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**THE EFFECTS OF TEACHERS' CRITICAL THINKING AND PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS AMONG
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN BOJNOORD**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to explore relationship between teachers' critical thinking and parents' participation and their effects on the treatment of behavioral disorders among preschool children at preschool centers in Bojnoord. A descriptive-correlational research method was used to do so. The sample under study included two groups: The first group consisted of 100 preschool teachers that were selected through simple random sampling technique and the second group included 100 parents who like the teachers were selected via simple random sampling technique. The instruments used to collect the data were California Critical Thinking Questionnaire (Version B, Samani and SadeghZadeh's Parents' Participation Questionnaire, and Shahim's Preschool Children's Behavioral Disorders. The results of the data analysis indicated that there is a negative and significant relationship between teachers' critical thinking and preschool children's behavioral disorders. Besides, the results of stepwise regression analysis suggested that deductive reasoning is able to negatively predict 5% of the changes in preschool children's behavioral disorders. Besides, there is a negative and significant relationship between parents' participation and preschool

children's behavioral disorders. It was also noted that learning at home can reversely predict 17% of the changes in preschool children's behavioral disorders.

Keywords: Teachers' Critical Thinking, Parents' Participation, Preschool Children's Behavioral Disorders

INTRODUCTION

Behavioral disorders are among problems that children may face before and during the formal education. Although interest in the emotional and social growth of preschool and kindergarten children has increased considerably in the few past decades, before that parents, professionals, researchers, and educators believed that children's problems are caused by developmental disorders, and such children will outpace these problems. However, the fact is that kindergarten and pre-school is a period that is associated with significant changes and developments so some behavioral instability can consequently be expected. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that many children run into emotional and behavioral problems in early childhood and such problems perhaps will continue till puberty and even in adulthood [11].

Children' behavioral disorders are common and debilitating problems that put teachers, parents, and even children themselves in trouble [5] while the fact is that in the contemporary world, the ministry of education and family are institutions that together have great impacts on the formation

of children's personality, attitudes, and their intellectual constructs [2]. Important factors affecting children's growth and education are teachers and trainers, whose thinking can influence the formation of thoughts and behaviors in children. Teachers who possess critical thinking make their learners prepared to think freely, creatively, critically, and systematically. Such teachers equip children with thinking skills in order to help them face amazing developments of the 21st Century and take appropriate decisions and solve the society's complex problems [3]. On the other hand, the family and especially the parents are the main elements that according to most of the studies have the most influence on the formation of children's character. Accordingly, parents' behaviors and actions can prevent the context for the emergence of behavioral problems in children [8]. Therefore, becomes clear that both the home and school can play an important role in improving children's behavioral disorders. The present study addresses the teachers' critical thinking and parental involvement to determine the effects of teachers' critical

thinking and parental involvement on the improvement of children's behavioral disorders.

Statement of the Problem

The statistics reported by the World Health Organization suggested that 1% of the children in the world are suffering from behavioral disorders [14]. In a study on preschool children found approximately 6% of children suffered from behavioral problems. Other studies have shown that children's behavioral problem is a serious problem that deserves attention.

Researchers have observed that family is considered as one of the most important and fundamental factors affecting the formation of personality [14]. On the other hand, the significance of preschool age has been emphasized by many theorists and psychologists in the field of child development. They believe that children achieve about 80% of their final growth before the age of five and their intelligence, aptitude, skills, moods, and their personality are formed during this period [18].

The family is a natural and social system with a series of principles that defines different roles for the household members. This fundamental system has a power structure and complex forms of visible and hidden massaging and employs elaborate negotiation

and problem solving techniques to perform different tasks successfully [5]. Such tasks are among the affairs that the family system may face intentionally and unintentionally and to overcome them it may require to change some functions and adapt it continuously to different conditions. One of these developmental assignments of the system is to direct the members to non-familial social institutions that the most obvious and significant example is apparent in the time when the children enter educational environments (kindergarten and other centers). According to [13], this is a point where a person become a member of the second component of his growth environment that is an "inter-system"; a system which is made of the interaction between sub-systems such as home and school. Without a doubt, participation at home and school is the most precious and most effective system to strengthen and accelerate the overall development of children. Without the involvement and the active participation of the family, any intervention will be unsuccessful and useless. This is Brenner's emphasis that has lead many professionals to research and exploration in a field called "Family Participation" or slightly narrower "Parents' Participation".

Parents' participation refers to a wide range of behaviors done by a father and a mother when dealing with their children's educational and learning experiences [9]. Therefore, general behaviors such as parents' insistence on having their child eat breakfast before going to school to special activities such as parents making judgments about the way the school must be run are regarded as a part of parents' participations [20].

Teachers deal with preschool children in different ways of thinking. One of these ideas is critical thinking. According to [15], critical thinking is not one of the goals of education but it is the main goal of education. Dewey defines critical thinking as suspended judgment or healthy skepticism (constructive criticism) and avoiding the rush in judgment. In other words, he defines critical thinking as active, stable, and accurate assessment of any idea or understanding. [17] defines critical thinking as the identification of wrong reasoning, keeping away from contradictions and stated and unstated assumptions when speaking with others, evading emotional excitement when facing a problem. He also believes that the basic principle of critical thinking is raising questions relevant to the problem on hand and evaluating solutions without raising alternatives. Based on a philosophical view, critical thinking is seen as

a criterion for good thinking that emphasizes the rational aspect of humanistic thinking and its enlightening and impartial features.

As was mentioned earlier, the existing statistics point out to the occurrence of 6% behavioral disorders among preschool children; therefore, some actions are needed to be taken to prevent and treat such problems and to identify factors they may affect such disorders. Accordingly, the present study is going to find out whether teachers' and parents' critical thinking plays a role in the improvement of children's behavioral problems.

The Significance of the Study

The agreement between home and school on educational and training issues are among important issues affecting the academic achievement of students. Although it is often seen that when parents do not attend school and school official do not pay attention to call parents participation, there will be a contradiction between home and school activities and the students get confused. However, if there is a coordination and opinion exchange between the home and school, many of the educational problems will not arise. "Planning for parents' cooperation with school can be an integral part of teachers' educational and management planning". The more interaction between

teachers and parents, the better educational and training conditions will be provided for learners and such interaction moves towards coordination and alignment and we will obtain more qualitative and quantitative growth, more effective educational and training, and amore trained generation. The results of research show that the intellectual contributions of parents can even solve material and financial matters at schools to a large degree. Let's not forget that in our society after the religion, the family is the most important social institution. In addition, the school is the students' second home. Failing to pay attention to either of these two important social institutions will bring in irreparable damages.

There is some evidence that suggests that childhood behavioral problems are associated with adulthood. In a study on five year children treated in a psychiatric clinic, some of them were still struggling with their problems after three to six years later to the extent that two-thirds of children with fear and nocturnal were still involved in such problems. In a study, the mothers whose children had different behavioral problems were seeking advice and guidance. Besides, 7% of these mothers believed that their children's behavioral problems negatively affected the whole family.

Therefore, rapid and early identification and early child behavioral problems will facilitate the quick treatment of such problems. In this line, the present study aims to determine the relationship between teachers' critical thinking and parental involvement in the improvement of behavioral disorders among preschool children. Such actions will promote the parents' relationship with school; besides, teachers' critical thinking in solving the problems faced by preschool children and the understanding of their behavioral characteristics become clear. In addition, a review of the scientific text shows that a few studies have been done in this field and most studies have focused on the role of teachers' and parental involvement and the effects of such participation on children's learning outcomes. Therefore, the present study is an innovative research as there is little studies at this level on preschool children. On the other hand, the results of the present study may have some practical implications for the following educational centers:

- Pre-school centers and other academic centers
- Counseling centers especially counselors of training centers and family counselors to identify factors that contribute to the

improvement of children's behavior disorders

- Teachers and educators to understand the role of critical thinking in improving children's behavioral problems and take advantage of it in practice

Review of Literature

Research Conducted Abroad

Conducted a study to determine the relationship between positive maternal parenting style and improved performance of preschool children with deficit attention hyperactivity. [7] results indicated that positive maternal parenting techniques are associated with the severity of behavioral symptom among children. [19] has studied the role of kindergarten teachers in the development of 5-6 year preschool children and found that the positive relationships between the child and the teacher affect the child's growth. Reviewed studies performed on the relationship between teachers and children with behavioral-emotional disorders. They found that teachers' unpreparedness and their lack of needed skills can affect the intensity of learners' behavioral problems. [6] analyzed the relationship between parental psychopathology, child rearing strategies, and children's mental health in a sample of 10438 children aged 5 to 15 with fathers and

mothers from English families. The results showed that parental psychopathology and non-physical punishment were associated with children's behavior problems. This relationship was especially evident among children with behavioral problems. studied the relationship between parental school involvement and students' behaviors. Parental involvement, behavior problems, and their consequences for 463 children in a 12 year period were studied. Their results indicated the involvement of parents and students will reduce behavioral problems.

[3] studied the role of parental involvement in children's self efficacy and their behavioral disorders. First grade preschoolers from 25 kindergartens with their parents participated in the study. Results indicated that greater participation of parents and children's feelings towards their fathers play an important role in the development of self adequacy and the improvement of children's behavioral problems. [7] examined the relationship between harmony/coordination in parenting, destructive behavioral problems, and disease internalization among 70 children with deficit attention hyperactivity. Coordination in general parenting and disciplinary cooperation from parents were associated with fewer disruptive behavioral problems (including aggression).

Research Conducted in Iran

Found that there is a negative and significant relationship between skills of critical analysis, deductive reasoning, and students' mental disorders. [16] studied the effectiveness of combined intervention of attachment treatment and the instruction of parenting on six mothers with children suffering from symptoms of failure hyperactivity disorders. The mothers had an insecure attachment style and their depression scores from Beck Depression Questionnaire were less than 12. The questionnaires contained the close relationship scale and hyperactivity disorder inventory. The results indicated that parenting instruction has a significant effect on reducing the child behavioral problems. [4] observed that the instruction of parenting skills (as one of the areas of parental involvement) is effective in reducing behavioral problems among children [10] studied 120 boys and girls together with their mothers and noted that there is a significant relationship between parenting skills and child behavior disorders. [12] performed a study to predict student behavior problems at home, at school, and with peers. The sample under study included 726 students (399 males and 327 females) studying in grades third to fifth of elementary school and grades first, second, and third of guidance school,

respectively. The participants answered the Family Background Questionnaire and Brown and Hamill's Scale. The results suggested that for female students the family was the strongest predictor of behavioral problems at home. On the whole the results showed that children who were maltreated experience not only some problems in their cognitive function but also they show more behavioral problems than their peers. [1] conducted an experimental study on four elementary educational groups to determine the effects of parent involvement education on child development. Results of this study showed that the independent and variable exercise of parent involvement education has affected the development of discipline, health, accountability, and social growth of children. [17] studied behavioral problems among 3 to 6 year-old children. To do so, 48 teachers completed Behavioral Problem Questionnaire for 439 children (204 females and 235 males). The questionnaire measured three factors of aggression, inattention, childish behavior, withdrawal, and anxiety. Results showed that on the whole there was a significant relationship between these three factors.

Research Objectives

Main objectives of the study

1. To determine the relationship between teachers' critical thinking and the

improvement of children's behavioral disorders

2. To determine the relationship between parental involvement and the improvement of children's behavioral disorders
3. To determine the relationship between parental involvement and the improvement of preschool children's behavioral disorders

Secondary Objectives of the Study

- To determine the relationship between teachers' inductive reasoning and children's behavioral disorders
- To determine the relationship between teachers' evaluation skills and children's behavioral disorders
- To determine the relationship between parental skills and children's behavioral disorders
- To determine the relationship between in-house learning and children's behavioral disorders
- To determine the relationship between home and school and children's behavioral disorders

Research Hypothesis

1. There is a relationship between teachers' critical thinking and the

improvement of preschool children's behavioral disorders.

2. There is a relationship between parental involvement and the improvement of preschool children's behavioral disorders.
3. There is a relationship between teachers, critical thinking, parental involvement, and the improvement of preschool children's behavioral disorders.

Research Methodology

A descriptive-correlational research method was used in this study. The population under study included all teachers and parents of preschool children in Bojnoord in 2012-2013 Academic Years. Since the population size was 137 female teachers of preschool centers, the sample members were selected in two stages. In the first stage, the sample sized was determined as equal 100 participants. Then, 100 teachers were selected through simple random sampling. In the second stage, to control the teacher factor (children whose teachers participated in the sample), 100 parents (all females) were selected by random sampling method and Parent Involvement Questionnaire were sent to them by their children. The instruments used to collect the data were Critical Thinking Questionnaire, Parent Involvement Questionnaire, and the

Inventory of Preschool Children's Behavioral Problems. To measure teachers' critical thinking, California Critical Thinking Test [3] was used. Parent Involvement Questionnaire was developed based [9] questionnaire. In addition, Inventory of Preschool Children's Behavioral Problems [17] was used to determine preschool children's behavioral problems. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by previous research. The values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Critical Thinking Questionnaire, Parent Involvement Questionnaire, and Inventory of Preschool Children's Behavioral Problems were 0.74, 0.93, and 0.9, respectively.

Results of the Study

Descriptive Statistics

Concerning the participants' level of education, it was noted that 12% of teachers had an associate degree, 78% had a B.A degree, and 10% were higher. It was also observed that 22% of parents were under diploma, 48% had a high school diploma, and 30% were higher than diploma. The analysis of the participants' age indicated that 33% of the participants were less than 35 years old, 56% were between 35-40 years, and 11% were higher than 40 years old. It was also noted that 62% of the parents were less than

35 years old, 30% were between 35-40 years old, and 8% were higher than 40 years old.

Testing the Research Hypotheses

First Research Hypothesis

As shown in **Table 1**, inductive reasoning has been entered into the regression equation only in the first step and is able to predict only 5% of variations in the preschool children's behavioral problems ($F = 5.035$, $P < 0.05$). The values of regression coefficient and β suggest that only inductive reasoning as one of the components of teachers' critical thinking affects the preschool children's behavioral problems.

Second Research Hypothesis

As shown in **Table 2**, inductive reasoning has been entered into the regression equation only in the first step and it can predict only 17% of variations of the preschool children's behavioral problems ($F = 20.51$, $P < 0.01$). The values of regression coefficient and β suggest that only in-house learning as one of the components of parental involvement affects negatively the preschool children's behavioral problems.

Third Research Hypothesis

As shown in **Table 3**, in-house learning has been entered into the regression equation only in the first step and it can predict only 17% of variations of the preschool children's behavioral problems. Besides, in the second

step by addition of the variable of teachers' critical thinking, the value reaches to 22%. The values of regression coefficient and β

suggest that in-house learning and teachers' critical thinking affect negatively the preschool children's behavioral problems.

Table 1: Results of stepwise regression for teachers' critical thinking and children's behavioral disorders

Step	Variable	β	t	R	R ²	F	Sig
1	Inductive reasoning	-0.221	-2.224	-0.221	0.05	5.035	0.027

Table 2: Results of stepwise regression for components of parental involvement and children's behavioral disorders

Step	Variable	β	t	R	R ²	F	Sig
1	In-house learning	-0.416	-4.528	-0.416	0.17	20.51	<0.001

Table 3: Results of stepwise regression for components of teachers' critical thinking and parental involvement on children's behavioral disorders

Step	Variables	β	t	Sig.	R	R ²	F	Sig
1	In-house learning	-0.443	-4.528	<0.001	-0.416	0.17	20.51	<0.001
2	In-house learning	-0.443	-4.88	<0.001	0.465	0.22	13.38	<0.001
	Evaluation	-0.210	-2.312	<0.05				

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study indicate that there is a negative relationship between teachers' critical thinking and preschool children's behavioral disorders and between parental involvement and preschool children's behavioral disorders. Besides, it was noted that in-house learning and teachers' evaluation skills simultaneously affect positively preschool children's behavioral disorders. However, since as these two variables together explain only 22% of variations in preschool children's behavioral disorders; it can be said that other factors such as personal characteristics, the child hereditary backgrounds, and educational

environments can have more contribution in the improvement of children's behavioral disorders. Nevertheless, the fundamental role of parental involvement and the interaction between teachers and parents in reducing preschool children's behavioral disorders must be taken into account. Although a few studies have been done in this field, the findings of the present study are in line with research done by [19]. The results of the present study concerning the parental involvement and children's behavioral problems are consistent with studies done by [7, 6, 3, 8, 16, 4, 10]. With regard to the relationship between parental involvement and the behavioral problems, the results of

this study are in line with the research conducted by [19, 7, 6, 3, 8, 16, 4, 10] who emphasized the role of teachers, the family, and parents in children's behavioral problems.

Limitations of the Study

Like many studies, the present study has some limitations; an awareness of them can be useful for interested researchers as well as in finding solutions to them. Some of these limitations are as follows:

- Only female teachers and mothers were included in the sample.
- The present study was conducted in preschool centers in Bojnourd and care must be exercised when generalizing the results.

Recommendations

The recommendations provided here in two parts are based on the findings of the study:

Recommendations Based on the Findings of the Study

Based on the findings of the study and given that critical thinking and its components are among factors reducing children's behavioral problems, managers and supervisors are recommended pay attention to the improvement of teachers' critical thinking and its components so that to reduce behavioral disorders among children in preschool centers.

Given the role of parental involvement in the reduction of behavioral disorders among children in preschool centers, senior managers in the field of education are recommended to provide suitable conditions including parents' education so that parents could contribute in their children education so that they reduce the causes of behavioral disorders among preschool children.

With regard to the simultaneous effects of teachers' critical thinking and parental involvement on the improvement of behavioral disorders among preschool children, the practitioners in the field are advised to provide conditions in order to enhance the simultaneous interaction between teachers' and families; paving the way for effective cooperation between teachers and parents.

Suggestions to enhance effective interaction between parents and teachers:

- Identification of the educational needs of children
- Participation in joint meetings with educators to improve children's activities and preschool centers
- Shared cooperation in holding recreational and scientific camps
- Shared cooperation to provide mental health of students

- Shared cooperation in preparing gifts and prizes to encourage children
 - Shared cooperation collaboration in identifying children's biological needs (clothing, food, financial, etc.)
 - Joint cooperation in using pre-school centers and the existing cultural and educational centers in society according to the needs of children
 - Paying attention to the experiences of other countries with regard to the interaction and participation of parents in the pre-school education
 - Analysis of ways to improve the interaction between home and school
 - Analysis of factors inhibiting parental involvement at school
- In addition to teachers' critical thinking and parental involvement, future researches can address the impact other variables such as children's personal and educational factors on the improvement of children's behavioral disorders.

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Suggestions for Future Research

- The present study was conducted only among female teachers and mothers, so it is suggested that future research focus on both genders.
- This study can be replicated in other educational fields to generalize the results more effectively.

- among parental involvement and young children's perceived self-competence and behavioral problems. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 9 (1), 27-38.
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