

Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication among Adolescents with Separated and Non – Separated Parents

Karen Mae C. Aquino, Queencel B. Enriquez, Kathrina B. Gonzales,
Lida C. Landicho

Psychology Department, College of Education, Arts and Sciences, Lyceum of the Philippine University

Date Received: February 9, 2015; Date Revised: July 3, 2015

Abstract - *Family is essentially made of those people who look after, who play a crucial role in our upbringing and who teach us such lessons in life. This thesis is intended to explore the major effects on adolescents with separated parents in terms of Emotional Maturity, Interpersonal Communication, and Anxiety. The researchers also compare variables to adolescents with non-separated parents. The scope of this study was given to 50 adolescents ages 17-21 with separated parents and 50 who were in intact families from Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas (N=100, 50 for non separated and 50 for separated). The researchers used quantitative method. Anova and Pearson-R were used to determine the results. The results show that the three variables have significant differences on separated parents. While Anxiety has a bigger impact on those adolescents with separated parents than with the non separated, Interpersonal Communication has no significant difference on adolescents with non separated parents.*

Keywords: *Anxiety, emotional maturity, interpersonal communication*

INTRODUCTION

Karl Zinsmeister (2001) noted that “We talk about drug crisis, the educational crisis and the problem of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime. But all these ills trace back predominately to one source: broken families”. Family is the basic unit of society. It is composed of a mother father and children who live in home. A word —homel may be alternated to the word —housel but is more appropriately referring to the material structure, whereas —homel refers to the intangible things that bind together the family members. It is the immeasurable and priceless love and care that keep one family together.

A country can be productive and governance will be effective if the citizens are properly oriented of good values and virtues, which is commonly taught

and acquired by the family. A man behavior that can trace back from what family he grew up with. Meaning the family is the most crucial substance of who we are.

However, no matter how ideal the family in terms of their relation, there is still a conflict and misunderstanding that will be encountered along the way, it is a part of any relationship. But the most painful part is when one member of the family gave up and others have no choice but to accept and let go. Thus, the family starts to be broken.

It is said that, one ingredient on youth’s happy life is his family, that the parents are the most important source of youths behavior, which affects his outlook in life. But how can a youth continuously become happy if the main source of his or her happiness is totally broken?

Zinsmeister (2001) emphasized that “there is scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual, physical, and emotional scars that persist for life”.

Nowadays, people are aware in embracing on what a modern generation brings to us. And together with this are the massive changes in society. Many of the teenagers today are engaged in pre-marital sex which leads to early pregnancy, crimes, cases of suicide and depression from which the first person that engross with this a teenager. All these things happened because they lack love and attention and no constant communication from the family because the family they considered is totally subside.

The researchers preferred to conduct this study because this could help the adolescents to become aware of the phenomenon called separated parents. It helps to enlighten the mind and to be open-minded in the reality of life. This study also helps the parents on how to guide and give attention to their children specifically the teens. It also aids the adolescents to be mature and independent despite of having a separated parent.

This study determined the level of emotional maturity; anxiety and interpersonal communication among adolescents with separated parents. The researchers also would like to find out what are the impact of having a separated parent to adolescent's personality and outlook in life. More so, how do adolescents cope with this kind of situation and keep on going despite being in a broken family.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to determine the level of Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication among separated and non – separated parents; compare the Emotional Maturity, Anxiety, And Interpersonal Communication according to respondents age among separated and non – separated parents; test the significant difference on Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication between adolescents with separated and non-separated parents; test the significant relationship between Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication of adolescents with separated and non – separated parents; and formulate an intervention program that will be a part of the CATC activity.

Theoretical Basis

Family System Theory

Bowen (n.d.) noted that the family system theory is a theory that suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one to another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system.

The two – relationship is the basic unit of any emotional maturity is an unstable system in the sense that, under stress, it tends to draw in a third to stabilize, creating three – person system of two – against – one, or two – helping - one. When the anxiety gets high enough in any triangle, it spills over into other triangles, spreading further and further into the whole family system. Thus, triangle form when discomfort in a two – person relationship in the family, binding family members into a series of repetitive interactions and roles. These interactions can develop into problematic behavior patterns in the unwitting participants of the triangle. When there is discord between two people, they commonly attempted to alleviate the discomfort by forming as triangle with a third. Families retreat themselves.

METHOD

Research Design

The study entitled —Separated Parents: It's Effect to Adolescents Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication made use of the quantitative method aims to determine the relationship between one thing (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable) in a population (Hopkins, 2008). Standardized questionnaires were used as research instruments.

Participants

A total of one hundred respondents participated in this study within Batangas City area particularly in Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas. Respondent's age is ranging between 17 to 21 years old. (See List of Tables)

Measures

In measuring the effect of separated parents to emotional maturity, anxiety and interpersonal skill among teenagers, the researchers used descriptive method using three standardized questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire contains the respondent's personal information and the second part includes the proper test. The first element of the questionnaire contains the Interpersonal Scale by Willoughby that provides a general indication of a person's interpersonal, social and emotional sensitivity. There are 25 questions that ask for a response ranging from 0 to 4 that corresponds to 0 = never, 1 = somewhat, 2 = average amount, 3 = usually, and 4 = practically always. For the scoring system, derive a total score for the questionnaire and the following are the severity ratings of the total score: 0 – 19 Normal Sensitivity, 20—39 Mild Sensitivity, 40– 59 Moderate Sensitivity, 60 – 79 Moderate to Extreme Sensitivity and 80 – 100 Extreme Sensitivity.

Next to Interpersonal Scale is the Zung Self – Rating Anxiety Scale by Dr. William W.K. Zung to quantify a respondent's level of anxiety. It is a 20-item self-report assessment device which includes measures of state and trait anxiety. In answering the statements a person should indicate how much each statement applies to him or her. Each question is scored on a Likert-type scale of 1-4 (based on these replies: "a little of the time," "some of the time," —A large part of the time," "most of the time"). For scoring, add the total scores of the items which ranges from 25-100 that corresponds to a interpretation; 25-

44 Normal Range, 45-59 Mild to Moderate Anxiety Levels, 60-74 Marked to Severe Anxiety Levels, 275 and above are Extreme Anxiety Levels.

Last part of the answer sheet is the Emotional Intelligence Scale by Dr. Nicolas Hall. The purpose of this self-evaluation is to measure your tendencies and abilities within various areas of emotional intelligence. There are 30 questions asks for a response of 1 = Disagree Very Much 3 = Disagree Slightly 5 = Agree Moderately 2 = Disagree Moderately 4 = Agree Slightly 6 = Agree Very Much. For the scoring, add the scores of the items number 3, 7, 8, 10, 18 and 30 to measure one's emotion. If your score is 27 to 32 above you will able to perform well in most managerial and professional jobs and are important to leading in fulfilling life in general. If your score is lower than 26 and below, you score fell into the —needs substantial development —or need some development.

Procedure

In conducting this study entitled —Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication among Adolescents with Separated and Non – Separated Parents, first, the researchers looked for students to participate in the study and before anything else; they briefed the respondents and established rapport. Next, the researchers guided the respondents on how to answer the questionnaires properly that was given to them.

Data Analysis

The researchers evaluated the data through the use of statistical means by computing the participant's raw score in the survey questionnaire. Pearson – r correlation was used as the statistical tool to acquire the relationship between the three variables Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication (x), (y), and (z).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Adolescents with Separated Parents as to different variables (n=50)

	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Interpersonal Communication	71.82	17.57	Moderate to Extreme
Anxiety	96.36	77.33	Severe Anxiety
Emotional Maturity	26.94	4.81	Perform Well

Table 1 shows the mean scores of adolescents with separated as to different variables Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication. The results show that anxiety got the highest mean score (\bar{X} =96.36, SD =77.33) and the Emotional maturity got the lowest mean score (\bar{X} =26.94, SD =4.81) among the three variables from separated parents.

According to Amato, Kelly and Emery (2003), most children from divorce adjust reasonably well, but divorce increases the risk of problems in adolescents or adulthood, such as antisocial behavior, difficulties with authority figures and dropping out from school. According to some researches, 25 percent of children of divorce reach adulthood with serious social, emotional, or psychological problems, as compared with 10 percent of children whose parents stay together. We also tended to have lower educational levels and more marital discord as well as weak bonds with their parents. Having experienced their parents' divorce, some young adults are afraid of making commitments that might end in disappointment and are intent on protecting their independence. They may have lingering feelings of sadness, worry, or regret or even pain and distress, often related to a sense of lack of control over their lives.

Table 2. Adolescents with Non Separated Parents as to different variables (n=50)

	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Interpersonal Communication	49.66	18.97	Moderate
Anxiety	41.58	10.96	Normal Range
Emotional Maturity	24.86	3.46	Needs Substantial Development

Table 2 shows the mean scores of Adolescents with Non Separated Parents as to different variables Emotional Maturity, Anxiety and Interpersonal Communication. Based on the result findings, Interpersonal got the highest mean score (49.66) and the emotional maturity got the lowest mean score (24.86) among the three variables from non - separated parents which falls under the moderate level.

Bruner (2002) noted that calls —acts of meaningful, understanding of interpersonal communication is an essential ingredient in cooking up good relationships. The success with which we cope with the contingencies of our interpersonal lives depends largely on how effectively we respond

to the contradictions and conflicts that social life necessarily poses. Family is revealed in concrete episodes of interaction, family enacts the patterns that bind them. Family members interacting with each other feel their moods and sense their entrapment.

Table 3. Comparison of the Mean Scores of Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety and Emotional Maturity between Separated and Non Separated Parents

	Separated	Non Separated
Interpersonal Communication	71.82	49.66
Anxiety	96.36	41.58
Emotional Maturity	26.94	24.86

Table 3 indicates the comparison of mean scores of Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety and Emotional Maturity between Separated and Non Separated Parents. As to the result of computation, Anxiety under separated parents has the highest mean score (96.36) and Interpersonal Communication with non – separated got a higher mean score (49.66).

Anxiety is a psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. It is the displeasing feeling of fear and concern. The root meaning of the word anxiety is 'to vex or trouble'; in either presence or absence of psychological stress, anxiety can create feelings of fear, worry, uneasiness, and dread. It has been seen that Anxiety has a big impact on adolescents with separated parents. They are experiencing anxiety and tend to lead to physical and mental health issues.

Teenagers in single-parent families and in blended families are three times more likely to need psychological help within a given year. They tend to be lonely, unhappy and insecure.

Interpersonal Communication has a highest mean among the three variables which means that it does not affect adolescents from non separated parents. They are sociable enough that their parents have

thought them. Adolescents from the separated parents are searching for family communication which they don't have.

Table 4 presents the mean score of adolescents from separated parents according to age from 17-21 years of age, among the three variables are: From age 19 Emotional Maturity has the highest mean score ($\bar{X}=107.46$) with the verbal interpretation - They Perform Well. And from age 18 Anxiety has the lowest mean score ($\bar{X}=26$) with the verbal interpretation they have a normal anxiety.

An unstable home may derail the normal steps toward independence in this age group. Children may experience depression and loss of interest in school, social activities and life in general. They may get into problems with the law, drop out of school and attach themselves to the wrong peer groups.

Divorce effects in teenagers are more pronounced than in small children, as children are yet to attain enough maturity to understand the gravity of the situation. Also effects of divorce on children are of temporary consequence as compared to teenagers.

Adolescents may express disappointment at not being able to grow up in an intact family and wondered if their life would not been better if they had been able to do so. At an onset of adolescents, early maturing girls from divorced families engaged in frequent conflict with their mothers, behave in noncompliant ways, had lower self-esteem, and experienced more problems in heterosexual relationships.

It is normal in adolescence for peers to become more influential in shaping who a teenager is, what they think, and what they do. During a divorce, this influence can increase. As the home situation changes and becomes less stable and / or less pleasant, teens can find greater comfort and security in their relationship with peers. This can offer genuine benefits such as providing a place to explore how they feel, especially if there are peers who have gone through similar experiences.

Table 4. Comparison of the mean Scores of Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety, and Emotional Maturity according to Respondents Age among Separated Parents

Age	Interpersonal communication	Verbal Interpretation	Emotional Maturity	Verbal Interpretation	Anxiety	Verbal Interpretation
17	65.87	Moderate to Extreme Anxiety	79.73	Perform Well	27.27	Normal
18	57.75	Moderate	123.75	Perform Well	26	Normal
19	74.96	Moderate to Extreme Anxiety	107.46	Perform Well	27.25	Normal
20	69.67	Moderate to Extreme Anxiety	39.33	Perform Well	23.67	Normal

Table 5. Comparison of the mean Scores of Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety, and Emotional Maturity according to Respondents Age among Non Separated Parents

Age	Interpersonal communication	Verbal Interpretation	Emotional Maturity	Verbal Interpretation	Anxiety	Verbal Interpretation
17	46.56	Moderate	38.12	Perform Well	25.00	Normal
18	35.8	Moderate	46.6	Perform Well	23.00	Normal
19	53.03	Moderate	42.68	Perform Well	24.93	Normal
21	29	Moderate	41	Perform Well	26.00	Normal

The negatives are when teens become susceptible to excessive influence from peers who actively encourage anti-social or destructive behavior.

Table 5 mean scores of Adolescents from non-separated parents according to age from 17-21 years of age, among the three variables are: From age 19 inter-personnel Communication has the highest mean score (53.03) with the verbal interpretation – moderate sensitivity. And from age 18 Anxiety has the lowest mean score (23.00) with the verbal interpretation they have a normal anxiety.

Compared with peers from intact families, children who experienced parental divorce tend to experience more psychological and socio-emotional challenges. Children of divorce scored lower than children of intact families in a variety of areas including: scholastic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social competence, and relationships with parents. The areas of conduct and father-child relationships were the most affected by divorce.

Table 6. ANOVA table for scores on Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents with Separated Parents

Variables	Mean	F	p-value	eta ²
Interpersonal Communication	71.82	36.70	.000	0.272*
Anxiety	96.36	24.59	.000	0.201*
Emotional Maturity	26.94	6.15	0.015	0.059*

* Significant at 0.05

Table 6 above illustrates that there is a significant relationship between the three variables Interpersonal communication ($F=36.70$, $p\text{-value}=.000$), Anxiety ($F=24.59$, $p\text{-value}=.000$) and Emotional Maturity ($F=6.15$, $p\text{-value}=0.015$) among adolescents with separated parents.

Parental separation is not a single event but rather represents a series of stressful experiences for the entire family that begins with marital conflicts before

the actual separation and includes many adjustments afterward (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992).

Wallerstein et al., (2000) found that the normal adolescent developmental move toward individuation is threatened by divorce. Instead of being able to move toward independence and separation from parents, adolescents perceive parents as having separated from them. The adults are often consumed with their own problems during this turbulent time and adolescents may be neglected. Many adolescents feel their time for growing up is shortened by the divorce.

Despite many adjustment difficulties, adolescents also show some positive changes such as an impressive development of maturity and moral growth, a more realistic understanding of finances, and a chance to experience new family roles and responsibilities. —it was hard for me to adjust but later on, I felt the peace and I was able to forgive my parents.

This statement was from one of our respondents, her feelings were developed positively.

Emotional Maturity implies controlling your emotions rather than letting your emotions get the better of you. Your emotional maturity depicts your capacity to manage and to check your emotions, to evaluate others' emotional state and to persuade their judgment and actions. A person's emotional maturity is very much influenced by his/ her relationship history.

Anxiety has been significant to adolescents with separated. Parents, children living with separated parents are exposed to more stressful experiences and circumstances than are children living with continuously married parents. Emotional Maturity also has a great impact on adolescents with separated parents.

Parents who played an active role in monitoring and guiding their adolescent development were more likely to have adolescents with positive peer relations than parents who had a less active role (Mounts, 2002).

A research synthesis paper released by the Family Research Council indicates that students from intact biological families experience greater academic success than those from disrupted families.

The research found that adolescents from intact biological families have higher math, science, history and reading test scores than their counterparts in disrupted families. Furthermore, such adolescents report that their parents have higher educational expectations for them, are more involved in their education, and are more likely to supervise their schoolwork and social activities.

Children from intact biological families are also more likely to graduate from high school, enter college and complete a four-year college education than those from disrupted families. Students from uninterrupted backgrounds are also more likely to care about doing well in school and less likely to be suspended or expelled from school.

Table 7. Scores on Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents with Non Separated Parents (n=50)

Variables	Mean	F	p- value	eta ²
Mean Per Non Separated				
Anxiety	41.58	0.67	.000	0.028*
Emotional Maturity	24.86	0.38	0.015	0.16*

* Significant at 0.05

Table 7 above illustrates that there is a significant relationship between the two variables Anxiety (F=0.67, p-value=.000) and Emotional Maturity (F=0.38, p-value=0.015) among adolescents with non separated parents.

Table 8 shows the correlation between Interpersonal communication and Anxiety (rxy=0.582, p-value=.000).

Table 9. Proposed Program Design

Specific Objective	Program	Target Persons	Responsible Persons	Incentive
To give recognition to the Parents and Children (Ages 17-21)	Recognition Ceremony	Parents & Children (Ages 17- 21)	Counseling and Testing Center Counselors	Plaque of recognition
To be aware about the impact of separation on Adolescents	Discussion	Parents & Children (Ages 17- 21)	Psychology Department Chair and Psychology Professor	Certificate of Recognition
Enhancing Interpersonal Communication	Seminar & Training	Adolescents (Ages 17- 21)	Guidance Counselors & Psychology Professors	Certificate of Participation

Table 8. Correlation between Interpersonal and Anxiety among adolescents with separated parents

x	y	rxy	p- value
Interpersonal	Anxiety	0.582	0.00*
Anxiety	Emotional maturity	0.33	0.00*

* Significant at 0.05

The result specifies that there is also a significant relationship between Anxiety and Emotional maturity (rxy=0.33, p-value=.000).

Graham (2005) noted that emotions are attached to every thought. We have a way of —feeling about every idea we entertain. We allow a thought or idea to take root in our minds. We visualize that thought taking place in reality, and then we make a decision in the will about how to respond. The degree to which our emotions are part of this process – in giving birth to an idea, in enhancing the visualization, and in compelling us to make a decision – determines how quickly and how intensely we will act on the idea. It is our thought, life that we are to govern with diligence. For emotional maturity, we must go out of our way to halt the flood of violent, seductive, and tempting messages that come unsolicited and often undesired.

CONCLUSIONS

The level of Interpersonal Communication among Adolescents with separated parents is Moderate to Extreme Sensitivity; on Anxiety is Severe Anxiety and Emotional Maturity which is they Perform Well. While those Adolescents from non-separated parents, interpersonal communication is moderate; anxiety is in Normal Range and Emotional Maturity which Needs Substantial Development. Interpersonal Communication affects mostly adolescents with separated parents than those with non separated parents.

Interpersonal Communication, Anxiety and Emotional Maturity has a significant difference or effect on adolescents with separated parents, and only Interpersonal Communication do not have a significant difference on adolescents with non separated parents. In adolescents with separated parents, Interpersonal Communication and Anxiety; Anxiety and Emotional Maturity, correlates with one another. And Emotional Maturity and Interpersonal Communication do not correlate with one another. In terms of adolescents with non separated parents, all the variables do not correlate with one another. Adolescents living with separated parents consistently report encountering more problems than those living with continuously married parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents should give importance about interpersonal on their children. They can be counselors for their children. They should give right attention to their children with the help of self-reflection and willingness to cooperate with both parents and children. Lyceum of the Philippines University should identify students with separated parents and should alleviate them from delinquent acts that they may act. For the Psychology Department, Counseling and Psychotherapy is highly recommended for adolescents with separated parents for them to be able to cope up with the separation. And for non separated, for them to be able to improve and develop themselves in positive ways. Future researchers may consider other variables such as sex and have a bigger population to be able to understand and compare the effects to adolescents from separated and non – separated. Intervention plan for adolescents coming from separated and non separated parents may be conducted.

REFERENCES

- Bowen, M. (n.d.) Family System Theory, retrieved date: January 25, 2012. url: <http://www.genopro.com/genogram/family-systems-theory/>
- Bruner, J. (2002). Handbook of Interpersonal Communication 3rd Edition Mark Knapp and John A. Daly (http://books.google.com.ph/books?hl=en&lr=&id=t97fuA_cjS-YC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=family+interpersonal+communication+&ots=Xc

- C8ihdBwy&sig=fIE-Lr5F3ewpn_sfuA0Wg5eqkrc&redir_esc=y)
- Graham, C. (2005). The Influence of Transgenerational Anxiety on Emotional Maturity and Human Interaction in Client Care, 2005(<http://www.soberliving.com/blog/the-influence-of-transgenerational-anxiety-on-emotional-maturity-and-human-interaction-in-client-care>)
- Hetherington, M. I, et al. (2006). Child Psychology A Contemporary Viewpoint. 6thed., pp. 484-488
- Hetherington, E. M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For better or worse: Divorce reconsidered*. New York: W. W. Norton
- National Observer Home > No. 53-Winter 2002 >Bill Muehlenberg
- Wallerstein —The Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Children, Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.
- Wallerstein, J. S., Lewis, J., & Blakeslee, S. (2000). *The unexpected legacy of divorce: A 25 year landmark study*. New York: Hyperion.
- Zung, William; Zung Self – Rating Anxiety Scale. Retrieved February 25, 2012. (http://psychology.wikia.com/wiki/Zung_Self-Rating_Anxiety_Scale)