

Home Environment and Psycho-Social Competency among School-going Adolescents with Single and Dual Parents, India

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ABSTRACT

Untouched by the harsh realities, adolescent's life is said to be the golden period. The primary source of strength in shaping the development of adolescents' life is the home environment. However, it is doubtful, whether single parent or dual parents' adolescence has better competence development. The present study is to understand the association and difference between the home environment and psychosocial competency among adolescents with single and dual parents. For the present quantitative study, a sample of 63 (both male and female) was taken, comprising of 31 adolescents with a single-parent and 32 adolescents with dual-parents with a mean age of the participants ($M=16.69$; $SD= 1.26$) from different government senior secondary schools of Assam through purposive sampling technique. Home environment scale and psychosocial competency scale was used to collect data. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 23 via correlation and t-test. The study portrayed a significant difference between the adolescents with single and dual parents, where dimensions of home environment such as protectiveness, punishment, reward, and nurturance were and dimensions of psychosocial competence such as creative thinking, coping with emotion and coping with stress were found to be lower for single-parent adolescents. Better quality of the home atmosphere is essential that prepares adolescents to deal with the demands and hassles of the modern societies, thereby, leading to a healthier adjustment.

Keywords: Adolescent, Home Environment, Psychosocial Competency, Single, Dual Parents

Untouched by the harsh realities, adolescence is the golden period of one's life span. It is a colourful phase like the springtime where trees shed their old leaves and blossom new leaves and flowers. It implies "to grow into maturity or grow up"^[1]. It is the time where the adolescence moves from immaturity of childhood to a matured adulthood. However, no single event or a boundary line can be emphasised to denote the end of the childhood and beginning of the adulthood phase. It is believed to be a flow from childhood into and through adolescence as comprised of a set of transition that spell out gradually and touches the various aspect of the individual's life such as development,

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behaviour and relationship. During this passage of time, physical, cognitive and psychological forces are taken into consideration ^[2]. They face number of crisis and dilemma in areas of life such as parent child conflicts, violence, substance abuse, problem solving, and decision making and coping with the external demands of the society. Moreover, along with the obstacles and changes, the values, beliefs and skills, more or less influence personality, competencies, mental health throughout the life. Therefore, according to Hall's view, adolescence is also a period of storm and stress for many individuals ^[3]. World Health Organisation defined adolescence as a person between the ages of 10-19, while adolescence period is said to be a transition period that bridges childhood and adulthood ^[4].

Understanding psychosocial competency and home environment

Adolescents are currently exposed to more information and cultural alternatives, proving adolescents with a ground to prepare for a successful life through enhancement of psychosocial skills and competencies ^[5] ^[6]. Psychosocial competency is defined by WHO as "person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is the ability of the person to maintain a state of mental well-being and to showcase it in an adaptive and positive behaviour while making interaction with other individuals, his/her culture and the external environment". Where adaptive implies that the people are flexible enough in various approaches and have the ability to adjust in different situations. Positive behaviour means that the person looks forward and even in difficult circumstances, finds opportunities and ray of hope in finding a solution. Therefore, developing life skills helps adolescence to translate the knowledge, values and attitude into sound behaviour that makes the individuals life rewarding.

Home, school, community are the various different settings, which enables the children to enhance the intellectual and social experiences. Those experiences help them to develop and acquire the life skills, which helps them in the performance of the adolescent and adult role ^[7]. However, among the various social groups, home occupies the most vital role in the adolescent's development. Studies have revealed the impact of home environment on psychosocial competency and the result showed that adolescents with high control, social isolation, deprivation of privileges and rejection at home lowers problem solving, decision making, coping with emotion, coping with stress and other psychosocial competence ^[8] ^[9]. Similar study revealed that parental regards was related positively to the psychosocial competence of self-esteem, parenting style, parental control, family functioning and parental sacrifices for children's education were positively related to adolescents' psychosocial support and negatively with antisocial susceptibility ^[10] ^[11].

Single parent- child relationship

However, the concept of home environment is quite different for the Indian and western culture ^[12]. Indian families have some advantages, as the families are related to the value system with certain social relations and ideal way of living. Thus, family can be said to be an institution that has an impact on the adolescent's transition period ^[13]. Nevertheless, the changing society has left no Indian families untouched. The Indian families are going through functional and structural changes (such as increase in divorce, death, separation) effecting the adolescents' development and parent child relationship. However, the most notable change in a family structure during the last decade is the raise of single-parent families ^[14]. Studies have shown that children with single parent experience loneliness, fear, academic problems, social deficits and psychopathology ^[15] and adolescents frequently feels

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sad, and anger, often involve in conduct disorders and feels helplessness^[16]. At the same time, contrary results are documented by highlighting the well-adjustment among the adolescents with single parent with enhanced responsibilities, matured self-reliance and self-awareness^{[17][18]}. Therefore, it is very crucial to understand whether adolescents are being competent enough to balance with the modern changing society and identifying the various factors that contribute to their well/ill adjustment to the single parent families.

Objectives

To evaluate the enhancement of psychosocial competency due to the home environment and compare the “home environment” and “psychosocial competency” among adolescents with single and dual parents.

METHODOLOGY

For the present quantitative study, a descriptive study was carried out among adolescents in India, 2018. Data were collected from January, 2018. Study population comprised of adolescents with a single-parent and dual-parents. A sample of 63 (both male and female), 31 (adolescents with single parents) and 32 (adolescents with dual parents) with age ranging from 15 to 18 (Mean age of the participants: $M=16.69$; $SD= 1.26$) was taken from government senior secondary schools of Assam, India. Adolescents of both single-parent (either divorced, separated, death, or unmarried) and dual parents (either biological, adoptive, or step-parents) was taken. Random sampling technique was used for data collection.

Two standardized questionnaires were used for collecting data from the selected samples. The Home Environment Inventory scale, was used to measure the psychosocial climate of the home as perceived by the adolescents. It measures the quality and quantity of emotional, cognitive, and social support. It consists of 10 items belonging to the 10 parameters: Control, Protectiveness, Punishment, Conformity, Social isolation, Reward, Deprivation of privileges, Nurturance, Rejection, and Permissiveness. The reliability of the dimensions ranged from .72 to .94^[19]. Along with it, the Psychosocial Competency Scale, consisting of 100 items was used. It focuses on 10 different life skills with 10 items: Problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking, empathy, self-awareness, coping with emotion, coping with stress, interpersonal relations, and effective communication. There are 75 positive items and 25 negative items. The scale has a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's $\alpha=.088$, Spearman-Brown coefficient= 0.71, Guttman's coefficient =0.71. The concurrent validity of all the subscales ranges from 0.388 to 0.76^[20]

The data processing and analysis were done using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 23. Data related to home environment and psychosocial competency were entered according to the guidelines. Quantitative information was presented using descriptive statistics such as mean, SD and percentage. To determine the association between the two selected variables and to compare the mean, inferential statistics such as correlation and t-test was used. A “p” value of less than .05 was considered for statistically significant level. The ethical clearance was taken from the School Ethical Committee, with reference number: NO. 0688. After the approval from the principal, recruitment was started.

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RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: The descriptive statistics of different socio-demographic variables (N= 63)

Variables	Sub-category	N	%
Age	15 years	7	11.10
	16 years	28	44.40
	17 years	17	27.00
	18 years	11	17.50
Gender	Boys	31	49.80
	Girls	32	50.20
Family type	With single parent	31	49.20
	With dual parents	32	50.80
Birth-order	1 st	38	60.30
	2 nd	17	27.00
	3 rd	5	7.90
	4 th	3	4.80

The demographic characteristics are shown in the table 1. Sample comprised of 63 adolescents, among which majority of the participants were found to be first born child and of age 16.

Table 2: Correlation between Home Environment and Psychosocial Competency among the Participants (N=63)

Dimensions	Problem solving	Decision making	Critical thinking	Creative thinking	Empathy	Self awareness	Coping with emotion	Coping with stress	Inter personal	Effective communication
Control	-.29*	-.28*	.14	-.02	-.02	.17	.09	.07	.14	.07
Protectiveness	-.39**	-.08	.17	-.14	-.02	.01	-.15	.08	.07	.16
Punishment	-.04	-.03	.01	-.24	.06	-.07	-.26*	-.47**	-.43**	-.29*
Conformity	-.07	-.43**	-.30*	.35**	-.04	-.40**	-.06	.04	.09	.06
Social isolation	-.30*	-.10	-.35**	-.20	-.06	-.02	-.28*	-.30*	-.33**	-.14
Reward	.07	.10	-.15	.08	-.06	-.16	.19	.43*	-.07	.14
Deprivation of privileged	-.29*	-.12	-.07	-.11	-.02	-.08	-.12	-.29*	-.33*	-.07
Nurturance	.002	.12	.018	-.02	.100	.30*	.071	.023	-.24	.114
Rejection	-.35**	-.28*	.013	.028	-.08	-.07	-.31*	-.35**	.138	-.18
Permissive	.086	.089	-.11	-.14	-.31*	-.11	.104	.40**	.116	-.16

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 summarizes the correlation between dimensions of home environment and psychosocial competency. The adolescents high in control, protectiveness, conformity,

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social isolation, deprivation of privileges and rejection at home have lower competencies such as problem-solving, decision making, coping with emotion, coping with stress and other psychosocial competences.

Table 3: Difference between single and dual-parent adolescents on home environment (N=63)

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig./Non-sig.
Control	Single-Parent	32	26.71	6.44	1.25	Non- significant
	Dual-Parents	31	26.70	5.11		
Protectiveness	Single-Parent	32	22.64	5.85	3.50	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	25.25	4.82		
Punishment	Single-Parent	32	22.03	5.74	5.59	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	29.21	6.56		
Conformity	Single-Parent	32	25.43	4.76	1.40	Non- significant
	Dual-Parents	31	23.77	4.87		
Social Isolation	Single-Parent	32	26.70	6.10	3.38	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	25.71	6.80		
Reward	Single-Parent	32	19.59	5.07	5.83	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	22.12	4.80		
Deprivation of Privileged	Single-Parent	32	38.34	8.72	3.92	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	34.83	7.41		
Nurturance	Single-Parent	32	24.38	5.97	6.40	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	26.37	5.56		
Rejection	Single-Parent	32	35.40	8.59	1.43	Non- significant
	Dual-Parents	31	34.51	7.50		
Permissive	Single-Parent	32	29.21	6.00	.77	Non- significant
	Dual-Parents	31	30.09	5.21		

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 indicated a significant difference between single and dual-parent adolescents with selected dimensions on the home environment such as on protectiveness, punishment, social isolation, reward, Deprivation of Privileged, and nurturance with t-value 3.50, 5.59, 3.38, 5.83, 3.92 and 6.40 respectively.

Table 4: Difference between single and dual-parent adolescents on psychosocial competency (N=63)

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig./Non-sig.
Problem Solving	Single-Parent	32	28.28	4.36	3.61	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	24.03	2.65		
Decision Making	Single-Parent	32	27.21	4.62	5.64	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	26.93	3.72		

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Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig./Non-sig.
Critical Thinking	Single-Parent	32	21.56	5.32	1.87	Non-Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	22.74	4.48		
Creative Thinking	Single-Parent	32	23.29	5.13	3.50	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	25.28	4.13		
Empathy	Single-Parent	32	23.40	5.03	1.51	Non-Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	21.70	3.75		
Self Awareness	Single-Parent	32	19.03	5.24	1.70	Non-Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	21.29	3.42		
Coping with Emotion	Single-Parent	32	24.28	4.51	3.71	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	28.29	4.01		
Coping with Stress	Single-Parent	32	31.50	3.81	4.34	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	34.74	6.08		
Interpersonal Relation	Single-Parent	32	20.65	3.71	4.11	Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	21.87	5.65		
Effective Communication	Single-Parent	32	19.93	4.34	1.46	Non-Significant
	Dual-Parents	31	21.5806	4.57365		

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4 indicated a significant difference between single and dual-parent adolescents with selected dimensions on psychosocial competence such as problem-solving, decision making, creative thinking, coping with emotion, coping with stress, and interpersonal relationship with t-value 3.61, 5.64, 3.50, 3.71, 4.34 and 4.11 respectively.

RESULTS

The aim of the study was to analyse the significant difference in the home environment and psychosocial competence between adolescents with a single-parent and dual parents. In addition to that, the contributing factors of different psychosocial competencies are explored. The analysis of the study also documented a lot of factors due to which there is a difference in psychosocial competence among single and dual parent adolescents. Most of the results supported the Research questions of the study.

The inter-correlation results among different variables showed in Table 1 were similar to a study on the impact of the home environment using the Home Environment Inventory on psychosocial competency. Results showed that adolescents with high social isolation, deprivation of privileges, and rejection at home lowers problem-solving, decision making, coping with emotion, coping with stress and other psychosocial competence [9]. As the present finding showed that children with high in protectiveness, punishment, conformity, reward, nurturance, and permissiveness have better empathy, critical thinking, self-

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awareness, coping with stress, interpersonal relation, and effective communication. Overall, it showed that the home environment has an effect on psychosocial competency. As environmental context plays a role in the development of adolescents. Parental support and understanding uplift the child to simultaneously face the challenges and overcome them. The present study goes in line with the earlier study, found that adolescents high in social isolation, deprivation of privilege, and rejection at home shows lower in problem-solving, decision making, coping with emotion, coping with stress. Adolescents with high in protectiveness, punishment, conformity, reward, nurturance, and permissiveness have better empathy, critical thinking, self-awareness, coping with stress, effective communication ^[21]. The study can be related to the earlier study which showed that the home environment has an impact on problem-solving ability among the adolescents ^[22]. A high home environment leads to better problem-solving ability than a low home environment. It might be possible that the parents who are task-oriented may make the adolescents dependent upon themselves. Due to which adolescents are less dependent upon the parents and come out with a solution for their problems which makes the adolescents have higher problem-solving abilities.

Lew ^[23] wanted to find out the connection between the home environment and creativity. The results revealed that creativity was correlated with the home environment. While concerns about the impact of the home environment on creativity, the adolescents whose family had a better environment, had better creativity ability than those of the poor environment. Adolescents who are less pampered and parents that don't conform to their child may be able to use minimum resources and come up with maximum products. Deprivation of resources might help them enhance their creativity skills.

From the above results, it revealed a greater number of single parents' adolescents is from average and above-average home environment. Dual parent adolescents are found to be less in number in this case. This goes with the result, which might show that single-parent adolescence is lower in protectiveness, punishment, and conformity and have a good home environment. A study supports the result for punishment that was found to be lower in single-parent adolescence than two parents. The result showed that lone parents did not punish their children more frequently than children with two parents did ^[24]. It might be because spousal abuse causes the children to face more violence ^[25] or may argue more with their parents. The two-parent adolescents might be more aggressive, due to which they are more likely to be punished. This contradicts with a study who found that single mothers were twice likely to hit their children than the partnered mother ^[26].

Since single-parent families are economically disadvantaged, so it is not possible for a single-parent to provide the children with necessities (books, private tutors, food items) ^[27]. So, the single parent adolescents might feel deprived due to which they might feel less protected. The findings are in line with an earlier study found out that parents are regarded as important for psychosocial competency. The study revealed that regards of parents are positively related to psychosocial competency ^[10], which could be seen in the present study. It might be possible that a single parent has given the adolescence much space to grow.

Since single-parent adolescents might not get enough facilities; they have to manage their own needs and problems. This might probably make them dependent upon themselves, which might facilitate them in developing the competencies required to cope with the external factors. However, single-parent adolescents have lower competence for coping with

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emotion and stress. Children have problems in coping with the absence of any one parent. The children might suffer more from depression and emotional distress. As social support for those children with one parent is less than that of the two parents ^[28].

In the normal household set up, adolescents are raised in families with two parents, who guide them in every aspect of their life. Single parents exert less control and restrictions upon the adolescent for managing their daily activities, showed less caring behaviour and could not effort much time, as well as the financial crisis, showed a pathway for their children to be productive while dual parents exerted rules, regulations, and restrictions upon the adolescent, parents listened carefully to their children's perspective, and either of the parents gets enough time to communicate with their children. Therefore, in single-parent families, the responsibilities are re-distributed among the family members ^[29]. This might encourage single-parent adolescents to get involved in several areas of decision making, and boosting management skills. This might also promote independence and maturity, thereby increasing adult-like responsibilities and decreasing parental control, upholding the psychosocial competencies among adolescents.

Although the study included a significant number of the interview, parental family problems, psychological factors, and other related issues were not investigated deeply. However, parental education should be implemented, focusing on dual-component programs targeting single parents and adolescents as well as dual-parents and adolescents. Psycho-education groups should be created for adolescents to help them acquire and develop constructive skills during the transition period.

CONCLUSION

Most of the single parents reported their children to be competent enough to get well-adjusted with their environment. Therefore, it can be understood that the demand for single parenthood has a less negative influence on the youth's psychosocial well-being. By identifying the mechanism of various risks to the adolescents' competencies, researchers and clinicians can provide support for the underserved population of the society.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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