

Impact of Domestic Violence on Career Aspirations of Children: A Case Study of District Okara

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Abstract

This study is based on the impacts of domestic violence on the career choices and career aspirations of the children who witness it. Keeping the nature of the study in view, the study falls under the interpretivist paradigm. This study further followed the exploratory qualitative approach that aims to explore the dilemmas behind the career choices of children who witness the domestic violence in their childhood. The data analyzed, is collected through semi-structured, open-ended and in-depth interviews from Okara District through convenient sampling technique. Participants were interviewed after fulfilling the certain criteria specified by the researchers. The collected information is analyzed through thematic analysis. After completing the thematic analysis, the analysis resulted in four superordinate themes i.e. Exclusion, Challenges, Recovery and Influence over Career Choice, 8 themes and 26 sub themes. Findings of the study have shown that many participants who witnessed domestic violence in their early life became the abusers of the relationship and they were practicing domestic violence themselves. It has also revealed that not all the children fall into the trap of becoming victims of abusive relationships. Some participants of the study worked hard to end up the abusive relationships of their parents. Some of them believed that the reason of abusive relationship among their parents was some financial crisis and they started to chase their career with great zeal so that they could help their parents to eliminate their abusive behaviors. Most of them were successful and now doing prestigious jobs at different institutions. Recovery process (negative and positive) of the participants played a major role in determining their career.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Abusive relationship, Career aspirations, Recovery process and witnessing.

Introduction

Domestic violence (intimate partner violence or domestic abuse) is a pattern of behaviors and actions in a relationship that are used by one partner to gain power and control over the other partner (Domestic Abuse Project, 2016). The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender based violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (UNO, 1993). Every second in Pakistan, women suffer from domestic violence (DAWN, 2016). Women in Pakistan do not want to end their abusive relationships due to some reasons. Along with financial dependency, lack of support, and shame, the fear of losing their children is the main cause of staying in abusive relationships (DAP, 2016). The abusive relationship do not impact the victim in a relationship only, but it also has impacts on the children witnessing it (Pingley, 2017). According to a report of daily times it is revealed that 46% children face psychological violence due to different reasons. One of the major reasons of psychological violence on children is witnessing of the interpersonal violence between their parents, which have devastating impacts on children’s life (Daily Times, 2018). It is suggested that 275 million children witness domestic violence across the world on average in a year (Adams, 2006). When children reach school age, the effects of witnessing domestic violence can increase their anxiety and hamper their educational abilities (Hornor, 2005). Witnessing domestic violence does not mean that the violence is occurring in the visible range of a child (Meltzer et al, 2009). According to McGee (1997), many children describe very fearful events of domestic violence that they have never seen but heard only. Domestic violence has short term and long term responses from the children witnessing it. Short term responses include Hyper Arousal (the children may become nervous and easily startled), Re-experiencing, Avoidance and Withdrawal. While on the other hand, children do have long term responses to the domestic violence including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicidal behaviors, impulsive acts (risky sex and unintended pregnancy), chronic health problems, low self-esteem, criminal behaviors, and victimization by an intimate partner (NCTSN). Children show a range of emotions when it comes to cope with domestic violence including sadness, anxiety and fear; while on the other hand some children chose coping strategies which are different from these emotions (Allen et al., 2003). There are two methods used by children to cope with the problem: problem focused and emotion focused. In first method, there is focus on the problem in order to solve it while in second method, there is focus on emotions by acting in a way to alter the level of stress being experienced (Allen et al., 2003).

After reading the literature, the researchers got a point that domestic violence has very negative and devastating impacts on the lives of children witnessing it. It destroys children’s physical health, mental health, social and cognitive abilities. The aim of this research is to explore the impacts of domestic violence on the career choices and career aspirations of the children who witness it. In the light of the above mentioned objectives, the research question of this study is how domestic violence influences the career aspiration of children? The researchers have not chosen the children of broken families but have chosen the children who live with their parents and see conflicts and domestic violence at home.

Methodology

This study is based on exploratory research and qualitative approach. Qualitative research is inductive in nature, and the researcher generally explores meanings and insights in a given situation (Mohajan, 2018). Primary data is collected through semi-structured, open-ended, and in-depth interviews (Yin, 2010). Thematic analysis is used to analyze the study. Thematic analysis in qualitative research is the procedure of identifying patterns or theme within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It includes arranging, describing and enlightening the information on the basis of the participant understanding and of constructing meaning about a situation (Cohen et al., 2011). Data was transcribed and written from the audio recordings and read by the researchers until essential themes emerged. For the reliability of the emerged themes, three of the participants read the themes to ensure that emerged themes meet the purpose of the research (Mayring, 2000).

Data collection

The data analyzed is collected through semi structured, open ended in depth interviews from Okara District through convenient sampling technique and participants were interviewed after fulfilling the certain criteria specified by the researchers. One to one interview is commonly used data collection method in social sciences (Ryan et al., 2009). As Labuchagne (2003), Lambert (2007) and Sandelwoski (2002) also believed that interviews are commonly used data collection method in qualitative research. Open-ended questions were asked by the researchers to the participants about their experience of witnessing abusive relationship of their parents. While witnessing the abusive relationship of their parents, what were their career ambitions? Whether they achieve it or not? If yes, then how they achieved it? If not, why they remained unable to chase their dreams? No fix numbers of participants were decided prior to the conduction of the study. Data was collected until the saturation came into the responses of the participants. Sample size was based on the idle point, when the answers of participants were not giving new information about the influence of abusive relationships of their parents on their careers (Mason, 2010; Diehl, 2013). Interviews were conducted from seven participants who were meeting the following criteria.

Participants

Data was collected with full consent from the participants who fulfilled following criteria (a) participants are either a boy or a girl. (b) boys/girls who have witnessed domestic violence (c) do not belong to broken families; live with their parents (d) minimum education is matric (e) want to share their experience voluntarily. Data is collected from 7 participants. Their age ranged from 20 to 35.

Table 1**Master table of participants:**

Sr .#	Participant	Age (in years)	Qualification	Current status of the participant	Type of domestic violence	When participant witnessed domestic violence	Current status of domestic violence
1	A	31	M.Phil.	Civil judge	Emotional abuse	Since childhood	No domestic violence
2	F	26	M.Phil.	Lecturer	Financial and psychological abuse	Since childhood	No domestic violence
3	F2	26	M.Phil.	Student	Emotional abuse	Since childhood	No domestic violence
4	F3	33	Masters	Jobless	Psychological abuse	Since childhood	Participant is doing domestic violence himself
5	H	28	Masters	Jobless	Financial abuse	At the age of 20 till date	Still financial abuse
6	K	28	Matric	Jobless	Emotional abuse	Since childhood	No domestic violence
7	M	27	M.Phil.	Student	Physical abuse	Since childhood	No domestic violence

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, respect for privacy and informed consent are the most important ethical considerations (Fouka & Mantzarou, 2011). Participant's informed consent is important initially, so that the participants feel confident that their privacy is not going to lose (Frankfort & Nachmias, 1992). Participants were briefly informed about the objectives of the research. Permission for audio recording was taken initially. Undertaking interviews with vulnerable populations can be challenging both for the interviewer and interviewee (Moyle, 2002). Data is kept very safely and except researchers, no one has the access to the data. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudo names are used. Collection

of data was highly energetic activity due to the participant’s personal experiences and feelings (Check & Schutte, 2012).

Results:

The thematic analysis resulted in four superordinate themes; 8 themes and 26 sub themes. Influence on the career ambitions of the witnesses of domestic violence was seen as the major essence of the study. Four emerged themes are enlisted below:

I: exclusion (family and self)

II: challenges (financial and psychological)

III: recovery (positive and negative)

IV: influence on career (positive and negative).

Influence on the career after witnessing the abusive relationship of parents was the main concern. Career was influenced both positively and negatively.

Table 2

Master table of themes

Super ordinate themes	Themes	Sub themes
Exclusion	Family exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being ignored by parents • No guidance for study • No guidance for career •
	Self-exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of self confidence • Exclusion of self esteem
Challenges	Financial challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to fulfill financial needs of study • Challenges to maintain basic expenses

	Psychological challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Frustration • Mental illness • Headache • Feeling deprived • Lost interest in studies
Recovery	Negative recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become used to the abusive relationship of parents • Not worried about parents as well as one's own self • Medicine usage
	Positive recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-support • Friends supports • End of abusive relationships and parents support • Zest and zeal for good life for one's own self and for parents
Influence on career	Negative influence	<p>(negative recovery)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No career • Unable to support themselves financially • Indulge in illegal activities • Drugs • Become burden on family

	Positive influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zest and zeal to get rid from abusive life • Started chasing career ambitions and got it • Good life style for parents due to good career • Career become a source to end abusive relations
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Exclusion

Exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon which is not limited to social exclusion only. It includes the financial, family, material and self-exclusion as well. It is a process in which one is being excluded from any procedure, process, institution, group or society. It can also be described as a state in which individuals are unable to participate in social, economic, political, cultural or family life (Wright & Stickley, 2013). The participants of this research have explained about their family and self-exclusion. They felt that they were nothing for their parents because they were not giving enough importance to them and always created problem for the children by doing domestic violence in front of them. Being ignored created family exclusion which further led towards the self-exclusion. The participants started losing self-confidence and self-esteem because they were unable to get any career and study related guidance which is often considered as first step towards better career choices. While sharing his experience, one of the participants said that his parents always had tortured relations among themselves and they always tried to do violence against each other to make their point valid in order to suppress each other and in that frustration, they often used to beat him, ignored him, abandoned him, and isolated him (K). Another participant said while sharing his experience that his father always advised him to focus on study, but he always humiliated his mother for having no education which indirectly hurt him because he loved his mother. “I always felt emotionally tired due to which sometimes I become unable to give sufficient time to my study and reciprocally, it become hurdle to achieve my career ambitions” (F2). Being ignored by the parents, the participants started losing self-confidence and self-esteem, and they felt that they were an extra part of family and do not have any importance. This family exclusion had led towards the self-exclusion of the participants.

Challenges

It was demonstrated in the study that the participants who were not affected to the extent of exclusion were not safe from the impacts of the situation. Domestic violence always created hurdles in the way of the participants to fulfill their ambitions regarding studies and career. Due to tortured relations among parents, some participants always remained afraid to ask for money to fulfill their study needs. Lack of money psychologically tortured the participants and forced them to quit studies. Due to these financial and psychological challenges, the participants remained frustrated, depressed, and became

victim of many mental illnesses like headache, mood disorders, anxiety, schizophrenia, personality disorders and traumatic stress etc. while sharing his experience one of the participant said that “I remembered the day when I asked for fee from my father and he started fighting with my mother. My father threatened my mother that I will give you divorce because you are favoring your son for study which is useless. Your son can never become successful by studying ask him to work on any shop” (F).

Recovery

As there is no consensus regarding the true meaning of recovery, it is often defined by scholars as a return to normal position, situation, or conditions. It is also defined as something which is gained from a situation (Davidson et al., 2001). The Participants showed two kind of recovery from the problems of witnessing abusive relationships. Some participants negatively recovered which means the domestic violence did no more has any influence on them and they had become drugs addicted, as well as they had started many immoral and illegal activities like robbery, theft etc. Now, career and good life were unknown to them and they felt satisfied when they themselves practiced domestic violence, immoral and illegal activities. One of the participants said that drugs were not bad things but it was a solution to many problems. “I feel satisfied, relaxed and calm by drugs” (K).

While at the same time, some participants had shown positive recovery from this situation of domestic violence. They had started to spend their time in good activities and tried hard to seek social support to avoid mental illness. They were afraid of being the witness of domestic violence and they thought that their good lives, career and bright future could change the lives and relationships of their parents. So, they had started to chase their career ambitions with great zeal. One of the participants said, “I decided at the very beginning that I will work hard for my career and future and will not allow the abusive relationship of my parents to destroy my career and future” (A). While sharing their experiences, one of the participants discussed that how she was able to have bright future. She said that she never wanted to spend her life like her mother that is why she worked hard and faced many problems to chase her dreams. She further said “I was consistent in putting the efforts that is why with the grace of almighty Allah I remained successful in getting a dignified career” (F2).

Influence on Career

Above mentioned negative and positive recovery are the main factors behind the career of the participants. The participants who had negative recovery were jobless, mentally ill and drug addicts etc., one of them was doing domestic violence himself. While the participants who showed positive recovery was successful now days. They were working as lecturers, civil judges and as bright students of Ph.D.

Domestic violence does not affect the victims only but also affects the children who witness it. As UNICEF (2006) rightly explained that the children who live with the victims of the domestic violence and see it at home face many risks and challenges throughout the entire life. James (1994) said that the children who remained exposed to domestic violence or witness it always showed signs of problems during their school age. They show less mental ability toward their studies as compared to the children who have not witnessed domestic violence. It is obvious that domestic violence affects the children physically, emotionally, psychologically and financially. These things determine the career of a

person. Career of the witness is affected by the exposure to the domestic violence. Initially, it affects the path towards career very negatively. Most vulnerable people remained unable to get rid of these negative impacts and lose the path towards career and shining future. Fantuzzo and Wanda (1999) along with Kernic (2003) believed that exposure of children towards domestic violence brings behavioral changes in the children and they feel deprived, frustrated and depressed. While this study has also shown that the participants who remained unable to get through these signs, were jobless and addicted to drugs and bad activities. There is more likelihood that these people transfer domestic violence and abuse to the next generations as said by Baldry (2003) and Spaccarelli (1995). Many participants, who witnessed domestic violence apart from career failure, they became the abusers of the relationship and now they were doing domestic violence. Results of the study have shown that not all the children fall into the trap of becoming victims of abusive relationships. Many adults, who grew up with violence at their home, actively oppose violence of all kinds anywhere. They have their own reasons; they believe that domestic violence is a hurdle in the way of their career and good life. Many participants, who were present at the time of domestic violence, try to help in solving the problem. Minnesota Center against Violence and Abuse also showed that 31 percent of the cases showed that children tried to help in ending the domestic violence which occurred during their presence. Some participants of the study worked hard to end the abusive relationships of their parents and some of them believed that the reason of abusive relationship among their parents was some financial crisis and they started to chase their career with great zeal so that could help their parents to end this abusive behaviors. Most of them were successful and now doing highly prestigious jobs at different institutions. Most of the cases of the study have shown that the participants became successful in ending the abuse among the relationship of their parents after becoming successful in their career. Results of the study have shown that the recovery process of the participants played a major role in determining their career. Negatively recovered participants were now spending a life of huge frustrations. They were not concerned with the devastating effects of the domestic violence, thus doing violence at their homes. They became used to it and considered it as a part of life. While on the other hand, the participants, who embraced positive recovery by seeking their friends help and consulting psychiatric, showed great achievements regarding their careers. This study has shown that one of the major causes of the domestic violence of the parents of the participants were due to the financial crisis; so these financial crisis also become hurdle in the way of the study and career of the participants. The participants were unable to fulfill their financial needs of the study, due to which, they started thinking of giving up on their careers. While on the other hand, when these financial crisis came into an end, the participants again returned to their normal lives.

Limitations for future studies

The study has some limitations. Generalization is the main limitation of the study as generalization is not the core purpose of qualitative research. Due to small size of the population, generalization of the study is not possible. Data is collected from different cultural settings. The researchers were able to get data from seven participants only, because people were not ready to recall their dark pasts which affected their careers. The participants were influence by their domestic violence positively and negatively. There is need for more exploration of study in future regarding the question that why some people recovered negatively while other positively from domestic violence exposure.

Implications for practice

The findings of the study have shown that it is very necessary to recover the children who witnessed domestic violence so that they can make their careers. While on the other hand, the participants who showed positive recovery also need career counseling. This study can help during the processes of career counseling in which, career counselors use their abilities to assist the individuals for making better decisions for their career choices, studies and for family jobs. Apart from it, the findings of the study can help in personality development. There are many personality development programmers working in Pakistan as well as in the whole world which can use this study for better comprehension. Many psychiatric are helping the people who are facing problems in their lives. This study will help them as well as findings of the study can play a role in the processes of socialization.

Conclusion

To round of the discussion, it has become clear that domestic violence, along with other negative impacts including mental illness and psychological problems, also affects the career ambitions of the witnesses. The children, who remained exposed to the violence at home, have fewer interests in studies or career. In other words, they face more problems towards career achievements. The participants, who faced exposure to violence, remained jobless and suffering from many psychological problems. While the participants, who got positive recovery, worked hard for their careers and now working in prestigious institutions. Positively recovered participants have eliminated the abuse at home successfully and are supporting their families financially after achieving their careers.

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