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## The effects of Family and Schools Together (FAST) program on behavioral problems of students

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### Background

Most of the inadequacies and mental disorders in adolescence and adulthood result from neglecting emotional issues, childhood behavior, and inappropriate guidance in process and evolution. Families and schools together program is a new preventive and therapeutic program that is designed based on the prevalence of students' mental problems and needs. The prevalence of behavioral disorders in children, especially in the early age group, is alarming and the accurate screening with broad screening programs and appropriate planning for prevention is necessary. Khuzestan province with 22.47% prevalence of behavioral disorders is ranked second among the provinces of the country. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of Families and Schools Together Program on reducing behavioral problems in elementary school students in Ahvaz.

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**Method**

This research was an experimental one, with pre-test, post-test and follow up with control group. First, two districts were randomly selected from 4 districts; then two primary schools were selected from each district. Finally, 80 primary school students (40 girls and 40 boys) were selected using a cluster sampling method. The students were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Students participated in the Families and Schools Together Program for 8 sessions (150 minutes each week) for two months, according to the two criteria (non-separation or divorce of parents and absence of severe mental illness) along with their family members. In this study, demographic questionnaire, and Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) were used. The intervention was administered to experimental group for two months and two months after the post-test, a follow-up test was carried out.

**Findings**

The results of the study showed that after removing the pre-test effect, the result of applying experimental intervention, namely the implementation of the FAST program on experimental group had a significant effect on reducing student problems. The differences noted in the post-tests results were due to experimental intervention and there was no pre-test effect. This finding shows the effectiveness of the content of the FAST program in reducing student problems. Also, the reduction of behavioral problems among students has continued in the follow-up phase.

**Conclusion**

Prevalence of behavioral disorders in students, especially in first grade of primary school, is worrying. This shows the importance of exact recognition and identification of endangered persons with wide-spread, steady and high-sensitive screening programs and questionnaires.

**Keywords:** family and schools together, behavioral problems