



## Behavioral and Emotional Problems Among Unaccompanied Children (Analytical Study)

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### Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the concept of behavioral and emotional problems, their types, symptoms and effects on the psychological, physical and social domain. The two researchers adopted the analytical method in studying and explaining the subject of the study, and they found a group of results the most important of which are the behavioral and emotional problems among children are reflected on their behaviors in the future. At the end the two researchers recommended that the need to take special care of this group since they suffer from psychological problems as a result of emotional and family deprivation. The two researchers also call for the need to conduct more studies about behavioral and emotional problems among unaccompanied children.

**Keywords:** Behavioral problems, emotional problems, unaccompanied children

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### Introduction

Family is considered to be one of the most important social organizations in any society, as it is the first pillar that the society build its cornerstones on it, it strengthens its building, it is the important system which supplies the human society with individuals and regulates relations among them and determines the various social roles that every individual of a family performs according to the social status of each member. Through the family, the individuals various primary needs are satisfied such as the psychological, social and individual ones. The family is considered the responsible party for building the personality of an individual from his childhood in addition to behaviors. It supplies him with values, attitudes and various

cultural elements that are transmitted from a generation to another so as to achieve social agreement among the individuals of the society, as individuals inside the family deal according to basis of values, ideals, shared manners, in addition to inherited habits and customs.

The existence of a family of complete elements (father, mother, children) is considered the base of psychological health of its members, and the loss of one of the parents or both of them leaves great negative effects on the psychological health of the children, where behavioral and emotional disorders appear clearly among them. Some studies showed positive relationship between the existence of children in shelters and psychological disorder among them, as 86% of organizations satisfy



psychological needs of the children, which helped in emerging several psychological and emotional problems among them (Zaytoun et al., 2005).

Loss of parents is considered one of the worst and painful experiences for children as they think that parents are a source of love and stability, and protection from any external effect. Therefore, the loss of a sincere person for children makes them live in a world that they don't feel safe in it.

Many attempts have been conducted to classify behavioral and emotional disorders among children, but they found more than one focus and trend to these classifications, as some of them called for classify psychological and behavioral disorders into external ones among children who stay in orphanages from their supervisors' point of view, and internal behavioral disorders including hyperactivity, attention deficit, obstacles and accompanied communication problems such as anxiety, withdrawal, repressed behavior which are called neurotic or emotional disorders. In general behavioral disorders are defined whether they are outward oriented, in other words they are oriented towards others (aggression, sabotage, theft), or internally oriented in a withdrawal social image (fears, withdrawal) (Gimple, G. & Holland, M, 2003).

The phenomenon of behavioral and emotional problems among unaccompanied children in Syrian camps is considered one of the most negative and widespread humanitarian problems, which stays in the way of achieving goals that

attract all human organizations, and make the life of host families unsuitable one because of the visiting children behavioral and emotional reaction which creates improper atmosphere to achieve human and educational objectives entrusted to them. The phenomenon of emotional problems among children is one of the most public ones among children and it forms a heavy burden on everyone who works with these children, because of their continuous daily dealing with these children.

### **Problem of the study**

The problem of the study appeared through the work of the first researcher as a counseling psychologist in Za'atari camp in observing low of level of agreement and emergence of behavioral and emotional problems among unaccompanied children; as taking care of children and helping them to overcome the low level of social and psychological agreement and get rid of behavioral and psychological problems become an urgent need in order to protect and immunize them from negative effects of these problems, where their danger lies in exposing children to many adaptive problems such as social withdrawal and violence.

The problem of the study also appeared in growing the rates of behavioral and emotional problems, where they become a rampant phenomenon in the camps of refugees and in Za'atari in particular; so in a study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (2014) about the extent of the spread of the phenomenon of unaccompanied children in refugee camps in Jordan, it reached many results, the most important of which was a registration of a large number of unaccompanied children in the refugee



camps (1000) children, whereas The Justice for Life Organization (2017) indicated that unaccompanied children show behavioral manifestations through clothing, games, drawings, aggressive tendencies, harm to their peers, showing their strength and physical skills and decline of the level of mental concentration comparing to females and years preceded the war.

### **Importance of the study**

The importance of this study lies in the importance of healthy upbringing of children, as childhood is considered a building stage that all coming age stages are based on it; In this stage self is built and the normal personality is formed. The idea of the study of these Syrian children who have severed from the scourge of family deprivation, whether at the level of partial or total deprivation in addition to the circumstances of the war and physical and psychological torture, which led to emergence of adaptive problems.

### **Objectives of the study**

The current study aimed to explain behavioral and emotional disorders that unaccompanied children suffer from.

### **Procedural definitions**

**Behavioral problems:** they are undesired repeated behavior that angers the social environment, it doesn't agree with the development stage and it should be changed because of its disability (the child's social or psychological efficacy or both of them), and because it has effects that are reflected on an individual acceptance to his happiness which they appear in an image of behavioral symptom or several symptoms and they can be observed such as lying, theft, vandalism and others (Salima, 1990).

**Emotional problems:** They are the clear and observed change in individual's emotions and feelings about himself and environment, and emotional disorder is

identified when an individual behaves in a way that harms himself or others.

**Unaccompanied children:** ( They are indicated in the Article 1 of Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2005, that they are separated from both parents and other relatives, who are cared for by an adult responsible by law or custom.

### **Literature review**

#### **Behavioral and emotional disorders**

Behavioral and emotional disorders are not only one type or degree, but they are several various types and degrees, so it is difficult to have one definitions that interested people agree on, as every specialist identifies it according to his private perception. The problem is not a cause of the lack of definitions despite of the modernity of the subject, but it resulted from the various definitions and their differences. Therefore, everyone defines it according to his specialization (teacher, doctor, lawyer, psychologist, ...), and according to the trend o school that he belongs to ( behavioral, analytical, environmental, physiology, humanistic), and also according to the standard or criteria (social, statistical, psychological, subjective)..., so several definitions and names emerged (Juma'a, 2005).

Baro defined children of behavioral and emotional disorders that those who show one or more of the following characteristics to a noticeable degree and for a relatively long period, some of them are :

- Inability to learn which can be explained in light of the physical, and health characteristics of these children.
- Inability of these children to build social relationships with other children, adults and teachers.
- Emergence of unsuitable behavioral and emotional patterns in the normal situations.



- Suffering from physical symptoms, pains fears related to health and school problems.
- They have feelings of sadness and depression (Al-Azza, 2002).

### **Reasons of behavioral and emotional disorders**

Zahran(2005) indicated that the reasons that lead to behavioral and emotional disorders are unknown, as children are distinguished people, where scientific studies about biological reasons are still in the beginning, and interactions that happen to children on the one hand, and with their families, environment and society on the other hand are too complex to the degree that we cannot define a single confirmed reason of the behavioral and emotional disorders. However, we can define many fields that may cause behavioral and emotional disorders, and these reasons would not overlapping with each other, and these fields are as follows:

**First:** the physical and biological domain is influenced with genetic and neurological factors in addition to the biological ones.

**Second:** the psychological domain, since human is consisted of a group of feelings, modes, influences and environment around him, the psychological side has a great effect in forming behavioral end emotional disorders. Therefore, when a person is exposed to frustration and failure, struggle between sexual desire, sexual satisfaction, the failure to satisfy psychological needs, rejection, hunger and lack of emotional security have a great effect in forming these disorders.

**Third:** the social domain may cause or help in emerging behavioral and emotional disorders.

### **Characteristics of children of behavioral and emotional disorders**

There is a difficulty in drawing a line between normal children and children of behavioral and emotional disorders since all children show various aggressive behavioral patterns, withdrawal behavioral patterns or sometimes anti-social behavior patterns. What distinguish behavioral patterns of children of behavioral and emotional disorders are the frequency, intensity, topography, and how long the behavior lasts.

### **Characteristics of children of behavioral disorders**

Comprehension, where some of them are unable to understand information from environment. These children can pronounce the words and a series of words forming a sentence of a definite story, but they have a little understanding of the meaning of the story and they can solve simple math problems using mechanic math skills, they cannot understand the meaning of insults, repeat a definite text, explain stories, problems and tendencies, however they can repeat the material and the above (Yahya, 2000). The intended behavior to attract attention, which is a verbal or non-verbal behavior, as a child uses it to attract others' attention, and behavior is usually unsuitable for activity the child is performing. These children usually perform patterns of behaviors to attract attention including screaming, loud fun, clowning and taking the last letter of a word I any verbal dealing. Some of them do physical movements by hands and legs, and those are often described as hyperactive people, but what distinguishes them is attracting attention (1987).

Social immaturity, which means inappropriate behavior for the age stage; in other words, adults show inappropriate behavior for their ages or what younger children show. This behavior usually



appears when a child is in unfamiliar situation or he is stressed. The social immaturity child fails in the proper skills of the age stage, and is characterized by limited social response mechanisms that exist for immediate use, that requires him to use less immaturity responses, which let others describe him as an immaturity child. Some characteristics of these children are that they prefer friends who are older or younger than them, choose playing, toys and activities that precede their age stage, and on a few occasions in unstressed social situations, they show behaviors that suit their age stage but they are false.

Withdrawal, it is an emotional behavior including leaving or escaping from situations of life, where from the person's perspective it can cause a psychological conflict or restlessness. The withdrawal child is described as withdrawn, lethargic, shy, afraid, depressed, anxious, daydreaming (Al-Khlaidy,1997).

Behavior influenced by others, it is a behavior done by an individual based on others' request or to please them without thinking of the results of this behavior; so a child or a person who is influenced by others is always described as incapable of taking responsibility, easy to lead or dependent. Children who are influenced by others don't feel secure in their environment, they usually choose a leader to direct them, they do everything to please their selected leader and they usually use this leader as an excuse to his behavior and personal activity.

Constant rebellion, which is an anti-laws and trends activity; the rebellious child is described as he always participates in anti-law activities of his parents, teachers and their trends. A lot of adolescents who joined the classes of behaviorally disturbed and emotionally handicapped are continuous rebellious;

they aggressively challenge the authority of the teacher, and they do not always obey even the simplest laws continuously (Melhem, 2002).

Repetition, it is the tendency to continue a definite activity after the proper time of it ends, as children find it difficult to move from an activity to another. This perseverance can be verbal or physical, as he can continue laughing for a long time after hearing a joke and others stopped have stopped laughing, answering a question after a long time where it can exceed the proper period or continuing to repeat a word or a specific number for a long time, and so on.

Negativity, which is the continuous extreme resistance of ideas, advice and directions introduced by others and this resistance or opposition is represented by (unwillingness for everything), agreement on little activities, always talking sadly, if they are asked their answer indicates unhappiness whether at school, a specific program or with friends, where they show a lack of enjoyment of life.

Motivation, which includes that an individual has a positive reason to practice a specific activity, and in general adults have the motivation to participate in activities, and they are described that they have no motivation. A few children encourage to practice activities in primary school, and when some of them become older, they lose his enthusiasm to school; the reason behind the decline of the level of motivation can be their misunderstanding of an activity or fear of new or different activities, or decline of a low self-concept as a result of repeated failure.

Excessive activity, it is the continuous excessive physical activity for a long time, which is characterized by disorganization and it is unpredictable and undirected. Children of excessive activity have severe



reaction to environmental motives, and their behavior is characterized as continuous, nervous and aggressive.

Complaining about psychosomatic illnesses, the term psychosomatic indicates overlap of the psychological system and the bodily (physical) system depending on each other, the internal psychological conflicts which appear as physical symptoms, as they could be a result of physical disorder whether it is fact or imaginary, and it often happens and most people are exposed to. For example, when a person is in a psychological stress situation, he often complains of headache, nausea and pain in stomach; thus, a child or any other person is tested by doctors (Bushnaq, 2001).

Aggressive behavior, as it is considered one of the characteristics that many people of behavior disorders have, and it is represents in hitting, fighting, screaming, disobey orders and deliberate sabotage, and this was observed by many researchers that aggression is one of the most common behavioral disorders among children.

Negative or low self-concept, which is the individual's recognition of his self as an individual, son, daughter or learner, and so he became unacceptable, and many children realize that they are failures or unacceptable. The concept is represented in comparing with effectiveness of bad self through sentences that reflect this concept such as "I can do that", "he is better than me", "I will never win" and "I am not good". Such individuals have over sensitivity to criticism and have no desire for involving in many activities.

Impulsivity is the immediate response to any stimulus, so that this response appears in the form of weakness in thinking and planning. These responses

are fast, repeated and improper, and their results are often wrong, as these impulsive children are described as they don't think.

Chaotic behavior, which is the behavior that inconsistent with the behaviors of an individual or a group, as the chaotic behavior in the classroom is represented in completely inappropriate behavior, laughing, clapping, hitting with foot, singing, whispering and other behaviors that obstruct the ongoing activities including inability in participating in activities and using bad words.

Inability to focus attention, which is inability to concentrate on stimulus for enough time to end the a task. An inattentive child is described as that he is unable to complete the task given in the limited time. This behavior includes inattention to a task and the given directions by a supervisors, where a child seems busy or follow daydreams (Yusuf, 2000).

Psychological instability refers to the changeable mood characterized by fast changing, from sadness to happiness in mood, from aggressive behavior to withdrawal behavior, from quietness to movement and if he is cooperative uncooperative, and so on. This changing in mood is not predictable, it happens without a clear reason, and those are described as they are irritable and their behavior is unpredicted.

Intense competition, it means a verbal or non-verbal behavior that leads to win by competition; in other words the individual should be the first or the best in a particular activity or task, as this competition could be with self or others. The spirit of competition is one of the most observable characteristics in our schools, and this competition exists in sporting events, and in school, while intense competition has a great effect on



the self-concept of the child, especially if the competition is unrealistic (Yahya, 2000).

### **Related studies**

#### **Arabic studies**

Al-Sardia (2002) conducted a study aimed to identify the level of practicing behavioral problems among children's care homes from their babysitters' point of view. The study sample consisted of (60) male and female children in 3 orphanages in Jordan. The results showed that the behavioral problems that appear among children are psychological problems, then social and finally the school ones, the results showed that they were for males.

Qassim (1994) conducted a study entitled "Self-concept and behavioral disorders among children deprived of parents. The study aimed to identify behavioral disorders and self-concept among children deprived of parents and who are put in alternative institutions and families. The study sample consisted of (120) male and female children in three groups : the group of alternative families which consisted of (40) male and female children and the group of normal families which consisted of (40) male and female children. The researcher used several colors including the drawing test, list of children behavior before school. The study found that there were statistically significant differences between the children of alternative families and children of institutions, and among children of families. As for self-concept , there were statistically significant differences for children of alternative families and normal families in self – concept for normal families among all children in alternative families, children of institutions and children of normal families of some dimensions of self-

concept and it was for children of normal families.

A study by Qaddah (1983) entitled "The impact of deprivation on the psychological building of a child" aimed to identify the impact of deprivation on the psychological formation of a child who is deprived of family care. The study sample consisted of (10) children deprived of their families, and the researcher used the drawing method, free play and subject-understanding test. The results revealed that a child who is deprived of family care lacks the feeling of love, and images that the children drew were full of feelings of sadness, depression, feel of aggression and decline of self-esteem.

#### **Foreign studies**

Stoltberg Allen Sandra (1995) conducted a study entitled " Psychological separation and deprivation among late teenagers and young adults of their parents" aimed to investigate gender differences and deprivation of parents among late teenagers. The study sample consisted of (182) male and female students, and the researcher used questionnaires and orientations lists to direct the impact of separation from parents in order to test the feasibility of self- theory in its relations. The results showed that the differences were for females, as they mentioned that they had various supportive relationships in society unlike males.

A study by Spigelman (1991) aimed to reveal the indication of depression and stress among deprived children comparing with their non-deprived peers. The study sample consisted of (108) male and female children distributed into two groups, and each group contained (54) children. The results revealed that the group of deprived children recorded the highest averages of depression comparing with non-deprived children, and the



deprived ones' performance in Rorschach test was distinguished with aggression,

whereas it didn't happen among non-deprived children.

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