

Psychological Problems of Children In Broken Family: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract:

Children are the most important asset of a country. There are many basic needs for children to be met. Full development of personality depends on meeting these needs. Family is the place where the satisfaction of basic needs of children is done. Children in broken family was neglected their basic needs. This leads to the development of various psychological problems. The purpose of this study is to explore psychological problems of children in broken family. The participants are the children having various psychological problems who came from broken families. Data was collected from children, care takers, Superintendent and official records of the Government Children's Home, Kozhikkode. The purposive sampling strategy was employed in order to collect data. The investigators conducted interviews with the children using an interview schedule prepared from Mathew Maladjustment Inventory and it was analysed using content analysis.

Key words:

Psychological problems, Children, Broken Family and content analysis.

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I. Introduction:

Our nation's assets are its children. The development of our country is dependent on how we treat youngsters since they will grow up to be tomorrow's young men and supply the human capital needed for that progress.

Today's civilization is undergoing fast change. As the fundamental societal unit, the family has also undergone some significant modifications. Its nature has been impacted, its functions have altered, and its structure has changed. In today's society, there are an increasing number of divorce, desertion, and separation cases. Family disagreements amongst members are getting worse. There are an unusually high number of disputes between parents and their kids. Households that have divorced or separated parents are considered broken families. The family may become disintegrated due to the passing of one or both parents, a parent's protracted illness, insanity, desertion, or divorce. A youngster from a turbulent home is more likely to develop emotional disorders or antisocial behaviour as an adult.

Basic psychological requirements are neglected for children in broken families. Children have a variety of basic needs that must be satisfied. Meeting these demands is necessary for personality development and potential manifestation. Children have four main psychosocial needs: the need for praise and recognition, the need for new experiences, the need for love and security, and the need for responsibility.

The need for love and Security:

A stable, ongoing, dependable, and loving relationship with his parents—who also experience a fulfilling relationship with one another—meets this need for the child from the moment of birth. Bowlby advanced the theory that “mother love in infancy and childhood is a crucial for mental health, as are vitamins and proteins for physical health” in 1951. The child realises his or her own identity and value through relationships with his or her mother, father, and eventually an ever-widening circle of other individuals. All later relationships are built on this foundation. The personality's healthy growth depends on this.

If those demands are not sufficiently addressed, the results may be severe in the long run. A large percentage of those who are maladjusted or incarcerated in prisons, mental hospitals, borstals, and schools are those who received unloving and uncaring care as children.

The need for new experiences:

As necessary to the development of the mind as nourishment is to the body, new experiences are a prerequisite for mental growth. From birth on, the kid is given tasks that are appropriate for their stage of development, and their mastery serves as a stepping stone for more challenging tasks. The same way that food is important for the body's development, new experiences is a prerequisite for mental growth. Beginning at birth, children are given activities that are appropriate for their stage of development, and their mastery serves as a springboard for increasingly challenging feats.

The need for praise and recognition:

A significant incentive is required since developing from a helpless newborn into an independent adult takes a tremendous amount of emotional, social, and intellectual learning and is invariably best by challenges, disputes, and disappointments. This is offered by adults who love the child and whom the youngster in turn loves and wants to please, as evidenced by their joy at accomplishment and their appreciation of achievement.

Unfortunately, praise and recognition are nearly always offered for success rather than for effort. As a result, this demand is frequently and most easily met in the case of children who are clever, healthy, well-adjusted, and attractive.

The need for Responsibility:

This need is satisfied by allowing the child to develop personal independence, first by teaching him how to take care of himself in daily care activities like eating, washing and getting dressed. He aspires to be like his parents since he continually models himself after them.

A child who isn't given the chance to practice responsibility won't learn to take responsibility for him, for others, or for material possessions. When this denial is coupled with a lack of training in self-control and forward planning, such children are more likely to be impulsive, unable to delay the satisfaction of urges, disrespectful of others' rights, and, in general, irresponsible. If one of these basic needs remained unmet- or inadequately met, it may lead them to several psychological problems. Certain psychological problems like depression, anxiety and feeling of inferiority seem significant and rich in the previous studies.

Cherlin, A. J et al. (1991) analysed longitudinal studies of effects of divorce on children in Great Britain and the United States. The studies discovered the following behavioural issues in kids as a result of their parents' divorce: mood swings, feeling like no one loves them, lying, being overly fearful, arguing too much, difficulty concentrating, being easily confused, being cruel to others, being disobedient at home and at school, being impulsive, feeling inferior, not being liked by other kids, having obsessions, restless, stubborn or irritable, having a strong temper, feeling down or depressed, withdrawing, etc.

A thorough review of the research on the long-term effects of divorce on children conducted by Wallerstein, J. S. (1991), has led to a growing consensus that a significant number of children experience psychological and social problems related to ongoing and/or new stresses in the post-divorce family for many years and have increased anxiety when forming lasting attachments at later developmental stages, such as young adulthood.

A review of community-based studies on the impacts of homelessness on children was done in 1991 by Rafferty, Y., and Shinn, M. Children who are homeless face substantial risks to their future wellbeing and chances for success. Health issues, hunger, inadequate nutrition, developmental delays, anxiety, depression, behavioural issues, and educational underachievement are of special concern.

Noviandari, H et al (2020) through their phenomenological study in children of broken home found out that Adolescents who grow up in dysfunctional families can endure psychological effects such as being more reserved and depressed for longer periods of time. They concluded that adolescent delinquency and mental illnesses including stress, worry, and depression are caused by family disturbance.

In their thorough evaluation of the data on the effects of divorce and separation on children's outcomes (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001), Rodgers and Pryor came to the conclusion that children of separated parents are more likely than children whose parents remain together to report more depressive symptoms and greater levels of smoking, drinking, and other drug use during adolescence and adulthood.

T. Tabassum (2020) carried out a quantitative descriptive research study Children between the ages of 8 and 15 who resided in Bahawalnagar District of Punjab, India, served as the study's respondents. The respondents were chosen using a straightforward random sampling procedure. Data gathering was done using survey questionnaires. In three months, 100 respondents' data were gathered, and SPSS was used for analysis (version 25). According to the research, most children who grow up in dysfunctional families experience social, psychological, and financial issues. Low provision for basic needs, an inferiority complex, and social prejudice were among these issues.

To determine the impact of a broken home on teenage aggression, Barnow, S., et al. (2001) conducted comparison research comparing aggressive and non-aggressive adolescents. Adolescents who were aggressive reported considerably higher levels of social issues, attention deficiencies, anxiety, and sadness.

Studies regarding the psychological problems of children in broken family using case study qualitative analysis are rare in the literature. In order to address the gaps in the current researches, the present research focuses on exploring the psychological problems of children in broken family.

Objectives of the study:

To explore psychological problems of children in broken families.

Participants:

The participants selected for the study are 10 children having various psychological problems who came from broken families and are inmates of Government Children’s Home, Kozhikkode, Kerala. Six children are girls and four of them are boys. From the six girls, two of them are victims of parental rejection and others of parental separation. From the four boys, two of them are members of deserted family and others are victims of marital discord of their parents. Purposive sampling method was used for selecting participants.

Measures used:

The investigator used semi-structured interview method. The investigators conducted interviews with the children using an interview schedule. Secondary data was collected from children, care takers, Superintendent and official records of the Government Children’s Homes for boys and girls, situated at Kozhikkode. And it was analysed qualitatively using content analysis.

Procedure:

The investigator obtained permission from Regional Assistant Director, Department of Social Justice, Kerala to visit both Government children’s homes for boys and girls situated at Vellimadukunnu, Kozhikkode, Kerala to collect data from children, Care takers, Superintendents and official records. Informed consent was obtained from the children before the interview. And an interview schedule was devised to explore several psychological problems of the children. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes to one hour.

Analysis:

Content analysis was used for data analysis of the present study. Generally, content analysis is the most widely used qualitative approach to analysing interviews. Key contents were developed from the research objective and from the responses of the participants.

Findings:

The responses of the participants are categorized according to the contents. The details of the findings are given below in the tables.

Table 1 shows contents related to Depression

Sub Theme		Frequency	Percentage
1.Sleep Disturbances	Insomnia	5	50 %
	Sleep Walking	1	10%
	Sleep Talking	4	40%
	Night mares	8	80%
2.Feeling of hopelessness		6	60%
3.Loss of Interest in daily activities		5	50%
4.Suicidal ideation		3	30%
5.Difficulty in Concentrating		5	50%
6.Feeling of guilty		2	20%
7.Devaluation of Life		4	40%
8.Dysphoria		2	20%
9.Irritability		4	40%
10.Mistrust		3	30%

Table 2 Shows contents related to Anxiety

Sub themes	Frequency	Percentage
1.Worry of Future	7	70%
2.head ache	10	100%
3.Being Upset	5	50%
4.restlessness	3	30%
5.Enuresis	1	10%
6.Agression	2	20%

7. Self-Destructive Behaviour	1	10%
8. Trouble Concentrating	6	60%
9. Chest Discomfort	10	100%
10. Worry of Future	8	80%

Table 3 shows contents related to Feeling of Inferiority

Sub themes	Frequency	Percentage
1. Feeling of smallness	8	80%
2. Sensitiveness	3	30%
3. Shyness	7	70%
4. Lack of Self confidence	4	40%
5. Easily hurt	2	20%
6. Defectiveness	3	30%

II. Discussion:

During the analysis three major key contents and its symptoms has been explained. It is Depression, anxiety and feeling of inferiority. Ten depressive symptoms have been described under content of depression and ten symptoms has been analysed under content of anxiety. Five sub issues analysed under feeling of inferiority.

Depression:

By analysing ten cases the investigator could understand that all of them have depressive symptoms ranging from mild to moderate levels. In interview schedule 20 questions deals with depression. Most of the children responded positively to these questions. All children have sleep disturbances including sleep walking, sleep-talking, sleep terrors and insomnia. Three girls have stressful events in life. They had no any sleep disturbances before their traumatic experiences. The psychologist of the home identified the sleep disturbances as arisen from stressful experiences of their life. The contents of sleep terrors indicate their family circumstances and miseries of their life. Children who were physically or mentally abused by their own fathers have night mares containing fearful image of their father.

A care taker opined that the words verbalized by children with sleep-talking are indicators of their traumatic stress events of their life. The investigator came to know that some children adopt suitable measures like book reading to terminate insomnia. Learning problems and disinterest in social activities were reported in some cases. It may be caused by lack of needful sleep. Continuous sleep disturbances may lead them to several disastrous consequences.

Recurrent thought of death or suicidal ideations were present in three children. A girl had made attempt to commit suicide also. This finding is supported by the study conducted by Wagner in 1997. His study revealed that children are at increased risk for suicide if they have lost a parent or have been abused. Some children feel that life is filled with miseries and they possess negative attitude towards life.

Diminished ability to think and concentrate in classroom was reported by the superintendent of the children's home in case of 5 children. Three of them are girls. In their own words their concentration has been distracted to family conditions and fearful experiences of life. In boys, irritability and aggressive behaviours are present. Boys often quarrel and humiliate each other in the absence of care takers. The quarrels between children from Kerala and other states are present. A girl suffers from enuresis. This disorder began after she was sexually abused by her own father. It may be the impact of her parental deprivation and abuse.

Anxiety:

By analysing ten cases both physical and psychological symptoms of anxiety are present in almost all cases. When asked about the automatic thoughts, all children positively responded. Anxiety about future life is present mainly in girls. One girl who was sexually abused by her own father expressed her intense anxiety about her future life. The girl who was assaulted by her lover considers all men in the world as untrustful. All boys and girls have headaches and soreness in the chest when they are stressed. The girls who were abused and boys were separated from their home and familiar surroundings become restless during night. Poor concentration and inability to sustain attention in the classroom was reported about 8 children by Superintendent and girls are more anxious about their future.

Feeling of Inferiority:

All children suffer from feeling of inferiority, especially when they go to school in which other children study. In the view of majority of general population, Government children's home is a jail filled with children in conflict with law. Their classmate and even some teachers view the inmates of government children's home as 'criminals'. This social stigma creates major problems for the children. Some children refuse to go to school.

During the analysis of ten cases, the investigator found out the interest to be alone and withdrawal features in most of the children. Feeling of inferiority at equilibrium level is better for the personality development of an individual. According to Alfred Adler, Inferiority by itself can never produce greatness. It must be combined with talent, courage and social interest. But excessive inferiority complex leads to maladaptive behaviours and to become social withdrawn person. Adler believed that people are greatly motivated by fictions or expectations of the future than by experiences of the past (Adler 1956).

By analysing ten cases we can see that all children have major aims and expectations in life. To become Military Officer, District Collector, Doctor, computer engineer is some of them. These goals of their life may help them to overcome their feeling of inferiority and may work as motivating force to strive for superiority. Their goals to become higher authorities may not exist in the future. But it moulds contemporary behaviour because it is subjectively perceived in the here and now. Two children suffer from severe feeling of guilty, feeling of smallness and shyness. one child has stolen many times and caught by police and another girl ran away from home with her lover and was abandoned by him after sexual abuse.

III. Conclusion:

The Children of broken family suffer from a plenty of problems. The life of children in government children's home is meant for supporting them for personality development and better future life. Few psychological problems have been explored and analysed here by the investigator. The negative attitudes of the public towards inmates of government children's home should change by giving proper awareness and empathetic attitude should be developed. Current findings highlight the importance of conducting multi-disciplinary research on mental health of the children of broken family and invite implementation of government programmes to address their issues.

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