

Latchkey Syndrome and Its Effect on Children

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ABSTRACT: A latchkey kid is the one whose both parents are working and he unlocks the door to enter home. The feelings such as trepidation of loneliness conventionally get better on such kids and often complaint of health problems. There are many reasons why some parents leave immature children unsupervised, the most prevalent of which involves employment. Single parents may have to work outside the habitation to fortify the family. Latchkey kids are kids between the age of five and thirteen who take care of themselves with no adult supervision either before or after school on a regular basis. The term self care is also used to describe these children. The percentage of children from single parent families peregrinating home alone dropped from 24 to 14%, and children of espoused couples with both employed dropped from over 20 to about 15%. However in 2009, budget challenges cut funding for many after school programs putting more children in jeopardy of becoming latchkey kids. The psychological effects have as well been observed in the kids left alone at home. The quality of attention declines by the parents due to their busy working schedule. The kids have to depend on the extended help arranged by their parents in form of nannies or baby sitter. Children who attend after school programs have better grades and behaviour and often outperform students not in structured programs. Arrangement sanctions the kids to develop a bond with their grandparents, and gives you a breather when both of you are diligent at work.

KEYWORDS: - latchkey kid, unsupervised, effects, self care, neglect, statistics

I. INTRODUCTION

A **latchkey** kid is the one whose both parents are working and he unlocks the door to enter home. The feelings such as trepidation of loneliness conventionally get better on such kids and often complaint of health problems. ^[1]It has been found that children from lower income families and single parent working spend less time alone in comparison to the higher income families with more hours. ^[2] Around the world, children routinely spend time unsupervised by adults with other children, or at times alone. Sibling caretaking is a day to day practice in many societies that customarily occurs within dimension of adults. However, negative consequences for child development and schooling for both caretaking and looked after children have also been documented. For instance, researchers have found that children who are supervised by older siblings have a higher risk of injuries than children who are supervised by their parents and adults or grandparents. ^[3]There are many reasons why some parents leave immature children unsupervised, the most prevalent of which involves employment. Single parents may have to work outside the habitation to fortify the family. Even two-parent families may need the integrated income earned by both working parents. In some cases, children are unsupervised because their parents are pursuing other fascinate or goals, such as enhanced level of higher education. In other cases, children may find themselves in self-care because their parents are unable or reluctant to provide adequate care. ^[4]The strategy of growing up your child from 80's has been changed to helicopter parenting. Now a day there is a more pressure on both parents and children. It is ironic about the fact that the kids taking care of themselves without any supervision of adults are not aware that they are considered as latchkey kids. India is well known for its joint family system has moved away from the norm in the first place, the answer is pretty straightforward. The growing number of nuclear families today could be a result of an increase in pre requisite for personal space, which otherwise might be laborious to meet in a joint family set-up. ^[5]

II. DEFINITION

Latchkey kids are kids between the age of five and thirteen who take care of themselves with no adult supervision either before or after school on a regular basis. The term self care is also used to describe these children. ^[2] Latchkey kids are those who often find themselves in a situation where they peregrinate home after school and open the door to a vacuous home with their own key. The kid then goes on to spend the remnant of his day by himself till the parents come back home, and is responsible for himself during the time. ^[5]

III. STATISTICS

The escalation in single-parent households, the need for both parents to work in two-parent families, the lack of availability of affordable and productive childcare, the fact that older relatives are working themselves, are too far away, or are indisposed, and the fact that school days are out of sync with workdays all engender an untenable situation. According to census data in 2011, over 4 million children worldwide were left without supervision for more than 6 hours every week on average. Because of regime and grant funded for After School Programs, these numbers have dropped dramatically. In 1995 it was estimated that 18% of elementary aged children peregrinated home to empty houses. Since after-school program legislation passed in 1998 in few countries, that number has dropped in all categories. The percentage of children from single parent families peregrinating home alone dropped from 24 to 14%, and children of espoused couples with both employed dropped from over 20 to about 15%. However in 2009, budget challenges cut funding for many after school programs putting more children in jeopardy of becoming latchkey kids.^[4] Another study conducted in 61 Low and Middle Income Countries has witnessed multiple factors associated with children staying at home without adult supervision or unattended. The contributing factors are unusual child temperament, childhood injuries, negative outcomes and behaviour. This is a global issue being faced by individual children, parents and the society at large in terms of socio-economical inequalities^[3]

IV. EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

It is very unfortunate that the effects are multi-fold. These kids develop Me, Myself and I and may develop adjustment problems with the peers. At the same time, raised levels of anxiety have been observed in these kids. The children feel more comfortable being solitary in spite of socialisation. Many kids are fearful. They may be afraid of the humdrum noises of an otherwise empty house. They may be trepidacious of burglars. They may be nervous of the tougher kids on the block. They don't prefer to tell their parents about their consternation; the kids feel that they don't want to represent themselves as frightened or panicky babies. Beside that they don't want to worry their parents, or they don't want to let their folks down.^[6] The impact of leaving children at home alone is controversial. If children are mature enough to stay safely at home, being alone might provide them with unique opportunities to enhance their independence, responsibility, and confidence. The majority of the preceding studies on this topic report negative replications among adolescents. Many studies in North America have shown that adolescents left at home alone feel solitary, have worries, and experience fear, and are vulnerable to antisocial comportment such as truancy, purloining, and imbibing. In addition to that, the middle-grade students, aged 12–14 years in the United States who were left at home alone for 3 hours or more inclined to show higher calibers of dejection, disposition, dilemma, low self-esteem, and low academic efficacy.^[7] The psychological effects have as well been observed in the kids left alone at home. The quality of attention declines by the parents due to their busy working schedule. The kids have to depend on the extended help arranged by their parents in form of nannies or baby sitter. The effect gives rise to the bondage gap between parents and children and the gap may widen in later stage of age if not taken care. These children show stubborn behaviour and mood swings to get attention of their parents.^[8] A few studies have shown that these children may suffer with depression, low self esteem and sometimes experience panic attacks, conduct disorders and hyperactivity.

V. REMEDIES

Latchkey programs should be promoted to develop the positive effects in children and reduce the negativity and adverse effects. The organisations of the employee should as well arrange day care centres to cater the needs of the women employees. The schools can also arrange before and After School Programs for these children either on free basis or a minimum affordable payment. Many studies have shown that staying at school in after school program has enhanced the skills of the children. A more healthful lifestyle in contrast to unsupervised children spending their time home alone optically canvassing TV, playing video games, surfing the cyber world, and orally consuming junk nutriment. Parents can feel a sense of placidity of mind that their children are safe and well cared for in a nurturing, safe, and fun environment without the obligation of being home alone. Children who attend after school programs have better grades and behaviour and often outperform students not in structured programs. This provides an opportunity to engage in an organized extracurricular activity outside of the classroom while enhancing the family/school relationship. This has led to a curtailment of students engaging in smoking, imbibing, drugs, sex, teen gravidity and juvenile malefaction. Children in After School Programs often have the opportunity to make friends and build relationships with individuals they would not otherwise encounter. In addition to that, the parents can adjust their timings of work. The weekends could be dedicated to the children by spending qualitative time to truncate the gap and ameliorate the bond between them. This will lead to a sense of security among children and they will not feel lonely or alone. The parents can take an extended help from their parents if they volunteer to babysit the child. This arrangement sanctions the kids to

develop a bond with their grandparents, and gives you a breather when both of you are diligent at work. From the financial aspect, this is the most low-cost and low-risk arrangement for your child.

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