



Social Context of Iranian Parents with Adolescents: A Qualitative Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The social context where parents live on affects their behaviors and interactions with their children. The social changes of the Iranian society in recent years have complicated the issues of families with adolescents. Discovering the experiences of parents by considering the cultural and Islamic context of Iran is an important step for the mental health of adolescents. The aim of this study was to specify the social context of parents with adolescents. This qualitative study was a conventional content analysis that was conducted in Tabriz in 2016. Participants included 13 mothers and 10 fathers with adolescent who were included in the study by purposive sampling. Data collection was done through in-depth interviews and continued until data saturation. Data analysis was carried out using the Graneheim&Lundman approach. Four criteria of Lincoln&Guba were used to provide trustworthiness of the study. The three theme reflect the social context of parents: (1)"Living in the future frame" with the categories, concerns on the child future and empowering the child regarding future, (2)"Challenges of now days", with the categories, social hazards and gap between generations, and (3)"Parental Religiosity" with the categories, Parents' religious affects, guiding the child toward religion emphasis on the doing religious teachings. Conclusion: Identifying the social context of parents has shown that tree factors of occupational-educational policies, universal advances, and superior beliefs can affect the health of families. So clarifying these issues makes simplify design micro and macro interventions.

Key words: Adolescent, Parents, Social factors, Qualitative research

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INTRODUCTION

The influence of adolescence period on future is very important. Most of the major physical and mental problems can be rooted in this period (1). According to the census of 2011, the population of age group of 10-19 years in Iran

has been reported 12.3 million people that constitutes about 16 percent of the total population (2). Thus, examining and investigating the problems of the period is very important (3). If the effective factors on the shaped personality of the adolescent, including parent and society are organized so that they aid forming the identity of the adolescent, the acute problems will not be emerged (4).

Social dimensions is one of the aspects emphasized in definition of the WHO on the health (4). Since

social conditions are the most important causes of health problem in the world (5, 6). Social contexts provide the background for the individuals' behaviors in the society and also reflect the social contexts of that society (7, 8). A study in China emphasizes the importance of cultural and social beliefs in the educational, sexual and marital family issues (9). The growth of an adolescent is happened in the family, social environment, specific native context and also cultural contexts and the person behavior is shaped based on his or her interpretation on the society and the environment (6). Thus, the important role of social contexts on the families with adolescents and their health is undeniable (4) and they are influential in the parents' behaviors and their interactions with their adolescents (7, 10). Identification of the influential social context on the parents is one of the important factors in the adulthood (11). The findings of studies showed that social context determines the parents' beliefs and values and also the quality of relations with their adolescents (10,12, 14). On the other hand, the most challenging characteristics of this age group cause to increase of improper behavior between the parents and the adolescent so that the parents suffer from conflicts in their parenting style (15, 16).

In Iran, families are deeply rooted in the country national culture as well as religious beliefs. In the Iranian society, families are responsible for their children at all stages of life. Also, most of the family problems are resolved privately within and between family members and the search for help from outsiders is rarely done. Thus, raising a child in such context where family relationships are limited and closed can cause differences (17, 18). In addition in the recent years, the social and cultural changes and entrance of Iran in specific stage of development have caused occurrence of special issues in this period. As other Low and Middle Income Countries, raising of modernity and industrialization have led to establishment of new life styles in Iranian families. For example, using satellite and internet has affected the adolescents' behavioral patterns and imitation from western culture leading to increase of conflicts in the families (18, 19).

Family plays an important role educating the healthy behaviors to adolescent (20, 21). The research conducted in Iran showed that the behavioral and emotional problems are seen in most adolescents (22, 23). Various studies have revealed that about 16.7% to 36.4% of the Iranian

adolescents suffer from one or several disorders related to mental health (17). The family context is effective in adolescence health (11, 24, and 25). Because of that identification of the context that the parents live and raise their children and problems that they experience can solve most the adolescents' problems (10, 12, 14). Living in a changing society with various social conditions such as Iran increases the capability of conducting qualitative research (4, 26). Thus the qualitative research can take an important step in promoting the adolescents health considering the Iranian families society and by a comprehensive outlook on the parents' experiences. Present study has been conducted to discover the social context related experiences of parents with adolescent offspring.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Conventional content analysis was used to explain the social context of the parents with adolescents. This approach is used in studies whose aim it is to describe a phenomenon for which there is little information in the literature. The important advantage of this method is attaining direct information from the study without imposing predetermined concepts and theories (27).

The researcher referred to the Education Department of Tabriz and received the list of high schools and permit for attendance in these schools. High schools were selected from among all city zones. The participants were chosen by the purposive sampling method. Selected participants had adolescent between 12 to 18 years, without any diagnosed behavioral or mental disorder and came from households where both parents lived together. When parents came to take part in school meetings, dropped their child off at school, or came to inquire about their child's educational status, the researcher with the help of school administrators, contacted them. Before interview, goals of study and methods were introduced. Also, we selected only the most eager and vocal participants. In total 13 mothers and 10 fathers were participated. Each interview was carried out 45 minutes to 71 minutes and conducted individually, in a private room, on school grounds. The interview was begun by asking a general question of "How is the life in the current society for you as a parent with an adolescent?" and the other questions were asked according to their responses. The interview was continued by questions such as "What problems do you encounter?" The searching questions such as "how" and "what cause" were used for clarification

of the responses. When data saturation was reached no further interviews were conducted.

All interviews were analyzed by Lundman and Graneheim approach. First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed several times in order to attain precise and comprehensive understanding. Second, the text was analyzed word-by-word, line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph and meaning units and codes, were assigned to them. After extracting the codes, interviews were compared to each other and subsequently, to their summarization and classification, and an appropriate label was selected for each. As a result, the primary subcategories emerged. We repeatedly revised the basic texts and emerged categories taking into consideration the main study conceptions. During the next step, additional groupings were formed regarding similarities and differences of subcategories. At the end, the main theme was formed with a specific label that encompassed all categories and subcategories (27). For categorize and manage the data, MAX QDA 10 software was used.

The Rigor of the study was provided using the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1885). To increase validity of the study, the duration of the interviews with participants at schools was increased. In order to further analyze the data, interviews recordings were transcribed and the texts were read over several times. Moreover, three experienced professors in the field of qualitative research reviewed all phases of the study. Dependability and conformability was provided through precise and systematic control of the research process. The researcher recorded all the activities and decisions from the initial phase in order to provide them upon request. The coding process was described in detail and the codes list was enclosed. Furthermore, some interviews along with the primary codes was shared with the participants in order to ensure their agreement regarding accuracy of the extracted codes. To increase transferability of the data, in selection of the participants, the maximum diversity was considered: we selected from variety of ages, educational backgrounds, occupations, and number of children. To generate cultural and class variety, schools were chosen from all zones of the city. Furthermore, parents of various educational levels (low to high) were selected.

The permit for research was received by Tabriz Medical Sciences University Ethical Committee

(TBZMED. REC. 1394.1071). Also, at first the parents were assured that their information would be kept confidential and the reporting will be done with mentioning their names. The participants' written content was obtained for participation in the research and recording the interviews.

RESULTS

The participants were 23 parents with adolescent girl or boy children. The mean age of the mothers was 42.53 years with a standard deviation of 4.11 and the mean age of the fathers was 45.88 with a standard deviation of 6.11. Seven mothers had female adolescents and six mothers had male adolescents. Four fathers had female adolescents and six fathers had male adolescents and the number of participants' children was one to three. The parents' educational level varied from guidance to master degree. The parents had different jobs such as self-employed, employee, retired, university master, servant and housewife. From analysis of interviews three themes of the "living in the future frame", "challenges of now days" and "parental religiosity" were obtained that explained the social context of the parents with adolescents. Table 1 summarizes the themes, categories and sub-categories.

1- Living in the future frame

It showed that parents are mentally and practically involved with issues related to the upcoming life of their child. "Concern about child's coming life" and "empowering the child regarding future" were categories of this theme.

According to the concern about child's coming life, adolescence is beginning of concern about the future for parents. In this period, the parents thought about their adolescents' unsuccessful marriage and they felt more responsibility for it.

"If she encounters with problem in marriage she will not solve it. Marriage cannot be predicted. We do not know its time. I only know that I am a responsible for it. I have to search much so I concern about her marriage." said a 56 year of father.

"I wish his to find a good job, I am worried about his future and I don't know that will he find a good job or not." said a 46 year old mother.

The category of empowering the child regarding future, includes sub-categories of raising the child talent, guiding him or her to proper academic position and empowering his or her moral.

According to the raising the child talent, the parents identified their children talents in different things such as painting, language or mathematics and helped them by actions such as registration in private classes in order to empower them. In the sub-category of guiding the child to the proper academic position, the parents invested in their children academic achievement and made effort for selection of proper field of study and readiness for conquer. One of the participants said:

"I encourage her to study and I registered in conquer class for all lessons. I buy her any book that she needs, test or educational CD".

In the sub-category of reinforcing the child moral, the parents talked about the future, having a proper job and explained the advantages of studying for good life. Also, the parents guided their children for setting goals in future and academic field of study and jobs. Two mothers said: "Some people say there is no work and why they study. These thoughts are weakening and causing to depression. For this reason, I told him to study well to find a good job. I try to satisfy him." (38 old year old mother)

"I help her to study well and I advise her to choose a good field of study. I tell her to try to get acceptance from state university." said a 43 year old mother.

2- Challenges of now days

The modern society's changes cause different issues in the adolescents and parents' life. This theme includes categories of "social hazards" and "gap of generations".

The social hazards category involves the expansion of virtual communications, tendency toward foreign cultures and damages out of home. Technological advances and existence of broad communications are problematic for the parents. Also dependency of the adolescents on cell phone and internet has reduced the child-parent relationship. On the other hand, due to expansion of the internet communications, complete management of the parents is imposable. One of the parents said:

"There is cell phone, internet and ... So I am worried about them. The impact of internet is so powerful and the parents' authority has been weakened. There are many issues in social media that cause to distancing the adolescent from the parent." (41 year old father).

In the sub-category of tendency toward foreign culture, the adolescents tend to foreigners life styles and the actors and singers:

"She listens to foreign songs and searches foreign singers and actresses. She follows them in internet and tries to talk or dress as they do." (43 year old mother)

In the sub-categories of damages out of home, the parents pay attention to the hazards imposed by society on the adolescents. They believe that their adolescents are less secured outside of the home and they are afraid of the society hazards such as encountering with the wrong people or physical hurts such as accidents. Two participants told us:

"He goes to school by bus school. We go outside together. We don't trust on the environment, it is dangerous, for this reason we do not take a risk. It might be a person comes and mislead or hurts her." (50 year old father)

"I am afraid. She is a child, I am afraid that she will crash. We do not know what will be happened." (45 year of mother)

The gap of the generations was the second challenge of the now days. The parents state that their adolescents believe that they have old tendencies and they do not up-to-dated thoughts and they do not accept their parents' thoughts.

"When he was a child, he did not think in such a way. For example he says: you are old and you have stayed in old times. When I talk about the past time, he does not accept it. He says that everything has changed." (41 year old mother).

Also, the parents compared their adolescence with current state and they believed that there is a significant difference between them and their children and these differences cause to gap in generations.

"We respected our parents differently. Our parents had authorities on us and we were obedient. Now our children experience different conditions. Everything has changed and the children belong to this period. For instance, I have some beliefs that I was grew up with them. But now my sons do not accept them." (41 year old father)

3- Parental religiosity

The parent emphasized on their adolescent religiosity and they tried to transfer their beliefs to their children. This theme included categories of "parents' religious sentiment", "guiding the child toward religion" and "obligate the child to observe religious norms".

In the category of the parents' religious affections, feelings of parents include: dissatisfaction of nonobservant of religious issues by the child and tendency toward observing religiosity by their children.

"I like my daughter to have a complete veil and say prayers. I am annoyed in the family. We are religious and we have lived with loyalty and I do not like the person who does not observe wearing veil and saying prayers." (38 year old mother)

"She wear a nail polish and her hair is out of her scarf. She protests our beliefs. She said payers before but recently she does not do that. I am dissatisfied about that." (42 year old father)

Parents guide their child toward religion by encouraging to religious issues and familiarization with religion constitute. The parents encouraged their children and tried to make them to be close to spirituality.

"When I ask my daughter about saying prayers, she replies that: I am not in a good mood, I ask her to say prayer and she reply that I do not have ablution. I say her to take ablution and remind that if you know the God, you never leave saying prayers. I try to familiarize her with God." (41 year old father)

According the last category the parents obligate their children. They emphasis on the practice of religious duties and to observe customary norms by religion.

"I look at her arms when we go outside. She likes to wear a hat or a coat. I ask her to wear a cloth under the coat. I talk with her about these issues and I tell her that she must to fast because she has grown." (44 year old mother)

DISCUSSION

This conventional content analysis study was conducted for discovering the experiences related to social context of the Iranian parents with adolescents. Three themes of "living in the future frame", "challenges of now days" and 'parental religiosity" were obtained.

Living in the future frame showed that the parents' construction on their children future. They think about their marriage and academic success and profession and they are concerned about these issues. Indeed, adolescence is beginning of concerns for parents. They take actions such identification of their children talents, registration in different classes and conquer classes.

The study of Liu in China found that the parents are worried about their adolescents' heath status, sex activities, academic achievements and marriage

(9). In a study in Iran, continuation of academic studies and occupation were the main concerns (28) that the findings are consistent to our findings. Family is the first social construct that causes to job and goals tendencies in the children (29). The studies have confirmed the impact of the family support in occupation of the adolescents (30). In Iran, family is responsible for education, occupation and socialization of their children (18). For this reason, families have heavy responsibility in this regard. Also, the conditions of the society influence it. The issue of university entrance exam has been converted in a social phenomenon in Iran that has affected the families' mental and educational conditions. The parents value acceptance in this exam and consider it as the way leading to success in life. Also, finding job is a big concern in Iran. In the past, the families provided their children jobs and nowadays the family has lost this duty and the society is responsible for adolescent job.

Challenges of now days was considered as the second theme by the parents. Expansion of virtual communication, tendency toward foreign cultures and existence of potential damages are seen in families leading to parent-child gap and social challenges for the parents.

Nowadays, the impact of satellite and the internet is undeniable. The adolescents imitate the foreign paradigms in their dress and appearance. Cultural changes and information transmission have influenced the families (19). The results of a study showed that the parents are worried about physical, cultural and cognitive damages of computer games (31). Also, social changes and technology have caused to gap between the parents and the adolescents. Today, new viewpoints of the new generation have been shaped and they want a new lifestyle (18). In a content analysis research conducted by the aim of explaining the adolescents' opinions on the family factors effective in health, it was shown that increase of age gap between the parents and the children is one of the main reasons that it can be referred to unawareness of the parents on the adolescence characteristics, unfriendly relations with children and traditional parents (19). In general, the society changes with change in norms lead to high risk social relations and unpredicted social relations.

Parental religiosity was the last theme in the Iranian families' issues. The parents tend to religious issues and try to guide their children to

them. In some cases, the parents obligate their children to observing religious norms.

Religion is a social reality and provides the context for individuals' growth that acts as a tool for socialization (32, 33). The parents are a key factors in socialization and shaping religious beliefs (12, 34). The parents transfer their social and religious beliefs to their children (9). The research shows that the differences in beliefs have a significant impact on the quality of the relations and cause to gap between them (35). Thus, they have important consequences in the adolescents' mental health (14). The adolescents who conduct religious acts show less high risk behaviors (35, 36). The cognition, affection and obligating to religious acts are influential in the person religiosity (36). The tendency of the parents to religious issues depicts their religious belief and they try to show positive affection toward it and guide their children to religiosity. Thus, the parents obligate their children to religious norms.

Tradition and modernity in the social and cultural contexts are contradictory forcers in the developing countries. The Iran social changes have rooted in the historical and cultural traditions and Islamic laws and on the other hand in western societies (8). Three resultant categories showed that the parents encounter with social context. We observe existence of religious traditions in most Iranians families that are inconsistent to modernity. These changes increase the parents' challenges. Indeed, our society is combination of traditional and modern norms that any educational

and reformation intervention should be done considering these issues.

Findings application

Health interventions in the social scope requires encountering with a broad scope of health determinant factors. It is multidimensional and includes governmental and private actors especially health sector staff (37). Investment in long-term programs by preventive approach can promote health in the society. Total reformation in the educational and occupational polices reduces the parents' concerns about their children future and promote their mental health. Also, in small domains, the family-based and school-based interventions can be designed and proportionate training approaches can be offered for the parents. Also, educating healthy behavior, promotion of religious values besides technologic changes can reduce this period and social conditions crises.

Limitations

In spite of strong points of the research with high number of interviewee, participation of the mothers and fathers considering all city districts in selection of the sample, in this study existence of the parents' family problems and the spouse marital issues, was not investigated completely and deeply. Also, the research focused on the parents' expressions and their opinions were not conformed to their adolescent children viewpoints. The findings of this study reflect the cultural characteristics of a society and reveal variation of the context.

Table 1. Themes, categories and sub-categories of social context of the parents with adolescents

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
Living in the future frame	Concerns on the child future	Mental concerns on the adolescent marriage challenge of the future occupation and study
	Empowering the child regarding future	Raising the child talent guiding the child to reach proper academic status reinforcing the child moral
challenges of now days	Social hazards	Expansion of virtual communications Tendency toward foreign culture Damages outside of home
	Gap between generations	The adolescent belief in oldness of the parents Parents' constant comparing
Parental religiously	Parents religious affects	Dissatisfaction of non-observing religious issues by the child Tendency toward religious norms by the child
	Guiding the child toward religion	Encouraging to observing religious issues Familiarizing the child with religion
	Emphasis on the doing religious teachings	Emphasis on the practice of religious duties Emphasis to observe customary norms by religion

CONCLUSION

According to the results of this study, the educational, occupational policies, world development and the norms and beliefs of society are main factors in shaping the social context of the parents with adolescents and promotion of the parents and adolescents mental health that rely on the proper management of these factors. Identification of the experiences related to the parents' social context can clarify their problems and concerns in order to conduct essential interventions in this regard.

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