

## **The Effect of Father's Absence on Depression Levels in Male Children**

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The present study was conducted to evaluate the associations between the death of father or prolonged separation and depression level in male children in Buner. The objectives of the study were: (a) to investigate the effects of father's absence on the depression level of male children; and (b) to investigate the difference in depression level between father present children and father absent children. A sample of 150 male children were randomly selected from the area of Buner (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), ranging in ages 11-15 years. The research participants were selected from three types of families; as father living with families, father living abroad, and father not alive. These were arranged in three groups consisted of 50 children in each. Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale 1992 in Urdu language was administered individually on all 150 subjects. Statistical tools i.e., ANOVA and Z test were applied on the collected data. The results reported that there is difference between the depression level of father involved and father absent children. The father died children have high level of depression as compared to father involved children. The findings further verified that those children whose fathers were living abroad from their families have high level of depression as compared to those children whose fathers were living with their children.

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The results of the current research confirmed that father's absence either in the form of death or living abroad has a significant contribution in high level of depression in their male children.

*Keywords:* Depression Level, Father's Absence, Father's Abroad Jobs, Father Died Children

Depression is marked by sad mood, inability to experience pleasure, loss of energy and appetite, difficulty in concentrating, short tempered and restlessness (Solomon, 2001). Family encounters death of loss of dear ones have significant role in the development of depression. Those adults, who are suffering from depression, have been brought up in rowdy, antagonistic family environment and are rejected by their parents. The lack of involvement in intimate relationships also is a jeopardizing factor for depression in females (Brown and Harris, 1989). Depression is the originator of handicap human being in all over the world and its increasing ratio of prevailing, it will become 2<sup>nd</sup> Work factor of human being after cardiovascular diseases up to the year 2020 (World Health Organization, 2012).

Recent psychological research received limited attention to father's involvement although it is a root cause associated with positive child development (Cabrera et al., 2000). Lamb (1997) described that it is assumed that fathers have little role in the development of children. The lack of prominence on the role of fathers in child brought up or nourishment is especially unlucky. One may expect the significant role of fathers in the children's mental health outcomes. With respect to the effects of father's involvement, a father's child involvement will exert same effects on child mental health as mother's child attachment. A sense of emotional support was might similarly offered to the child by paternal accessibility (Lamb, 1997). A number of psychological difficulties have been linked to paternal absence in children but unfortunately, it was rarely discussed in the literature (Popenoe, 1996). Children who are living without their father are at great risk for school dropout without completing their education. , These children are also vulnerable to many Behavioural and conduct problems as well as other psychological consequences (Hijjawi and Wilson, 2003). Parent involvement is

particularly associated with overall life satisfaction of children. Paternal involvement is negatively associated with the experience of depression (Dubowitz *et al.*, 2001). Children who are attached to their fathers' have fewer behavior problems and less psychological distress as compared to those who are living with their fathers (Formoso *et al.*, 2007).

Children are facing psychological and emotional issues when they are living away from parents (Amato, 1991). Numerous circumstances can develop when a father leaves the home. Primarily, the child may see his or her father frequently. Visitation of this type probably happen most when the relationship of parents ends without intense rancor, and so far the paternal and maternal relationship is at least genial and close in all likelihood between father and child. Evaluating the significance of paternal and youngster frequent contact, should be attainable only when relations may have ended on a relatively positive note, with all that may insinuate for the child's ensuing intellectual and sentimental development. Little connection is found by a massive research studies between how a child copes intellectually or cognitively in the father's absence from the home. Previous researches indicate direct interrelation between child cognitive deficiencies and father's absence. Studies verified that, with absent fathers there is indeed a reduction in cognitive performance in children, this reduction can have an immediate link with the family squabbles and stress, above average level. Financial scarcity, high anxiety and low levels of parent child interaction of father absent families, all contributed to child's poor cognitive efficacy (Biller, 1982). Study carried out by Melhem, Walker, Moritz, and Brent (2008) suggest that paternal death develop depression and post traumatic stress disorder in children during the first year and persisting into the second year after the death (Melhem, Walker, Moritz, and Brent, 2008).

On the basis of the above research studies, the present study was conducted to examine the effects of father's absence on the depression level of male children in District Buner (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Pakistan. Depressive manifestations in adolescents are subject matter because of its universality and impairment of performance in the affected individual in the area of the study. It was observed that most of the fathers were out of their native country and has no regular contacts with their children. High

school dropout, substance abuse and depressive symptoms were being observed in those male children whose fathers were died or living out of their native countries for jobs.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

The following hypotheses have been formulated to investigate the impact of father's absence on the depression level of male children.

H1: Those children whose fathers had died have high level of depression as compared to those children whose fathers were living with their families.

H2: Those children whose fathers were living out of their native country have high level of depression as compared to those children whose fathers were living with their families.

### **Method and Procedure**

#### **Participants**

The area of Khadukhel District Buner (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Pakistan consists of three union Councils named union council Totalai, union Council Sarwayee and union Council Chinglai. According to the official record of union Councils as per 1998 census, total population of the area was 75,195 and total number of families was 15,040.

Sample (N = 150) for the study was selected from three types of families as, those children whose fathers were living with their families and has regular attachment with their families since last two years which are 7,552 families and were 50.22% of the total population in the area, those children whose fathers were died since last two years, which were 480 families and consisted of 3.2% of the total population in the area, and those children whose fathers were living out of their native country for jobs since last two years and had no regular contacts with their children which were 7,008 families and consisted of 46.6% of the total population.

(Source: Official record Union council Totalai, Chinglai)

Table 1  
*Sample for the Main Study*

<b>Father Involved Families Since 31 March 2012</b>	<b>Father Died Families Since 31 March 2012</b>	<b>Father Living Abroad Since 31 March 2012</b>	
<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>
50	50	50	150

Research participants belonged to the same culture and it was assured that the monthly income of each family was Rs. 15000/- Per month to Rs. 25000/- per month in Pakistani rupees.

Sample was consisted of male research participants ranging in ages from 11 to 15 years. No cultural differences like language, dress and life styles were found between the research participants.

Table 2  
*Family Socio Economic Status of the Research Participants*  
(N=150)

<b>Monthly Income in PKR</b>	<b>Father Involved Group</b>	<b>Father Died Group</b>	<b>Father Group</b>	<b>Abroad</b>
15000	0	0		0
16000	0	04		0
17000	01	14		03
18000	01	05		04
19000	0	01		0
20000	04	12		14
21000	0	01		0
22000	03	03		10
23000	0	0		0
24000	41	10		19
25000	0	0		0
	50	50		50

Table 3

*Research Participants Age Wise*

<b>Age Limit</b>	<b>Father Involved Group</b>	<b>Father Group</b>	<b>Died</b>	<b>Father Abroad Group</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
Y - Y. M	N		N	n	N
11 - 11.11	1		10	03	14
12 - 12.11	5		10	06	21
13 - 13.11	16		06	06	28
14 - 14.11	19		14	11	44
15 - 15.11	09		10	24	43
	50		50	50	150

Research participants were students of 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade in government high schools and government higher secondary schools in the area, where same school of thought was been followed. Before conducting the main study, rapport was developed by warm hand shake, introduction with research participants and discussion about the class time table and regularity in attending classes.

Table 4

*Research Participants Grade Wise*

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Father Involved Group</b>	<b>Father Group</b>	<b>Died</b>	<b>Father Abroad Group</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
6 <sup>th</sup>	13		20	07	40
7 <sup>th</sup>	10		08	10	28
8 <sup>th</sup>	19		11	15	45
9 <sup>th</sup>	08		11	16	35

0 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	02	02
	50	50	50	150

### Research Design

According to the following steps, study was carried out. The subjects were consisted of two types of groups namely

1. 1<sup>st</sup> group was consisted of those children whose fathers were living out of their native country for jobs since last two years and those children whose fathers had died since last two years.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> group was consisted of those children whose fathers were living with their families for the last two years.

### Research Tools

**Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale (1992).** Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale (1992) in Urdu language (*Appendix A*) was used to measure depression level of the research participants. The scale is developed by Salma Siddiqui and Ashiq Ali Shah in 1992 for the assessment of depression in Pakistan. The development of a scale of indigenous depression, Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale will be useful in both clinical assessment and research. As a measure of depression based on the culture of relevant expression of depression may help in the evaluation of the same characteristic of being missed, thus facilitating the accurate clinical diagnosis. Using the scale for purpose of evaluation is further facilitated by providing percentiles. The Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale was significantly reliable and internally consistent. The scale provides a numerical index of the degree of depression that can be used for comparative purposes with other quantitative data for both the purpose of the clinical evaluation and research too. The minimum score is 36 and the maximum can be 144 The scale consists of 36 items and the score is performed in four-point Likert scale, from 1 to 4 for the score 1 means no time and 4 for all the time. Cronbach alpha was calculated. Alpha reliability Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale for depressed and non-depressed adults was 0.92 and 0.92 (Shah and Siddiqui, 1992).

## Procedure

The study was conducted in the area of Khadukhel (Buner), lies on the east side of District Buner and according to census 1998 the area was consisted of 15040 families and total number of population was 75,140. The area was consisted of three union counsel as union counsel Totalai, union counsel Chinglai and union counsel Sarwayee (*Appendix B*). Meeting was conducted with the secretaries of all union counsels before starting the main study and collected information about those families where fathers were died since last two years and those families whose father figure was living abroad for jobs since last two years. Information about the total number of high schools and higher secondary schools in the area were obtained from the sectaries of the three union counsels. Sample for the research study was selected from Government Higher Secondary School Totalai Buner, Government High School No 2 Totalai Buner, Government High School Ghazikot Buner, and Government Higher Secondary School Chinglai Buner. During Government High Schools and Government Higher Secondary Schools visits in the area of Khadukhel (Buner) proper permission from the Principals and Head Masters was obtained with the details about the father's death or going abroad of the research participants.

## Results

The current research study was conducted to investigate the effects of father's absence on the depression level of male children in Buner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale was applied in order to measure depression level of the research participants. Statistical Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for derivation of mean differences in depression level among father's present and father's absent group. The results derived at  $\alpha = 0.01$  and the tabulated value of  $F(2, 147) = 4.75$ . The results obtained by applying ANOVA  $F$  ratio derived at  $0.01(2, 147) = 24.4$ , which was greater than tabulated value of  $F(2, 147) = 4.75$  and proved that there is mean differences in depression level of father's involved group and father's absent groups and verified that father's absent children have high level of depression as compared to father's involved children.



Table 5

*ANOVA Table for the Assessment of Mean Difference in Depression Level of Father Involved Group, Father Died Group and Father Abroad Group(N=150)*

	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>M.S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Significant Level</b>
Between Groups	12164.8	2	6082.4		
Within Groups	36641.9	147	249.26	24.4	**0.01
Total	48806.7	149			

\* $p < 0.01$  ( $\alpha = 4.75$ )

For statistical verification of the results LSD was applied on the data with Mean and Standard Deviation ( $M1 = 60.9$  and  $SD = 15.53$ ), ( $M2 = 78.82$  and  $SD = 14.75$ ) and ( $M3 = 81$  and  $SD = 16.56$ ) as  $M1$  was father involved group,  $M2$  was father died group and  $M3$  group was consisted of those children whose fathers were living abroad for employment from their families. Combined mean for all the three groups was derived which was  $M = 73.57$  and combined  $SD = 15.79$ . The results obtained verified the ANOVA results and concluded that father's absent children have high level of depression as compared to father's present children.

Table 6

*Least Significant Differences (LSD) of the study (N = 150)*

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>LSD</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>Significant</b>
$(M1 - M2) = 17.92$	8.238	**0.01	$(17.92 > 8.238)$
$(M1 - M3) = 20.1$	8.238	**0.01	$(20.1 > 8.238)$

\*\* $p < 0.01$  ( $\alpha = 8.238$ )

Table 7

*Group wise Mean and Standard Deviation and Combined Mean and Standard Deviation of Father Involved Group, Father Died Group and Father Abroad Group (N = 150)*

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Combined M</b>	<b>Combined SD</b>
Father's Involved Group	M1 = 60.9	15.53		
Father's Died Group	M2 = 78.82	14.75	73.57	15.79
Father's Abroad Group	M3 = 81	16.56		

For further confirmation and explanation of the 1<sup>st</sup> research hypotheses each experimental group (father died group) was compared with control group (father involved group) and statistical Z test was applied on the collected data. Statistical treatment of the first hypothesis by applying Z.

### **Discussion**

Depression is one of the most endemic psychological disorders in Pakistan. Depression can be originated by several elements, among which the most superior is the termination of paternal attachment with children, family neglect, interpersonal relationships, disturbed family environment, and loss of an important job. The present study was conducted to investigate the effects of father's absence on the depression level of male children in Buner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.

Paternal absence is the most important factor and most prevailing factor in the development of depression in children. According to Popenoe (1996) studies father's Absence is a root cause of the development of many important psychological issues. Most of the scientific research studies suggest negative outcomes for children who are suffering from father's absence (Popenoe, 1996). The death of fathers, divorce between mother and father, and abroad jobs of fathers are root causes of father's absence. (Worden, 1996). Studies carried out on the psychological vulnerability of children for depression due to father's

absence suggest that father absent children more likely experience depression and emotional mess as compared to father present children (Amato, 1991). Melhem, Walker, Moritz, and Brent (2008) suggested that paternal death develop depression and post traumatic stress disorder in children during the first year and persisting into the second year after the death Melhem, Walker, Moritz, and Brent, 2008).

The present research study supported the research findings of Popeno (1996), Worden (1996), Amato (1991), and Melhem, Walker, Moritz, and Brent (2008) after the analysis of data collected by Siddiqui Shah Depression Scale 1992 in Urdu language by applying ANOVA. The results derived  $F(2, 147) = 24.4$  at significant level 0.01 and  $p > 0.01$  verified the research hypotheses and proved that those children whose father were died or living out of their native countries have high depression level as compared to those children whose father were living with their families. LSD analysis also verified the results.

According to the nature of the study, it is necessary to highlight the role of father attachment. Barnett, Marshall and Pleck, (1992), showed that those male children who have good attachments with their mother or father reported low levels of psychological distress. Comparison of both the mother's attachment with male children and the father's attachment of male children by regression equation revealed that only the father's attachment with male children was significantly related to male children's distress (Barnett, Marshall, and Pleck, 1992). There is a positive correlation between overall life satisfaction of children and parent involvement and less depression is experienced by such children (Dubowitz *et al.*, 2001). Parent involvement is correlated with less depression (Harris *et al.*, 1998). Father involved children feel less psychological distress (Flouri, 2005). Jorm, Dear, Rogers and Christensen, (2003) concluded that those Children whose parents are living with their families have fewer symptoms of anxiety and lower neuroticism.

The present research study supported that above mentioned research findings. Statistical analysis of the data by applying ANOVA proved that children of involved father have less depressive symptoms  $p < 0.01$ . Individual Score graphs also verified that those male children

whose father were absent in the case of death and abroad jobs have high depression level as compared to father involved male children.

Currently millions of Pakistanis migrants are living in different part of the world; these migrants are economically associated with Pakistan. The increase ratio of interest of the young generation in abroad jobs in the country created a serious issue of absent fathers. Families left behind without father figure suffer from emotional and psychological disorders. According to Bowlby (1988) study parents must be available, loving, and helpful when a child experiences a frightening or stressful situation. If the parent fails to fulfill the child's need, then normal development will be disturbed (Bowlby, 1988). Those children, who are suffering from non-resident fatherhood, receive less paternal supervision and attachment, are more likely to drop out of high school, and are more likely to get into fights and become involved in criminal activity, along with other negative outcomes (Hijawi and Wilson, 2003). Gotlib and Hammen, (1992) reported that the foremost reasons for developing depression would be an individual's contacts and relations within his family and society. Some interpersonal imbalances have the ability to results in depression, such as the family environs, the social set up and the prejudice against male versus female in some specific cultures and communities (Gotlib and Hammen, 1992).

In Pakistan studies carried out by the Imam and Shaik, (2005) to assessed paternal acceptance and rejection on the personality growth of the male children and female children by personality assessment questionnaires proved that effects of paternal acceptance and rejection were minor for female children, but were significant for male children. Imam and Shaikh, (2005) found that those male children who get the adoration of a father have good psychological accommodation opposing to those male children who did not experience a caring father (Imam and Shaikh, 2005). Those children who were suffering from family neglect have positive correlation with high level of anxiety (Bhutto and Shafi, 2006). Those children who experienced parental neglect in childhood have positive correlation with depression in adulthood and parent's emotional attachment with their children during childhood has a

significant negative correlation with depression in adulthood (Munaf and Sardar, 2010).

The present research study supported the above mentioned researches by statistical analysis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research hypothesis by applying Statistical Z test was applied on the data collected with  $M1 = 60.9$  and  $M3 = 81$  with level of significant  $\alpha = 0.01$ . The results concluded that fathers play a significant role in the life of a male child. The mean difference between the father present group and father abroad group showed father abroad male children suffer from more depression which leads to many psychological and physical disorders.

Like wise to assess the difference in depression level between fathers involved children and fathers died children by applying statistical Z test with  $M1 = 60.9$  and  $M2 = 78.82$  with level of significant  $\alpha = 0.01$ . The results concluded that those children whose fathers had died have high level of depression as compared to those children whose fathers were living with their families.

### **Conclusion**

The present research study was conducted to investigate the effects of paternal absence on depression level of male children in Buner (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Pakistan, as much less research has been done on paternal role in the life of children in Pakistan. It was concluded that paternal separation places male children at risk for depression. The present research advocates that fathers have forgotten contribution in the life of male children. When a male child losses his father by going abroad or in the case of death, it develops depression in male children which leads to many psychological disorders and suicidal thoughts along with much complicated physical diseases.

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