

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Doctoral dissertation topic:

Performance of children of alcoholics in the school environment. A sociopedagogical study.

Keywords:

Children from alcoholic families, school environment, problems, performance, support, alcohol use disorder.

Summary:

The doctoral dissertation addresses the problems faced by children from alcoholic families in the school environment. The analysis of the root causes of these problems allowed for the identification of essential issues which lie within the alcoholic family.

Children of alcoholics are at increased risk for various developmental problems due to the mental health issues experienced by at least one of their parents. Contemporary trends in alcoholism research treat excessive alcohol consumption as a chronic mental disorder characterized by permanent negative health consequences, mental health problems and highly maladaptive patterns of social functioning.

Like in the case of other mental disorders, parental alcoholism affects children's development in two main areas of their functioning: firstly, it increases their genetic and neurophysiological susceptibility to various psychopathological symptoms, including alcoholism; secondly, it exposes children to chronic, negative life stress.

The research purpose of this dissertation was to understand and diagnose the performance of children of alcoholics in the context of school environment. The following issues are considered in this area:

- What are the main disorders in the emotional and social development of children from alcoholic families?
- How do the children from alcoholic families adapt to the requirements of the school environment?
- Are there any specific characteristics in the performance of children from alcoholic families?

In addition to strictly quantitative data, the scope of the diagnosis was further expanded to include a multidimensional, interdisciplinary overview comprising case studies, interviews and opinions of psychologists and educationalists in the field. This ensured complete triangulation of data thanks to which the final results are not only profoundly insightful, but also reliable and credible.

The research focused on children of alcoholics in the context of diagnosing their performance in the school environment. The study covered the age group ranging from 7 to 17 years. The dissertation is divided into two sections: a theoretical one and a research one. The theoretical section, which became a basis for own research, consists of three chapters which introduce the issue of alcoholism as a social disease, describe the specific nature of families with alcohol problems and show the consequences of functioning in such a family for children in the aspect of their psychophysical disorders which can result in problems they may encounter in the school environment.

The research section involves surveys conducted among children aged 7–17 from families with alcohol problems. Case studies, psychological drawings and interviews with professionals (educationalists, psychologists) who provide therapy to children from families with alcohol problems were used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the issue. The conducted research provides the basis for creating a therapeutic programme for children from families with a drinking problem that aims to overcome the difficulties they encounter in the school environment by developing their self-esteem and defining their identity. In the case of children from alcoholic families who have problems in the school environment, the following is recommended:

- Identification of children from families with alcohol problems by teachers/tutors,
- Providing them with occupational therapy, individual psychological assistance and creating support groups,
- Observations and conversations with children, cooperation with the family and aid institutions,

- An atmosphere of acceptance and trust must be built in the school/classroom environment for children from alcoholic families,
- The school should play a compensatory role, i.e. provide emotional support, a sense of security and access to professional help,
- Cooperation between the school and Social Welfare Centers, probation officers as well as Psychological and Pedagogical Counseling Centers is essential for helping children from alcoholic families,
- Teachers need to get training in working with children from dysfunctional families, including alcoholic families. It is recommended that teachers attend workshops on empathy and developmental psychology in order to better recognize the needs of children who are not only educated but also raised by them. Psychological workshops on child personality constructs, self-esteem, self-confidence and identity formation can help teachers identify children who need help. Likewise, workshops on alcoholism, the problems of alcoholic families and children growing up in such environments could certainly raise awareness among the teaching community,
- It is necessary to adopt the principle that “problems should be solved, not avoided.” Alcoholism is a disease and the child of an alcoholic deserves respect, love, dignity and a sense of security.

The author's own research has shown the multifaceted nature of alcohol problems in families. Children's performance in the school environment is largely influenced by patterns learned at home. In the author's opinion, the research indicates a crisis in the modern family and even the breakdown of its structures as well as its pathologization through the introduction of alcohol into the so-called “lifestyle.”

A school has great potential to support and help children from alcoholic families and can gain allies among institutions working for the benefit of dysfunctional families, but whether they effectively engage in such cooperation is a separate issue.

The research conducted yielded results that allowed to diagnose the causes of school problems among children from alcoholic families. Knowing the root of the problems enables the planning of adequate forms of support.