

Impact of father absence on depression among adolescence

Dr. Smritikana Mitra Ghosh

Ph.D, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhnad, India.

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to see the effect of father absence on depression among adolescents. For this purpose 80 adolescents (40 fathers absent and 40 fathers present) were selected from different schools of Ranchi town. They were in the age group between 16 - 18 years. To collect the required data for the present study Beck Depression Inventory was administered on all subjects. The obtained data were analyzed with the help of percentage, mean, SD and t-value. The result revealed that the level of depression were high in father absent adolescents then father present adolescents group. There were significant difference between father absent adolescents and father present adolescents group.

Keywords: Depression, father absence and father present adolescents

1. Introduction

Family is a structured network of person with parents (single or both) with their children. In general, children reared with their familial network are more responsible, emotionally balanced and efficient; also, they have the tendency to get along with people very easily. Relationship with parents dictates the total family life of the child. It starts with the development of attachment between the caregiver and the new born child and with time, the early attachment behavior is processed to generate a two way relationship between the child and mother or father.

1.1 Concept of Father Absence

A child without a father is like a house without a roof. Fathers are important. The death of a parent is one of the most stressful and significant events a child can experience. When the father is present at home, he can help out emotionally, as well as economically for his family. The psychological effects of a parent's death can affect the child for the rest of her life. Father absence has a negative impact on the development of children. Supporting the child and helping her grieve is crucial for her adjustment and overall well-being. It's not surprising that psychological distress is one of the main effects of parental death. Psychological distress can manifest in several ways, ranging from feelings of extreme sadness and grief to anxious feelings or increased stress. But the surviving parent's response to the loss can play an important mediating role for psychological distress in children. Research on the role of fathers and fathering on child and adolescent psychological well-being has emphasised the complexity of the association between presence or absence of the biological father and mental health outcomes. The father-child relationship is characterised by an independent man-to-child attachment which shapes development and is associated with both positive and negative mental health outcomes. Probably the least traumatic effects due to paternal deprivation result from prolonged but temporary father absence, since these effects are reversible. There is also a different effect of age on the severity of impact of father absence on children versus adolescents. This may well be due to the inferior coping mechanisms of

children as compared to those adolescents, who have achieved increased emotional maturity and have access to supportive social networks in the form of peer groups. We have a good deal of information about the effects of father absence, because in the great majority of one-parent families it is the father who is gone. It is apparent that father absence has a far greater effect on males than on females; also, the greatest effect occurs in the early years. According to Horn (2002) ^[4], the fact is "children need their fathers".

1.2 Concept of Depression

Depression in children and adolescents can interfere with normal developmental tasks forming friendships, mastering social and academic skills, achieving independence. Almost everyone feels sad sometimes, but most often sad moods are transitory, reactive to negative experiences, separation, loss, failure, family conflict and do not necessarily portend depression. Depression is a serious and pervasive mood disorder. It causes feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness. Depression in teens is often described as the invisible illness. Statistically in a school of 1000 students, as many as 100 may experience depression severe enough to warrant a psychiatric diagnosis. Adolescents are less likely to feel depressed or anxious if the peer group provides emotional support. Depression is a normal response to loss or misfortune when it may be called grief or mourning. Depression is abnormal when it is out of proportion to the misfortune, or is unduly prolonged. According to studies conducted by National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, India, one in every 15 adult Indian suffers from depressive illness. At least 10% of the population suffers from depression that needs professional and medical help, and as much as 40% of the population is demoralized and likely to cross the line to clinical depression sometime.

2. Review of Literature

Increasingly, research studies are showing that parental loss during childhood or adolescent can and often does lead to depression during childhood and into adulthood. The

relationship of depression in adults to loss of parents when young seems relevant. It seems likely those children who lose their parents experience helplessness and might be more vulnerable to later depression. Crook and Eliot (1980) [2] concluded that there is no sound evidence for a relationship between early parental death and adult depression. Paternal deprivation has been linked to a number of psychological difficulties in both sons and daughters (Biller, 1982) [1]. Fathers can impact every aspect of a boy's life. Strong evidence (Floyd & Morman, 2003; & Jones *et al*, 2003) [3, 5] supports that boys without fathers have profound consequences in their lives.

3. The Research Hypotheses

- The level of depression will vary in father absent and father present adolescents.
- There will be significant difference between father absent and father present adolescents in their depression.

4. Research Sample

The sample consisted of 80 adolescents, out of which 40 served as experimental group (father absent adolescents) and

40 as normal control (father present adolescents). The adolescents were selected from different schools of Ranchi town. Their age ranged between 16 to 18 years.

5. Variables

- Dependent variable: Depression
- Independent variables: Father absent and father present adolescents.

6. Research Tool

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI, 1961):- Beck Depression Inventory is a self-report measure of depression, consisting of 21 items that assess the severity of affective, behavioural, cognitive and somatic symptoms of depression. Each item is scored on a 3 – point scale. It comprised of 20 items as its one item having sexual connotation was dropped, so score range of Beck Depression Inventory is 0.60 and construct validity is 0.84.

7. Statistical Techniques

In the present study Percentages, Mean scores, S.D and t-test was applied for statistical analysis of data.

8. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Number and Percentages of adolescents of father absent and father present with Beck Depression Inventory.

Level of Depression	Father absent adolescents		Father present adolescents	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Low depression	10	25	24	60
Mild depression	10	25	10	25
Moderate depression	12	30	6	15
Severe depression	8	20	0	0

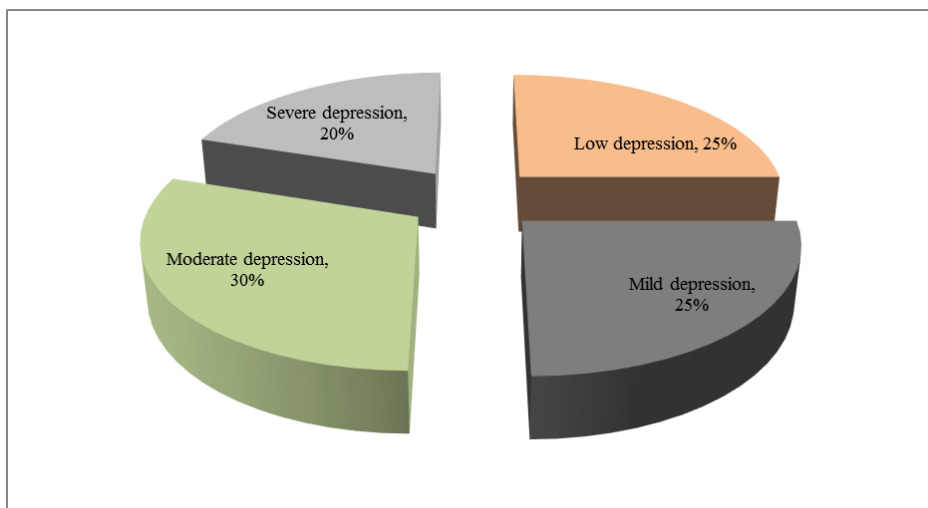


Fig 1: Percentage of low, mild, moderate and severe level of Depression among father absent adolescents

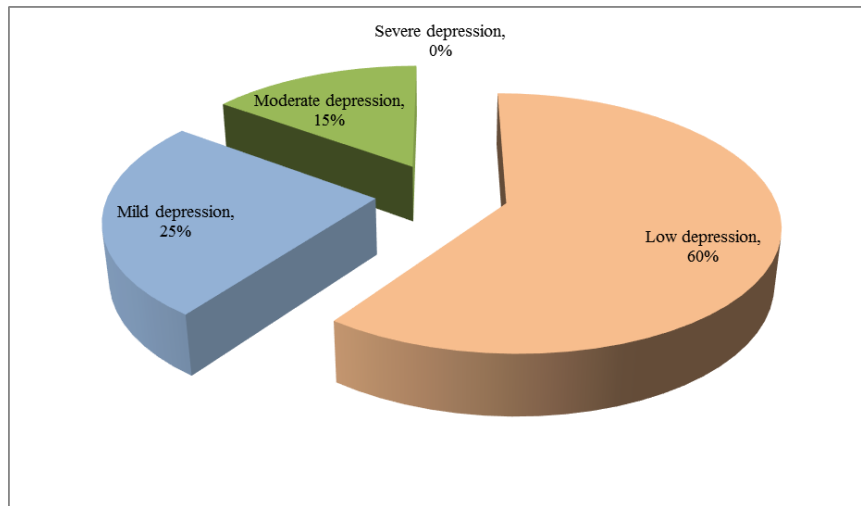


Fig 2: Percentage of low, mild, moderate and severe level of Depression among father present adolescents

From the table – 1 it can be observed that prevalence of depression was significantly higher among the adolescents of father absent groups as compared to father present adolescents. Majority of father absent groups of adolescents were having moderate and severe level of depression where as in most of the father present adolescents group were having lower level of depression and none of them belong to severe level of depression. Father absent adolescents groups exhibited higher percentage in severe level of depression (20%) as compared to father present adolescents group (0%). Whereas father present adolescents group exhibited higher in low depression (60%) as compared to father absent groups of adolescent (25%). Mild level of depression was found similar in both groups (25%). Among father absent groups reported higher percentage (30%) of moderate level of depression as compared to father present adolescents group (15%). Thus, the hypothesis “The level of depression will vary in father absent and father present adolescents” was proved.

It was evident from table – 2 that adolescents of father absent has greater mean score on depression scale (Mean = 17.89) than the adolescents of father present group (Mean = 7.23). Obtained t- ratio between the means was 9.96 which were significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis “There will be significant difference between father absent and father present adolescents in their depression” was proved.

9. Conclusion

Father absent adolescents showed more depression then father present adolescents.

10. References

1. Biller HB. Fatherhood: Implications for child and adult development. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), Handbook of development psychology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982.
2. Crook & Eliot. Parental death during childhood and adult depression: Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 1980; 17(1):37-42.
3. Floyd K, Morman MT. Human affection exchange: II. Affectionate communication in father-son relationships. The Journal of Social Psychology. 2003; 143(5):599-612.
4. Horn WF. Father facts. Washington, DC: National Fatherhood Initiative, 2002.
5. Jones KA, Kramer TL, Armitage T, Williams K. The impact of father absence on adolescent separation-individuation. Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs. 2003; 129(1):73-95.

Table 2: Means, SDs and t –value of adolescents of father absent and father present in Beck Depression Inventory.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P Value
Adolescents of father absent	40	17.89	5.84	9.96	39	<0.01
Adolescents of father present	40	7.23	3.47			

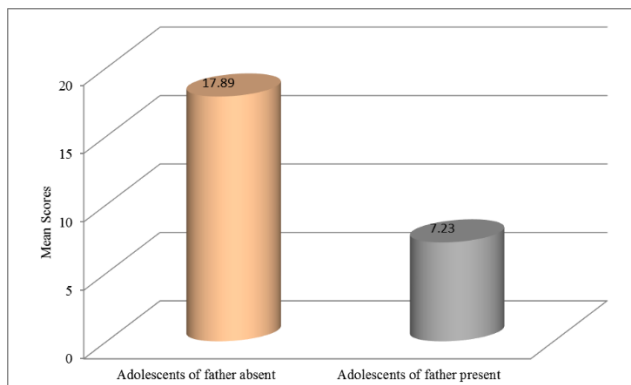


Fig 3: Mean scores of adolescents of father absent and father present in Depression