

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Supporting school children with social, emotional, and mental health needs

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Edited by **Danna Raupp**

Abstract The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began a study in the 1990s that tracked the maltreatment of young children. They revealed that more than three million reports were made annually involving more than six million children. Any one of these deaths may be a four-year-old child with an abusive father or mother. The scale of the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs is extremely large and must be investigated. The study aims to understand how negative childhood experiences affect their future lives. With Naomi Campbell, we start with the premise that "Children are our future We must take care of them with maximum effort."

Keywords: child abuse, children, mental health, SEMH needs, tracking

Introduction

Our research aim is to examine trauma in children and to find places and environments where children develop into healthy adults. Readers have the chance to understand what the unspoken feelings may be of children who cannot express them. The audience for this research is not only intended for young people. I would like to link my research to my future profession because future teachers must want to understand children fully, not only the smiles on their faces. Daily, we hide many emotions, pains, and unspoken words. Surprisingly, children often cope so well that even those close to them do not see or understand it.

Social development determines a child's ability to relate to the environment and people around them. Emotional development determines the child's ability to know and express his feelings and to know the emotions of others, to have compassion, and respond appropriately. Studies show that children thrive in rich physical and social environments.

Age development plays a significant role in the general development of youngsters. Unfortunately, many children live in abusive families which is a serious obstacle to a child becoming a mentally secure person. There are many, varied dynamics in abusive families.

I want to express my clear view of Psychologists: they are doing a difficult job, and they face tremendous challenges. When parents approach a stranger to understand their own child's needs they will often find, it all comes down to the wrong parenting approach! I hope my research will answer some of the questions that a Psychologist might be faced with.

Methods

This is a study within the area of humanities and psychology. Participants were from my former school, 35 adolescents in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Their ages were 12.8-13.3 at the beginning of the study. The demand for participation was relatively high among high

school children, but my research aims to involve children ages 10-15 because this is the age when many of these problems begin to surface. Bottrill (2018) accurately expresses my feelings when he says that working with young children is an unbelievable experience; it is a real privilege to spend time in their company, seeing their potential and joy.

Relevance of child mental health problems

Social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs are a type of educational needs for children and young people who have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behavior. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations. (Matusiak, 2022). Fortunately, many young people are healthy emotionally and mentally, but one in every nine or ten cannot deal with their problems. This raises the question of what is lacking that these children are not able to thrive. Here are some definitions of how the problems of children with emotional and mental health needs are revealed:

- Children who have difficulty relating to adults or other children
- Children who find it hard to express their feelings
- Children who cannot manage emotions and aggression and express them inappropriately

The place where a child grows up leaves a giant mark. The household must establish the child as a dignified, helpful person within the community. Many sources confirm this. For example, the New York Times reports current research from Harvard University on the influence of the neighbourhood. Their findings confirm that the place a child grows up is significant. Most well-intentioned parent wants to provide a secure future for their child, but there are cases where parents fail to provide a healthy environment in which to raise children.

It was not surprising to find that the most severely affected children had parents who also had experienced an absence of support for their

emotional and mental health needs at an early age. Bullying often caused confusion among family members, causing extreme pain and a constant feeling of insecurity. This suggests that public involvement should not be only for high-risk occasions, as is often recommended. It must be as early as possible because behavioral problems in children may well be a sign that greater psychological problems like depression, deterioration of self-esteem, and loss of interest in life are in their future. It has been shown that in the great majority of cases when support services are provided for children with emotional and mental health needs the children will be helped to establish a healing balance in their lives. Of particular interest to me is a study about genome linkages published in the Journal of Nature which revealed that the inheritance of depression is estimated at 40% (Howard, et al., 2022; Uffelmann, et al., 2021). The child is a mirror of the family, so our goal is to discover why this is so.

Because I want this paper to be helpful and relevant to young people of my age, I want to tell the stories of two young people we knew who lived in poor family situations. Their names have been changed.

Tengo

Tengo is now 21 years old and lives with his parents, two sisters, and three brothers who are little ones. Tengo is the eldest child. The family is in financial difficulties and this may have been the reason his father was abusive. Tengo's dad was a dairyman and worked on a farm. As a boy, each day when he returned from school, he had to work on the farm together with his dad. When Tengo was only 13 years old his father would leave him alone to care for a herd of 100 cattle, a heavy responsibility for a young boy. He could never refuse to do it and did not express fatigue. Years later, when I knew him in college, I always saw sadness in his eyes, but he was good at hiding it. But he often was only in class two days during the week and sometimes he was not there for months at a time. He never had a real childhood and now

as a young adult, he continues to be burdened with these family responsibilities. He admits “I’m too young to be this stressed.”

Anna

Anna is 15 years old and lives with her parents. When Anna was ten years old, the family lost their flat and moved to a relative’s house until they could find another apartment. But this was a crowded living situation and they were not always welcome, so they had to move around to different places. During this time, Anna became increasingly aggressive. She lashed out at other children and even adults. Anna wanted to play with other children but because she was so aggressive, they were now fearful of her. When other children agreed to play with her, they had to behave exactly as she wished. She never understood why they did not want to play with her. There can be no doubt that the unstable home environment had damaged her. She could not cope with a living situation where she felt unwanted, like a stranger. She tried to make new friends but did not know how.

Were there any attempts to get help for these young people from school or family? They have very different needs, but both of them needed additional support which was not provided. Tengo is the type of child who carried the burden of the family at an early age. He is an example of a young person who coped by creating his own space where no one was allowed in. Anna’s aggressive behavior will continue to make it likely that the move to another place or school is going to be disruptive and without help, she will not be able to adjust.

Fortunately, society has recognized that given such family situations, there is a need for the school building to be a source of support for children to develop emotionally, psychologically, and socially. “One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world” (Yousafzai, 2022).

Depression and Anxiety Disorder

When a baby is faced with a frightening situation, it can be traumatizing. A toddler begins to develop psychological signs like anxiety and depression. Teenagers become sad and often reckless, sometimes suicidal. If the condition is severe, the teenager feels empty, with despair for the future. These are often early symptoms of depression.

The question arises, are they too young for these feelings? The answer to that is that depression can affect a toddler, a child of 10, and an adult of 45. When it occurs in a very young child it is undoubtedly more complex than when it occurs later in life, when coping mechanisms may be more developed. Actor and activist Stephen Fry, who has suffered from depression and knows what it is like, advises that if you recognize someone who is depressed, please never ask them why. “Depression isn’t a simple response to a nasty situation; depression just is, a bit like the weather” (Donovan, 2015).

You can find help for a child by calling this hotline at 111 24 21 422. There is also a psycho-social service center hotline at 2 200 220.

If I had known about this center, I would have called two or three years ago when I had a period of depression in my own life. I want to tell you my story, too. The school leaves a mark on a child. It is there where greater demands are put on the child and you are learning how to meet those demands. It so happened that I fell victim to a lie; then I was blamed for the lie, making it even worse. This is what caused my depression. For two weeks I could not eat anything all day. I finally stopped fighting my sense of righteousness at the unfairness of my situation because I realized that you simply only should be right with yourself. This experience, even the period of depression, enabled me to face difficulties in my life and now I am proud that I am not fearful of the unpleasant situation.

I was lucky that my mother stood by me during this difficult time; it is vital who is with you. No matter what relationship parents have with

a child, at such critical times they definitely must show their love and support. Be the best parent you can be to help them overcome their difficulties. An element of depression is suicide, the most devastating outcome of any situation. The numbers are high and when there are any signs of suicidal intent, all adults must intervene and get help

Discussion

We have considered the factors that contribute to the change in the condition of children and young adults. Children can suffer from severe and unexplained pain. Confirmation of suicide rates in other countries means that the mental health of children and young adults is a global problem. The need to raise our children with the maximum love and support should be the highest priority. We need to develop new strategies and explore them internationally. Our work is about supporting the child, but we also want to offer ideas, investigate a problem, and promote a healthy, socially informed society.

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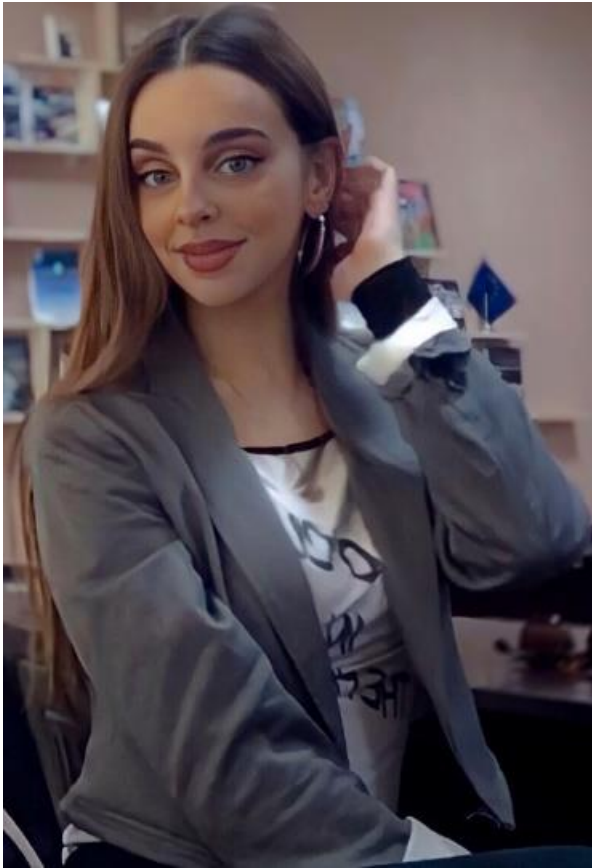
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Acknowledgments

I wish to say many thanks to my teacher, Khatuna Meladze, who could be a Psychologist by profession, for her involvement in this research. She made an immense contribution to assisting my research. The School Director, Mzia Okhanashvili, took the initiative to involve children's classes in my project and I thank Ms. Mzia for her support.

Biographical Note



Ketevan Kanashvili is 21 years old and lives with her family in the village of Kvakhvrel in Georgia. She is about to be a third-course student in English Philology at Gori State University. This is Ketevan's first effort at research and writing about it in English. She has chosen a subject close to her heart, the mental health needs of children and young people. She says that she wants to tell young people with mental health issues that they are not alone. “Bad days are always followed by bright days and they are worth waiting for.” We commend her for having the courage to want to present her work to the wider world.