



Short Communication

Using free listing to understand the difficulties of school going adolescents

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Abstract

School going adolescents undergo multiple challenges in their personal, family and academic life. The paper examines the difficulties faced by school going adolescents in Kollam district, Kerala. A cross sectional study was conducted through free listing method using Anthropac software. Sixty school going adolescents were randomly selected from classes VIII to XII from one government and one private school. The paper focuses on personal difficulties, difficulties at home and at school faced by adolescent students. The result depicts that forgetfulness (21.7%) and headache (18.3%), parents' pressure & parents have no time for them, adjustment problems & groupism are the major difficulties from the perspective of school going adolescents whereas more than a tenth of them reported that they have no difficulties. The study concludes that there is a need to provide systematic intervention model for the better development of school going adolescents.

Keywords: Free listing, personal, difficulties, school going, adolescents.

Introduction

School going adolescents are in the secondary stage of learning (class VIII to Class XII). They face such challenges as academic pressure^{1,2}, health problems³⁻⁵, mental health problems⁶⁻⁸, lack of parenting⁹, and lack of social support^{10,11}.

The present study examines the challenges faced by school going adolescents in their personal, family and academic life. Academic pressure; and fear and anxiety are one of the major difficulties faced by school going adolescents. High level of academic pressure or fear has been attributed to over-involvement of parents, lack of concentration, poor study habits, feeling helpless, not attending regular classes and poor performance in school work¹²⁻¹⁴. Economic problems are another set of factors that hamper school-going adolescent's development. Economic or financial difficulties are much related to academic pressure, health and mental health problems^{2,7,15,16}.

The objectives of the current study are to examine the personal challenges of school going adolescents; and to determine the difficulties faced at home and at school.

Methodology

A cross sectional study was conducted among adolescents of Classes VIII to XII, their parents and teachers in one private and one government school in Kollam District, Kerala. The schools were conveniently selected while sixty school going adolescents from both schools were randomly selected. The data was collected from school going adolescents using free listing

method. All of the responses were listed out and data was analysed using Anthropac software.

Results and discussion

A sample of 60 school going adolescents were taken for analysis. Table-1 depicts the personal difficulties of school going adolescents. In terms of frequency, a large majority (90%) of school going adolescents mentioned they had personal difficulties in their life.

Table-1: Perception on self-difficulties among school going adolescents.

Values	Frequency (%)	Average Rank
Self-difficulties	90	1.85
Forgetfulness	21.7	1.23
Headache	18.3	1.64
Poor concentration	16.7	2.9
Stress	16.7	1.9
Laziness	16.7	1.9
Loneliness	15	3.22
Exam fear	13.3	3.25
Nobody to help solve problems	13.3	3.5

The major personal difficulties were forgetfulness (21.7%), headache (18.3%), and a little less than fifth (16.7%) mentioned having poor concentration, stress and laziness whereas more than a tenth (13.3%) had exam fear as well as not having anyone to help them with their problems.

The perception of school going adolescents on difficulties at home can be seen in Table-2. More than a tenth (13.3%) of them reported pressure from parents with regard to their studies and also that parents have no time for them; a little more than a tenth (11.7%) mentioned having economic problems and not being able to share their problems with parents; while a few adolescents (5%) mentioned illness of parents. Overall, less than half (45%) mentioned having problems at home.

Table-2: School going adolescents’ perception on difficulties at home.

Values	Frequency (%)	Average Rank
Difficulties at Home	45	2.56
Parents pressure on studies	13.3	5
Parents have no time for me	13.3	3.13
Economic problem	11.7	2
Not able to share problems with parents	11.7	2.29
Parent’s illness	5	2.33

Difficulties faced at school are depicted in table-3 where more than quarter of school going adolescents (28.3%) mentioned having difficulties at school. The major difficulties observed are not being able to talk with friends (16.7%), problems of adjustment (11.7%), groupism (10%) and quarrel with friends (1.7%). In contrast, a little more than a tenth (11.7%) perceived that they had no difficulties in their personal, family or academic life.

Table-3: School going adolescents’ perception on difficulties at school.

Values	Frequency (%)	Average Rank
Difficulties at school	28.3	3.29
Not able to talk with friends	16.7	3.2
Adjustment problem	11.7	4.43
Groupism in school	10	2.33
Quarrel with friends	1.7	2

Table-4: Distribution of no difficulties faced among school going adolescents.

Values	Frequency (%)	Average Rank
No problems	11.7	1

Discussion: The current study focused on three segments of difficulties among school going adolescents. The three segments were self/personal difficulties, difficulties at home and difficulties at school. The study found that most of the participants in the free listing mentioned personal difficulties such as forgetfulness, headache, poor concentration, stress and laziness. This corroborates with the study by George et al. which found school going adolescents faced problems with forgetfulness¹⁷. Headache among school going adolescents have been found in other studies as well^{18,19}. It can also be seen that loneliness, exam fear and nobody to help solve problems secure a high rank in the listing. This indicates that adolescents in secondary school age face a certain number of physical as well psycho-social problems in their academic and personal life.

School going adolescents mentioned parental pressure with regard to their studies, parents having no time for them, economic problems, not being able to share their problems with parents; and parent’s illness. Corroborating studies on parental pressure being grounded on academic development of school going adolescents can be found²⁰. The perceived problems mentioned by adolescents and the fact that parents have no time for them ranks highest indicate the adolescent’s need for attention and care from parents. Though not all participants in the study faced difficulties at home, it can be seen that parent-child relationship, lack of open communication at home and economic strains are perceived difficulties faced by school-going adolescents that may affect their personal and scholastic performance. The home environment and parent-child relations have a huge bearing on adolescent health and development. Effective communication is one of the factors for better development and self-sufficient life²¹, whereas economic pressures can lead to psychosocial problems²².

Difficulties faced in school were mainly social in nature and adolescents are mainly affected by feelings of being left out from peer groups. Being an outsider in peer groups are bound to have some psychosocial effects on adolescents^{23,24}. Not being able to talk with friends, adjustment problems, groupism and quarrelling with friends were the most frequently mentioned by the participants. Adjustment problems rank highest followed by not being able to talk to friends. Multiple factors lead to adjustment problems among adolescents such as academic-parental-peer pressure and so on²⁵.

The difficulties among school going adolescents are inter-related. Academic pressure has been found to be related with health problems, mental health problems, lack of parenting, lack of social support and so on^{1,3,4,7,9}.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a need to promote academic achievement without pressure and inculcate a learning environment in which students especially in the secondary school stage are equipped with life skills to cope with their personal and academic problems. This also calls for ensuring positive home and family environment along with the support of school authorities for the holistic development of school going adolescents. Regular assessment, intervention plans and follows up can be undertaken by a multidisciplinary team for catering to the difficulties of school going adolescents.

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