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Nightlife and Adolescents from Broken Homes: A Phenomenon in City X

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Abstract

Research on family disruption and youth behavior has expanded, yet limited attention has been given to how young adults from disrupted family environments experience and interpret their involvement in nightlife. This study explores the forms, underlying reasons, and meanings of nightlife involvement among young adults in City X. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed with three participants aged 18–22 years selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations and analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings generated three major themes: family dysfunction as a source of emotional distress; nightlife as a space for escape and social acceptance; and the emergence of risk awareness, self-reflection, and future aspirations. Participants' involvement included social and recreational activities, alcohol and cigarette use, and, for one participant, employment as a lady companion. They interpreted nightlife as an alternative space for obtaining emotional support, acceptance, freedom, and economic opportunities while simultaneously recognizing its physical, psychological, and interpersonal risks. The study contributes a phenomenological understanding of nightlife as a multidimensional experience that may function concurrently as a coping space, a source of social belonging, an economic opportunity, and a setting of vulnerability. These findings highlight the need for supportive interventions that address family relationships, emotional needs, and access to constructive social support rather than focusing exclusively on nightlife behavior.

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Keywords: Family Disruption; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; Nightlife; Social Support; Subjective Experience

INTRODUCTION

Nightlife has become an increasingly visible part of contemporary urban life, particularly among young people seeking recreation, social interaction, and spaces for self-expression beyond their everyday routines. Nightclubs, cafés, bars, karaoke venues, and other late-night entertainment settings do not function solely as commercial leisure spaces; they also create social environments in which identities, friendships, and forms of belonging are negotiated. Chatterton & Hollands (2021) describe urban nightlife as a social arena shaped by youth culture, pleasure, consumption, and changing patterns of interaction. Nofre (2023) similarly argues that nightlife can contribute to social well-being and community building by providing opportunities for connection and shared experiences. These social functions coexist with considerable risks. A recent systematic review found that nightlife settings are closely associated with substance use and other health-related risks, with young adults representing one of the populations frequently encountered in these environments (Glavak-Tkalić et al., 2025). Nightlife should consequently be understood not simply as a form of entertainment, but as a complex social setting in which pleasure, vulnerability, social connection, and risk may occur simultaneously.

Young people between the ages of 18 and 22 occupy a particularly important developmental period in relation to such environments. This age range is often associated with the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, when individuals increasingly make independent decisions about friendships, leisure, relationships, and lifestyles. Identity development during this period involves an active process of exploring personal values, social roles, and relationships with others (Erikson, 1968; Santrock, 2017). Greater independence can provide meaningful opportunities for personal growth, yet it may also increase exposure to social environments that involve risk. Peer relationships become especially influential when young people spend more time outside direct family supervision. Hoffmann (2022) found that family structure and unstructured socializing can be associated with adolescent risk behavior, illustrating the importance of examining individual behavior within both family and peer contexts. Nightlife may therefore become attractive not only

because it offers entertainment, but also because it provides opportunities to experience autonomy, social recognition, and membership in a peer community.

Family circumstances constitute another important context in understanding how young people navigate these social environments. Family relationships provide emotional security, social learning, guidance, and a sense of belonging during adolescence and the transition to adulthood. Disruption within the family, including parental divorce, prolonged parental conflict, separation, loss of family cohesion, or weakened parent–child relationships, may alter the emotional resources available to young people. Amato (2000, 2010) shows that divorce and family instability can have enduring implications for children's and adolescents' psychological and social adjustment, although the consequences differ according to individual circumstances and the quality of relationships surrounding the young person. The Family Stress Model likewise explains that sustained family stress can influence emotional functioning and developmental outcomes through disrupted interpersonal processes within the household (Masarik & Conger, 2017). The term *broken home* in the present study is consequently not treated merely as a label for parental divorce, but as a lived family condition characterized by disruption, weakened harmony, or reduced emotional support that may shape how young people experience their social world.

Indonesian studies have documented a range of experiences among adolescents raised in *broken-home* families. Ikhsan et al. (2023) identified changes in social behavior among early adolescents experiencing family disruption, while Anarta et al. (2023) reported that parental separation may influence the behavioral and emotional experiences of adolescent girls. More recent qualitative evidence also points to emotional difficulties, behavioral changes, and challenges in adapting to family circumstances among adolescents from *broken-home* backgrounds (Ardyanti et al., 2025). Psychological consequences should not be interpreted as inevitable outcomes of family disruption, because young people respond to adversity in different ways and many develop adaptive coping strategies. The available evidence nevertheless suggests that disrupted family relationships can affect emotional regulation, perceived support, and the ways young people seek connection outside their homes. Syahrani & Palila (2024), for example, found attention-seeking tendencies among some late adolescents from *broken-home* families, indicating that unmet relational needs may be expressed through attempts to obtain recognition and acceptance in other social environments.

The search for acceptance outside the family provides an important perspective for examining the attraction of nightlife. Young people who perceive limited emotional support at home may invest more heavily in friendships and peer groups as alternative sources of companionship, recognition, and psychological comfort. Peer support has been associated with psychological and subjective well-being, particularly when interpersonal relationships provide a sense of being understood and valued (Ariyanda et al., 2025; Rochma & Hartini, 2021). Self-determination theory similarly places relatedness, alongside autonomy and competence, among the psychological needs that contribute to healthy functioning and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Nightlife environments may satisfy some of these social needs temporarily by offering relatively informal spaces for meeting friends, communicating freely, and escaping restrictive or distressing situations. Such involvement should not automatically be understood as deviance. For some young people, entering nightlife spaces may represent an attempt to cope with loneliness, family conflict, emotional discomfort, or a perceived absence of belonging in the home environment.

Nightlife nevertheless exposes young people to social practices that may carry psychological, behavioral, and health consequences. Research on nightlife cultures has long shown that these environments can combine pleasure, friendship, identity exploration, alcohol consumption, and other forms of risk-taking (Hunt et al., 2010). Glavak-Tkalić et al. (2025), through a systematic review of nightlife-based studies, found substantial scholarly attention to substance use and related harms in nightclubs, bars, and entertainment districts. Indonesian research presents a comparable social concern. Kasim et al. (2021) documented young people's involvement in nighttime karaoke settings, while Yudha et al. (2024) described behavioral transformations associated with participation in nightlife in an Indonesian urban context. These studies demonstrate that nightlife is not a socially neutral setting. Its significance depends on the motives, relationships, vulnerabilities, and meanings that individuals bring into the environment. Examining young people from *broken-home* families therefore requires attention not only to what they do in nightlife settings, but also to why they enter these spaces and how they interpret the experiences that occur there.

Previous scholarship has generally developed along two relatively separate lines. Studies concerning *broken-home* families have primarily examined psychological adjustment, social behavior, attention-seeking behavior, delinquency, and other forms of risky behavior(Anarta et al., 2023; Ikhsan et al., 2023; Rohman et al., 2024; Syahrani & Palila, 2024). Research on nightlife, by contrast, has tended to focus on entertainment practices, alcohol

and substance use, risk behavior, youth culture, and transformations in social behavior within nightlife settings (Glavak-Tkalić et al., 2025; Kasim et al., 2021; Yudha et al., 2024). These bodies of research provide valuable knowledge about family disruption and nightlife as separate social phenomena, yet they leave limited understanding of what happens when the two experiences intersect. Particularly limited is research that gives young people themselves space to explain how family disruption relates to their decision to enter nightlife environments, what they seek from those environments, and what emotional and social meanings they attach to their participation.

The present study addresses this gap by approaching nightlife involvement as a lived experience rather than treating it solely as an indicator of problematic behavior. Such an approach is important because outwardly similar behavior may carry very different meanings for different individuals. Participation in nightlife may represent recreation for one person, peer conformity for another, and an attempt to cope with family distress, loneliness, or emotional emptiness for someone else. Folkman & Lazarus (1988) emphasize that coping involves processes through which individuals respond to situations they perceive as demanding or emotionally challenging. Social environments may consequently acquire particular meanings when they are used to manage emotional experiences. This perspective allows the study to move beyond a simple causal assumption that a *broken home* directly produces nightlife involvement. Its novelty lies instead in examining the intersection of family disruption, emotional experience, social belonging, and nightlife through the perspectives of the young people experiencing them, while recognizing their agency and avoiding the automatic stigmatization of either *broken-home* families or nightlife participants.

This study therefore focuses on young people aged 18–22 from *broken-home* families who are involved in nightlife in City X. It seeks to explore the forms of their involvement in nightlife, the personal, familial, and social circumstances underlying that involvement, and the meanings they attribute to their experiences. Particular attention is given to how nightlife is experienced as a social space for interaction, emotional release, identity exploration, coping, and the search for acceptance outside the family environment. By foregrounding participants' lived experiences, the study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between family disruption and nightlife participation without reducing young people to stereotypes of delinquency or family dysfunction. The findings are expected to enrich psychological and social discussions of young people's adjustment to family disruption

while providing a contextual account of nightlife experiences among emerging adults in City X.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences and personal meanings constructed by young people from *broken-home* families who were involved in nightlife activities. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' emotional experiences, social interactions, and subjective interpretations within their everyday contexts rather than quantify predetermined variables. Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative inquiry is particularly suitable for examining how individuals or groups interpret social phenomena and life experiences. More specifically, the study adopted an interpretative phenomenological perspective because the research focused on how participants made sense of family disruption and their subsequent involvement in nightlife. Phenomenological inquiry is concerned with understanding events as they are consciously experienced and interpreted by individuals (La Kahija, 2017). The study was conducted in City X and involved three participants selected through *purposive sampling*. Participants were men or women aged 18–22 years who had experienced parental conflict or family disruption, had participated as customers in nightlife venues, were willing to take part voluntarily, and were able to communicate their experiences verbally. The use of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to recruit individuals whose experiences were directly relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured in-depth interviews and supported by non-participant observation. The interview guide was developed around the main research focus, including participants' experiences of family conflict, emotional responses to family disruption, reasons for becoming involved in nightlife, forms of nightlife participation, social and emotional experiences in nightlife settings, perceived effects on personal and social life, and the meanings attached to these experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used to maintain consistency across participants while allowing them sufficient freedom to elaborate on personally significant experiences. Each interview was conducted face-to-face at a mutually agreed location that ensured privacy, comfort, and emotional safety, and lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. Follow-up interviews could be conducted when clarification or deeper exploration was required. With participants'

informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of their narratives. Observations were conducted mainly during the interview process and focused on nonverbal expressions such as facial expression, eye contact, tone of voice, body language, pauses, spontaneous reactions, and changes in emotional responses. These observations were documented in field notes and used to complement the interview data. Maintaining an empathetic, open, and non-judgmental interaction was considered particularly important because the study addressed sensitive experiences involving family conflict and nightlife participation (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Smith et al., 2009).

The data were analyzed using *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA), following the procedures proposed by Smith et al. (2009). Analysis began with repeated reading of each interview transcript to develop a comprehensive understanding of the participant's account, followed by initial noting of significant expressions, experiences, and interpretative meanings. The researcher then developed emergent themes from these initial notes and examined connections among themes to identify broader patterns within each participant's experience. Each case was analyzed separately to preserve its individual characteristics before patterns, similarities, and differences were examined across participants. The resulting themes were subsequently organized into an interpretative narrative that described how participants understood their family experiences, nightlife involvement, emotional responses, and social relationships. Data credibility was strengthened through source, investigator, and theoretical triangulation. Information obtained from different participants was compared, interpretations were reviewed with supervisors or research colleagues to reduce individual interpretative bias, and the findings were examined in relation to relevant theoretical perspectives. Systematic documentation of interviews, field notes, transcripts, and analytical decisions was also maintained to ensure that the interpretation process remained traceable and accountable (Moleong, 2017).

RESULTS

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the experiences of WR, NV, and A generated three major themes: family dysfunction as the background of psychological distress, nightlife as a space of escape and reconstructed social meaning, and the emergence of risks, self-reflection, and future aspirations. The three participants differed in family circumstances and forms of nightlife involvement, yet their narratives revealed a comparable

experiential trajectory. Family conflict and limited emotional support created discomfort within the home, nightlife subsequently became an alternative social environment, and continued involvement produced both perceived benefits and considerable personal risks. The thematic structure of the findings is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes and Main Findings from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Major Theme	Subtheme	WR	NV	A
Family dysfunction as the background of psychological distress	Economic conflict and family disharmony	Father's unemployment increased financial pressure and parental conflict	Limited paternal income, maternal economic responsibility, and conflict with an older brother	Paternal gambling and infidelity, worsening economic circumstances, and unstable family relationships
	Emotional distance from parents	Limited communication with father and little support from sibling	Emotionally distant and individualistic family relationships	Perceived absence of both paternal and maternal warmth
	Emotional responses	Suppressed distress and sought trusted friends	Suppressed problems and increasingly avoided home	Sadness, emotional emptiness, and positive cognitive reframing
Nightlife as a space of escape and reconstructed meaning	Initial involvement	Greater freedom after earning her own income and avoidance of parental conflict	Family pressure, unemployment, economic needs, and peer introduction	Pressure while living with relatives and need for freedom and acceptance
	Friendship and belonging	Friends were perceived as more understanding than family	Preferred emotionally close friends with similar experiences	Nightlife friends were perceived as a substitute family
	Substance use	Alcohol and cigarettes provided temporary relief from psychological pressure	Alcohol and cigarettes were partly related to nightlife employment	Alcohol was experienced as temporary emotional escape
Risks, self-reflection, and future aspirations	Risks and consequences	Fear regarding personal safety while intoxicated	Physical consequences and changes in perceptions of relationships and self-worth	Experienced sexual harassment
	Self-reflection	Continued desire for family harmony and concern for younger sibling	Began expressing a desire to leave nightlife	Expressed desire to improve herself
	Future orientation	Hoped for a harmonious family and a better future for her sibling	Hoped to leave nightlife and pursue another life trajectory	Hoped for health, stable employment, and a more positive life

1. Family Dysfunction as the Background of Psychological Distress

Family dysfunction emerged as the earliest shared context across the three cases. The participants' experiences demonstrate that a *broken home* was not necessarily associated with formal parental divorce. WR and NV continued to live in structurally intact families, but their homes were characterized by persistent economic pressure, weak communication, and limited emotional support. A similarly had both parents physically present in her life but described the relationship as emotionally distant, leading her to experience herself as both *fatherless* and *motherless*. The participants therefore experienced family disruption primarily through the weakening of family functions rather than through marital status alone.

WR's family circumstances were strongly shaped by financial difficulties after her father stopped working regularly. Economic responsibility increasingly shifted toward her mother and, later, toward WR after she began earning her own income. Financial pressure frequently developed into arguments between her parents and contributed to her discomfort at home. WR recalled:

"Back then things were still okay because my father was working, but now he does not work anymore and mostly stays at home." (W1.WR.L59–60)

The financial problem was accompanied by emotional distance. WR described little communication with her father and limited support from her older brother. Her father rarely communicated his concerns directly, creating a relationship characterized more by silence than by emotional engagement.

NV reported a comparable combination of financial strain and weak family relationships. Her father earned a limited income from work at a mosque, whereas her mother carried a substantial share of household expenses. NV also experienced conflict with an older brother regarding expectations that she should become financially independent while she was unemployed. The emotional climate of the family was described as individualistic, with members tending to manage their problems separately.

A's family experience followed a different pattern. She described a history of gambling and infidelity involving her father and associated these experiences with worsening family relationships and economic instability. Emotional deprivation became particularly prominent in her narrative. She stated:

"Since I was little, I never really felt that I received affection from my father. Even until I was around sixteen, the relationship between us still felt awkward." (W3.A.L92–96)

A also described never experiencing ordinary expressions of paternal closeness, such as being accompanied, embraced, or asked about her life. Periods of living with relatives further strengthened her perception of being emotionally displaced from her parents.

The three participants developed different ways of managing family-related distress. WR tended to suppress problems until they were experienced physically, including headaches and persistent mental exhaustion. NV similarly described herself as someone who kept problems to herself and disclosed them only to a small number of trusted people. Her discomfort at home gradually changed her daily behavior from returning home late to remaining outside until early morning. A attempted to endure family difficulties by maintaining positive interpretations of her circumstances despite acknowledging considerable sadness.

These findings show that family dysfunction operated as a continuing emotional context rather than as a single event. Economic strain, distant parental relationships, weak communication, and limited opportunities to express emotions were intertwined in the participants' experiences. This condition preceded their increasing orientation toward social environments outside the home.

2. Nightlife as a Space of Escape and Reconstructed Social Meaning

Nightlife involvement developed gradually rather than through an abrupt decision. The participants described different pathways into nightlife, but each pathway was connected to discomfort in the family environment and the search for an alternative social space.

WR became more frequently involved in activities outside the home after starting work and obtaining her own income. Financial independence gave her greater freedom to remain away from parental conflict. She explained:

"After I started working, I had my own money, so I was often away from home. When I was still in school, I would come home and hear my parents arguing." (W1.WR.L37–45)

Nightlife consequently became part of WR's broader pattern of spending less time at home. The experience was not initially framed as a deliberate rejection of the family but as a way of reducing exposure to an environment she perceived as emotionally exhausting.

NV stated that she had never originally intended to become involved in nightlife. Her entry developed after accumulated family conflict, unemployment, financial needs, and introduction to nightlife through friends. She explained:

"I never really imagined that I would enter that kind of world, but I had many problems, including problems with my brother and a family environment that had become toxic for me." (W1.NV.L443–448)

NV's case was distinctive because nightlife later became related to employment. Her involvement therefore carried both an emotional and economic dimension. It provided distance from family pressure while also offering a means of earning income.

A's initial involvement was closely connected to her experience of living with relatives. She felt constrained by household expectations and believed that she was required to conform to standards she could not comfortably meet. A explained that she was unable to "be herself" under these circumstances. The nightlife environment gradually became attractive because it offered a contrasting sense of freedom and social acceptance.

Friendship became one of the most meaningful components of nightlife for all three participants. WR described friends as people who were willing to listen and understand her experiences. She noted that some people she had recently met could sometimes understand her better than her own family:

"Sometimes even someone I have just met can understand me better than my own family." (W1.WR.L171–178)

NV distinguished between numerous casual acquaintances and a much smaller number of emotionally meaningful friendships. Similar life experiences were particularly important to her because they created a sense of being understood without needing to explain every aspect of her situation. For NV, emotional closeness depended more on shared experience and trust than on the number of friends.

A described the strongest substitution of family relationships through nightlife friendships. She perceived members of her nightlife social group as people who embraced and accepted her. The emotional significance of these friendships extended beyond companionship and was described in familial terms. A stated:

"I felt happy with my nightlife friends. They treated us like, 'this is my family.' They accepted me and always embraced me." (W1.A.L282–293)

The meaning of nightlife therefore extended beyond entertainment. For WR, it provided opportunities to talk and feel understood. For NV, it offered companionship with people who shared similar circumstances as well as economic opportunities. For A, it became a social environment in which she experienced forms of warmth and acceptance that she felt were missing within her family.

Substance use also appeared in the three narratives, although its meaning varied. WR associated alcohol and cigarettes with attempts to calm overwhelming thoughts. She initially refused alcohol but later accepted a friend's suggestion after being told that drinking might help reduce her mental burden. WR stated that she wanted temporary relief from concerns related to family and work.

NV's alcohol and cigarette use was more closely connected to the environment and demands of nightlife employment. Substance use became intertwined with occupational and social practices rather than functioning exclusively as emotional escape.

A attached a more explicit psychological meaning to alcohol consumption. She described intoxication as creating a temporary sense of release from emotional pressure. She eventually summarized the significance of nightlife in a brief but revealing statement:

"My escape from life." (W1.A.L529–531)

The cross-case findings therefore show that nightlife served multiple functions. It created physical distance from family problems, provided access to emotionally meaningful friendships, offered economic opportunities in NV's case, and temporarily reduced psychological pressure. These experiences explain why nightlife could retain personal meaning despite the participants' awareness of its risks.

3. Risks, Self-Reflection, and Future Aspirations

The participants described nightlife as an ambivalent environment. It provided companionship, freedom, temporary psychological relief, and economic benefits, while simultaneously exposing them to physical, psychological, and interpersonal risks.

WR's account emphasized vulnerability related to personal safety. She was particularly concerned about losing control while intoxicated and becoming vulnerable to unwanted treatment. WR stated:

"I was afraid because it was my first time. I worried that something might happen to me, especially if I became drunk and another man took me somewhere." (W1.WR.L147–152)

Her narrative demonstrates that perceived emotional comfort in nightlife did not eliminate awareness of possible harm.

NV experienced both physical consequences and changes in her perceptions of interpersonal relationships. Her nightlife-related work affected her physical condition and contributed to changing views of men and her own sense of self-worth. NV nevertheless continued to recognize the practical benefits associated with the environment, particularly income and opportunities to momentarily distance herself from personal problems.

A reported the most serious safety-related experience among the participants. She described being given a substance and subsequently subjected to unwanted sexual contact. The experience illustrated the contradiction within her relationship with nightlife. The environment that had initially provided companionship and emotional acceptance could also expose her to serious vulnerability.

The participants' experiences gradually gave rise to self-reflection. WR continued to express a strong desire for family harmony despite having previously distanced herself from home. She also showed particular concern for the future of her younger sibling. Her reflection suggests that involvement in nightlife did not eliminate the importance of family in her personal aspirations.

NV increasingly viewed nightlife as a temporary stage rather than a permanent direction. Her desire to eventually leave that environment represented growing awareness of the limits and consequences of her current life circumstances.

A also began evaluating her experiences and expressing a desire for personal change. She stated:

"I just want to improve myself now, at nineteen years old." (W1.A.L692–700)

The three participants retained aspirations for different futures despite the difficulties they had experienced. WR hoped to have a harmonious family and wished to protect the future of her younger sibling. NV hoped to leave nightlife and pursue another way of living. A emphasized health, stable employment, and personal development:

"For now, I just hope I can keep living, stay healthy, and eventually have a stable job." (W1.A.L689–691)

These future orientations indicate that nightlife involvement did not become a fixed identity for the participants. Their narratives contained awareness, evaluation, and the possibility of change.

4. Cross-Case Dynamics of the Participants

The cross-case analysis revealed both shared patterns and distinctive pathways in the experiences of WR, NV, and A. Although all three participants experienced family dysfunction, their pathways into nightlife were shaped by different combinations of economic pressure, emotional deprivation, peer relationships, and personal needs. Table 2 presents the comparative dynamics of the three participants across seven stages of experience.

Table 2. Cross-Case Dynamics of WR, NV, and A

Stage of Experience	WR	NV	A
Initial family condition	Father's unemployment, economic pressure, parental conflict, and limited communication with father and older brother	Limited paternal income, mother carrying much of the financial responsibility, emotionally distant family relationships, and conflict with an older brother	Emotionally absent parents, paternal gambling and infidelity, worsening family conditions, and periods of living with relatives
Conditions preceding nightlife involvement	Began earning her own income, gained greater independence, and increasingly avoided conflict at home	Experienced family discomfort, unemployment, economic pressure, and introduction to nightlife through friends	Experienced pressure while living with relatives and felt unable to express herself freely
Meaning of friendship	Friends became trusted listeners and were sometimes perceived as more understanding than family	Preferred a small number of close friends who shared similar life experiences	Nightlife friends were perceived as a substitute family that provided warmth, acceptance, and belonging
Meaning of substance use	Alcohol and cigarettes were used as temporary relief from family and personal problems	Alcohol and cigarettes were partly embedded in the social and occupational demands of nightlife work	Alcohol was experienced as a means of temporarily escaping emotional pressure
Risks and consequences	Fear of personal vulnerability and being harmed while intoxicated	Physical exhaustion, emotional consequences, and changes in perceptions of interpersonal relationships	Experienced sexual harassment and recognized that social acceptance did not always guarantee personal safety
Self-reflection	Reflected on family relationships and remained concerned	Began recognizing that nightlife did not have to become a permanent part of her life	Evaluated her previous experiences and expressed a desire to improve herself

Stage of Experience	WR	NV	A
	about the future of her younger sibling		
Future aspirations	Hoped for a harmonious family and a better future for her younger sibling	Wanted to leave nightlife and pursue a different life trajectory	Hoped to remain healthy, obtain stable employment, and build a better life

Table 2 demonstrates that family dysfunction represented a common starting point, but its form and consequences differed among participants. WR's pathway was shaped mainly by economic conflict and the desire to avoid tension at home. NV experienced a combination of family pressure and economic necessity, making her nightlife involvement more closely related to employment. A's pathway was more strongly associated with emotional deprivation and the search for warmth, acceptance, and belonging. These differences indicate that nightlife involvement cannot be explained through a single pathway, even among individuals who share experiences of family dysfunction.

The similarities across the three cases nevertheless form a recognizable experiential pattern. Family difficulties generated psychological discomfort and weakened the participants' sense of emotional security at home. Alternative social relationships consequently became more meaningful, and nightlife developed into a space where participants could temporarily distance themselves from family problems. Friendship, acceptance, economic opportunities, and temporary emotional relief strengthened the significance of this environment. Continued involvement, however, also introduced physical, psychological, and interpersonal risks.

Overall, the cross-case analysis indicates that nightlife involvement among WR, NV, and A was embedded in a broader process of negotiating family difficulties, emotional needs, social relationships, and personal circumstances. The shared trajectory does not suggest that family dysfunction inevitably leads to nightlife involvement. Rather, it demonstrates how nightlife can acquire particular meanings when young people experience limited emotional security at home and encounter alternative spaces that appear to provide acceptance, companionship, freedom, or economic opportunities.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that nightlife involvement among the three participants cannot be understood independently from the family environments in which their experiences developed. Family dysfunction appeared in different forms across the cases: persistent economic conflict and emotionally distant relationships characterized the experiences of WR and NV, whereas A described a family that remained structurally intact but lacked the emotional presence and caregiving she expected from both parents. This finding broadens the meaning of a *broken home* beyond formal parental separation or divorce. What appeared particularly significant in the participants' accounts was not simply whether both parents remained in the household, but whether the family continued to provide emotional safety, communication, affection, and dependable support. This interpretation is consistent with Amato (2000, 2010) who emphasizes that the consequences of family disruption are strongly influenced by the quality of family relationships and the level of conflict surrounding young people. Research on adolescents from dysfunctional families similarly shows that instability within family relationships can influence emotional adjustment and social behavior even when family members remain physically present (Ikhsan et al., 2023; Jannah et al., 2023).

Economic pressure was particularly visible in the experiences of WR and NV. Financial difficulties did not remain a material problem but became intertwined with parental conflict, changes in family roles, and emotional discomfort at home. This pattern corresponds closely with the Family Stress Model, which explains how economic hardship may increase parental distress and interpersonal tension and, through these relational processes, affect children's psychological adjustment (Masarik & Conger, 2017). The participants' experiences suggest that economic hardship becomes especially consequential when it is accompanied by limited communication and inadequate emotional support. Anarta et al. (2023) likewise found that young people from disrupted family environments may experience behavioral and emotional changes associated with family conflict. The present findings extend this perspective by showing how prolonged family strain can make social environments outside the home increasingly meaningful, not necessarily because young people simply reject their families, but because they are searching for spaces in which everyday emotional pressure temporarily becomes less intense.

Emotional distance from parents formed another important layer of the participants' experiences. WR described minimal communication with her father, NV experienced a

largely individualistic family relationship, and A reported an enduring absence of parental warmth despite the physical presence of her parents. These experiences can be understood through parental acceptance-rejection theory, which proposes that perceived parental rejection or lack of emotional acceptance is associated with difficulties in psychological adjustment across cultural contexts (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002). Recent Indonesian studies also demonstrate that family relationships remain closely connected with adolescents' emotional and social functioning (Herliani, 2025; Syahrani & Palila, 2024). The present study, however, suggests that emotional deprivation does not lead to one uniform response. WR sought trusted friends, NV increasingly remained outside the home, and A attempted to cognitively reinterpret difficult family experiences. Their responses illustrate different ways of managing circumstances they perceived as emotionally difficult rather than a single predetermined consequence of being raised in a *broken-home* family.

The tendency to suppress distress and seek relief outside the home also reflects an important coping process. Folkman & Lazarus (1988)) describe emotion-focused coping as an effort to regulate emotional reactions when individuals perceive the source of stress as difficult to change directly. Elements of this process were evident across the three participants. Rather than confronting family problems that they felt unable to control, they attempted to regulate distress by remaining outside the home, confiding in trusted peers, reframing difficult experiences, or engaging in activities that temporarily distracted them from family tension. These strategies need to be understood within the constraints of the participants' circumstances. Their movement toward nightlife was not presented in their narratives as a straightforward choice between a "good" and a "bad" environment. It emerged through attempts to manage emotional discomfort with the social and psychological resources that were accessible to them at the time.

Nightlife consequently acquired meanings that extended well beyond entertainment. For the participants, it became an alternative social space in which they could distance themselves from family tension, interact more freely, establish friendships, and experience forms of recognition they perceived as limited at home. This finding is consistent with Hunt et al. (2010), who conceptualize youth nightlife as a social arena involving pleasure, identity, relationships, and risk rather than merely a setting for substance consumption. Nofre (2023) similarly argues that nightlife may provide opportunities for social connection and community building. The present findings add an important family dimension to this literature. For WR, nightlife friendships offered understanding; for NV, relationships with

people who shared similar experiences created a stronger sense of emotional connection; and for A, peer relationships came to resemble a substitute form of familial warmth. Social acceptance was therefore not peripheral to their nightlife experiences but central to the meaning they attached to continued involvement.

The importance of peer relationships is also consistent with evidence that supportive social connections can contribute to psychological well-being when individuals face stressful circumstances. Rochma & Hartini (2021) found that family functioning and peer social support were related to adolescents' subjective well-being, while Ariyanda et al. (2025) emphasize the significance of social support in adolescent life. The present study nevertheless points to a more complex process. Peer support within nightlife could provide companionship and emotional relief while simultaneously connecting participants with an environment containing new risks. The same social context could therefore be experienced as both supportive and potentially harmful. This duality is essential for understanding why participants remained involved even after becoming aware of some negative consequences. Emotional acceptance and social belonging may have had immediate psychological value that could not easily be replaced by relationships available elsewhere.

Substance use further illustrates this ambivalence. WR and A described alcohol as providing temporary relief from overwhelming thoughts, whereas NV's alcohol and cigarette use was more closely connected with the social and occupational norms of nightlife work. These differences indicate that substance use should not be assigned a single meaning across participants. Research has documented the close relationship between nightlife settings and alcohol or other substance use, while also showing that motives and patterns vary across individuals and social contexts (Glavak-Tkalić et al., 2025; Hunt et al., 2010). Manoppo et al. (2023) similarly discuss alcohol consumption in relation to stress among young people. The present study adds phenomenological detail by showing that alcohol could be experienced as a temporary form of emotional quieting, a component of social interaction, or part of workplace expectations. The relief described by participants was temporary and did not resolve the family circumstances that preceded their involvement.

The consequences of nightlife were similarly ambivalent. Participants described benefits such as companionship, opportunities to forget problems temporarily, greater freedom, and income, but they also encountered physical exhaustion, changing perceptions of relationships, safety concerns, and interpersonal vulnerability. A's experience of sexual

harassment is particularly important because it demonstrates that a space initially perceived as emotionally accepting may simultaneously expose an individual to serious harm. Research on nightlife has repeatedly identified alcohol-related, interpersonal, sexual, and other health risks within nightlife environments (Glavak-Tkalić et al., 2025). Hoffmann (2022) also shows that unstructured socializing may play an important role in the relationship between family structure and risk behavior. These findings should not be interpreted as evidence that nightlife inevitably produces harm, nor that young people from disrupted families will necessarily enter risky environments. Rather, they highlight how vulnerability may emerge through the interaction of family distress, peer contexts, economic circumstances, substance use, and situational exposure.

An important contribution of this study lies in the participants' continuing capacity for reflection and future orientation. Nightlife involvement did not erase their awareness of its consequences or their ability to imagine other possibilities. WR continued to value family relationships and hoped to protect her younger sibling from similar experiences. NV increasingly regarded nightlife as a temporary phase and expressed a desire to leave it. A articulated a wish to improve herself, remain healthy, and achieve stable employment. These accounts complicate portrayals of young people from *broken-home* families as passive products of family dysfunction or as individuals defined by risky behavior. Research on psychological resilience emphasizes that exposure to adversity does not eliminate an individual's capacity for adaptation, meaning-making, and future-oriented growth (Hendriani, 2018). The participants' aspirations similarly demonstrate that difficult family and nightlife experiences can coexist with agency, self-evaluation, and hope.

Theoretically, the findings suggest that the relationship between family dysfunction and nightlife involvement is better understood as an experiential pathway than as a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Family economic strain and emotional distance created a context of distress; limited emotional support increased the significance of alternative social relationships; nightlife provided temporary relief, belonging, and in some cases economic opportunities; prolonged involvement subsequently introduced new risks; and these experiences eventually contributed to reflection about the future. This pathway brings together perspectives on family stress Masarik & Conger (2017), parental acceptance and rejection Khaleque & Rohner (2002) , coping Folkman & Lazarus (1988) peer support (Rochma & Hartini, 2021), and nightlife as a social environment (Hunt et al., 2010; Nofre, 2023). The contribution of the present study therefore lies less in proposing that *broken homes*

produce nightlife involvement and more in demonstrating how nightlife can acquire particular psychological and social meanings when young people experience emotional insecurity within their families.

The findings also carry practical implications for families, counselors, educators, and youth-support services. Interventions directed solely at stopping nightlife behavior may overlook the emotional and relational circumstances that make nightlife meaningful to young people. Support should therefore address family communication, emotional availability, safe opportunities for disclosure, coping skills, supportive peer networks, and access to non-judgmental psychological assistance. Particular attention is needed when nightlife participation intersects with economic necessity, as illustrated by NV's experience, because behavioral recommendations that ignore financial realities may be difficult to implement. Prevention and counseling programs would benefit from approaching young people as active individuals with complex needs rather than defining them primarily through family status or nightlife behavior. Such an approach may create greater opportunities for trust, reflection, and sustainable behavioral change.

The study also has several limitations. The use of three purposively selected participants within a single urban context is consistent with the idiographic orientation of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, but it limits the transferability of the findings to wider populations. The participants represented particular family circumstances and forms of nightlife involvement, and young people from other socioeconomic, cultural, gender, occupational, or family backgrounds may interpret similar experiences differently. Interview data also relied on retrospective personal accounts and were therefore shaped by memory, current emotions, and participants' willingness to disclose sensitive experiences. The researcher's interpretative position is another inherent consideration in phenomenological analysis, although triangulation and systematic analysis were used to strengthen credibility. Future studies could involve more varied participant profiles, examine differences across forms of family disruption and nightlife involvement, and explore the perspectives of family members or significant peers while continuing to protect participants' privacy and emotional safety.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that family dysfunction, nightlife involvement, and subsequent self-reflection formed an interconnected experiential process for WR, NV, and A. Family disruption was experienced primarily through economic tension, emotional

distance, and the absence of a secure relational space rather than formal divorce alone. Nightlife subsequently acquired meaning as an alternative space for escape, friendship, acceptance, and, for one participant, economic survival. The same environment also generated substantial risks and did not resolve the difficulties originating within the family. The persistence of reflection and future aspirations across all three narratives is therefore especially significant. It shows that young people navigating family disruption and nightlife remain capable of evaluating their experiences, maintaining personal boundaries, and imagining lives that are healthier, safer, and more stable.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and discussion, the involvement of young people aged 18–22 from *broken-home* families in nightlife in City X can be understood as a gradual process shaped by family experiences, psychological pressure, social needs, and economic circumstances. The three participants showed different life histories, yet their experiences shared several common features, particularly family conflict, limited emotional support, emotional distance from parents, and the need to feel safe, accepted, and understood. Nightlife subsequently emerged as an alternative social space where participants could distance themselves from family tension, build friendships, experience greater freedom, and, in certain cases, meet economic needs. Their forms of involvement varied from socializing and entertainment to alcohol and cigarette consumption and nightlife-related employment. These differences indicate that nightlife carried distinct personal meanings for each participant and cannot be understood merely as recreational or risky behavior.

The findings also show that nightlife produced ambivalent experiences. It provided companionship, emotional relief, social acceptance, and economic opportunities, while simultaneously exposing participants to physical, psychological, interpersonal, and safety-related risks. Despite these experiences, all participants retained the capacity for self-reflection and continued to imagine a different future, including hopes for a more harmonious family, leaving nightlife, improving personal well-being, and achieving stable employment. The study therefore concludes that nightlife involvement among young people from *broken-home* families is best understood as a complex experiential trajectory that begins with unmet emotional and relational needs, develops through the search for alternative spaces of belonging, and may eventually lead to greater awareness of personal risks and future

aspirations. Future studies are encouraged to involve participants from more diverse family, social, cultural, and occupational backgrounds in order to deepen understanding of how family disruption and nightlife experiences are interpreted across different contexts.

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