Exploring the Impact of Father's Demise among Female Adolescents

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Abstract

The present study is intended to explore the impact brought about by parental demise among female adolescents. Moreover, examining the societal role, particularly the part played by the family system, after the death of a father and its effect on an adolescent's life perception. Data was collected through in-depth interviews from 4 adolescents aged between 17-19 years, accumulated by a purposive sampling method and analyzed through interpretative phenomenological analysis. Findings demonstrated that adolescents who encountered the loss of their fathers face numerous problems impacting their emotional, cognitive, and behavioural well-being. The absence of parents brings a drastic change in an entire life affecting their mental health leading to low self-esteem, depression, anxiety as well as emotional sufferings. The major issues highlighted during the study were life disruption, financial crisis, lack of support in terms of both financial and emotional aspects from extended family. Moreover, the family system played a detrimental role in the adversities encountered. Furthermore, participants stressed that children having both parents attained support, attention, emotional bonding, and encountered fewer social, psychological, and emotional issues. They constantly grieved the parental loss and faced a lack of care, that significantly affected their well-being. These findings help in understanding the problems associated with lack of parental bonding in connection with father's loss, whereas its long-lasting impact spread throughout one's life.

*Keywords***:** Father Demise, Life Adversities, Financial Crisis, Well-being,
          Family System

1. INTRODUCTION

Individuals have numerous significant relationships throughout their lifespan, however, the most important relationship one may have in a lifetime is a relationship of a child with parents. The child and father relationship leads towards a unique bond that plays an influentially crucial role in a child's life.

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This relationship configures childhood development and influences values; moreover, it also serves as a predictor of positive or negative psychological well-being (Rohner and Veneziano, 2001). This relationship provides a male role model along with discipline and supervision contributing to financial and physical well-being [Ackerman, *et al.* (2002); Flouri and Buchanan (2003); Mackey (2001)]. Although, the literature focused more on the role played by the mother yet, existing researches demonstrate that the father also participates in child caring and plays a univocal role, while positively influencing psychological well-being [Phares (1992); Rohner and Veneziano (2001)]. Fathers are significant figures and influence the lives of both men and women through their multifaceted caregiving role as families' breadwinners, moral guides, protectors, companions, caregivers, etc. (Lamb, 1997a). The role played by the father is preeminent in a child's life.

The death of a parental figure is a major life-changing experience; irrespective of age resulting in mental, physical, financial, and emotional trauma (Tyson, 2012). To deal with the inevitable loss and underlying life transition, individuals try to give meaning to their experience to make it more comprehendible.

In this transition, culture, and society plays a significant role. Cimete and Kuguoglu (2006) focused on the significant role played by spiritual and cultural beliefs, and how people deal with a loved one's death. Every religion and culture has a unique approach in dealing with loss and influences how people think, act, and deal with a loved one's death. Hence, it is important to understand the role played by the patriarchal society pertaining to the loss of parental figures.

According to the existing literature, collectivist cultures with close-knit families, predict family support after any significant or traumatic event. This perceived support, as well as support received from friends and family significantly correlates with self-esteem and life satisfaction (Goodwin and Hernandez Plaza, 2000). The traditional Asian joint family system follows the principles of collectivism, that has proved to be an excellent resource of care (Chadda and Deb, 2013). In patriarchal cultures, families residing in a joint family structure are considered closely connected which in turn increases emotional support provided in the occurrence of traumatic events. To explore the role played by the family system, both family structures; joint and nuclear; were studied in the context of the underlying phenomenon. This will help understand the phenomenon comprehensively and add to the existing literature.

Theoretical perspectives have focused on the significance of parental figures in the life of a child that continues for a wider period and its traces are visible in later adulthood. Life-course perspective and attachment theory have

particularly focused on losing the parental figure and its long-lasting impact. The life-course perspective has focused on how chronological age, significant relationships, life transitions, and social changes shape life throughout the course (Hutchison, 2011). A loved one's death is a major life transition leading to foremost life changes in a patriarchal culture, where a father is the bread earner and considered as a protector. The majority of American adults have significant contact and exchange in terms of monetary aspects, with their parents, throughout their life. However, daughters were found to provide more care as compared to sons; one of the associated reasons was their emotional investment in their parents (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). The relationship with parents impacts the well-being of an adult child [Amato and Afifi (2006); Barnett, *et al.* (1991); Barnett, *et al.* (1992); Umberson (2003)]. Due to the loss of a father, they are unable to sustain an important relationship that is salient for the well-being of a child in the long-run which is the subject matter of the current study.

The attachment theory of lifespan attachment has focused on the intrinsic biosocial inclination towards seeking security from loved ones through the connection, created in an earlier childhood period in wake of challenging outside world environment (Bowlby, 1980). Empirical researches based on attachment theory have focused on the significance of the primary attachment figure; the mother. However, researches have also demonstrated significant attachment with the father, and loss of that figure brings a devastating impact on an individual's life (Lamb, 1997b). Psychodynamic perspective focused on the broader impact on childhood loss of a love object and postulated that it is an important risk factor for later development of psychopathology [(Abraham, (1924); Brown, (1966); Freud, (1917)]. Studying the impact of the loss of parental figures is highly significant in the diverse patriarchal culture to understand its long-standing impact, the primary focus of this study.

Bereavement literature extensively focuses on parental responses to the death of a child or adult and the loss of a spouse (Fleming and Balmer, 1996). Balk (2001) stated that the bereavement of parental loss is a serious life crisis. The parent's death means growing up and understanding that life is not just fun and games (Corr and Balk, 1996). Single parent children encounter several problems such as; family disruption, separation anxiety, insecure attachment leading to psychological problems in later life [Bylund-Grenklo, *et al.* (2016); Cipriano and Cipriano (2019); Ellis, *et al.* (2013)]. Considering the literature, the current study intended to explore the impact brought about by parental

bereavement on the perception of female adolescents raised in a patriarchal culture.

The absence of a father from a child's life could be due to multiple reasons and each reason differently impacts a child. An absence due to family breakdown or discord leads towards negative parental views, hence, negatively impacting child and results in changed family values (Barber and Eccles, 1992). However, if the loss of father is due to death it results in positive emotions increasing the attachment (Spruijt, *et al.* 2001). This further leads to emotional turmoil due to the unavailability of care and emotional attachment required by the child, causing a drastic impact on the overall well-being of the child.

The empirical literature has demonstrated that children being raised in single-parent families, particularly headed by women, exhibit behavioural problems with less psychological well-being, poor academic achievement, and experience greater life adversity [Ellis, *et al.* (2003); Farrell and White (1998); Hetherington, *et al.* (1998); Lang and Zagorsky (2001); Spurijt, *et al.,* (2001)]. All the above-discussed literature demonstrates the significance of a father in the life of a growing child and how adversely this absence has a detrimental everlasting impact on all aspects of a child's life are the subject matter of the current study.

Existing researches have focused more on the impact brought on a male child due to gender similarity. However, gender differences were found. Moss et al. (1997) have examined gender differences in response to the death of a last surviving parent. Findings demonstrated that overall daughters become more upset and reported somatic responses as compared to sons. A current study focused on exploring how female adolescents perceived the loss of father, and how this phenomenon impacted them.

Umberson's (2003) study demonstrated that anyone who has not experienced the loss of a caregiver would never be able to understand such a major life change. They pointed out that the expression of filial grief has no place in contemporary society. A similar theme emerged regarding the restricted expression of familial grief in the study conducted by Klapper, *et al.* (1994).

The existing literature has focused more on the caregiving impact of mother and how the loss of mother impacts the child. Existing studies have not paid attention to its impact on the life of a female adolescent. Particularly the impact varies across cultural and socioeconomic groups [Paquette (2004); Williams and Kelly (2005)]. Thus, the current study has focused on exploring how the loss of a father impacts female adolescents and changes their perception towards life. Moreover, the role played by our patriarchal society in

a major life transition as well as the impact brought by the family system in case of father's demise also constitutes the present study.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the current study were:

- To explore the repercussion of a father's loss on different aspects of family life along with the impact that occurred on their perception.
- To understand the role played by society in the particular role of family systems.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study:

- What were the major changes encountered by the family after the loss of a father figure?
- What was the role played by society in terms of the family system in particular?
- How does a female adolescent's perception change due to the life changes that occur after the death of a father?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Qualitative research design is suited for exploring novel areas, specifically when inductive and deductive data analysis is intended to gather shared patterns within a group of people's experiences (Creswell, 1998). A qualitative research method with an inductive approach was used for this study. As per the nature of the study, the richness of data and distinctiveness of details is essential for the exploration of the lived experiences of participants in the context of the loss of a father (Smith, 2015). To be able to understand the phenomenology of parental loss impacting different aspects of adolescent females, while altering their perception towards life, the qualitative research method is the most suitable approach for the current study.

2.2 Sample

A homogenous sample was taken through purposive sampling keeping in mind the following characteristics: (a) age range, (b) gender, (c)

socioeconomic status, (d) loss of father in middle childhood, and (e) living with mother. The sample comprised 4 female adolescents, with the age range of 17-19 years. Existing literature demonstrates that loss of father in middle childhood plays a more significant and detrimental impact on the life of a child (Susan, n.d). The participants experienced a loss of father five to eight years ago, at the age of 11 to 12 years in middle childhood (Del Giudice, 2014). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) emphasizes purposive sampling with homogeneity of sample characteristics that are pertinent to the research question. Furthermore, IPA focuses on the richness of individual cases while sacrificing breadth for depth of data (Smith, 2004). To ensure homogeneous characteristics regarding the experience of underlying subject matter, specific criteria were established considering the existing literature. The sample was kept homogenous based on the five criteria stated above, establishing uniformity among participants according to social and theoretical factors pertinent to the study phenomenon while examining psychological variability within the study group, whereas analyzing divergence and convergence among underlying experience. Considering the IPA guidelines and sensitivity of the research questions under study, the sample size of 4 homogenous participants was considered sufficient and the richness of experiences endured by participants was the primal focus of the study (Smith, 2015). Two participants were living in nuclear family system and two belonged to joint family system. Demographic characteristics can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Participant	Age	Birth Order	Siblings	Birth Order, Gender, Age	Family System	Duration Since Father's Death
P 1	17	2nd Born	2	1st brother 21	Nuclear	5 years ago
P 2	19	4th Born	5	1st brother 28 2nd brother 24 3rd sister 21 5th sister 17	Joint	8 years ago
P 3	18	2nd Born	3	1st brother 24 3rd brother 16	Nuclear	7 years ago
P 4	19	1st Born	2	2nd brother 15	Joint	7 years ago

2.3   Procedure

As per the nature of the study, a semi-structured interview guide was developed based on existing literature comprised of open-ended questions.

Moreover, to ensure that questions are not direct and will not provoke any traumatic experience regarding the loss of father it was evaluated by two experts. Afterwards, an interview guide was further refined by conducting a tryout study on one participant.

Interviews steered in a comfortable setting, without interference. Respondents were briefed and verbal consent was obtained, along with permission to audio record interviews. Interviews lasted for approximately 40 - 50 minutes.

2.4   Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an idiographic inductive approach that focuses on the exploration of individual experiences (Smith, 2011). IPA holds that respondents are experiential experts of the phenomenon under investigation. The case is central; the researcher attempts to understand one case before moving onto the next. Findings from the first case are set aside through dynamic bracketing to maintain sensitivity to each person's unique story (Smith, *et al.* 2013). By employing the idiographic inductive approach with bracketing helped gain first-hand data and allowed greater accuracy and clarity. The codes were generated from the data rather than using a pre-existing theoretical model, by employing the idiographic approach that begins with particular examples while slowly moving towards general categories (Smith, 1996).

During the first phase, transcripts were read and re-read to get familiarized with the data while documenting emergent themes. Afterward, initial emergent themes were clustered while ensuring their connection with the data set. These clusters lead to the development of superordinate themes after a thorough analysis of the data set and the refining of existing clusters. As the sample size was small so the analysis of the next cases was done from scratch; it was focused to find convergence and divergence among themes generated separately. After analyzing each transcript through the interpretative process, superordinate themes table was constructed (Smith, 2015). These themes were focused based on richness while illuminating important aspects regarding the studied phenomenon.

3.   FINDINGS

Through in-depth case by case analysis, seven superordinate themes emerged, as seen in Figure 1. Findings revolved around life disruption, constant

bereavement experienced by adolescent females in absence of a father, along with the role played by society in terms of lack of care as well as a dearth of financial and emotional support. The family system also played a determinantal role and added to their sufferings while affecting their well-being. Moreover, this turmoil influenced their perception towards society in general and family in particular.

Figure 1: Impact of Parental Demise among Female Adolescents
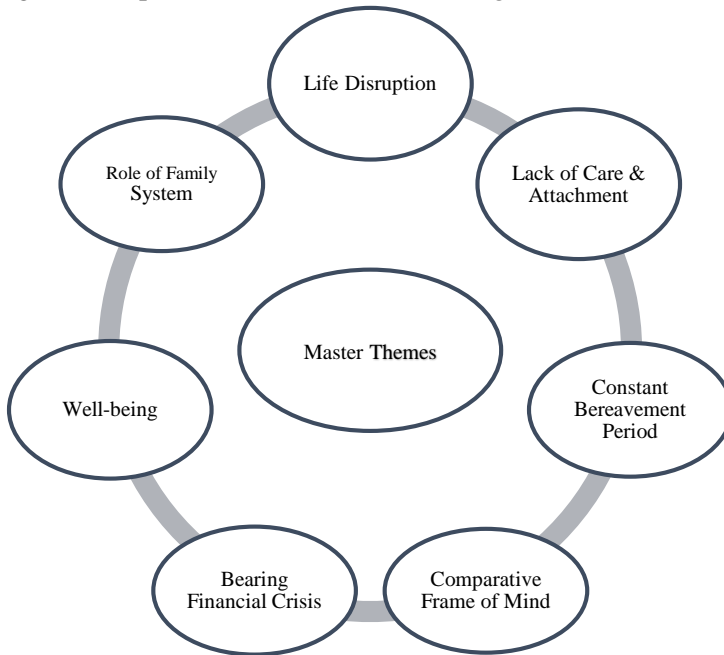
Life Disruption

The first superordinate theme that emerged from the data set was termed as life disruption. Drastic changes occurred in the lives of female adolescents. They have witnessed many crises after the loss of father spread throughout the life course. Three participants reported that for a brief duration some relatives supported them emotionally but as the time lapsed, the support started to diminish. However, one participant's family never received support in any aspect as they were being blamed for the death. Besides, their family was accused of poisoning the father.

> *"My father died due to malignant lung cancer. However, our relatives blamed us and accused that we poisoned him. My mother even shared reports and chemotherapy reports as well but still, they blame us for his death". (P 2)*

This demonstrates the emotional turmoil encountered due to the father's death which significantly disrupted their life. They belonged to a combined family system; however, rather than providing the support, they added to the existing turmoil of the bereaved family members.

All of the participants' lives were disturbed due to the father's death. Participant 1 went through another life transition after her father's death as her family was previously living in a joint family system. However, after the father's death, her family shifted to a nuclear home due to conflicts among the participant's mother and grandmother. The maternal uncle supported her family as they lacked resources that demonstrate positive support received from the maternal family. In this case, living in a joint family system; instead of bringing support, added to their sufferings and trials and even from the maternal side they initially received some financial support but did not receive any emotional support.

Families went through emotional and physical adversities. Participants' mothers were affected drastically and struggled to accept the loss. Two participants reported that their mothers were diagnosed with depression and were treated for it. Due to this occurrence, their life was further paralyzed as no one supported them financially or emotionally.

> *"My mother stopped talking to us. She was diagnosed having depression and treated for more than a year. She even had fits. She had spent nights weeping and couldn't sleep. This was the beginning of our difficulties." (P 2)*

Their perception towards life changed with adversities as stated above, was only the beginning of a more difficult life. This demonstrates pessimism and a lack of hope in the participants' verbatim. Moreover, two participants reported that their mothers suffered from physical disorders as well.

> *"My mother got sick and suffered from spinal issues. One of her discs dislocated making it hard to do home chores. I have to help her now as we can't afford a maid. It's difficult to manage studies with house chores". (P 4)*

Supporting the mothers in childhood added to emotional turmoil and challenges experienced by the respondents, as managing academics and responsibilities simultaneously was difficult. They were living in the joint family system but never received the care and support usually associated with the collectivist culture of a joint family system.

Life disruption encountered after father's death was substantial and impacted all aspects of their lives and the family system in itself has not provided any ease.

Lack of Care and Attachment

Participants did not receive the needed care and attachment. Rather than providing emotional support, the relatives blamed them for their father's death. Living with the extended family does not ensure support rather it added to emotional turmoil. Participants and their siblings supported each other at a young age. The eldest sibling reported among participants was 20 years old at the time of father's death. Hence, it was difficult for even the eldest siblings to provide the support required by the family, rather they themselves needed support, which they did not receive. It was a difficult phase for the whole family particularly for the mother to accept this loss that impacted the sole caregiver's physical and mental health.

> "It was hard for her to accept... She pretended that he will come home at any moment or this is just a dream, they will wake up one day and father will be sitting on the sofa reading newspaper. My parents were very close". (P 4)

Denial on part of only available attachment figure negatively impacted the existing bond with the mother. Participants reported that this incident brought significant disruption in familial life and impacted their attachment bond with their mother.

> "My mother became very strict after my father's death. She now rarely talks to us. Mostly busy in trying to manage everything on her own". (P 1)

They lost care and attachment previously provided along with protection that shielded from life adversities and living in a joint family system further enhanced those adversities encountered.

> "My father loved us... On every weekend our whole family used to go for an outing; though we were not very well off financially. He believed in creating happy memories as they matter more than monetary things". (P 3)

> "He loved and cared for us. My father's younger brother always criticized my mother. My grandmother supported my uncle but my father always protected my mother. They even

accused my mother of doing magic on my father to ensure that he always blindly follow her". (P 2)

Participants faced constant familial conflicts due to which family of participant 1 left their paternal home. This resulted in a more distant relationship with the extended family as they now rarely visit them. The drift created by father's demise enlarged further. Lack of emotional support and attachment impacted their perception making them pessimistic towards relationships.

"We use to frequently visit relatives and enjoyed spending time. Subsequently, they started ignoring us… Such materialistic relationships are just a burden".

Constant Bereavement Period

Participants went through constant grief that still exists. Respondents also reported that they along with their siblings sometimes compare themselves with peers. During the interview, participants shared past happy memories in a grieved tone. This demonstrates that parental bereavement lasts throughout the life course. They even regret that they lost everything cherishable.

"My grandmother always scolded my mother…due to constant conflicts, we left our father's home where we had memories of our father and childhood." (P 1)

She shared memories in a grieved tone. Her voice exhibited emotional pain. This finding demonstrates that living in a joint family system with close relatives was more challenging than living in a nuclear family system.

Comparative Frame of Mind

Participants and their siblings compared their life without the father's loss.

"My younger brother became hypersensitive. Whenever mother scolds him he reacts... pointing if my father was alive this wouldn't be happening." (P 3)

She further elaborated that he sometimes shares about his peers having both parents. Participants compared their life with their peers who receive emotional support, care, and have not faced challenges that they encountered

while stating that the people who have their parents alive will never be able to understand what they have experienced.

Bearing Financial Crisis

During the analysis, the superordinate theme of financial crisis and its impact on participants' lives constantly emerged. Participants encountered a significant financial crisis after the father's death. It was hard for them to make ends meet. They received no financial support from paternal relatives rather encountered more difficulties due to them. Participants belonged to the upper-middle socio-economic class at the time of father's death and subsequently faced difficulty in managing expenses. Though their father financially supported his many relatives but, they did not receive support from them.

> *"He helped my uncle… he was doing a job and had property.*
> *After his death the uncle, rather supporting us, blamed us for*
> *his death and severed ties." (P 2)*

They encountered difficulty even in meeting the expenditure of their studies. They have to study hard to continue their studies as the only possibility was to earn a merit scholarship. However, one participant was living in a joint family system and relatives were well aware of their financial condition but they still did not receive any support.

> *"I have always been good in academics but now I have*
> *pressure to maintain CGPA. The only possibility to continue*
> *studies is through scholarships otherwise, we can't afford the*
> *dues. Even it's tough for us to manage other financial*
> *matters… My grandparents and uncles are aware of our*
> *financial condition but never supported us. Though they are*
> *well off." (P 4)*

Even on some occasions it was hard for them to manage and they have requested help from relatives but financial help was never provided.

> *"At the time of the sister's marriage, we couldn't afford the*
> *expense. My mother tried to seek help from grandparents and*
> *uncles but they rejected. We took a bank loan to manage*
> *expenditures. Now trying to pay off which has increased our*
> *financial crisis". (P 2)*

The participants' elder brothers started part-time jobs to support their families and bare degree expenses barely completing graduation. In some cases,

degree duration increased as managing a part-time job with studies was difficult. The mother of participant 4 started a job considering the financial crisis but due to physical and emotional turmoil, her spine discs were affected, further increasing the financial crisis. They were living in the joint family system and did not receive any support in monetary or emotional terms. This financial crisis and lack of support affected their perception as well; now they consider that the monetary aspect is more important than relationships. Hence, participants exhibited regret that their father did not realize the veracity of these relationships and continuously supported the relatives.

Well-being

Participants' families' well-being was drastically affected. They suffered from emotional as well as physical issues. Their mother got physically and mentally sick further impacting their well-being. Furthermore, the crisis impacted the well-being of the overall family and in some cases lead to an identity crisis. Participant 3 reported that her elder brother started smoking due to bad company. He was in a transition phase from adolescence to adulthood that made him vulnerable. The mother was unable to provide support to the children due to her depression. She further stated that she had to look after her mother and younger brother that impacted her well-being. She became distant from her elder brother. In patriarchal cultures, elder brothers fill the gap of a father in his absence. However, due to father's demise, he got astray and influenced the family's overall well-being. All these emotional crises made them pessimistic and their perception became more hopeless in deference to life.

> *"I sometimes feel life will always remain the same full of problems". (P 2)*

Participants' studies have been affected negatively and grades have suffered dramatically. They now encounter low self-esteem. All these have further negatively impacted their well-being. Behavioural and emotional changes were also reported.

> *"How hard I try grades are never the same… My younger brother became highly hypersensitive. He often stays at his room and doesn't interact". (P 3)*

> *"I cry often even on childish things. I think I became more sensitive". (P 4)*

This demonstrates that the overall well-being of the family was drastically affected and brought a long-lasting impact on personality, behavioural, and emotional well-being.

Role of Family System

Participants living in a joint family system encountered more challenges as compared to participants living in a nuclear family system. Though the themes that emerged in both cases were similar, however, living with extended family members added to their existing problems. Participant 1 was previously living within a joint family system, however, due to constant familial conflicts with a grandmother, they opted to live in a nuclear family system as a solution to adversities. Participant 2 and Participant 4 we're living in a joint family system which added to their challenges.

Participants expressed that their relatives never supported them in any manner; instead played a negative role. Even the grandparents and paternal uncles from whom they expected care scolded and blamed them. Living in a nuclear or joint family system has not ensured any support rather both participants living in a joint family system encountered more life adversities.

> *"My mother was in immense pain when her spinal disc was dislocated. We faced a lot of challenges, but my grandmother rather showing sympathy accused her of malingering". (P 4)*

As stated above they encountered financial adversities and emotional crises and have not received care and support associated with the collectivist culture of a joint family system.

Living in a joint family system was more turbulent as compared to living in a nuclear family system in a time of crisis. Thus, the participants living in a nuclear family system encountered fewer problems created by extended families. However, in both family systems, participants did not receive any kind of support from relatives.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings observed in the current study demonstrated that after the loss of father, female adolescents encountered drastic changes in the life course. This dramatically impacted their well-being at all levels including psychological, emotional, and mental. They have gone through episodes of grief, remorse, anger, resentment, and also faced self-esteem issues. Existing literature also demonstrates that the father's loss impacts the child and they

experience seclusion, envy, and sorrow (Lerner and Harriet, 2011) accompanied by low self-control (Kruk, 2012), leading towards risk-taking behaviours (Williams, 2011). Participants experienced similar impacts such as low self-esteem and hypersensitivity. Their behaviour was also impacted as one participant's sibling started smoking due to peers' bad influence.

The literature has focused that parental involvement in a child's life varies among cultures [Paquette (2004); Williams and Kelly (2005)]. In Pakistani patriarchal culture, the father is not only considered as the bread earner; rather he plays a significant role as his family's protector.

Findings resonate with the existing literature, stating that fathers are significant figures and influence the life of a child playing simultaneously multifaceted roles; e.g., a breadwinner, a moral guide, protector, companion, caregiver, etc. (Lamb, 1997a). Furthermore, participants experienced a feeling of loss, resentment, and despair. This affected their psychological and emotional well-being, lowered their self-esteem, and made them more susceptible to negative emotions and psychological disorders. They have demonstrated hopelessness, deficient self-esteem, and hypersensitivity associated with low mental well-being. Flouri and Buchanan's (2003) study has also demonstrated that father's involvement in children's earlier years contributed to less emotional and behavioural problems and protects them from later-life psychological difficulties.

As the participants have experienced father's demise in middle childhood, that is significant in terms of development, hence, the impact was comparatively more negative and spread across all life aspects even leading to an identity crisis. In a patriarchal culture, a father's identity is taken as a source of pride by the family and its absence can lead to an identity crisis. The existing literature also states that early parental death impacts other domains associated with the specific evolutionary tasks allied with the developmental phase. Even this factor further impacts the child's consolidation of identity as he/she is going through a transitional phase (Blos, 1977).

Based on previously existing literature, Silverstein and Auerbach (1999) argued that behavioural problems and pathology associated with an absence of a father are not the primal factors. However, factors associated with this absence play a more significant role such as poverty and social pressure on women-headed families. In the study, it was observed that participants have encountered significant societal pressures after the loss of a father. Moreover, they have also faced major financial issues, which was apparent throughout the analysis.

The participants have focused that they expected support from blood relations of both paternal and maternal sides, however, they received a negative attitude. Living in the joint family system added to their adversities as compared to living in a nuclear family system. Previous literature has focused on the traditional joint family system stating that it provides comparatively more care than a nuclear family system, which is associated with mental and physical well-being (Chadda and Deb, 2013). The findings of the current study contradict as participants faced more adversity rather than receiving support. This further lead towards the development of a comparative attitude among participants. Furthermore, participants focused that children having both parents attained support, attention, emotional bonding, and encountered fewer issues. This attitude further negatively impacted their psychological, emotional, and mental well-being. Similar findings were observed in the existing literature as well. Umberson's (2003) study demonstrated that respondents focused on how dramatic life change was and those who have not experienced a similar loss would never understand their turmoil. Analogous findings were observed in the current study. Participants have focused that others can never understand the loss and challenges they have encountered.

The findings have also demonstrated that loss of care and attachment of a father negatively impacts the overall well-being of a child. The participants constantly experience a void in their life due to the absence of essential bonds associated with the care allied with a father. Moreover, they felt more distant from their mother and in some cases from siblings as well. They encountered conflicting relationships with their mother rather than receiving emotional support. The existing literature also supported that traumatic events not only involved the loss of a parent but the consequent change in relationship with the surviving parent (Tafà *et al.,* 2018).

The participants have witnessed psychological and physical illnesses in their primary caregivers due to which they have not received the care and support required following the father's demise. Surviving parents who are emotionally or mentally struggling in the grief period are less sensitive and supportive of grief-related emotions in their children (Werner-Lin and Biank, 2013). The traumatic event leads them in a denial phase and they have started to dissociate its existence in their life while considering the current circumstances as a dream. Dissociation and denial in terms of grief can save a person from emotional turmoil; however, making them more susceptible to maladaptive development [Frewen, *et al.* (2008); Schimmenti (2017); Schimmenti and Caretti (2016)]. This denial was not helpful in the scenario of Participant 4 as the mother went into depression and was unable to cope with the grief.

The above-stated findings demonstrate a drastic change in the life course and negative perception among female adolescents after the father's death. Moreover, this sudden life transition had a detrimental impact on their overall life. Furthermore, society and relatives played a significantly negative role and affected their well-being. Living in a joint family system added up to adversities encountered after father's passing away.

5.   CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on findings it can be concluded that:

(a) The impact of parental bereavement among adolescents was long-lasting as a child remains deficient in several aspects of psychosocial, emotional, and cognitive functioning throughout the life span which is analogous with the theoretical frame discussed in life-course and attachment theories.

(b) Moreover, the loss of a father-figure leads to a constant bereavement adding to adversities and plays a detrimental role in well-being. The parent's absence brings a drastic change in a child's life and affects mental health leading towards low self-esteem and making them susceptible to psychological illness as postulated by a psychodynamic perspective.

(c) Additionally, they encountered issues regarding lack of care and attachment due to the relatives' negative role and having a distant relationship with their mother.

(d) The financial gap was significantly reported along with a lack of support from extended family members belonging to paternal and maternal sides.

(e) Living in a joint family system added to existing challenges as compared to living in a nuclear family system.

(f) While comparing themselves with their peers the participants considered that their peers had better opportunities. Moreover, due to life adversatives and the negative role of society, their perception turned pessimistic which contributed to emotional turmoil.

These findings help to understand problems associated with lack of parental bonding and interaction due to loss, bereavement process, and its long-lasting impact spread throughout life. Additionally, the role played by society along with the family system after the father's demise. The current study's

findings are helpful for the counselors and other practitioners who deal with adolescents as well as for researchers.

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