of assertive behavior.
- The pattern of assertive behavior allows us to be controlled.
- The form of assertive behavior helps to increase our confidence in ourselves.

- It is observed that people who exhibit a form of assertive behavior have decreased stress (Back, 1982). Greenberg (2002) points out the main points of these three behaviors. In assertive behavior, a person expresses himself comfortably and meets his needs. He does not hurt others while doing these things and he feels good. In the form of non-initiative behavior, the person denies their wishes to satisfy others. It sacrifices its own needs to meet the needs of others. In aggressive behavior, one tries to exert himself by acting as he wishes others to spend (Greenberg, 2002, p. 95).

Assertiveness is not just about earning at all costs but on the contrary, creating needs and rights fairly (Rogers, 2002, p. 55). When we want to be assertive, we have to look at the eyes of the person, but we must not shake our finger very closely to show it. We must use a clear, calm, serious tone of voice clearly (Rogers, 2002, p. 134).

Emmer, Evertson, and Worsham (2003) state that there are three skill requirements for effective communication within communication skills in teaching. These skills are constructive assertiveness, empathic response and problem solving. Constructive assertiveness involves explicitly expressing the subject matter involved, insisting on correcting misconduct, resisting against compulsion and subjugation. In this case, it is apparent that there are three elements of constructive agility. These include the ability to express the problem or situation clearly, to have a pronounced body language (eye contact but not threatening to the opposite side, not the stiffness of the spine and the matching of the face expression), and resistance to appropriate behavior or problem solving (Emmer et al., 2003, p. 147-148).

The aim of the study. To find out teachers opinion of single parents' students' behavioral tendency. The significance of this study is that there are few number of studies conducting on single parent children' problems in terms of parent specialist such as psychologist or social worker view. Studies on teachers' opinion on single parents' students' behavior is too rare.

Material and methods

Working Groups. This study was designed as qualitative research. 30 elementary school teachers who had ten or more years experienced in teaching joined in the study. The working group was familiar with basic problems of single parent children such as economic and academic. The group was highly skilled with teaching.

Data Collection. 30 participant elementary school teachers joined a conference on "Children Action Tendency" submitted by the author of this study. The conference duration was held 90 minutes. After the conference teachers answered three open ended questions:

1. What do you think about single parents' children over all?
2. What is your opinion on single parents' children behavioral tendencies such as assertiveness, aggressiveness and submissiveness?

3. Do you think that you are capable of coping with single parents' children behavioral problems?

There were three questions asked to participants as open-ended. These individual interviews were recorded. The approximate duration of interviews is 10 minutes. 300 minutes interviews records were transcribed as 32 pages of written data (Times New Roman 12, spacing 1.5).

This study was designed by qualitative research methods using document review technique. These kind of studies aim to depict the past or present as it exists (Karasar, 2008, p. 77). Qualitative research is frequently used in anthropology, philosophy, humanistic psychology, sociology, social psychology, environmental psychology, linguistics. However, qualitative research is also used in interdisciplinary studies such as educational sciences. Qualitative research offers a flexible working environment for researchers. In qualitative research, interview methods have positive contributions such as giving flexibility to researchers, dominating responses, following nonverbal behaviors, providing control over the environment and getting in-depth information (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008).

Data analysis and reliability. The two terms are sine qua non for all researches not only quantitative but also qualitative ones. Reliability is a term which is used in quantitative research to indicate the consistency of measurement. The term is also applied to some qualitative research, particularly that which adopts a realist epistemology. In qualitative research, the evaluative criteria that are applied are more commonly transparency and trustworthiness. Validity is the extent to which research measures or reflects what it claims to. It is most meaningfully used in research with a realist epistemology (Frost, 2011, p. 108).

The thematic model can be applied to a wide range of narrative text, including narratives produced in interviews and written documents. The analyst can start the thematic analysis by the open coding of data. The steps in the categorical content analysis described by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) can be used in the process of thematic analysis. The categorical content analysis focuses on thematic similarities and differences between narratives generated in interviews. The analytical approach of

Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 112-113) involves breaking the text into smaller units of content.

Results

This study reflects only a small partial of very wide range of scientific research project. The research title is "Preparing a Psycho-Educational Program for Identifying Problems of Single Parents and Solving These Problems". To make visible study for problems of single parents' students, this qualitative study was designed. In this study, 30 elementary teachers who are experienced more than ten years were interviewed. Before these interviews, those teachers were participated a conference on behavioral tendency. In this conference, the author of this study explained to the teachers what is assertive, aggressive and submissive behavior of any person especially elementary student. 90 minutes conference on Children Action Tendency were held for experienced elementary teachers.

After the conference, the working group (30 teachers) were interviewed with three open ended questions.

Themes from their answers are shown as Table 1 as in below.

In question one "What do you think about single parents' children over all?" asked to the teachers. 26 teachers out of 30 gave positive statements. According to the teachers there are a few students of single parents in all classes and it is pity that they are problematic. In statistically this seems to be in high ratio (86%).

"What is your opinion on single parents' children behavioral tendencies such as assertiveness, aggressiveness and submissiveness?" asked to the teachers as a second question. According to the teachers single parents' students are failure in presenting assertive behavior. Girls seem to be submissive whereas boys are more aggressive when comparing to their same age and sex counter parts of two parents' students. 28 teachers out of 30 agree with this situation and this is also in high percentage (93%).

The last question was "Do you think are you capable of cope with single parents' children behavioral problems?" 20 teachers out of 30 (66%) stated that they have lack of information how to cope with single parents' students. Even if they know something to intervene there will be time problem to devoting to problematic students.

Table 1. Teachers response on behavioral tendencies of single parents' students.

| Questions | Response | f (frequency) | % (percentage) | Sample from responses |
|---|--|------------------|-------------------|--|
| 1. What do you think about single parents' children over all? | Socially, emotionally, behavioral problems | 26 | 86 | I think there are several such kind of students an all class but sometimes it is difficult to guess who they are. I believe and I know that most of them have social, emotional and behavioral problems. |
| 2. What is your opinion on single parents' children behavioral tendencies such as assertiveness, aggressiveness and submissiveness? | More submissive or aggressive and less assertive | 28 | 93 | Especially single parent girls are more submissive. I know a girl she was with her two parents and was very lively. But now even she prefers being far away from her old friends. Ohh boys are every time problematic yelling fighting whatever you think as undesired behavior. |
| 3. Do you think are you capable of cope with single parents' children behavioral problems? | Professionally no and limited time | 20 | 66 | I know something but where and when I should intervene. |

Discussion and Conclusions

In this qualitative study, 30 experienced elementary classroom teachers reflected their ideas on behavioral tendencies of single parents' students. In three open ended questions, teachers are agreed with there are problems of single parents' students.

Submissiveness seems to be main characteristics of single parents girls. Whereas boys of single parents display more aggressive behavior when they compare their two parents counterpart. Submissive or aggressive behavior is an example of unwanted behavior at home or at school in children (Alberti and Emmons, 1998, p. 45). How should these behaviors be avoided and how can these children present desired behavior? First of all, the behavior of the children should be well known. Unfortunately, parents and teachers make mistakes while interpreting children's behaviors. It must be realized that not only at home, but also in school, desired behaviors of children. Parents and other members of the household have the opportunity to closely monitor the child's behavior. In the school environment, tests and non-test techniques are used to identify individuals in the context of school guidance services. Apart from testing techniques such as skills tests, success tests and interest inventories, it is used to identify students with non-test techniques based on observation, self-expression and others' perspectives. However, it appears that there is limited scope for student recognition techniques within the programs of primary and secondary school guidance services. The techniques of individual recognition conducted in school guidance services are to uncover the differences between the students and to give them an opportunity to help them to develop more effectively. However, besides all these intensive help services, parents are worried about some of their children's behavior (Emmer et al., 2003)

Especially Sociometry Test which is the measurement tool of sociometry and popularity of children is very useful. Some apparatus such as The Loneliness Scale, Self-Respect Scale measurement tools with the tests are insufficient in the definition of the students. These inadequacies can result from the inability to observe student behaviors carefully. Group psychological counseling and guidance processes are effective in the close observation of the students.

Psycho-education groups are created for people to acquire certain skills, to understand certain topics, and to help them during difficult transition periods of life.

Both the process and the performance in this process and the output to the product can lead to changes in the ability of the students to recognize them both by their parents and their teachers (Uşaklı, 2007). It is very important that children be directed to their appropriate fields of art and sport in order for them to come from the top of unwanted behaviors after their parents or specialists are recognized. Drama in the classroom, circle clock, psycho-education activities will also help children develop constructive attitudes.

Single parent's children are sensitive groups. As parents, school principals and teachers, we should be aware of their developmental needs. About 2000 years

ago, the great wise Hillel said: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I'm just for myself, what am I? And if not now – when?" Some of the most important lessons that we can teach our children include how they will express themselves and their balance of interest when they consider the rights and feelings of others, and when should parents teach these lessons? As Hillel asked, "If not now – when?" (Deluty and Uşaklı, 2009).

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