

Abstract

Background: Father's death is considered as one of the major issues affecting the family all over the world, and it is worst in a patriarchal society like Palestine. The emotional, behavioral, and physical effects of father's death had been highlighted by different studies as a major concern in the world and particularly among adolescents. However, there is a lack of such studies in Palestine.

Aim: To assess the effects of father's death in childhood at adolescents from 11 to 18 years old , in Jerusalem Area.

Method: A cross sectional design was utilized to achieve this purpose. The data was gathered between middle of March 2018, and finished at the end of July, 2018. Non-probability sample – convenience sample used in this study, reached out 120 females and male adolescence between the ages of 11 and 18years, who experienced the death of their fathers in childhood, in Jerusalem. The data was collected using the Youth-Self report (YSR) for adolescents; it is a questionnaire filled out by youth themselves. It consists of 113 items (range: 0 – No, 1– somewhat/sometimes true, 2–Yes true. The YSR-Self report shares eight cross-informant syndrome scales derived by principal components analysis: (1) withdrawn, (2) somatic complaints, (3) anxious/ depressed, (4) social problems, (5) thought problems, (6) attention problems, (7) delinquent behavior, and (8) aggressive behavior. These subscales are not directly equivalent to any clinical diagnosis but have proven useful for screening children and adolescents with behavioral problems across multiple cultures.

This study used descriptive statistical techniques, and frequency distribution of socio-demographic, cause of death, socioeconomic status, time passed since father death, and religiosity level. Frequency of adolescence behavior problems rated by adolescents themselves were conducted using cut-off points of YSR-Self report for adolescents. Association between child behavior problems and sex were tested using t-test in which sex and age, mother's work were the independent variables and mean of total YSR-Self report for adolescents, externalizing and internalizing problems as dependent variables. Differences between other variables such as cause of death, time passed since father death, socioeconomic status, religiosity level and child behavior problems were tested by parametric test (One Way ANOVA) in which socio-demographic variables were entered

as independent variable and mean of YSR-Self report, externalizing, and internalizing subscales as dependent variables.

Findings: Analysis of the participants' characteristics showed that males were (37.5%) and females were (62.5%). Their ages ranged between (11-18) years old and all from Jerusalem area. 51.7% had 4 and less siblings, 40.8% had 5-7 sibling, and 7.5% had 8 and more siblings. Regarding family economic status 29.2% had low family monthly income, 55.0% had medium, and 15.8% had high. Regarding to the time since the father death, 16.7% had lost father less than 2 years, 35.0% had loss 2-5 years, and 48.3% had lost father more than 5 years. Regarding cause of father loss, 10.0% lost their father due to Road Traffic accident, 29.2% due to sudden death, 48.3% had chronic disease, 4.2% were murdered 8.3% had been Martyr.

The findings showed that the total YSR self report problems were highest as internalizing problems, and lowest as thought problems, also the study found statistically significant relationship between YSR self report and other variables; sex, age, socioeconomic situation, religiosity level, cause of death, and the age of the child when the father passed away.

Conclusion: This study concluded that the death of the fathers in childhood affected the adolescents negatively, exacerbate internalizing problems (anxiety/depression, somatic and withdrawal) at adolescent female, and externalizing problems (aggressive, and delinquent problems) at adolescent males later. Adolescents who belonged to low socioeconomic status, with low religiosity and their fathers were murdered had more total YSR problems than others. These findings could help improve the interventions and preventions for adolescents who lost their fathers at young age. The findings from this study need greater attention from the families, mental health professional, and policy makers, to target children shortly after father's death in order to help children with grieving process and to prevent future emotional, social and behavioral problems.