



Research Paper: Comparison of Self-destructiveness, Fear of Performance Failure, and the Big Five Personality Traits in Adolescent Boys with Divorced and Normal Families

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to compare self-destructiveness, fear of failure, and the big five personality traits in adolescent boys in divorced and normal families, employing a causal-comparative method. Ninety boys (of divorced and normal families, 45 in each group) were selected through purposeful sampling method for teenagers from divorced families and random sampling for teenagers from normal families. All of which were 15 to 18 year-old boys studying in the second grade of high school in Karaj. To collect the data, Chronic self-destructiveness Scale (CSDS), Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) and NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) were run, and Multivariate analysis of variance test was used for analysis of data. Results showed that chronic self-destructiveness ($F=94/64$, $p \leq .001$), inconsideration and lack of commitment ($F=28/818$, $p \leq .001$), neglect ($F=160/60$, $p \leq .001$), risk taking ($F=43/543$, $p \leq .001$), stupefaction ($F=52/933$, $p \leq .001$), fear of failure ($F=1238/00$, $p \leq .001$), fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment ($F=1035/45$, $p \leq .001$), fear of devaluing one's self-esteem ($F=1600/64$, $p \leq .001$), fear of having an uncertain future ($F=1507/61$, $p \leq .001$), fear of losing interest from important others ($F=69/872$, $p \leq .001$) and neuroticism ($F=94/2202$, $p \leq .001$) were higher in adolescent boys with divorced families than normal ones. In other dimensions of the big five, extraversion ($F=1719/52$, $p \leq .001$), openness to experience ($F=47/12$, $p \leq .001$), agreeableness ($F=3032/96$, $p \leq .001$), and conscientiousness ($F=1788/59$, $p \leq .001$), the mean scores in adolescent boys with normal families were higher than the ones from divorced. The negative experiences, the absence of a caring parent, and the lack of a sense of security in divorced families can be the reasons behind the higher rate of self-destructiveness and fear of success in adolescents from divorced families.

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1. Introduction

Family is a safe place to satisfy various physical, intellectual and emotional needs. Therefore, it is very important to be aware of biological and psychological needs of children and to know how to satisfy them. It is usual that various individual, social, emotional and psychological factors, as well as stability, and coherence weakens this long-lived and constructive institution (Amato & Mariot, 2017). Among these factors is divorce. In addition to the effects that divorce has on couples, it has many negative effects on children and their psychological health, which can lead to many short-term and long-term psychological problems for the children of these families (Amato & Marriot, 2017). Anxiety, stress, mental and physical problems are among the negative effects of divorce on the children of these families (Schimmenti & Bifulco, 2015). Moreover, creating emotional problems, children's social relationship problems, moral problems and even problems in children's academic performance are important which are factors resulting from parental separation, because with the separation of parents, high stress and tension is created among all family members, especially in children (Berry et al., 2010).

Considering the fact that adolescence is a sensitive period which is educationally difficult and challenging, the separation of parents can create many behavioral problems for adolescents by creating double stress, doubly increasing the behavioral and mood tensions of this period (Sharifi Daramadi, 2007). The conditions governing divorced families can create discrepancies between teenagers in these families and teenagers in normal families. According to studies, it can

be predicted that the children in high tension or divorced families have more behavioral and psychological problems than those of normal families (Fletcher & Bonell, 2008; Gauffin et al., 2013). Changes in mood, economic problems, withdrawal as well as isolation, unwillingness to establish a relationship and tendency to introversion, inability to reasoning and to be logical in a stressful situation, in high tension and anxiety, to have intolerance of indecisiveness, inappropriate emotional responses, weakness in self-expression, problems in adapting to stressful situations, high feeling of guilt and intolerance in failure, self-suppression and self-destructiveness, as well as delinquent behavior and mental problems such as depression and anxiety are the other problems in teenagers caused by the divorce of parents (Storksens, 2006; Thompson et al., 2017; Yaghibi et al., 2011; Das, 2010; Motataianu, 2015). According to the background of the research on the difference between teenagers in divorced and normal families with regard to some psychological characteristics, the present research was conducted aiming at investigating the difference between two groups of teenagers from divorced and normal families considering three variables: self-destructiveness, fear of failure and the big five personality traits. In the definition of self-destructiveness, it can be stated that the tendency to perform behaviors that increase the probability of gaining negative experience and decrease the probability of achieving their success is called self-destructiveness (Kelley et al., 1985) which is in harmony with the definition of self-failure

personality proposed in the definition of the third revised edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. In fact, it can be said that failure-seeking patterns are a durable set of inflexible and inclusive behaviors leading to long-term negative consequences in people (Baumeister & Scher, 1988). The possibility of self-destructiveness in teenagers increases in families in which the needs of teenagers are not satisfied and the atmosphere in the family is unstable and tense (Lindström & Rosvall, 2019; Brand et al., 2019; Molepo et al., 2012; Shirzad, 2019).

Three models have been proposed for self-destructiveness (Leith & Baumeister, 1996):

- a) Intentional or primary self-destructiveness model: In the most incomprehensible type of self-destructiveness, a person wishes to harm himself or herself and, in this regard, chooses activities that predictably lead to such results. The tendency to self-destructiveness clearly indicates a negative attitude towards oneself. Low self-value goes beyond a mere lack of confidence in an activity and includes intense self-loathing. It is also possible that the intensity of negative attitude towards oneself is facilitated by negative and strong emotional states. In this case, intense guilt, regret and maybe even anxiety create a very negative self-evaluation, ultimately leading to self-destructiveness. This model is not observed in healthy people.
- b) Balanced model: the second model of self-destructiveness requires choosing behaviors that harm oneself at the cost of certain benefits of that choice. Therefore, this cost (self-harm) is predictable, but there is no desire for it, and harm or danger is accepted

as a necessary accompaniment to achieving other goals. This model refers to a situational structure that requires two competing, but unrelated goals. Normally, in this model, a person faces a situation in which there is a mismatch between two desirable goals, in such a way that pursuing one reduces the person's chance to achieve the other. Many situations in the balanced model require an immediate goal and a long-term goal, and thus it is possible for a person to make a poor choice by focusing on immediate and short-term outcomes. Urgency creates a remarkable perspective, and so the short-term benefits are quite obvious to people; however, the long-term goals seem distant. Therefore, factors that increase short-term focus increase the frequency of self-destructive responses in this model. Emotional states are by nature transient and short-lived, and therefore people are more likely to make a decision that places too much importance on short-term and immediate outcomes. Especially negative emotional states and the desire to end them should quickly be taken into consideration. In the case of positive emotions, a person's tendency to prolong them and make them permanent can increase wrong decisions.

- c) The model of strategies with opposite results: the third category includes a type of self-destructiveness in which a person does not wish for or predict harm to himself/herself. In this category, a person actively pursues goals, but systematically finds inconsistent or ineffective methods to achieve that goal. Therefore, this category can be considered unintentional self-destructiveness. Apparently, the person has logical and consistent reactions to achieve his goals, and

it is only at the end that it becomes clear the reactions had a counterproductive result. The chosen strategy may fail for two reasons: either the person is not able to implement it, or the strategy (even if it is implemented properly) does not lead to the desired result.

In addition to self-destructiveness, it seems that teenagers from divorced and normal families also differ in fear of failure. For defining this variable, it can be said that fear of failure is a negative and threatening evaluation, a feeling of anxiety in situations in which there is a possibility of failure. Failure is considered to be threatening for people who have learned to associate it with disappointing results (Maghsoodlo et al., 2016). Among the factors that lead to the fear of failure are experiencing shame and embarrassment, having an uncertain future, losing important people and their interest, and having negative self-evaluation (feeling of worthlessness) (Conroy et al., 2010). Based on the presented models for self-destructiveness (Leith & Baumeister, 1996), fear of failure can be placed in the second model of self-destructiveness; a person sacrifices potential opportunities in order to avoid negative emotional experience.

Another factor that seems to be different in two groups of teenagers in divorced and normal families is personality traits. One of the theories that examines the individual and personality differences of people is Eysenck's theory. In classifying personality traits, Eysenck pays special attention to the role of biological factors and states that two-thirds of traits are caused by biological factors. They do not neglect environmental factors in the formation of these traits (Eysenck & Chan, 1982), this theory summarizes the

complexities of personality in the form of extroversion, neuroticism and psychosis (Eysenck, 1967). Goldberg (1999) considers personality traits to include five strong factors, which are neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Extroverted people are social, have more friends, and participate more in social activities (Sedaghat et al., 2014), extroverted people are less sensitive to pain and punishment and need a high level of arousal to stimulate (Adan et al., 2010). People with a neurotic personality style show more emotional reactions and are aroused to things more than other people; these people tolerate high anxiety and tension (Sedaghat et al., 2014). Additionally, people with a psychotic personality style are aggressive, cold, lacking in empathy and self-centered (Adan et al., 2010).

Teenagers who are under the stress of parental separation show more neurotic symptoms in stressful situations; moreover, the emotional and avoidance symptoms in this group of teenagers are more than those from normal families (Ghamari & Fakoor, 2010). In terms of the differences between two groups of teenagers from divorced and normal families in personality traits, Parzham (2018) also states that teenagers from divorced families are clearly different from teenagers from normal families in psychopathic traits, flexibility, and extroversion. Another research on the difference in the characteristics of teenagers in divorced and normal families shows that the mental health of children of families with a lot of conflict in their relationships is lower than that of normal families. The feeling of being stuck in parent-child relationships after

divorce increases with the increase of conflict between parents and predicts behavioral problems as well as a decrease in mental health after divorce (Afifi, 2003).

According to the mentioned research results, it can be stated that the children of divorced families have psychological and behavioral problems compared to normal families (Bernardi & Radi, 2014). By reviewing the literature, it is revealed that in the studies that investigated self-destructive behaviors in teenagers, researcher-made scales were used; it is either performing delinquent acts or self-harm which considered to be an indicator of self-destructiveness. To the best of the author's knowledge, using a valid scale to explore self-destructive tendencies in teenagers from divorced families had not been investigated. In doing so, the present study was conducted with the aim of comparing self-destructive tendencies, fear of failure, and the big five personality traits in teenagers from divorced and normal families. It tries to answer the following question: Is there a difference between self-destructiveness, fear of failure, and the big five personality traits in adolescent boys from divorced and normal families?

2. Method

2.1. Research design

The research method was descriptive-comparative. The population of this research was adolescent boys aged 15 to 18 years studying in the second grade of high school in the academic year of 2018-2019 in Karaj. According to statistical principles, for semi-experimental and causal-comparative

research, 30 participants are enough as the sample (Delavar, 2015). In this regard, 45 students whose parents were divorced were selected using purposive sampling. For the sample of teenagers from normal families, 45 students were randomly selected from the classmates of teenagers from divorced families. The inclusion criteria for the research were the given consent for participating in the research and the absence of physical diseases as well as mental retardation. The criteria for leaving the research included the unwillingness to continue collaborating on the research. The participants in the research were all informed that their information will remain completely confidential, and the results will be analyzed in groups. For sampling, after obtaining an introductory letter from the university and referring to the Department of Education for conducting the research in two all-boys high schools, and after obtaining the consent of the high school staff and referring to the students' files, teenagers from divorced families were selected purposefully. Teenagers from normal families were randomly selected from the list of the same class as teenagers from divorced families in which they were present. It is worth mentioning that the sampling was done in the first months of the academic year and before the closure of schools due to the spread of the Covid-19.

2.2. Instruments

To collect data, the following questionnaires were used:

Chronic Self-Destructive Scale (CSDS):

The chronic self-destructive scale was developed by Kelley et al. (1985). This scale

has 73 items. The contents of the items cover four areas of tolerance, poor health care, evidence of transgression and lack of planning. The scoring method of the questionnaire is in the form of a Likert scale from 5 (completely applies to me) to 0 (does not apply to me at all). The higher the individual's score, the more self-destructive he or she is. Some items are specific to women and some are specific to men, and some items are common in both genders. The internal consistency of the original version has been reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.97 to 0.73 and one-month test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.98 to 0.90 (Kelley et al., 1985). In this research, since all the participants were boys, the Persian version for males was used, which has elements of inconsideration and lack of obligation (items 68, 54, 69, 14, 26), neglect (items 18, 66, 65, 62, 2, 29, 67, 25), risk taking (items 12, 34, 3, 21, 32, 30, 17), and stupefaction (items 70, 71, 27). The Persian version of this questionnaire has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 and its convergent validity was confirmed by calculating the Pearson correlation between the total score and the CSDS factors with the variables of depression, shame, guilt, internal self-criticism and comparative self-criticism. The correlation score of total CSDS in women with the above variables was reported to be 0.42, 0.51, 0.49, 0.36 and 0.27 respectively and in men with the same variables, 0.38, 0.38, 0.43, 0.60, 0 and 0.35 respectively (Mousavi et al., 2015). In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire was also 0.82.

Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI): To assess performance failure, a

short 41-question performance failure appraisal inventory, developed and edited by Conroy et al. (2010), was used. This scale includes 41 items with five sub-scales as fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment (items 4, 11, 22, 30, 34, 38, 40 and 41), fear of devaluing one's self-estimate (items 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 12, 16, 17, 21, 26, 27, 31 and 35), fear of having an uncertain future (items 3, 8, 13, 14, 18, 23 and 37), fear of losing social influence (items 19, 20, 24, 28, 32, 36 and 39), and fear of upsetting important others (items 5, 10, 15, 25, 29 and 33). The answers to each of these items range on a scale from completely disagree (score 1) to completely agree (score 5) and items 9, 17, 18, 21, 23 and 35 are scored inversely. A higher score in this questionnaire means more fear than failure in performance. Conroy et al. (2010) reported Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the subscales of the questionnaire ranging from 0.74 to 0.88, and Rajabi and Abbasi (2012) reported internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale in the whole sample and in males as well as females 0.79, 0.70 and 0.83 respectively. The validity of the Persian version was confirmed using factor analysis, and in all five subscales the ratio of Chi-square to degree of freedom was less than 3, GFI, NFI and CFI indices were more than 0.90 and RMSE was less than 0.05 (Abdoli et al., 2013). In the present research, Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was 0.80.

The NEO Five-Factor Personality Inventory (NEO-FFI): This instrument was developed by Goldberg (1999), which contains 50 items. In this questionnaire, there are 10 items to evaluate each of the big five personality traits. These five traits are often

called neuroticism (items 24, 4, 44, 49, 29, 19, 14, 9, 34 and 39), extroversion (items 31, 21, 46, 11, 1, 26 and 16), openness to experience (items 25, 15, 50, 20, 10, 30, 35, 5, 40 and 45), agreeableness (items 32, 7, 2, 22, 17, 12, 37, 27 and 42) and conscientiousness (items 38, 28, 43, 18, 8, 48, 33, 13 and 3). The scoring method of this questionnaire is based on a five-point Likert scale. In this way, 1 score is given to “I totally disagree” and 5 scores are given to “I totally agree”, and items 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 22, 26, 28, 32, 38, 41, 46 are scored in reverse. **Goldberg (1999)** concluded that Cronbach's alpha of the subscales of neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness as 0.79, 0.76, 0.54, 0.61, and 0.78, respectively, and the validity through correlation with Cattell's 16-factor test and California Personality Questionnaire were 0.86 and 0.62 respectively. **Khormae and Farmani (2014)** highlighted that Cronbach's alpha of neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness subscales were 0.83, 0.72, 0.69, 0.83, and 0.81 respectively. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the Persian version of this questionnaire in

Farahani and Farzad's (2008) research confirmed the 5-factor model and indicated the construct validity of the scale. GFI and RMSE were 0.91 and 0.05, respectively.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential methods (multivariate analysis of variance) were used. Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the distribution and Levine's test was run to check the equality of variances.

3. Results

In the present study, two groups of 45 adolescent boys from divorced and normal families were compared in the variables of personality traits, fear of failure and self-destructiveness. The average age (and standard deviation) of the participants in the study was 17.24 (1.34) in the divorce family group and 17.13 (1.12) in the normal family group. 37, 38 and 25 percentage of participants were from 10th, 11th and 12th grades, respectively. **Table 1** shows the mean and standard deviation of the studied variables in two groups.

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of research variables in adolescents from divorced and normal families

Variable	Subcomponents	M	SD	M	SD
		Divorce		Normal	
Self-destructiveness	inconsideration and lack of obligation	22.20	2.84	6.64	2.27
	Neglect	26.44	2.98	19.80	1.85
	risk taking	28.06	3.51	12.60	2.72
	stupefaction	13.46	1.56	4.11	1.33
fear of failure	Fear of experiencing shame and	36.11	3.97	10.71	3.50
	Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate	54.97	3.92	21.62	4.06
	Fear of having an uncertain future	28.35	2.04	12.82	1.73
	Fear of losing social influence	31.53	3.65	9.71	3.34
	Fear of upsetting important others	17.46	1.30	17.55	1.53
Big five personality traits	neuroticism	41.24	1.79	11.66	2.81
	extroversion	16.06	1.03	25.73	1.17
	openness to experience	24.71	2.19	27.64	1.84
	agreeableness	12.64	2.39	41.77	2.61
	Conscientiousness	15.84	1.79	38.35	2.12

As it can be seen in [table 1](#), there is a difference in the mean scores of the two groups at the descriptive level. In order to check the significance of this difference, it is necessary to use inferential tests. Before performing the multivariate analysis of variance test, the Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to measure normality in order to

perform parametric statistics. The significance level for all three variables was greater than 0.05, and therefore, assuming the normal distribution of the variables, the analysis of variance test was run. The condition of equality of variances was also verified using Levine's test.

Table 2

Quadruple tests to determine the difference in dependent variables in two groups of adolescent boys from divorced and normal families

Effect	Test	Value	F	hypothesis df	error df	P	Effect size
Group	Pillai's trace	0.985	306.30	16	73	0.000	0.985
	Wilks Lambda	0.015	306.30	16	73	0.000	0.985
	Hetelling's trace	67.134	306.30	16	73	0.000	0.985
	Roy's Largest Root	67.134	306.30	16	73	0.000	0.985

Table 3

The results of multivariate analysis of variance to compare self-destructiveness, fear of failure and the big five personality traits in adolescent boys from divorced and normal families

Variable	Subcomponents	sum of square	df	Mean square	p	Effect size
Self-destructiveness	inconsideration and lack of obligation	5444.44	1	5444.44	0.000	0.903
	Neglect	993.34	1	993.34	0.000	0.646
	risk taking	5382.40	1	5382.40	0.000	0.861
	stupefaction	1969.34	1	1969.34	0.000	0.914
	Self-destructiveness	31285.37	1	31285.37	0.000	0.425
fear of failure	Fear of experiencing shame and	14516.100	1	14516.100	0.000	0.922
	Fear of devaluing one's self-estimate	25569.878	1	25569.878	0.000	0.948
	Fear of having an uncertain future	5428.900	1	5428.900	0.000	0.945
	Fear of losing social influence	10714.711	1	10714.711	0.000	0.908
	Fear of upsetting important others	0.178	1	0.178	0.768	0.001
	Fear of failure	208995.211	1	208995.211	0.000	0.934
Big five personality traits	neuroticism	19684.011	1	19684.011	0.000	0.962
	extroversion	2102.500	1	2102.500	0.000	0.951
	openness to experience	193.600	1	193.600	0.000	0.349
	agreeableness	19096.900	1	19096.900	0.000	0.972
	conscientiousness	11401.878	1	11401.878	0.000	0.971

The results shown in Tables 2 and 3 indicated that there was a significant difference between adolescent boys from divorced and normal families in the overall score of self-destructiveness ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=64.94$), inconsideration and lack of obligation ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=818.28$), neglect ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=160.60$), risk-taking ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=543.43$) and stupefaction ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=933.52$). In the fear of failure variable, in four of the five components, that is, fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment

($p \geq 0.001$, $F=1035.45$), fear of devaluing one's self-estimate ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=1600.64$), fear of having an uncertain future ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=1507.61$) and fear of upsetting important others ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=872.69$) the differences were significant between the two groups. In addition, there were significant differences between the two groups in all five subscales of the big five personality traits: neuroticism ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=2202.94$), extroversion ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=1719.52$), openness to experience ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=47.12$),

agreeableness ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=3032.96$) and conscientiousness ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=1788.59$).

4. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to compare self-destructiveness, fear of failure, and five big personality traits in adolescent boys from divorced and normal families. The results indicated that the overall score of self-destructiveness ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=64.94$) and the score of subscales of inconsideration and lack of obligation ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=818.28$), neglect ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=160.60$), risk-taking ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=543.43$) and stupefaction ($p \geq 0.001$, $F=933.52$) were higher in adolescent boys from divorced families than male teenagers from normal families. Behaviors that decrease the chance of future success and increase the probability of failure were mentioned in the definition of self-destruction. Inconsideration and lack of obligation due to not having a plan and not sticking to it can clearly reduce the chances of future success. Furthermore, a look at some of the items of the neglect subscale shows how a high score in this component can be associated with self-destructiveness; "I don't have an account of my income and expenses"/ "Most of the time, I avoid doing obligatory things that are boring"/ "It seems that sometimes I don't pay attention to what happens to me"/ "Even though I know that some things don't have a good outcome, I do them". Risk-seeking and stupefaction also mean the acceptance of risk and the desire to engage in behaviors such as smoking, which were generally higher in teenagers from divorced families than teenagers from normal families. These results are consistent with the previous findings (Strohschein, 2012;

Thompson et al., 2017; Yaghobi et al., 2011; Das, 2010; Motataianu, 2015) which revealed that divorce is related to self-destructiveness in teenagers. It can also be said that this result is consistent with previous findings (Lindström & Rosvall, 2019; Brand et al., 2019; Molepo et al., 2012), expressing that people with unfulfilled needs such as having a close relationship which is satisfying may experience less security and be more at risk for engaging in self-destructive, self-harm, and risky behaviors. Moreover, in some studies (Thompson et al., 2017; Molepo et al., 2012; Shirzad, 2019) negative experiences in the family as well as lack of relationship with parents, such as the absence of a caring parent and the lack of creating a sense of security in children, are some of the influencing factors. In this regard, it should be noted that it is related to the occurrence of behavioral and emotional problems such as self-destructiveness, which is in line with the results of the present study.

In explaining this finding, it can be said that divorce and problems within the family, such as conflicts, have a negative effect on teenagers. Self-destructive people are at high risk of ideation and self-harm. In addition, there are some personality traits such as impulsivity and emotional instability in self-destructive people. These people have emotional difficulty in understanding the behavior that ultimately leads to self-harm, and they negligently expose themselves to great harm. This lack of understanding of the appropriate emotional state leads to high-risk behaviors, and thus, this practice increases risk-taking in these people, because they do not have a sound understanding of the consequences of harm, and in order to avoid

problems and avoid facing them, they tend to behave in ways that reduce anxiety in the short term so that they do not experience their inner tension. The lack of adaptive response to negative emotions and the increase of maladaptive responses to negative emotions cause an increase in thoughts and imaginations and practices of self-destructiveness in people. Suppression is a general term used to describe the tendency to suppress experience, not to express negative emotions and unpleasant understandings to prevent threats to an individual's self-image. Unpleasant experiences, events, and traumas created in the family environment cause a person to use ineffective coping strategies such as emotional suppression or cognitive avoidance. When emotional suppression or cognitive avoidance becomes one of the main methods of facing stressful events, their access is blocked to correct cognitive, emotional and behavioral methods of problem solving. As a result, the use of ineffective defense mechanisms causes the harmed person problems about managing stress. On the other hand, from the psychoanalytic point of view, the continuous accumulation of emotions, excitements and negative beliefs in the unconscious mind can endanger a person's health in different ways. One of these ways is to turn negative emotions, excitements and beliefs towards oneself, and as a result blaming and considering oneself worthless, which can ultimately increase self-destructiveness. Therefore, it can be said that the use of inefficient methods such as emotional suppression, which can decrease psychological health level in a person, plays a facilitating role in the emergence of

disorders such as depression and self-destructiveness.

Additionally, the results indicated that there was significant difference between the means of fear of failure and the sub-components of fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of devaluing one's self-estimate and fear of losing social influence in adolescent boys in divorced and normal families. The mean in these variables were higher in adolescent boys in divorced families than in the normal group, but there was no significant difference between the two groups in the sub-component of fear of upsetting important people. This result is in line with the findings of [Amato and Patterson \(2017\)](#), [Molepo et al. \(2012\)](#), [Das \(2010\)](#), [Motataianu \(2015\)](#), [Tohidi-Moghadam and Kordi-Tamandani \(2017\)](#) and [Shirzad \(2019\)](#), who stressed that divorce with internalized problems include a kind of main confusion in his or her thinking style and about the future.

It can be said that, according to previous research, the absence of parents has short-term and long-term psychological effects on teenagers due to divorce. Consequently, teenagers with the experience of parental divorce may choose styles that continuously create thinking of failure in the individual, and in this way, leads to a decrease in the type of logical thinking in different situations. In other words, teenagers in divorced families may express the fear caused by the loss of their parents that they have already experienced, shown in the form of fear of experiencing a failure again to respond to situations and generalize a failure to other situations to establish a secure relationship with their parents ([Wagner et al., 2007](#)).

Because of the fear of failure, these people continuously provide the conditions for failure in a way that creates failure in a cyclical manner. This happens unconsciously in a person, and, since a person does not see himself or as acceptable for success, he or she experiences a sense of shame and a decrease in self-esteem in his or her social relationships. A teenager who has perceived the initial safe environment of his life to be insecure somehow considers himself or herself lost in that institution and sees his or her personal strengths as weakness. In addition, in this sense, he is constantly worried about his chronic self-Inferiority in one's community and relationships (Wagner et al., 2010).

Fear of failure can also be understood as part of self-destructive behaviors along the same continuum of self-destructiveness. According to the models presented by Leith and Baumeister (1996), the fear of failure is placed in the second model (balanced model). Fear of failure can cause a person to participate less in activities in order to avoid failure, and therefore, as much as it prevents future failure, it also reduces the probability of future success. On the other hand, if we take a look at the two variables of self-destructiveness and fear of failure from the perspective of psychoanalysis, both cases can be considered punishment functions of conscience. In other words, from the psychoanalytical point of view, self-destructiveness is imposing punishment to oneself. All the adversities that arise as a result of an inappropriate environment can spill over under the influence of self-destructive tendencies; "The need to be sick or to suffer" is a term used by Freud to

explain unusual psychotic reactions. According to him, the feeling of guilt is the first factor playing a role in these abnormal reactions. Another factor is called self-destructiveness, and Freud refers to it as *inversion of self-preservation, self-injury and self-destructiveness* (Freud, 1993, as cited in Payande, 2004).

On the other hand, results demonstrated that there was a difference between the five major personality traits (neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) in the two groups of adolescent boys in divorced and normal families, and the degree of extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness which were higher in teenagers in normal families; additionally, the level of neuroticism was higher in teenagers from divorced families. This result is in line with the findings of Parzham (2018), Fayaz and Kiani (2011), Amato and Patterson (2017) and Strohschein (2012).

Among the limitations of the current research, we can point out the lack of control of variables such as cultural, economic, and family conditions, which may have had an effect on the results. Furthermore, considering that this research was done at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the high level of anxiety caused by this pandemic may have affected the results. For future researches, it is suggested that the researchers repeat the research in different geographical locations, with gender comparisons which may lead to interesting results. The possibility of using a larger sample of children in divorced families, selected

randomly, will increase the possibility of generalizing the results.

5. Conclusion

The results showed that the degree of self-destructiveness, including inconsideration and lack of obligation, neglect, risk-taking, and stupefaction, was higher in adolescent boys from divorced families than from normal families. Additionally, the average fear of failure and its subscales were higher in boys in divorced families than in normal families. Divorce and its stressful consequences for children can lead to the formation of self-destructive tendencies and behaviors in such children.

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Conflict of interest

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