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Substance Abuse of Parents and Emotional Wounds among Their Broods

📧 Gopal Singh Charan,¹ 📧 Amanpreet Kaur,² 📧 Charanjit Kaur³

¹Department of Pediatric Nursing, SGRD College of Nursing SGRD University of Health Sciences, Amritsar, Punjab, India

²Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Institute of Nursing, University Regional Centre, Goindwal Sahib, Tarn-Taran, Punjab, India

³Department of Medical Surgical Nursing, Institute of Nursing, University Regional Centre, Goindwal Sahib, Tarn-Taran, Punjab, India

ABSTRACT

Substance abuse by parents inflicts enduring emotional wounds on their children, with repercussions stretching across family, society, and individual well-being. The profound impact of parental substance abuse on children manifests primarily as aggression but conceals a spectrum of potential behavioral disorders. Factors contributing to this aggression include neglect, strained mother-child relationships, impaired parenting, family conflicts, stress, physical abuse, and poor ego development. If these emotional struggles are not addressed, they can potentially lead to delinquent behavior, conduct disorders, and substance abuse in the future. To mitigate mental health risks in children and adolescents, preventive measures should be implemented. These measures include educating parents, providing family therapy, developing healthy coping mechanisms, offering school-based mental health services, and promoting open communication. Addressing these vulnerable children's intricate emotional challenges and ensuring their emotional well-being and future success require a collaborative effort involving parents, educators, society, and government working together in coordination.

Keywords: Behavioral disorders, emotion, parents, substance abuses



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Address for correspondence:

Prof. Gopal Singh Charan,
Department of Pediatric
Nursing, SGRD College of
Nursing SGRD University of
Health Sciences, Amritsar,
Punjab, India

Phone: +91-9780430871

E-mail: pedslope@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is a can of worms.^[1] It has a deleterious effect on the family, society, occupation, personal functioning, etc. The most striking effect of substance abuse is on the young minds that are on the children of substance abusers. Parenting in the early years of life determines the adult personality and emotional expression organization. Substance abuse of parents leads to hidden conflicts in the mind of children, due to which the child may not be able to express emotions in an exact way or an acceptable manner.^[2] They may exhibit aggression as a symbol of frustration due to home atmosphere such as dispute among parents, financial constraints, and social stigma due to parental drug abuse. Furthermore, various behavior disorders could develop in the offspring of substance abusers. Among these behavior disorders, aggression is just a tip of the iceberg. The studies indicated that offspring whose parents or parents indulged in substance abuse have a higher tendency for psychiatric and behavior disorders in comparison to those children whose parents are sober and the aggression was associated with parental substance abuse.^[3]

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF AGGRESSION

Parental substance abuse may act as poison for the child's development.^[4] The following factors may contribute to aggression outbursts as follows:

Neglect: Neglect has a deep effect on the emotional development of the child.^[5] Due to these feelings of insecurity and emotional outburst emerges. In other words, neglect ingrains the seeds for emotional turmoil as it gives the sense of unacceptability among children of substance abusers. Due to the lack of adaptive coping strategies, the child may develop aggression.

Poor Mother–child Relationship: A healthy mother–child relationship is important for developing an organized and secure personality.^[5] Suppose there is maternal deprivation due to substance abuse and conflict between mother and father. In that case, trust may not be developed in the child, laying the foundation for emotional outbursts.

Impaired Parenting: Under the effect of a substance, parent/parents may not be able to rear child as per emotional needs of wards.^[6] Moreover, lack of adequate resources such as basic physiological needs, financial resources, poor education, love, and belongingness acts as a seed for emotional insecurities.

Family Conflicts: Skewed and schisms in the family may predispose a child to have emotional outbursts.^[7] In addition to this, substance abuse has a grave effect on the environment of the family due to regular quarrel and conflicts between family members which leads to the maladjustment of children to this situation.

Stress: One episode of stress leads to change in neurons which increases the vulnerability of person to the next episodes of stress.^[8] Stress due to substance abuse in the family plays a major role in the children who are living with the parents having substance abuse. The child is always pre-occupied with parental substance abuse due to which the child may express anger.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse leads to the development of an emotional wound that always bleeds and does not heal easily.^[9] The child may use a defense mechanism such as displacement.

Poor Ego Development: Due to poor parenting and maternal deprivation, ego may be unable to balance id and superego.^[9] This may lead to behavior problems among children living with addictive parent/parents.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Aggression among the heir of substance abuse may open the door for delinquent behavior, conduct disorder, and

substance abuse.^[5] The following steps may curb the menace of aggression among the broods of substance abusers.

Education to Parents: It must be given to parents that erroneous parenting leads to unorganized behavior of the child.^[5] The parents are clay potters responsible for the formation or shaping of the child's behavior. Therefore, warning signs of poor parenting must be taught to parents.

Family Therapy: Pseudo-mutual and pseudo-hostile communication must be evaluated in the family. The family must be taught about healthy interaction.^[9]

Integration of Healthy Lifestyles: Children must be educated and trained about adaptive coping styles, mature defense mechanisms, relaxation exercises, and stress reduction techniques.^[9] Thought-stopping techniques must be taught to these children.

School Mental Health Services: There must be the availability of mental health services at school so that warning signs can be easily identified.^[10] According to the need for child counseling, psychological therapy could be provided to the child.

Cultivate Open Communication: Open communication helps ventilate the child's feelings.^[10] This may prevent the chances of emotional outbursts.

CONCLUSION

Emotional problems among children of substance abusers are a Gordian knot which intensively affects the growth and development of the child.^[4] Young children are the future of the nation. These emotional problems open the doors for various psychiatric disorders, conduct disorders, and substance abuse among these children. Parents, teachers, society, and government must coordinate efforts.^[5] Intensive counseling sessions, health education, and role play must be planned to train them regarding emotional maturity and stress reduction. Helpline numbers must be available for emergency mental health services. Inclusion of parenting skills in the services or treatment of substance abusers.

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