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Study of Familial Influence in Emotional, Social and Academic Adaptation of Children

DR. GHODSY AHGHAR[a*] AND DR. HASSAN PASHA-SHARIFI[b]

[a]Educational Research Institute, Tehran; [b]Azad University, Rudehen

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the familial role in emotional, social and academic adaptation of middle school students. The sample consisted of 9,628 third year middle school students from all over Iran. The size of the sample was determined using multistage random sampling. Data were obtained using an emotional, social and academic adaptation survey and a family structure questionnaire. The study shows that most students have average or better behaviour adaptation. Moreover, healthy family structures, favourable economic situation, and high-end paternal professions facilitate behaviour adaptation. On the other hand, maternal employment has no effect upon behaviour adaptation.

Keywords: emotional adaptation, social adaptation, academic adaptation, family structure, adapted behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Education and training of children is one of the most important principles upon which the development of a country is dependant. In order to efficiently educate and guide adolescents, we must correctly understand them. Even though the modern meaning of the term adolescence has been established in the 20th century, the essence of adolescence is still vague and self-contradictory and thus can't be properly defined. According to classic interpretation, adolescence is a period of conflict, confusion, and anxiety.

Hall—who was the first researcher to scientifically study adolescence—has defined adolescence as a period of internal disturbance, stress, and physical, mental, and emotional changes. Many psychoanalysts still regard adolescence as a period of psychological confusion (Dadsetan, 1998).

Integration of the self and environment is a vital necessity for all living beings. All creatures endeavour to adapt to their surroundings in order to preserve their security and obtain their needs. These endeavours are dynamic and continuous for us humans, because in addition to our diverse and constantly varying needs, the conditions and situations of our surroundings are also continually changing.

According to the Piagetian model, adaptation is described as the equilibrium of organism and environment. Adaptation is the balance between accommodation and assimilation. It is a process with two scopes with which a child creates new mind structures in order to effectively associate with its surroundings (Mansour, 2005).

* Corresponding author. Ministry of Education, Educational Research Institute, Tehran, Iran. Email: ahghar2004@yahoo.com

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The theoretical structure of this study encompasses psychoanalysis, behaviourism, and objective models. These subjects are comprehensively discussed in the works of psychologists such as Erikson, Gesell, Freud, Piaget, Maslow, Adler, Bandura, and Mishell.

According to Erikson, adolescents are in search of individual identity. Thus they endeavour to establish a correlation between the disparate elements of their personality and subsequently reexperience their previous conflicts. As a result, they frequently quarrel with their parents. By the time a child reaches adolescence, he has experienced three social groups: family, peers, and school (Mansour, 1998).

As indicated by Gesell's model, adolescence is the period between ages ten and sixteen. This phase of growth is full of change and vicissitude. In this model, adolescence is divided into four successive stages.

Ages eleven and twelve are considered a conduit between childhood and adolescence. This stage consists of much change for the adolescent. Age thirteen is a period of introspection and self-analysis in which adolescents experience the novelties of their new situation, distance themselves from others, and prefer to refrain from talking about their problems. At age fourteen they become more extroverted, direct their interests toward others, and enter their social life. After much undulation, a person reaches the final cycle of adolescence at fifteen years of age and thus attains a type of equilibrium (Mansour, 1998).

Many delinquencies and social offences are rooted within psychosocial maladjustment. Maladjustment is a biological, mental, and social phenomenon which is derived from a sense of insecurity. It is a mechanism which causes a person to be unable to cope with the demands of normal society (Mansour, 1998).

The source of maladjustment can be found within the family (Tomas & Kaplan, 1993). Furthermore, the causes of many pupils' difficulties are familial troubles (Meidi, 2001).

The extent of adherence to the norms of society is directly related to the general condition of families. Moreover, all social traumas are directly or indirectly associated with families.

The quality of cultural and moral upbringing is slowly degrading in today's societies. Many social psychologists posit that this decline originates from dysfunctional families. Long periods of absence of working fathers and mothers from home, and socioeconomic crisis's are considered the main reasons of unbalance in families (Navabi-Nezhad, 1991).

Unfavourable familial performance creates disruptions and breaks in child development (Cermak, 1990).

In his research, Steinberg (1993) investigated five types of families: a) intact and affectionate families; b) responder families; c) indifferent families; d) autocratic families; and e) dysfunctional families. The findings show that intact and affectionate families and also responder families are the best types of families for the upbringing of a child.

Dysfunction, autocracy, and indifference lead to anxiety, depression, antisocial behaviour, and a severe delinquent mentality in children while family solidarity leads to mental health in children (Nourooz, 2002).

A child's family deeply affects formation of their personality, maladjustment, and tendency for delinquency through its child-parent relationship and unique structure (Bourley et al, 1990; Barra & Garisen, 1992).

The social and emotional adjustment of students whose mothers are employed is significantly better than that of students whose mothers are homemakers (Little,

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2001). Additionally, students who live in families with low economic and social situations are less socially adjusted and have more problems with their studies (Givera, 1989).

Prior studies show that the existence of traumatic relations between mother and child (Wesmen, 1994); incompatibility between family members, stressful and unstable atmosphere, parent drug use, divorce (Kelap, 2001); collapse of family structure (Salk, 2001); inferiority feeling relative to siblings, uncertainty and confusion, and insecurity (Tiber, 1999) are effective factors in maladjustment and delinquency and also cause psychopathological disorders in parents and their children. Therefore, in this study we endeavour to ascertain the extent of emotional, social, and academic adjustment of pupils and determine the degree of familial influence in their adjustment. For this study, four research questions were formulated:

- What is the condition of the emotional, social, and academic adjustment of middle school students nationwide?
- Does family structure influence pupil adjustment and if so, how?
- How does parental employment and profession type affect pupil adjustment?
- In what ways do the economic situation of families affect pupil adjustment?

METHODS

Participants

Participants were 9,728 students recruited from middle schools nationwide using random multistage sampling. The sample was intentionally selected in order to contain an equal quantity of each gender.

Procedure

Deductive statistics were used to analyse accumulated data. Adjustment and its influential factors were measured using two questionnaires: a 55-item adjustment questionnaire (Sing and Sinha, 1993) consisting of emotional, social, and academic adaptation assessments; and a familial structure survey with 20, seven choice questions.

The content validity of these surveys was investigated by six psychology professors with considerable experience in research who made the necessary corrections.

The reliability of these surveys and their components was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha with a random sample of 1,800 student participants. The results are shown in Table 1. These values illustrate the internal parallelism of the surveys which adequately indicates their reliability.

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[TABLE 1]

STATISTICAL ANALYSES AND RESULTS

a) Evaluation of social, emotional, and academic adjustment: the frequency and distribution ratio of the sample was evaluated in five classes which are shown in Table 2 and Graph 1.

[TABLE 2]

According to Table 2 and Graph 1, most students have an adjustment ratio of average or better. Furthermore, emotionally 30.8%, socially 21.4%, and academically 20.1% of the students had under average adjustment ratios. These students are socially, emotionally, and academically maladjusted.

b) In order to determine influential familial factors upon pupil adjustment, we used the independent t-test to analyze data collected from the surveys in relation with intact and dysfunctional families (Table 3).

[TABLE 3]

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant difference in adjustment ratios between the two groups ($\alpha < 0.001$). The mean adjustment score for students of intact families is higher than that of students living in dysfunctional families.

c) We used the independent t-test to ascertain the effects of maternal employment on pupil adjustment by comparing the survey scores of students with employed and unemployed mothers (Table 4).

[TABLE 4]

As can be seen in Table 4, no significant difference was found concerning pupil adjustment within these two groups (Table 4).

d) We used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe's test so as to determine the effects of economic status on pupil adjustment (Table 5).

[TABLE 5]

According to the ANOVA regarding effects of economic status on pupil emotional adjustment, there is a significant difference between the means ($\alpha < 0.002$). The ANOVA regarding social adjustment of pupils showed a significant difference between social adjustment score means ($\alpha < 0.001$). Furthermore, the ANOVA regarding pupil academic adjustment showed a significant difference between academic adjustment score means ($\alpha < 0.001$).

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[TABLES 6,7, and 8]

We applied Scheffe's test to compare pupil emotional (Table 6), social (Table 7), and academic (Table 8) adjustments based on economic status. The test indicated that pupil emotional adjustment means were significantly higher in families with a good economic situation (monthly income higher than 301,000 tomans; roughly 320 dollars) when compared with families with lower economic situations. No significant difference was observed regarding other economic classes.

e) We also performed one-way ANOVA in order to determine effects of various paternal professions on emotional, social, and academic adjustment of pupils (Table 9). The analysis showed a significant difference between means regarding emotional adjustment ($\alpha < 0.0007$). Also, with respect to social and academic adjustment, a significant difference between means was found ($\alpha < 0.001$).

[TABLE 9]

Scheffe's test was also implemented in order to compare effects of various paternal professions on pupil adjustment. The average emotional (Table 10), social (Table 11), and academic (Table 12) adjustment score for students whose fathers were in the military, or were staffers, teachers, specialists, or self-employed was significantly higher than the average emotional adjustment score of students whose fathers were labourers or unemployed.

[TABLES 10,11, and 12]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

An adolescent is neither adult nor child, rather a person who is midway between a bygone childhood and an unrealized adulthood; he is an individual who has ceased youthful imitation but has yet to come into harmony with his new role. Stanly Hall described adolescence as a "rebirth" since humanity's most advanced traits and civilized manners appear in this period.

- Statistical analysis showed that 75% of middle school students have an average or better emotional, social, and academic adaptation ratio. Although 30.8% of examined students had lower than average emotional adaptation, 20.1% had lower than average social adaptation, and 21.4% had lower than average academic adaptation. Thus these students are emotionally, socially, and academically maladjusted.

Gesell maintains that adolescence is a period of change and vicissitude which begins at ten and ends at sixteen years of age. In this period, adolescents experience puberty—a time of sudden and extensive physical changes accompanied by severe anxiety which may produce emotional and social maladjustment.

Most researchers agree that puberty and identity crisis are two of the most important risk factors in adolescent equilibration. According to Adler, the tendency for behavioural maladjustment reaches its climax in adolescents. New age psychology schools have executed many comprehensive analyses regarding risk factors in maladjustment and equilibrium egress. The results of these analyses present many

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practical guidelines for educators and psycho-pedagogic counsellors. Many of these studies can be found in the works of Sigmund and Anna Freud. Major ramifications of pupil maladjustment include academic dropout and various types of delinquency.
In order to elucidate further, it must be stated that many psychological features such as emotional deficiency, rejection, and ineffective communication expose students to maladjustment.
Over half of adolescent students suffer from behaviour maladjustment (Sanford, Offord, Boyle, Peace, and Racine; 1992). This maladjustment endures throughout their pedagogic years and exposes them to serious problems including academic failure (Ladde & Hidak, 1986), behavioural defects (Ladde, 1990), behavioural and emotional disorders (Coie & Dodge, 1993), delinquency (Borien, 1990), and academic dropout (Fine, 1989). Parent-child conflicts gradually escalate and reach their height in the middle of adolescence (Larss & Kalinse, 1994).
While self-identity is an essential concern for everyone, most fluctuation and confusion occurs within the period of adolescence in which most social maladjustments originate (Tomas, 2000).
Adolescents must accept the fact that they must sooner or later take professional and familial responsibility (Kotral, 1996). Additionally, seniors and peers develop new expectations of adolescents as they grow older. As stated in related research, these issues may be causes for maladjusted behaviour in adolescent students (Amens, 2000; Korop et al, 2002; Tine et al, 2001).

- Statistical analysis showed significantly higher pupil adaptation ratios in intact families compared with pupil adaptation in dysfunctional or broken families.

The majority of researchers postulate that familial structure and performance are the most important factors in a child's psychological growth and evolution and innumerable pupil problems are in essence domestically derived.
Last et al (2002) studied family while regarding it as an interactive system. He showed that emotional, social, and academic adjustment is lower in families with less interaction, emotional ties (Hibbs, 2000), and social activity (Rappoport et al, 2001).
Familial structure and performance influences mental health and psychosocial trauma (Masten et al, 2003).
Carr (2000) showed that inferiority feeling due to physical defects; familial cultural; social and economical deficiency; collapse of family structure; lack of parental sentiment; and lack of correct moral criterion within the family are all behavioural risk factors for pupils and thus cause antisocial behaviour which is an unacceptable method for pupils to facilitate reduction of accumulated internal tension. According to Kendall (2003), pupils' achievement within their own families influences social and emotional adjustment. Being an orphan, foster child, or single child; possessing a stepfather or stepmother; and indifference or overprotection all cause emotional immaturity in children and complicate their emotional, social, and academic adjustment in various environments.
Compared to children living in an intact and healthy family, children of divorced parents manifest greater antisocial behaviour, aggression, disobedience, and depression (Helterington, E, M & Cox, M; 1982). They also demonstrate more behavioural problems in social relations (Seif, 2003).
According to a study of the effects of collapse of family structure and divorce on children (Emery, 1994), such children have internal problems like depression, anxiety, low self-esteem; external problems such as disobedience, aggression, and

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delinquency; social incompetence; confused friendly relationships; and psychological disorders throughout adulthood (Seif, 2003).

- Additionally, analysis of data gathered from the surveys showed that maternal employment has no effect on emotional, social, and academic adjustment with reference to middle school students nationwide.

Several prior studies posit that maternal employment adversely affects pupil emotional, social, and academic adjustment (Detis & Comis 1996; Rubin, 1990; Mohammad-Khani, 1994). While other studies assert that it positively affects adjustment (Kuban, 1992; Haffman, 1999; Hoston, 1983; Afshari, 1995). These results are inconsistent with our current research.

Conversely, alternative studies show that maternal employment has no effect on emotional, social, and academic adjustment of pupils (Richman, 1983; Ebrahimi, 1993; Bulining & Lukas, 2004) which is consistent with the present findings.

Mothers who work have less time to spend with their children. Particularly, in low income families, mothers who work spend most of their time outside the home and do housework when at home and as a result they have very little time to spend with their children. It seems that conformity and understanding between parents and children are no longer effective factors in emotional, social, and academic adjustment and thus maternal presence becomes irrelevant to adjustment. This may be due to the generation gap caused by development of new technology and alteration of social views. Additionally, with academic advancement, children surpass their parents in knowledge thus creating distance between parents and children.

- Moreover, data analysis showed that emotional, social, and academic adjustment of middle school students living in families with a good economic situation is significantly better than students living in families with a poor economic situation.

This result conforms to analogous research such as the studies of Shuab (2003), Farahani (2000), and Amini (2001).

Correspondingly, Finiks (2001) showed that in poor countries such as India—in which families have low income—40% of students are maladjusted. With income increase mental health, adjustment, and morale are improved. Additionally, Finiks also demonstrated that in wealthy countries in which students' necessities are satisfied such as America, Canada, and many European countries, there is no significant relationship between income and mental health, adjustment, and morale. The findings of Mirski (2004) support these results.

By comparing pupil morale and adjustment from 1957 to 1998, Mirse (2000) observed that even though the economic situation of the populace has drastically increased, pupils' behavioural adjustment and morale have decreased from 35% to 33% while depression, aggression, and suicide have escalated.

It seems that economic status has dissimilar effects on pupil adjustment within first and third world countries. This is because in third world countries fulfilment of students' basic needs is based on familial economic status whereas in first world countries these needs are fulfilled in the majority of families; therefore, economic status has little effect on morale and behavioural adjustment. Even so, aggression, suicide, and runaways have increased in first world countries.

- The emotional, social, and academic adaptation ratio of students whose parents are administrative employees, teachers, businessmen or

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specialists is significantly higher than students whose parents are labourers or unemployed.

Many researchers confirm the fact that paternal profession affects emotional, social, and academic adaptation of students and further maintain that development of pupil mental structure and adjustment is related to welfare. Parental profession and socioeconomic and cultural status affect pupil conduct, emotional climate, academic progress, and adjustment (Mirski, 2004). Previous studies showed that behaviour maladjustment disorder rates in poor families are double these rates in wealthy families.

While all poor children are not maladjusted, economic, social, and cultural deficiency and the lack of welfare are significant risk factors in adjustment (Navabi-Nezhad, 1991). Student runaways and delinquencies may be caused by parental unemployment and drug addiction (Ouhara, 2003).

PROPOSITIONS

- Adolescents are subject to widespread mental disparity; therefore, they must be treated with great care in order to facilitate progression though crises.
- Pupil emotional, social, and academic adjustment must be determined annually through valid tests. Students with adjustment issues must receive necessary counselling.
- Students living in dysfunctional or broken families must be identified in order to receive special care and counselling. Moreover, they must be specially observed in order to determine and suppress any sort of maladjustment or delinquency.
- Courses must be developed for parents regarding correct methods of child training and education in accordance with various periods of child development.
- Targeted initiatives must be designed in order to raise the economic status of deprived families, minimize inflation, and lower unemployment rates in order to decrease familial problems which cause maladjustment and delinquency.

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Table 1: Reliability ratio of behaviour adaptation and family structure surveys
Table 2: Frequency and distribution ratio of social, emotional, and academic adjustment in middle school students
Table 3: Independent t-test used to compare adjustment levels of children in intact and dysfunctional families
Table 4: Independent t-test regarding influence of maternal employment on student adjustment
Table 5: ANOVA regarding effects of economic status on pupil adjustment
Table 6: Scheffe's test applied to compare student emotional adjustments based on economic status
Table 7: Scheffe's test applied to compare student social adjustments based on economic status
Table 8: Scheffe's test applied to compare student academic adjustments based on economic status
Table 9: ANOVA regarding effects of male parent profession on pupil adjustment
Table 10: Scheffe's test implemented in order to compare student emotional adjustment means based on various paternal professions
Table 11: Scheffe's test implemented in order to compare student social adjustment means based on various paternal professions
Table 12: Scheffe's test implemented in order to compare student academic adjustment means based on various paternal professions

Survey	Cronbach's Alpha Ratio
Emotional section of adjustment survey	0.75
Social section of adjustment survey	0.78
Academic section of adjustment survey	0.78
Family Structure Survey	0.82
Total	0.80

Table 1

	Very Poor		Poor		Average		Satisfactory		Excellent		Total	
	Frequency	Ratio (%)	Frequency	Ratio (%)	Frequency	Ratio (%)	Frequency	Ratio (%)	Frequency	Ratio (%)	Frequency	R (%
motional justment	1,012	10.9	1,843	19.9	1,936	20.8	3,324	35.8	1,172	12.6	9,287	1
Social justment	665	6.8	1,425	14.6	2,817	28.9	3,241	33.3	1,593	16.4	9,741	1
cademic justment	457	4.9	1,411	15.2	1,868	20.2	2,365	25.5	3,166	34.2	9,267	1

Table 2

Adjustment Type	Family Structure	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	*t*-value	Degree of Freedom	p-level

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Emotional Adjustment	Intact Families	5,143	72.81	17.6	0.230	7.2	8,163	0.000
	Broken and Dysfunctional Families	3,022	69.60	18.4	0.350			
Social Adjustment	Intact Families	5,381	72.66	13.62	0.181	4.6	8,558	0.000
	Broken and Dysfunctional Families	3,179	71.15	13.56	0.233			
Academic Adjustment	Intact Families	5,097	79.61	16.16	0.230	10.4	8,152	0.000
	Broken and Dysfunctional Families	3,057	75.17	17.93	0.310			

Table 3

Adjustment Type	Maternal Employment	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	*t*-value	Degree of Freedom	p-level
Emotional Adjustment	Employed	881	71.57	17.83	0.601	0.03	9,076	0.97
	Unemployed	8,197	71.56	18.16	0.201			
Social Adjustment	Employed	925	71.92	13.39	0.44	0.04	9,528	0.96
	Unemployed	8,605	71.94	13.57	0.14			
Academic Adjustment	Employed	865	79.20	17.1	0.51	1.76	9,064	0.21
	Unemployed	8,201	78.98	16.9	0.18			

Table 4

Adjustment Type	Variability	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Sum of Squares (SS)	Mean of Squares (MS)
Emotional Adjustment	Within-group	6	6,626.32	1,104.38
	Between-groups	8,600	2,821,857.75	328.12
	Totals	8,606	2,828,686.07	
Social Adjustment	Within-group	6	3,092.47	515.41
	Between-	9,028	1,665,537.38	184.48

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	groups			
	Totals	9,034	1,668,629.86	
Academic Adjustment	Within-group	6	21,999.47	3,666.58
	Between-groups	8,612	2,411,930.115	280.066
	Totals	8,618	2,433,939.61	

Table 5

Income		**0-100**	**101-200**	**201-300**	**301-400**	**401-500**	**501-600**	**Over 600**
	Mean	**70.47**	**70.99**	**71.2**	**72.5**	**72.6**	**72.86**	**73.01**
0-100	**70.47**	□						
101-200	**70.99**		□					
201-300	**71.2**			□				
301-400	**72.5**	❊	❊		□			
401-500	**72.6**	❊	❊			□		
501-600	**72.86**	❊	❊				□	
Over 600	**73.01**	❊	❊					□

Table 6

Income		**0-100**	**101-200**	**201-300**	**301-400**	**401-500**	**501-600**	**Over 600**
	Mean	**71.12**	**71.16**	**72.2**	**72.3**	**72.35**	**72.39**	**72.82**
0-100	**71.12**	□						
101-200	**71.16**		□					
201-300	**72.2**			□				
301-400	**72.3**	❊	❊	❊	□			
401-500	**72.35**	❊	❊	❊		□		
501-600	**72.39**	❊	❊	❊			□	
Over 600	**72.82**	❊	❊	❊				□

Table 7

Income		**0-100**	**101-200**	**201-300**	**301-400**	**401-500**	**501-600**	**Over 600**
	Mean	**75.46**	**77.22**	**78.83**	**79.2**	**79.7**	**79.94**	**80.75**
0-100	**75.46**	□						
101-200	**77.22**		□					

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201-300	**78.83**			□				
301-400	**79.2**	❊	❊	❊	□			
401-500	**79.7**	❊	❊	❊		□		
501-600	**79.94**	❊	❊	❊			□	
Over 600	**80.75**	❊	❊	❊				□

Table 8

Adjustment Type	Variability	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Sum of Squares (SS)	Mean of Squares (MS)
Emotional Adjustment	Within-group	6	7,669.71	1,278.28
	Between-groups	9,026	2,964,887.42	328.48
	Totals	9,032	2,972,557.14	
Social Adjustment	Within-group	6	5,087.59	847.93
	Between-groups	9,474	1,725,931.59	182.17
	Totals	9,480	1,731,019.18	
Academic Adjustment	Within-group	6	14,379.74	2,396.62
	Between-groups	6,010	2,506,016.74	278.13
	Totals	6,016	2,520,396.48	

Table 9

Profession		**Unemployed**	**Labourer**	**Military**	**Staffer**	**Teacher**	**Self-Employed**	**Specialist**
	Mean	**69.01**	**71.27**	**73.2**	**73.4**	**73.6**	**73.7**	**۷۳.۹**
Unemployed	**69.01**	□						
Labourer	**71.27**		□					
Military	**73.2**	❊	❊	□				
Staffer	**73.4**	❊	❊		□			
Teacher	**73.6**	❊	❊			□		
Self-Employed	**73.7**	❊	❊				□	
Specialist	**۷۳.۹**	❊	❊					□

Table 10

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Profession		Unemployed	Labourer	Military	Staffer	Teacher	Self-Employed	Specialist
	Mean	66.49	71.71	73.2	73.4	73.5	73.8	74.20
Unemployed	66.49	□						
Labourer	71.71		□					
Military	73.2	❊	❊	□				
Staffer	73.4	❊	❊		□			
Teacher	73.5	❊	❊			□		
Self-Employed	73.8	❊	❊				□	
Specialist	74.20	❊	❊					□

Table 11

Profession		Unemployed	Labourer	Military	Staffer	Teacher	Self-Employed	Specialist
	Mean	73	77.37	83.1	83.4	83.5	83.67	84.68
Unemployed	73	□						
Labourer	77.37		□					
Military	83.1	❊	❊	□				
Staffer	83.4	❊	❊		□			
Teacher	83.5	❊	❊			□		
Self-Employed	83.67	❊	❊				□	
Specialist	84.68	❊	❊					□

Table 12

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