

PREVALENCE AND CORRELATES OF ADJUSTMENT DISORDER IN SINGLE PARENT MOTHERS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To investigate prevalence and difference of adjustment disorder in single parent mothers.

Study Design: Cross-sectional analytical study.

Place and Duration of Study: Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, from Jan to Apr 2019.

Methodology: The data were collected from 300 single parent mothers from the community of district Gujrat and Gujranwala by using purposive sampling technique. The single parent type information like spouse out of city or country and widow was asked in demographic form and further, adjustment of mothers was measured by using Scale of Adjustment for Adults.

Results: Among a total of 300, single parent mothers were widows 100 (33.3%), having spouse out of country 100 (33.3%) or city 100 (33.3%) each of same number. Majority of the mothers faced moderate level 181 (60.4%) of adjustment problems. Based on the cut-off of adjustment scale (71 and above) majority 234 (78%) of the mothers were maladjusted. The One-way ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in the adjustment problems faced by widows and mothers whose spouses were out of city or country. Further, widows (90.44 ± 17.81) encountered more problems comparing to spouse out of city (88.30 ± 19) or out of country ($\text{mean} = 79.41 \pm 15.89$).

Conclusion: The study findings indicated that single parent mothers encountered moderate level of adjustment problems and were mostly maladjusted. Further, there was statistically significant difference in the adjustment problems faced by single parent type of widow and spouse out of city or country.

Keywords: Mother, Maladjusted, Prevalence, Single parent family, Spouse, Widow.

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INTRODUCTION

There are various family structures prevailing in the society as for example intact family, extended family, adoptive family, step parent family and single parent family. Among others single parent family lack one parent figure either mother or father¹. In the world, the percentage of single parent mothers are increased. Globally about 15% of children are living with single parents. Single parent families which are run by mothers have more chance to experience poverty which could result in deteriorating health².

There are various reasons that actually lead to single motherhood. It might be because of death of partner, separation from a partner, unexpected pregnancy, conflicting relationship or

divorce. Mostly young eligible women also become single parent mothers due to the confusion of premarital relationships³. Single maternity has been recognized as a challenging role as it accompanies many hardships for mothers in the form of physical, psychological, emotional, social and financial issues. Among others time management, professional occupations complications, children rearing, stress, mental health issues and adjustment problems were common⁴. The adjustment problems in single parent mothers was prevalent⁵.

Adjustment is the process of regulating or matching the contradictory needs, objectives, motives & emotions. Further, it refers to as the unusual and impulsive reaction that resulted from sudden life intensification. Whereas adjustment disorder can be specified by emotional and behavioral symptoms in individual retaliation occurring within the 3 months of the induction of

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the stressor. It is also caused through the continuous occurrence of adjustment problems. The maladjusted person become overwhelmed and stressful and unable to adjust. According to the adjustment disorder criteria it has specifiers of depressed mood, anxiety, mixed depression and anxiety, disturbance of conduct and mixed disturbance of emotion and conduct⁶. There were various factors that can boost adjustment issues in individuals as for example neurotic, introvert and psychotics personalities, authoritative parenting, less attention, care and understanding with person⁷.

The adjustment can be measured with disturbances in mood, emotion, depression, anxiety and conduct behaviors⁶. There were various studies conducted that confirmed the presence these disturbances in single parents. A study has established the fact that single parents face different kinds of psychological problems in which anxiety, frightened feelings, depressed mood, loneliness and security was evident⁸. Further, another study confirmed that single parent mothers were more anxious and depressed at the same time young single mothers face more mental illnesses⁹. A study conducted in Canada presented that 18.3% families were handled by single parents. Results indicated that single mothers have more depression 11.8% and anxiety disorder as compared to partnered parents. In the comparison of single parents, single mothers have high anxiety disorder as compare to single fathers. In conclusion researcher also indicates that the psychiatric disorders had high influence on single parents as compared to married partners¹⁰.

Modern society has begun realizing the individual identity with women. Nowadays women are becoming not just a substantial unit of society but also influencing the path of societal change in society. Women are the most active part of today's society and playing all kinds of role in society. The total population of the females in Pakistan is 48.63% in 2019 hence, confirming the role of fully functional entity of the country. Adjustment issues are faced by

almost every individual around us. It is very important to have an adjusted personality to handle the life activities and become fully functional. A well-adjusted person has vigorous and balanced behavioral patterns. These behavioral patterns must be according to the social expectations of an individual. These patterns include, consciousness of his powers, valuing himself and others, fulfillment of basic needs, positive attitude, flexible behavior, the ability to abridge with the hostile circumstances, a faithful insight of the world, a feeling of comfort with his milieu and a stable attitude of life¹⁰. Women as a single parent have a dual function and they confront many challenges in their animations. The current study can help in the understanding about the adjustment problems encountered by single parent mothers. The main objective of the study was to investigate mother's prevalence of adjustment in single-parent family.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional analytical study was conducted from January to April 2019. The data collected from a total of 300 single parent mothers selected from the community of district Gujrat and Gujranwala by using purposive sampling. The data was taken from single parent mothers whose were widow or spouse lived abroad or died. The mothers of ages above 18 years and have children were included. Mothers who had any physical issue or diseases and any psychological problems were excluded from the study. The selection criteria are based on gender (women), family structure (single parent family) and age (19 years and above). The objectives and procedures of research was approved by the research supervisor at department of Psychology, University of Gujrat after which the data collection was started.

The type of family structure that is single parent type were asked in demographic information along with other variables. The adjustment was measured by using Scale of Adjustment for Adults¹¹. This scale consisted of 48 items with 8 subscales. The subscale includes, Depression

Physiological (DP), Anxiety Physiological (AP), Depression Behavior (DP), Conduct Behavior (CB), Depression Cognition (DC), Anxiety Cognition (AC). The scale is on 3 point Likert. The reliability of the scale was 0.938. The results established convergent validity with $r=0.626^{**}$

Table-I: Prevalence of adjustment problem in the different score ranges (n=300).

Score Ranges	Descriptors	n (%)
Above 113	High Adjustment problems	10 (3.3%)
81-112	Moderate Adjustment problems	181 (60.4%)
≤80	Low Adjustment problems	109 (36.3%)

Table-II: Prevalence of adjustment problem according to Scale Cut-off Point (n=300).

Cut-off = 71	n (%)
70 or below	66 (22%)
71 and above	234 (78%)

and divergent validity confirmed as there was no relationship exist between adjustment and coping. The adjustments scale for adults is a valid scale for use with the cut-off point of 71¹⁴.

The single parent mothers were recruited by researcher from community or on house hold

Table-III: Results of ANOVA between the groups.

	Spouse Out of City (n=100)	Widow (n=100)	Spouse Out of Country (n=100)	p-value
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	
Adjustment Problems	88.30 ± 19.00	90.44 ± 17.81	79.41 ± 15.89	<0.001

Table-IV: Post HOC Analysis (between the groups).

Categories of Single Parents	Mean Difference	p-value
Spouse out of city	Widow	-2.14000
	Spouse out of country	8.89000*
Widow	Spouse out of city	2.14000
	Spouse out of country	11.03000*
Spouse out of country	Spouse out of city	-8.89000*
	Widow	-11.03000*

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

bases. The mothers were briefed about the research and both oral and written consent was taken before data collected. The data collection was done with face to face interview or self-reported questionnaire based on the education

of the respondents. The mothers were asked to fill the scale carefully with the most suited or appropriate response. The answers were recorded on questionnaire. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were kept intact. The scale was used after getting permission from the authors via email.

The study data was analyzed on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 for windows by using descriptive statistics and One-way ANOVA. In descriptive statistics frequency and percentages of different levels of adjustment was computed whereas in ANOVA a comparison of three categories of single parent mothers were compare on adjustment.

RESULTS

A total of 300 single mothers were enrolled in the research. The mean age of mothers was 36.75 with SD of 8.86 years. The age range was between 21-60 years. The participants 100 (33.3%) were equally distributed among the categories (spouse out of country, out of city & widowed).

Table-I depicts the prevalence of adjustment problems in mothers running single family. Majority of the respondents 181 (60.4%) encountered moderate adjustment problems followed by

109 (36.3%) low adjustment problems and high adjustment problems 10 (3.3%).

The cut-off of the adjustment scale was 71.14 score of 71 or above was considered as maladjusted whereas below 71 the person was

considered as adjusted. The table indicated that about $\frac{3}{4}$, 234 (78%) of the single parent mothers were maladjusted whereas $\frac{1}{4}$, 66 (22%) were adjusted.

The table shows that there are statistically significant differences in adjustment problems faced by different types of single parent mothers ($F(2,297) = 11.02, p < 0.001$). The mean and SD indicated that widows (90.44 ± 17.81) have more adjustment problems than those whose spouse living out of city (88.30 ± 19.00) and spouse living abroad (79.41 ± 15.89).

The table-IV depicts that there are significant difference present in the adjustment problems of spouse out of city and spouse out of country ($p = 0.001$) and widow and spouse out country ($p < .000$). On the other hand, there is no difference in the adjustment problems of spouse out of city and widows.

DISCUSSION

The current study was conducted on single parent mothers to assess mothers prevalence of adjustment in single-parent family.

The findings of current research comprehensively concluded that majority of the mothers living in single parent family demonstrated moderate level of adjustment issues 181 (60.4%). Further, if investigate the cut-off of adjustment scale i.e., 71 and above, majority 234 (78%) of the mothers were maladjusted to their environment. As discussed earlier adjustment can be viewed in terms of depressive mood, anxiety and conduct issues¹⁴. A study by Kong and colleague conducted in Korea recently established the fact that single parent mothers faced depressive symptoms and mental health issues with odds ratio of 2.02 (95% confidence interval 1.56-2.63) and 1.74 (95% Confidence Interval 1.38-2.20) respectively¹⁵. Further, Rousou study the Northern Europe and United States had witnessed the prevalence of depression in female single parent mothers was 38.9%. This percentage was 3 times more than the rate of depression in general population¹⁶. While studying about anxiety in single mothers, Liang, Berger and Brand¹⁷ conducted a study to confirm

the anxious and depressive feelings in approximately 30% mothers of single family. Furthermore, a single mother from US has reported that she come across anxiety throughout her life¹⁸. The conduct issues may be manifested in terms of drug use and a study by Jackson confirmed the presence of drug dependence in single mothers in South Florida US¹⁹.

Single mothers may encounter such problems because of various threatening issues. The problem may be the financial burden or low education of mother²⁰. Further, there was a gap witnessed between mother and children as mothers were busy in jobs or other household chores. Moreover, the mothers may face stress, less self-esteem, social integrity and emotional support for others¹⁹.

The difference of adjustment problems faced by type of single parent family (widow, spouse out of city and country) were also explored. The findings of the current study confirmed that widow mothers (90.44 ± 17.81) encounter more adjustment problems comparing to mother's whose spouses were living out of city (88.30 ± 19.00) or out of country (79.41 ± 15.89). A review of previous researches support the findings if a single parent recently widowed have high degrees of depression and problems related to mental health²¹. Further, studies mentioned intense anxiety and anger symptoms in widows²² along with more depressive mood in widowed (mean = 17.22) than in married (mean = 15.29)²³. Hence, these widows may also reported many clinical problems. The ultimate reason why widows face more problem may be because of absence of spouse completely.

Hence, the results showed that mostly single parent mothers encountered moderate level of adjustment problems and maladjustment whereas widows face more problem as compare to mothers whose spouse was out of city or country.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

Our study had few limitations. There was significant difficulty in approaching respondents

as well as in taking their consents and building rapport.

RECOMMENDATION

The general physicians and other stake holders should be aware of difficulties faced by single mothers especially adjustment disorder. The problems directly affect the children of the mothers so, there must be supportive assessment and interventions to help these mothers. The distressing consequences of single motherhood must be rectified with proper guidelines and strategies to prevent the problem. In future adjustment of fathers and children can also be studied. Qualitative study may be helpful for intense investigation of the problem.

CONCLUSION

The study findings indicated that single parent mothers encountered moderate level of adjustment problems and were mostly maladjusted. Further, there was statistically significant difference in the adjustment problems faced by single parent type of widow and spouse out of city or country.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This study has no conflict of interest to be declared by any author.

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