

Natalia Gałązka

Experiences of being raised by parents with bipolar disorder: Perspectives of adult children

SUMMARY

This dissertation is devoted to the experiences of growing up with parents diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder and to the biographical consequences of these experiences. The theoretical part of the study addresses a systemic perspective on the family, justifies the predominant role of the family environment in the process of child and adolescent development, and presents a characterization of bipolar affective disorder based on the ICD-10 and DSM-5 classifications. Against this background, the analysis discusses potential difficulties in fulfilling the basic functions of the family, as well as the heightened risk of dysfunctional family functioning determined by parental bipolar affective disorder. The second part of the theoretical considerations focuses on the significance of individual experiences, memories, and autobiographical memory. Subsequent sections concentrate on developmental crises, drawing on Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, discussed in the context of the potential educational and developmental impact of parents with bipolar affective disorder on the accomplishment of developmental tasks and the successful resolution of psychosocial conflicts in their children. The theoretical part concludes with reflections on the construction of individual life biographies shaped by growing up with a parent affected by bipolar affective disorder.

The dissertation also includes the author's methodological decisions concerning the conducted empirical study, which involved adults who had experiences of growing up with parents diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder. The empirical part of the study presents the results of the author's own research conducted using the case study method. It includes descriptions of experiences related to being raised by a parent with bipolar affective disorder, focusing on family functioning patterns, intrafamily relationships, memories of growing up with an ill parent, parental child-rearing styles, experiences of parentification, significant events related to the ill parent, as well as areas in which—according to the participants—they experienced the consequences of growing up with a parent with bipolar affective disorder. This section also addresses manifestations of difficulties within these areas and provides an overview of the forms of support that participants perceived as needed during adolescence while living with a parent affected by bipolar affective disorder. The dissertation concludes with practical recommendations aimed at supporting children of parents with bipolar affective disorder during both periods of illness episodes and remission, addressed to psychologists, educators, and parents.

KEY WORDS: experiences; growing up with a parent with bipolar disorder; bipolar affective disorder; family system