

Relationship of micro and meso human ecological environment on adolescent's problems in single parent families

KAVITA DEVI, KRISHNA DUHAN AND SHEELA SANGWAN

Accepted : March, 2009

See end of the article for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to:

KAVITA DEVI

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, C.C.S. Haryana Agricultural University, HISAR (HARYANA) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken with the aim to delineate the human ecological factors affecting various problems of adolescents in rural and urban single parent families. The study was carried out in randomly selected Hisar district of Haryana state. City area of the selected district was taken purposively to have urban respondents. From the selected city area, two senior secondary schools were selected randomly. From the selected district, two villages were selected randomly. Three senior secondary schools were selected purposively from the selected villages. A sample of 120 adolescents (15-19 years) was drawn purposively from rural and urban city areas. The micro system variables such as sex, landholding, family income, adolescent's relation with grandparents and activities at school were found significantly associated with social, economic and emotional problems of adolescents. The mesosystem variables such as occupation of parents also reported significant association with economic and emotional problems of adolescents.

Key words : Micro system, Mesosystem, Social problems, Emotional problems, Economic problems, Family relationship problems

Children need to receive affection, affirmation, discipline and identification from both the parents. Children need father's security and identity and mother's love and affection at every developmental phase of childhood. They live happily and adjust well in the family and in the society when both the parents are there. The mother father are likely to be working on and making the teen more reliant and more responsible. The child learns many roles from both the parents, which he/she will have to play in the adult life. The concept of family has changed from the large extended family to smaller units, the nuclear family and now a days to even single-parent families. A family in the conventional sense consists of a father, a mother and their children. But due to death, separation, desertion or divorce of the father/mother may leave the family. Irrespective of the reason, under the circumstances, it becomes imperative for the husband/wife not only to take care of himself/herself but also his/her children.

The ecological environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structure and referred to as the micro system, mesosystem, exosystem and macro system. The inner most and the most basic structure of the system is the micro system, which includes the entire array of person's activities, roles and interpersonal relationship experienced by children in a face to face setting such as home or school. The combination of all the microsystems in which the children participate and the linkage among them form the child's mesosystem. Exosystem represents one or more settings that don't involve a person as an active participant but in which events occur that effect, or are affected by,

what happens in the micro system. Adolescent is the growing stage, where adolescent are needed special guidance, care and attention. This need is fulfilled by both the parents. Due to the absence of one parent the adolescents not only face the most important emotional, psychological backing but also they feel insecure, unsure and face low self-esteem at each and every phase of life. It brings great emotional, social, economical and even more serious problems. So, keeping in view the importance of all these facts, the present study was undertaken with the objective to study the micro and meso human ecological factors affecting problems of adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Hisar district of Haryana state was selected randomly. City area of the selected district was taken purposively to have urban respondents. From the selected city area, two senior secondary schools were selected purposively. To have rural sample, Hisar-I block was selected randomly. Three senior secondary schools were selected purposively from the selected two villages of this block. Lists of adolescents (15-19 years) from single parent families was prepared from each selected school and from this list a sample of 60 adolescents were taken each from rural and urban area, thus making a total sample of 120 respondents.

Tools for data collection:

Two questionnaires were formulated. One was on various problems and other was on variables of human ecological environment influencing the adolescent's

problems of single parent families. The questionnaire was pre-tested and evaluated on four problems of adolescent's viz., social, economic, emotional and family relationship. Content validity ratio and standardized norms was calculated to standardize the developed questionnaire. Data regarding independent and dependent variables were collected with the help of self-structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, two sample t-test and chi-square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effect of microsystems on adolescents problems:

This deals with the information regarding influence of micro system variables on social, economic, emotional and family relationship problems of adolescents in rural and urban single parent families. Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence has been used to measure the degree of association between dependent and independent variables.

The data presented in Table 1 revealed that micro system variables such as sex, income, land holding, activities at school and scholarship help to adolescent from school were found significantly associated with social problems of the adolescents. Variables such as caste, duration of becoming single parent, family size, parent's relation with family members, adolescent's relation with parent and grand parent were found non-significantly associated. The results are strengthened by findings of Kumari (2002) who found that adolescents in single parent families were likely to face more social problems. An average home environment of single parent families tend to be less stimulating than the both parents families on social development of child. Further, Cairney *et al.* (2003) concluded in their study that single parent and children reported lower level of social involvement and less meetings with friends and other family members. With regard to economic problems faced by adolescents, results further revealed that variables such as sex, family income, activities at school, adolescent's relation with grandparents and voluntarily responsibilities taken by family members were found significantly associated. A non-significant association was found with caste, family size, land holding, parent's relation with family members, adolescent's relation with family members and family support to adolescents. The results are supported by the findings of Compass and Williams (1991) who studied that one of the most important problem of the single parent family was limited income. The single parent faced serious difficulty in providing food, education and other necessities for the child due to the economic reasons and thus in this condition the children need love and security in the form of mother/father. The single parent and young adolescents reported more daily

hassles related to economic problem. Demo (1992) also reported that the boys of single parent family are more directly influenced by notable economic hardship.

As far as emotional problems are concerned, study revealed a significant association with variables such as sex, landholding, parent's relations with neighbours, grandparents and adolescent's relation with grandparents. The results are supported by finding of Bumpass (1984) who examined that death of one parent is associated with negative emotional consequences for adolescent's development in single parent family. Further, Owusu (1995) found that adolescents of single parent have low self-esteem and they are poor emotionally and socially less stable. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) also studied that adolescents from single parent families are more likely to experience lower school achievement of aspirations, increased psychological distress, earlier initiation of substance use and sexual activity, increased health problems and greater likelihood of engaging in behaviour problems or deviant activity.

With regard to family relationship problems faced by adolescents, data further revealed that variables such as land holding, parent's relation with neighbours, family members and family support to adolescents were having significant association. Variables such as caste, duration of becoming single parent, parent's relation with grandparents and adolescent's relation with parent and other family members were found non-significantly associated with family relationship problems. The study conducted by Bosman *et al.* (1995) found that single parent family remains disadvantageous in relation to family environment. Similarly, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) also studied that life circumstances of adolescents of single parent often promote a high disorganization in the family and family situations. Also, Kleist *et al.* (1999) revealed in their study that family structure affected parental attempts to control adolescent's behaviour.

On the basis of above results it may be concluded that the most important micro system variables found significantly associated with social, economic, emotional and family relationship problems of adolescents were sex, land holding, family income, adolescent's relation with grandparents and activities at school. Further family relationship problems were influenced by land holding, parent's relation with family members, neighbours and family members support and help. It may also be highlighted that family income is an important determinant of adolescent's problems as highly income parent are able to provide more facilities and more exposure to adolescents, which may be the reason of less social problems. Further adolescent's relation with grandparents

Variables	Social problems	Economic problems	Emotional problems	Family relationship problems
Sex	9.93*	15.54*	6.66*	2.76
Caste	7.97	7.27	3.36	6.42
Type of family	2.46	0.21	0.49	2.35
Family size	4.46	4.56	4.71	1.90
Land holding	10.70*	5.48	10.43*	26.84*
Family income	10.92*	20.97*	3.38	3.83
Duration of becoming single parent	5.09	0.26	5.39	6.04
Parent's relation with grandparents	2.83	3.34	6.38*	5.95
Parent's relation with family members	4.89	5.99	3.53	15.34*
Parent's relation with neighborhood	3.56	2.18	7.13*	12.42*
Adolescent's relation with parent	4.60	0.46	0.64	5.11
Adolescent's relation with grandparents	4.83	12.25*	6.59*	4.52
Adolescent's relation with other family members	2.65	4.58	2.73	6.73
Activities at school	10.70*	6.68*	1.38	4.47
Scholarship help to adolescent from school	8.93*	3.71	0.23	3.17
Family members support and help each other	0.69	4.93	0.66	8.73*
Responsibilities taken by family members voluntarily	5.83	8.22*	0.58	3.78

also affected their economic and emotional problems. The reason may be that children are found more attached with their grandparents and do activities in which they get full cooperation and support from them, which further motivate them to build their confidence in day to day life. In a study conducted by Kellam *et al.* (1985) it was reported that the presence of grandparents assisted the social and economic adaptation of children in single parent family.

Similarly, activities at school and scholarship help from school also influenced social problems of the adolescents. It may be due to the fact that adolescents are exposed to various recreational, educational and social activities in school environment through these activities and they are encouraged by teachers and ultimately it may help to improve their social skills. Extra-curricular activities in the school also develop a sense of obligation in adolescents that carries over the community participation in adult life as part of social development. Most schools today have extra curricular organizations that offer students opportunities to develop social skills.

The crux of above discussion may be concluded that the level most immediate to the developing adolescent is the "microsystem". In Bronfenbrenner's view, the

expanding capacity to do more is the very essence of development one of the most important aspects of micro system as a force in development is the existence of relationship that go beyond simple dyads (two people). Family is viewed as the primary context in which adolescent problems are developed. Parent and family directly or indirectly influence adolescent's reactions or way of coping with various types of evocated situation.

Effect of mesosystem variables on adolescents problems :

This part deals with the influence of mesosystem variables on adolescent's problems in single parent families.

The data presented in the Table 2 revealed that the occupation of single mothers and single fathers was found significantly associated with social, economic and emotional problems of the adolescents. Further, a non-significant association was found with other variables such as adolescent's relation with friends and their teachers. The results are supported by William *et al.* (1980) who reported that the economic function of the husband/father is to bring money for the children and that of the wife/mother is to exchange a small portion of the family for

Variables	Social problems	Economic problems	Emotional problems	Family relationship problems
Occupation of single mother	8.76*	18.40*	8.76*	4.74
Occupation of single father	7.13*	11.09*	12.35*	5.15
Adolescent's relation with friends	3.85	11.57	3.56	1.92
Adolescent's relation with teachers	3.49	6.62	8.94	3.65

the goods and services needed for the maintenance of the family. In the absence of husband/father this process suddenly changes. Desrochers (1988) found that in the single parent families, the effect of low-income may be infested in things like lower educational achievements, lower economic level and even leave the child isolated and lonely. Also, Hilton *et al.* (2002) indicated in their study that economic strain caused lots of problems for the future of the adolescents.

On the basis of above findings, it may be concluded that the profile status is an aggregate of all the variable or factors which provide opportunities to the individual to develop fully. The social, economic and emotional status is influenced by occupation of a person. If a person is having high occupational status, ultimately it results more income and also it effects interpersonal relationship of the person, which further helps the individual to improve their social and economic problems. It is also well known fact that higher income parents provide better facilities to their children and satisfying their needs or requirements.

Conclusion:

The variables of human ecological environment exerted a powerful influence on the adolescent's problems. Microsystem variables such as sex, land holding, family income, adolescent's relation with grandparents and activities at school were found significantly associated with social, economic and emotional problems of adolescents. Further, variables such as land holding, parent's relation with family members, neighbours and family member support and help were significantly associated with family relationship problems of adolescents. The mesosystem variable such as occupation of father/mother also influenced the social, economic and emotional problems of adolescents. Results drawn from the study of human ecological factors suggested that micro and mesosystem of human environment are very important as human being is surrounded by these systems. Educational units like Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Child Development, Sociology and Psychology should take responsibility to create awareness among families and communities regarding importance and role of the these systems in reducing problems of single parents especially.

Authors' affiliations:

KRISHNA DUHAN AND SHEELA SANGWAN,
Department of Human Development and Family Studies,
P.G. College of Home Science, C.C.S. Haryana
Agricultural University, HISAR (HARYANA) INDIA

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