



Causes and Manifestations of the Perceived Behavioral Issues of Adolescents A Case Study of Learners in Secondary Schools Islamabad

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Syed Imran Haider*

Azhar Waqar†

Samreen Mehmood‡

Abstract

The study aims to comprehend the adolescents' behavioral issues and their impact on their physical and emotional life. The theory of socialized anxiety and adolescents has been applied to this study which conceptually analyzes the anxiety and behavioral issues of the students. The qualitative and quantitative approach was utilized in the study and adolescent students were the targeted sample. However, for qualitative study, the teachers and parents of the adolescents were also selected for focus group discussions. The study finds that the mood of adolescents frequently changes even in the school environment. It was also found that adolescents do not share their emotions and problems with their parents, though they prefer their teachers and friends. The study recommends that the gap between the parents and the adolescents must be reduced so that the adolescents could perform more effectively and efficiently in the school environment and their social life.

Key Words: Adolescents, Anxiety, Parents, Teachers, FGDs

Introduction

During the adolescence phase of human development, emotions play a key role in shaping the behavior of the in the context of the overall environment (Kruger, Gouws & Dicker 1998). They experience a weird attitude where they want to enjoy the company of some of their friends and after some days, they even do not give to their friends and prefer the solitude.

The change in adolescents, from about 12 to 18 years are included, recognizing one's body image as masculine or feminine, relations with the peer groups, seeking economic independence and working on further socially desirable roles (Havighurst, 1951, pp.30-55, as cited in Muuss, 1975, p.142).

With the passage of time, children use to imitate the roles of their elder siblings and parents from the existing social environment. The parents have a direct role in the life of the adolescents and they try to imitate their behaviors, learn their language and follow their instructed cultural pattern. Similarly, they also try to follow their teacher's role and behavior in some way. Teachers usually appear as an inspirational personality for adolescents. In addition, they also imitate the talking style and learn the vocabulary from the teachers (Markiewicz, Doyle, & Brendgen, 2001).

Weeks (1998) expressed that behavioral problems can be categorized into three levels such as minor behavioral issues, less serious behavior and more serious behavioral issue of adolescents. The minor behavioral nature is termed as the temporary in their nature because it includes, lying, lack of punctuality and non-seriousness towards minor things. However, the less serious behavior issues like bullying and abusing others deserve professional guidance from the psychologists as this behavior badly affects their personality.

Finally, the more serious behavior issues; for example, the sexual abuse of children and juvenile delinquency influence a small percentage of children. This attitude needs to be analyzed in a holistic way in order to guide the children appropriately (Johal, & Mehta, 2015).

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Population Studies, Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: imran.haider@aiou.edu.pk

† M.Phil, International Development Studies, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan.

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Indeed, behavior varies from individual to individual and culture to culture. SO this is of utmost importance to understand that who is evaluating the behavior of the children and in which culture they are making an assessment about the behavior (Weeks, 1998).

Adolescent's physical characteristics affect their behaviors as well. The physical attraction of an adolescent does play a good and crucial role in improving his positive self-esteem and he is likely to be more active in social environment. Lerner, Delaney, Hess, and Jovanovic (1990) explained that adolescents with good looking physical appearance are more prone to become intelligent, friendly, kind and successful. On the other hand, adolescent with less physical attractiveness may feel the negativity and might suffer from inferiority complex and stress. Even the false impression of adolescents about oneself can also negatively influence his personality.

Grossman (1990) shared that emotions are the most critical thing in the life of adolescents and their emotions determine their behavior. However, sometimes the emotional response appears as quite intensive and sometimes as weak. Adolescents usually fail to manage their behavioral patterns due to the prevailing and rising emotions. They do not tolerate the lighter criticism especially in the presence of their peers and react with strong emotions. They get easily disappointed due to the higher and unrealistic expectations for others. They may show deviant behavior by violating the established norms and values in front of large audience. A behavior that is not conformed to the existing social set up and norms by the individuals is categorized as the behavioral problem or the deviant behavior.

Keeping all these reasons in mind, this study was carried out with the sample that included people who are related with the specific age group in which their behavior changes due to different reasons, teachers and parents who try to help or support them, and try to handle them with their experiences. The study aims to understand the adolescents' behavioral issues exhibited by the students which affect their classroom activities, social and emotional behavioral patterns.

Literature Review

Herts, McLaughlin, and Hatzenbuehler (2012) stated that the adolescent's age period is quite sensitive and critical. However, it is a natural process that has been occurring with human species for thousands years. This stage of age absorbs the contradictions, higher level of emotional intensity and frequent mood swings, Nwafor (2014) also expressed that the adolescents are a universal phenomenon in which adolescents feel the shift in their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and emotions. Even their relationships with peers including the opposite sex also oscillate. Their psychological and physiological changes trigger and push them towards the change in behavior. Mead emphasizes that freedom is very important for adolescents and they should not be compelled to conform before the family and parents for smaller issues. Moreover, at this stage of age, adolescents may identify and realize their creativity and particular area of interest. This creative potential should be given an appropriate way so that they could express themselves (McCarthy & Hoge 1982). Bernard (1981) expressed that the adolescence is like social locomotion because adolescents are continuously heading towards a greater social and complex psychological field. The adolescents have no clear goals and objectives and just follow their own will and mood. Even they do not know what they are doing and where they are moving.

O'Koon (1997) was of the view that the self-image of every individual depends upon his body. While in normal body development, the natural process of change in body remains slow and the individuals may have a better and stable self-image of themselves. Moreover, the slow development process lets them easily adjust and adapt the external environment and behave in a normal and smooth way. Clay Vignoles and Dittmar (2005) elucidated that adolescents experience swift physiological and psychological change. As a result, their urges become more intensive and sometimes they could not manage and behave in a deviant and abnormal way.

They might suffer from stress, depression, and life becomes boring, unguided and painful for them. The adolescents always perceive their body image and believe that others also perceive their body image. The positive perception of body image increases their sense of satisfaction.

According to Beard (2013), Piaget divided the three stages of cognitive-developmental and explained the idea of egocentrism in the development of the personality of individual. He added that the first and critical period of egocentrism occurs at end of the sensorimotor stage. While at the end of the preoperational stage, the second period of egocentrism occurs. The second period represents the lack of differentiation between the ego and alters

the opinion, between the subjective and the objective. Similarly, another form of egocentrism also exists which appears at the transition from the solid to the formal stage. The structure of the formal operations also becomes large and bulky. Lewin stated that adolescence is a marginal individual and some of other experts endorse his point (McConville, 2003). Petersen (1988) described that human development cannot be divided or segregated into multiple stages rather it is a consistent process. In addition, he added that the social factors, conditions, and elements are responsible for the transition period for some individuals in society. The intrinsically it is not a transition rather a continuous and disconnected process.

Theoretical Framework

Adolescence and Socialized Anxiety

There are several theories of behavior that can help adults related to different aspects of life. However, this study prefers the Allison Davis theory of Adolescence and Socialized Anxiety. He defines "*socialization as the process by which an individual learns and adapts the ways, ideas, beliefs, values, and norms of his culture and makes them part of his personality.*" He is of the view that development is not a fixed thing rather it is continuous learning process in multiple dimensions. The adolescent learns behavioral management, acceptable and disapproved behavior under particular social patterns. In fact, it is the society that appreciates and approves certain behavior and discourages and disapproves certain behavior. The various agents of society such as groups, sub-groups, institutions play an active role in this regard. The social learning does not exist without the existence of the cultural patterns. Davis' theory critically focuses on the effects of social learning on the behaviors of adolescents.

According to Davis, the socialized anxiety has a central role in influencing and motivating the adolescents in the process of socialization. The social anxiety sponsors the discomfort and prepared the adolescents for developing a mechanism of behavioral management. This theory argues that the process of socialization depends a lot upon the adaptive behavior of adolescents. The individual obeys and conforms the social anxiety under the guiding mechanism of society. Furthermore, the strong the effects of social anxiety, the normal, responsible and the mature will be the behavior of the adolescents. The cognitive variables also affect the behavior of adolescents evidently such as values, expectations, self-control, self-management, self prestige. If adolescents are not guided properly, their school activities and overall behavior get disturbed and they are likely to suffer from anxiety.

Research Methodology

The nature of this research required that both the qualitative and quantitative approaches be used to carry out the study. The population of the study was the adolescents and teachers and parents of Islamabad. The size of the population was very large in Islamabad, so keeping in view the feasibility of the study and accessibility of the respondents all the population could not be studied. Thus the sample size was put at 112 including 80 students, 16 teachers, and 16 parents. For instance, four schools (2 Schools with O & A Level and 2 Federal Boys and Girls Schools) were randomly selected and twenty (20) students in each of the four schools were selected. The respondents were accessed through the use of stratified sampling.

The focus group discussions were utilized to understand and discuss the causes of behavior problems in adolescents in secondary schools. The focus group discussions of teachers and parents of adolescents have also been conducted at the schools in Islamabad. The teachers and parents participated in the study through focus group discussion.

The sample was drawn keeping in view the gender of the respondents; in each school, 20 males and 20 females were selected at random. A total of 40 males 40 females were sampled, making a total of 80 students. Two tools were devised for collecting the data from the respondents, structured questionnaires for the students and focus group discussion guide for the teachers and the parents. The following table explains the sample size and target audience of the study.

Table 1. Target Audience, Research Methods, and Sample Size

Target Audience	Research Method	Sample Size
Students	Quantitative	40m+40f=80
Teachers	FGD	16

Parents	FGD	16
Total		112

Note; m refers to male and f* refers to female*

Results and Discussions

Demographic details of the Respondents

The respondents in this research belonged to diversified educational institutions of the public and Government sector. All 80 respondents from different schools belonged to 4 different educational institutions out of the 40 were students of O& A level in renowned English medium schools which provide foreign qualifications in Pakistan; the other 40 students were studying in federal Government Higher secondary institutes. Out of 40 teachers 10 belonged to each institute.

The age groups in which children are considered adolescents are from 13 years to 19 years old, so the ages of the respondents ranged from 14 years to 17 years. About half of the children were ranked in 14 to 15 years age group and half of the participants were ranked in 16 to 17 age group. As all the respondents at the age group of the adolescent are dependents on their parents or guardians for fulfillment of their requirements.

Physical and Emotional Changes in Adolescence

The respondents were asked about different physical and emotional changes through which they are passing at his phase of their lives. Most questions were related to their personal changes which ultimately reflect in their behavior. About 42% of respondents strongly agreed and 35% agreed that they experience mood shifts while 12.25% respondents strongly disagreed they do not experience any mood shift and 10% also disagreed with the statement.

They reacted on a question of behavioral changes in this phase of age where it becomes difficult to distinguish between happiness and distress. About 28% of respondents agreed and 21.2% strongly agreed that they are unable to differentiate between happiness and distress. The result shows that 45% respondents disagreed with this statement that certainly means they are able to that they can identify their different mental states. Whereas, 27.5% disagreed and 22.5% strongly disagreed with the same statement.

On the question of a change in hobbies and leisure activities, 57.5% strongly agreed and 27.5% adolescents replied that there is a prominent change in their hobbies and leisure activities; whereas, only 8.7 % respondents strongly and 6.2% opposed this statement.

Physical change is an essential part of adolescence, and most teenagers show more concern about their physical appearance and look. For instance, about 53.5% respondents strongly and 31.2% replied in agreement that they are more concerned about their looks and 16.2% of them along with 11.2% respondents considered that physical appearance or their looks do not matter for them.

About 63.7% of respondents strongly and 30% agreed that there is a prominent change in their eating habits, however and 7% respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 2. Physical and Emotional Changes among Adolescents

Questions	Scale	Responses	Total	%
Do you feel mood shifts?	Strongly agreed	34	80	42.25
	Agreed	28		35.0
	Strongly Disagreed	8		10.0
	Disagreed	10		12.25
The feeling of vacillation between happiness and Distress	Strongly agreed	17	21.25	21.25
	Agreed	23		28.75
	Strongly Disagreed	18		22.5
	Disagreed	22		27.5
Change in hobbies and leisure Activities	Strongly agreed	46	57.5	57.5
	Agreed	22		27.5
	Strongly Disagreed	7		8.7

More concerned about your looks	Disagreed	5	6.25
	Strongly agreed	43	53.75
	Agreed	25	31.25
	Strongly Disagreed	9	11.25
Change in eating habits	Disagreed	13	16.25
	Strongly agreed	51	63.75
	Agreed	24	30.0
	Strongly Disagreed	-	
	Disagreed	5	7.0

Role of Parents, Friends, and Teachers

The first question was related with the generation gap through which most parents feel that their children should follow the same lifestyle and norms and values as they spent at the time of their adolescence, on the other hand the adolescents feel that it is not possible for them to adopt that outdated lifestyle. About 42.7%, of the respondents admitted that their parental values and beliefs are outdated and obsolete while 16.2% strongly agree. However, about 25% of respondents disagreed with this statement and 16.2% also strongly opposed this view.

The children were quite reluctant in sharing their problems with their parents. About 90% of respondents agreed that they hide their issues from their parents and 10% respondents disagreed with this statement by replying that they do not hide things from their parents.

A majority of 45% of respondents agreed that rely on their friends for advice when they are in trouble while 18.7% strongly endorsed the same point of view. Nevertheless, about 25% respondents replied with disagreement and 7 percentage respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The role of teachers seemed more worthy in this context because about 56.2% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that they give importance to the opinion or advice of teachers in difficult times. However, 35% respondents disagreed and 2.5% strongly rejected this statement.

Table 3. Role of Teachers, Parents and Peer Group

Questions	Scale	Responses	Total	%
Parental values are outdated	Strongly agreed	13	80	16.25
	Agreed	34		42.75
	Strongly Disagreed	13		16.25
	Disagreed	20		25.0
You use to hide things from your parents	Strongly agreed	10		12.5
	Agreed	45		56.25
	Strongly Disagreed	3		3.75
	Disagreed	32		40
Do you rely on friends for advice when you are in trouble	Strongly agreed	15		18.75
	Agreed	39		45.0
	Strongly Disagreed	6		7.5
	Disagreed	20		25
Do you rely on teachers for advice when you are in trouble	Strongly agreed	5		10
	Agreed	45		56.25
	Strongly Disagreed	2		2.5
	Disagreed	28		35.0

Focus Group Interviews

Two focus group discussions were also carried out with the teachers and parents of the adolescents. The focus group discussions enabled the researcher to look into the causes of behavioral issues of adolescents of secondary Schools.

There was total of sixteen teachers were selected from the four secondary schools for the group discussions. The gender factor was given importance and eleven female teachers and nine male teachers were chosen. All these teachers have different knowledge and experience in dealing with adolescents children on multiple issues. Some of the teachers also the members of disciplinary committees of the schools.

The majority of the teachers shared that adolescents are very reluctant and they mostly rely on each other and share their issues with friends. It was also shared that students give much importance to the advice of the teachers, however they are in that stage of life where the advice does not work effectively. Moreover, students at this age, do not give importance to their studies as well and lose their grip on the subjects. The ideology, belief, and attitudes of the teachers determine the behavior of the adolescents. One of the participants shared that with poor knowledge of the subject, teachers cannot gain the true respect of the learners. Moreover, students behave in multiple and weird ways to express their displeasure towards the lecture, subject, and teachers. It has also been shared by the teachers that number of rules increases the complexity and even students might explicitly refuse to obey those rules. Certainly, the poor lecture or presentation of the teachers leaves a bad impact on the learners. Similarly, the poor management of the class also creates and promotes the chaos among the students and some of the students might get discouraged

The parents of the adolescents were also interviewed in the form of group discussion. The parents were included male and female parents; two fathers and two mothers from each school were selected. It was ensured that all the selected parents have adolescent children in their homes. They were of the view that there is a gap exists between them and their children. They also shared that they observed the physical and emotional changes among their children. They also criticized the role of media and internet which is, directly and indirectly, harming the youth at this stage of age. It was suggested by the parents that in the presence of the cultural barriers, the teachers should play a more effective role in guiding the students about the physical and emotional life as well.

Conclusion

The envisaged outcome of this research has confirmed that adolescents face many physical, psychological and emotional changes at this stage of age. Sometimes, it even badly influences their academic performance and classroom behavior as well. There is severe need to reduce this gap between the parents and the children and also between the teachers and the students in order to guide the adolescents in a better direction. Furthermore, the parents and teachers must monitor the students to get familiarity with their hobbies and issues. The more the parents and teachers adopt friendly behaviors with the children; the less the adolescents will face the emotional, social and educational problems

Recommendations

The role of parents has great significance in the context of the social and academic development of adolescents. It is the responsibility of the teachers to make sure about the relevant and most essential facilities such as the library, computer lab, reading material, and any other relevant things. On a serious note, if the parents do not feel good about the school and develop a negative behavior towards the school and the management of the school, certainly this behavior will be transferred to their children and they would not also feel good about the school. Resultantly, they will lose interest in their studies. The biological and psychological issues of students should never be ignored by the parents as these influence and disturb the students in their regular interaction as well as in study matters.

Furthermore, the teachers need to lead in order to understand his/her students and develop empathy with them. By understanding the students, teachers will be in good position to guide and dictate them accordingly. The teachers should introduce new and innovative ways to guide and teach the students. The lectures should never be developed and delivered in a boring style because it also discourages adolescents to attend classes.

Teachers should make a time table in which they make a plan to meet with the students who are facing adolescents' issues and guide them in free time. The teachers should also give time to adolescents and listen their problems in careful way. The ore teachers get familiarity with the personal level issues of the students, the greater the participation and obedience of the students will be visible in the classroom. It will boost the confidence of the students and they will show more interest in their study.

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