To Compare the Psychosocial Challenges of Adolescent Children (13-16 Years) from Dual Career Families and Single Career Families in the city Of Bangalore

Presented by

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(This research article is a brief extract of an unpublished thesis submitted towards a Master of Arts in Family Life Education at Urban India Ministries Family Research and Training Institute. Manonmani J is a Family Educator from UIM FRTI and is currently working in USA. She can be reached at poppybrunette@gmail.com)

Abstract

This thesis explores the psychosocial challenges that adolescent children face and helps find out if there is a difference in the way adolescent children handle their challenges, based on whether they hail from single career homes or dual career homes. Will one parent staying at home and raising children make a difference in the way the child handles its challenges as it transitions into adolescence?

The researcher understood post survey that the major psychosocial challenges are that the children were easily angered, they had difficulty conforming to rules, they preferred making their own decisions and spent a lot of time with gadgets / TV. The major differences in the findings were that, children from dual career homes had better ability to make decisions on their own, but children from single career homes were not very eager to go home after school, and they spent a lot of time with gadgets and electronic media every day.

This study has shown that irrespective of whether both the parents might be working or not, unless both the parents deliberately make it a priority to set apart time with the child and family on a regular basis, the child may not be greatly benefitted.

Introduction

The researcher was burdened by the working parents in the life of their relative's family. The children don't get to see the parents till late at night and this was causing rebellion by the children. Since both parents were working the children demanded compensation of their time by gifts and other tangible items. She observed neglected children in other families too in the city of Bangalore which when left unattended could lead to mental health concerns. In 2011, 97 cases of rape were registered, and 59 of the victims were aged between 14 and 18 years. In this, 51-percentage of the accused were relatives and neighbors. Of the 608 molestation cases in the state in 2011, 250 happened in Bangalore (Shivakumar). Bengaluru Urban district reported the highest number of teenage pregnancies between April 2016 and January 2017, according to data collated by the health department's Mother and Child Healthcare Monitoring System (MCTS).

The influence of the internet and the associated exposure has had an adverse impact on the character of children and so the researcher wanted to investigate and find out if both the parents spending regular time with the children all through their childhood, makes a marked difference in the child's psychosocial and spiritual worldview, as they transition into adulthood.

Literature Review

The researcher firstly reviewed literature about dual-career and single career families and the challenges particular to parenting teens. Secondly, she reviewed literature about the characteristic traits of adolescent children, their emotionality, social changes and social interests during this period, as well as their needs, problems, challenges, traps of adolescence and ecological techno subsystem. Thirdly, she reviewed literature about the effect of parents' employment on outcomes of adolescent children. Fourthly, she explored the role of spirituality in a teenager's life, the love languages of children, and how to intentionally parent

the child for success. Lastly she reviewed literature about the methodology used for this study.

The Trending Families of the Millennium – Dual-Career Homes

The emergence of dual-career households in the city has altered the way people tend to manage their private and public lives. Effects are seen in the social, economic and familial roles and relationships, in the management of the home, provisions for children's upbringing and education, etc. Dual-career couples get a chance to interact with a broad cross-section of the society, which helps them to broaden their outlook in life by learning from others' experience (Savara).

Positive Effects of Dual-Career Families

Full-time maternal employment can affect adolescents' well-being through a variety of different pathways. Mothers who work long hours may have less time to provide emotional support, monitor their child's behavior and foster their child's involvement in school and recreational activities. However, maternal work also brings additional income to the family that may be invested in educational and recreational activities. These factors may reduce parental stress about financial circumstances, and this could have a positive effect on the parent–child relationship (Guo and Harris).

Dual-Career – Boon or a Bane

Dual-career couples' concerns fall into three major areas - work, family and personal issues. Both partners' careers may not be in the same stage. One partner's career may be taking off while the other partner's career is being temporarily stalled in the same position (George 53,54). Working late and not having time for family often creates tension and resentment. If a couple does not plan how to work out the stresses of non-parallel career paths, they are likely to experience relationship problems.

Employed women might be more likely to suffer from role conflict and difficulties with reconciling work and family(Hart 84)**.** Adolescents who do not have a stay-at-home parent are also likely to have greater responsibilities, and the effects of these factors may be positive for some teenagers, but negative for others.

The advantages of single-career families - The effect of parents' employment on outcomes for children

There was strong evidence of a trade-off for mothers who were employed full-time when their children were under five. Although full-time work increased family income, less time for mothers to interact with their families tended to reduce children's later educational attainments. Part-time employment by mothers appeared to have few adverse effects on children as young adults. A longer period of part-time employment by mothers when their child was a preschooler reduced the child's educational attainments, but this effect was smaller than that of full-time employment at these ages (Francesconi).

Characteristics of adolescents

A time of search for identity

During any transitional period, the individual's stage is vague and there is confusion about the roles the individual is expected to play. The adolescent at this age is neither a child nor an adult. If adolescents behave like children, they are told to "act their age"(Mollie S. Smart 98), or if they try to act like adults, they are often accused of being "too big for their britches" and are reproved for their attempts to act like adults. On the other hand, the ambiguous status of today's adolescents is advantageous in that it gives them time to try out different lifestyles and decide what patterns of behavior, values, and attitudes meet their needs best (Williams). One of the ways adolescents try to establish themselves as individuals is by the use of status symbols in the form of cars, clothes, and readily observable material possessions (Hurlock 224)

Emotionality during adolescence

Traditionally, adolescence has been thought of as a period of "storm and stress" – a time of heightened emotional tension resulting from the physical and glandular changes that are taking place. An indication of emotional maturity is when the individual assesses the situation critically before responding to it emotionally instead of reacting to it unthinkingly as would a child or an immature person (Mangeli and Toraldo)

Social changes during adolescence

Increased peer group influence and changes in social behavior

Peers would have a greater influence on adolescent attitude, speech, interests, appearance and behavior than the family has. Of all the changes in social behavior, the most pronounced is in the area of heterosexual relationships. Social activities, whether within members of the same sex or with the opposite sex, usually reach their peak during the high school years (Hurlock 227).

The traps of adolescence

Dennis Rainey, in his book, "Ministering to Twenty First Century Families" lists the factors that deceptively traps the teenagers and sometimes even paralyzes them from moving forward in their aspirations. They are peer pressure, unresolved anger, the tongue, sex, appearance, mediocrity, dating, deceit, pornography, attitude issues, substance abuse, false gods, media and busyness (Rainey 84).

Ecological Techno subsystem – Urie Bronfenbrenner's model

Adolescents seemed to be trapped in the maze of social media. According toUrie Bronfenbrenner's model of Human Development there are. various levels of influences on the teenager from the microsystem, macrosystem and exosystem and techno subsystems. The figure below explains the model.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development
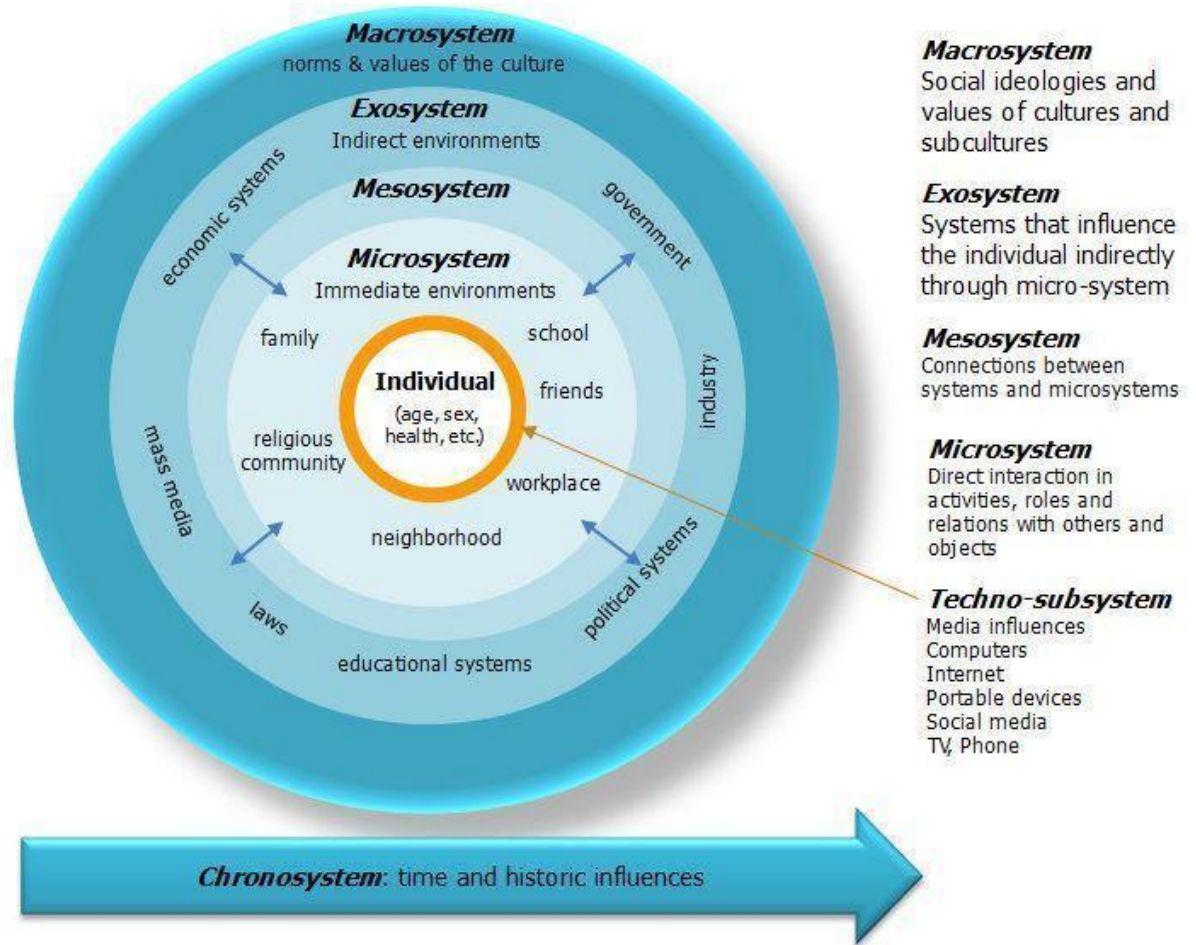
The model by Urie Bronfenbrenner shows how children these days are not only influenced by the microsystem – immediate environments (viz. family, religion, neighborhood, school, friends, workplace, immediate environments), the exosystem – indirect environments (viz. mass media, laws, government, economic and educational systems), macrosystem – social ideologies, values of culture and subculture, but are heavily influenced by the techno subsystem – media influence through computers, internet, portable devices, social media, TV and other handheld devices (Johnson and Puplampu).

The internet, video games, Hollywood and sex obsession – a vast wasteland

We have reached a time when fewer households are supervised by a parent in the home after school. Children are little information factories, and they thrive on the hyper. Just

as video games preach the gospel of violence, the motion picture industry carries a constant message that life is all about sexuality and about selfish indulgence of every impulse. So, it is profitable for any brand to always associate the brand with sexuality, which is so very enticing to the teenage mind, as teenagers are curious about sexuality (Campbell and Suggs 56).

Healthy parent-child relationship – a fortress during troubled times

Studies on parent-adolescent relationships reported that healthy parental interaction has a strong relationship to the wellbeing of adolescents (M.Greenburge 373). Parents who spend time with their children on a regular basis cultivate a strong sense of self. Good communication will help the adolescents to have a clear picture of their role at home and to develop the empathy which will help to balance feelings of both independence and connectedness, develop social skills, smoothen the cohesion between parents and the child, resulting in a strong parent-child bond (V. T. Sheth 971-972).

Research on adolescents at risk of mental health or conduct problems, has identified healthy parent-child relationship as a protective factor, whereas lack of interaction between parents and children act as a risk factor for various psycho-social adjustments in the case of adolescents (Liu 447).

A study among adolescents in Kolkata, India, noted that parent-adolescent communication has a high impact on the child's misbehavior. Studies among the 200 adolescents who were delinquent and non-delinquent shows a significant difference in terms of their perception about satisfactory parent-child interaction. Both fathers' and mothers' separate interaction was connected to the child's delinquent behavior. Early adolescence is a rich breeding ground for delinquency. But a satisfactory parental communication is crucial during the adolescent period to stand as a protective factor against delinquency (Mukherjee 74).

Parents' daily time with children – A significant influence in shaping the child's psychosocial behavior

Time with parents is a significant factor in children's health and development. Shared activities promote close, nurturing relationships that are critical for youths' psychological and behavioral adjustment and for their ability to develop close relationships with peers. With longer work days and commute times, more nonstandard work schedules, and greater work stress, it is more difficult to be a parent today than in the past. Most research on parents' work and time with their children shows that longer work hours are associated with less parent-child time. Adolescents' increasing autonomy and involvement in the world beyond the family also means that parents and adolescents spend less time together than in childhood. However, adolescents' time with parents remains important for their development, and work policies and practices that allow parents to be responsive to their adolescents' schedules may promote parent-youth shared time (Kelly D. Davis).

The love languages of children

It is so much easier to discipline a child if he or she feels genuinely loved, particularly, if the cause of the misbehavior is an empty love tank. It helps if we remember that they are children and we have the precious responsibility to fill their love tanks first, and then train them to move on in their journey (Chapman, The five love languages of children 29). Chapman says physical touch, words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, and acts of service are the five love languages of a child (Chapman and Campbell 36).

Intentional parenting

Being an intentional, patient, grown-up, balanced, consistent, playful, connected, encouraging, spiritual, merciful, hopeful and a free parent is not easy. However Sissy Goff, in her book "Intentional parenting" tells how we could endeavor to strike a balance between the two. Proactive parenting – thoughtful, intentional, strategic and wise parenting, or more

active parenting is responsive, engaged, invested, connected parenting. It is difficult to parent out of love when we are simply reacting to everything going on around us. If so, we are only postured to react rather than to respond. (Goff, Thomas and Trevathan 76).

Parenting Teens

Psychologist, Dr. Bruce Narramore states in his book, "Parenting Teens", that teenagers have six basic needs which need to be fulfilled during adolescence in order to become healthy, well-adjusted adults (Narramore and Lewis 103). They are

1. Develop their distinct identity and a sense of their uniqueness**.**

2. Progressively separate themselves from their childhood dependency on their parents.

3. Develop meaningful relationships with peers and others outside the family.

4. Develop their capacity to relate well to the opposite sex.

5. Gain the confidence and skills to prepare for a career, economic independency, and other adult responsibilities.

6. Fashion their faith and value commitments and basic attitude toward life.

Methodology

The research design is quantitative research where adolescent students between 13 to16 would be administered a questionnaire and they would be asked to fill up the survey sheet. The instrument that I used for my survey is a demographic sheet mostly with open-ended questions, which gave me all the demographic details of the child, followed by a 30-question survey sheet for which the child was asked to tick one of the four options given based on 4-point Likert scaling (Muijs 87).

Participant Profile

This research was conducted in 3 schools in the city of Bangalore. The total number of samples collected was 300, but those used for the research were only 80 samples - 40 from

dual career families and 40 from single career families, to have an equal number of samples from both kinds of families. The age of the children taken for the study varies from 13 years to 16 years of age. The children are primarily from the lower income group, where most of their parents are non- graduates. Most of them hail from nuclear families. Their parents generally held low paying jobs like cooking, tailoring, painting, housekeeping, driving, selling tea etc.

The psychosocial challenges of the children around which the questionnaire was designed are identity / self – esteem, anger, performance, relationship with peer group, conformity to rules, need for independence, addiction, relationship with family.

Research Questions

The two research questions that guided the research are:

Research Question #1

What are the psychosocial challenges faced by adolescent children (13-16) growing up in dual-career families and single-career families?

Research Question #2

How different or same, are the above challenges*?*

Findings

Research question #1 analysis

They get angered easily

While 68.75% of the children said that they were often nervous or afraid and 62.5% of the sample said that they get angry very often. Being treated "like a child, or being treated unfairly" is more likely to make the adolescent angry than anything else.(E. B. Hurlock 224). So, the child goes through a lot of stress because of the hormonal changes in his system and also because he sometimes is expected to behave like an adult, and sometimes like a child.

Hence, adolescent children go through a lot of anger and stress in this stage of life, irrespective of their family background.

They find it difficult to conform to rules

60% of the children agree that it irritates them when they are asked to obey rules. Irrespective of the family background, adolescent children find it annoying when rules are laid out for them. This is the age when children tend to exhibit problematic behavior like violence or rebellion or questioning authority the most. The child truly goes through a roller coaster ride in this stage of life (Mollie S. Smart 98). As researched, the ambiguous status of today's adolescents is advantageous in that it gives them time to try out different life styles and decide what patterns of behavior, values, and attitudes meet their needs best. Hence difficulty to conform to rules is a common behavior among adolescent children, irrespective of whether they hail from single career or dual career family.

They prefer making their own decisions

68.75% of the children said that they prefer making their own decisions. While all periods in the life span are important, some are more important because of their immediate effects on attitudes and behaviors, whereas others are significant because of their long - term effects. Accompanying these rapid and important physical developments, especially during the early adolescent period, rapid mental developments occur. These give rise to the need for mental adjustments and the necessity for establishing new attitudes, values and interests. Hence the child constantly feels the need to be independent and make his own decision (E. B. Hurlock 98).

They spend more time with gadgets daily.

68.75% of the children agree that they spend more than 2 hours in front of TV/mobile/laptop, and 57.5% said that they get irritated when they are not allowed to see TV or play video games every day. We have reached a time when fewer households are

supervised by a parent in the home after school. Children are little information factories, and they thrive on the hyper-textual wonderland of cyberspace (Campbell and Suggs, How to really parent your child 56).

Research question #2 analysis

Research question 2 helped the researcher compare the psychosocial challenges between children from single career families and children from dual career families. As data was analyzed, it was found that there were some challenges which were the same with children from both the families, while some challenges were more pronounced in one group of children than the other.

Similarities between single and dual career families

The study reveals that in terms of being easily angered there is not much difference. 62.5% of children from both single career families and 70% from dual career families were easily angered. Likewise, children from both single career and dual career families get irritated when they are asked to obey rules. The percentage of children who get annoyed when asked to obey rules is 60% across both the segments of families. Overall adolescent children from both family backgrounds have issues in conforming to rules. "Being treated like a child, or being treated unfairly" is more likely to make the adolescent angry than anything else. During any transitional period, the individual's stage is vague and there is confusion about the roles the individual is expected to play. The adolescent at this age is neither a child nor an adult. If adolescents behave like children, they are told to "act their age" If they try to act like adults, they are often accused of being "too big for their britches" and are reproved for their attempts to act like adults. Because of such role confusions and also because of glandular and hormonal changes that are taking place in the child's system, the adolescent child becomes easily angered irrespective of his family background.

Differences between single and dual career families

Gadget usage time is more among children of single career homes than dual career

75% of children from single career homes and 62.5% of children from dual career homes spend more than 2 hours in front of TV/mobile/laptop and 65% of dual career home children say that they get irritated when they are not allowed to see TV or play video games every day. Surprisingly, children from single career homes are more addicted to TV and social media, than children from dual career homes.

Longing to reach back home after school is more in children of dual career families

32.5% of children from single career homes say that they are not eager to go home after school every day, while a lesser percentage of children, 17.5% of children from dual career homes say that they are not eager to go home after school.

Studies on parent-adolescent relationships reported that healthy parental interaction has a strong relationship to the wellbeing of the adolescents (M.Greenburge 373). Adolescents want to confide in those whose interests and values are similar to theirs, who understand them and make them feel secure, and in whom they can confide problems and discuss matters they feel they cannot share with parents or teachers.

Ability to make their own decisions is more in children from dual career families.

60% of children from single career homes and 77.5% of kids from dual career homes say that they make their own decisions. This means that irrespective of the family background, children of this age have a strong need to be independent as they slowly become adults. (Appendix 2, figure 3)

Limitation

The researcher limited the study only to the lower income group of Bangalore, which may be different from the psychosocial challenges of adolescent children from other social strata.

Recommendation for Further Study

This study was done with adolescent children as the focal point. However, further studies could be done by administering the same questionnaire to the parents of those children to get a holistic view about the psychosocial challenges of these children. A mixed method with both quantitative and qualitative research would help delve deeper into the reasons for the challenges faced by these children.

Moreover, longitudinal study, collecting data from the children over different points in time would also give better insights into the challenges faced by the adolescent children.

Covering the various economic segments of the society (low, middle and high-income group) would throw a better light on the adolescent children of Bangalore, as a whole.

Conclusion

In this fast-paced world which venerates materialism, and parents are straining every nerve to bring home that extra buck either to make ends meet or to improve their quality of life. Children are the ones who take the brunt of the bargain, usually left to be on their own, with gadgets or caretakers. Though adolescence is a stage where the peer group influence seems to be quite pronounced, the parent still remains the most important influencer and advisor when the child encounters challenges during adolescence. A quantity of time spent by both the parents in a quality way on a regular basis with the adolescent children would help the children loosen up and communicate their challenges to their parents.

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