

Alcoholism and Domestic Violence: A Case Study Analysis

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Abstract

The study examines two cases of domestic violence against children, exploring the nature of abuse, the neglectful care provided by those responsible, and the resulting consequences for the children's physical, mental, emotional, and educational well-being. The cases were identified from private orphanages in the district of Kottayam. The data was collected through interview schedule and observation. The analysis draws on the theoretical frameworks of Conflict theorists Ralf Dahrendorf and Randall Collins to provide a deeper understanding of the social and structural factors that contribute to child abuse. By examining these cases in detail, the study aims to shed light on the complex interplay of individual, familial, and societal factors that contribute to the perpetuation of violence against children. For reaching these purposes, this study uses primary and secondary data to give a qualitative picture.

Keywords: Child abuse, Domestic Violence, Well-being

Case 1: Parental Abuse and Neglect

This case study highlights the devastating impact of parental abuse and neglect on a 17-year-old boy. His father's alcoholism led to physical abuse, verbal abuse, and a chaotic home environment compounded by poverty and social stigma. The boy's upbringing was marked by his father's alcoholism and domestic violence, which created a toxic environment for the entire family. His mother, who was a young teenager when she had her first child, struggled to provide for her family and was unable to address the abuse and neglect effectively. The boy's mother, struggling with her anxiety disorder and limited resources, was unable to provide adequate care or stability. The father, once intoxicated, lay naked on the school premises. This made the boy face a lot of bullying from other children in the school. He was in deep shame and embarrassment. The incident led to his girlfriend rejecting him. The boy was in emotional distress and had violent outbursts both at home and at school. This ultimately resulted in his expulsion from school. Now he was free to wander, which actually pushed him into substance abuse and criminal activities and soon led to social isolation. He was caught in a few criminal activities and brought to the Observation home.

Case 2: Alcohol Abuse

This case study depicts the devastating consequences of alcohol abuse on a 16-year-old boy. His father's alcoholism resulted in domestic violence, abandonment, and a lack of parental care. The boy's mother, burdened with financial struggles and the need to provide for her family, was unable to provide adequate support. The boy's father's drinking and domestic violence created a chaotic and unsafe environment for the children. The boy's father's abandonment and subsequent return only exacerbated the family's problems. The boy's father's return, followed by a relapse into alcoholism and further abuse, led to a violent confrontation. The abuse the boy suffered at the age of fourteen, which led to his father's injury, further

isolated him from society. This event resulted in the boy's father leaving the family and the boy facing social stigma and exclusion. The mother, forced to work long hours to support the family, was unable to provide adequate care and supervision. The boy's lack of education and social support, coupled with the negative labelling he received, made it difficult for him to escape the cycle of poverty and violence. The boy's experiences led him to engage in substance abuse, criminal activities, and a high-risk romantic relationship.

Common factors

- 1. Cycle of Violence and Abuse:** Both cases demonstrate a clear cycle of violence and abuse within the families. In Case 1, the father's alcoholism fuels his abusive behaviour, while in Case 2, the father's drinking leads to domestic violence and abandonment. This cycle of abuse creates a toxic environment that negatively impacts the children's development and well-being.
- 2. Lack of Parental Care and Support:** Both cases highlight a significant lack of parental care and support. In Case 1, the mother struggles with her mental health issues and lacks the resources to provide adequate care. In Case 2, the mother is burdened with financial responsibilities and is unable to provide emotional support. This lack of maternal care leaves the boys vulnerable to peer influence and risky behaviours.
- 3. Financial Hardship:** Both families experience financial hardship, which contributes to the overall instability and stress within the home. In Case 1, the father's low-income job and alcohol addiction strain the family's resources. In Case 2, the mother's struggles to support her family create a constant source of stress and pressure.
- 4. Social Stigma and Exclusion:** Both boys experience social stigma and exclusion as a result of their family's circumstances. In Case 1, the father's criminal activities and the boy's actions lead to negative labelling and social isolation. In Case 2, the boy's involvement in criminal activities and the incident with his father led to social ostracisation and a sense of being an outsider.
- 5. Substance Abuse and Criminal Activities:** Both boys engage in substance abuse and criminal activities as a coping mechanism for the trauma and stress they experience. These behaviours are often a consequence of the lack of parental care, social isolation, and the desire to escape from their difficult realities.
- 6. High-Risk Romantic Relationships:** Both boys develop high-risk romantic relationships with minor girls, which further complicate their lives. These relationships may be a result of the lack of emotional support and connection within their families, as well as the influence of their peer groups.

Theoretical application

Case 1: Parental Abuse and Neglect

In this case, of Dahrendorf's theory authority and conflict is evident. The father's alcoholism and abuse represent a clear violation of societal norms and the child's well-being (Dahrendorf, 1959). The father's position of authority is used to exert control and dominance, leading to conflict and a breakdown of consensus within the family.

Collins' theory of emotional dominance is also applicable here. The father's use of violence and verbal abuse is a form of emotional manipulation, aiming to instil fear and shame in the child. This emotional dominance creates a power imbalance and reinforces the father's control over the boy. The cycle of abuse,

characterized by the father's violent outbursts and the boy's subsequent emotional distress, exemplifies the interaction rituals described by Collins (Collins, 2004).

Case 2: Alcohol Abuse

Dahrendorf's theory of authority and conflict is again relevant here. The father's alcoholism and abuse disrupt the established power dynamics within the family, leading to conflict and a breakdown of consensus. The father's position of authority is abused to exert control over the child, resulting in a cycle of violence and instability.

Collins' theory of emotional dominance is also applicable in this case. The father's alcoholism and violent behaviour are forms of emotional manipulation, aiming to control and intimidate the child. The father's use of violence is a manifestation of his emotional dominance, creating a power imbalance and perpetuating the cycle of abuse. The boy's experience of social stigma and exclusion further reinforces the emotional dominance exerted by his father.

The conflict theory of Ralph Dahrendorf focuses on the inherent conflict between social groups with differing levels of power and resources (Tittenbrun, 2013). This conflict can manifest in various forms, including social movements, revolutions, and even individual acts of defiance. In the case of the 17-year-old boy, the conflict arises from his father's abuse and the family's marginalization due to their lower-income status, interfaith marriage, and the father's alcoholism. This conflict creates a cycle of violence and social exclusion, leading to the boy's emotional trauma, school suspension, and eventual involvement in substance abuse and criminal activities.

The conflict theory of Randall Collins emphasizes the role of interaction rituals in shaping social identities and power dynamics (Collins, 2004). Collins argues that individuals gain status and power through their participation in shared rituals and interactions. In the case of the 16-year-old boy, his family's social isolation and the absence of positive rituals contribute to his negative social labelling. The lack of parental care and the father's violent behaviour create a hostile environment, further marginalizing the boy and his family. This marginalization leads to his association with high-risk peer groups, substance abuse, and the eventual social stigma of being a “goonda.”

Conclusion:

These case studies illustrate the complex and interconnected nature of factors contributing to child abuse and neglect. The cycle of violence, lack of parental care, financial hardship, social stigma, and the resulting substance abuse and criminal activities create a vicious cycle that traps children in a cycle of trauma and adversity. It is crucial to address these underlying factors through comprehensive interventions that provide support for both the children and their families.

References

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