

MENTAL HEALTH, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND SELF-EFFICACY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM BROKEN AND INTACT FAMILIES



ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to make a comparison of the mental health, locus of control, and self-efficacy of adolescents from broken and intact families. Online data were collected from a random sample of 184 adolescents from the secondary schools of the Kanyakumari district. The instrumentation included the Mental Health Status Scale, the Indian Version of Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, and the Self-efficacy Scale. Independent sample 't'-tests revealed a significant difference between students from broken and intact families with respect to their mental health, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy, favoring adolescents from intact families.

Keywords: *Mental health, Locus of control, Self-efficacy, Broken family, and Intact family.*

Introduction

The family is the most valued social system throughout the history of humanity. The role of the family in socializing children and molding their personalities is of utmost importance. A persistent insecure family atmosphere not only compromises the balanced development of personality but also contributes to psychopathology in adult life (Kashdan, 2010). In modern times there is an ever-mounting instance of family breakage due to a multitude of causes. Children are the real victims of family disintegration as it triggers emotional problems and subsequent maladjustment in life. The psychological well-being and social adjustment of children and adolescents are greatly influenced by the overall family functioning and marital harmony of parents (Hepi, Fitri&Resnia, 2020). Family integration and parental harmony are, thus, critical factors in the mental health of children and adolescents. Jain and Singh (2015) have reported the contributory role of internal locus of control to the mental health of adolescent girls. Ashagi and Beheshtifar (2015) found a direct and meaningful relationship between internal locus of control and self-efficacy beliefs in adults. These studies indicate the possible effect of locus of control and self-efficacy on the mental health of adolescents in our secondary schools. In light of the reports regarding ever-increasing family disintegration in Kerala (Hindustan Times, 2018; Mathrubhumi, 2017), and an ever-escalating incidence of personality maladjustments among Indian adolescents (UNFPA, 2018), there is a pressing

need to make a comparative study of the mental health of adolescents from broken and unbroken families.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives in view:

1. To compare the mental health of secondary school students from broken and intact families.
2. To compare the locus of control of secondary school students from broken and intact families.
3. To compare the self-efficacy of secondary school students from broken and intact families.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

H₀1: There is no significant difference between secondary school students from broken and intact families with respect to their mental health.

ALEX, A.,

Asst. Professor, Anna Vinayagar College of Education, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India

ARJUNAN, N. K.,

Principal, Adi Sankara Training College, Kalady, Kerala, India.

SHERLIN, S.

Asst. Professor, St. Xavier's College of Education (Autonomous), Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu, India

H₀2: There is no significant difference between secondary school students from broken and intact families with respect to their internal locus of control.

H₀3: There is no significant difference between secondary school students from broken and intact families with respect to their self-efficacy.

Methodology

Normative Survey method was adopted for the present study. A simple random sample of 184 adolescents in the age range of 13-17 years was selected from four secondary schools in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu (India). The data required for the study were collected online by administering the tools, Mental Health Scale developed (Abraham & Prasanna, 1981), the Indian Version of Rotter’s Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Arjunan & Abraham, 2003), and the Self-efficacy Scale (Rose & Arjunan, 2014), prepared in Google Forms. An Independent sample t-test was performed in SPSS (version 16.0 for Windows) to test the hypotheses.

Analysis and Interpretation

The mental health of the students from broken and intact families were compared by applying an independent sample ‘t’-test, the data, and result of the same is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of the mental health of secondary school students from broken and intact families

Sub-samples	Statistical indices			t-value	p-value
	N	M	SD		
Intact Family	166	88.84	14.28	2.43	0.05 level
Broken Family	18	80.28	12.22		

Table 1 shows that the adolescents from intact and broken families differ significantly ($t = 2.43$; $p < .05$) with respect to their mental health. A closer observation of the mean scores reveals that subjects from intact families have better mental health compared to their counterparts from broken families. This finding is in conformity with the findings made by Maher (2003) who reported a high incidence of antisocial personality disorders, delinquency, and emotional

problems among adolescents from broken families. Parental divorce was found associated with lower psychological and social well-being in adolescence, an increased risk of schizophrenia, and in a longer perspective, psychiatric morbidity, as well as increased mortality (Hansagi, Brando & Andreasson, 2000).

Table 2 presents the data and result of the independent sample ‘t’-test performed to compare the internal locus of control scores of secondary school students from broken and intact families.

Table 2

Comparison of the locus of control of secondary school students from broken and intact families

Sub-samples	Statistical indices			t-value	p-value
	N	M	SD		
Intact Family	166	15.91	2.09	3.76	0.01 level
Broken Family	18	13.38	2.65		

The t-value estimated shows that there is a significant difference in the internal locus of control of adolescents from intact families and broken families ($t = 3.76$; $p < 0.01$). A closer observation of the mean scores reveals that subjects from intact families are more internally oriented than their counterparts from broken families. The result of the present study goes in agreement with that of Coleman and De Leire (2003), and Cohen, Mannarino, and Deblinger (2006) who reported greater external locus of control in children who have experienced stressful events of parental discord or traumatic grief of parental death.

The secondary school students from broken and intact families were compared by applying the two-tailed test of significance for the difference between means to find out whether there is any significant difference between the groups with respect to their self-efficacy. The details of the comparison are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparison of the self-efficacy of secondary school students from broken and intact families

Sub-samples	Statistical indices			t-value	p-value
	N	M	SD		
Intact Family	166	25.55	3.90	3.61	.01 level
Broken Family	18	21.94	4.86		

The result of the t-test shows that the adolescents from intact and broken families differ significantly ('t' = 3.61; p<.01) with respect to their self-efficacy. A closer examination of the mean values reveals that adolescents from intact families have higher self-efficacy compared to those from broken families. Adverse childhood experiences such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, etc. are likely to be more in broken families. The findings of the present study do not stand alone as recent studies such as those conducted by Green (2020) and Cohrdes and Mauz (2020) also have reported poor self-efficacy in children who experienced parental neglect.

Conclusion

The t-tests performed to compare secondary school students from broken and intact families with respect to their mental health, locus of control, and self-efficacy revealed a significant difference between the groups with respect to all the variables. The null hypotheses formulated in this context, viz., H₀₁, H₀₂, and H₀₃ are, therefore, rejected. The findings expose that, students from intact families have better mental health compared to their counterparts from broken families. Adolescents from intact families are more internally oriented than their counterparts from broken families and adolescents from intact families have higher self-efficacy compared to those from broken families. Hence efforts, both from the side of parents and teachers, need to be undertaken to educate and counsel parents regarding the significance of healthy families in the development of mentally healthy, self-efficacious youngsters with the internal orientation of mind.

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