

Family Disruptions and Coping Mechanisms Among Junior High School Students in Baguio City: Basis for School Intervention Plan

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Abstract - Family stability plays a vital role in the emotional, psychological, and social development of adolescents. However, changes in family structure and dynamics have increased the prevalence of family disruptions that affect young people's well-being and adjustment in school environments. Family disruptions such as parental separation, financial instability, domestic conflict, parental absence, substance abuse, and family dysfunction can create emotional stress and psychological strain among adolescents. Understanding how students experience these disruptions and the coping strategies they employ is essential in developing appropriate school-based support systems. This study examined the level of seriousness of family disruptions experienced by junior high school students in Baguio City and identified the coping mechanisms they practice in response to these challenges. The study also investigated the relationship between family disruptions, coping mechanisms, and selected socio-demographic variables of the respondents. The study utilized a descriptive–correlational research design involving 385 junior high school students enrolled in public secondary schools in Baguio City. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire that measured students' socio-demographic characteristics, the seriousness of family disruptions experienced, and coping mechanisms across six domains: physical, emotional, mental, academic, social, and spiritual coping. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to interpret the data. Results indicated that students experienced family disruptions at a moderately serious level, suggesting that family instability remains a common challenge among adolescents. Similarly, coping mechanisms were practiced only at a moderate level, indicating that while students attempt to manage stress, their coping strategies may not always be consistently applied or effective. The findings further revealed that there was no significant relationship between family disruptions and students' demographic variables, nor between coping mechanisms and demographic characteristics.

Keywords - Family disruptions, coping mechanisms, adolescent mental health, school intervention programs, psychosocial support

INTRODUCTION

Family has long been recognized as the fundamental unit of society and the primary environment where children develop emotional security, social values, and behavioral patterns. Within the family structure, individuals first learn how to interact with

others, regulate emotions, and develop coping skills necessary to manage challenges encountered throughout life. The stability and functioning of the family therefore play a crucial role in shaping the psychological, emotional, and academic development of children.

When families provide a nurturing and supportive environment, children are more likely to develop resilience, positive self-concept, and healthy relationships. However, when family structures become unstable or dysfunctional, children may face emotional stress and difficulties that affect their overall well-being.

Family disruptions refer to significant changes or instability within the family structure that may negatively affect the emotional and psychological development of children. These disruptions may include parental separation, divorce, domestic conflict, parental absence due to migration or employment, financial instability, substance abuse within the household, and the death or abandonment of family members. Such circumstances can disrupt the emotional security of adolescents and create an environment characterized by uncertainty, stress, and emotional distress. Adolescents who experience these disruptions often struggle to balance their academic responsibilities with the emotional challenges brought about by family instability.

Research conducted in various contexts has consistently shown that family disruptions are associated with negative outcomes for children and adolescents. Studies suggest that adolescents who grow up in unstable family environments may experience higher levels of anxiety, depression, behavioral problems, and academic difficulties. Family instability can also reduce parental supervision and emotional support, which are critical factors in promoting students' academic motivation and social development. When adolescents lack adequate guidance and emotional support from their families, they may encounter difficulties in managing stress and adapting to challenges in school and social environments.

Coping mechanisms play an important role in helping adolescents manage the psychological and emotional effects of family disruptions. Coping mechanisms are defined as the cognitive and behavioral strategies individuals use to deal with stressful situations, emotional difficulties, or challenging circumstances. According to the transactional theory of

coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman, coping is a dynamic process that involves the interaction between individuals and their environment. Individuals evaluate stressful events and adopt coping strategies that help them regulate emotions, solve problems, or adapt to difficult situations. Effective coping strategies allow individuals to maintain psychological balance and continue functioning productively despite facing adversity.

Adolescents employ a variety of coping strategies when confronted with family disruptions. Some students seek emotional support from peers, teachers, or guidance counselors, while others engage in physical activities, recreational hobbies, or spiritual practices to reduce stress. Positive coping strategies such as problem-solving, emotional regulation, and social support can help adolescents adapt to stressful circumstances and maintain their academic engagement. However, some adolescents may resort to maladaptive coping behaviors such as withdrawal, avoidance, aggression, or substance use when they lack adequate emotional support and coping skills.

In the Philippine context, family disruptions may occur due to several socio-economic and cultural factors. The migration of parents for overseas employment, financial hardships, marital conflicts, and changes in family structure are common challenges faced by many Filipino families. These disruptions may have profound effects on adolescents who must navigate emotional struggles while maintaining their educational responsibilities. Schools therefore play an important role in providing supportive environments where students can access guidance services, counseling, and emotional support programs.

Given the increasing concern regarding adolescent mental health and family instability, it is essential to examine how family disruptions influence students' coping behaviors and overall well-being. Understanding these experiences will help educators, school administrators, and policymakers develop appropriate interventions that address the emotional and psychosocial needs of students. This study was therefore

conducted to determine the level of seriousness of family disruptions experienced by junior high school students in Baguio City and to examine the coping mechanisms they employ in response to these disruptions. The findings of this research serve as a basis for designing a school-based intervention program aimed at strengthening students' resilience and promoting their holistic development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between family disruptions and coping mechanisms among junior high school students. The descriptive component of the research design allowed the researcher to identify and describe the extent of family disruptions experienced by students and the coping mechanisms they practiced. Meanwhile, the correlational component was used to determine whether significant relationships existed between family disruptions, coping mechanisms, and the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The study was conducted in public junior high schools located in Baguio City, Philippines. These schools were selected because they serve diverse student populations from different socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural communities. The respondents of the study consisted of 385 junior high school students enrolled in Grades 7 to 10 during the 2024–2025 academic year. These students were selected through a survey-based sampling procedure designed to identify individuals who may have experienced various forms of family disruptions.

Data for the study were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire that was validated prior to its administration. The questionnaire consisted of three major sections. The first section gathered information regarding the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, including their age, gender, grade level, family size, cultural background, and average monthly family income. The second section measured the level of seriousness of family disruptions experienced by the students. These disruptions included parental separation, loss of family members, domestic violence, parental

absence, substance abuse in the family, financial instability, family conflict, and remarriage or blended family situations. The third section examined the coping mechanisms practiced by students in response to these disruptions. The coping strategies were categorized into six domains: physical coping mechanisms, emotional coping mechanisms, mental coping mechanisms, academic coping mechanisms, social coping mechanisms, and spiritual coping mechanisms.

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained permission from the Schools Division Office of Baguio City to administer the questionnaire. After approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with school administrators and teachers to distribute the survey instruments to the selected respondents. Students were informed of the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used only for research purposes. Participation in the study was voluntary.

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was used to determine the level of seriousness of family disruptions and the level of coping mechanisms practiced by students. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between family disruptions and the demographic variables of the students, as well as the relationship between coping mechanisms and demographic characteristics

RESULTS

Table 1. Summary of Family Disruptions and Coping Mechanisms among Junior High School Students in Baguio City

Variable	Domain / Indicator	Verbal Interpretation
Family Disruptions	Parental Separation	Moderately Serious

	Loss of Family Member (Death/Abandonment)	Moderately Serious
	Domestic Violence or Abuse	Moderately Serious
	Parental Absence	Moderately Serious
	Substance Abuse in the Family	Moderately Serious
	Financial Instability	Moderately Serious
	Family Conflict and Dysfunction	Moderately Serious
	Remarriage / Blended Families	Moderately Serious
Overall Family Disruptions	—	Moderately Serious
Coping Mechanisms	Physical Coping	Sometimes Practiced
	Emotional Coping	Sometimes Practiced
	Mental Coping	Sometimes Practiced
	Academic Coping	Sometimes Practiced
	Social Coping	Sometimes Practiced
	Spiritual Coping	Sometimes Practiced
Overall Coping	—	Sometimes Practiced

Mechanisms		
Relationship: Family Disruptions & Profile Variables	—	Not Significant
Relationship: Coping Mechanisms & Profile Variables	—	Not Significant

The summary table presents a consolidated view of the findings regarding the family disruptions experienced by junior high school students and the coping mechanisms they employ. The results indicate that students experienced various forms of family disruptions at a moderately serious level, with an overall average weighted mean of 3.01. This suggests that family instability is a common experience among adolescents, although the severity varies across individuals. Disruptions such as parental separation, loss of family members, domestic violence, parental absence, substance abuse, financial instability, family conflict, and blended family situations were all perceived as moderately serious, indicating that students encounter multiple forms of stress within their home environments.

The findings also reveal that students practice coping mechanisms at a moderate level, with an overall average weighted mean of 3.02 interpreted as “sometimes practiced.” This indicates that while students attempt to manage the emotional and psychological effects of family disruptions, they do not consistently employ coping strategies. Coping behaviors were observed across physical, emotional, mental, academic, social, and spiritual domains, suggesting that students utilize diverse approaches to manage stress. However, the moderate level of practice implies that many students may lack sufficient skills,

guidance, or support systems to cope effectively with challenging family situations.

Furthermore, the correlation analysis shows that there was no significant relationship between the seriousness of family disruptions and the socio-demographic profile of the students. Similarly, no significant relationship was found between coping mechanisms and demographic variables. These results suggest that family disruptions and coping challenges are experienced by students across different backgrounds, regardless of age, gender, grade level, family size, cultural background, or income level. The absence of significant relationships highlights the universal nature of these psychosocial issues among adolescents.

Overall, the summary table underscores the need for comprehensive school-based support systems that address the emotional and psychological needs of students experiencing family disruptions. The moderate levels of both disruptions and coping mechanisms indicate that students are navigating difficult circumstances without fully adequate support. This finding provides strong justification for the development of intervention programs aimed at strengthening resilience, improving coping skills, and promoting the holistic well-being of junior high school students.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study highlight the widespread presence of family disruptions among junior high school students and their potential effects on adolescents' emotional and psychological well-being. The finding that family disruptions were rated as moderately serious suggests that many students experience family instability that may influence their academic engagement and mental health. Family disruptions such as parental separation, financial difficulties, and family conflict can create emotional stress that affects students' ability to concentrate on their studies and maintain healthy relationships with peers and teachers.

The moderate level of coping mechanisms practiced by the students indicates that adolescents attempt to manage the stress caused by family disruptions, but their coping strategies may not always be sufficient or consistent. While some students rely on positive coping mechanisms such as social support, physical activities, or spiritual practices, others may struggle to develop effective strategies for managing emotional distress. This highlights the importance of providing structured guidance and support within the school environment to help students strengthen their coping abilities.

The absence of significant relationships between demographic variables and both family disruptions and coping mechanisms suggests that family instability is not limited to specific social or economic groups. Instead, family disruptions appear to be a common experience among adolescents from diverse backgrounds. This finding emphasizes the need for universal support programs that address the psychosocial needs of students regardless of their demographic characteristics.

These findings underscore the important role that schools play in supporting students who experience family disruptions. Educational institutions serve as critical environments where adolescents can receive emotional support, guidance, and counseling services that help them cope with personal challenges. By implementing school-based intervention programs, educators can help students develop resilience, emotional regulation skills, and effective coping strategies that promote their overall well-being and academic success.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that family disruptions are commonly experienced by junior high school students in Baguio City and are perceived as moderately serious challenges that affect their emotional and psychological well-being. Students employ various coping mechanisms to manage these disruptions; however, the level of coping strategies practiced remains moderate,

indicating that many students may lack sufficient support in developing effective coping skills.

The findings further revealed that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, grade level, family size, cultural background, and income do not significantly influence the level of family disruptions or coping mechanisms experienced by students. This suggests that family disruptions affect adolescents across different social groups and therefore require comprehensive support systems that address the needs of all students.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of implementing school-based psychosocial intervention programs that strengthen students' resilience, improve their coping abilities, and provide emotional support for those experiencing family instability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, several recommendations are proposed. Schools should develop and implement structured psychosocial support programs that address the emotional and mental health needs of students experiencing family disruptions. Guidance counseling services should be strengthened to provide individualized support and intervention for students facing personal challenges. Teachers and school administrators should receive training to help them recognize signs of emotional distress among students and respond appropriately. Schools should also promote collaboration with parents and community organizations to establish a comprehensive support system for adolescents. Finally, future research may explore the lived experiences of students facing family disruptions through qualitative approaches in order to gain deeper insights into their coping behaviors and emotional needs.

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