ISSN: 2581-8651 Vol-6, Issue-2, Mar-Apr 2024 https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/jhed.6.2.10

Peer-Reviewed Journal

Journal of Humanities and Education Development (JHED)

Interventions for Behavioral Problem of Students Belonging to the Broken Family in Middle Secondary School

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Abstract

This is an action based research paper carried out at Kamji Central School under Chukha district. It involved 10 participants ranging from classes PP to X including parents and teachers. It aims to explore and identify the behavioral issues among children from the broken family background. It's a qualitative design of research where findings made are thematically analyzed. Following this, some of the applicable interventions too were applied during the study that helped in reshaping and molding the behavior of those children. Recommendations too are presented after the analysis of the findings that can be effective if applied even in other school settings.

Keywords— students, behavior, vulnerable, broken family, esteem, support, children

I. INTRODUCTION

As children proceeds with growth in the phase of their developmental stage, they learn from their environment and picks up different behavior that would have impact in their lives at the later phase of their lives. Children belonging to the broken family includes those whose parents have been divorced, demised or abandoned them. Hasan and Hatab (2021) defines broken family as those family under divorce, separation, death of father, death of mother and death of both parents. Children from the broken family are one among those who are categorized under vulnerable sections of the population as they are susceptible to mislead their life owing to the lack of guidance and support.

Bhutan's guiding principle of Gross National Happiness (GNH), requires that children enjoy free health and education in a safe and secure environment. Thus, legislations for protecting children, such as the Child Care and Protection Act 2011, Child Adoption Act of Bhutan 2012, and others have been enacted." Within the realm of human rights, vulnerability is a condition where people are more susceptible to discrimination, marginalization, and oppression due to the unequal position they occupy in

society" (Study on Status of Vulnerable Children, 2015.Pdf, n.d., p. 7). A growing concern for students without either of their parents or both the parents due to divorce, death, emigration, and abduction are found vulnerable in the school. They possess low self-esteem and are prone to negative influences. Quite often this group of students exhibits irregularities in the classes and other school activities.

Once the stakeholders develop a deep understanding of the vulnerability and their needs, it would be easier for the school to plan suitable activities for them. Saika, (2017) states that it does not matter how ideal a family in the terms of their relationship, there are still hardships and misunderstandings that will come along the way. Children of divorced or separated parents have less success and happiness (Aktar, 2013). Thus they need proper attention from the school for success and happiness. Thus, this study is aimed at finding the types of negative behaviors practiced by the vulnerable group of students and discover the corrective measure from the voice of the participants.

Devi, (2014) Concluded that an urgent need to understand by each parent the importance of the good democratic home environment for social development of their young children is urgent. However, this study would help students to reveal the fact about their unhappiness and the way forward. Lee and Breen (2007) proposed more research on the phenomenon of early school leaving by utilizing multiple methods of data collection from several stakeholder groups, such as teachers, students, parents, and policymakers, which would enable a greater understanding of this complex issue. The issue of students' behavior has been encountered in different places outside. So, it is imperative to focus on this study in Chhukha and benefit the rest of the schools in Bhutan at large. To have a deeper understanding of this phenomenon the study on the impact on broken family upon adolescent behavior at secondary school this research has been conducted.

Context of the Study

A growing concern for students without either of their parents or both the parents due to divorce, death, emigration, and abduction are found as an issue in the school. They seem to possess low self-esteem and are prone to negative influences. Quite often this group of students exhibits irregularities in the classes and other school activities. Nybom and Stuhler, (2018) find that the students from broken families tend to have lower educational attainment than those from intact families. Despite repeated reminders and consultations by the school authority, the sign of improvement in their behavior Figlio and Schnepel (2017) found that is minimal. students from broken families are more likely to experience behavioral and academic problems than those from the intact families. Instead of improvement, they indulge in substance abuse and other undesirable activities. Upon providing counseling service and positive disciplining techniques, they often state that they would quit their negative habits and do better. Yet their improvement pace is slow and some land up in dropping the school. These students lose faith in them and at times disrespect the law of the school with destructive plans, violent attitudes and delinquent behavior (Anderson & Hinkle, 2017) So, this group of students deserves immediate attention from the school authority. The study on the Effects of broken families on pupil's behavioral development and academic success concluded that the attitude and behavior of the learner affect academic success. (Felisilda & Torreon, 2020)

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of the struggling students who are attending their education in a middle secondary school in Chhukha. This study would help understand the emotions and true feelings of the students belonging to broken family. The findings of this study will help address the need of the

students living with either divorced, single, or without parents. Magpantay et al. (2014) discussed that the respondents generally utilize negative coping strategies such as smoking and alcohol abuse, while some of them engage in sports as a positive coping strategy. This conclusion encouraged me to search further and find practical remedies to help the students who are indulged in negative behavior.

Ever since the behavioral problem issue was encountered by the middle secondary schools in Chhukha, there wasn't any scientific study conducted to address the needs of this group of students. This study aims to answer the following over-arching question that would guide my research throughout the study.

Research Question

- 1. How do the students belonging to broken families behave in the school?
- 2. What are the causes of indecent behavior of students in the school?
- 3. How does the indecent behavior impact the development of students?
- 4. What can the school do to help students belonging to broken families overcome their deleterious behavior?

Objectives of the Study

At the end of the study the researcher will be able to:

- examine the negative behavior of students belonging to broken family backgrounds.
- help students feel emotionally strong in the school.
- find ways to help overcome the behavioral issue of the students.
- discover the motivational factors of students to live a contented life.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to link issues of research, theory, and practice in the school in particular, about the students belonging to broken family background. First, this study addresses a gap in the existing research on the Social Development of Young Children Belonging to Broken Families (Devi, 2014) and Study on status of vulnerable children, 2015pdf. (n.d.) Similarly, (Joyce et al., 2014) concluded that lying, going home late at night, absenteeism, and getting in fights are the most common behavioral problems of adolescents from broken homes. Consequently, to respond upon the situation, eating disorder due to depression and anxiety is the most common effect of the adolescents belonging to a broken family. The finding of this study will not only help the existing students of middle secondary schools in Chhukha but also the incoming students with a similar

background in the future. Hereafter, the teachers would be able to study the behavior of students and identify whether they belong to broken family background. The school can timely intervene with corrective measures to support the needy students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A GNH school must ensure there are justice and equity in the way the principals, deal with teachers and teachers with students. Children have to be taught to promote mutual respect and cooperation - between the educated, intellectual, and the ignorant (EPGI-2012.Pdf, n.d.) Yet the schools in Bhutan face challenges to cater to the need of students belonging to broken family backgrounds. The study on disruptive behavior of students recommended further research to improve students' behavior (Rabsel-Volume-V.Pdf, n.d.) Thus the study on students' behavior in school belonging to broken families sparked in my mind to venture into this research. Similarly, the behavioral problem and coping strategies of selected adolescents belonging to a broken family confirmed that the negative behaviors affect the adolescents' health, emotional, and social status. (Joyce et al., 2014)

Behavioral problems of students in school.

A study conducted in the Quebec region confirmed that students at risk of dropping out of school report many family organizational problems and that they obtain little emotional support from their parents (Fortin et al., 2006). Due to the difficult situation, students tend to cope negatively. They have to express their emotions for them to lessen their loneliness (Magpantay et al., 2014). Students classified as having poor relationships with teachers and poor bonds with the school had poorer scores on self-and teacher ratings of social and emotional adjustment than children classified as having positive relationships and bonds (Murray & Greenberg, 2000) In the similar connection the students in school belonging to the broken family came in the priority list to address their need

Impact of behavior in students' development

Complementary evidence from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) confirms that single mothers spent relatively less time engaging in childcare-related activities with their children which leads to controlling for the greater incidence of school disciplinary and behavioral problems. (Poipoi et al., 2011) Children from non-intact homes, don't have sufficient needs as the result they have poor relations with their classmates because they ignore them.

It was found that age, sex, grade level, number of siblings, and the person stays with has no direct influence on the pupils' behavioral development, and however, the academic success of the pupils depends on their behavior development. Therefore, it was concluded that the attitude and behavior of the learner affect academic success. (Felisilda & Torreon, 2020). This finding created a gap and I wanted to study whether the behavior of students from broken family backgrounds affects only academic success or character development.

Remedies for the behavioral issue of students.

Adolescents with broken family situations shall consult their teachers or guidance counselor to make better adjustments in their studies (Joyce et al., 2014).

A study in Australia encourages exploring the remedies from students. (Lee and Breen, 2007) confirmed that it is imperative that school reform attempts to include opportunities for students to have a voice, have their needs fulfilled, and experience power and control. So the attempt of this research would discover the corrective measures to overcome the deleterious behavior of students in middle secondary school. This growing awareness has led to a need for research focused on understanding the behavioral patterns of students in the school. However, upon synthesizing the above literature, there is a gap wherein non-of literature has spelled the concrete remedies to address the urgent need of students belonging to a broken family in a middle secondary school in Chhkha Dzongkhag.

Definition of Terms

To my understanding, students' behavior refers to the attitude, the way of communication, thinking, and willingness to adapt to the rules and regulations of the school. It also includes students' interest to participate in school activities and carry out the assigned tasks on time.

Belonging to broken family background describes that some students are living without parents, some live with a single parent, step-parents, relatives, and grandparents.

Vulnerable denotes the level of risk that the students have attained due to unavoidable circumstances.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the research methodology used in the study is described. The geographical area where the study was conducted, the study design and the population and sample are described. The instrument used to collect the data, including methods implemented to maintain validity and reliability of the instrument are described.

Choice of Paradigm

Constructivism/ Interpretivism: The methodology deployed for this study is the qualitative approach with a judgment sample design. The research site is identified in Kamji Central School, Chhuka. The population size of the school is about seven hundred students across pre-primary to class ten and the students above classes seven to ten are approximately five hundred students. The students belonging to a broken family from classes Preprimary to ten comes around twenty students of which four students ranging from classes seven to ten (two boys and two girls) are selected as sample for this study because they have lived more than five years either with single parents or without parents. Besides students, two teachers, a male, and a female are also selected as a sample including two parents, a male, and a female. There is no gender bias in the selection of the sample because both the gender of students belongs to the broken family in this school.

Research design

Qualitative Method with judgment sample design. (Creswell & Miller, 2000) stated that the qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be. The tools that the researcher is going to use for data collection are; interviews with semi-structured question observation and document analysis. The interview will be used for all three groups of samples. The observation will be done for students only and document analysis, student's exercise books, project works, assessment records, statements, and referral forms will be referred.

Samples/ Participants

There were 10 participants in this research among whom 6 were students from class seven to ten identified as belonging to the broken family including 2 parents and 2 teachers. The parents involved were the ones identified at the vicinity of the school and teacher includes a male and a female each. For this, convenience sampling technique has been applied.

Data Collection Tools

Interview: The researcher will frame semi-structured questions and write down the responses in his field notebook. In case the questions are ambiguous, the researcher will probe to get accurate responses from the participants. The researcher will have a voice recorder for the interview responses of parent participants to enable him to transcribe exactly because he may not meet them for validation.

Observation: The ethically identified participants will be closely observed by the researcher throughout his study to

learn the prominent behavior and make note of each details for analysis in the later part of the study.

Document analysis: The researcher shall refer to the students' exercise books, project works, and attendance sheets for activities, statements, and referral forms. According to (Mohajan, 2018) The qualitative research data are descriptive, in the form of interview notes, observation records, and documents; and data are analyzed inductively. Interview transcripts will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and pattern in participants' experience of social behaviour in the middle secondary school.

Validity and Reliability (Qualitative)

The researcher will transcribe the interview responses, documents analysis and participants' observations details from the field note to analyze and have a rich thick description.

After the data interpretation, the researcher will use the data triangulation approach to further validate the information gathered from interviews, observation, and document analysis. According to (Creswell & Miller, 2000) Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study.

The researcher will also use Member checking for validation. It consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. (Creswell & Miller, 2000) Whereby, the researcher will go to meet the participants, the teacher, and students to confirm whether they meant to respond to what has been interpreted. If the researcher encounters any contradiction, he will probe his interview question and get accurate responses for correct data interpretation. The researcher will also go for peer debriefing/ proofreading from a teacher colleague who possesses a sound knowledge of research to validate his final research report.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval or consent letter from college and Ministry will be sought and apprised the same consent to Dzongkhag and school administration. The researcher will not have any special ethical consent for my participants because they are independent for decision making. The rights of self -determination, anonymity, and confidentiality will be maintained as to comply with the ethical guidelines.

Data Analysis Approach:

The researcher will use coding including preset code and emergent code while recording the responses in computer excel and Microsoft word. The researcher will have reading through all the transcribed information then organize the data for analysis. The researcher will follow Nuts and bolts of narrative data for which the researcher will add identification (ID) for each interview question, audio recordings, and punching of organized data in the computer.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Assessment of Risk Factors

There are numerous risk factors posed by the broken family to the children especially during their early age that would have an adverse impact in the later phase of their lives. The following are the risk factors that culminates in diverse range of behavioral issues among children belonging to the broken family.

1. Parental Conflicts

Children witnessing parental or family conflict will undergo mental trauma once they are able to understand and conceptualize it. In Bhutanese school settings, day scholars are more exposed to such kind of conflicts at home. If there is violence at home, children's mindset would get affected that would lead to a different character traits in them as they grow up.

2. Lack of emotional support

Children belonging to the broken family will face numerous emotional issues. Silva (2023) states that, children who grows up in a dysfunctional family are at risk of developing mental illness, which, if not treated, can result in long term mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. One of the respondent in the survey stated that he was is not happy most of the time. In some cases, children will have the feeling of rage, resentment, betrayal, sadness that would distort their emotions.

3. Socio-economic strain

The study reveals that children with the broken family also faces the financial strain. However, this is not true in all the cases. This happens to children belonging to the middle or lower income families. It is definite that, children who are orphan, raised by guardians or those survived by single parents would face financial difficulties unlike those raised by both the parents. Bhutanese family environment, majority of the wives are dependent with some exceptions.

4. Self-esteem and Internalizing Issues

Children belonging to the broken family faces the internalizing issues. Owing to the low level of self-esteem, they would mostly get enveloped by negative emotions such as sadness and anger where they hardly share their

problems with others. Behere, Basnet, & Campbell (2017) entails that, children from single family were more than twice likely to report internalizing problems and more than three times likely to report externalizing problems compared to children from two-parent families. This culminates in the display of ill behavior. Few of them seems to be emotionally strong and not influenced by the habit of their peers. Few of them seems to be emotionally strong and not influenced by the habit of their peers.

V. EVALUATION OF BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS

The behavioral issues discussed here is confined to those which are either experienced or narrated by the respondents who were selected as the sample for the study. However, citing some literatures, the generalized issues and information too are disseminated. Researchers have found out that, children from broken families may experience higher levels of emotional distress, behavioral problems, and academic challenges compared to those from intact families. (Anderson, 2014).

Although all the children pick up bad habits at different point of time owing to the kind of environment they get exposed to, children belonging to the broken family are found most vulnerable to different ill behavioral pattern. Silva (2023) opines that, children who are exposed to constant conflict, aggression, abuse, neglect, domestic violence and separation because of family issues are likely to have behavioral and emotional problems. Following are list of some of the ill behavior found among samples under study were as follows;

- a. Skipping School Activities.
- b. Tobacco and smoking.
- c. Substance abuse.
- d. Aggression and fights

Indeed, all the aforementioned patterns of behavior found among children belonging to the broken family are closely interlinked. One leads to the ripple effects over the others. For example, it was stated by one of the respondent that they don't like coming to the school on most of the occasions. They are indifferent to the normal activities that indicating absenteeism. However, as per the observations made, they were found to be skipping mostly the studies (morning, evening and night), meals and evening prayers more than the classroom related activities.

As per the narration done by the respondents, they get entangled into tobacco and smoking as a leisure and to ward off their mental distresses. Some pointed out that they also get tempted and started using alcohol and other substances to get freed from the trauma. This is in line with the ocular fact that those children with the broken family usually have low self-esteem with few exceptions. To console themselves, they tend to get attached with their peers who are already into such habits and some of them even become dependent over time. This indicates that they too get affected by the peer pressure.

Starting from minor issues such as absenteeism and smoking, they gradually move towards higher level of intoxications. A respondent engaged himself into alcohol and substance abuse. However, abusing for few years, he quitted the ill habits. Getting into alcohol and substance abuse such as Marijuana which is widely found in Bhutan would result in crises. Some may get addicted over time that would ruin their lives while others may have to face numerous health issues owing to it.

Another bad side of the behavior is that they tend to get entangled into fight with their friends upon getting discriminated on the parental background. For example, a respondent shared an incidence where his emotions got raged and broke into fight with his classmate when he talked about his mother who left him when he was very young. Children from the broken family seems to be emotionally weak that they easily get moved by the circumstances. This is same with the orphans, children who are abandoned by their parents as well as those with single parents (One of them having been expired or divorced). Study found out that students get indulged into fights upon being discriminated on parental background. Children also tend to get engaged in brawl under the influence of alcohol and other substances.

Behavioral Problem and Academic Performance

As per the study the broken family is found to have ripple effect in the lives of the children. The students belonging to the broken family usually develop detrimental behavior owing to the low self-esteem that stems out of the family issue back home. The detrimental behavior affects the study of those children in varying degrees depending on the level of their mindsets. Majority of the respondents stated that they cannot fully concentrate in the classes owing to the family trouble. One said that, he desires to take part in all the school activities but he can't because of the lack of support.

Children of divorced parents are more likely to have lower grade point averages (GPAs) and be asked to repeat a year of school. Academic success of the pupils depends on their behavior development. This study concluded that the attitude and behavior of the learner affects their academic success. (Anderson, 2014). This is a direct indication that students belonging to the broken families often struggle to meet the academic requirements.

However, this is not the case for all of them as some may either have a strong and determined mind sets while other may gain resilience over time and with maturity. One of the sample showed that he was naughty and uncontrollable till the lower secondary level but gave up those bad habits upon reaching the high school. However, this finding is not to generalize that all children belonging to the broken family background will have academic disadvantage as many are found to be academically sound.

VI. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES APPLIED

Following were few interventions applied not just to the to the samples of the study, but to all students as a support service from the side of the school. However, students belonging to the broken family were brought into limelight to fulfill the objective of this research.

a. Tracking and observing them.

It's a norm in Bhutanese schools that the needy students are tracked and identified in the beginning of the year. The students belonging to the broken family background were tracked down and taken as the sample for the study including their parents and teachers.

They were observed and their daily activities were eyed and recorded to delve into their behavioral pattern. This was done with an intention to guide and support them so that their problem back home would not spoil their school environment. The bigger goal was to mold their character so that they become better individuals in the future.

b. Referral and Counselling Services

The general settings in school is that, whenever, students face any social, emotional or mental issues, counselling services are available for them. However, specifically for the purpose of the research, the sample under study were sent to the school counselor as and when they were found encountering any issues. Close rapport was maintained between the researcher, counselor and the students so that the issues gets addressed on time.

c. Motivation and Support

Besides counselling, they were given motivation and support to enable them to not to get affected by their family issues. In finding their improvement, they were praised and given positive reinforcement to encourage them. They were also persuaded to take part in both the curricular as well as extra-curricular activities organized by the school. The samples under study were given motivational talks to boost their esteems.

d. Rapport Building and Listening

One effective method to understand the children better is to gain proximity. Attempts were made to maintain a close rapport with the respondents so that their problem are heard and addressed. This in deed builds courage to approach and gives them confidence to share their mental state or any other crises.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some of the recommendations to be presented in line with findings and analysis. Implementation of these recommendations by the schools with the support and direction from the Ministry of Education would benefit the children from the broken family and other disadvantaged children in the school

1. Accessibility to Boarding Facilities

Identification of vulnerable children and making the boarding facilities available for them would also ease their problem and aid them to perform well in their studies. This implies to all the children with the broken family and with the low support system.

2. promoting Counselling and Motivation

Counselling service has to be made vibrant in Bhutan. Just like in schools, it also has to be made available outside the school settings. Every child from the broken family deserves the counselling service at regular interval so that they remain motivated all the time.

3. Engagement Programmes.

Initiating and instituting engaging programmes in the school would benefit the children to a great deal, especially to those having problem. This would not only keep them engaged but also keep them mentally and physically sound enabling them to lead better lives. For example, the 'Mentor Mentee Programme' instituted by the Royal Government of Bhutan plays a vital role.

4. Understanding Backstory as Educators

The dire need of the contemporary times is that we need to better understand the so that we can nurture and make their lives better. In the school settings, teacher must delve into and understand the backstory of their children so that we know them better. There must be two-way communication between teacher and student.

5. Creation of a conducive environment in the school.

Conducive environment is indispensable to promote the wellbeing of children in the school. Although every schools in Bhutan strives to promote the idea of conducive school environment, an added effort towards promoting it would always aid the growth and development of children. Among all, it would serve the best to those children belonging to the broken family. They will find relieve and solace in such schools.

6. Promoting co-parenting even after divorce-Rethinking Parental role.

In the case of children whose parents are divorced, its vital that the child receives care and support from both their parents. As mentioned by Silva (2023), a healthy and nurturing family environment is necessary for development of mental health in children. It is a blatant failure of parenthood if in case child is ignored or abandoned by both or either of the parents. Even during separation, child can be contacted by law wherein they can be cared and supported.

7. Resilience Building Techniques in Children.

Teachers across schools in Bhutan are trained but all in pedagogical aspects. However, they seldom get to attend the seminars and other professional development programmes. Each of the high schools in Bhutan is equipped with trained counselors who can deal with children having various issues including mental traumas. So, having counselors even in the primary and lower secondary school along with additional training programmes for teachers would serve the purpose.

8. Accessibility to Mental Health Services

Although we have hospitals in each of the 20 Dzongkhags, there are limited health personnel who can deal with the mental health. Although the Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan have deployed the counselors in each of the secondary schools in Bhutan, we lack those counselors in schools or at the proximity who are clinically trained. Since mental health issues among youths are of growing concerning all across the globe, the accessibility of the mental health services is deemed important.

9. Peer Support Group

This is yet another setting which can be an effective 'self-help mechanism' that can resolve issues among the school children. The school can create a platform and give children the liberty to form the 'peer Support Groups' amongst themselves. Children of the same school with the similar problem can get along together and resolve their issues on a mutual basis. However, it's a prime duty of the school administration to supervise, guide and support those groups to ensure that they don not breed any ulterior motives in the school.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The findings presented entails that the school going children from the broken family undergoes struggles of varying degrees in different fields unlike those with the intact families. Lack of support and motivation happens to be the main factor that affects their emotions resulting in internalizing issues. Behere, et al. (2017) entails that, disruption in family structure can lead to several adverse events impacting both the mental health of children and their parents. This further leads to an adverse impact on their daily functional habits. Many of them tend to pick up bad habits as a means dodge their social and emotional issues. While few gains resilience over the span of time and become better, many continues the same habitual pattern that are found detrimental to their lives.

However, the findings presented here do not mean that children from the broken family are bad or toxic, but that they are vulnerable to learn those ill behaviors to raise their declining self-esteems. Hence, the need of the hour is that since the children attending the school are psychologically categorized in the 'formative age', it's the due responsibility of the parents, school teacher reputed as second parents' and other relevant stakeholders could to support and nurture them so that they would become better individuals in the coming days.

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