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Influence of family environment on adolescent mental health: A review

¹Subhasmita Udabar and ²Bijayani Bhoi

¹Lecturer in Home Science, Narasinghpur College Narasinghpur, Cuttack, Odisha, India

²Lecturer in Home Science, Womens College Jharsuguda, Jharsuguda, Odisha, India

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Corresponding Author: Subhasmita Udabar

Abstract

Adolescence represents a crucial developmental stage characterized by rapid emotional, psychological, and social transformations. Family, being the primary socializing agent, significantly influences adolescents' mental health and adjustment. This review paper examines existing research to understand how family dynamics—parenting styles, communication patterns, emotional bonding, and conflict management—affect adolescent mental health. Studies from various psychological and sociological perspectives reveal that supportive, communicative, and affectionate family environments foster self-esteem, resilience, and emotional stability. In contrast, environments marked by neglect, conflict, and overcontrol are associated with anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues. The review concludes by emphasizing the importance of family-based interventions and parental education to enhance adolescent well-being.

Keywords: Family environment, adolescent, mental health, parenting style, communication, emotional support

1. Introduction

Adolescence is an important stage of development when physical, emotional, and cognitive transformations happen at a high pace affecting the overall well-being of a young individual. This stage is usually between 10 and 19 years of age and is characterized by gaining more independence, identity development, and a feeling of sensitivity to environmental factors (Santrock, 2018) ^[42]. Due to these changes, adolescents become psychologically vulnerable and have more chances to have emotional issues like anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems (Patel *et al.*, 2018; Steinberg, 2014). It is at this phase that the youth start forming their own identity, values, and social relations that are critical in the formation of their psychological adaptation and mental well-being (Erikson, 1968) ^[22]. Even though peer, school and media tend to be more influential in shaping adolescent behavior, the family context is the most important context that influences the mental health and psychological adjustment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ^[8].

The family includes parenting styles, communication patterns, emotional climate and discipline methods as well as the general quality of relationships in the household. Literature always proves that families that are emotionally supportive lead to positive developmental outcomes in the lives of adolescents. Warmth, free communication and regular parental follow-up help teenagers to build a high self-esteem, emotional regulation, and robustness (Steinberg, 2001; Darling and Steinberg, 1993) ^[47, 19]. The theory of parenting styles by Baumrind also highlights that authoritative parenting which is warm, responsive and exercising proper control is linked to greater psychological well-being and social competence in adolescents (Baumrind,

1991) ^[5]. These families also offer sense of belonging, trust and emotional safety to adolescents, which is necessary to overcome stress and deal with developmental difficulties (Olson, 2011; Santrock, 2018) ^[37, 42]. In addition to emotional stability, family environments that provide support lead to academic achievement, social ability and positive peer relations (Eccles *et al.*, 2003) ^[21].

On the contrary, the adverse or poor family environment has been reported to be closely linked to poor mental outcomes in adolescents. Parental conflict, corporal punishment or inconsistent punishments, the lack of feelings, and the communication are the reasons behind stress, anxiety, depression, aggression, and low self-esteem (Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman, 2002; Conger and Donnellan, 2007) ^[40, 13]. Long-term emotional trauma and poor social functioning may be caused by exposure to chronic conflict or domestic violence (Amato and Afifi, 2006) ^[2]. Teenagers in families with neglect, instability, or cohesion tend to more often embrace risky behavior, face problems with educational performance, and make maladaptive coping mechanisms. Moreover, socioeconomic factors like poverty, unemployment, and overworking of parents may decrease emotional availability and cause a psychological burden in the family setting (Conger and Elder, 1994) ^[14]. The relevance of the family role in adolescent mental health has been increased further by present day social developments. In the modern familial communities, there are rapid changes in the family settings because of the changes that lead to urbanization, migration, parents having two jobs, academic pressure, and increased exposure to digital media. Such alterations have transformed family habits and communication styles and in some cases have resulted in

lack of emotional contact as well as stress in homes (Chao, 2012; Livingstone and Helsper, 2008) ^[10, 32]. Though there are families that respond positively to these changes, there are some that may not cope with the changes and this forms the environment that may either positively or negatively influence the adolescent mental health. As adolescent mental health problems are becoming more common all around the world, with prevalence rates of about 13-15 percent, problem identification and explanation of protective and risk factors in families has gained significant global public health attention.

Under these conditions, the role of family setting on teenage mental health is a critical field of study in human development and family research. A more comprehensive explanation of how emotional well-being depends on family relationships could be used to design an effective intervention, parent education, and counseling (Santrock, 2018) ^[42]. A review of the available literature would be useful to ensure that there are consistent findings, gaps in the research, and implications that can be put into practical use to ensure adolescents grow into healthy developmental paths. Enhancement of family connections by creating awareness, effective communication and supportive family practices is thus a very important step towards encouraging positive mental health outcomes among the adolescents.

Introduction to Family Environment and Adolescent Mental Health

Children and adolescents spend most of their socialization with the family. It influences emotional growth, personality, coping method and mental adaptation. Many investigations in the field of psychology, sociology, and human development point out that family relations, which are either positive or negative, impact on the mental well-being of adolescents significantly (Steinberg, 2001; Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman, 2002; Santrock, 2018) ^[47, 40, 42]. Adolescence, which is the period of age between 10 and 19 years, is the time when a person is developing at an accelerated rate physically, mentally, and emotionally, and young people are especially susceptible to the effects of the surrounding environment. The family relationships at this stage are very important in influencing the identity development, emotional well being, and behavioral outcomes (Erikson, 1968; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ^[22, 8]. The literature review presented below discusses the main factors in the family that affect adolescent mental health.

2. Parenting Styles and Psychological Effect

The typology of parenting styles proposed by Baumrind (1991) ^[5] authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful are the fundamental ones in the developmental studies. Emotional adjustment, social competence and psychological resilience are key aspects that are affected by the parenting practices of adolescents (Darling and Steinberg, 1993) ^[19].

2.1 Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative parenting that is both warm, open, and authoritative is always linked with good mental health outcome. The teens brought up in authoritative families are more self-esteemed, experience less behavioral issues, have improved emotional control and consequently succeed

better in school (Steinberg, 2001; Santrock, 2018) ^[47, 42]. Evidence also suggests that this parenting style encourages autonomy and, at the same time, sustains parental support, thereby assisting adolescents to acquire successful coping mechanisms and social competence (Baumrind, 1991; Darling and Steinberg, 1993) ^[5, 19].

2.2 Authoritarian Parenting

The authoritarian parents lay stress on high levels of control and obedience and low levels of emotional responsiveness. Research has shown that fear-based discipline and the lack of emotional attachment tend to induce anxiety, depressive symptoms, and low confidence in adolescents in such families (Chao, 2012; Steinberg, 2014) ^[10]. The overprotectiveness of the parents may restrain the autonomy of the adolescents and cause them emotional tension, which results in psychological maladaptations.

2.3 Neglectful and Permissive Parenting

High warmth and low control characterize permissive parenting and in most cases, poor impulse control and risk-taking behavior are likely to be the result of permissive parenting. On the other hand, the idea of neglectful parenting is associated with low warmth and low supervision, which has been correlated with serious emotional issues, social withdrawal, and depression (Baumrind, 1991; Repetti *et al.*, 2002; Santrock, 2018) ^[5, 40, 42]. Teenagers who grow up in irresponsible families are more exposed to delinquency, drug abuse and school related challenges.

1. Patterns of Family communication

Healthy communication will help the adolescents to communicate with their feelings, get support, and discuss their challenges without fear of judgment. The openness in parent-adolescent communication leads to emotional security, strength, and good mental health outcomes (Olson, 2011) ^[37]. Positive family communication is also effective in making adolescents more efficient in solving problems and managing emotions.

On the other hand, bad communication (through criticism, invalidation, or emotional withdrawals) results in psychological vulnerability. It has been found that adolescents in low-communication families feel lonely, possess low self-esteem, and struggle with stress (Repetti *et al.*, 2002; Santrock, 2018) ^[40, 42]. Communication can also be a problem causing the adolescents to find emotional support outside the school, and in some cases, this can lead to bad company.

2. Emotional Support, Fidelity, and Cohesion of Family

An integrated family offers emotional security, sense of belonging, and common responsibility. Demo and Acock discovered that teenagers in cohesive families have a higher level of life satisfaction, social competence and emotional stability. The warmth of the family- manifested in terms of affection, empathy and reassurance is a protective aspect of depression and anxiety (Olson, 2011) ^[37].

Teens who feel that their parents are interested in them and trust their ability to cope through difficult situations show improved mental health, coping, and positive relationships

with others (Steinberg, 2001) ^[47]. Good family conditions also help to enhance academic motivation and social adaptation (Eccles *et al.*, 2003) ^[21].

3. Family Strife, Dysfunction and Emotional Strife

One of the strongest predictors of mental health problems with adolescents is family conflict. Parental quarrelling, hostility, or domestic violence make people more susceptible to anxiety, aggression, depression, and behavioral disorders (Amato, and Afifi, 2006) ^[2]. Constant intrusion in the family lowers the level of security and mental stability of the adolescents.

Repetti *et al.* (2002) ^[40] refer to these environment as risky families, which are filled with conflict, neglect, and emotional support. The resultant long-term effects of these conditions include stress reactivity, emotional regulation and susceptibility to mental diseases.

4. Family Stress and Socioeconomic Status

Family functioning and adolescent mental health are largely affected by socioeconomic status. Reduced socioeconomic status has been linked to an increase in parental stress, irregular parenting, and unavailability of emotions (Conger and Donnellan, 2007) ^[13].

According to NCERT, the teenagers in families with low financial means tend to have anxiety about the results in school, social comparison, and a lack of opportunities. It is also possible that economic difficult circumstances can enhance parental strife and decrease access to mental health services, further exacerbating psychological difficulties on the side of adolescents (Conger and Elder, 1994) ^[14].

5. Cultural and Social Influences

Parenting is influenced by the cultural norms and expectations and the general climate in the family. Adolescents have emotional security and support in collectivist societies because the society values older people and their families have strong interpersonal bonds (Chao, 2012) ^[10].

Nevertheless, high academic pressure, discipline and strong social expectations are sometimes considered to be cultural demands and add pressure and anxiety to adolescents. Mental health among adolescents is thus necessary due to the balance in cultural values and emotional support.

6. Theoretical Support

According to the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) ^[8], development in people is a function of the interactions between the people and their environment. The microsystem family is the most immediate contributor to the development of the adolescent. According to this theory, the family that is well nurtured helps foster emotional stability, social competence and psychological well-being and the family that is dysfunctional predisposes the individual to mental health issues.

3. Methodology

The research design used in this study was a review research design, which relied on secondary data to analyze the role of family environment on adolescent mental health. The aim of this approach is to find, analyze, and synthesize the existing

research results in credible academic sources in a systematic manner. In social sciences, review-based research is popular to synthesize the knowledge of various researches and determine patterns, gaps, and emerging trends in a specific field (Snyder, 2019) ^[46]. The review was conducted in a systematic manner that involved the identification of the useful literature, selection of the studies according to predefined criteria, and thematic analysis of the essential findings to put significant results in order.

3.1 Research Design

The design was descriptive review, the emphasis was made on the identification of the previously published empirical studies, theoretical papers, and review articles that were connected to the family environment and adolescent mental health. This design allows the researchers to establish an overview and interpretation of the prior research findings to offer a holistic view of a particular topic (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) ^[16].

The purpose of the review was to draw the patterns, relations, and major trends concerning the impact that various dimensions of the family environment have on the psychological health of adolescents.

3.2 Sources of Data

The current study was wholly based on secondary data, which was gathered using reliable scholarly and institutional articles. The major sources included:

- Research papers like Journal of Adolescence, Child Development, and Journal of Family Psychology have been reviewed by the peers.
- Adolescence, family and developmental psychology Books and book chapters on adolescence, family, and developmental psychology.
- Adolescent mental health reports by government and non-governmental organizations.
- Scholarly databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, PubMed and ResearchGate.
- Human development and family Review articles and meta-analyses.

The consideration was made of published and publicly available academic materials only in order to guarantee the reliability and credibility of the information.

3.3 Search Strategy

Relevant literature was identified with the help of a systematic search strategy. The search was performed with the help of keywords and keyword combinations containing the terms family environment and the adolescent mental health. The key search terms were:

- Family background and teenage mental status.
- Parenting style and adolescent behavior.
- Family relationships and psychological well-being.
- Youth mental health and home environment.
- Parent child communication and emotional development.

The search results were refined and expanded using the Boolean operators like AND, OR and NOT. For example:

- Family environment, AND adolescent mental health.

- Parenting style OR family relationship and adolescent depression.

This method of systematic search was used to assist in ensuring that relevant literature was found in various academic databases.

3.4 Inclusion Criteria

The studies incorporated in the review were those which satisfied the following criteria:

- Published between 2000 and 2024
- Targeted at adolescents between the age of 10 and 19 years.
- Aspects of family environment that have been examined, including parenting style, patterns of communication, family conflict, emotional support or family structure.
- Mental health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, stress, self-esteem, emotional adjustment, or behavioral problems.
- Appeared in English language.
- Made available in full-text to analyze in detail.

These requirements made sure that the studies used in the research were pertinent to the research aims.

3.5 Exclusion Criteria

The studies were not included in the review when they:

- Targets more children under the age of 10 or adults.
- Disregarded family environment factors in dealing with mental health.
- Were editorial articles, opinion article or non-academic blogs.
- Adequate methodological lacked clarity or empirical evidence.
- Was there any duplication of publications in different databases?

These exclusion criteria were used to ensure that the literature reviewed was of good quality and that it was relevant.

3.6 Data Extraction and Data Analysis

The thematic analysis as a qualitative approach to finding patterns and themes of the research data was applied to the chosen studies (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The results of the chosen literature were clustered under major thematic concepts, which were:

- Parenting styles influence.
- Parent-child communication role.
- Impact of family conflict
- Favorable vs. unfavorable domestic settings.
- The effect of socioeconomic and cultural factors.

The aspects analyzed and recorded under each study were as follows:

- Purpose of the study
- Sample characteristics
- Research methodology
- Key findings

Adolescent mental health implications

Comparison of the results, summarizing, and synthesis were then given to have a general understanding of the effect of family environment on the mental health of adolescents.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

No direct human subjects were used in this study since it was founded solely on secondary data. Thus, ethics like informed consent, privacy or confidentiality were not applicable.

But, academic integrity was upheld in the study through:

- Correct referencing of all the sources of information.
- Proving due credit to original authors.
- Preventing plagiarism and transparency in the process of review.
- These ethics will make the research look credible and scholarly.

4. Results and Discussion

This review was aimed at exploring the effects that various factors of the family environment have on adolescent mental health. As the reviewed studies help to understand, there is a certain trend: the family is the background context under the influence of which adolescents develop emotionally, cognitively, and socially, and a lack of order in the family is tightly related to adverse psychological outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ^[8]. The results are consistent with the earlier studies which indicated that the home environment had a considerable influence on the psychological strength and susceptibility of adolescents to mental health issues (Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman, 2002) ^[40]. The reason behind this is that the parenting styles are known to be predictors of mental health.

4.1 parenting styles as predictors of mental health

Throughout the literature reviewed, authoritative parenting (warmth, clear expectations, and open communication) was identified as the most protective influence on the mental health of the adolescent. Teens, who grow up in such families, exhibit more self-esteem levels, better emotional control, and reduced anxiety and depression (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 2001; Santrock, 2018) ^[42, 5, 47].

Conversely, authoritarian, neglectful, and inconsistent parenting styles had close relationships with the emotional distress, behavioral and low resilience (Darling and Steinberg, 1993) ^[19]. Such results support the existence of an argument that has long existed that adolescents are in need of structure and emotional encouragement in order to grow to have good coping skills and psychological soundness.

4.2 Parent Child Communication

The literature points out the role of parent child communication as a shield against mental health challenges. Harmful conversations and free and understanding communication enable adolescents to share their feelings and worries without any inhibitions and make them feel heard and appreciated (Olson, 2011) ^[37]. This type of communication builds trust and makes adolescents forge parental advice when they are stressed.

On the other hand, unresolved conflicts and higher levels of

psychological stress are caused by ineffective communication patterns, which are typified by criticism, failure to listen and emotional distance (Repetti *et al.*, 2002) ^[40]. Young people in such a setting tend to feel loneliness, anxiety, and depressive mood.

Also noted in the review is that adolescents tend to initiate parental help in cases where there is a supportive communication with parents thus allowing those issues of mental health to be identified early and addressed accordingly.

4.3 Family Strife and Emotional Stress

One of the themes that reappear in the literature is the detrimental effects of unrelenting family warfare, verbal violence, marital violence and sibling rivalry. This puts instability and emotional insecurity and this can lead to internalizing disorders like anxiety and depression (Amato and Afifi, 2006) ^[2].

Adolescents forced to cope with the stress levels they are exposed to by family conflict usually end up with emotional dysregulation, aggression, or simply stop attending school and relationships with peers (Repetti *et al.*, 2002) ^[40]. Studies also suggest that the level and rate of conflicts exert more influence on the psychological health of teenagers compared to the infrequent disputes.

These results show how healthy emotional development can be achieved on the basis of stable and supportive home environments.

4.4 Effect of Supportive and Non-Supportive Environments

Favorable family conditions, referred to as emotional warmth, encouragement, and collective family experiences, play a significant role in enhancing positive mental health outcomes. Teens in such families build a better system of coping, healthier peer relations, and sense of belonging.

Conversely, non-supportive settings, which are typified by neglect, emotional unavailability, and parental involvement, are more likely to increase the chances of loneliness, depression, and low self-worth.

According to research, adolescents when they see their parents as indifferent or too busy are prone to internalizing negative beliefs on themselves and this is harmful in the long-term psychological well-being (Santrock, 2018) ^[42].

4.5 Socioeconomic and Culture Factors

Various researches show that larger social economic status contributes to the mental health of adolescents indirectly. Parental stress which is caused by financial stress, unemployment and unstable living conditions may impact parenting behavior and emotional availability (Conger and Donnellan, 2007) ^[13].

Family expectations, patterns of communication and gender roles are also influenced by cultural values (Chao, 2012) ^[10]. For example:

- Social support and emotional security among adolescents in collectivist societies are commonly as a result of family bonds.
- Adolescents can be more psychologically pressured in the cultures which value high academic achievement and strict social standards.

Thus, the family setting should be interpreted on the background of its cultural and socioeconomic background.

4.6 Family Structures and Modern Influences in Change

Modernity has brought about social changes that have altered the traditional family setup. The growing trend of single-parent families, two-earner families, and single-parent families that have been merged with other families brings new challenges to adolescent development.

A study has indicated that teenagers in positive single parent families might have good psychological conditions as compared to emotional distress in teenagers living in two parent families that have conflicts (Amato, 2005) ^[2].

Moreover, contemporary forces like the use of digital technologies, lack of time in the family, and academic rivalry affect the relationship and communication style within the family (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008) ^[32]. Otherwise, these changes can destroy emotional connections in families.

4.7 Overall Interpretation

The general conclusion of this review is that:

- Healthy family environment increases emotional security, resilience and psychological well being.
- An adverse or antagonistic family atmosphere is a risk factor to emotional disorders and maladaptive behavior.
- Adolescent mental health is subject to family influences in relation to cultural, social, and economic environments.

These results also coincide with the ecological view of the many social contexts, where Bronfenbrenner held that individual development is highly dependent on the immediate social settings, namely the family.

Therefore, the mental health of adolescents should not be regarded in isolation; it is closely intertwined with the state of relationships with the family members and the general atmosphere at home.

5. Conclusion

This review indicates that family setting is central and essential in the development of mental health among adolescents. Teenagers are at a very important stage of life development when emotions are significantly changing, identities develop, and independence increases (Santrock, 2018) ^[42]. This can largely be because of the quality of the family relationships at this time that determines whether adolescents are psychologically stable or stressed. The literature reviewed suggests that appropriate family environments, which are marked by a sense of warmth, communication, emotional availability, and the ability to exercise control, lead to the good mental health conditions of high self-esteem, emotional stability, and robust coping skills (Steinberg, 2014). On the other hand, families characterized by conflict, neglect, harsh parenting, or ineffective communication are negative environments that are likely to result in depression, anxiety, stress and behavioral issues (Repetti *et al.*, 2002) ^[40].

Moreover, extended contextual variables like socioeconomic pressure, cultural demands, and lifestyle changes in the modern world impact family performance

and psychological well-being of adolescence. In general, family environment should be reinforced to facilitate mental health in adolescents. The intervention of enhancing parent child communication, emotional support, and conflict management can play critical role in psychological development of adolescents. With the increased prevalence of mental health issues in the global community, the issue of developing supportive, consistent, and sensitive home experience has to feature higher on the to-do list of families, educators, and policymakers.

6. Recommendations

On the basis of the results of this review, it is possible to offer a number of recommendations, which may be followed to reinforce the family environment and facilitate the mental well-being of adolescents.

6.1 Parents and Family Member Recommendations

Parents need to promote ordinary, non judgmental talk with adolescents. Listening and emotional validation help to build trust and provide psychological health.

Embrace authoritarian parenting.

Striking a balance between a warm, and regular discipline assists teenagers to attain emotional stability and harness control.

Reduce family conflict

The families are advised to adopt healthy conflict-resolution methods and not expose the adolescents to heated marital conflicts.

Get more parental participation

Family activities and daily discussions and emotional support increase the feeling of belonging among the adolescents.

Control the activities of adolescents

The advice regarding academics, relationships with peers, and the use of digital media assists in avoiding stress and risky behavior.

Promote positive coping mechanisms

The support that families need to help them develop resilience should include sports or other activities and relaxation methods.

6.2 Recommendations to Schools and Educators

- Mental health awareness at schools.
- Enhance school counseling to identify emotional issues at an early age.
- Encourage parent-teacher partnerships in order to facilitate academic and emotional growth of adolescents.
- Develop school cultures which are inclusive and supportive through anti-bullying policy and peer support programs.

6.3 Counselors and Mental Health Professionals Recommendations

- Adopt family-based practice of counseling.
- Offer training programs on parenting skills.
- Encourage early detection and treatment of

psychological problems.

- Culturally sensitive counseling approaches should be used in counseling different families.

6.4 Community and Government Agencies Recommendations

- Increase community-based family support programs.
- Establish family welfare policies that lessen the economic strain.
- Create awareness campaigns in the society to remove stigma associated with mental health.
- Expand spending in mental health services among adolescents in schools and community centers.

7. Overall Recommendation

Mental health of adolescents should be promoted and preserved through a comprehensive and interdisciplinary strategy. It shows that this review can lead to one conclusion, which is that the well-being of adolescents cannot be tackled by any single institution, but a collective of families, schools, communities, and policymakers. More emphasis should be given to developing the supportive home atmosphere where emotional warmth, open communication, and supportive parenting could be practiced because they play an essential role in the psychological resilience and emotional stability of adolescents.

Schools also have a significant part in this and offer both mental health awareness education, counseling services, and supportive learning environments to enable adolescents to cope with academic and social stress (Santrock, 2018) ^[42]. The support systems can be further enhanced by the community organizations and non-governmental agencies through conducting parenting workshops, youth development schemes, and awareness campaigns that foster good relations within the families. At the policy level, governments are recommended to invest in accessible mental health services, family welfare programs, and preventive programs that would help alleviate the socioeconomic stress and enhance functioning in the family. Emotional problems detected at early age, along with providing timely counseling and family-based interventions, can greatly decrease the threat of psychological problems in the long run. On the whole, family relationships, building positive social conditions and encouraging early mental health intervention is a step forward towards ensuring that adolescents grow in an emotionally strong, well-developed coping skills and positive psychological state so as to be able to transition well into adulthood.

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