

A Study on Adolescents as Silent Victims of Parental Marital Disharmony

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on adolescents who are affected by parental marital disharmony. Many adolescents face emotional and psychological problems due to conflicts between their parents, but they do not express their feelings openly. Hence, they are considered silent victims. The study aims to understand their life struggles they face daily in their life. Data was collected from adolescents using a questionnaire. The study found that parental conflict negatively affects adolescents' life satisfaction, but proper support can improve their well-being.

Keywords: Emotional distress, silent victims, family conflict, psychological well-being, social withdrawal

Introduction

Adolescence is an important stage of life where individuals experience many physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, family plays a major role in shaping their personality and mental well-being. A peaceful and supportive family environment helps adolescents grow confidently. However, when there is conflict or misunderstanding between parents, it creates stress and confusion in the minds of adolescents. Parental marital disharmony, such as frequent arguments, lack of communication, or separation, can negatively affect adolescents. Many of them do not openly express their feelings and become silent sufferers. They may experience fear, loneliness, and emotional distress. This study focuses on understanding adolescents as silent victims and examines how parental conflict affects their life satisfaction and overall well-being.

Objectives

- To analyse the demographic profile of the study
- To study whether the parental conflict affect child's life.
- To analyse trust issues in relationship among children from conflict families.

Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and was conducted in Nagercoil city among adolescents aged 18–25 years. A sample of 50 respondents was selected using purposive sampling method. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire including

socio-demographic details and variables like emotional distress and life satisfaction, while secondary data was gathered from books, journals, and reports. The collected data was analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation with the help of SPSS

Analysis and Interpretation

Si. No	Variables	Value Level	Respondents
1	Age	18-20	48%
		20-23	24%
		24-26	26%
2	Educational status	Arts Engineering Diploma polytechnic	82% 8% 8% 2%
3	Family type	Nuclear family Joint family	68% 32%
4	Fathers occupation	Business farmer	38% 16%
5	Mothers occupation	Working Non- working	24% 78%
6	Part-time jobs	Yes no	6% 94%
7	Family income	Low income Middle income	28% 72%
8	Purpose of choosing course	Interest	32% 68%

The table shows that the majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 21–22 years, where 24% are 22 years old and 20% are 21 years old. A large majority of the respondents (82%) belong to the first category of educational status. Most of the respondents (68%) belong to nuclear families and 76% of their mothers are non-working. Only 6% of the respondents are doing part-time jobs, while 72% belong to middle-income families. Further, 68% of the respondents have chosen their course mainly for job opportunities and the ambition of the respondents is almost equally distributed between higher studies (34%), job (34%).

Si. No	Variables	Value Level	Respondents
1	Feeling scared	Yes	76%
		No	24%
2	Feeling lonely	Yes	70%
		No	30%

3	Emotional disturbance	Low Moderate High Very high	36% 28% 18% 18%
4	Mood swings	Rarely Sometimes Often Always	38% 32% 20% 10%
5	Suppress emotions	Yes No	68% 32%
6	Trusting issues	Yes No	62% 38%
7	Affected mental health	Yes No	66% 34%
8	Affected due to Parental conflict	Yes No	64% 36%
9	Studies affected	Concentration problems Marks reduced Loss of interest	28% 36% 36%
10	Fear of marriage	Yes No	60% 40%
11	Compare future relationship	Yes No	68% 32%

The table shows that a majority of the respondents (76%) feel scared during parental conflict and 70% of them feel lonely at home due to family problems. About 36% of the respondents experience low emotional disturbance, while 28% experience moderate emotional disturbance and 18% each experience high and very high emotional disturbance. The table also reveals that 68% of the respondents suppress their emotions and 62% of them find it difficult to trust others in close relationships. Further, 66% of the respondents feel mentally affected at home and 64% state that their studies are affected due to parental conflict. In addition, 60% of the respondents feel afraid of marriage and 68% compare their future relationships with their parents' conflict.

Sl. No	Variables	Value Level	Respondents
1	Shared parent conflict With friends	Yes	64%
		No	36%
2	Kept family secret	Yes	70%
		No	30%
3	Try to solve conflict	Yes	78%
		No	22%
4	Avoid arguing	Yes	64%
		No	36%
5	Feel financially secured	Yes	64%
		No	36%
6	Receive necessary financial	Yes	76%
		No	24%
7	Caused financial problems	Yes	54%
		No	46%
8	Financial worries	Fees	34%
		Daily expenses	18%
		Educational expenses	30%
		All	18%
9	Basic needs	Fully Partially	42%
		Not fulfilled	48%
			10%
10	Manage family expenses	Properly Somehow	32%
		manage with difficult	26%
		Very difficult	18%
			22%

The table shows that 64% of the respondents have shared their parents' conflict with friends, while 70% have also kept the conflict as a secret from others. A majority of the respondents (78%) stated that their parents try to solve conflicts calmly and 64% said that their parents avoid arguing in front of them. The table also reveals that 64% of the respondents feel financially secure at home and 76% receive necessary financial support for their education. However, 54% of the respondents reported that parental conflict has caused financial problems.

Sl. No	Variables	Value Level	Respondents
1	Struggle to trust others	Yes	62%
		No	38%

2	Suppress emotions	Yes	68%
		No	32%
3	Difficult to express	Yes Sometimes	46%
		No	30%
			24%
4	Compare future relationship	Yes	68%
		No	32%
5	Discussing family problems	Yes	60%
		No	40%
6	Blame yourself	Yes	50%
		No	50%
7	Staying at home affect mental health	Yes	60%
		No	40%

The table shows that 62% of the respondents struggle to trust others in close relationships and 68% suppress their emotions instead of expressing them. About 46% of the respondents find it difficult to express affection openly, while 60% feel afraid of marriage because of their parents' relationship. The table also reveals that 66% of the respondents feel that staying at home affects their mental health and 60% avoid discussing family problems with others. However, 74% of the respondents stated that they have the determination to change the negative situation in their family.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, it is clear that adolescents are deeply affected by parental marital disharmony, often becoming silent sufferers. Therefore, it is important to create awareness among parents about the impact of their conflicts on children. Parents should try to maintain a peaceful environment and avoid involving children in their disputes. Emotional support, open communication and counselling services should be encouraged to help adolescents cope with stress. Schools and social workers also play an important role in identifying and supporting affected adolescents. Providing guidance, promoting positive coping strategies and strengthening family relationships can significantly improve adolescents' wellbeing.

Conclusion

The study concludes that adolescents are silent victims of parental marital disharmony. Family conflicts create emotional distress, fear, and low life satisfaction among adolescents. Even though many do not express their feelings, they are deeply affected. Proper

support from family, school, and society can help them cope with these problems. A peaceful family environment is essential for the healthy development of adolescents.

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