Family Functioning As A Risk Factor Of Psychological Problems In Adolescents

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Abstract: This study was conducted to examine that family functioning is a significant predictor of Psychological problems in adolescents. 230 (100 males, 130 females) adolescent students of ages between 12 to 18 years were randomly selected from government and private educational institutions of Sialkot, Pakistan. Family Functioning Scale (Family ICPS; Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma & Schweitzer, 1992) and Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS-42, Zafar & Khalily, 2014) were used. Multiple regression analysis results indicate that family functioning is a significant predictor of depression, anxiety and stress in adolescents.

Key words: Family functioning, Depression, Anxiety, stress

1. Introduction

Family is the primary agent of socialization. Basically, family is a group of members or individuals who are perceived as mutually favorable and beneficial for others [1]. The family characteristics are determined by the interaction of the family members in which rules, regulations, restrictions, liability, and boundaries are formed from them [2] [3]. Family functioning is explained as a system in which the whole family treats, act, react and interact with each other, such as family boundaries, resilience, fusion level, adaptation and flexibility [4]. Further, there are three domains of family functioning intimacy, conflict and parenting style.

Deficits in family functioning and domains of family functioning can lead to the growth and maintenance of psychological problems in adolescents. As the family is the first institute for a child’s socialization and one of the most significant aspects for shaping the individual’s patterns of transmitting values, improves honesty and accurate behavior which leads to a balanced life. Lack of communication and non-supportive behavior, over critical and aggressive attitude of the parents towards their children creates conflict and leads to depression [5]. Additionally, adolescent’s of dysfunctional family functioning leads towards depression, anxiety, stress.

During adolescence a desire for independence developed which creates disagreement in the parent-child relationship that leads them to the higher level of conflict [6]. There has been a substantial research evidence that adolescent conflict with parents was the main reason of developing depressive symptoms, and in turn these depressive symptoms showed poorer parent adolescent emotional closeness and communication [7]. Another study explained that poor communication between peers; low level of trust, conflict with family and parents, low competency and loneliness is strongly related to depression [8]. Further, an individual’s psychological well-being is largely affected by conflict, whether is experiencing depression, anxiety and stress [9]

Moreover, families with risky characteristics like over critical environment, physical and emotional abuse, cohesion, inconsistent disciplinary practices, unresponsive or low parental involvement, and detachment from the parental figure affects the behavior of an adolescents and leads to multiple psychological problem such as anxiety and stress. During the transitional period from adolescents to adulthood, sometimes adolescents are unable to cope the stresses of this life phase [10]. Lack of emotional warmth between adolescence and parents is a main cause of a development of anxiety. Further, one study results explained that parents-child relationship, parenting style and stability of home decreased the level of stress in adolescents [11]. Further, intimacy and support are also needed for adolescent's personal and social growth as well as their academic success [12, 13].

Further, within the families, relationships between family members changed, when the process of differentiation started. During the transitional period of adolescence, they seem to autonomy and self-determinants, rely more on friends instead of parents and are less willing to consider themselves as part of a power structure, as
a result parent adolescent relationship experienced a higher level of conflict and lack of closeness and warmth [14]. Further, lack of support and positive regard, less protection and warmth in a relationship is also related to the development of depression [15]. Investigations of discouraged and depressed youths have demonstrated that their family members’ showed more clash and correspondence issues, lack of support, less articulation of effect, and more mishandling than ordinary control families [16].

In Pakistan, the family holds power and greater significance in the society. For a common Pakistani his family is his assets. He is deeply rooted in the family. In present times, due to advanced society and modern technologies the family system, norms, connectedness and affection are changing. Lack of time, overburden of work and study, use of innovative technology is resulting in detachment between parents and children. As adolescence is a crucial stage of human development, lack of attachment, time and care on the side of parents may lead to psychological problems and hampers individual’s mental health. Therefore, this research will add a significant knowledge about the role of family functioning in the development of adolescents. This will help parents, teachers, professionals to better understand needs of adolescents and help in dealing with this critical stage of life.

2. METHOD

Participants

Participants were consisted 230 adolescent students of ages between 12 to 18 years were randomly selected from various schools and colleges of the city of Sialkot, Pakistan.

Measure:

Family Functioning Scale- Adolescents (Family ICPS; Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma & Schweitzer, 1992) consisted 30 items ICPS. Alpha coefficients for the original sample were calculated at 0.92 for Intimacy, 0.68 in Parenting Style and 0.82 for Conflict. Correlations between the factors of the ICPS tend to be moderate to high, suggesting that the dimensions being measured here are not totally independent.

Certainly, Intimacy and Conflict seem to be fairly strongly related and at opposite poles of the same dimension (r = -0.63 across two studies). Correlations between Intimacy and Parenting style are positive (r = 0.41 and 0.34) and those between parenting style and conflict tend to be low (r = 0.28, 0.26). Test-retest coefficients for intimacy was 0.77, For conflict, 0.79 and for parenting style 0.81.

2. Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale 21 (DASS-42, Zafar & Khalily, 2014) originally developed by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995) used. DASS-42 is 4-point Likert scale on a 0 to 3 scores with (0) did not apply to me at all, and (3) applied to me very much, or most of the time. The Scale measures the severity and frequency of the symptoms over the previous week. Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .83, and three sub-scales reliability were at .63, for depression, .60 for anxiety and .60 for stress. Each of the three subs-scales of DASS that is Depression, Anxiety, and Stress contained 14 items. Test-retest reliability of the scale was .94 and validity was also good.

3. RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple regression analysis of family Functioning as Predictor of psychological problems (depression, anxiety &amp; stress) in Adolescents.</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Parenting Style</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>15.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Parenting Style</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Parenting Style</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. DISCUSSION

As a predictor, family functioning (Intimacy, Parenting Style, Conflict) is a primary agent for the psychological health of adolescents. Furthermore, family helps in providing support; love, care, sense of security and belongingness and healthy communication between family members. But if...
the family fails to maintain a supportive, esteemed, secure and open environment for the adolescents then it may lead to the mental health problems, that not only affected their behavior as a whole but also escort to problems in later life. Dysfunctional family system and disturb family relationships, such as severe conflict, less communication and withdrawal from the situation create a feeling of detachment between family members which can cause psychological problems in adolescents. Further, during adolescent era family functioning and interaction style between family members may lead to depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with previous research. Research has investigated a positive relation between impaired family functioning individual’s mental health problems and assorted aspects of impaired family functioning as well as parent–child conflict [17]. Further, poor interpersonal relationships, disagreements and conflict between parent and adolescents have a devastating impact on the psychological health of the young adults and may lead to depression [18]

Further, research has suggested that the better communication style, support and cohesion are a quality of healthy family functioning which influenced the level of depression [19]. Research has also examined that depression in adolescence is much linked with family functioning such as the absence of supportive and positive interactions with parents increased the levels of conflict, over critical and an aggressive interactions [20] [21].

As far as the domains of family functioning are concerned, intimacy also played an important role in predicting depression in adolescents. As in family functioning, Intimacy is the love, passion and loyalty among family members. During adolescence intimacy like feelings of appreciation or affection, sense of closeness plays a positive role in mental health. Research has suggested that Adolescent depression has been linked to decreased intimacy between parent and child [22], insecure parent child attachment [23], and perception of the family as less cohesive and adaptable, less open to emotional expressiveness, more hostile and rejecting, more conflicting and disorganized, and less likely to engage in pleasant activities [24]

Further parenting style also plays an important role in developing depression during adolescents. The parenting style which involves emotional warmth, love and attention, respect of adolescents’ opinion, parental support, and provision of intellectually stimulating environment leads to adequate emotional, cognitive, psychological, physical development. As previous studies, stated that depression among teenagers is linked up with strict parenting manners [25]. Researches also has suggested that young adults with high levels of depression also reported lack of support, constructive behavior, affection, proximity, aggression and less intimacy from parents 26.

These results are consistent with the previous findings that during transition from adolescents to adulthood need a supportive family system because impaired family functioning can be dangerous for the healthy development [27].

Moreover, deficits in parenting style at this stage are very important for the development of anxiety in adolescent. Moreover, some cross-sectional researches explained that lack of warmth and support and high level of rejection from the parents is positively associated with anxiety in adolescents [27] [28]. It has been suggested that a lack of autonomy may prevent children from developing a strong sense of self-efficacy and that this increases their sense of vulnerability to threat and heightened anxiety [29].

Additionally, during the adolescent conflict between family members or between parents and siblings plays a crucial role in developing anxiety. If adolescent’s experienced family conflicts that can have short term or a long term effect on adolescent’s mental health. One researcher found that family conflict enhances the risk of anxiety in adolescents [30].

Adolescence is stressful period, detachment from parents and conflict with family members, distorted family patterns and difference of opinion is a main cause of stress in adolescents. On the other hand, family relationship is important as a particular source of interpersonal support for stress during adolescents. Nevertheless, the impact of parents along the broader emotional climate of the family can play a major part in both the quality of parent adolescent relations and on the adolescent’s mental health development. Parenting style is a main source of stress in adolescents. The findings of the present research are in line with previous researches. According to [31] the parenting styles greatly influence children’s psychological tendencies and can also predict future adult stressors.

5. References


Cite this article as:


