



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL NEGLECT, PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS, AND DEPRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research was focused on examining the correlation between parental neglect, psychological distress and depression among adolescents. A sample of 120 adolescents was selected from Gujranwala, Pakistan. The Childhood Experience of Care and Abuse Questionnaire, Depression Anxiety Stress Scale, and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale were used to measure parental neglect, psychological distress, and depression among adolescents. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were computed. Results revealed that parental neglect (mother & father) significantly positively predicted psychological distress and depression among adolescents.

I. INTRODUCTION

This present research was conducted to observe the depression and distress among adolescents who were neglected by their parents. Researchers' interest in child neglect is increasing these days. A considerable amount of new research has been conducted (Burgess et al., 2011). Strategies, practice, and initiatives have been developed to begin to reimburse a prior 'neglect of neglect' (Turney & Taylor, 2014). Initially, neglect is considered as physical neglect due to the most readily apparent type of neglect, such as a destructive living environment, individual personal hygiene, or nutrition (Christian & Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2015). Children are affected by abuse and neglect in various ways. Neglect is demarcated to acts of omission, whereas abuse is demarcated to acts of commission (McCoy & Keen, 2013). The factor that is involved in the development of depression during early childhood is the collaborative and reciprocal relationship between parents and child within the milieu of stressors, parenting behaviors, and family atmosphere, which is said to have an enormous impact on a child's adaptation during the critical age of life.

The consequences of child neglect may be devastating, immediate, and long-lasting on the intellectual, emotional, and behavioural development of a child. Congruent theories also support that of attachment; neglect at an early age in life is largely devastating in later development. Neglect within most localities is connected to distinct impacts to those of physical abuse, especially throughout childhood and the initial stages of adolescence. The neglected children experience more serious intellectual and academic discrepancy, withdrawal sociologically and interacting partially, and internalising problems as compared to the physically abused children. According to

sample study reports, the depressive symptoms are not only rampant but also pathetic in adolescents. A report released in 2004 on the health and well-being of teenagers estimated that 21-36% of the 12-16-year-olds would develop depression. There has been an alarming rate in obtaining an alarming rate of depressive symptoms in research conducted on the clinically diagnosable levels. According to a longitudinal study conducted by the Canadian National Population Health Survey (Galambos et al. 2004), major depressive episodes were found to be observed in nearly 11 to 21% of the adolescents between the ages of 12 and 23 years. The depressive symptoms are low in the first (14 years old), and the symptoms appear at a later age.

Many of these negative consequences, such as stress, depression, smoking, alcohol predation, and illegal drugs, can influence the immune system depending on the association of maltreatment (Maxfield & Widom, 2001). A slowing down of health and development due to neglect over the long run may occur; low self-esteem or being unloved and lonely exist in the children as well. Maltreatment may impair the emotional, psychological, and mental health of a child, and the effects of the maltreatment may manifest instantly or many years later. There is also a direct and long-term effect of abuse, which may cause mental problems, nervousness, hopelessness, substance misuse, eating disorders, self-harm, aggression, sexual problems, and age-appropriate sexual behaviour (Lanktree et al., 2008). This study involved children who had 80 pre-schoolers who belonged to low socioeconomic status and 27 non-maltreated pre-schoolers who were compared on their descriptive characteristics. Using a MacArthur Story-Stem Battery, children completed story stems, and they brought up new and stressful family situations. With the help of the MacArthur narrative coding manual (Schechter et al., 2007), the coders rated the portrayal of character responses of parents and children, and the responses of the participants to alleviate the distress of adolescents.

II. METHOD

Participants

The population of the study included individuals from the Child Protection Bureau, Aghosh Special, with an age range from 13 to 19 years of age. The 120 participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling with an equal distribution of 60 male and 60 female participants. The participants with other psychiatric disorders and neurodevelopmental disorders were not part of the study.

Measures

Personal information from the participants is gathered, and it is used as a self-constructed demographic. Age, gender, birth order, education, residential area, and whether the parent is dead or alive are included in it. The subscale of the Childhood Experience of Care and Abuse Questionnaire (Smith et al., 2002) was used to measure the parental neglect/antipathy among adolescents in this study. Physical and sexual abuse before the age of 17, in adults or adolescents' parental loss, neglect, antipathy (hostile or unkind parenting), and care were included. CECAQ has been used by various investigators to measure parental neglect among adolescents. CECAQ is a Likert-type rating scale; the alpha coefficient for the present study is acceptable. The Depression subscale of the Depression Stress Anxiety Scale (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) was used to measure depression among adolescents. In clinical and nonclinical samples, the alpha reliability coefficient for the (DASS-21) subscales has been studied and reported as .94 for depression, .87 for anxiety, and .91 for stress. It is a Likert-type rating scale. Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10) (Slade et al., 2002) was used to identify the psychological distress perceived by the adolescents. It consists of 10 items. K10 is a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 to 5. Its alpha coefficient for the study is .93, which is acceptable.

Procedure

For the purpose of data collection, the Child Bureau Protection Center and Aghosh Center and street children from the Gujranwala region were selected. First of all, the higher authority of these institute contacted, and the purpose of this study was clearly communicated with them. The particular sample from these institutes was approached individually. They were ensuring that their info would be kept confidential or intimate and only used for educational purposes; they were brief about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was taken from the adolescents. They were asked to comment or respond to all items and can question any query in items; moreover,

they all were allowed to withdraw at any stage from the participation of research, and their data will be destroyed after their withdrawal. The adolescents who were selected for the study were administered the questionnaires. Additionally, to gather the required information about the participant, a demographic sheet was attached at the beginning of the questionnaire; they were asked to fill it out first. After the data collection, the required statistical analysis was run to meet the objectives of the study.

III. RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	Range	α
Mother's neglect	35.61	8.03	14-47	.75
Father's neglect	36.75	10.25	10-47	.72
Psychological distress	37.48	9.54	14-49	.94
Depression	16.19	3.05	9-24	.72

Table 1 shows that all the variables have an acceptable level of alpha reliability.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation among Mother's Neglect, Father's Neglect, Psychological Distress and Depression

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Mother's neglect	--	.86**	.43**	.77**
2. Father's neglect		--	.44**	.67**
3. Psychological distress			--	.60**
4. Depression				--

** $p < .01$

Table 2 shows that mother's neglect was significantly positively related to father's neglect $r(118) = .86, p < .01$, psychological distress $r(118) = .43, p < .01$, and depression $r(118) = .77, p < .01$. Father's neglect was significantly positively related to psychological distress $r(118) = .44, p < .01$, and depression $r(118) = .67, p < .01$. Psychological distress was significantly positively related to depression $r(118) = .60, p < .01$.

Table 3: Mother and Father Neglect as Predictors of Depression

Model	B	SE	T	95% CI	
				LL	UL
(Constant)	10.48*	1.15	9.1*	8.20	12.76
Mother's neglect	.07	.06	1.21	-.04	.20
Father's neglect	.08	.04	1.63	-.01	.17
R^2	.600				
F	87.83*				

* $p < .01$

Table 3 shows multiple regression analysis for investigating mothers' neglect and fathers' neglect as predictors of depression. Results revealed that mothers' neglect and fathers' neglect did not predict depression. There was 45.7% variance explained by the model in the dependent variable.

Table 4: Mother and Father Neglect as Predictors of Psychological Distress

Model	B	SE	T	95% CI	
				LL	UL
(Constant)	4.71	2.55	1.84	-.33	9.77
Mother's neglect	.91*	.14	6.51*	.63	1.19
Father's neglect	.06	.11	.05	-.21	.22

R^2	.457
F	15.48*

* $p < .01$

Table 4 shows multiple regression analysis for investigating mothers' neglect and fathers' neglect as predictors of psychological distress. Results revealed that mothers' neglect significantly positively predicted distress. There was a 60% variance explained by the model in the dependent variable.

IV. DISCUSSION

It was found that mother neglect and father neglect predicted depression among adolescents. Findings indicated that mother neglect and father neglect did not predict depression among adolescents. These findings are against the existing literature evidence, which suggests that mother neglect and father neglect may predict depression among adolescents (Kasperek et al., 2022; Glickman et al., 2021). Child neglect and maltreatment a significant societal health issues, though a lack of awareness of its severe life-long outcomes, and cost and outcome to the society has been a barrier to investment in prevention policies and programs. The WHO 2006 report on child maltreatment prevention proposed the expansion of scientific evidence based on the magnitude of such maltreatment, the effects, and how such maltreatment may be avoided (Mubashara & Riaz, 2024; Butchart et al., 2006) to be able to respond to the problem effectively. There might be some sociocultural factors that are involved in getting rid of depression. Moreover, coping strategies also help to reduce the level of depression that was happening due to parental neglect (Glaser, 2011).

Mother neglect and father neglect also predicted psychological distress among adolescents. Current results indicated that mother neglect significantly positively predicted distress among adolescents. Research seldom focuses on father maltreatment except sexual abuse; comparatively, the research focuses on maltreating mothers and fathers (Pittman & Buckley, 2006). Mothers who were maltreated were more distressed and had more problematic reports by persons outside the family compared to those who were maltreated by fathers; fathers made more rigid expectations of their children, had less cohesive families, and less structured families than mothers who were maltreated (VanBergen & Love, 2022; Riaz et al., 2015). The irrespective sex of the parents, in the family of origin, victimization was associated with distress and unhappiness. Equally, family origin victimization and history of recidivism were also strong predictors of more undesirable family climate irrespective of the sex of the offending parent (Ashiq et al., 2018; Pittman & Buckley, 2006).

V. CONCLUSION

The research was directed to discern that parental neglect predicts psychological distress and depression among adolescents. Findings revealed that the adolescents who were neglected by their parents are at higher risk for developing depression and psychological distress.

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