

Role of Home Environment in Adolescent Stress: A Review

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Abstract: Various factors contribute to stress during adolescence. Home environment is one factor which plays a major role in adolescent stress. The primary focus of this review paper was to summarise results from role of home environment in adolescent stress, highlight the factors within home that leads to adolescent stress, evaluate and draw conclusions based on these general findings. The purpose of this review was to highlight the stress experienced by the adolescents with respect to family environment and understand its impact on their daily life. The paper reviews various empirical studies and papers with this regard. Family plays an important role in providing support during stressful situations and ensuring a healthy development of the adolescents. But various factors within home can result in a persistent stress and may cause severe disturbances in future. Suggestions for improvement include, understanding how adolescents perceive the home environment and what they think is contributing to the stress. By addressing this issue, it would be possible to have a deeper understanding of the role of home environment and bring in necessary changes and ensure that the adolescents have a less turbulent transition and have a protection from their family.

Keywords: Adolescent stress, Family environment, Home environment, Adolescent and Psycho-social issues.

INTRODUCTION

The term Adolescence has various definitions based on different characteristics. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines adolescence as any person who falls between the age group of 10 to 19. Age is only one factor that defines this phase. Other factors include – physical changes, neurodevelopmental changes, psychological and social changes. Interestingly, Adolescence is one of the best phase in one's life. An individual's life takes a major turn here because of the changes that takes place during this phase – both physical and mental. Speaking of changes, which one may not know about or be ready for, often come with many mixed messages. These messages come from the parents, teachers, equally confused friends and most importantly, from oneself. This is where stress comes to build a permanent residence. Stress is essential and is common in everyone's life, but what happens when you are ill-equipped with what it takes to deal with it? Stress takes a pathological turn. When facing various conflicting issues, adolescents are at a greater risk of going through stress and they are also not equipped to deal with the stress. Some adolescents are more vulnerable than other and end up having serious issues like depression because of their inability to deal with it. Adding to this, the period between childhood and adolescence is the phase which has witnessed the onset of various psychiatric illness [1, 2].

Family is a primary unit of the society which provides a safe environment and facilitates a healthy development of its members especially the children. It is important to note that Family environment plays a significant role in the life of an adolescent. This is because the adolescents often seek help from their family at the time of a crisis and at the same time due to a greater need for independence, want to be left alone to deal with their problems. The latter can cause more problems when there is too much involvement from the family. Evidence suggests that behavioural problems in adolescents can strongly be linked to disturbances in family environment with respect to – child rearing practices, domestic violence, disciplinary styles, parental conflicts, siblings' rivalry etc. Some factors that affect the home environment include – poor maternal mental health, low economic status, and more number of children at home.

Disturbance in Home Environment

Various studies have highlighted various factors that disturb home environment. A study by Parpio *et al.*, in the year 2012 in Pakistan, found that factors like – number of siblings, parental conflicts, age of the mother and the number of rooms are strongly linked to adolescent stress [3]. Some of the factors that the adolescents perceive in their family to be stressful includes – not being taken seriously, being too strict about the appearance, lack of trusts from family, over expectations by the family, having to abide by petty

rules at home and little or no control over one's own life and too much interference. Adolescents coming from disturbed families have more anxiety and they are unable to share their personal problems and stress to their parents [4]. This study also went on to find that adolescents from middle class families in India experienced more stress than adolescents from upper and low socio economic status.

It is important to note that not all adolescents are the same. Most of the adolescents go through the phase without much difficulty and are not affected by the harmful effects of stress because they are equipped to deal with the stress. But this does not change the fact that adolescents are still on the high risk to experience stress [5, 6].

Purpose

It is known that adolescents are at a higher risk to experience stress and they use different coping strategies to deal with stress. The purpose of the paper would be to understand the role of home environment and various factors within home environment that lead to stress during this phase. Identifying such factors will be helpful in deciding the type of psychotherapy where there is family issues with respect to – identifying loopholes, what to focus on, where to bring a change, so that it does not affect the adolescents in the house.

Stress, as proven by the empirical studies is understood to play a major role in our life. It is important to understand the adolescent stress with respect to home environment as the family members and the events at home play a major role in reinforcing the stress which may have serious implications later. Also, aiming at the general population, especially at family, this paper helps to understand what in family is causing a persistent stress. Once the changes are brought within families, this helps not only to maintain a harmony but also ensures the adolescents have a safe and healthy environment for a healthy development.

Method

The databases and websites that this paper makes use of includes – JSTOR, Proquest, Wiley Online library, Sage Pub, Science Direct, Research Gate, National Institute of Mental Health and Google Scholar. The information in this paper is valid and reliable because of the trustable source it is taken from and from the empirical studies. The keywords used to understand the topic are – Adolescent stress, Family environment, Home environment, Adolescent and Psycho-social issues. The paper covers crucial information from the year 1990 to 2017.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Self-Determination theory explains well-being in three ways – the need for autonomy, competence and social relatedness. The need for social relatedness can be explained as the need to be cared for,

understood and appreciated by others and be connected to others. The need for social relatedness can be explained in terms of family's roles towards psychological well-being of adolescents. Numerous studies have showed that children who are brought up in a happy and a harmonious family, have a better mental health and low stress and a better development than those who are not [7, 8]. Stress from family comes through various ways like – parental expectations, desires, over-involvement, criticality, negligence etc which influence adolescents' psychosocial adjustment and well-being [9, 10]. When there is disturbance in the family environment, the adolescents often do not feel safe and do not share their personal problems leading to stress and affecting their mental health. A healthy family environment provides adolescents with a sense of emotional security and safety.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences study has revealed that there is strong link between the childhood exposure to abuse and various leading causes of death like – Heart diseases and cancer. Thus, childhood trauma can lead to severe long-term consequences in adulthood if ignored [11].

A study by Rapheal and Paul [12] has showed that family consists of elements that can lead to stress during adolescence. A lower socioeconomic status, maternal negligence, single parenting and a disturbing relationship between the adolescents and other members of the family also have a strong link to adolescent well-being and stress. A study by Jagapreet Kaur [13], has found that positive family environment, comprising of – rewards, encouragement, conformity and nurture is associated with a healthy adolescence. Adding to this, a family with better understanding between the members and more support for each other are strongly associated with low levels of stress and better adolescent development [14]. The parenting style is also a strong predictor of adolescent development and stress. Adolescents who are brought up by more permissive parents than authoritarian parents, are most likely to have healthy psychological development and low stress. These adolescents also have a high self-esteem which lacks among the ones brought up by authoritarian parents [15]. Adolescents who perceive their parents as dominant, aggressive and short-tempered are reluctant to share their problems or communicate anything [4].

A study by Deepshika and Bhanot in Uttar Pradesh found that family plays a significant role in social adjustment of adolescent girls and the pressure by parents are one of the leading causes of adolescent stress. With this regard, academic stress is highest in students going to Public Schools [16].

Stress, as proved by the empirical studies is understood to play a major role during adolescence. Family is one factor that contributes to the mental health of adolescents A positive adolescent-parent

relationship is a strong indicator of less deterioration during adolescence. It is necessary to have a supportive family to ensure a less turbulent phase.

To conclude, adolescents from a dysfunctional home environment resort to poor adjustment and coping and are more likely to have psychological problems during adulthood.

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