

**QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN DIVORCED FAMILIES; A
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS IN KANNUR DISTRICT, KERALA**

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Abstract

Quality of Life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. (*World Health Organisation*). Standard indicators of the quality of life include wealth, employment, the environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, social belonging, religious beliefs, safety, security, and freedom. The quality encompasses the overall well-being and satisfaction of health, education, safety, and social connections. High quality of life indicates a balance between physical, emotional, and social aspects, contributing to happiness and fulfilment. The adolescent period is one of the crucial periods of psycho-social development. The social integration process is deeply dependent on the quality of life they have. Family environment, Parental support, Education, and emotional and social well-being are the key factors that determine the quality of life among adolescents. Adolescents from divorced families do not get enough family support or parental care to maintain a good quality of life. Parental separation or divorce has definitely adverse effects on the quality of life among adolescents. (*Alfredo, 2019*). The problems have to be addressed in the social work scenario. The current quantitative study aims to analyse the quality of life among the adolescents of divorced families in Kannur District, Kerala. A descriptive research design was applied in this current study. The researcher selected 60 adolescents in the age category of 12-19 years in Kannur district using a simple random sampling method. The samples were selected from the cases which are filed in the district family court, Kannur. THE WHOQOL-BREF scale is the major instrument that is used by the researcher to collect the data from the required population. The study clearly shows that adolescents in divorced families have a low level of quality of life. The findings of the study will be more helpful for the micro, mezzo, and macro level social work practice and future researchers also.

Key words; Adolescences, Quality of Life, Divorced family, Kannur District

Introduction

Quality of Life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. (*World Health Organisation*). Quality of life is a critical aspect for adolescents as it significantly influences their overall well-being and development. During this pivotal stage of life, individuals undergo physical, emotional, and social changes that shape their future. A high quality of life for adolescents is essential for optimal health and functioning. Physical well-being, including nutrition, exercise, and access to healthcare, directly influence their energy levels, cognitive abilities, and emotional stability. Emotional well-being is equally crucial, as adolescents navigate identity formation, relationships, and the challenges of self-discovery. A positive quality of life fosters resilience and coping mechanisms, enabling them to deal with the complexities of adolescence more effectively. Moreover, the social dimension of quality of life among adolescents cannot be overstated. Peer relationships, family support, and a sense of belonging play pivotal roles in shaping their social well-being. Positive social connections contribute to emotional stability and provide a support system during challenging times. Additionally, access to education and opportunities for personal growth enhance their overall life satisfaction. A focus on the quality of life during adolescence is not only about addressing immediate needs but also about laying the foundation for a healthy, fulfilling adulthood. Recognizing and addressing the multifaceted aspects of quality of life is crucial for fostering a generation of strong, well-adjusted individuals who can contribute positively to society.

Family is the primary agency of socialisation. An individual's basic character is formed in the family. Family environment, parental care, family support- all are the factors responsible for the quality of life among every individual. Better quality of life is only possible through the better family environment. Adolescents in divorced family are denied proper care or better family environment to maintain a good quality of life. Divorce is one of the crises and problem which is increasing in Kerala. Out of 23.43 lakh divorced women in India, 1.96 lakhs are in Kerala. In Kerala, the majority of divorce cases filed are in Thiruvananthapuram, followed by Thrissur, Pathanamthitta and Ernakulam. Most divorces are among couples working in IT sector and those divorces happen within three years of marriage. Several factors are responsible for the high prevalence rate of divorce in Kerala. Unlike in the past, when the divorces were pretty low, family members came to the support of couples. The family and extended family would get themselves involved in the differences. They also try to mitigate the problems between the parties, offering mental support and enabling the couples to enjoy a normal family life. However, with changes in socio-economic conditions, the nuclear families do not have such a luxury. The couples usually live separated from their families, not getting any family support in the events of stress and burn outs. The couples too can't support each other because of the work pressure each one suffers. IT couples work long hours, shouldering big responsibilities, and without relaxing. The root of the problem is both the parties have only a few openings to vent their frustrations, disappointments and mental pressure. There is no extended family to turn to. The spouse is usually very busy with his/her own share of mental agonies. The average rate of divorce in India is 1%. As a small state in terms of population and geographical features the divorce rate of Kerala is 6.3% which is five times more than national average. During 2005-2006, there were 8456 divorce cases filed in Kerala. The number of divorce cases in Kerala family courts increased to 44,236 in 2012. During the year of 2022 – 2023 the divorce rate in Kerala is 1.96Lakh. The data evidently shows the high prevalence of divorce rate in the state.

WHO defines 'Adolescents' as individuals in the 10-19 years age group. In this period of time, they may undergo a myriad of physical, emotional, and social changes that collectively define this stage of development. Physiologically, the onset of puberty marks a period of rapid growth, accompanied by hormonal fluctuations that influence secondary sexual characteristics. Emotionally, adolescents often grapple with the intricacies of identity formation, seeking autonomy while navigating the challenges of self-discovery. This period is characterized by heightened emotional intensity, with adolescents experiencing a wide range of feelings, from euphoria to mood swings, as they learn to manage and express their emotions. Socially, peer relationships gain prominence, influencing behaviour and self-esteem. The desire for social acceptance and belonging becomes a driving force, leading to the formation of close-knit peer groups. Cognitive development during adolescence is marked by increased abstract thinking and the exploration of complex ideas. However, decision-making may still be influenced by impulsivity as the prefrontal cortex, responsible for rational decision-making, continues to mature. The pursuit of independence and the establishment of personal values become paramount, often leading to a natural tension with parental authority. Overall, the characteristics of adolescents reflect a period of dynamic change, where physical, emotional, and social dimensions intersect, laying the foundation for their future identities and roles in society. Quality of life is significantly important to maintain good social integration and psycho-social well-being. Family environment- fostering care of parenting, family support and good family interaction- has deep influence to maintain good quality of life. Unfortunately. the adolescents in divorced family, couldn't get enough support or parenting care. These situations will adversely affect them and lower the level of quality of life. It should be addressed in the scenario of Social Work profession.

Review of Literature

Yoa Sorek, (2019), In recent decades, considerable information has been gathered on the negative implications of divorce for children's well-being. However, the implications of divorce on the children's quality of life – which is manifested mostly in positive life aspects – have been little studied. This article addresses this gap by examining risk and resilience factors related to self-

reported quality of life of children of divorced parents, with particular emphasis on psychological processes: self-blame for the divorce and parental conflict and active coping with it.

Alfredo (2019) A cross-sectional survey was conducted to assess psychosocial quality of life in school-age children of divorced parents. Three hundred and thirty families were invited to participate and 313 completed the questionnaire. Univariate analysis showed that quality of life was significantly associated with parental separation, child sex, time spent with the father, standard of living, and maternal education. Children's psychosocial quality of life was negatively affected by divorce.

Nooshin Sabour (2022) purpose of this study was to determine the correlates of self-esteem and quality of life in a sample of 800 adolescents of divorced families aged 15 to 18 years, using probability proportionate to size sampling technique. The findings indicated that adolescents who experienced high level of post-divorce parental conflict, maternal distress, economic hardship, and poor quality of the parent-child relationship tend to exhibit lower level of self-esteem. The present study concludes that parent child relationship is the strongest predictor of self-esteem among adolescents of divorced families in Mashhad/Iran. Adolescents of divorced families, who experienced positive and warm relationship with their mothers, show higher level of self-esteem.

Buchan, Abigail C (2023) The family environment contributes a lot to the development and well-being of children and adolescents. The traditional definition for family is ever changing, and diversity in families is become more and more evident and accepted. It is well known that currently more than half of all marriages end in divorce. It is necessary to be conscious of the significant challenges and issues that young people of divorced families are faced with, in order to facilitate positive change in the counselling process. The author provides a historical overview of the divorce epidemic, the effects of divorce on youth, as well as implications and interventions for school counsellors in working with young people struggling with issues of divorce.

Significance of the study

Kerala holds the 7th position in divorce rate in India. Average divorce rate in Kerala is 6.3%. Out of 23.43 lakh divorced women in India, 1.96 lakhs are in Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram, Pattanamtitta, Ernakulam and Thrissur have the highest divorce rate among the districts in Kerala. Several factors, such as, marital conflicts, adjustment problems among couples, role conflicts, partner alcoholism or substance abuse, domestic violence, extra marital affairs etc, are the problems that lead the couples to divorce in Kerala. We can't generally say that divorce is a problem, because sometimes divorce is a solution from toxic relationship. In fact, after-effects of divorce are always reflecting on the life of their children, especially on the quality of life of adolescents. Studying the quality of life in adolescents from divorced families holds significant implications for the field of social work. Research provides social workers with a nuanced understanding of the specific challenges and needs that adolescents in divorced families may face. This insight allows social workers to tailor their interventions and support services to address the unique circumstances of these individuals. Whether it involves counselling, mentorship programs, or community resources, a targeted approach can enhance the effectiveness of social work interventions and contribute to the overall well-being of adolescents navigating the complexities of parental divorce.

Comprehensive and scientific study of the quality of life in adolescents from divorced families informs the development and improvement of policies related to family welfare and child support. Social workers play a crucial role in advocating systemic changes that can positively influence the lives of their clients. By contributing data and analysis on the experiences of adolescents in divorced families, social workers can advocate for policies that promote family resilience, access to mental health services, and educational support. In essence, research on the quality of life in this context becomes a valuable tool for social workers to seek evidence-based practices and policies that foster the optimal development of adolescents in divorced families within the broader societal framework.

Statement of the Problem

Legal, cultural and social reasons have been advanced to justify divorce and separation among couples. There are indications that the practice is gaining wide acceptance in Kerala. Family court officials say the number of divorce applications has doubled and even tripled in some districts of Kerala over the past 5 years.

There are thousands of divorce cases pending in family court of Kerala. Past six months 96885 cases have been filed. In Kerala 16000 cases every month and 500 cases each day. At least five couples get divorced in Kerala every hour. Although the incidence of divorce in Kerala is on the rise, there is total disregard of their negative psychological effects on children who find themselves in the middle of conflicting parents.

The adolescent children suffer a lot. Many adolescent children are being exposed to diverse stressors that challenge their development across all domains. If this state of affairs persists such children could suffer for many years from psychological and social difficulties associated with these stresses. Such difficulties include anxiety when forming enduring attachments at later developmental stages of life.

Quality of life is an important factor which determines the personality and social integration process of an individual. In the divorced family, adolescents don't get good family environment to develop their personality traits and social integration. Parental care is of prime importance in developing the personality; unfortunately, separate parenting or divorced family, the child or adolescent are not able to get this. Traditional Indian family system was joint family. In modern times, our family system has changed into nuclear family and extended family. Divorce is most commonly seen in nuclear family. Open conflicts, divorce and court-cases adversely affect the emotional well-being of adolescents and it also lower the level of quality of life. Adolescents in divorced families, who are denied proper attention, adversely affect their personal and academic life. Lower level of quality of life and social integration will lead the individual to poor academic performance and lower level of self-esteem. If the situation of adolescents become more severe, the quality of life will grow worse. It should be addressed in the scenario of social work profession and have to take necessary interventions to improve the quality of life of adolescents among divorced families.

Aim of the Study

The major aim of this study is to analyse the quality of life among the adolescents in divorced families in Kannur district, Kerala

Specific Objectives

- To understand the socio-demographic characteristics of the adolescents in divorced families
- To analyse the quality of life among the adolescents in divorced families
- To propose suitable suggestions and recommendations to improve the quality of life among the adolescents in divorced families

Research Design

The present study aims to analyse the quality of life among the adolescents in divorced families in Kannur district, Kerala. The researcher adopted descriptive research design for this study.

Universe of the Study

The universe of the current study consists of adolescents in the age group of 12-17 years among the divorced families in Kannur district, Kerala. The accurate universe of the study is currently undefined due to the exploratory nature of research topic.

Sampling

The researcher adopted 60 samples as respondents in this study from the above-mentioned population. The samples were selected from the divorced cases filed in the district family court in Kannur, Kerala. Simple random sampling method was applied.

Tool of the Data Collection

The researcher adopted questionnaire method to collect the data from adolescents among divorced families. Following are the important tools which were used by the researcher to collect the data from the required samples

- Self-structured questionnaire is the instrument used by the researcher to collect the socio-demographic data among the respondents.
- The WHOQOL –BREF is the standardised scale was used by the researcher to assess the quality of life among the adolescents in divorced families.

Scope of the study

The researcher aims to analyse the quality of life among the adolescents in divorced families in Kannur district, Kerala. The findings of the study will be helpful to provide an insight into the quality of life among adolescents in divorced families and thereby to propose suitable recommendations and social work interventions to improve the quality of life among the respondents. The findings are expected to be helpful for the micro, mezzo and macro level of social work practice and also helpful for the future researchers who are interested to do research in this line.

Results

Age

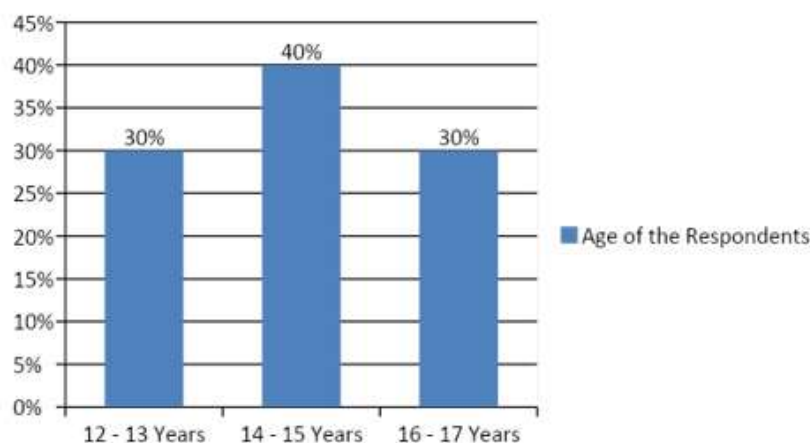


Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 above shows the age of the respondents for this study. 30% of the respondents in this study belong to the age category of 12 – 13 years. Majority of the respondents in this study belong to the age category of 14 – 15 years. 30% of the respondents in this study belong to the age category of 16 – 17 years.

Gender

Gender of the Respondents

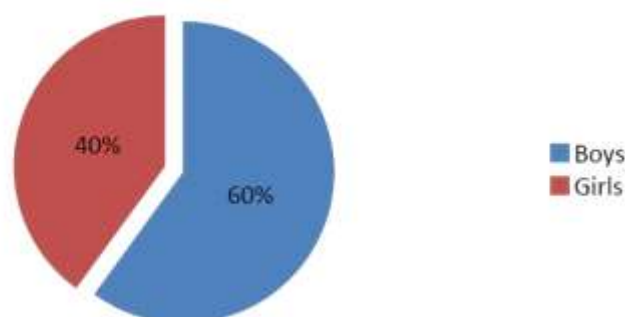


Figure 1.2

Figure 1.2 above depicts the gender of the respondents for current study. Among the total 60 respondents, equal number of respondents were selected from each gender.

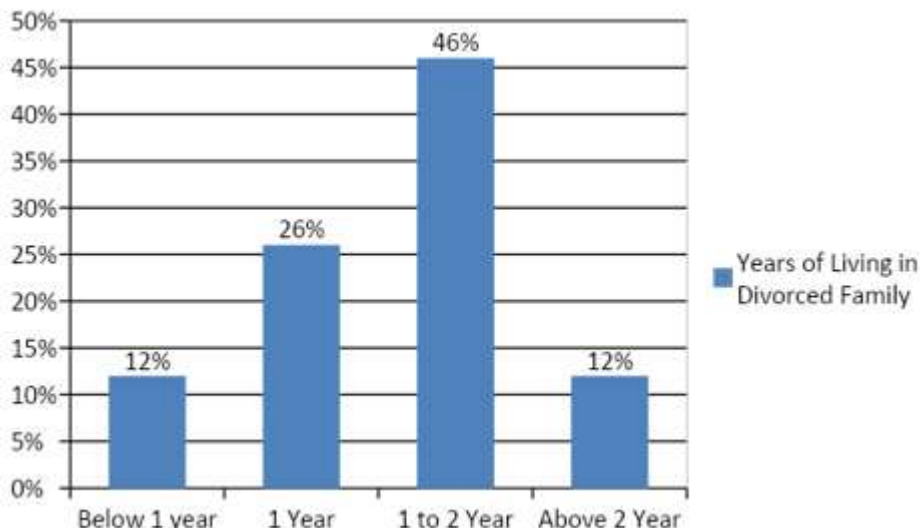


Figure 1.3

Figure 1.3 above shows the years of living of the respondents under single parenting in family after the divorce of their parents. Nearly one sixth of the respondents in this study, live under single parenting less than one year after the divorce of his/her parents. More than one fourth of the respondents in this study live one year under single parenting. Vast majority of the respondents nearly half-46%- live 1 to 2 years under single parenting after the divorce of their parents. About 12% of the respondents live under single parenting more than 2 years. Most of the children are living along with their mother.

Satisfactory Level of Health and Life

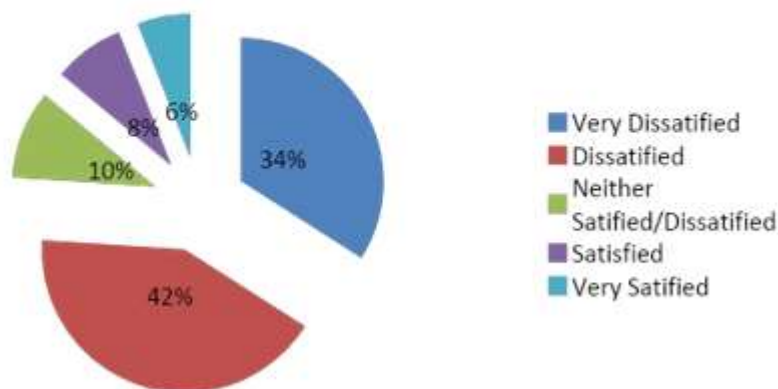


Figure 1.4

Figure 1.4 above shows the level of satisfaction among the respondents about the relationship of health and life under WHOQOL – BREF scale. More than one third of the respondents in this study reported that they are very dissatisfied about their health and quality of life. Vast majority of the respondents-nearly half 42% of them- is reported that they are dissatisfied about their health and quality of life. About 10% of the respondents reported that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Only 8% of the respondents in this study reported that they are satisfied about their level of health and quality of life. About 6% of the respondents reported that they are very much satisfied about their level of health and quality of life.

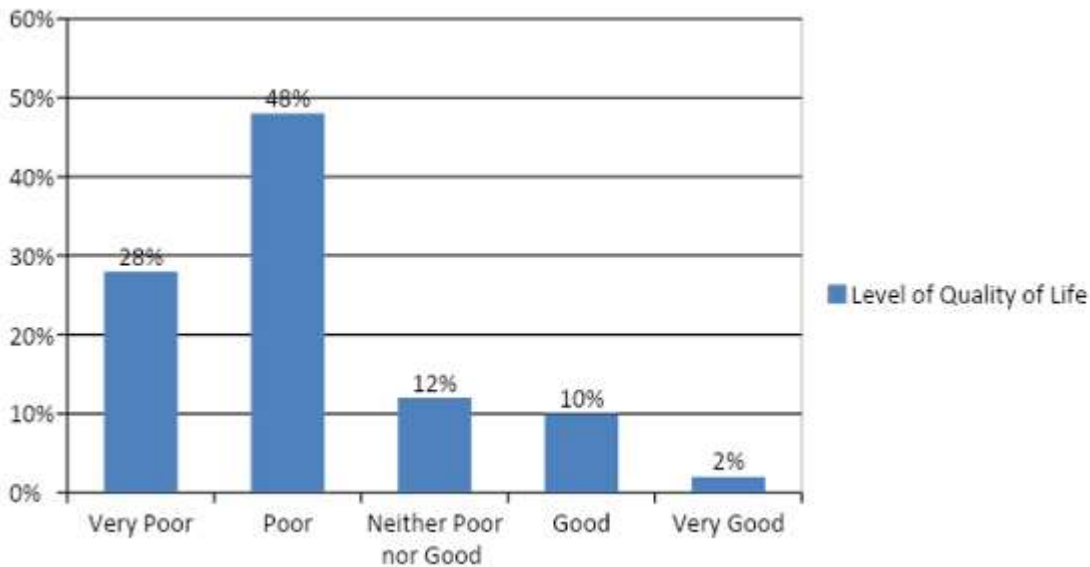


Figure 1.5

Figure 1.5 above shows the level of quality of life among the respondents under WHOQOL – BREF. Among the total respondents more than one fourth of them reported that they felt very poor about their quality of life after the divorce of their parents. Nearly half of the respondents in this study reported that they felt poor about their quality of life after the divorce of their parents. Around 12% of the respondents reported that they are indifferent, that is, neither poor nor good about their quality of life. Around 10% of the respondents reported that their quality of life is good. Only 2% of the respondents reported that their quality of life is very good.

Major findings

- Majority of the respondents in this study belongs to the age category of 14 – 15 years
- Equal number of respondents were selected from both gender
- Majority of respondents parents were divorced in the time period of last 1 – 2 years
- Majority of the respondents lives along with their mother after the divorce of his/her parents
- Nearly half of the respondents reported that they are dissatisfied with their quality of life related to health
- Majority of the respondents were reported that they have poor quality of life only after the divorce of his/her parents.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- The practice of social work method, such as case work and group work to address the individual and common problems of the adolescents, will be helpful to improve the quality of life
- Appointing school counsellors to focus on the adolescents from divorced family would be great to improve the quality of life
- Counselling services to address the emotional problems of adolescents will be helpful to develop a positive mind and thereby improve the quality of life
- Parent-counselling would help to enlighten and to make them aware of providing a positive home environment to improve the quality of life among the adolescents
- Education and carrier guidance will help them to improve the quality of life in near future.

Conclusions

Quality of life is necessary to maintain a good and happy life. Prioritizing the quality of life for adolescents in divorced families necessitates a comprehensive approach. Building a foundation for positive family environment and fulfilling future depends on the quality of life. In this study the researcher finds out that the adolescents among divorced family have only a low level of quality of

life. Social worker plays a vital and crucial role to create an awareness and thereby improve the quality of life among them. Fostering emotional support and good environment can achieve these objectives.

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