



A Qualitative Approach to the Impact of Familial Discord and Social Environment on the Psychological Well-Being of Young Adults

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to examine at the impact of familial discord and social environment on young people' psychological well-being. A qualitative research design was used, with data obtained via interviews with fifteen (15) respondents. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings indicated that familial discord leads to negative psychological states, with sibling rivalry being the most prominent aspect. Unbridled criticism and blame were found to reduce self-esteem and a sense of security. Experiences of familial discord strain interpersonal relationships but also help individuals handle conflicts better. Familial discord significantly affects academic performance, and those affected often rely on religion and spiritual beliefs for coping. The study concludes that familial discord is associated with emotional distress, decreased self-esteem, strained relationships, and impaired academic performance. Effective coping strategies, such as seeking social support and engaging in problem-focused, emotion-focused, avoidance, cognitive, and religious or spiritual coping mechanisms, are crucial for mitigating these negative effects.

Keywords: Familial discord; psychological well-being; young adults; qualitative research

1. Introduction

The formative years of adulthood are crucial for identity development and emotional stability, and disruptions within the family sphere can have lasting effects. Constant exposure to familial discord can contribute to heightened stress levels, anxiety, and even depression among young adults. The uncertainty

and emotional turmoil within the family environment may interfere with their ability to establish healthy relationships outside the family unit. Moreover, young adults experiencing familial discord might grapple with feelings of isolation, diminished sense of security and a depleted self-esteem. The psychological impact can extend to various facets of their lives, including academic and professional performance.

Family as a social unit experiences its fair share of instabilities, these instabilities when not properly addressed end up affecting every member of the family and even more so the children, increasing the risk of psychopathology as they grow older. Not all families provide an environment that allows for healthy discovery, development and growth, as many families experience family conflict. A dysfunctional family environment, including dysfunctional patterns of interaction and problem solving, has been viewed as one of the most notable risk factors for the development of psychological and mental health problems (Whisman, 2013). Distractions arising from family conflicts may hinder concentration and hinder goal attainment. The emotional toll can also influence decision-making, potentially leading to impulsive choices or avoidance behaviors. O'Hara, Sandler, Wolchik, and Tein, (2019) notes that children's perception of the frequency of inter-parental conflict greatly contributes in predicting both cognitive function and conduct problems.

Smith and Davies, (2016) found that parental marital conditions, family functioning, relationships between children and parents, and communication patterns affect the level of psychological well-being of

adolescents. The role of the family becomes very important in the context of adolescent development, especially for emotional and psychological well-being. The study by Agboola, and Oluwatosin (2018), found that some factors of the family that play a role are attachment, harmony, and family functioning. Conversely, family factors that also have the potential to reduce the quality of adolescent welfare include parent's marital problems, conflict, and divorce. Thus, the quality of parental marriage may also affect the quality of adolescent mental health. If parents are able to establish an adequate marital relationship, this will affect the attachment developed by adolescents, and this attachment to parents supports the formation of psychological well-being in adolescents (Zaki, Abed, Wahab, & Shattla, (2022). On the other hand, a negative quality marriage also has an impact on adolescent psychological well-being.

Various studies showed that when the quality of the relationship between parents is low or with high conflict, this tends to lead to psychological problems in young adults, such as internalizing and externalizing disorders (Fuller-Iglesias, Webster, & Antonucci, (2015). This may be related to the level of support provided between partners and to their children. The negative effect is stronger if the low-quality of marriage is accompanied by aggression between the partners, leading to psychological problems in young adults such as depression and anxiety as well as emotional insecurity (Bodenmann, Meuwly, Bradbury, Gmelch, & Ledermann, (2012). Numerous studies have examined the implications of parental divorce for children's scholastic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social competence, and relationships with parents. Many studies have found that children from divorced families experience lower levels of well-being across these domains than children from intact families.

Parents play the most important role in determining whether parent-child conflict occurs because they have superiority before their children become adults at which point they have developed deviant and antisocial behaviors. Mental health problems in young people presents a significant societal and economic challenge, in that those with poor mental health are less likely to achieve academically or gain employment, have poorer physical health and are more likely to engage in substance misuse or anti-social behaviour (Branje, 2018). The presence of family discord was associated with higher rates of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Conduct Disorder, and any diagnosis in offspring. A considerable body of research has shown that children from conflictual families present higher rates of behavioral problems

when compared to children from non-conflictual families (McDaniel, & Coyne, 2016).

Therefore, it is suggested that a child's parents' relationship can be influential, and can impact child well-being in a number of ways. Children often model the behaviors and interactions of their caregivers, which can at times result in problematic child outcomes depending upon the amount of inter-parental relationship conflict that the child is observing. If a child is raised in a high-stress, high-conflict environment, they may be more likely to demonstrate similar behavioral styles in their own future relationships. For example, if a child observes poor parental communication skills and frequent conflict between parents, they may introduce similar tendencies into their own future relationships (Tahmasebi, & Ahmadi, (2015). Inter-parental conflict, including the level of conflictual interactions, also serves as a model for understanding a child's future development into adulthood. Children often learn patterns of behaviors, interpersonal skills, and family processes via exposure to their parents' relationship (Xia, Fosco, Lippold, 2018; Shulman & Connolly, 2013).

According to this perspective, children of divorce exhibit problems, not because of the change in family structure, but because of the accompanying conflict. Overall, it has been observed that children from parents, who are in conflictual relationships, show a higher number of mental health problems compared to children of happily married families. Conflictual parental relationships have been proven to lead to a higher likelihood of externalizing problems in children (Harindranath, & Nickels, 2017). These externalizing behaviors often include things like physical aggression, disobedience, cheating, stealing, and may even develop into crime-related problems if not resolved before adulthood. Other harmful outcomes related to inter-parental conflict include anger, fear, anxiety, sadness, insomnia, and lack of academic success (Markham, & Greenberg, (2018). In addition to the overwhelming amount of potential risk factors, which accompany high-conflict home environments, children are also more likely to view the world more negatively. They often struggle in romantic relationships, perceive friendships in a negative light, and have negative internal representations of family (Sutherland, 2014; Mell, 2021), which demonstrates how this conflict can even trickle down and impact future generations within a family. Therefore, families who are unable to maintain stability within their system due to marital conflict are more likely to experience family discord.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The psychological wellbeing of young adults faces various challenges hence the significance of accentuating the intricate impact of familial discord across various dimensions. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the profound impact that familial environments have on psychological well-being of individuals, particularly during the critical developmental phase of young adulthood. Young adults, typically navigating the transition between adolescence and full independence, are highly susceptible to the influences of their immediate social environments. Familial discord, characterized by ongoing conflict, communication breakdowns, and emotional distress within the family unit, presents a significant risk factor for the mental health of young adults. The emotional toll can also influence decision-making, potentially leading to impulsive choices or avoidance behaviors. A considerable body of research such as by Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, (2020) and Israel, (2021) has shown that children from conflictual families present higher rates of behavioral problems when compared to children from non-conflictual families. Despite its importance, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding about the specific ways in which familial discord affects the psychological well-being of young adults. This research aims to fill this gap by systematically investigating the correlation between familial discord and various aspects of psychological health in young adults, including stress levels, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems to mitigate the adverse effects of familial discord on this vulnerable age group. It is based on the premise that the researcher seeks to investigate the Impact of Familial discord on the psychological well-being of young adults.

1.2 Research Questions

To achieve the research objectives, the following research questions will guide this study:

- What is the impact of familial discord on the psychological wellbeing of young adults?
- What specific aspects of familial discord have a more pronounced impact on the psychological well-being of young adults?
- Is there a relationship between gender and the impact of familial discord in interpersonal relationships of young adults?

- Is there a relationship between familial discord and academic performance of young adults?
- What coping mechanisms do young adults employ in response to familial discord, and how do these strategies influence their psychological well-being?

2. Research Methodology

The qualitative research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study consisted of all Students in the University. The population consisted of university students across multiple faculties A sample size of fifteen (15) respondents was used for this study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select one student from each faculty in the university. The Instruments used for this study was an interview protocol of fifteen items used to elicit information from respondents. The interview protocol was divided into two sections. With a single item inclusion to ascertain the reliability of each respondent to the issue. The instrument was validated by three experts. The researchers administered the instrument. A brief explanation of the concept of the interview was given to each respondent after which the interview session began. The interview session lasted for ten (10) to thirty-three (33) minutes for each respondent.

Nineteen (19) persons were interviewed however, four (4) persons did not meet up to the inclusion criteria, as they could not relate with familial discord, only fifteen (15) valid interviews were ultimately obtained. The method employed in the analysis of the data collected for the study was the thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis

From the data transcribed the following themes were observed based on the questions asked.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of familial discord on the psychological wellbeing of young adults?

Question 1: Have you experienced any form of familial discord such as marital conflict, parent-child conflict or sibling rivalry?

Marital Conflict: From the interview transcribed, it can be deduced that four (4) out of fifteen (15) stated that they have experienced marital conflict, this is evident in the submission of interviewee 4, 5, 11, 15.

“I think everyone has experienced the three, but parent-child conflict is more prominent to me.” (Interviewee 5, Female)

“I have experienced the marital conflict.” (Interviewee 11, Female)

Parent-Child Conflict: It was observed that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) respondents agreed that they have experienced parent-child conflict which is evident in the statement of interviewee 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13 and 14. These can be seen in their discussion below:

“I have experienced parent-child conflict.” (Interviewee 2, Male) “I’ve experienced parent-child conflict.” (Interviewee 6, Male)

Sibling Rivalry: From the transcript, it can be seen that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) disclose that they have experienced sibling rivalry. This can be seen in the submission below:

“I am most familiar with the aspect of sibling rivalry.” (Interviewee 1, Male)

“The ones I’ve actually experienced is sibling rivalry and parent child conflict.” (Interviewee 8, Female)

Based on the following themes discussed above, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents have experienced more of parent-child conflict and sibling rivalry.

Question 2: Could you please share your experience with me?

Child Preference: From the responses during the interview, it was observed that five (5) out of fifteen (15) interviewees indicated that they had experienced their parents playing preferring their sibling over them and them over their siblings. This can be deduced from the following interviews:

“I can relate more with the sibling rivalry in terms of favoritism in my family I’m the only son with two sisters so most of the times they get more benefits than me cause they’re more two and just me most times for the distribution of stuffs there are mostly girl things then boys” (Interviewee 7, Male).

Parents Intent for the Child: It was observed that interviewees 2, 6, and 14 stated that their opinions opposed their parents’ intentions for them. This shows that three (3) out of fifteen (15) have the same view. This is observable in the following statements:

“As a child, my parents specifically my father wanted me to be a priest but then it wasn’t actually my dream I wanted to be a doctor it actually brought a lot of conflict at home they wanted me to study in line of becoming a catholic priest while I wanted to be a doctor” (Interviewee 2, Male).

Perceived Lack of Support from Parents: It was observed that three (3) out of fifteen (15) interviewees

stated that they felt they were not receiving adequate support from their parents. This is evident in the statements of interviewees 3, 5 and 13

“My dad is not someone who is very expressive, he is expressive with action so most of the time instead of correcting with words he’s always very violent but then yes, he is sometimes to me” (Interviewee 5, Female).

Perceived Superiority among Siblings: Interviewees 4 and 12 indicated that they experienced constant show of dominance from their siblings towards them. This indicates that two (2) out of fifteen (15) had the same view. This standpoint is evident in these responses:

“I feel most sibling rivalry is just a show of dominance or say seniority age wise and all. There was a time frame my elder brother’s phone got spoilt so we were sharing mine and there are periods where I would want like use my own stuff but he would be busy with it so how to get it from him it’s an issue. Because there’s no way to go upright and ask him so that I’ll be able to make use of it when he’s busy using it. So me walking up to him and asking him for it there might be little hiccups along the way you might misuse some words which he will misinterpret and take it as an abusive word or a frame for argument” (Interview 4, Male).

Marital Conflict: It was observed that two (2) out of fifteen (15) interviewees stated that they had experienced marital conflict and described the experience as traumatizing when both mother and father quarrel. This is evident in these statements:

“My mom and my dad quarreled and it led to this separation, until now, they are no longer together. The issue was then that I came to realize that my mom was just staying with my dad all the while; he had not paid her dowry. So it got to a stage in one of the years, my mom was insisting that he must do the needful and my dad saw it as a form of disturbance. Like my mom is just pestering him and was not happy about it and they started quarreling to the extent that he asked her to leave and it got to the extent that they even went to the village council and all. For most people could not believe that at that stage, the bride price hadn’t been paid but that led to the both of them quarreling to the extent that they were separated and they did not come back. I, with the siblings, suffered a lot because you talk to our dad about something he will say, go and talk to your mom, tell your mom this. Therefore, we were standing at the edge. We were the ones suffering for what they did. Even in my academics, it affected my academics; it affected me psychologically because I was emotionally down at those times. There are some exams that I wanted to register for, but because of the fight between the both parties, I could not do it. Because my mom said, I will bear my father’s name. And my dad said, at the end of the day, it’s my mom

that I'm going to take care of, so at that point, like two of my exams, I could not write it, I could not register for it because of the conflict between the two of them. Thank you. Okay” (Interview 11, Female).

The in-depth interviews revealed concerns that parents playing favorites among siblings is prevalent in most households. It can be observed that five (5) out of fifteen (15) interviewees share the same view that child preference in the family has posed a problem in their families. Six (6) persons from two categories with three (3) persons each of the opinion that their parents' intent for them brings about familial discord and perceived lack of support from their parents brings about problems in the home. Two (2) persons believed that the perceived superiority among their siblings constitutes the rivalry among them. While two (2) persons had experienced their own parents at loggerheads and believed it as the cause of the problems at home. Hence it can be inferred that majority of the interviewees had a problem with child preference in their homes.

Question 3: How did you feel after the experience?

Negative Psychological Experience: It was observed that ten (10) out of fifteen (15) interviewees stated that they felt bad after the experience of familial discord. This can be deduced from the statements of the following interviewees:

“It wasn't okay. Like, it was not okay. It wasn't okay at all because there was a time we actually had actual fights and it didn't end well at all, so it wasn't okay at all”. (Interviewee 10, Male).

“I didn't feel good. Just as I said, her opinion prevailed over mine at that time but now, I think I understand her better but that is just it. I was not feeling happy about it” (Interviewee 14, Female).

Perceived Disregard from Parents: From the interview transcription it can be deduced that three (3) out of fifteen (15) stated that they perceived that their parents had disregard for them. This is evident in the submission of interviewee 1, 3 and 6.

“I felt neglected, I was having questions like “am I actually the child of these two persons?”(Interviewee 1, Male).

“I felt my mom loved her friends more than she loved us. That is not true because I felt she was going to support us. Nevertheless, I just felt like she has more experience to handle things more than the way we handle things so her reacting that way does not mean she doesn't love us she was just trying to protect us from the outsider world from people not saying her children are irresponsible or bad children”. (Interviewee 3, Female).

Sense of Relief: From the transcription, it can be seen that two (2) out of fifteen (15) disclosed that they felt a sense of relief after the experience. This can be seen in the statements of interviewees 2 and 13.

“After the experience, I can say that I felt fine because it opened my eyes to seeing what I could become and not just following the footsteps of my parents but examining all my available options.” (Interviewee 2, Male).

“After dropping from the vehicle, I felt like a freedom for him because he didn't bother to check on me or he just kept driving because the area wasn't far from home, so, immediately, I felt good, like not being in his presence to keep experiencing the verbal abuse. So, I felt a little bit of freedom.” (Interviewee 13, Male).

Based on the themes discussed in question 3 above, it can be observed that ten (10) out of fifteen (15) interviewees shared the same bad feelings after they experienced familial discord. Three (3) out of fifteen (15) felt neglected by their family members. Two (2) out of fifteen (15) felt a sense of relief after the experience. Hence, it can be inferred that the majority of interviewees gave a negative response to this item.

Question 4: Do you feel safe and secure at home?

Perceived Security At Home: It was observed that twelve (12) out of fifteen (15) respondents agreed that they had safety and security in their homes. This is evident in the statements of these interviewees:

“Sure, extremely safe and secure”. (Interviewee 4, Male).

“Yes, I feel safe and secure at home”. (Interviewee 6, Male).

Lack of Security At Home: The researcher also noted another theme from the interviewees, as three (3) out of fifteen (15) said that they did not feel safe and secure at home. It can be deduced from the statements of interviewees 2, 11 and 15.

“No, I don't feel safe and secure at home, I barely go home”, (Interviewee 2, Male).

“Apart from the issue of no peace. If you have to take that issue away, I will be okay at home because personally, I don't like a toxic environment, I don't like an environment that is rowdy, violent, I don't like that. I might end up reacting in a way that I should not. Therefore, going home, that peace and security is not there. However, like I said, if we are to take those factors, like the factors of the way we are being treated and all that. If we are to handle it effectively, then the home will be a better place”. (Interviewee 15, Male)

The majority of interviewees (12 out of 15) had a strong sense of safety and security in their homes to which they admitted from their statements. While a minority, (3 out of 15) held negative opinions on their safety and security at home. The conclusion being that more persons felt safer and more secure at home, than others did. Overall, it was discovered that majority of the respondents felt safe and secure in their homes.

Question 5: Can you openly discuss your problems with your family members?

Inability to Divulge Problems to Family Members:

It was observed that seven (7) out of fifteen (15) interviewees stated that they had difficulty discussing their problems with family members most especially problems they find to be personal. The statements of interviewees 1, 2, 4, 12, 13, 14 and 15 has led to this surmise. Such statements are as follows:

“No, I can’t”. (Interviewee 2, Male).

“It depends on the type of problem, but I don’t freely share my personal problems with my family members, just open surface problems, things I can easily sort out or I need a second opinion on”. (Interviewee 4, Male).

Ability to Confide in Family Members: it was observed that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) respondents admitted to being comfortable discussing their problems with family members. This can be inferred from the statements of the following respondents:

“I can only discuss with someone I feel that understands me in the family. For example, if my brother understands me more than my dad, mom and my sister. So, I will actually feel more secure to open up to him because I will know that he will not judge me that he’ll be able to offer me easy solution and console me. More than actually opening up myself to somebody that will actually judge me and lay blame on me so I think I’ll do that with somebody I feel closer to somebody that understands me in the family”. (Interviewee 8, Female).

“Yes, especially my mum”. (Interviewee 10, Male).

During the in-depth interview conducted for question 5, seven (7) out of fifteen (15) respondents expressed their inability to divulge their problems to their family members. While eight (8) out of fifteen (15) asserted that they could confide in their family members with some respondents having particular members of their families to whom they could confide in. Hence, it can be inferred that the majority of the interviewees gave positive responses to this item.

Based on the items raised for research question 1, the researcher generated 15 themes. The most prominent of all the themes was *perceived security at home* with twelve (12) interviewees revealed that they had safety

and security in their homes. *Negative psychological experience* where ten (10) interviewees disclosed that they felt bad after the experience of familial discord. *Ability to confide in family members* with eight (8) interviewees admitting to being comfortable discussing their problems with their family members. The conclusion from these prominent themes is that although the interviewees were safe in their homes, the negative feelings attributed to familial discord was undeniable; these feelings are comfortably shared with family members who likely have similar experiences.

Research Question 4: What specific aspects of familial discord have a more pronounced impact on the psychological wellbeing of young adults?

Question 6: How does ongoing tension or unresolved arguments within your family affect your emotional state?

Negative Effects of Sibling Rivalry: From the responses during the interview, it was observed that seven (7) out of fifteen (15) interviewees experienced negative emotional states during tension or unresolved arguments relating to sibling rivalry. This statement can be inferred from interviewees 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

“It affects it negatively, there was a time there was conflict between my two siblings it affected me negatively psychologically and emotionally and when I got to school in those days I was feeling down and couldn’t concentrate.” (Interviewee 1, Male).

Negative Effects of Parent-Child Conflict: It was observed that six (6) out of fifteen (15) respondents agreed that they experienced negative emotions because of parent-child conflict. Which is evident in the statements of interviewees 3, 4, 5, 8, 13 and 14. This can be seen in their discussion below:

“I won’t say it doesn’t affect my emotional state. It does, but you know, one of the characteristics of human beings is the ability to adapt. Adaptation. Therefore, I think I have gotten used to it and I have adapted. So, I’m not really concerned but there’s always a problem, there’s always a tension but I’ve adapted to it.” (Interviewee 13, Male).

Negative Effects of Marital Conflict: From the interview transcribed, it can be deduced that Four (4) out of fifteen (15) stated that they had experienced negative emotions in relation to marital conflict. This is evident in the submission of interviewees 4, 5, 11, and 15.

“For me, I would say I cannot think straight, like where some persons who will be talking. I always feel this loneliness, like, I feel this being left out in most areas because the motherly care, I did not get it because of

the conflict between my both parents, I had to start staying with my aunt, which I passed through a lot, I suffered a lot there. Even in my schooling, when I'm learning, I don't concentrate most of the time, when I see some parents with their children; I'll start feeling down casted somehow." (Interviewee 11, Female).

Emotional Stability: From the transcript, it can be seen that two (2) out of fifteen (15) disclosed that their experience of familial discord particularly parent-child conflict had no effect on their emotional state. This can be seen in the submission below:

"For me it really doesn't affect my emotional state, it doesn't." (Interviewee 2, Male).

"For me as a person, it doesn't affect me so much because I come from a family where we don't actually bear grudges. We may have our differences but due to the underlying fact that we actually look out for each other, it does not have much influence on me. I can still share my problems. what I'm trying to say is our differences, we don't take it to heart, it's not a bitter conflict just that sometimes you may not agree with someone's opinions on matters." (Interviewee 6, Male).

Based on the themes discussed in question 6 above, it can be inferred that a majority of thirteen (13) out of fifteen (15) interviewees experienced negative emotions in relation to familial discord, although they all experienced different aspects of familial discord. While two (2) interviewees were of the opinion, that familial discord did not affect them emotionally whatsoever. Overall, the prevailing sentiment among the interviewees is that familial discord has a negative impact on emotional state.

Question 7: When family disagreements involve you directly (e.g., criticism, blame), how does it impact your self-esteem and sense of security within the family?

Detrimental Impact on Self Esteem: From the interview transcript, it was observed that interviewees 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 15 admitted to having reduced self-esteem when faced with criticism or blame. This is evident in the submission below:

"It lowers my sense of security within the family and in aspect of self-esteem, I feel each time I am blamed for something within my family, I really feel as if I'm inadequate as if I don't have what it takes." (Interviewee 2, Male).

Resilient Self Esteem: From the interview transcript, seven (7) out of fifteen (15) interviewees stated that either criticism from family members improved their self-esteem (Interviewee 5) or their self-esteem was unaffected in the face of criticism or blame in their

homes when faced with criticism or blame. This can be deduced from the following statements:

"The thing is that with the type of person I am, criticisms make me strive to be a better person. It makes me strive to be a better person so if I am being criticized by my family members, I feel that is the people that are supposed to tell you the truth without looking at your emotions. So when I receive criticism like that it does not necessarily reduce my self-esteem in fact it even doubles it because I now know my faults so I work on it I know that I am going to make deliberate actions to work on it so when I'm interacting with people my self-esteem does not falter." (Interviewee 5, Female).

From the themes discussed above, it can be deduced that the majority of the respondents (8 out of 15) have experienced reduced their self-esteem from criticism or blame from family members during arguments. While the minority were either unaffected (6 out of 15) or felt their self-esteem increase (1 out of 15) when they experienced criticism or blame from their family members.

Based on the items raised for research question 2, the researcher generated six (6) themes, the most prominent of all themes was Detrimental impact on self-esteem with eight (8) interviewees admitting to having reduced self-esteem during family disagreements (criticism or blame), and Negative effects of sibling rivalry. However, these prominent themes present Sibling Rivalry as the aspect of familial discord with the most pronounced impact on the psychological wellbeing of young adults.

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between gender and the impact of familial discord in interpersonal relationships of young adults?

Question 8: How has your experience with familial discord influenced your approach to forming close relationships with others, be it with friends or romantic partners?

Distant Relationship with Others: It was observed that nine (9) out of fifteen (15) interviewees stated that they find it difficult to form close relationships with others due to their experiences with familial discord. This can be surmised from the following statements:

"I can say it actually affects because the same way you're being treated at home it actually kind of works on your mindset or psychology in the sense that if you have a relationship with somebody be it a friend or partner or you're dating somebody. All those things will still play out and you will start to think if that person you are dating is going to still display those

attitudes that your siblings and parents actually displayed towards you and your reaction towards the person will change kind of. For example, if you are in a kind of family, that they throw blames or they judge you. If you're in a relationship with somebody, you'll be quick to react because you don't want the person to judge you or to see you as a failure or to treat you anyhow so you'll be quick to react in order to defend yourself, it can actually play out." (Interviewee 8, Female).

Empathic Interpersonal Relationships: From the interview transcription, it can be deduced that six (6) out of fifteen (15) stated that they were friendly and tried to consider other people's feelings. This is evident in the submission of interviewees 3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 15.

"I feel that this has impacted my close-up relationship with people because I'm not a very open person so I don't talk a lot and observe more so I say as little as I can so as not to spike emotions and I think that my personality is as a result of familial discord." (Interviewee 4, Male).

Based on the themes discussed in question 8 above, it can be observed that a majority (9 out of 15) had difficulty forming close relationships with others because of familial discord. While the minority (6 out of 15) found themselves to be friendly and considerate of other persons despite their experience with familial discord. Hence, it can be inferred that the majority of the respondents gave a negative response to this item.

Question 9: Do you find you disclose more or less about your personal life and relationships with friends or partners depending on your gender?

Impact of Gender on Interpersonal Relationships:

All fifteen respondents provided responses on how their gender had an impact on their interpersonal relationships. Ten (10) out of fifteen (15) respondents (Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12 and 15) believed that gender had nothing to do with how much they told their friends and partners about themselves. With some believing that, experience (Interviewees 3, 4 and 15) or personality (Interviewees 8 and 12) played major roles in how much they were willing to talk about themselves. This is evident in the submissions below: "I don't think gender has anything to do with it, I feel it depends on the person close up, there are more masculine men that don't need to share certain things with their partners or family members; I feel it has to do with a person's experiences." (Interviewee 4, Male).

The majority of interviewees (10 out of 15) stated that their gender had nothing to do with how much they

disclose of their personal life and relationships with friends or partners. While a minority, (5 out of 15) expressed a more positive opinion. The consensus among the interviewees was that gender had no impact on communication in interpersonal relationships.

Question 10: Can you think of any situations where your experience with familial discord influenced how you handled conflict within your friendships or romantic relationships?

Adverse Effects of Previous Experience with Familial Discord:

It was observed that five (5) out of fifteen (15) interviewees 1, 2, 5, 11 and 15 stated that their experiences with familial discord had adverse consequences on how they handled conflict with friends and romantic partners. This is evident in the following statements:

"Yes, as at the time I had sibling rivalry with my brother, that experience has molded me. In a way that I see the conflict I have with friends and others in a different light cause now I don't expect too much from outsiders as I've gone through ups and downs with my family so what is from them, I just take it that way." (Interviewee 1, Male).

Adopting Positive Methods after Experience with Familial Discord: From the transcript, it can be seen that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) respondents agreed that they adopted positive methods as a result of their previous experience with familial discord when they handled conflict with other persons. This is evident in the following statements:

"Well, I think our family discord has helped me in relationship outside families in terms of patience because dealing with my family, I've seen patience as a really great virtue. Therefore, it has really helped me in dealing with other people, when you are patient with people, when you try to understand them more; there is less conflicts out there with them. So, patience is something that I learnt with my experience with family discord." (Interviewee 13, Male).

Inability to Relate Previous Experiences with Familial Discord to Conflicts: Interviewees 7 and 10 expressed that they could not relate their experiences with familial discord to conflict with their friends and romantic partners. This is evident in the submission below:

"Not really, friendships and family are two different aspects so they're handled differently." (Interviewee 7, Male).

"There's none that I remember actually. There's none." (Interviewee 10, Male).

Based on the themes discussed above it can be deduced that a majority of the interviewees (8 out of 15) expressed that they adopted positive methods

during conflict after their experiences with familial discord.

Based on the items raised for research question 3, the researcher generated six (6) themes. The most prominent of all themes was impact of gender on interpersonal relationships where ten (10) interviewees stated that gender had nothing to do with how much they disclose about their personal life and relationships with friends or partners. Distant relationship with others with nine (9) interviewees finding it difficult to form close relationships with others because of familial discord. In addition, adopting positive methods after experience with familial discord where eight (8) interviewees expressed that they adopted positive methods during conflicts after their experiences with familial discord. The conclusion drawn from these themes is that gender has no relationship with the impact of familial discord in interpersonal relationships.

Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between familial discord and academic performance of young adults?

Question 11: Do you think your family environment during arguments or tension affects your ability to focus on schoolwork?

Adverse Impact of Familial Discord on Academic Performance: From the interview transcription, it was observed that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) interviewees had negative countenance towards their academics because of familial discord. This is evident in the submission of interviewees 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14 and 15.

“Yes, as at the time I had sibling rivalry with my brother. That experience has molded me in a way that I see the conflict I have with friends and others in a different light cause now I don’t expect too much from outsiders as I’ve gone through ups and downs with my family so what I see from them I just take it that way.” (Interviewee 1, Male).

Positive Impact of Familial Discord on Academic Performance: It can be observed that seven (7) out of fifteen (15) had the belief that their family environment had no effect on their ability to focus on schoolwork. This is evident in the discussion below:

“No, it doesn’t.” (Interviewee 4, Male).

“No, not at all.” (Interviewee 5, Female).

Based on the themes discussed in question 11 above, it can be deduced that a majority of the interviewees (8 out of 15) expressed that they had a difficult time focusing on their studies. While the minority of seven (7) out of fifteen (15) think that their family

environment cannot affect their ability to focus on their schoolwork.

Question 12: Can you describe any changes you noticed in your study habits or motivation for school that coincided with periods of increased discord at home?

Inability To Identify Changes in Study Habits: It was observed that ten (10) out of fifteen (15) interviewees were unable to identify any changes they noticed that coincided with periods of increased discord at home. This can be seen in their discussion below:

“No, because when those things happened, I was much younger then and it doesn’t affect me anymore.” ((Interviewee 1, Male).

“No.” (Interviewee 10, Male).

Lack of Concentration: The researcher observed that five (5) out of fifteen (15) interviewees indicated that they were unable to focus properly on their academics during periods of increased discord at home. This is evident in the statement of interviewees 6, 8, 11, 14 and 15.

“Yes, I think if you have an important exam or test you have to write and in the middle of reading, you just receive a call and then you’re being scolded or lashed out on, or some blame or allegation is being placed on you it will actually work on your psychology. You’ll not be able to focus even if you want to read all those things will still be playing out and you’ll not be able to focus and grasp as much as you can so it can actually impact negatively on your studies.” (Interviewee 8, Female).

Based on the themes discussed above, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents were unable to think of any changes they noticed in their study habits that coincided with increased discord at their homes.

Based on the items raised for research question 4, the researcher generated four (4) themes, the most prominent of all themes was, adverse impact of familial discord on academic performance where eight (8) interviewees admitted to having a difficult time focusing on their studies during familial discord. Inability to identify changes in study habits where ten (10) interviewees were unable to identify changes they noticed in their study habits that coincided with periods of increased discord at home. From the prominence of these themes, it can be concluded that there is a negatively significant relationship between familial discord and academic performance of young

adults, this relationship was not accompanied by changes in study habits.

Research Question 5: What coping mechanisms do young adults employ in response to familial discord and how do these coping strategies influence their psychological wellbeing?

Question 13: Are you familiar with any of these coping strategies? - Problem focused in which you make plans and take steps to solve the problem. Avoidance coping whereby you practice denial, suppression and engage in distracting activities. Emotion focused where you seek emotional support and engage in relaxing activities, seeking social support where you try reaching out for assistance or companionship, Cognitive coping strategies where you try to reframe negative thoughts and challenge irrational beliefs, and finally Religious or spiritual coping whereby you draw from your beliefs, faith and spiritual practices.

Problem Focused Coping: It was observed that six (6) out of fifteen (15) interviewees, interviewees 1,3, 7, 9, 12 and 14 identified with the problem focused coping strategy as the coping strategy they employed to alleviate the effects of familial discord. This is evident in the following statement:
“I’m more familiar with problem focused coping strategies which lays emphasis on making plans and taking steps to solve the problem because if you experience familial discord, it’s advisable to make plans and take steps in order to solve the problem.” (Interviewee 1, Male).

Avoidance Coping: It was observed that seven (7) out of fifteen (15) interviewees, interviewees 2, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13 and 14 identified with the avoidance coping strategy as the coping strategy they employed to alleviate the effects of familial discord. This is evident in the following statement:
“I’m familiar with the first one which is avoidance and then the second one which is trying to distract yourself with some activities, and then the last one religious, getting involved in religious activities.” (Interviewee 13, Male).

Emotion Focused: It was observed that seven (7) out of fifteen (15) interviewees, interviewees 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 14 identified with the emotion focused coping strategy as the coping strategy they employed to alleviate the effects of familial discord. This is evident in the following statement:
“I do it more emotionally. I try to seek emotional support and engage in relaxing activities.” (Interviewee 10, Male).

Seeking Social Support: It was observed that four (4) out of fifteen (15) interviewees, interviewees 7, 8, 12 and 14 identified with the seeking social support coping strategy as the coping strategy they employed to alleviate the effects of familial discord. This is evident in the following statement:
“Emotional and religious and sometimes seeking social support.” (Interviewee 8, Female).

Cognitive Coping: It was observed that four (4) out of fifteen (15) interviewees, interviewees 4, 7, 12 and 14 identified with the cognitive coping strategy as the coping strategy they employed to alleviate the effects of familial discord. This is evident in the following statement:
“I am more familiar with Avoidance and Cognitive coping strategies, sometimes it’s denial and other times I reframe my negative thoughts.” (Interviewee 4, Male).

Religious Or Spiritual Coping: It was observed that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) interviewees, interviewees 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14 and 15 identified with the religious or spiritual coping strategy as the coping strategy they employed to alleviate the effects of familial discord. This is evident in the following statement:
“I think it’s both spiritual and emotional so I pray basically to draw strength and I try to engage in relaxing activities.” (Interviewee 5, Female).

Based on the themes presented in question 13 above, Majority of the interviewees (8 out of 10) admitted to the consistent use of the religious or spiritual coping strategy to overcome the pressures of familial discord in their families.

Question 14: How do these coping mechanisms affect your mood and overall wellbeing?

Uplifted By Coping Strategies: From the transcript, it can be seen that twelve (12) out of fifteen (15) interviews admitted to feeling like their conflicts were gone, having improved moods, feeling relieved and encouraged after applying the coping strategies which is evident in the statements of interviewees 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8 through to 15. This can be seen in their discussion below:
“I always feel good because the problems are always behind me.” (Interviewee 1, Male).
“It elevates my mood.” (Interviewee 10, Male).

Feeling Resentful After Using the Coping Strategies: It was observed that two (2) out of fifteen (15) respondents agreed that they were affected negatively after they made use of the coping strategies

which is evident in the statements of interviewees 4 and 13. These can be seen in their submission below: “Sometimes negatively but after a while you get past the emotions because they’re just emotions, when I say negatively, I mean that most times I plan my revenge.” (Interviewee 4, Male).

Undecided Responses to Coping Strategies: It was observed that interviewees 3 and 6 were undecided in their responses to the coping strategies. This is evident in the statement below: “I can’t say.” (Interviewee 3, Female).

Based on the themes discussed in question 14 above, the prevailing sentiment among a majority (12 out of 15) of the interviewees was that they felt uplifted after they applied coping strategies.

Question 15: Have you found certain coping mechanisms to be more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord?

Problem Focused Coping Strategy: From the interview transcription, interviewees 1, 2, 9 and 14 admitted that problem focused coping strategy proved more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord, although they found it difficult to make use of at times. This is evident in the submission below: “Yes, I have. I think problem focused strategies is actually the best although I’m most times not capable of attacking the problem head on so I just avoid them.” (Interviewee 2, Male).

Emotion Focused Coping Strategy: From the interview transcription, interviewees 3 and 15 admitted that emotion focused coping strategy proved more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord. This is evident in the submission below:

“Like listening to cool good music, has a way of calming me down, making me relax and unwind from the stress and making me just feel happy.” (Interviewee 15, Male).

Seeking Social Support Coping Strategy: From the interview transcription, interviewee 13 admitted that seeking social support coping strategy proved to be more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord. This is evident in the submission below: “Yes, yes, I have. I am kind of majoring in one of them now and that is reaching out to others for help. Being social is one coping mechanism I’m working on.” (Interviewee 13, Male).

Cognitive Coping Strategy: From the interview transcription, interviewee 7 admitted that cognitive coping strategy proved to be more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord. This is evident in the submission below: “Yes, I think changing of negative thoughts into positive is the most effective.” (Interviewee 7, Male).

Maintaining The Initial Coping Approach: From the interview transcription, seven (7) out of fifteen (15) interviewees agreed that they would maintain their initial choice of coping strategy as it proved to be more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord. This is evident in the submission below:

“I thought it depends on who you are, doesn’t it? But I have not found anyone better than emotional and spiritual coping strategies.” (Interviewee 5, Female).

Based on the themes discussed in question 15 above, the prevailing sentiment of the interviewees (7 out of 15) was that they maintained the coping strategies they selected based on item 13 as more effective than others in managing the negative effects of familial discord they had experienced.

Based on the items raised for research question 5, the researcher generated seventeen (17) themes, the most prominent of all themes was Religious or spiritual coping strategy where a majority of eight (8) out of fifteen interviewees admitted to the consistent use of the religious or spiritual coping strategy to overcome the pressures of familial discord. The prominence of this theme presents the answer to this research question, this strategy is accompanied by feelings of relief and encouragement.

The impact of familial discord on psychological wellbeing of young adults is an intricate issue. In this discussion, the researchers examined several themes relating to familial discord. Including: marital conflict, parent-child conflict, sibling rivalry, child preference, perceived lack of support from parents, negative psychological experience, lack of security at home, negative effects of familial discord, impact on self-esteem, effect of familial discord on interpersonal relationships, adverse impact of familial discord on academic performance, impact of gender in interpersonal relations and coping strategies employed against the negative effects of familial discord. By understanding these different aspects of the issue, we can gain more insight to understanding the complex and widespread impact of familial discord on psychological wellbeing of young adults.

3. Discussion of Findings

The research questions serve as the basis for the discussion to proceed. It was discovered that familial discord significantly impacts the psychological well-being of young adults, often leading to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Young adults exposed to family conflicts may experience lower self-esteem and difficulties in maintaining social relationships. This finding is in consonance with Branje, (2018) who stated that family conflicts could lead to a range of mental issues including depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.

The thematic results gave the researcher better insight on the specific aspects of familial discord that have a more pronounced impact on the psychological wellbeing of young adults. This study revealed that sibling rivalry affect young adults more compared to parent-child conflict and marital conflict according to their experiences and apparent infrequency of marital conflict in their homes. Criticism and blame during disagreements within the family sphere revealed to be very common in households, which led to a significant reduction in self-esteem and sense of security within the home. This is affirming the study by Whisman, (2013) that negative sibling relationships marked by rivalry, hostility and aggression are linked to higher levels of psychological distress, lower self-esteem and maladaptive coping strategies and unresolved sibling conflicts may perpetuate familial discord and strain intergenerational relationships. This finding further confirmed the findings of Markman, Stanley and Blumberg (2010) who revealed that ineffective communication behaviors such as criticism, defensiveness and stalling, lead to reduced relationship contentment and increased conflicts among family members.

Furthermore, based on the thematic analysis the researcher discovered that there was no relationship between gender and the impact of familial discord in the interpersonal relationships of young adults. Gender has nothing to do with interpersonal relations but rather experiences or personality, which is contrary to popular speculation this completely, opposes the study by Grych and Fincham (2010) that emphasized that boys and girls may respond differently to marital conflict, which can influence their adjustment and psychological health as they transition into adulthood. Nevertheless, is in concurrence with the study of Stone, Otten, Engels, Vermulst and Janssens (2010) that did not explicitly focus on gender but underscores how familial discord during adolescence can affect psychological wellbeing, with implications for young adulthood.

In addition, the thematic analysis proved that there was a significant relationship between familial discord and academic performance of young adults. The findings from this study agrees with the study of Harold et al. (2018) whose study found that children from families with high levels of conflict are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems and have low academic achievement.

Lastly, the thematic analysis brought to light that the religious coping strategy was the most employed coping strategy by young adults as well as the problem focused coping strategy as feelings of relief, courage, improved mood and a feeling that the conflict was gone accompanied them. According to the ideals of Crnic, and Ross, (2018) that problem, focused coping is associated with better psychological outcomes and greater perceived control over stressful situations. As well as those of Krause, Ellison and Wulff (2012) who stated that religious or spiritual coping can promote resilience and psychological wellbeing providing a sense of meaning, purpose, and connection to something greater than oneself, this research is seen to be in complete alignment.

4. Summary of the study

The study examines the impact of familial discord on psychological wellbeing of young adults. Five research questions were raised to guide the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 44,140 (21,881 females and 22,259 males) of the University of Benin. The population comprises full time Undergraduate students of the various faculties during 2022/2023 academic session. A sample size of 15 students was used and this was obtained with the random sampling technique. The research instrument used for this study was an in-depth interview, which was used to collect data from the sample population based on the attribute of interest. The content validity method was used to establish the validity of the instrument. Data collected was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Based on the analysis of the data the following were the findings.

5. Findings

The following are the findings of the study:

- Experiencing familial discord leads to negative psychological states.
- Sibling rivalry is the most prominent aspect of familial discord.

- Unbridled criticism and blame bring about reduced self-esteem and sense of security in one's home.
- Experiencing familial discord results in strained relationship with others.
- Previous experience of familial discord helps to handle interpersonal conflicts better.
- Familial discord has a significant impact on the academic performance of individuals who have experienced it.
- People who experience familial discord constantly depend on their religion and spiritual beliefs.

6. Conclusion

This research work assessed the impact of familial discord on psychological wellbeing of young adults. Based on the findings highlighted above, the study concluded that exposure to family conflict is associated with elevated levels of emotional distress, including anxiety and depression, as well as significant impairments in self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. Sibling rivalry, identified as the most prominent aspect of familial discord, exacerbates these issues, leading to competitive stress and further emotional turmoil. The negative effects extend to academic performance, with affected individuals often displaying behavioral issues and a higher propensity for mental health disorders. Furthermore, the study highlights the complex interplay between familial dynamics and young adults' development, emphasizing the importance of effective coping strategies. While negative effects are prevalent, adaptive coping strategies can mitigate these outcomes. These strategies include seeking social support, problem focused, emotion focused, avoidance, cognitive and religious or spiritual coping strategies.

7. Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

Implement government-funded counseling services with partnership with health educators and support groups specifically tailored for young adults affected by familial discord in schools and communities.

Launch public awareness campaigns through health education program to educate families about the psychological impact of discord on young adults and promote healthy communication and conflict resolution skills.

Promote public health initiatives that provide affordable and accessible mental health services, including therapy and counseling, for young adults.

Develop health education programs that include subsidized family counseling and mediation services to help families resolve conflicts and improve relationships constructively.

Implement parenting education programs within health education initiatives to equip parents with effective communication strategies and conflict resolution skills, reducing the negative impact of discord on young adults.

Create health education programs that establish community support networks and peer mentoring programs, offering young adults social support and resources to cope with familial discord.

Advocate for health education policies that include legal protections for young adults in dysfunctional family environments, ensuring access to legal aid and protection from abuse or neglect.

Fund research through health education programs to understand the long-term effects of familial discord on young adults' psychological well-being and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, guiding future policies and programs.

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