

THE SPILL-OVER EFFECTS OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON CHILDREN BEHAVIOURAL REACTIVITY

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Abstract

Numerous studies have come up with an assumption that children nurtured in a conflict, dysfunctional and diverse family contexts show inconsistent forms of domino effect that transverse various developmental domains. A mountain of evidence also established that different family factors such as: parents respond to child's distress, family emotional environment, family income and inter-maternal effectiveness explained children's behavioural socialization. This paper has, therefore, sought to assess and analyse empirical research literature on the relative spill-over effects of the quality of couple's relationship and socioeconomic status (SES) on a child's behavioural functioning. The paper employs and reviewed empirical literature that assess and supports the associations between family relation, SES and child's behavioural adjustment. Finally, findings revealed that children reared in a poor family background and experienced family instability are probable of developmental psychopathology problems in teenage years.

Keywords: Family relation, socioeconomic status, child behavioural adjustment

Introduction

In recent times, research on family studies has shifted to development that is related to children's adjustment problems, particularly those interactions that are connected to child's developmental menace and psychopathology. Most of these studies have come up with an assumption that children raised in a conflict, dysfunctional and diverse family contexts show inconsistent forms of results that transverse various developmental domains. Similar evidence from family studies suggested that different family factors such as parents respond to child's distress, family emotional

environment, socioeconomic status, and inter- maternal effectiveness explained children's emotional socialization (1, 2).

However, to comprehend the concept of children's behavioural adjustment, an investigation of the multifaceted forces that connecting the youngster and his /her environment is necessary. Therefore, a systematic analysing of the interactions that take place in a child environment is crucial for their adjustment. Evidence shows that several stages of involvement in a child contextual environment are part of a shared interaction and practices that forms the course of their development. This notion is widely supported by rising number of literatures that recognizes the significance of the whole-family system and bigger societal links to child growth (3, 4). This article will buttress and add more knowledge to the topic by probing child behavioural adjustment in the context of family relationship and SES.

Theory and research confirmed that studies on family have moved from the universal concept of spousal change to particular characteristics of family functioning that are associated with child outcomes, precisely, the parents' open crisis and the manifestation of physical violence (5). This incidence is frequently connected to youngsters' violent and behavioural difficulties in life. Interestingly, the reviewing literature used the recent advancement in physiological process to explain youngster's feelings and their regulatory instruments. To support this assumption, studies such as cardiac vagal tone (6), event -related talents (7), and hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal functioning (8) documented the significance of biological approaches to children's emotional self-adjustment. Although this assumption sound convincing, nonetheless, the idea continue to influence people's view about children experience, countenance and how they manage their emotions in an interpersonal environment.

In a similar manner, the economic situation in the family impacts negatively on family functioning and the child's wellbeing (9) and poverty is significantly linked with other variables that interconnected in the family such as quality of life, conjugal contentment, parental feeling and efficient, violence, and physical and mental disorders. For instance, the work of (10) confirmed that the connection between income, family and child health is higher in low family income group and significantly reduce when family earnings surpasses the poverty level. This finding suggests a correlation between lower parental sensitivity and unsuccessful maternal control in families with low-income compare to those above the poverty level (11).

Purpose of the Paper

The article examines various research evidence on children's behavioural reactivity and adjustment and how it link with, family relationship and socioeconomic status. The paper begins with brief

overviews of the family relation and SES and assesses the relative cross over effects of the interaction on a child's behaviour. Though, studies linked family instability and SES with undesirable child behaviour; yet, it is imperative to deduce exactly what makes the interactions caustic to children's mental health. Besides, the paper will underline and address why marital quality is evenly conceived as relationship contentment and examine how the unidimensional emphasis on couple contentment failed to find particular measurements of conjugal value that are associated with child adjustment.

Methodology

This paper employs and reviews the empirical literatures that analyzes, assessed and support the associations between family relationship, SES and child's behavioural adjustment. The literature review process is carried out by using online data base i.e. ERIC, PsychInfo, EBSCO host to search for the following key words either separately or in combination: family relation, SES and marital conflict, children emotional development, family instability. This process reported about 2500 articles, journals, technical reports and paper presentation and book chapters covering more than 15years period. Based on abstracts from the 2500 search reports articles cum journals, the search was lessened to quite a few studies that are relevant to the research topic. Therefore, to achieve the aims of this paper, the content of the remaining several hundred journals or articles were scrutinised and only those that reported empirical findings were used in this study. Furthermore, the references are confirmed and verify using manual searches of relevant journals and articles related to the topic.

Theoretical framework

An ecological perspective to family relation and child's emotional adjustment

Bronfenbrenner,¹² and Lynch and Cicchetti,¹³ came out with various models that explain a child's ontogenic level of engagement as entrenched in various levels of experience. According to ecological theory of development, child's activities are embedded in the microsystem, i.e. the family setting, and the pattern of interaction between members of the family. Thus, the microsystem includes i.e. various subsystems, (conjugal and caregiver- child relationship). Ecological theory established that all variables are embedded in the macrosystem, which represents the largest system of culture that transmits information, customs, and orientation and at the same time explained people's behaviour, ethnicity, cultural, or traditional identity (14). However, the principles as well as customs at macro-systems level articulated the way people relate or engage with each other in the family.

Study grounded on transactional models of development defines the different systems that formed the nested phases of children's experiences. This justifies the assumption that family dynamics in a marital setting is connected to the engagement at the microsystem level and a child's emotional regulation at the mesosystems.

Literature Review

Rationale for family relation and stability

Numerous research literatures on children have long come out with a suggestion to support the psychological and economical influence that relationship stability has on children's wellbeing. Review of literature showed that so far, only limited empirical studies reported the irreplaceable or shared impacts that interparental skirmish, family socioeconomic status and child-rearing practices have on children wellbeing (15). Besides, Buehler and Gerard,¹⁵ documented that only 12 empirical literatures reported the associations between family instability, child-rearing, and child functioning. Founded on a national investigation of over 2,500 culturally diverse household with youngsters of different age group, the study reported higher disciplinary child-rearing and fewer parental participation to some extent as mediating the association between spousal skirmish and a total manifestation of child emotional adjustment.

Family stability encourages stability in caregiving and increases financial and emotional support accessible to mothers and motivates responsive parenting. Evidence showed that stability in a household serves as a channel through which parents support their children (16, 17). A Similar research indicated that a sensitive and reliable parenting in the early stage of life supports youngsters' full engagement of the contextual setting and breed constructive social interactions with grown person and peers (18, 19) and backup youngsters' emotive and developmental growth. Marital precariousness, conversely, disturbs household interactions and enhances difficult roles amongst youngsters (20, 21). Without a doubt, research established that family breakdown are traumatic for family members and that an interruptions in early infant continue will continue until the teenage years and middle age (22, 23). Thus, marital steadily increases the financial incomes accessible for offspring, while entering and leavings of spouses in the family promote little or irregular amounts of incomes, regulating kids' contact to stimulating resources and communications (24). However, a review of literature documented a consistent correlational association between exposure to conjugal skirmish, poverty and conduct disorder in children, yet the exact processes accountable for these links continue to be uncertain (25).

Interestingly, a body of research established that an undesirable broad conjugal fulfilment is significantly correlated with harmful child consequences, to be specific, a child's behavioral difficulties (26, 27). Consequently, most reports from recent hypothetical and experimental analysis showed that relationship conflict and instability in a household is expressively disequilibrating for youngsters development (28, 25). Therefore, critical observation of youngster's developmental responses to interparental skirmish highlighted the need for proper assessment of the association between SES, family instability and child's emotional adjustment (25). Structural and systemic theories predict that when family subsystem functioning is disrupted; the risk for maladjustment increases (14). Similarly, most empirical work on the subject continues to support the assertion that conduct disorder is more noticeable in youngsters when limits are desecrated (29, 30), and that this finding is replicated cross-culturally (31). Basically, what is not yet understood, are the pathways that connect problems in the family functioning and SES to externalizing or internalizing problems in children.

Cross Over Effects of Family Relation on Child Adjustment

One of the particular issues that required urgent attention among scholars on marital dynamics is how effect and the regulator are spread in interactions. Numerous scholars have juxtaposed the significance of authority in couple relations, and conjugal dyad to be precise (32, 33, 34). Most studies on family relation (32) highlighted that appreciating relationship arrangement, as well as the regularity or irregularity of power, choice, and authority in household relationships, offer better intuition into pattern of interaction, steadiness, and value of the family system which influence child's emotional behaviour. On the contrary, research works on WFC ignore the significance of environmental approach on family relationship. Most of the research focuses more on a person with less consideration given to the interaction that happen in a context environment (35). Studies overlooked the multifaceted shared interactions in the systems which influences people's feelings and conducts (36). However, spreading the component of investigation from people to couples while reviewing backgrounds and results linked to WFC might offer a further appreciative of the work–family interface. This statement is specifically suitable for new married people nurturing minor children in a household (37) and couple reliance on one another in their shared duty of child nurturing.

Thus, a crossover is referred to as the dyadic, interindividual diffusion of anxiety or worry (38). The development happens once a member of a household is going through psychological distress and his/her situation directly or indirectly disturbs or contribute to the degree of pressure or

tension in another individual sharing similar social setting. It occurs because of the spill over of the empathic reaction in one of the individual that upsurges the other person level of anxiety (39). Although quite a lot of studies on the marital relation confirmed this development, however, a study conducted by Westman, Vinokur, Hamilton, and Roziner,⁴⁰ on Russian soldiers to the partners reported spill over of spousal displeasure. In a similar study, Westman and Etzion,⁴¹ confirmed that mostly professionals transfer their job related stress to their wives. Therefore study revealed that crossover impacts of WFC as a foundation of strain in a household recorded less interest. Additionally, Westman and Etzion,³⁹ conducted a study on womenfolk in the U.S air force and their husbands and they reported a spill over of WFC. Hence, Swanson and Power's,⁴² also reported occupational functions as a cause of skirmish among partners and stated that spouse's career hindered relationship.

The household emotional climate.

Recent research established that household forms of communication of hopeful and destructive affection are believed to be an exemplary “feeling guidelines” that add to the socialization of emotional state (43). Likewise, warmth, cohesive and positive household interactions and environment serves as a foundation for a child to engage and understand their emotiveness and develop their sociocognitive skills. While, unfriendly, life-threatening and undesirable household relations can dishearten youngsters from asking for support regarding their affects desires (44, 43). Literature reliably associated positivity in a household to the youngsters' feeling parameter (45, 46). On the other hand, reports that support the assumption that unconstructiveness and strain in a household significantly weaken child's feeling continue to command a lot of support till date (45), even if the variables are unpredictable (46). Traditionally, the dimension of the poignant environment depends on parent's explanation of household or experiential dyadic relations of caregiver and youngster. According to research studies this situation captured just a part of the family environment, however , numerous viewpoints on the family dynamic or perceiving household interactions is required if a precise explanation of the emotional environment is to be recorded (43).

The interparental conflict

Research reported that enduring, unfriendly, and poorly settled skirmishes among caregivers promote poor affectionate guideline, or intensify youngsters' emotive misery and disheartenment children's aptitude to handle their individual feelings. Children witnessing parental conflict will display more emotive agony, behavioral dysfunction, strong emotive

reactivity, and last but not the least show larger psychophysiological dysfunction (25, 47, 48). Recent research reveal that profound spousal skirmish is reliably linked to worse caregiver– child interactions (47), besides, this also relates to difficulties with wide-ranging household activities (49). Thus, marital dissonance impacts negatively on youngsters’ feeling by touching other facets of household running.

Family Stability and Children’s Mental Health

Numerous studies have established various characteristics of precariousness that are significant to the children’s sociocognitive development, these includes increasing progressions, the direction of the changes (developments and terminations), and the planning of the changes.

Cumulative Transitions

A body of research suggested that frequent changes of relationship or parental status significantly impacts negatively on the youngster’s sociocognitive and affective activities (50, 51, 52, 53). Basically, most of the best evidence on the implication of parental status and separation on youngsters’ mental health emphasised the increasing vicissitudes in youngsters’ proximal contextual situations and interactions and not the marital status as such. On the other hand, the review of recent literatures reported that increasing developments anticipated complex behavior difficulties between young offspring, and this cut across quite a lot of national cases (22, 54, 55, 56). Besides, studies put forward that changes operate directly and that every household development enhances the likelihood of constructive youngster effectiveness (50, 54, 56). Most of the studies on family relations measured the influence of marital unsteadiness without giving consideration to conjugal standing (57, 58); while it was also confirmed that others studies measured merely conjugal status during the period of the child’s delivery while searching for resultant precariousness (22, 56). Hence, previous relations precariousness is significantly linked with present household organization (mothers with a history of several previous changes in relationship are definitely staying alone or live together with a partner than married). However, both attributes are connected to the youngsters ‘quality of life

Socioeconomic Status and Child Adjustments

Research reveals that poor household condition is related to several factors such as, wellbeing, conjugal contentment, motherly warmth and usefulness, aggressiveness, and physical and psychological disorders. Data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (10) documented that the association between income and household and

youngster welfare is robust in the bottom earnings group and declines as household earnings surpasses the national poverty level. Thus, findings have come with a suggestion that poorer parental compassion and more incompetent parental regulator in poverty stricken households than those households living above the low income level (11).

The general belief among researchers on SES, household effectiveness, and human growth is that sociocultural situation significantly impacts on families through time, and has negative repercussion for children and adults (9). This statement confirmed the proposition of the social causation approach that conclude that social situations bring differences in wellbeing and quality of life. Besides, other hypothetical theories assumed that the association involving SES and household developments described the changes in the unique features of household members, and this is related to the SES and family relations. This opinion denotes the concept of social selection theories and explains how a person's characteristic influences their societal situations, impending feelings and conducts (59). Thus, theories on SSP are seen as posing a stern test to the assumption that societal difficulty has an underlying effect on families and offspring. However, it can be deduced that neither the (SC and SS) opinions are models but they signify fundamental values that a particular notion can be found. So, based on the evidence on the two perspectives, we can deduce that an underlying interaction concerning the socioeconomic status and household interactions is more complex than earlier made-up; therefore, efforts should be directed towards fashion out fresh ideas and theory that would analyse the problems associated with family instability and SES and the crossover effects on children.

Discussion

The focus of this paper is to cover empirical works on couple relation spill over development by probing the linked between conjugal conflict, SES, and child emotional adjustment. The review of literature on family relation, consistently mentioned how interactions between this variable significantly influenced children's adjustment. Research on the topic shows that little attention is given to the ways in which these factors influenced children's adjustment. Therefore, the way in which conjugal developments adds to the differences in 'overt and covert behaviour of young children deserved a thorough analysis.

The reviewed literature also identified that children embracing a negative attitude from their parents is explained through observational learning model. This assertion further corroborates a finding that child's aggressive behaviour is reflected in the applicable crisis-management tactics they observed from their caregivers in a household. Also, children living in a

household where parents demonstrate consistent aggressive spousal relations and instability might respond with a belief that the relationship is heading to separation. This kind of situation significantly influence their sociocognitive functioning and behaviour.

In a related study, Cherlin,⁶⁰ reported that a significant number of young people experienced household unsteadiness in early infancy and teenage year .The study confirmed that 12% of youngsters witnessed more than three developmental changes by teenage years.

Similar recent work on household living in poverty level also shows that 10% of children witnessed more than three developmental changes when they reach the age of 8. Therefore, poor and unstable household was linked with emotional and behavioral functioning in teenage years. Interestingly, numerous evidences highlighted that children who experiences marital conflict, family separation, low socioeconomic status and family dysfunction in a household are significantly affected by the situation and are typically, shoddier off than their peers in a stable and blissful household who are enjoying a good quality of life .Hence, build-up of household turbulences might obstruct strong warmth interactions and the delivery of social and financial incomes to youngsters, hence influenced adjustment and managing abilities of young children (61, 62).

Conclusion

This paper emphasized mainly on research evidence of the interaction between family relation and SES and how the crossover effect of the interplay impacts on child emotional adjustment. Although the idea of a correlation between family relation, SES and child emotional adjustment is naturally interesting, nevertheless, the review of literature continuously emphasized that the multifaceted nature of the variables: (family relations and SES) contributed to the inconsistency in empirical research. Thus family instability and poor SES impact seriously on a marginal number of children, mostly in the existence of other aggravating influences. This confirmed that most youngsters are vulnerable, and therefore opens to household precariousness in early and teenage age. Also, deterioration in financial situations, couple with the marital conflict may elucidate sum and not all, of the worse consequences amid youngsters who have witnessed or reared in a dysfunctional household.

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