The Effects of Complex Family Dynamics on Early Childhood Development: A Case Study

Straichea Mae C. Tabanao [a++*]

[a] Institute of Graduate and Professional Education, Davao Del Sur State College, Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines.

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Case Study

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the effects of complex family dynamics on early childhood students' development. This study addresses the cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and coping mechanisms early childhood students adopt. A descriptive case study design and purposive sampling were utilized. Five respondents, from early childhood education nursery and kindergarten students, were interviewed face-to-face while observing proper health protocol. Utilizing Resiliency Theory and Carl Rogers' Self-Actualization framework, the study employed a descriptive case study design with structured interviews. Findings reveal challenges such as emotional neglect, isolation, and anxiety, counterbalanced by nurturing caregiver relationships and effective coping mechanisms. The majority of the students experience a lack of parental support and guidance due to diverse, complex family dynamics like blended families, single parenting, and families affected by divorce or separation. In addition, most of the students experience emotional difficulty, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation. Also, many of them need help socializing and following rules and regulations. Recommendations to improve these experiences include workshops and resources

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++ Postgraduate Student - Master of Arts in Education major in Educational Management;
*Corresponding author: Email: straichea.tabanao@gmail.com;

designed to foster parental involvement in their children's education and emotional well-being and establishing mental health services in schools to offer counseling and support for children facing family-related challenges.

Keywords: Complex family dynamics; early childhood; lived experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family dynamics are the interaction, communication, and behavior patterns within a family unit. These dynamics encompass the relationships between family members, their roles, and the emotional connections that bind them. The family environment provides the foundational context in which children learn to navigate relationships, develop a sense of self, and acquire essential life skills. Research has shown that children with secure attachments exhibit better emotional and social outcomes, including resilience and effective communication skills (Sroufe, 2005). According to Jabbari et. al.,2023, family members are one of the main sources of relationship security or stress since they depend on one another for financial, emotional, and physical support. While strained family connections are hampered by conflicts, unrelenting criticism, and burdensome demands, secure and supportive family ties offer love, counsel, and care.

However, complex family dynamics can significantly influence a child's emotional, social, and cognitive development. These dynamics often include divorce, remarriage, extended family involvement, and varying parenting styles. As a result, creating effective solutions is frequently too challenging. According to earlier studies, children who do not live with both of their biological parents perform somewhat worse than those who do on a number of outcomes. This includes two pieces that add to this line of inquiry. The first European study of how family trajectories affect children born to single mothers is presented by Mariani et al.,2017. In addition to the consequences of parental separation, Radl et al.,2017, look into the relationship between child outcomes and living with siblings or grandparents, as well as if the latter condition the former effects. Research has shown that children in high-conflict families may exhibit symptoms of anxiety and depression (Cummings and Davies, 2002). Children raised in high-stress environments may struggle with concentration and learning. This can lead to academic challenges and hinder cognitive growth (McLoyd,1998). In the United States, a study by Amato,2000, states that children experiencing parental divorce often face increased risks of anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues. The disruptions in attachment that can occur during familial transitions affect a child's ability to form stable relationships in the future.

Moreover, in the Philippines, a study by Gonzales,2020 indicates that children from complex family backgrounds may struggle with social skills due to inconsistent parenting styles and exposure to conflict. Children from complex family backgrounds in Davao are at a higher risk for behavioral issues. Research indicates that parental conflict, along with divorce or parental separation, are a higher predictor of negative outcomes for children (Amato & Keith,1991; Kelly,2000). According to Cherlin et al.,1991, children of divorced and separated parents do worse on accomplishment tests when it comes to their educational effect.

Research by Mercado,2022 shows that inconsistent discipline and exposure to parental conflict contribute to increased aggression and defiance among children, impacting their relationships and academic performance. Families that prioritize education and engage in stimulating activities promote better cognitive skills, while those that are less involved may hinder academic success Dickinson,2001. These dynamics hold important bonds to the children's development. In order to measure home and family dynamics and to guide educational and therapy strategies, it is necessary to find assessment methods. This is because the family is crucial to the social and academic development of preschool-aged children. The importance of the home environment and family for preschoolers has long been recognized by the early childhood education industry Nickerson et. al.,2017.

This study tailored the Residency Theory and Carl Rogers' Self Actualization. This theory is influenced by the social and cultural context, including family dynamics, community support, and socioeconomic conditions Luthar,2005. Resiliency Theory illustrates that every individual can overcome any challenges or problems that come in their lives.
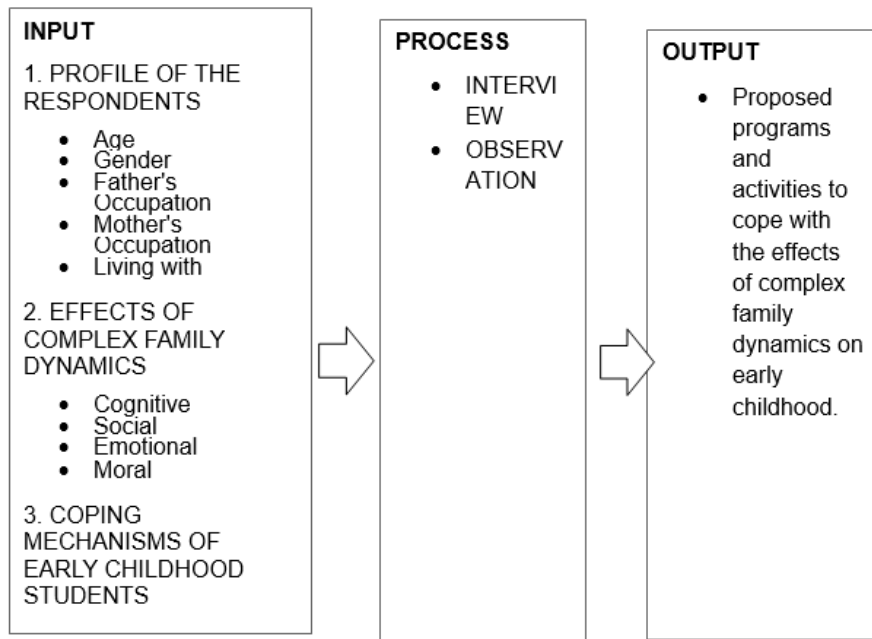
Fig. 1. Research paradigm

This diagram shows that everyone's ultimate goal is to propose programs and activities in school to improve and cope with the effects of complex family dynamics on students' early childhood. Rogers wants to illustrate that the first step to having concrete output is to identify the problems that we may propose possible and concrete solutions.

1.1 Research Questions

This study identifies the effects of complex family dynamics on early childhood students' development. This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents?

   a. Age:
   b. Gender:
   c. Father's occupation:
   d. Mother's occupation:
   e. Living with:

2. What are the effects of complex family dynamics in early childhood development?

   a. Cognitive
   b. Social
   c. Emotional
   d. Moral

3. What are the coping mechanisms used by students who experience complex family dynamics?

4. Based on the findings, what proposed programs can be formulated to support the effects of complex family dynamics on students?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Design

This study utilized a descriptive case study method. The descriptive method focused on illustrating the certain conditions that prevail over the chosen group of individuals. Maxwell, 2008. This aims to help early childhood students who have experienced complex family dynamics cope with their cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development.

2.2 Participants

This study was conducted in Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines and participated by five (5) early childhood students aged 4-6 using purposive sampling. Moreover, the purposive sampling approach work well with a maximum of five individuals act as the main sources of information because of the nature of the study's objectives, design, and aims Rai & Tapha,2015.

In choosing the case report participants, he/she should be a early childhood students, currently

enrolled in S.Y. 2024-2025, at any public or private school in Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines. In addition, the exclusion criteria are the following: one (1) parents have not sign the issued parent's, two (2) unwillingness to participate in the study, three (3) developing diseases in the inclusion criteria, four (4) non-responses to all the questions during the interview, five (5) the parents, teachers or guardian did not allow the students to participate the study.

2.3 Instruments

This study used the Interview method through a structured interview guide to gather information developed by the researcher. Moreover, the interview guide was validated and checked by the experts before utilizing in the study. Also, the structured interview guide was used in which the researcher prepared particular set of determined questions. Part 1 imparts the respondents' age and gender to the early childhood students. Moreover, Part II shows the students the effects of aging complex family dynamics on their cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. Also, Part III dealt with the ways of early childhood students coping mechanisms they do when they experience his complexity. Lastly, in Part IV, embark on the proposed program or activities to cope with the effects of diverse student life. The materials were collected by the researcher through a dialogue that has been recorded and directed inquiries to document, etc., throughout the trip toward the involvement of parents. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety and confidentiality of each volunteer, the investigator defended the data collected from them. and kept it secret and under wraps. The investigator made certain that the informed permission was provided by the participants showing off their advantages and their expectations on the course of the research.

2.4 Design and Procedure

The researcher sought permission from the Dean of Graduate School, and a letter was prepared and addressed to the school president, together with the parents' consent forms for the respondents. The researcher utilized face-to-face interviews through structured interview-guided questions to gather data from early childhood students.

Before conducting this study, the researcher went through the research's validation interview protocols. The researcher is certain that all documents are put into effect prior to conducting the research. The investigation was carried out by researchers. In the course of the phase of implementation, the parents signed the parents consent letter for the learners to participate in the study. Through the help of the parents of the pupils that their students or children were able to participate in the study. When the researchers see potential subjects, they inquire about their availability and time. However, the parents/guardian of the students who are willing to take part in the study are asked for approval by the researchers. Focus groups were used in this investigation. Following an interview, the researchers translated the talks that were recorded; the data was then forwarded to the designated data analyzer with the help of the researchers. After two (5) working days, the data was returned to us. The study's materials, including the conversion forms that were recorded, were stored in a secure location.

In addition, Content analysis is considered in the study. Content analysis is a research technique that enables the systematic and reliable study of qualitative data collected for the purpose of drawing generalizations about the researcher's interest categories Haggarty,1996. According to Krippendorff, 2018 content analysis is a research method that quantitatively, methodically, and objectively characterizes the visible content of communication. However, content analysis has lost its position as the primary method of text analysis in recent decades as discourse analysis itself has developed into a wide range of approaches from ethnomethodology to artificial intelligence. Today, it is more frequently utilized as a supporting tool for more complex forms of discourse analysis, while it can still be employed for that purpose in some situations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The five cases of early childhood students who experienced complex family dynamics were illustrated and described in the following paragraph: the profile and the effects of aging complex family dynamics in the cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development of early childhood students and the coping mechanisms they utilized.

The cases of the students who experienced complex family dynamics are illustrated through a brief narrative. Moreover, Students A, B, C, D, and E were used to protect their real identities.

3.1 Case No.1 "Student A"

(a) Personal

Student A is a 5-year-old female early childhood student from a wealthy family. She is the only child of a family of professionals. Her father is a doctor in a very well-known hospital in the city. Also her mother is a nurse who's also in the same hospital with her father. Student A is living with her parent. However, only her nanny is with her as her parents do not have time to spend with her. As she longed for her parent's attention, she found it in her nanny.

(b) Cognitive

Student A narrated that she find the eagerness to student to get attention from her parents. Moreover, she said that there are times that if her parents don't have the chance to go to their awarding day her nanny will be the one to put her awards and medals,, "*gusto kay ko mo eskwela para mag ka medal ko ug malipay sila mommy ug daddy. Akoang yaya ra akoang kauban perminte pati kung naa koy award syara pud ang mo saka sa stage.*"

(c) Social

Student A recalled that she is too shy to talk and play with her classmates because she is afraid of being bullied because she doesn't have a mother and father in school. Only her nanny, "*maulaw ko making dula nila kay basin sungugon ko nila na wala koy papa ug mama dre na naga sundo sa eskwelahan*".

(d) Emotional

Student A shared that at night, she cries as she goes to sleep because she misses her mother and father. She said that her nanny will always cheer her up and hug her if she feels it. "*Maghilak ko tag gabie Kay mingawon ko nila pero gakson ug pahilumon dayon ko sa akoang yaya ug ingnon ko nya na okay ra daw to*"

(e) Moral

Student A said that most of the time she received punishments to her teacher because she did not follow rules and obligations in school. However, she is happy for this because she will get the chance to meet her parents if the teacher will ask for their precense, "*permi ko kasab an sa sakoang maistra Kay gahi kog ulo pero okay ra pud kay para makitan nako sila mama na mo adto sa eskwelahan*".

(f) Coping Mechanisms

She said that even if her parents do not have time to spend with her, she's still happy because she has her nanny to guide her. She also said that she would not go to school and be a good girl without her nanny.

3.2 Case No. 2 "Student B"

(a) Personal

Student B is a five (5) and 1/2 years old female and a kindergarten student.

Her mother is a public school teacher, and her father is a house-husband. She lives in their house but sleeps in her father's bed while her mom sleeps in a different room. She revealed that sometimes she is confused because her mom and dad do not talk with each other.

(b) Cognitive

Student B illustrated that sometimes she could not do her assignments and projects because her father did not help her. She said that even in class, she could not focus because she did not cook for breakfast in the house and forgot to give her a meal. "*Usahay di nako mabuhat akoang assignment kay dili man ko tabanagan sa akoang papa, ug usahay pud dili ko kasabot kay gutom kaayo wala nag luton si papa .*"

(c) Social

Student B confessed that even if her dad was always there to take care of her and get her from school, she still missed the care and face of her mom. She told me that sometimes she is shy that her classmates will see that its her dad who gets her and not here mom, "*biskin si papa ang permi naa dra sa ako mingawon japon KO sa nwng sa akoang mama, maulaw ko makitan sa akoang classmates na si papa ang nag sundo sa akoa unya dili si mama.*"

(d) Emotional

Student B revealed that sometimes she feels sad for her dad because he always cries at night. She said that whenever her dad cries, she likes to hug and kiss him. She also said that one day during a family day in school and her mom didn't

attend her dad was always there to cheer her up and join different games even if its for mom and daughter; "*maluoy ko ni papa Kay maghilak man sya pag gabie na unya e kiss ug gakson na lan nako sya, sauna Kay nag family day mi unya wala man ni adto si mama unya si papa akoang kauban nag dula biking mga mama among kalaban*"

(e) Moral

Student B said that only her father will teach her the right and wrong things to do. She shares that, that's the reason why she loves her dad more that her mother is that her dad will let her experience everything and let her learn from its experiences, "*si papa kay tudloan ko nya sa tama na buhaton ug sa mali pud, okay ra sa iyaha na maka testing ko sa mga butang para makabalo daw ko unya dili nako mo tisting sunod.*"

(f) Coping Mechanism

Student B stated that if she misses her mother, her father always tells her that her mom is at work and teaches children like her. Moreover, her dad will always make her understand their situation. After what her dad said, she said she understands and loves them both even though their situation is slightly different. With her father's love and support, she could cope with her situation.

3.3 Case No. 3 "Student C"

(a) Personal

Student C is a 4-year-old male early childhood student whose parents have separated since birth. His mother is a housewife, while her father works abroad. Currently, student C lives with his mother and visits his grandmother on his father's side every weekend.

(b) Cognitive

Student B stated that his mother is a housewife, so he proudly said that he is always there to help and guide her in studying his lessons. He also said that even if sometimes he forgot and cannot answer the lessons his mother will not punish him or even talk bad at him but rather help him in a very calm way, '*si mama ang naga tabang sa akoa naa sya permi kay tabanagan ko niya mag study, dili pud sya masuko kung di ko kasabot dili ko nya singhagan'.*

(c) Social

According to Student C, sometimes when he saw a boy with his father he felt sad and jealous specially when they are in the park and the parents are playing with the children. He confessed that the other kids in school bully him because of not having a father in his side, he just cry. '*usahay kay mag selos ko sa uban na naay papa ug mag dula-dula sa park kauban sa ilahang pamilya, gina bully pud ko sa eskwwelahan kay wala daw koy papa ug mag sge na lang kog hilak'*

(d) Emotional

Student C stated that sometimes he felt happy that there are just two of them in the family because that means his mother will not always cry at night. He stated that, one night he saw his mother cry when he walk at their room. He said that he was sad when he saw it and hugged his mother. Student B stated that he don't miss his father whenever it go back abroad. '*nalipay ko na kami ra duha ni mama kay para dili na magsgeg hilak si mama inig kagabie, nakita nako sauna si mama nag hilak sa kwarto unya ni hug ko nya. Dili man ko mingawon ni papa kung o balik syag lakaw'.*

(e) Moral

According to Student C, he learned that even if his dad hurt her mom, he still called her dad, and her mom did not say bad things about him. He believe that his mom and dad is still her parents that he need to follow and respect, '*nakatuon ko na biskin sige hilak si mama kay papa sila japon akoang mama ug papa, love nako sila ug gusto ko ma happy sila sa akoa',*

(f) Coping Mechanism

Student C stated that if he is sad about not having a dad by his side, his mom buys him ice cream or cooks his favorite food. He said that if he thinks bad things are still happening, he's still here to have his mom by his side, and then he will be happy.

3.4 Case No. 4 "Student D"

(a) Personal

Student D is a 6-year-old kindergarten student living in his stepmother's house. His father is a

politician, while his mother died due to breast cancer.

(b) Cognitive

Student D stated that in his whole life, he had never felt the love and support of a parent since his mother died. He said his only value in his father's eye is if he did well in class, like having high grades or even winning an award. In that way, he said he always tries to make his father proud of him. *'walay may ga love sa akoa, sukad namatay si mama. Palangga lang ko ni papa kung tass akoang grado or dagko akoang score or kung naa oy award bantog naga paningkamot ko para malipa sya'*

(c) Social

Due to the lack of attention and strict rules Student D gets from his father and stepmother, he has yet to experience playing on the street or even communicating with the other children. Thus, this results in the absence of a friend or a companion in school and outside the home.

(d) Emotional

Student D said that he felt like he didn't have any team in their house, as his father and stepmother have children on their own. He felt lonely and sometimes out of place in their own house.

(e) Moral

Despite not having the presence of a real mother by his side, Student D has become a very good child despite the lack of guidance he experienced. He doesn't use it as an excuse to hurt or be bad with other people.

(f) Coping Mechanism

According to Student D, it was hard for him to open up about his problem to anyone in his family. However, he finds comfort in talking about his feelings to his nanny and driver. He finds comfort, support, and understanding through them.

3.5 Case No. 5 "Student E"

(a) Personal

Student E is a 6-year-old kindergarten student living with her parents in a very simple life away from the city. Her mother is a housewife, and her father is a fisherman.

(b) Cognitive

As I observed, Student E is a slow learner child. According to her teacher, she is often absent, and if she's in class, she pays less attention to the discussion. One time, student E stated that she felt dizzy and hungry because he had not been eating since breakfast, which is probably why she's not focused in class.

(c) Social

Student E stated that she has no friends in school. No one wants to play with her; most of the time, she is isolated and lonely. She said that all she wants to do is to play with her dolls and toys.

(d) Emotional

According to Student E, she only likes to be with her dolls and toys because she feels nobody wants to be with her. She stated that whenever she's lonely, sad, and angry, only her dolls and toys are there for her, and nobody will.

(e) Moral

As I observed, Student E is a good girl because even if she doesn't want to socialize or be at the center of attraction, she still has a good heart for being kind to her classmates and respecting her teacher. She follows the rules and understands things in a most kind way.

(f) Coping Mechanism

Student E's coping mechanism is to play with her dolls and toys. In that way, she loves to create scenes that portray family and friendship. She said that whenever she's with her dolls, she feels like she has a friend or companion who accepts and plays with her.

4. PROPOSED PROGRAM

Table 1 represents the proposed activities/outreach program to improve the complex dynamics effect on early childhood development.

Table 1. proposed activities/outreach program to improve the complex dynamics effect on early childhood development

Category	A. Cognitive	B. Social	C. Emotional	D. Moral
Area	● Learning difficulty ● Lack of Parents Support / Follow Up ● Inattention ● Slow Learner	● Attachment Issue ● Lack of Self-Confidence ● Loneliness and Isolation ● Difficulty with Peer Relationships	● Emotional Dysregulation ● Difficulty Identifying and Expressing Emotions: ● Depression and Anxiety	● Difficulty Understanding Consequences ● Lack of Empathy or Concern ● Struggles with Trust and Fairness
Objectives	● Enhance the cognitive development of children by providing enriching and intellectually stimulating environments.	● Foster the social development of children by encouraging peer relationships, cooperation, and social understanding.	● Provide a structured approach to building emotional intelligence and social skills, which are key to cognitive and moral development.	● Strengthen collaboration between families and schools to create a consistent environment that nurtures moral development.
Persons Involved				
Programs/Activities	● Play-Based Learning: Introduce activities like puzzles, building blocks, and early literacy games (e.g., reading aloud, letter recognition, storytelling) that stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving. ● STEM Exploration: Offer hands-on activities to introduce basic scientific concepts, math patterns, and cause-and-effect reasoning, such as sorting, counting, and exploring nature. ● Technology Integration: Use age-appropriate, interactive apps or programs to promote	● Structured Playgroups: Organize playmates or small group activities where children work together to achieve common goals (e.g., building something together, group storytelling, collaborative art projects). ● Conflict Resolution and Social Skills Training: Teach children conflict resolution techniques (e.g., negotiation, compromise) and social skills (e.g., greetings,	● SEL-based Curriculum: Implement SEL programs in early childhood settings that include regular lessons on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. ● Interactive SEL Activities: Activities like "feelings circles" where children share emotions, "I feel" statements to express how they feel, and collaborative problem-solving tasks to teach	● Workshops for Educators and Families: Host sessions where families and teachers collaborate to align strategies for teaching kindness, responsibility, and respect at home and school. ● Parent-Teacher Conferences Focused on Values: Discuss children's moral and ethical development, providing tips on reinforcing good behavior at home and school. ● Family Learning

Category	A. Cognitive	B. Social	C. Emotional	D. Moral
	cognitive skills such as memory, attention, and logical thinking.	turn-taking, respecting others' feelings).	respect, kindness, and cooperation. ● Emotion Regulation Games: Use games to teach children how to recognize and manage their emotions (e.g., "When I Feel Angry, I Can...").	Activities: Organize family-centered activities that teach moral principles, such as "game nights," where children and parents role-play social situations and moral dilemmas.
Budget	P10,000-P15,000	P10,000-P15,000	P10,000-P15,000	P10,000-P15,000
Expected Outcome	● Boosts cognitive skills by engaging children in activities that require thought, reasoning, and exploring new concepts, setting the foundation for academic success and lifelong learning.	● Develops children's social competence, emotional intelligence, and ability to engage in positive relationships. Promotes cooperation, empathy, and respect— key components of moral development.	● Fosters social-emotional competence, helping children develop empathy, strong relationships, and understanding of their and others' feelings.	● Encourages a unified approach to moral education, ensuring children receive consistent messages from home and school, fostering internalized values.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study's results. The researcher aimed to identify the lived experiences of early childhood students and the coping strategies that they used to overcome these challenges as they experienced complex family dynamics.

5.1 Summary

This case study examines how complex family dynamics affect early childhood development, focusing on the intricate relationships and emotional environments that shape children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral growth. Utilizing foundational theories such as Residency Theory and Carl Rogers' Self-Actualization, the research emphasizes how social and cultural contexts—like family structure and parenting styles—impact children's development.

The study integrates theories of resilience and self-actualization, suggesting that recognizing individual challenges within their social and cultural frameworks can enhance coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies. The aim is to identify issues arising from complex family dynamics and recommend programs supporting affected children.

A descriptive case study methodology included structured interviews with early childhood students. These interviews gathered demographic data, assessed the effects of family dynamics, and explored coping strategies. Qualitative analysis was used to interpret the responses and extract meaningful insights.

The findings demonstrate that children from complex family backgrounds encounter unique challenges that influence their development. However, supportive relationships and coping mechanisms—such as caregiver nurturing—can help alleviate negative effects. The study highlights the need for targeted programs in educational settings to assist children in navigating these complexities, emphasizing the significance of family dynamics in early childhood development.

5.2 Conclusion

The study's findings reveal the significant impact of complex family dynamics on early childhood development, illustrated through the stories of five students. Each case highlights distinct challenges and coping strategies shaped by their family situations. Children's language abilities, critical thinking, and academic achievement are generally improved by parents who participate in stimulating activities like reading, problem-solving, and conversation Hart & Risley,1995. Secure attachment is associated with resilience and greater self-esteem in children who grow up in a setting where caregivers are attentive to their needs and responsive Bowlby,1988. Moreover, according to Baumrind,1991 Children raised in households with supportive, upbeat dynamics typically grow up with stronger social and emotional intelligence.

Student A, despite her affluent background, suffers emotional neglect due to her parents' demanding jobs. Her dependence on her nanny for emotional support illustrates how caregivers can partially fulfill the emotional needs left by absent parents. This case emphasizes that financial stability does not guarantee emotional well-being, highlighting the importance of active parental involvement in children's lives.

Student B faces emotional turmoil stemming from her parents' strained relationship. Her confusion and embarrassment when her father picks her up from school show how familial conflict can affect a child's social experiences. Nevertheless, her father's nurturing presence is a crucial counterbalance, indicating that strong parental support can foster resilience and understanding, even amid conflict.

Student C sheds light on issues of separation and absence. He experiences jealousy and sadness about peers with his present fathers yet maintains a strong bond with his mother. This case illustrates the mixed emotions children in complex family structures experience—being content with their immediate situation while longing for what they see as 'normal.' His coping strategies, such as focusing on the positive aspects of his relationship with his mother, demonstrate how children can adapt to their unique circumstances.

Student D is facing multiple emotional and social challenges due to the loss of his mother, his strained relationship with his father, and his isolation from other children. Despite these difficulties, he shows resilience and seeks support from trusted adults outside his immediate family.

Student E is a quiet, kind, and respectful child who struggles with loneliness, social isolation, and attention difficulties in school. She lacks friends and finds solace in playing with her dolls, which provide her with the companionship she feels she lacks. While she has cognitive challenges and often feels physically neglected (like hunger), she remains a good-natured child who copes with her emotions through imaginative play and attachment to her toys.

Across all cases, common themes related to cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development emerge. Cognitive challenges often arise from emotional distress and instability at home, affecting attention and learning. Socially, these children display shyness and fear of bullying linked to their family situations, impacting peer interactions. Emotionally, they frequently feel sadness, confusion, and a longing for parental attention, underscoring the need for emotional support systems. Morally, their understanding of right and wrong is heavily influenced by parental figures, highlighting the importance of consistent guidance.

The coping mechanisms these children utilize demonstrate resilience. Relying on caregivers, finding comfort in routines, and drawing strength from parental relationships are key strategies that help them manage their complex realities.

In summary, while complex family dynamics present considerable challenges to early childhood development, supportive relationships and effective coping strategies can lessen these impacts. This emphasizes the need for targeted interventions and support programs in educational settings to enhance emotional resilience and promote healthy development among children facing similar challenges. Future initiatives should prioritize increasing parental engagement and providing resources that empower children and families to navigate their circumstances better.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations can be made to support better early childhood students facing complex family dynamics. These suggestions enhance their cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development while promoting effective coping strategies.

1. There should be workshops and resources designed to foster parental involvement in their children's education and emotional well-being. These initiatives should offer strategies for busy parents to engage meaningfully, such as dedicating specific times for family activities, even if they are short. Thus, there should be training and resources for caregivers—like nannies and grandparents—to help them meet children's emotional needs. This training should emphasize active listening, emotional validation, and fostering a nurturing environment.
2. There should be an establishment of mental health services in schools to offer counseling and support for children facing family-related challenges. Qualified counselors can assist students in processing their emotions, coping with anxiety, and developing social skills. Also, there should be peer support groups in schools where children can share their experiences in a safe and understanding environment. These groups can help normalize their feelings, reduce isolation, and encourage friendships among those facing similar challenges.
3. Future studies should aim for larger sample sizes and more diverse populations better to understand children's varied experiences across different backgrounds.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

CONSENT

The author declare that written informed consent was obtained from the parents of participants (or other approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written consent is available for review by the Editorial office/Chief Editor/Editorial Board members of this journal.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The author hereby declare that all experiments have been examined and approved by the appropriate ethics committee and have therefore

been performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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