

Effect of Single Parenting on Stress of Adolescent Students

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ABSTRACT

In the present study it is found that Children who are living in single-parent households have increased risks of psychiatric diseases at various life stages. Growing up in a single-parent family may have adverse effect on the health of the child also. They may also face the condition of lack of resources which may lead to poor academic performance of the children. Studies conducted in this area indicated that in a single parent family child suffer from different types of problems. Rodgers and Pryor concluded from a comparative study of children of separated parents and children whose parents remain together that children of separated parents are at increased risk of the lower level of educational achievement, high drop out of school, become teenage parents, more conflicts with their parent, less supervised by adults.

Keywords : Single Parenting, Stress, Adolescence, Students

I. INTRODUCTION

The family is the basic unit of society, within which the 'newborn' takes birth. It is the first world to the child. It is the oldest social institution for nurturing and basic schooling of children. The early socialization process and the personality make-up of a child start in the family. It is one of the most effective institution that guide children for their development and integration. It is a primary social group consisting of parents and their offspring. Parents perform following functions:-

- i. They train them in learning basic activities of life.
- ii. They are the vital source of satisfaction of their child's physical and psychological needs.
- iii. They act as a major source in influencing the attitude and behaviour of the child.
- iv. They provide good home environment necessary for growth and personality development.
- v. In the real sense, parents transmit values to their children in several ways such as through instructions, selective reinforcements and through their own behaviour.

A child's satisfactory adjustment to life situation is directly dependent upon the extent to which all his basic needs and requirements are satisfied. The effectiveness with which transmission takes place differs from family

to family and society to society and also depends on parenting style and family structure.

Parenting style is a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their child rearing. It includes the practices that parents use to rear their child to make him a better citizen or member of the society. In a normal structured family, generally, a child gets proper care and attention from his parents. Both parents provide better environment to their children and try to provide all the facilities to their children according to their needs. They even participate in their daily activities such as playing and completing their home work. They are able to do so because they are two biological parents of their children and have enough time and resources to do so. They together take good care of their child. So as both the parents i.e. father and mother are responsible for the better growth and development of a child, so it is necessary for them to be together and constitute a better family environment. But sometimes, due to certain factors and conditions, normal family structure gets distorted and parents get separated.

Family structure is the way in which a family is organized according to roles, rules, power, and hierarchies. It is considered as a family support system involving two married individuals providing care and stability for their biological offspring. Sometimes the

normal family structure is affected due to certain factors. The factors can be divorce, marital separation, single parent adoption, out of wedlock pregnancy and death of any one of the two partners either of male and female. These terms are defined as follows:-

- **Divorce** is the termination or cancellation of marriage between a married couple under the rule of law of a particular country or state.
- **Marital separation** is a state when married partners stop living together.
- **Out of wedlock pregnancy** is the state when a female is not married and she becomes pregnant as she may be engaged with a male or males.
- **Death** is the termination of all biological functions that sustain a living organism.
- **Single parent adoption** is the state in which a single parent either male or female adopts a child. He/she can be divorced, unmarried and single because of any reason.

Therefore, there can be various reasons for single parenting conditions. If one of the parents gets separated from the family, then all the responsibilities of the child/children come on the shoulder of single parent. This makes the situation more difficult and he/she has to take care of his/her child on her own. He/she has to play the role of both of father and mother and perform all the activities. In a female headed family, a mother has to do job, all household work and perform all the responsibilities of her child/children. While, in case of male headed families, he has to do job along with all household works. So, all the responsibilities of both parents are completed by a single parent. During or after the separation of parents, a child may suffer from different kinds of problems regardless of the reason of the separation of their parents. This type of condition may lead to the development of abnormal behaviour and various other psychological problems.

Children who are living in single-parent households are found to have increased risks of psychiatric diseases at various life stages. Growing up in a single-parent family may have adverse effect on the health of the child also. They may also face the condition of lack of resources which may lead to poor academic performance of the children.

Studies conducted in this area indicated that in a single parent family child suffer from different types of problems. Rodgers and Pryor concluded from a

comparative study of children of separated parents and children whose parents remain together that children of separated parents are at increased risk of the following:

- Lower level of educational achievement
- High drop out of school
- Become teenage parents
- More conflicts with their parent
- Less supervised by adults
- More likely to become truants
- More frequently become abuse of drug and alcohol
- High risk sexual behavior
- More likely to join a gang
- Emotional and behavioral problems
- More likely to participate in violent crime
- More likely to commit suicide

II. REVIEWS OF RELATED LITERATURE

Krein and Beller (1988) conducted a study on educational attainment of children from single parent families. They examined the effect of living in a single-parent family on educational attainment by gender and race. According to household production theory, the reduction in parental resources for human capital investment in children living in a single-parent family should lower their educational attainment. Using matched mother-daughter and mother-son samples from the National Longitudinal Surveys, they constructed precise measures of the age and length of time a child lived in a single-parent family. Empirical findings showed the negative effect of living in a single-parent family (1) increases with the number of years spent in this type of family, (2) is greatest during the preschool years, and (3) is larger for boys than girls.

Barnes and Farrell (1992) conducted a study on parental support and control as predictors of adolescent drinking, delinquency, and related problem behaviour. This study was conducted on a sample of 699 adolescents and their families the effects of parenting practices, particularly support and control, on the development of adolescent drinking, delinquency, and other problem behaviour was examined. Black families were oversampled (n = 211) to permit meaningful analyses. The findings confirmed that parental support and monitoring are important predictors of adolescent outcomes even after taking into account critical demographic/family factors, including socioeconomic indicators, age, gender, and race of the

adolescent family structure, and family history of alcohol abuse.

Ahuja and Stinson (1993) conducted a study on female-headed single parent families: an exploratory study of children's influence in family decision making. This study examined the relationships among selected characteristics of female-headed single parent families, and the influence the children have in the family decision making process. The characteristics of interest were, the mother's age, education, income, sex role orientation, employment status, and the number of years since the mother's separation, divorce, or widowhood, the household size, the age and sex of the oldest child. The results indicated that children's influence in this family type varies according to demographic characteristics of the family, according to the mother's sex role orientation, according to the type of product investigated, and according to the stage in the decision making process.

Falci (1997) undertook a study on the effects of family structure and family process on the psychological well-being of children. This study indicated that the differences in children's psychological well-being were small across family structures. These small differences support other researcher's findings that most children grow up fine in all family. Furthermore, family processes mediated the effects of family structure on children's psychological well-being. In addition, the degree of closeness to mother and father, and mother's psychological well-being appeared to be the most influential predictors of children's psychological well-being.

Gill, Sharma and Verma (2003) conducted a study on adolescents in single parent families. The results indicated that the families of single parents had no adverse effect on the parent-child relationship which was directly related to the average well-being of adolescents and feelings of cohesion among the family members. However, differences were present in the experiences that adolescents had in single parent families related to gender and family structure.

Ginther and Pollak (2004) conducted a study on family structure and children's educational outcomes: blended families, stylized facts, and descriptive regressions to describe correlations between children's educational outcomes and family structure. This was revealed that educational outcomes for both types of children in

blended families step, children and their half-siblings who were the joint biological children of both parents were similar to each other and substantially worse than outcomes for children reared in traditional nuclear families. It was concluded that there exist a crucial distinction between children reared in traditional nuclear families (i.e., families in which all children are the joint biological children of both parents) and children reared in other family structures (e.g., single-parent families or blended families).

Park (2008) conducted the study on effects of single parenthood on educational aspiration and student disengagement in Korea. Data was collected from Korean 9th and 12th graders. Logistic regression analyses showed that students with a divorced single parent, regardless of gender of the parent, were less likely to aspire to four-year university education and more likely to be disengaged than their counterparts with two parents.

Susan and Pollet, (2008) conducted a study on single parent households. According to the findings of the study, single parent families were no longer nontraditional families in the United States given the statistics. Attorneys, judges, mediators, mental health professionals and all other professionals and policy makers who work with and think about these families must be cognizant of the challenges of single parenthood and continue to work toward alleviating the burden on children so that the statement that children in two parent households generally far better than children raised by one parent can be changed.

Mooney, Oliver and Smith (2009) conducted a study on impact of family breakdown on children's well-being. They compared with children growing up in intact families and breakdown families. It was found that across a range of measures are poorer for children who experience family breakdown, and some of these persist into adulthood.

Musick and Meier (2010) conducted a study on the effect of parental conflict on well-being of adults. Data was taken from three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households. Findings of this study suggested that parental conflict is associated with children's poor academic achievement, increased substance use, and early family formation and dissolution. It concluded that children do better, on

average, living with two biological married parents, the advantages of two-parent families are not shared equally by all.

Abreu (2013) conducted the study on single parent home effect on adolescence. This paper studied the interrelationship among family structure, patterns of single parent decision making and deviant behavior among adolescents. It also included family income and non custodial parent involvement. Patterns of family decision making and family structure both had a significant effect on adolescent deviance behavior. Data on the child's behavior, the child's life at home, and parental relation with the child was collected through self reports. It was recommended that understanding the family structure can have an important role in the intervention and prevention of deviant behavior in the child. More parental monitoring was associated with less delinquency in a single parent household. They examined family structure including two parent families, single mother families, single father families, and stepfamilies. This paper addresses the implications of different theories and findings designed to reduce deviance.

Dogget (n.d.) conducted a study on juvenile delinquency and family structure to explain the effect of family structure on juvenile delinquency. Data for this research were collected from a high school in a predominantly low-income area of the south by using surveys. Findings suggested that family structure indeed both negatively and positively play a role in the production of juvenile delinquency. The least amount of communication and structure the family provides, the more likely the child will engage in delinquent activities. After reviewing the results of the study the researcher found out that there is a relationship between single parenting and stress and problems of adolescents. These factors affect each other.

III. PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN OF SINGLE PARENT ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE

Usakli (n.d.) conducted a study on comparison of single and two parent's children in terms of their behavioral tendencies. The purpose of the study was to compare behavioral tendencies such as assertiveness, aggressiveness and submissiveness of single parent children and normal parent children who have two

parents. This study was undertaken on a sample of 150 children out of which 75 single parent children and 75 were two parent children. CATS (Children Action Tendency Scale) (Deluty, 1979) which was adapted by Usakli (2006) was used as an inventory. At the end of the study, it was found out that the single parent children were less assertive and more aggressive and submissive than their two parent peers. He also mentioned problems of children of single parent according to their age. These are as follows :-

3.1 Three to five years old children

1. Poor understanding of the family situation
2. Feelings: frightened, insecure
3. May have nightmares, whining, crying, clinging behaviour
4. Temper tantrums
5. Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
6. Regression to more infant like behaviour

3.2 Six to eight years old children

1. Trouble separating their own needs from those of their parents
2. Feel sad, loss, frightened, uncertain
3. Generalized anxiety
4. Disorganized and unsettled
5. School work problems
6. Feelings of abandonment and miss their parent
7. Anger at perceived rejection
8. Lashing out at custodial parent, teachers, other children
9. Denial, self-blame, feels alienated
10. May attach themselves to other adults for security

3.3 Nine to twelve years old children

1. Sense of losing belongingness
2. Feel rejected, helpless, lonely, ashamed, embarrassed
3. Powerless to control parental behavior
4. Psychosomatic symptoms
5. Anger, withdrawn, overactive
6. Blame one parent for the divorce, direct anger
7. School work problems
8. Struggling with feelings of mixed loyalties, loneliness, depression
9. Power struggle with authority
10. May seek support from other adults outside of the home

In another study, Savage (1980) proved that about 40 percent of elementary school children who

come from single-parent families are classified as "low achievers," according to the study of 18,000 pupils in 14 states in the country. According to Katz, Dunham, and Zimmerman (1997), the social control theory emphasizes that people act in deviant behavior because of the thrill they experience from acting in deviant ways. It is believed that children display deviant behavior when social control is ineffective, such as in a single parent home. Establishing a family structure is the first step in which norms are teach to child, but when a household goes through a change, the child often loses sense of values and norms. Studies show that a single headed parent home deprive the child from learning proper social norms as the child would experience from a two parent household.

So it can be concluded that in a two parent family or normal structured family, a child/ children get better environment as compared to single parent family. Children in normal family get better growth and development as compared to in single parent family.

IV. EFFECT OF SINGLE PARENTING ON STRESS OF ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

Adolescence is marked by specific attitudes and behavior patterns. It has been called a period of 'Challenge and Potential'. At the same time he is faced with great challenges on account of his rapid physical growth, soaring as well as falling ideals, his search for identity as he is neither considered as a child nor an adult, heightened emotions and lack of appropriate energies for channelizing his enormous energy. All these issues and problems make the adolescence period as the period of 'stress and storm'. However, the situation may be worsening if he/she is reared in single parent family. In, single parenting child may become more stressed because of problems that are arises due to single parenting.

Findings of various studies also proved that family structure affects the life of a child. As, in normal family structure a child gets better family environment and opportunities for growth and development but in single parent family a child may not get better opportunities for their growth and development and may face various types of problems. These problems may be economic, social and emotional in nature. This may lead to poor academic performance of single parenting child and develop other problems like academic anxiety and

psychological disorders. This fact has also been supported by various studies conducted in past that single parenting children are more vulnerable to become the part of criminal and illegal activities. This clearly indicates that single parenting children need special care and attention. However, very few studies have been conducted to understand stress related problems of these adolescent students. As the cases of single parenting children are increasing now days, researcher felt that there is need to conduct more research on the problem of a single parent child that he/she faces in his/her life and its effect on stress level and problems of students. It should be studied that how single parenting effects the level of stress and the level of problems among students. It will help to identify the areas of problems of single parenting child and will make it easy to solve out their problems. In this way, the living conditions of single parenting child can be improved and level of stress can be reduced.

V. CONCLUSION

Findings of this research can help in solving educational, emotional and social problems by providing appropriate measures. It can also be useful for educational administrators and educational counselor by providing the deep understanding of the issues like anxiety level and other related problems of single parenting adolescents. It will also helpful in arranging intervention programs for single parent children to overcome their aggressiveness and submissiveness and other problems. So, the researcher decided to conduct a study on level of stress and related problems of single parenting child with a thought of providing better environment and appropriate measures to single parenting child at home and school and in society so that he/she may excel in their studies and other fields.

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