Contact Network and Satisfaction with Contacts in Children Whose Parents Have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

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SUMMARY

Aim: The aim was to analyse contacts network and satisfaction with contacts among children of parents with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Subject and methods: The sample consisted of 100 pupils (age 10 to 15) from two randomly chosen schools. Children were selected from general population, lived with both parents who had had war traumatic experiences. They agreed to participate in psychometric research. We divided them in two groups: observed (O) group of children (N=50) whose parents were showing symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and control (C) group of children (N=50) whose parents did not show symptoms of PTSD (evaluated by Harvard trauma questionnaire – BiH version). Contact network was examined by a Map of Contact Network which includes contact and satisfaction with persons in close environment. In relation to gender representatives of fathers and mothers, sample was homogenous. Results: The most important persons in children whose parents are showing symptoms of PTSD were schoolmates (88,0%), home mate (86,0%), mother (72,0%), and father (2,0%). At children whose parents did not show symptoms of PTSD, the most important persons were schoolmates and they had problem in communicating with fathers and males. According to satisfaction children whose parents suffered from PTSD were showing distinction in contacts with their families, relatives, schoolmates and formal contacts.

Keywords: contact network, contact satisfaction, children, parents, post traumatic stress disorder

1. INTRODUCTION

War and post war period brings many problems inside family, illness, lower standard rate disruption in family contacts etc. There are different circumstances that could disrupt traditional relationships and create confusion inside family. The development of individual in social environment is made of mutual interaction where external influence makes important factor in changes of development and it emphasized unity between individual and environment (1,2,3,4).

Environmental factors and individual factors influence on relationships network through the life span (5). Parents, especially war veterans are usually overwhelmed by PTSD, what makes them difficult to recognize as well as to satisfy all family needs. The family represents basic spot and certain communication field which offer to any family member aid in confrontation, built of self esteem and self respect in facing with critical moments (6). Preoccupied with their war traumas, fears, anxiety and guilty feelings parents with PTSD became distant of family and for that distance they accuse their family. Children are feeling unnoticed, detached with adults, especially fathers. Parents usually sacrifice their authentic contact with children and transfer it on appearance and cliché level rather to be floated with unpleasant feelings (7). With traumatization, interactions between parents and children is destroyed (8,9).

2. AIM

The aim of this study is to examine contact network and satisfaction with it in children whose parent’s show PTSD symptoms.

3. METHODS

In our examination we took 100 school age children (from 10 to 15 years old) from two randomly chosen elementary schools from Tuzla Canton area. The research was approved from Pedagogy and School Council of Tuzla Canton, and school boards confirmed testing approach. The research was done among children from 5. to 8. grade. Based on social map of school we took 150 children who have lived in complete family. From that number we include 120 children whose parents subscribe written approval for participating testing and fulfilled Harvard Trauma Questionnaire. Among 120 of children we discovered 50 whose parents have shown positive result in PTSD in HTQ scale (> 2.5) and we have chosen 50 children whose parents have not shown PTSD symptoms in HTQ scale (< 2.5). Conditions for parents to participate in research were: general population, previous traumatic experiences, show symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, no other psychological disturbances. Conditions for children to participate in research were: complete family, equal number of male and female participants, elementary school age (5-8 grade).

Harvard Trauma Manual, Bosnia-Herzegovina Version (HTQ) HTQ-Version for Bosnia and Herzegovina, consisted of four parts: possible traumatic event, declaration for possible traumatic events, description of the most traumatic event, questions about head injuries, and questions about psychosocial disturbances caused by trauma. Results for PTSD and/or total score >2.5 is counted as „positive“ for PTSD. Total score value represent intensity of PTSD and that result represent symptoms and functional status.

Network contact map (10) is concerned to contact with persons who surround child and his/her satisfaction with those contacts. It measured contacts with the most important, important and les important persons, as well as important persons with weak contacts and their satisfaction with those contacts. Contacts are done in 1.) family, 2.) friends and neighbors, 3.) relatives, 4.) school, 5.) formal contacts.

For significance testing we have used descriptive statistics. For performing of statistical evidences in research we have used program SPSS 10.0 for Windows.

4. RESULTS

In total sample, participants age 11-13 represent 86.0% and there were 46.0% girls and 40.0% boys. (ME=12.06, SDE=0.91 ), (MK=12.10, SDK=1.23 )

According to number of family members the most of them live in family with 4-5 members and there is no statistically significant difference between groups (X2=6.27, df=4, p=0.05).

Regarding number of siblings children
of parents who shows symptoms of PTSD live in family with more siblings (X^2=8.43, df=3, p<0.05) (p<0.05). According to contacts with the most important persons in total sample of children for 91.0% of them the most important person is school mate, domicile friend 86%, 76% mother, and only 8.0% children in total sample declare father as the most important person in their lives (Table 1).

Important persons in contacts are: teacher (72.0%), father (70.0%), domicile friend (42.0%), nurse (38.0%) and friend’ s parents (30.0%). In group of children whose parents did not show symptoms of PTSD less important persons is sister (46.0%), teacher of mother language (28.0%), friend’s parents (28.0%), aunt (22.0%) and psychologist-pedagogue (22.0%). There was no statistically significant difference between children from group whose parents show symptoms of PTSD and those whose parents do not show symptoms of PTSD (Table 2).

Important persons with weak contacts are relatives (32.0%), aunts (10.0%), school principal (10.0%), family friend, displaced persons (10.0%), father (8.0%) and 72.0% of children have no answer. In group of children whose parents do not show symptoms of PTSD important persons with weak contacts were relatives (24.0%), aunts (18.0%), school keeper (16.0%), uncle (14.0%) and 84.0% of children have no answer. Among children of parents with PTSD symptoms and those whose parents did not show symptoms of PTSD there was no statistically significant difference between groups (p>0.05). Important persons with weak contacts were relatives (28.0%), aunt (14.0%), school keeper (13.0%), family friend, displaced persons (8.0%), father (5.0%) and 72.0% have no answer (Table 3).

Regarding satisfaction with contacts which make children of parents with PTSD symptoms were more unsatisfied with contacts which make with family, relatives, school as well as formal contacts (p<0.001) (Table 4).

5. DISCUSSION

Family system has significant influence on manifestation of PTSD symptoms and a person who suffers from PTSD shows inappropriate emotional reactions, withdrawal, social isolation from other family members (Williams and Williams, 1987; Sipprelle, 1994;
Our study has shown that in children whose parents suffer from PTSD symptoms groups of school friends, domicile peers and mother represented the most important persons and those were appropriate with developmental stage (2,15,16,17,18,19). Mother is still the most important family member. Very significant place presented mothers parents-grandmother and grandfather, what could be a part of cultural milieu and relationships.

Some important persons are teacher, father, medical professionals, relatives and friends, but less important persons are siblings. Boys from traumatized families had more difficulties in communications with brothers and male persons in family (p<0.05). There was big percentage (78.0%) without any answer what could mean that children mostly communicate with persons in their nearest surrounding.

Very weak contact was established with father as family member and we explain it with weak resonance and weak capacity for communication because of father of traumatic experiences in which made him emotionally “stuck”, isolated and distanced, so children lack confidence in communications with those persons who were capable to do that.

This point up that relations and roles inside the family have been changed, but it could also be consequence of specific developmental age-early adolescence. Our results are compliant with previous researches (14,20,21,22,23) that the most important persons in the age of latency and early adolescence are peers, parents, school friends, teachers, siblings, cousins and close friends. It could be an “important social capital” for normal development and growing up. There were no significant difference between two groups in choosing the most important, important and less important persons with weak contacts (p>0.05), but children whose parents do not show PTSD symptoms had more frequency in contacts with the most important persons.

Our study has shown that children whose parents had PTSD symptoms significantly more unsatisfied with contacts inside the family, relatives, school, friends/neighbors and formal contacts comparing with children whose parents did not have PTSD symptoms (p<0.001).

Our results are compatible with previous researches (7,9) which showed that relationship between parents and children were destroyed and that traumatized parents show up too little resonance for children. Many PTSD symptoms in parents are connected with interpersonal relationships like less interest for people and things around them, weak emotional expression and irritability (20,24,25). Children are secondary traumatized and frustrated with everyday contact forming, feels as detached and try find the way to get in reached with family members (Guajardo, Snyder and Peterson , 2009).

6. CONCLUSION:
Children whose parents has PTSD symptoms as the most important persons for communication picked up peer friends, and had difficulties in communications with fathers and mail persons.
Children of parents with PTSD, according to satisfaction with contacts they have, showed more unsatisfied in contacts they made in family, relatives, school, formal contacts.

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![Table 4. Distribution of participants regarding satisfaction with contacts and groups in sample](image-url)


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