

ADJUSTMENT ISSUES, SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS LIVING WITH STEP PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present research was planned to address the adjustment issues of young adults who are living with their step parents and the relationship of these adjustment issues was also checked with their level of self-esteem and academic motivation. To measure the adjustment issues the researcher administered a Brief Adjustment Scale-6. The level of self-esteem and academic motivation were also quantified by using Rosenberg Self-esteem scale and Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). The total sample included in this research was (N=80) young adults living with their step parents. This was a cross-sectional study and the results from the study revealed that 51% young adults living with their step parents were unhappy with them. From the research participants 32% young adults living with their step parents reported that their parents are not playing a leading role. Furthermore, the overall level of self-esteem and academic motivation was lower among the young adults living with step parents. A gender wise comparison showed more adjustment issues among females as compared with males. Similarly, the overall level of self-esteem was higher among female and academic motivation was lower among male young adults.

Keywords: Adjustment Issues, young adults, Step Parents, Self-Esteem, Academic Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Conceptually the step parents are the families where the young adults are living. In these families the reciprocity plays a vital role (Dunn, 2004). It has been noticed that the young adults living with their step parents face complex circumstances or many psychological issues (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). Consequently, these psychological issues influence on the young adults' perception negatively that give rise to other emotional behavioral gaps and cognitive problems as well (Gosselin & Rivest, 2007). It is because the step parents always behave in an authoritative way showing the power to give orders or while making decisions for young adults living with them (Maccoby et al, 2021).

On the other hand, the supportive parents are those who show good interest for their adolescence usually help and encourage them. They attend them without having judgmental attitude and always understand their future related concerns and challenges. Therefore, the quality of peer attachment, quality of parental relationship, psychological health and adjustment of the young adults increased (WHO, 2001). In connection with the above, all the psychologists are agreed that the parental relationships play a key role in grooming the personality characteristics of their young adults such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence and their motivation level (Huebner, 2004).

A good parental and peer attachment is considered as a significant predictor of high level of self-esteem, higher motivation, life satisfaction and a well-being (Gilman & Huebner, 2006). Hence, there is a dire need to discuss about the relationship of parental and peer attachment.

Role of Parental and Peer Attachment

Raja et al., (1992) stated that peer attachment is a vital for increasing the quality of life and mental health of the young adults. Based on the concept of the "working model" we can conclude that level of

parental attachment directly influences on the quality of life of the young adults (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). Similarly, Inchley et al., (2020) reported a higher level of overt aggression among the young adults that has poor parental attachment. So, it is a fact that the level of parental attachment is very important. It is because the young adult spends a lot of time with their parents. He considered their parents as a source of security, support, love and affection (Li, et al., 2020). It has been also reported that the peer attachment predicts the adolescent's mental health. Improving the level of attachment, we can reduce the negative behaviors of the adolescence such as conduct behavior related issues, emotional and behavioral difficulties and pro social behavior (Oldfeild et al., 2016). Hence, there is a need to discuss supportive literature in connection to the adjustment issues of the young adults that are living with step parents and its relationship with their level of self-esteem and academic motivation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Few studies are available to address the adjustment problems of the young adults living with step parents along with its connection with their level of self-esteem and academic motivation. Such as: Lippold & Jensen (2017) stated that family system is considered as a social context in which the youth can develop their personality such as self-esteem, self-confidence and self-motivation. They also reported that the young adult of adjusted families is well groomed and academically strong as compared to non-adjusted families. Jensen (2017) studied the different patterns of dyadic relations among the young adults living in step families. He reported a strong association of each dyadic relationship with demographic features of the individuals living with step father, and step mother. The results of his study revealed a positive relationship were significantly correlated with the young adult concurrent adjustment in his or her family. According to Dunn (2002) one of the vital facets of youth living in adjusted families is their motivation and self-esteem. Similarly, the young adults of adjusted families reveal lower level of conflict and reduced level of stress (King, 2007). A healthy pattern of life with fewer internalizing, externalizing and minor physical health issues were noticed by Jensen and Harris (2017).

On the other hands the young adults living with step father and mother and not adjusted due to some conflicts may face many psychological and emotional anomalies (Papernow, 2017). A lower level of self-esteem and life satisfaction was found among the young adults living with step parent (David et al., 2017). The personality development of adults and adolescence is positively linked with their parental relationship. Having caring or supportive relations with step parents' adults can improve their academic motivation, self-worth and self-efficacy (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). A study conducted by Dumka et al (2010) to check the effects of step parenting on self-esteem and academic motivation. the results of their study revealed a lower level of self-esteem among the young adults living with step parents as compared with those living with their parents. Farkas and Valdes (2010) conducted research to highlight the personality issues of the young adults living with step parents. The findings of their study reported emotional behavioral issues and lower self-esteem. Tillman (2007) conducted a study to find out the academic motivation among the young adults living with step families and reported lower level of self-efficacy, academic motivation and higher level of psychological and adjustment issues as compared with those who are living in their first parents. Cumming et al., (2006) concluded that the young adults living with step parents reported higher level of academic stress or lower academic grades. They also reported a lower level of achievement motivation among those living with step families.

Rationale of the Study

Living with step parents is considered very difficult. It has been noticed that there are many psychological issues of adolescence living with step parents either with step father or step mother. These issues are considered as a hurdle in achieving their future goals. The researchers reported that low self-worth, self-esteem and decrease level of academic motivation are usually associated with family issues or conflicts faced by the young adults in this connection, a rich literature is available that addressed the adjustment issues of the adolescence living in step families. But there is a lack in exploring the relationship of adjustment issues of young adults living with step parents and the relationship of these adjustment issues with their level of self-esteem and academic motivation. To cover this huge gap in research the researcher planned to address this ignored issue perhaps first time in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the adjustment issues among young adults living with step parents.
2. To check the relationship of adjustment issues with self-esteem and academic motivation among young adults living with step parents.
3. To compare the severity of adjustment problems among gender.

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4. To check the relationship of self-esteem with academic motivation among young adults living with step parents.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. The young adults living with step parents will reveal more adjustment issues.
2. The young adults facing adjustment issues will significantly lower in the level of their self-esteem and academic motivation (living with step parents).
3. Adjustment problems would be higher among female young adults as compared with males living with step parents.
4. Level of self-esteem and academic motivation would be lower among male young adults living with step parents.
5. Level of self-esteem and academic motivation would be higher among female young adults living with step parents.

METHODS OF THE STUDY

The method of the study includes the following steps taken during the research process.

Problems Statement of the Study

The phenomenon of step parents is prevailing in all over the world. No doubt the young adults living with step families face many challenges and issues. The most common are family conflict, negative perception, unrealistic expectation and cultural myths. Consequently, the young adult suffers from stress, depression and anxiety and other emotional behavioral and personality issues. To address these issues this study was carried out to explore the adjustment issues and its relation with self-esteem and academic motivation among young adults.

Research Design of the Study

This was quantitative research with cross-sectional research design. The sample of the study was selected by using purposive sampling method.

Sample Size

In this research a total sample of (N=80) young adults living with step parents was selected by using online G. Power sample calculation software.

Inclusion Criteria

All the young adults living with step mother or step father was the sample of this study. In this study both gender male and female young adults were included.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

In this study the young adults with diversified demographic characteristics were included. Among those 30% were males, 70% were females, 53% were belonging from rural areas and 46% were belonging from urban areas. All the participants were living in step families.

Assessment Measures

In this research three measures were used to quantify the study variables. First of all, a Brief Adjustment Scale pertaining 6 items was administered to screen out the young adults those who were facing adjustment problems. Secondly, the level of self-esteem was measured by using Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale consisting on 10 items. Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was used to measure the level of academic motivation of young adults. All three scales were valid and reliable.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results from the collected data are discussed as under:

Table No. 1 Demographic information of the study participants (n=80)

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	24	30.0
	Female	56	70.0
Are you happy with your step parents?	No	41	51.2
	Yes	39	48.8
Have your step-parents a leading role with you?	No	30	37.5
	Yes	37	46.2
	Some times	13	16.2

Note: The above table shows statistical data and descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) calculated from the sample (n=80) select from the target population. From the overall sample of 80 respondents from which 24 (30%) are male and other 56 (70%) are female respondents. For the residential area of the respondents 43 (53.8%) individuals having their residence in rural areas and the other 37 (46.2%) people from the urban areas. About 51.2% people are satisfied with their step parents and replied that they are happy with their step parents and the other 39 (48.8%) adolescence replied that they are not happy.

Table No. 2 Level of Self Esteem and Academic Motivation among young adults living with step parents (n=80)

Clinical variable		Frequency	Percentage
Self-Esteem Level	Low	29	36.2
	High	51	63.8
Academic Motivation Level	Very Low	10	12.5
	Low	19	23.8
	High	20	25.0
	Very High	31	38.8

Note: This table shows the self-esteem level and academic motivation levels for the target population of adolescence living with step parents. From the overall selected sample of 90 respondents 29 (36.2%) people having low self-esteem, and the other 51 (63.8%) respondents having high level of self-esteem. On the other hand for academic motivation the average sale 10 (12.5%) respondents are at very low academic motivation level, 19 (23.85%) people are at low level of academic motivation, 20 (25%) said they are at high level of academic motivation, and the other 31 (38.8%) people are at very high level of academic level.

Table No. 3 Showing the Descriptive Statistics of study variables (n=80)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
Age	22.36	2.482	15-28
Adjustment Issues	5.59	2.827	0-12
Self-Esteem	22.80	11.085	1-40
Academic Motivation	121.82	55.145	10-195

Note: This table shows the descriptive statistics of all the clinical variables that are included in this research work.

Table No. 4 Showing the comparison of Adjustment issues between males and females using T-test

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Test Comparison	
				T-Score	P-value
Male	24	4.75	2.59	-1.831*	0.037
Female	56	5.95	2.87		

*. $p < 0.05$ and **. $p < 0.01$

Note: The table shows comparison of overall adjustments score according to gender (male and female) of the respondents to check the significance of difference.

Table No. 5 Showing the comparison of Self-Esteem between males and females using T-test

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Test Comparison	
				T-Score	P-value
Male	24	20.42	9.90	-1.342	0.018
Female	56	23.82	11.49		

*. $p < 0.05$ and **. $p < 0.01$

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Note. The table shows comparison of overall self-esteem score according to gender (male and female) of the respondents to check the significance of difference

Table No. 6 Showing the comparison of Academic Motivation between males and females using T-test

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Test Comparison	
				T-Score	P-value
Male	24	99.08	45.13	-2.727	0.009
Female	56	131.57	56.51		

*. $p < 0.05$ and **. $p < 0.01$

Note: The table shows comparison of academic motivation score according to gender (male and female) of the respondents to check the significance of difference.

Table No. 7 Relationship between Academic Motivation Level and Adjustment Issues

Academic Motivation Level	Adjustment Issues		Total
	Lower level	Higher level	
Very Low	4	6	10
Low	10	9	19
High	8	12	20
Very High	26	5	31
Total	48	32	80

Note: The above table shows the relationship between academic motivation and adjustment issues of the respondents for overall sample selected from the target population. The results are showing that there is inverse (negative) relationship between the both variables. It is concluded from the analysis that respondents having higher level of adjustment issues reveals the lower level of academic motivation and the respondents having lower level of adjustment issues reveals the higher level of academic motivation.

Table No. 8 Relationship between Self-Esteem Level and Adjustment Issues

Self Esteem level	Adjustment Issues		Total
	Lower level	Higher level	
Low	14	15	29
High	34	17	51
Total	48	32	80

Note: The above table shows the relationship between Self-Esteem level and adjustment issues of the respondents for overall sample selected from the target population. The results are showing that there is inverse (negative) relationship between the both variables. It is concluded from the analysis that respondents having higher level of adjustment issues reveals the lower level of self-esteem and the respondents having lower level of adjustment issues reveals the higher self-esteem level.

DISCUSSION

This study was carried out with the spirit to check the effects of step parenting on self-esteem and academic motivation among young adults. The overall hypotheses of this study significantly accepted. It was hypothesized that the young adults living with step parents will reveal more adjustment issues. Among the participants (n=41) participants reported that they are unhappy with their step parents and (n=30) participants reported that their step parents are playing no any leading role for them. These findings are in line with the study of Agarwal & Dixit (2017). The second hypothesis was about to see the effects of adjustment issues on self-esteem and academic motivation among young adults. The findings revealed that the young adults who scored higher on adjustment issues also reported lower level of self-esteem and academic motivation. These findings also verified with the study conducted by Casey et al. (2010). The third hypothesis was generated to check the gender differences in adjustment issues. The findings showed a higher level of adjustment issues among female as compared with male. The findings are in accordance with the study of Tracy et al. (2003). The fourth and the fifth hypotheses were developed to compare the level of self-esteem and academic motivation among male and female

young adults. The results showed that the level of self-esteem and academic motivation was higher among female and lower among male young adults living with step parents. The findings are in line with the conclusion of the studies conducted by Kraft et al. (2015) and the results of Hetherington & Elmore (2003).

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings narrated in this study it concluded that the young adults living with step parents are not happy because their step parents are not playing a vital role in fulfilling their needs. Due to this neglected attitude of the step parents the level of self-esteem and academic motivation is suffering a lot. Hence, the findings of this study can guide the policymakers, and educators to ensure the mentally healthy environment of the step families where the parents must involve in the psychological and academic matters of their step young adults living with them.

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