

Study of Impact of Family on the Adjustment of Adolescents

Girls

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Abstract

The image of adolescence as a time of storm and stress, intense moodiness and preoccupation with the self has permeated both professional and lay perspectives on this developmental period. The families in general and parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to the child. The strongest factor in moulding a child's personality is his relationship with his parents (Mohanraj and Latha 2005). The family in its most common forms is a lifelong commitment between man and women who feed, shelter and nurture their children until they reach maturity. It is a primary socialization context and is, therefore, considered to be a very important factor influencing child development (Ozcinar 2006).

Keywords: Nuclear family, Joint family, Adjustment

Introduction:

Strong emotional bonds evolved to faster long term commitment among parents, children and other relatives. The experience that the adolescent girls gain from the family decide the future adjustment of adolescent girl within society and her peer group which eventually reflect the social maturity of adolescent girls (Unisa 1995). Family environment continues to be of crucial importance throughout adolescence and young adulthood (Van Wel 2000). Because of the important role of psychological functioning for youngsters' daily lives and their further social adaptation, it is apparently relevant to study the effect of the family environment on the emotional adjustment of adolescents (Mc Farlane et al. 1994). Family cohesion and supportive relationships between family members are associated with adolescent psychological adaptation and lower depression (Herman et al. 2007). Research regarding level of family conflict suggests that a conflictual family environment is associated with adolescents' insecurity and psychological distress, as well as aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder (Wissink et al. 2006). During adolescence, well-being decreases and psychological problems increase. One aspect of the family that has been steadily found to affect the emotional adjustment of adolescents is the quality and stability of their parents marriage (Amato and Keith 1991a). Numerous studies have shown that youngsters growing up in families with a happy, harmonious parental marriage experience fewer problems and a higher well-being than those from divorced or maritally distressed families (Spruijitt and De Goede 1997).

"Happiness Comes From.....Some Curious Adjustment to Life." (Hugh Walpole) The 21st century is an era of information and communication technology. With all its advancement and changing pattern, the environment of today is changing and life is becoming very complex & conflicting day by day. In this dynamic environment, many of the adolescents are finding it difficult to adjust themselves and even sometimes succumb to the environmental pressure. It's not only academics with which the students are concerned; they are equally affected by the social and emotional changes. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) describe this transition as a "culture shock involving significant social and psychological relearning in the face of encounters with new ideas, new teachers and friends with quite varied values and beliefs, new freedoms and opportunities, and new academic, personal and social demands" (pp. 58- 59). Adolescents with poor habits and skills are known to develop high risk behaviours which lead to long lasting social and academic consequences.

The nature of children's family environment has a very strong effect on children's cognitive and behavioural development. In fact, family environment is the quality and quantity of the cognitive, emotional and social support that has been available to the child within the home and connotes the psychological environment of home. Thus, a young person's social adjustment is not a thing apart, but is closely linked with his adjustment to his home and school relationships. It usually follows that an adolescent who experiences a normal and wellintegrated home and school life carries over into all his other associations a similar

wholesomeness of attitude and control of behaviour (Verma and Sangita, 1991; Field et al. 1995; Kokko and Pulkkinen, 2000 and Lai and McBride-Chang, 2001).

Family interactions and relationship between family members play a pivotal role in the adjustment issues of adolescence (Werner-2003). Family cohesion and supportive relationships between family members are associated with adolescent psychological adaptation and lower depression (Herman et al. 2007). The families in general and parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available in moulding child's personality. It is a primary socialization context and is, therefore, considered to be a very important factor influencing child development (Ozcinar 2006). Family environment continues to be of crucial importance throughout adolescence and young adulthood (Van Wel 2000). Numerous studies have shown that youngsters growing up in families with a happy, harmonious parental marriage experience fewer problems and a higher well-being than those from divorced or maritally distressed families (Spruijt and De Goede 1997). Previous studies indicate that family environment influences adolescent's psychological adjustment and problem solving strategies as well as self-confidence and ability to set clear goals (Jewell and Stark 2003). Because of the important role of psychological functioning for youngsters' daily lives and their further social adaptation, it is apparently relevant to study the effect of the family on the adjustment of adolescents.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Adjustment: Concept and Definitions

The concept of adjustment was originally a biological one and was used in Darwin's (1859) "Theory of Evolution". The term adjustment refers to the process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs (Shaffer, 1961). Good (1959) state that adjustment is the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. In Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, "it is stated that adjustment is to achieve mental or behavioural balance between one's own needs and the demands of others as a result of which the individual is put to a more satisfactory state." These meanings refer to psychological and sociological implications of the term adjustment. In Encyclopedia Britannica (1768, Vol.I) it is stated that adjustment (in psychology) is the process of behaviour by which all creatures maintain an equilibrium between their needs and demands and obstacles to the environments. It is therefore a harmonious relationship with the environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's need and meet most of the demands both physical and social that are put upon one. Thus we may say that adjustment is a process of maintaining a balance between the needs such as physical, social, psychological and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. In other words, adjustment is a state in the condition of harmony arrived at by a person whom we call "well adjusted". Operationally adjustment is defined as the scores obtained by the students in three areas of adjustment i.e. Emotional, Social and Educational through the adjustment inventory prepared by Dr. A.K.P. Sinha and Dr. R.P. Singh.

Family: Concept and Definitions

The term family is derived from the Latin word 'familia' denoting a household establishment and refers to a "group of individuals living together during important phases of their lifetime and bound to each other by biological and/or social and psychological relationship". It is the most pervasive and universal social institution which plays a vital role in the socialization and healthy development of individuals' personality. Unlike the western society, which puts impetus on "individualism", the Indian society is "collectivistic" in that it promotes interdependence and co-operation, with the family forming the focal point of this social structure. As Mack and Young say, "The family is the basic primary group and the natural matrix of personality". According to the Bureau of Census (U.S.A.) "Family is a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together". According to Burgess and Locke, "Family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption; consisting a single household, interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their social roles of husband and wife, mother and

father, son and daughter, brother and sister creating a common culture". Though family is a universal institution, its structure or forms vary from one society to another. Sociologists and anthropologists have mentioned about different types of families found in different cultures. In this research classification of families is done on the basis of organization (nuclear and joint).

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURES

Deepshikha and Bhanot (2011) studied role of family environment on socio-emotional adjustment of adolescent girls in rural areas of eastern Uttar Pradesh and found that all the eight family environment factors, viz. cohesion, expressiveness conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization and control together showed significant role in socio-emotional and educational adjustment of adolescent girls. Manju (2011) to study the adjustment among high school students (boys and girls) and found no significant difference in the emotional, educational and social adjustment. Basu (2012) conducted a study on adjustment of secondary school students. The findings of the present study reveal that there exist highly significant differences between the adjustment of secondary school students when compared on the basis of gender, type of family structure and medium of instruction in school. Chauhan (2013) conducted a study on adjustment of higher secondary school students of Durg district. The t-test results indicate that there is significant difference in adjustment of higher secondary school's students and female students have good adjustment level when compared to the male students. Sharma & Saini (2013) studied Health, social and emotional problems of college students. The findings of the study revealed that Girls are average in the dimensions of health and social adjustment and unsatisfied in emotional areas. Boys are average in the dimensions of social adjustment and unsatisfied in health and emotional areas. There is no significant they differ significantly difference between health, social and emotional adjustment of Girls and Boys. There is a significant difference between health and emotional adjustment of urban and rural college students but they do not differ significantly in social adjustment. Devik (2013) found that significant difference exist in the emotional adjustment of the boys and girls and with regard to social adjustment no significant difference found between boys and girls of higher secondary school students. Makwana & Kaji (2014) conducted a study on Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Relation to their Gender. The result shows that there is no significant difference in Home, School and Emotional adjustment of boys and girls secondary school student. But there is significant difference in Social adjustment of boys & girls secondary school students at 0.05 level. It means boys are Social adjustment better than girls. Mohan Raj and Latha (2014) studied perceived family environment in relation to adjustment and academic achievement. Academic performance was significantly related to independence and conflict domains of family environment. Boys and girls differed in perception of the home and environment. Vishal & Kaji (2014) studied Adjustment of Boys and Girls School Level Students in Ahmedabad. The result shows that there is significant difference in total, home, social and emotional adjustment of boys and girls students at 0.01 & 0.05 levels. There is no significant difference in school adjustment of boys and girls students in Ahmedabad. Pooja (2014) conducted a comparative study of emotional adjustment of secondary school students in relation to their gender, academic achievement and parent-child relationship. The results of the study showed that female secondary school students are emotionally more adjusted as compared to male secondary school students. Vaghela (2014) conducted a study on adjustment among adolescent girl students of secondary school with respect to their type of family. The findings of the study showed that (i) there were significant differences between adolescent girl students from nuclear and joint families in relation to their social adjustment.(ii) As regarding the emotional adjustment there were statistically significant differences between adolescent girl students from nuclear and joint families, (iii) There were no significant differences between adolescent girl students from nuclear and joint families in relation to their educational adjustment. Sharma (2014) conducted a study to find the effect of family climate on emotional and social adjustment of school students. The finding of the study was no significant difference between social adjustment of students due to highly

satisfactory family climate and highly dissatisfactory climate and there is significant difference between emotional adjustment of students due to highly satisfactory family climate and highly dissatisfactory climate. Tewari and Shubham (2014) conducted a comparative study on emotional need fulfillment in adolescents of joint family and nuclear family. The result shows that adolescents from joint families are more satisfied in the aspect of emotional need fulfillment. Oranous Ghotbinejad Bahreasemani and Zohreh Ostovar (2014) conducted a comparative study of social adjustment, self-Worthiness and achievement motivation among only- child adolescents and adolescents with siblings. Findings of the research indicated that there is a significant difference on social adjustment between the adolescents in families with one-child and the adolescents in families with multiple-child. It is evident from the survey of literature that in none of the study adjustment of secondary school students were studied simultaneously along with both sexes and type of the family. Therefore, in the light of the above facts the present investigation will definitely fill the void of knowledge by providing fruitful information particularly in the area of adjustment- a most powerful indicator of success in life.

Family Functioning and Adolescent Adjustment

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the profound influence of the family, as a core microsystem, on an individual's psychological and social adjustment. The role of family functioning in adolescent adjustment has also been supported by Shek's research (Shek, 2002). Family functioning is a multidimensional, comprehensive concept that includes the relational structure among family members, communication quality, emotional bonds, and the ability to cope with environmental changes (Beavers & Hampson, 2000; D. H. Olson, 2000). Among these, family cohesion reflects the strength of emotional bonds between family members and serves as the core of mutual recognition, support, and emotional exchange (Beavers & Hampson, 2000; D. H. Olson, 2000; J. Tang & Jiang, 2009). Family adaptability refers to the ability of family members to flexibly adjust family rules and internal norms in response to external environmental changes and developmental challenges (Fei et al., 1991). Adjustment is the ability of individuals to form corresponding psychological and behavioral patterns to fulfill the demands of social life (Xu, 2000). Zhang and Jiang (2006) defined adolescent adjustment as an individual's capacity to adjust to changes occurring during the process of socialization, thereby achieving congruence with the surrounding environment. Positive family functioning not only provides emotional support and social resources to adolescents but also fosters the development of their socio-emotional competencies, enhancing their interpersonal communication, emotional management, and social responsibility, which significantly improves their adolescent adjustment ability (Shek, 2002). Conversely, inadequate family functioning often leads to decreased self-esteem, increased mental health issues, and difficulties in forming stable peer relationships, resulting in poor adjustment (Yen et al., 2013). Research shows that stronger family cohesion and adaptability provides more positive support for adolescents, facilitating emotional and social development and promoting positive behavioral adjustment (Choi & Becher, 2014; Shao et al., 2014). In contrast, a negative or weak emotional connection in the family environment can increase adolescent feelings of loneliness, reduce social responsibility, and lead to adjustment difficulties (Du, 2014). Therefore, this study proposes Hypothesis 1: Family functioning positively predicts adolescent adjustment level.

Family Functioning and Interpersonal Competence

Interpersonal competence, also referred to as interpersonal communication competence, is a key psychological quality that enables individuals to build and maintain high-quality interpersonal relationships through effective interaction with others or groups (Hao & Niu, 2014; X. Liu et al., 2014). It typically comprises three dimensions: interpersonal communication, interpersonal perception, and interpersonal regulation (Shen et al., 2009). Interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of information and psychological signals, serving as a motivational force that meets individual needs, and is regarded as a form of social intelligence (Rogers & Koch, 1959; Wentzel, 1998). Interpersonal perception involves recognizing and understanding others' appearances, personalities, and behaviors,

falling within the domain of social cognition (Guo et al., 2007). Negative interpersonal perception may lead to emotional withdrawal and maladaptive social interactions, thereby undermining the quality of real-life relationships (Sadikaj et al., 2007). Interpersonal regulation refers to the ability to flexibly apply communication strategies to manage and adjust interpersonal relationships, which is essential for effective interaction (Ma & Bai, 2006; Shi, 2013).

As a critical distal environmental factor influencing adolescent psychological and social development, family functioning plays an essential role in shaping interpersonal competence. Healthy family functioning, characterized by high levels of cohesion and adaptability, provides adolescents with stable emotional support and a sense of security, thereby fostering the development of interpersonal communication skills (Dai, 2001; Shek, 2002). Studies have shown that harmonious family relationships not only contribute to adolescents' resilience and optimism but also help reduce behavioral problems (Sonogo et al., 2013; Yang, 2014). Furthermore, parental education and attention to parent-child relationships enhance the positive impact of family functioning on adolescents' emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication skills (Li et al., 2014). In contrast, dysfunctional family environments often lead to emotional detachment among members, decreased interpersonal trust, and lower communication quality, making adolescents more likely to adopt maladaptive interpersonal coping strategies, thereby negatively affecting their social adjustment (Geng et al., 2011). Additionally, positive family functioning promotes secure parent-child attachment and facilitates the development of positive cognitive schemas, providing a strong foundation for healthy peer relationships and significantly influencing interpersonal behavior (D. Zhao et al., 2009).

Interpersonal Competence and Adolescent Adjustment

In adolescent development research, interpersonal competence has been shown to be closely related to well-being, emotional regulation, and school adjustment (Geng et al., 2001; Lee & Yun, 2002). Good adjustment abilities help individuals establish positive interpersonal relationships, improve relationship quality, and enhance their willingness and ability to engage in social activities (C. Liu et al., 2005). As adolescents improve the quality of their interpersonal relationships, their interpersonal needs are more easily met, which in turn promotes better adjustment to the constantly changing external environment (Vorauer et al., 2000). Existing studies have shown that interpersonal communication skills can significantly and positively predict new students' adjustment, while negative communication motives can lower individuals' adjustment levels in both psychological and school-related domains (Y. Chen et al., 2009). Based on these findings, this study proposes hypothesis H2b: Interpersonal competence positively predicts adolescent adjustment.

CONCLUSION

From the above results it may be concluded that type of family has significant effect on the development and adjustment patterns of the adolescents. On the basis of the analysis of the data we can safely conclude that these significant impact of structure of family might be due to the reason that in joint family system, there are more members in the family wherein there are more chances of disclosure of pent up emotions, there are more number of adults advising young ones during their stressful period where as such intimacy is not found in nuclear family. According to McFarlane et al. (1994), family environment plays a very important role on the emotional adjustment of adolescents to understand the social adaptation pattern. Parental control, exercised in a supportive environment is widely recognized as a facilitator of social development in adolescents (Adams and Bennion, 1990).

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