

Do the Depressed Youth Perceive Parental Separation as a Cause for Their State of Depression? An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

Parental separation is an adverse experience that many youths face in their childhood, which may cause psychological distress. This study investigates a subject that has received little attention in the available literature: the effects of parental separation on the mental health of depressive youngsters. A convenient sampling method is used. The study focuses on ten young people, ages 16 to 21. Some of them are undergoing treatment at the Peradeniya Teaching Hospital's psychiatric ward and the others have completed their treatments. They have been diagnosed with depression and are going through parental separation. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data. The views of these young people about parental separation and its impact on their mental health were investigated using thematic analysis. The results show that young people with depression believe that parental separation has a significant effect on their mental health. Participants underline that parental separation has an important role in contributing to their psychological discomfort, even if they acknowledge that it is not the only reason for their state of depression. Comprehending various viewpoints is essential, providing insightful knowledge for family and couple counselling. With more awareness of the possible mental suffering that children may experience as a result of parental separation, parents will be better able to provide their children with intervention measures and support networks. Therefore, the study results can be incorporated into marriage counselling sessions.

Keywords: Depression, Parental Separation, Youth, Mental Health, Psychological Discomfort

INTRODUCTION

Depression is a common mental health issue that impacts individuals of all ages and significantly raises the global illness burden. Depression affects about 280 million people worldwide (WHO, 2023). The concept of youth, as distinct from both childhood and adulthood, represents a transitional period between school and employment, signifying change, progress, and future development (Ibargüen, 2004; UNICEF, 2020). This study uniquely focuses on youth who experience depression following parental separation, addressing a gap in existing research. The international community, guided by the United Nations, defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 24, with member nations having the flexibility to adopt their definitions (Krishnan & Sethuramalingam, 2017).

Family patterns such as increased Parental separation rates and growing single-parent families are interconnected with the well-being of the young generation. These patterns have possibly expanded the understanding of the significance of parental influence in children's lives (King et al., 2017). Parental separation is the breakdown in partnership between parents regardless of their marital status (Lacey., 2014). It is associated with an increased risk of mental health problems in children and young individuals. Furthermore, these differences tend to persist into adulthood rather than being confined to infancy (Karhina et al., 2023). Understanding the real reversible, personal, and complex understanding of young people on the ongoing impact of their life experiences on their present experiences is crucial (Eldar-Avidan et al., 2008).

When children have experienced parental separation in their childhood, the risk of developing adolescent problems such as Substance abuse, mental health disorders, and sexual activities increases (Fergusson et al.,

1994). Parental separation is a major adverse childhood experience, yet reports of its results on childhood vary significantly. Parental separation is generally preceded by conflict, which is itself a risk factor for child problem behaviour (Yilza et al., 2019). The immediate, identifiable effects of parental separation are rejection, anger and guilt (Connell, 1988).

The study, "Impact of Parental Separation or Divorce on School Performance in pre-term children" (Nusinovici et al., 2018) implies that Parental separation has been associated with reduced cognitive development and educational performance, as parental separation can result in multiple negative effects, including perceived guilt, blame, stressors, and diminished resources for the children (Nusinovici et al., 2018). Children who experience parental separation may relapse, exhibit anxiety and depression symptoms, become touchier and demanding, uncooperative and struggle in their social interactions and academic performances (Lee & Bax, 2000).

Theatrical Framework

Attachment Theory

John Bowlby, a psychologist, created attachment theory in the middle of the 20th century. It has become a well-known paradigm for comprehending the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, especially in early childhood development (Bretherton, 1992). This theory investigates how early caregiving experiences affect an individual's attachment patterns throughout their life, focusing on the basic human need for social connection (Main, 2023).

The fundamental idea of attachment theory is that children have a biological tendency to develop close emotional relationships with their primary caregivers, who are usually their parents (MSEd, 2023). The development of internal working models—cognitive frameworks that affect a person's expectations and ideas about oneself, other people, and relationships—begins with these early relationships (Li, 2023). Bowlby distinguished between four main attachment types, which are disorganized, insecure-avoidant, insecure-anxious, and secure (MSEd, 2023).

From basic visual searching on the low end to aggressive following (Keikha et al., 2020) and verbal signalling on the other, children are likely to display a range of attachment behaviours (NICE, 2015). These actions persist until the child either gets exhausted, which may occur in the event of a protracted separation or loss, or until the child can restore a desired degree of psychological or physical closeness to the attachment figure (Florida State College at Jacksonville, n.d.). Bowlby claims that in these situations, young children go through severe depression and hopelessness (Li, 2023).

Social Learning Theory

A well-known theoretical framework in the study of human behaviour is the social learning theory, which was developed by psychologist Albert Bandura. It emphasizes the importance that imitation, modelling, and observational learning play in the learning of behaviours (McLeod, 2023). This theory, which dates back to the middle of the 20th century, deviates from conventional behaviourist viewpoints by acknowledging the importance of cognitive processes, social environment, and reciprocal connections in determining behaviour (Lamorte, 2022). The Social Learning Theory offers a framework for comprehending how children adopt social skills from the actions of important people in their social surroundings (Main, 2023). This theory may be utilized to investigate how parental separation affects child development (Kleinschlömer & Krapf, 2023).

The idea of observational learning, which holds that people pick up new behaviours by seeing and copying the activities of others, is the foundation of social learning theory. According to Bandura, this process incorporates cognitive functions including motivation, attention, recall, reproduction, and self-reinforcement in addition to direct reinforcement (McLeod, 2023). The model also emphasizes the significance of vicarious reinforcement, which occurs when people see the results of other people's actions and modify their actions appropriately (Mimiaga et al., 2009).

A major factor in the development and expression of depressive behaviour is observational learning. People, especially kids and teenagers, might pick up on depressive behaviours, cognitive patterns, and coping techniques from the people in their social circles (McLeod, 2023).

Youths' Perception of Parental Separation

Adolescents' emotional, psychological, and social well-being can be greatly impacted by how they perceive parental separation. These are some arguments emphasizing how crucial it is for young people to understand parental separation (Kleinschlömer & Krapf, 2023).

Youths who have a good view of parental separation may feel more stable and secure. It can improve their mental condition if they think that their parents' choice is essential to their pleasure or well-being (Clark, 2013). A negative view, on the other hand, might cause mental discomfort, thoughts of desertion, or an unstable sensation. This may affect their capacity to overcome obstacles and disappointments (McNeil, 1959).

Adolescents whose parents have split are more likely to experience mental health issues in a variety of mental health areas (D'Onofrio & Emery, 2019). Exposure to unpleasant life experiences was consistently more likely among adolescents with split parents (Karhina et al., 2023). Adolescents from split families were twice as likely to have encountered some of these events—like adult aggression and unwanted sexual acts—than their peers from non-separated homes (Livingston et al., 2007). Teens whose parents had divorced were also more likely to have gone through several unfavourable experiences in their lives (Anderson, 2014).

Young people's experience of parental separation is shaped by complicated cognitive processes that are affected by several variables. Mental functions including perception, interpretation, memory, and reasoning are referred to as cognitive processes (National Academies Press (US), 2016).

Depending on their knowledge and viewpoint, young people perceive the circumstances around parental separation. Their emotional development, prior experiences, and cognitive growth all influence how they perceive things (Kleinschlömer & Krapf, 2023). Youths may concentrate on particular parts of the separation, such as the reasons for it or the perceived impact on themselves, as a result of cognitive processes involving selective attention (Hobbiss & Lavie, 2024).

Impact On Emotional Well-Being

A growing proportion of children worldwide encounter familial instability as a result of divorce or separation, as well as the aftermath of cohabitation or non-marital births (D'Onofrio & Emery, 2019). After parental separation, kids and teenagers may feel more anxious (Karhina et al., 2023) and depressed than usual (WHO, 2021). These emotional difficulties may be exacerbated by modifications in living circumstances and family upheaval (Pedrosa et al., 2020).

Feelings of abandonment may arise from the separation, particularly if one parent is thought to be less involved in the child's life (Villines, 2023). It has been proposed that a child's development of depression is linked to parental separation (Sanwald et al., 2023). Following a split, the new family structure may be linked to higher levels of childhood trauma, which might result in more emotionally unstable individuals (Behere et al., 2017). At the end of the day, this could be a risk factor for mood disorders, especially the onset of chronic depression (Sekhon, 2023). People with separated parents are more likely to experience poor mental health outcomes in adulthood, according to prospective research examining the relationship between parental separation during childhood and mental health later in life (Karhina et al., 2023).

However, each person may experience parental divorce in childhood in a different way (Cherlin & Chase-Lansdale, 1995). While some children are more resilient than others, resilience is believed to depend on several variables, including the child's traits, those of their family, and the environment in which they live (Li, 2023). With a frequency of 5-8% after a year, depressive disorders are prevalent in adolescents (Mullen, 2018). Additionally, a significant factor in the worldwide burden of disease is depression.

Depression

Among the most prevailing mental disorders, depression is a common mental illness, which goes far beyond the emotion of sadness. Simply it IS beyond sadness (Khurshid et al., 2015). An estimated 3.8% of people suffer from depression, including 5.7% of individuals over 60 and 5% of adults (4% of males and 6% of women). Depression affects over 280 million individuals worldwide (WHO,2023). The data indicates that a startling 19.4% of Sri Lankans as a whole experience depression. While just 16.1% of Asians experience depression, Sri Lanka has a much greater incidence of mental illness than any other Asian nation (Eliatamby, 2023).

Many individuals with depression often have symptoms that are severe enough to cause difficulty in their day-to-day activities, such as relationships with others, jobs, school, or social activities. Some people may experience widespread misery or unhappiness for no apparent reason (Mayo Clinic, 2022). According to the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10, 2019), Depression can range from Mild Persistent Depression (dysthymia) to Major (severe) Depressive Disorder.

Many affective factors cause depression. It results from complex social, psychological and biological factors. Adverse life events, such as unemployment, bereavement, and psychological trauma are more likely to develop depression (World Health Organization, 2020). Over 264 million people were recorded as having depression in 2017, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study, of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. It is reported as 2.7% males and 4.1% males. The share of the population with depression ranges between 2%- 6% around the world. (Hannah Ritchie, 2018). In 2023, the statistics reported that 3.8% of the global population experienced Depression, which is over 280 million people (WHO,2023).

Depression in Youth

Currently, Depression is one of the most prevailing mental illnesses in Sri Lanka (Alwis et al., 2023). 19.4% of the Sri Lankan population experienced Depression, which is slightly higher than in other Asian countries. 39% of young Sri Lankans among the ages 10-24 are suffering from Depression and Sri Lankan research has found a significant increase in having Depression in the country (Eliatamby, 2023). Depression prevalence in the urban Sri Lankan sample lowers, similar to Western countries, but under-identified due to cultural appropriateness (Ball et al., 2010).

In the early 1990s, Sri Lanka had an exceptionally high suicide rate among teenagers aged 15-19. In light of this, the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka suggests that local hospital mental health departments offer school programs for teenagers. (Rodrigo et al., 2010). However, juvenile depression is remarkably underdiagnosed, in part because medical professionals are trained to seek adult depression symptoms, which may manifest differently in young people (Palmisano, 2013).

The underlying reasons for juvenile depression may be their childhood and adolescence. Adolescent morbidity is mostly caused by the development of depression. Often starting between the ages of 10 and 18, the onset often signals Chronic depression that lasts longer in adulthood (Palmisano, 2013). It has been observed that over 70% of teenagers who had depression also had an increased chance of developing depression as adults (Rikard-Bell et al., 2022).

Depression in young people causes them to encounter several challenges. Some consequences of depression include low self-esteem, alcoholism and drug misuse, academic difficulties and failure, issues with family disputes and other relationships, social isolation, involvement in the judicial system, self-harming activities, and suicide (Village Behavioral Health, 2020). They experience persistent boredom in daily activities because depression is difficult to manage behaviorally. As they do not always seem sad, they are more likely to be labelled troublesome by teachers and parents (Palmisano, 2019).

Additionally, among youth who have been bullied, depression significantly raises the chance of suicide. The primary risk factor for depression is that over half of those who have committed suicide experienced depression (Petito et al., 2020). Depressed youths often experience low self-esteem and hard to repair their

mood, so they are vulnerable to the emotional pain of bullying (Kodish, 2016).

As the main focus of this study is on the young population, statistics about the young generation with depression are significant. Nearly 10%- 20% of the population experience any type of mental disorder in their childhood and it has followed to their adolescence. Among these mental disorders, Depression is one of the most prevailing mental health conditions (Petito et al., 2020).

75% of mental health issues start between the ages of 18 to 24, according to the Mental Health Foundation. Annually, depression has the potential to result in suicide. The WHO's 2019 figures show that among those aged 15 to 29, suicide ranks as the second most common cause of death. Youth encounter mental health problems as a result of traumatic childhood events (Fusar-Poli, 2019). Youth is defined as those between the ages of 10 and 24 (WHO, 2017). For adults, the most prevalent age at which a major depressive episode occurred was 20 years old. In 2017, 10.1% of males and 19.3% of women in this age group reported having suffered a major depressive episode. In young people, depression affects up to 20% of female teenagers. In the United States, 21.6% of people between the ages of 18 and 29 purchased medication in 2018 due to anxiety and depression. (Elflein, 2019).

Youths are more likely to view peers with depression as dangerous and potentially violent, increasing their sense of isolation and thus their depressive symptoms (De Laia Almeida et al., 2022). Additionally, research indicates that youths who are in treatment for mental health issues are more common targets for teasing and bullying, increasing their risk for suicide and negatively affecting their participation in mental health treatment (Borschuk, 2015). Young people often infrequently seek professional help when they suffer from psychological disorders like Depression, highlighting barriers to early access and improving psychological well-being (Salaheddin & Mason, 2016).

Depression and Parental Separation

Separation affects, not only married couples but also their children (D'Onofrio & Emery, 2019), especially when they grow up (Anderson, 2014). Parental divorce negatively impacts adolescents' mental health as it is an adverse childhood experience. Research suggests parental divorce leads to depression in children, emphasizing the need for mental health improvement (Liu, 2022). Young children experience the bad effects of parental separation in their childhood, and in later life (Crittenden & Spieker, 2023). The children, however, bear this burden because they have few alternatives. A child's future well-being depends on having a positive parent-child relationship. Having supportive, tolerant, and non-aggressive parental interactions is one of the most reliable protective factors against depression in the long run (González, 2015).

Genetics, reactions to adverse childhood experiences and illnesses; like bipolar disorder are some of the causes of depression in youth (Morrow, 2023). Adverse Childhood Experiences include patterns of abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional), household challenges (such as incarceration of a family member or parental separation or divorce), and neglect (either physical or emotional), all of which are strongly correlated with an increased risk for depression (Neavin et al., 2018). Huang et al. (2022) study on Family functioning and adolescent depression examines family functioning's impact on adolescent depression, focusing on vulnerability, social support, self-esteem, and peer relationships. According to the study results, Family functioning influences adolescent depression, impacting intervention.

According to the statistics of UNICEF, over 21,000 children are in orphanages in Sri Lanka. 19,000 of them have one or both parents are still alive (IRIN News, 2007). Due to the destroyed family unit, these children suffer throughout their life journey. Among the causes for having depression, parental separation is a key factor (Bohman et al., 2017). Childhood parental separation or divorce is linked to increased psychological distress in adulthood. Parental separation increases children's psychological distress, depression, and anxiety in adulthood (Lacey et al., 2014).

Types of Separation in a marriage include Trial Separation (separating as a trial to see whether the choice is right or wrong), Permanent Separation (divorced), and Legal Separation (finalized separation in legal terms via a court-issued judgment) (Caroline, 2023). In European countries, divorce is around 35%, while Sri Lanka has

1.5% of the total number of marriages (Amarathunga & Wickramarachchi, 2018). When there are 400 divorces a day, it must be declared as an extremely alarming social issue facing Sri Lanka at present (Karunaratne, 2021).

A recent survey carried out by the health authorities has revealed that 54 per cent of marriages in Sri Lanka end in divorce. According to Anusha Gokula Fernando, Director, of Social Services, Western Provincial Council, most of the divorces, have children, under 18 years of age. (Aryaratne, 2016). Sri Lanka has the lowest divorce rate globally, with a crude 0.15 rate in 2023. However, Low divorce rates are likely due to strict marriage laws (Bieber, 2023).

What it is important to focus on here is, it is just "Divorce" rate is low, but not the other types of separations (Karunaratne, 2021). With 400 divorces reported per day, it is obvious that Sri Lanka is facing a significant social issue (Writer, 2014). The reason for this remarkable turn of events is the rising divorce rate, especially in Asian countries like Sri Lanka where marriage is considered a lifetime commitment (Aryaratne, 2016). A recent poll by the health authorities indicates that 54% of marriages in Sri Lanka result in divorce separations (Karunaratne, 2021). So, for Sri Lanka, it is important to focus on the separations of married couples.

This study highlights the frequently disregarded effects of parental separation and calls for consideration of both divorce and other types of marital separation. While divorce rates are low in Sri Lanka, there are significant obstacles associated with other kinds of separations. The fact that more than 21,000 children in Sri Lankan orphanages have parents still living is noteworthy and highlights the long-term effects of shattered families (Orphans in Need, n.d.). It's critical to comprehend how parental separation affects kids in the long run (WHO, 2021). Studies show that teenage depression is exacerbated by parental divorce, highlighting the importance of mental health therapies. A stable protective factor against depression over the long run is a positive parent-child connection (Sander & McCarty, 2005). It is significant to bring to light the need for comprehensive interventions in family and marriage therapy to address the psychological distress that young people experience as a result of parental separation, which will eventually enhance the mental health of this vulnerable group (Longstaffe, 2000).

Takeuchi et al. (2003)'s research findings show that, those who have reported significantly higher scores on the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) have experienced the loss of same-sex parents in their childhood. However, this research only uses patients with acute major depression, not all types of depression. Also, it does not pay attention to the age range of youth and it focuses on the adults with childhood parental separation experiences.

Also, Palmarsdottiret al. (2015), has researched "Parental Separation; Family Conflict and Adolescent Depression and Anxiety" which was a population-based, cross-sectional survey. They aimed to gain a better understanding of, how both family conflict and parental divorce may affect adolescents and whether the effects of parental divorce on anxiety and depression are mediated through family conflict. According to the findings of the research family conflict has a stronger relationship with depression and anxiety. In this study, they only focused on the age range of 13-16 and only studied the impact of divorce without concerning other types of separations.

There is a direct influence of parental separation and it has an impact on depression through relationship commitment and financial measures in adulthood with an indirect effect through specific relationship characteristics in adulthood (Wauterickx et al., 2006). Children with divorced parents experience lower well-being, depression, emotional issues, and less satisfaction with social and family aspects, later in their adulthood. The research evidenced that, parental divorce has a huge impact on Depression along with relationship commitment and economic activities in their adulthood (Wauterickx et al., 2006).

Early object loss might exacerbate depression once it has already started, particularly by limiting a person's capacity to carry out daily tasks (Takeuchi et al., 2002). Additionally, the majority of kids express negative emotions regarding their parents' divorce, and a sizeable portion of kids experience protracted and severe symptomatology associated with parental divorce, which might include issues with internalizing and externalizing (Catherine, 2000).

The study on the influence of parental divorce on Depression symptoms in adolescence and early adulthood has found a correlation between parental divorce and adolescent depression. The study was an analysis of prevailing literature on the issue. The main databases that have been used for this study are Psych Info, PUBMED, and EBSCOhost. The keywords were parental divorce OR parental separation and depression OR mental health OR emotion. (Liu, 2022).

Another study investigates parent-child separation and self-harm subtypes in Chinese adolescents, examining potential risk factors. So, Zhou et al. (2022), in their research, Childhood Separation from Parents and Self-Harm in Adolescence: A Cross-Sectional Study in Mainland China has found that Self-harm subtypes have shown a relationship to paternal and maternal separation. However, this study doesn't focus on developing Depression later in their adolescence.

Despite its prevalence, depression in youth remains underdiagnosed, often due to clinicians applying adult-centric diagnostic criteria. Approximately 5% of adolescents, or 1 in 20 teenagers, grapple with Major Depression, with an increased prevalence among females during and after adolescence (Admin, 2021; Palmisano, 2013). Understanding the distinct presentation of depression in youth is crucial for accurate diagnosis and effective intervention.

Educational outcomes are also affected, with parental separation associated with reduced cognitive development and academic performance (Nusinovici et al., 2018). While past research often focuses on specific types of separation, this study recognizes the need for a holistic understanding of the various forms of parental separation and their nuanced impacts on children's mental well-being (Palmarisdottir, 2019).

In the Sri Lankan context, so far there is no research on this current study title. Further, most of the research done on depression and parental separation has found a clear relationship between these two factors. However, all these studies focus on the perception of individuals who have experienced parental separation in their childhood and developed depression in their adulthood. Almost all of the above-stated literature has found that there is a significant relationship between parental separation and depression in later life. So even though there is plenty of research done about the relationship between parental separation and depression, the study of former literature did not find any literature which focuses on the perception of the victim. Also, there is very little research done on the age range of youth, as most of the research has focused on childhood, adolescence and adulthood to bring to light the victim's perception of the impact of parental separation on developing depression.

The main objective of this study is, to understand the Youths' perception of, whether parental separation has impacted their present condition of depression or not.

What is most significant in this study is, that the study can be used for marriage counselling and family counselling. As family and marriage conflicts are common; children and young individuals are affected due to this conflict, the study results are very useful to make the couples understand, how much the children are affected due to family conflicts.

The study emphasizes the importance of exploring how young individuals perceive parental separation and its effects on their mental health. The findings could inform family counselling initiatives and individual interventions, guiding parents to prioritize the well-being of their children during periods of marital discord and separation (Connell, 1988). By understanding the subjective experiences of youth, it becomes possible to tailor interventions that mitigate the negative effects of parental separation.

Despite numerous studies in Sri Lanka on youth depression and parental separation, there remains a gap in understanding the perceptions of young individuals regarding parental separation and its impact on mental well-being. This research seeks to fill this void, providing valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions and counselling strategies for youth facing the challenges of parental separation in the Sri Lankan context.

So, it is important to focus on the impact of parental separation on the mental well-being of the child and how

the young individual perceives it to reduce the bad effects that happen to the child, due to parental separation. When couples try to get divorced or separated, in counseling sessions the study results can be used to put their attention on the lives of their children. So, it is possible to focus the adults' attention on the bad effects that happen to children, due to their conflicts and how much they harm the mental wellbeing of their child. Consequently, the negative effects that happen to children, due to children can expected to be reduced with the help of the results of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

This study delves into the nuanced experiences of depression, focusing on ten inpatient and outpatient youths aged 16-21 at the Psychiatric unit of Peradeniya Teaching Hospital, who have encountered parental separation. They experienced parental separation within 10 years before starting the treatments for depression. The sample consists of 06 outpatients and 04 inpatients. 06 of the sample are Male and 04 participants are female.

Instruments

Data was collected through a semi-structured interview.

The interview covered 04 main sections. The first section is Demographic Information (eg. Age, gender, separation period of parents...). The second section is about the treatment process (eg. "How long do you take treatments?"). The third section is about the experiences that the participants have identified by themselves as traumatic. The final section is the present emotional state (eg. "What is the emotion that you experience at present?").

Procedure

Ethical approval was taken by the Teaching hospital, Peradeniya. Participants were given informed consent forms, while interviewed using the semi-structured interview, which is conducted both in Sinhala and English language. It lasted for 10-20 minutes. At the end, the debriefing form is provided and explained to the participants.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Identified Themes

Theme	Description	Sub Themes
1. Current emotions	Feelings and ideas about what they feel at the moment	Happy Sad Lonely
2. Onset of causes of depression	Participants identified causes of depression	Parental separation Negligence of parents Being abused Authoritarian parenting Romantic relationships Bullying
3. Impact of Parental Separation on Life	View about the way that parental separation impacted on their lives	Economic Social

		Mental Educational
4. Identifying parental separation as a cause/not a cause for depression	Perception of the fact that parental separation has or/has not caused depression	

Happiness

02 out of 10 participants, who are participants 05 and 10 said that they are "Happy" in response to the question "What do you feel at the moment?"

"I am happy, not sad." This is Participant 05 response, and he said that they struggle to live with his aunt. Following their parents' divorce, the participant's mother moved out, forcing them to live with their aunt. "In her house, I feel like a servant". He claims that because he isn't living with the aunty right now, he is at least somewhat at ease.

Participant 10 said that he is cheerful and doesn't always feel down. "I don't feel as horrible now. I'm content and doing well". Even yet, the subsequent response was, "It will be comfortable for me if I can meet my friend", notwithstanding the initial response.

Sadness

When asked what emotion they were now experiencing, the most frequent response from the participants was sadness. Participants 01, 02, 03, 04, 06, 08, and 09 replied that they were sad at the moment. When asked what they were feeling at the time, participant 01 replied, "I'm really sad. I don't want to be here". In response to the second half of the question, which asked why they were depressed, he replied that being at home makes him feel stressed out."

Participant 02 said, "I feel sad," in response to the first half of the question, and, "I want to go home," in response to the second half. "Being here is not insane. It was a while before I visited my father's symmetry". This participant just lost her dad. She loves her dad so much. She is currently feeling depressed and anxious due to this absence.

"I'm not comfortable. I'm feeling down and scared. My best friend is married, so I can't even get to meet her, but I still want to see them. This was the response from Participant 03 who said that she is currently unhappy. She doesn't feel safe staying at home since her father abuses her both physically and mentally. Participant 09 gave substantially identical responses. In response, he said he was depressed and wanted to see his friends again.

"I'm not sure how I feel. I feel as though I am alone and depressed since no one is around. I truly miss him. Here, she refers to her boyfriend as "He." She (participant 04) is suffering at her house as a result of her brake up with her partner. Similar to those who have already been discussed, participant 06 said he was depressed because he missed his mother. "I want to see my mother at home." He claimed that seeing his friends stresses him out, thus he doesn't want to see them.

Participant 08 identified her emotional status as sad and at the same time lonely.

Loneliness

Two out of ten participants used the word "Lonely" as the direct response to the question, "What do you feel at the moment?"

Participant 08 is suffering and is grappling with the perception that her father is involved in an extramarital

affair. Despite her strong affection for him, she does not want to see her father with anyone other than her mother. She claimed that she feels alone as she doesn't want to be in the hospital and doesn't have any companions to share her feelings.

Another response from Participant 07 who identified his feelings as “Lonely” was, "I want to meet my friends. In their absence, I feel alone”. He claims that he is at ease with his peers.

Identified Causes of Depression

Parental Separation

Every member of the study's chosen sample had gone through parental separation before beginning depression treatments. Out of the 10 individuals, seven have acknowledged that parental separation is a contributing factor to their sadness. Furthermore, the research data results indicate that parental separation has not been singled out as the sole cause of sadness.

Participant 01 attributes his emotional breakdown to his father's separation; he was forced to live with his mother, who is involved in an extramarital affair. He now experiences pain anytime he is at home as a result of this occurrence.

"My mother's man caused my father to leave us. This was too much for him. I also find this intolerable. Once my dad abandoned me, there was nothing I could do. I still can't finish my work”.

Similarly, these people believe that having their parents separated had a detrimental effect on their mental health. According to Participant 10, "They fight with each other all the time. I want them to be united. But nobody cares what I am saying. They simply blamed one another. I'm in pain. Because of this issue, my friends made fun of me”.

"Father does not give us anything. Mom doesn't have a job. I have a brother. I have to take care of him and my mother" This was the reply of Participant 09. He has the burden of his family and, therefore is frustrated and sad at the same time. The above-mentioned participants have identified parental separation as a significant cause for their current state.

"If they can fix the stuff together again, I will feel somewhat relaxed and can focus on re-routing my life". This was the reply of Participant 10. Similarly, participant 01 has the intention to get together with the father, which is not possible with the current situation in the family.

Other Causes

The participants indicated several additional variables that contributed to their sadness in addition to parental separation. One of the factors that influenced their mindset was the guardian's negligence. "My mother doesn't care about me because of her lover. Do not even inquire as to whether I had eaten. Participant 01 is suffering as a result of his mother's carelessness.

Participants also mentioned poor guardian treatment as a contributing factor to their depression. Because they abandoned him, participant 05 does not have parents. He was forced to live with his aunt after that. The guardians there do not treat him nicely.

"Even though they treat me badly, I have to have patience because I don't have parents."

Another factor mentioned by Participant 09 is authoritative parenting. He has the responsibility for the family. Thus, he is compelled to work to support the family financially.

"I have to do all these things because I am the eldest," she used to say often.

Individuals 04 and 08 claim that ending a romantic relationship is another factor contributing to despair. They

suffered from broken love relationships in addition to parental separation.

In response, Participant 08 said, "He took care of me after I lost my father. He was loving. However, he abandoned me. Without him, I feel alone".

Participants 03 and 07 have mentioned sexual abuse, mental and physical harassment, and bullying as additional factors. Participant 06 said that being teased by his peers has made her suffer more because "my friends laugh at me, saying that I am like a girl and I am not like them." Additionally, participant 03 said that she was unable to keep herself out of the situation since she had been subjected to both sexual and physical abuse by her father. "I don't feel safe in this world". This is the response of the participant.

Perceived Impact of Parental Separation in Their Life

According to the participants, economic breakdown is caused by parental separation. As their parents are separated and they don't have stable economic backgrounds they suffer. Participant 09 is doing a job to secure the economy of the family. If not, they even don't have plenty of money to buy their food. Also, participant 06 used to consume alcohol. As he and his mother don't have a job, they depend on his sisters' salary. But it is not enough for them all, to fulfil their basic needs.

Due to the separation of parents, one of the effects that experienced by these participants is, they are humiliated by their friends. Participant 07 said, "Father always uses alcohol and is shouting for everyone around our house. So, a friend knows about the situation. Always they compare me with my father". Also, participant 08 replied, "All the friends know about the father's affair. One day, I heard them talking about that, even though they are not telling it directly."

The incident is same with the Participant 01, as his mother's extramarital affair has become a reason for his friends to humiliate him.

Abuse is another effect that is caused by parental separation. Participant 05 has experienced physical abuse, as he was beaten up by his aunt and uncle several times. Also, participant 03 is sexually abused by her father in her childhood after the separation from her mother. This incident has made her suicidal, which has caused her to attempt suicide several times. Furthermore, she has hatred and anger at the same time towards the people around her.

Identifying Parental Separation as One of The Causes of Having Depression.

Out of 10 participants, 07 have directly answered that parental separation is a cause for their state of depression. Participants 01, 02, 03, 07, 08, 09, and 10 replied that they perceive the separation of their parents as one of the main causes of their depression. Participant 01 said, "Yes, they are responsible for putting me in this situation. After their fighting, I had to face many issues".

"Yes, it puts me down and at the same time I felt emotionally drained because I need them to stay together. I need my mother and father. Likewise, the other participants, who were mentioned before, were also perceived as the same.

Participants 04 and 06 said that they have other reasons for being depressed as mentioned in the previous theme; while Participant 05 does not have an idea about the impact of parental separation on the current state of Depression.

CONCLUSION

The current study brings to light the importance of awareness of the negative effects experienced by children who are being affected by parental separation. According to the study results, each participant who has experienced Depression considers parental separation as a cause of developing the state of Depression, which is much needed to be addressed in situations where parental separation is about to happen. Most of those who were experiencing Depressive symptoms have reported Sad and lonely emotions after the separation of their

parents. Not only parental separation but also other incidents following parental separation have increased the risk of developing negative mental health conditions. In conclusion, it is much needed to address the emotional difficulties and social influence of the children of separated parents, to make parents reconsider their life decisions. Family counselling and social awareness programs are very effective in distributing these study results to increase the awareness of people on the decisions made in their marriage.

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