A Study on The Impact of Shift Work on The Socio – Emotional Development of Children and Functioning of Families

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ABSTRACT These days non-standard work schedules are becoming an hindrance to the proper functioning of families and causing a rift in the relationship between parents and children. The children are being deprived of their essential needs and this affects their socio – emotional development. This conceptual paper studies the effect of shift work on the children's socio-emotional state. The paper focuses on understanding the theoretical background of researches conducted and carefully examines the theories. Firstly, the paper elaborates the Attachment theory written by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Secondly, the paper describes Lev Vygotsky's socio – cultural theory. Thirdly, the paper explains Uri Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Finally, the authors use the three theories and draw a model using the current situation of work place employment to identify the different areas the children as well as the families suffer due to shift work.

1. Introduction

The meaning of shift work is working round the clock 24/7. Organizations that exist today in India are mostly multi-national and require employees to work in different shifts. The shifts may be rotational shifts or standard shifts, but the employee should be in a position to work in any shift and the shift pattern of an individual employee could change in any part of their career. Organizations expect the employee to be committed to work anywhere and at anytime. There are many employees in India who not only work in their shift hours, but also work at home even after their shifts are over. Here we see that the employee becomes committed to the organization, with the advancement in technology it is possible for him to work from anywhere and at anytime.

Now, when both parents are caught up in this kind of a work environment, it puts pressure on their married life and brings about disarray in the family life. The parents are unable to accomplish the family duties and are put in a situation that they need to depend upon other family members or friends. The growing children are not able to get the care and warmth from their parents and this causes a big impact on their well being. Parents who are working in irregular shifts would obviously have caretakers or some member of the family to take care of their children, but the question is how well they are taken care of? Are their emotional needs met? Are they able to learn social values? Do they lack social skills? Do they express their ideas and feelings? These are some of the questions that need to be answered.

Children whose mother is working in night shift are the most affected and vulnerable ones. The children start feeling insecure and lose the warmth and affection from the mother. The children secretly within themselves feel that they are missing a lot; these children are also unable to express their desires and their problems with their mother. The absence of mother at night is a big loss for the child, as they would not get time in the morning. Most of the parents who work in the night sleep the whole day and by the time the children come from school, the parents are getting ready for work. This is the most pitiful and pathetic state of the children.

Shift work causes family dysfunction in the sense the wife and husband are also unable to spend good time with one another. The work is so routine that their arise family – work conflict. Most of the organizations don't bother about creating awareness about work – life balance, as they are in the fear of work being neglected. It is very essential that the parents who are working in shifts atleast maintain work – life balance where they could spend some valuable time with one another and concentrate on the growth of their children.

2. Review of Literature

'The term shift work is defined as an arrangement of working hours that uses two or more teams (shifts) of workers, in order to extend the hours of operation of the work environment beyond that of the conventional office hours. The varieties of shift work include: stable/permanently displaced working hours in which the work schedule used does not require a person to normally work more than one shift (including night work), rotating shift work in which an individual is normally required to work more than one shift, changing from one shift to another and unscheduled working hours (Atanu Kumar Pati, Arti Chandrawanshi & Alain Reinberg, 2001).

A study that documented the effects of shift work on marital quality found that one of the key problem issues reported by couples working nonstandard shifts was conflict over parenting. (White and Keith, 1990). One particular qualitative study suggests that husbands and wives in shift work couples rarely parent at the same time due to nonoverlapping schedules. They often rely on "solo parenting" while their spouse is at work. Not surprisingly, they face some of the same parenting challenges of single parents (Hattery, 2001).

Shift work may have a differential impact on child development dependent on the child's age and developmental needs. Infants and toddlers require a large investment of time from a primary caregiver in meeting their physical needs and forming secure attachment. As toddlers, they require constant supervision and activities focused on language development, including reading time with their parents. Parents are invaluable in helping children to understand and express language, develop a variety of skills,

and solve cognitive tasks (Bradley, 2002). Parental non-standard work may have a negative impact not only on children's mental health but also on their cognitive development. Based on the bio - ecological theory and resources framework pressure on parental time due to combined employment, housework, childcare demands, parental stress, particularly maternal depressive symptoms (Hoffman and Youngblade, 1999; NICHD ECCRN, 1999).

Social-emotional development is a child's ability to understand the feelings of others, control their own feelings and behaviors, and get along with peers. In order for children to attain the basic skills that they need such as cooperation, following directions, demonstrating self-control and paying attention, they must have social-emotional skills. Feelings of trust, confidence, pride, friendship, affection and humor are all a part of a child's social-emotional development. A child's positive relationship with trusting and caring adults is the key to successful emotional and social development (ECDC, 2009). According to childcare experts, the most important thing parents can give their children is love. The second most important thing is discipline (Brazelton & Sparrow, 2003).

A child's social-emotional development is as important as their cognitive and physical development. It is important to know that children are not born with social-emotional skills. It is the role of the parents, caregivers, and teachers of children to teach and foster these abilities.

A child's social-emotional development provides them with a sense of who they are in the world, how they learn, and helps them establish quality relationships with others. It is what drives an individual to communicate, connect with others and more importantly helps resolve conflicts, gain confidence and reach goals. Building a strong social emotional foundation as a child will help the child thrive and obtain happiness in life. They will be better equipped to handle stress and persevere through difficult times in their lives as an adult (ECDC, 2009).

In India mothers have started working in night shifts and many have taken up call centre jobs which require them to work in night shifts. According to Reena Patel's "Working the night shift" workers are entangled in night shift because of the handsome salaries and good opportunities for their betterment and development. Though the author of "Working the night shift" says that the call center job has benefited the lives of employees, there is a reverse effect of the children being affected. The plausible reason behind women working may be that women have the same kind of work expectations and demands that men have (Y. P. S. Kanwar, A. K. Singh and A. D. Kodwani, 2009).

The scheduling of employment time has significant repercussions for how individuals organize and coordinate family life. When one spouse works a nonstandard shift, traditional family roles are disrupted, with likely effects on children's socio - emotional outcomes (Rosalind Chait Barnett and Karen C. Gareis, 2007). The inference is that when the parent;s involve more with their children there would be better child outcomes than parent's who don't involve with their children. This assumption receives considerable support from the empirical literature (e.g., Aldous & Mulligan, 2002; Updegraff, McHale, Crouter, & Kupanoff, 2001; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka, 2001).

Irregular shifts may increase the risk of children's poor physical health outcomes. Children whose mothers work nonstandard schedules during their first 3 years of life show poorer cognitive development and expressive language skills (Han, 2005).

3. Theoretical Background
There are quite a lot of theories associated with the cognitive development of the children. Scholars have written many years back about the importance of relationship between the parents and the children and in today's way of life it becomes difficult for the parents to spend quality time with her children.

3.1 Attachment theory
The Attachment theory which was created by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth showcased the importance of mother and children relationship. When there is separation between the child and the parents it causes harmful effects on the psycho social growth of the child (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).Attachment creates a sense of intimacy and the baby in the early childhood learns to deal with their emotions by interacting with the parents or caretakers (Armstrong KH, Ogg JA,Sundman Wheat A.N & St. John Walsh A, 2014). The person who takes care of the children should deal with care and show love to the children as it is the early childhood. The children look for love from others and look for a safe and secure environment (Armstrong KH, Ogg JA,Sundman Wheat A.N & St. John Walsh A, 2014).
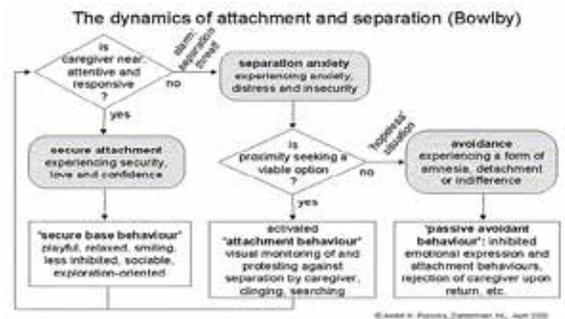

Attachment Theory

Figure 1

In the above diagram we come to understand that if the caregiver is nearer, attentive and responsive there is a sense of security and the children experience love and confidence. The children are more playful, relaxed and sociable. The children who are not given proper care and concern in the early stages develop separation anxiety, distress and insecurity. The attachment theory states that if the child doesn't get the required care, the child may protest against the separation or may avoid experiencing amnesia and detachment.

"Bowlby's first empirical study, based on case notes from the London Child Guidance Clinic, dates from this period. Like the boy at the school for maladjusted children, many of the clinic patients were affectionless and prone to stealing. Through detailed examination of 44 cases,

Bowlby was able to link their symptoms to histories of maternal deprivation and separation"(Inge Bretherton, 1992). According to Mary Ainsworth, the children should have a secured relationship with the parents before moving into unfamiliar environment (Inge Bretherton, 1992).

3.2 Lev Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's socio – cultural theory brought about the importance of relationship between children and parents. He wrote about the interaction of the children with knowledgeable peers and adults would develop the cognitive skills. Vygotsky said that the cognitive development happens and is enriched when the children have a good relationship with parents, peers and teachers (Berk, 1996). According to Vygotsky the development of human starts with the guidance from adult either a caregiver or parents. Vygotsky used dialectical method to explain that interrelationships are the basic for development (Vera John-Steiner & Holbrook Mahn, 1996)
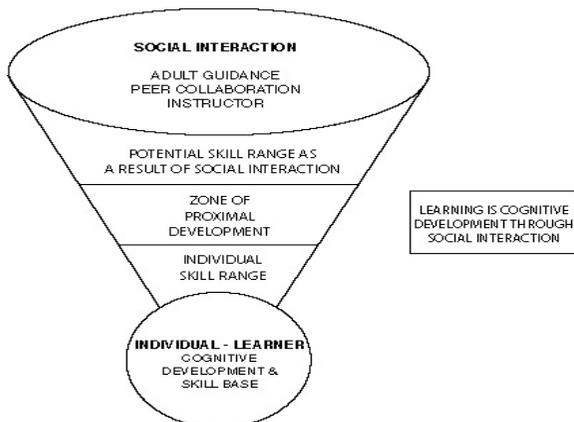
**Lev Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory
Figure 2**

Parents are the most important people in the early stage of the child and they are the ones who teach the children language. Parents teach the children the culture and they mould them with values. The child becomes dependent on the parents for everything, the parents at the early stage start teaching the child what is right and what is wrong and all these happen through language (Mamour Choul Turuk, 2008).

3.3 Uri Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

This theory is also called bio-ecological systems theory meaning that the biology is the immediate environment for the child's development. The biological environment is the most vital for the growth and nurture of child in the proper way (Dede Paquette & John Ryan, 2001). According to Brofenbrenner the child's development is possible through heredity as well as environment. The heredity happens naturally and the environment nurtures the child to develop certain habits and actions. Brofenbrenner divided the ecological system into four components (i) Micro system (ii) Meso system (iii) Exo system and Macro system. All these four components are necessary for the child

Micro System: The Micro system is the immediate environment of the child like the parents, the family, school, neighbours etc.

Meso system: Meso system is the surrounding and their connection with the Micro system. The neighbourhood and their relationship with the parents could be a form of Meso system or the parents and their relationship with the school teachers could be another form of Meso system.
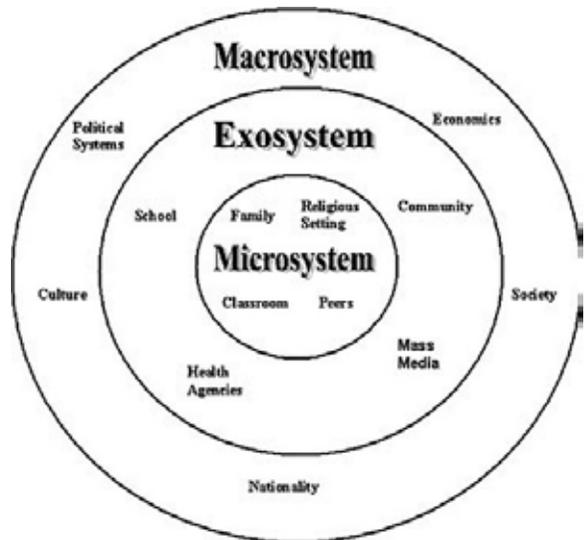
**Uri Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
Figure 3**

This relationship between two systems influences the child's behavior.

Exo system: The broader areas that influence the child, it may be a play ground or religious centre or cultural centre or some place of visit, these are broader areas where the child gets into contact with and this enables the child to learn the new way of living to get accustomed with this. These are broader circle that directly influence the child's behavior (Brofenbrenner.U, 1994)

Macro System: Macro system is much broader this enables the child to learn faith, religious, culture, tradition. The child comes to know about the religion and nationality. The child through this system clearly understands who is he/she and the background and ancestral traditions are taught. The child is more clearly able to understand the social and cultural background and factors (Brofenbrenner.U, 1994).

4. Socio–Emotional Development Model: Shift Work and its Impact on Children

The Attachment theory and Lev Vygotsky's socio – cultural theory did not give so much emphasis on the parent guidance but has stated that caregiver and adult guidance, here they are not so specific about the parent's and it shows that anyone can mould and develop the cognitive ability of the children. The socio – emotional model developed categories the working parent and the non-working parent and the shift works effect on the child's socio – emotional development.

Parent Child relationship provides the basis for learning; it is where the children learn skills that will make them succeed in life. Positive relationship between Parents and children has a great influence on the child's emotional state (Dawson & Ashman, 2000).

Families are responsible and can make the children learn new things everyday and help them to develop confidence. It will motivate them to like the art of learning (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette & Hamby, 2006). Parents who work in shifts are unable to spend quality time with the children.

They are unable to take leave, take paid leave nor muster time for their children. Many researchers have stressed that children need healthy family relationship and if this is lacking especially in the early years of the child, it could lead to serious health related problems. The researchers have also recorded that if the parents of the children are not spending time and if the child is grown up without proper parental care, it could affect the academic performance of the children (Carolyn J. Heinrich, 2014)

Work and family engagements cannot be done at the same time and the work hours of the parents interfere with the valuable time they need to spend with their children and family life. Even at weekends the family is unable to be united and spend good time with their children especially at weekends and the evenings (Knauth and Costa, 1996). Many a times we see that the mother's work is more crucial than the father's work. The time and nature of the mother's work could work heavily on the socio-emotional and cognitive development of the child (Carolyn J. Heinrich, 2014).
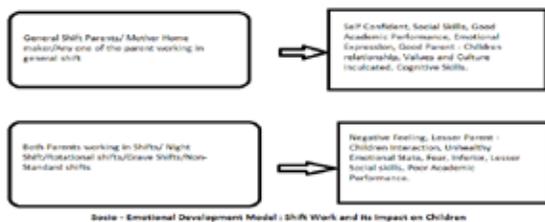

Figure 4

Moral development is another aspect that the child should develop. The positive influence on the child will develop the moral attitude. This moral development can arise through schools and colleges but this discipline is caused by the parents at crucial stages of child hood (Hoffman, 1983). When the parents allow the child freedom to participate or involve in decision making of their own things, moral reasoning is developed in the child (Bornstein, 2002)

Social development will occur when the parents are with the children teaching them to respond to difficult situations. The parent character will influence the child and make the child imitate the behavior, in this way the child develops moral behavior (Papalia et al., 2002). Here we see if the parents of the children are unable to spend valuable time with them on account to their shift work or busy schedule at work or non-standard working hours the children are deprived of their well being, this may lead to disarray in the family. The functioning of families will also be affected as a result of this non-standard shift work, the children may be left to the caretaker and the children may lack on necessary things like moral, social and emotional needs.

5. Conclusion

This conceptual paper shows us that the children of parents working in night shift or rotational shifts are prone to have socio-emotional development problems, though this can't be taken for all children, there is a tendency to develop this kind of negative attitude as the parents presence with the child is of utmost importance. Due to lack of parent children relationship, the children may face certain situations that they are unable to tackle or may lose their confidence. The children could also feel inferior and have lesser social skills. From the above mentioned we can easily ascertain that at early stages of child parents intervention is needed for them to develop morally as well as socially.

There is a possibility that the child's academic performance could also be disrupted as there would be none to monitor the studies of the children, though the schools and colleges take care of the academic performance, the parents guidance and intervention would make them build their confidence level and make them more positive in their studies. It is well understood from the above diagram (Fig 4) that, a mother who doesn't work or if working in a general shift (9 AM – 6 PM) could engage more time with the children and this would boost their academic performance and inculcate the moral, values and culture of the society.

This brings us to the importance that emotional state of children should be well tuned and care should be given that their needs are met in the most appropriate way. When the child is frustrated or unable to get love from the parents, he/she would develop mental stress and strain; these could be the cause for also deviant behavior. The paper stresses the importance of at least one parent spending good valuable time for interaction with their children for the social and emotional development of the child. Though today's world is becoming busy day by day, it is important for the parent to have a work and life balance that would enable the children to get a good platform for development.

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