

## **Behavioral Problems and Coping Strategies of Selected Adolescents Belonging to a Broken Family**

Magpantay, Mary Joyce, Malabrigo, Precious,  
Malijan, Rouel Joseph, Manarin, Mary Gayrose

### Abstract

*Behavioral problems become a devastating dilemma among adolescents. Most of them belong to a broken family or single parent family. This family stress causes lack of parental support and guidance which results to adolescents' emotional and behavioral problems. This leads to disrespectful and aggressive behavior of adolescents. Mediocre teenagers tend to lie to their parents, thus making it the most manifested behavioral problem. While, violent behaviors such as trying to hurt or kill others are not primarily a choice for them. This proves that the present adolescents did not yet reach the peak of cruelty. However, these behaviors affect the adolescents' health, emotional, and social status. Most of them experienced eating disorders and exhibited poor self-esteem. Because of having low self-confidence, they are having problem in socialization. Problem in making friends and keeping friends was the common dilemma in terms of their social status. Due to their difficult situation, they tend to cope negatively. They still find vices as a solution to forget their situation for a period of time. Though, there are few adolescents cope positively by engaging themselves in sports. On the other hand, some of them shared their insights and gave their best advices to adolescents experiencing the same situation. They uttered that adolescents must be optimistic. They have to express their emotions in order for them to lessen their loneliness. Instead of dwelling to negative people, they should engage themselves to sports or any organizations that will help them to discover their self-worth. Accepting the reality and their situation will help them to free from emotional distress. But the most important is to love their selves.*

*Keywords: adolescents, problems, behavioral, coping, broken family*

## INTRODUCTION

Family plays a crucial role in molding one's personality, belief and capability. Everything about a man mostly relies on the state of the family he belonged. The way he acts towards other people could be accounted to the people whom he often mingles with. Living under the same roof might as well add to the reasons how dependent he is to his family. Even so, since every individual has this reliance towards his family, any adversity would definitely affect his whole- being. Such devastating matters regarding family relationships like parent's separation could give a severe impact to the people concerned, the children (Eshica, 2010).

Nowadays, many are involved in a broken family. It is very usual for people to think that teenagers doing such nasty acts are rooted to family disorientation. Even countless studies show that child's mislead life is blamed to separated parents. According to Eschica (2010), children with separated parents do not perform well in school which is a very terrifying incident because a school that is an institution for learning is failing to deliver education. Thus, it merely becomes unproductive.

Moreover, it is said that children, being part of a broken family, are suffering five times than their parents do. Parental separation really causes problems in emotional, behavioral and academic aspects. Studies also say that those teenagers are worse off than those with continuously married parents in terms of academic success, conduct, psychological well-being, and peer relations system. Thus, it appears like adolescents are the innocent victims of their parents' inability to maintain harmonious and stable homes (Amato 2007).

To support the previous statements, Keith also said that the children are at risk when it comes to single- parenting arrangement. Most adolescents living with only one parent are economically disadvantaged. Parents cannot afford to buy consumer goods in order to give their child status among their peers. It results to juvenile delinquency of teenagers. Aside from this, quality of parenting is one predictor of behavioral problems among adolescents. They find it difficult to function as parents in the near future (Keith 2007).

Hence, adolescents belonging to a broken family are exposed to more stressful experiences and circumstances than those who are living with continuously married parents. It builds up behavioral problems on cognitive, social, and emotional standpoint. Usually, things like decision making, actions

and words of a child would correspond to how they look on their situation. It can be a good or bad outcome, but mostly, the latter.

Based on the researchers' observation, some adolescents residing at Sto. Tomas are products of broken families due to parental separation or abandonment of spouse. This situation prompted the researchers to conduct a study on the adolescents belonging to this type of family, more specifically on their manifested behavioral problems, their causes and effects.

### **Review of Literature and Studies**

Adolescence is a critical developmental period in everyone's life. To become adults, we have to "survive" adolescence. Adolescents are at high risk for the development of problem behaviors that are distressing and socially disruptive. Thus, they are the victims once they have poor family structure. They are the victims of unintentional broken family (Drysdale & Rye, 2007). Children are encouraged to blame the separation for whatever unhappiness they may feel, which makes them feel helpless about improving their lives (Ahron, 2007).

Family stress is the most common cause of behavioral problems of the adolescents. Parental separation, children born outside marriage, death of a parent, discordant two-parent families, and stepfamilies are the origins of a broken home. However, adolescence becomes risk-taking due to economic hardship, quality of parenting, and exposure to stress (Amato, 2007). The effort and care that parents put into establishing their post separation families are crucial and will pay off over the years in their many benefits to the children (Ahron, 2007).

The significant disadvantages of children from single-parent or broken families, especially those who experienced parental divorce, have important implications for stratification and inequality in Korea in the recent trend of increasing divorce. Under the current context of minimal governmental support for families, increasing numbers of children from single-parent families due to parental divorce are vulnerable, facing significant educational and other disadvantages. In the changing demographic environment, family structure is emerging as an important mechanism through which intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status occurs. Given that household income explains a part of the negative effect of single parenthood on educational aspiration and student disengagement, income support for single-parent families seems to be a critical policy. However, the negative effects of single parenthood especially due to divorce remain significant even after controlling

for household income suggests that other social and cultural programs should be available for parents and their children to deal with parental divorce. Moreover, the relative importance of parent-child interaction for single-father families implies that special policy focus should be directed to strengthen the positive relationship between a single father and his children (Park, 2008).

Additional risk factors identified in the research also include the initial separation such as the abrupt departure of one parent, continuing parent conflict after separation, ineffective or neglectful parenting, loss of important relationships such as extended family members, and financial/economic changes (Kelly, 2008). Protective factors identified by Kelly are competent custodial parents, effective parenting from the non-residential parent, and amicable versus high conflict relationship between the separated parents (Ruschena, 2007).

Furthermore, supporting Amato's argument, Sun and Li (2007) also found that adolescents of separated parents have lower scores on measures of well-being. (i.e., academic functioning, locus of control, and self-esteem) compared to adolescents of intact families. According to (Doughty, 2008), the research adds to a wealth of data showing that children suffer badly from parental break-up, and that those who are brought up by a single parent are more likely to do badly at school, suffer poor health, and fall into crime, addiction and poverty as adults. The report, funded by the Department of Health and published by the Office for National Statistics, investigated emotional disorders - ranked as those which cause considerable distress and interference with the way in which children perform at school and during play. Teachers are often too quick to identify separation as the reason for child's school behavior problem. The greater society points a finger at separation as the reason for a wide range of greater social problems (Ahron, 2007). It also looked at conduct disorders which result in aggressive, violent or anti-social behavior.

Aside from academic failure, Department of Health sought for other aspects to where the effect of broken family is extremely felt. The report, funded by the Department of Health and published by the Office for National Statistics, investigated emotional disorders - ranked as those which cause considerable distress and interference with the way in which adolescents perform at school. It also looked at conduct disorders which result in aggressive, violent or anti-social behavior. The report said that a child whose parents had

split during this time was more than four and a half times more likely to have developed an emotional disorder than one whose parents stayed together.

According to Soriano (2010), delinquency is part also of the behavioral problems of the teenagers. He stated that juvenile delinquency is a criminal or antisocial behavior of children and youth. The causes of juvenile delinquency from most theories have focused on children from disadvantaged families, ignoring the fact that children from affluent homes also commit crimes. The latter may commit crimes because of the lack of adequate parental control.

Also according to him, families have also experienced changes within the last 25 years. More families consist of one-parent households or two working parents; consequently, children are likely to have less supervision at home than was common in the traditional family structure. This lack of parental supervision is thought to be an influence on juvenile crime rates.

To support the previous statements, Social Development Theory by Weis, Catalano, and Hawkins, states that teenagers are at risk for anti-social behavior. They become aggressive and violent. Thus, in an early age, they are already involved to criminal behavior. This is due to lack of parental attachment. Likewise, teenagers' anti-social behavior also depends on the quality of their attachments to parents and other influential relations. If they remain unattached or develop attachments to deviant others, their behavior may become deviant as well. The social development model suggests that interaction with anti-social peers and adults promotes participation in delinquency and substance abuse.

Undergoing such circumstances, it will not be surprising if the health of the teenagers will also be sacrificed. It is revealed that most of the time, they experience physical and mental symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia, tooth grinding at night, headaches, depression, anxiety and panic attacks, irritability, and panic behavior, low immunity, and palpitations (Cole, 2007).

Aside from physical illnesses, teenagers often experience emotional distress that leads to mental illness. Teenagers with family break up experience five phases of feelings. First is the denial wherein in they can't accept the reality of loss. In extreme cases it may be a complete denial, as if the person had not really left. There is also sometimes denial of the pain of loss, when people behave as if they are emotionally unaffected. This numbness is the way the mind protects itself from being overwhelmed by the shock of loss. Second is anger; they may be in general anger with the world, fate or God, or an anger directed towards certain people- especially the parent who was gone. The anger

may be a reaction to internal questions like “why you have left me?” and can lead to emotional, aggressive outburst. This often happens immediately after the loss. Third is bargaining when your mind refuses to accept what has happened and you may try to strike a bargain to get back what you have lost. This is a difficult stage- it may take a long time to realize the things are not going to go back to how they were. Fourth is depression; as acknowledgement of the loss grows, depression can follow. This is the next stage of the grieving, represented by an overwhelming feeling of sadness, loss and loneliness. Lastly, the acceptance is when the bereaved persons come to terms with their loss, and are able to move on and accept the future. This stage is calmer, without the extremes of emotions of the earlier stages (Cole, 2007).

At the last stage, teenagers must have the acceptance. But some of them can not get through the emotions due to broken family. They rather stuck to depression and eventually it will become serious. They are bound to have feelings of sadness. But depression is more than an on-off feeling of sadness and pessimism. When they are depressed, they are constantly low and see no way of ever feeling any different. Depression is a mixture of symptoms that can affect every part of their life, from not being able to sleep to wanting to commit suicide. There may be symptoms of depressions like being moody, irritable or snappy, worrying about little things, or worrying about everything, feeling lazy, bored or tired all the time, not wanting to see anyone or speak to friends, feeling numb and empty and not caring about anything, feeling of they will never be happy ever again, feeling worthless, crying a lot, feeling life is not worth living and wanting to end yours wanting to harm self, eating a lot more less than usual, experiencing sleep disturbances, having nightmares, sleeping at all times or no sleep at all, and last lying or making up stories (Cole, 2007).

Due to severe depression of some teenagers who were victims of broken homes, they may perform self-harm. Self-harm can include cutting and burning yourself or taking harmful substances. It can be done in private, dealt with privately and then covered up. Damaging behavior like alcohol and drug misuse, eating disorders, unsafe sex, and taking risks (such as dangerous driving) is not classified as self-harm but can be equally destructive. All these acts, including self-harm, show there are unresolved problems. Act of self-harm may lead to suicide or be motivated by suicidal thoughts. There are reasons why this thing happens. Sometimes it may seem like the only way they can get attention or be taken seriously and sometimes it can seem like the only way to cope with or show difficult feelings (Cole, 2007).

With so much stress and disappointment the adolescents felt, they tend to escape and make their own world but for some, they just adapt. Adapting is a human nature but since people have different personality, they also vary in coping strategies. It is said that females and males have differences in terms of adapting behavioral problems, emotional stress, and how they cope from the said problems. From the research of Gutierrez (2008), 40% of male and 4% of females smoke. Supporting Gutierrez's study, men tend to have more difficulty expressing emotions than do women for two main reasons. First, it is often culturally unacceptable. And sometimes they think that if they cry and express themselves, they are being criticized compared to girls. Women do not have any problems in expressing problems because for them support group or peers is a good listener for them (Shawn, 2008).

Affected adolescents use smoking as coping mechanism to broken home. Aside from smoking, adolescents also are engaged to drinking, taking illegal drugs, sexual activity, and juvenile delinquency as coping strategies (Cruz & Berja, 2008). In terms of psychological, girls more likely exhibit emotional distress toward boys (Yeo & Huan, 2007).

Even some studies of non-Western developing societies have found no apparently negative effects of single parenthood. Lloyd and Blanc, (as cited in Park, 2008) found that in sub-Saharan Africa countries, children in female-headed households tended to have greater educational opportunities in terms of school enrollments and attainment relative to children in male-headed households. Compared to the large number of studies on single parenthood in Western industrial countries and even in some developing countries, little research has addressed the issue in societies that have recently experienced dramatic changes in family structure, especially the rapid increase in divorce in East Asia. In particular, Korea, along with Japan, has long been recognized with its very low level of divorce and low incidence of births outside of marriage linked with strong family ties (Park, 2008).

### Conceptual Framework

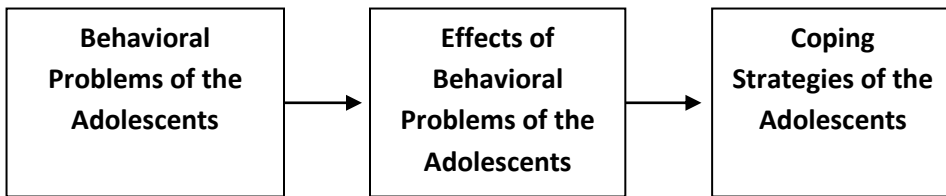


Figure 1 Paradigm showing the variables of the study

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship of the different variables. As shown in the diagram, The input includes the Behavioral Problems of the selected adolescents. The process includes the effects of those behaviors to the adolescents. Lastly, the output includes the coping strategies that the adolescents use to cover up their problems.

### Theoretical Framework

The researchers utilized Social Development Model Theory as basis for their research. In their social development model, it shows how different factors affecting children's social development over their life course influence their behavioral problem. As children mature within their environment, elements of socialization control their developmental process. Children are socialized and develop bonds to their families through four distinct interaction processes, namely: 1) the perceived opportunities for involvement in activities and interaction with others, 2) the degree of involvement and interaction with parents, 3) the children's ability to participate in these interactions, 4) the reinforcement they perceive for their participation (Weis, et al. in Soriano, 2010).

To control the risk of anti-social behavior, a child must maintain pro social bonds. These are developed within the context of family life, which not only provides pro-social opportunities but also reinforces them by consistent, positive feedback. Parental attachment affects a child's behavior for life, determining both school experiences and personal beliefs and values. For those with strong family relationships, school will be meaningful experience marked by academic success and commitment to education. Youth in this category are likely to develop conventional beliefs and values, become committed to conventional activities, and form attachments to conventional others.



Without the proper level of bonding, adolescents can succumb to the influence of deviant others. Hence, the development of the behavioral problems of the adolescents depends on the family structure they belong to.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general aim of the study is to identify the behavioral problems, the effects of these behaviors and the coping strategies of the adolescents belonging to a broken family.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research entitled “Behavioral Problems and Coping Strategies of Selected Adolescents Belonging to a Broken Family” is designed primarily to answer and investigate some questions regarding behavioral problems, its effects and coping strategies of adolescents who belong to a broken home.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of: age, gender, civil status, occupation, and educational attainment?
2. What are the behavioral problems encountered by the adolescents?
3. What are the effects of the adolescents’ behavioral problems on the following: health status; emotional status; and social life?
4. What are the strategies used by the adolescents in coping with their problems?
5. What recommendations may be given to assist students in coping with their problem?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The main purpose of this study was to identify the behavioral problems and its effects, and also the coping strategies used by selected adolescents belonging to a broken family. To achieve this purpose, the researchers employed a combination of descriptive and qualitative methods of research. Descriptive method was used which involves gathering information about existing conditions through a normative approach, supported with descriptive analysis of data gathered from the said survey. On the other hand, qualitative type of research was also used to validate the information provided by the

respondents. This type of research gave the respondents the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own terms. It determined the necessary information and the completeness and accuracy of the results.

### **Research Locale**

The researchers chose Sto. Tomas, Batangas for it was the most accessible place to conduct the study. Sto. Tomas is a first class municipality in the province of Batangas, Philippines. It is composed of 30 barangays. The town is a gateway to the province from Laguna. It borders the cities of Calamba City to the north, Los Baños to the northeast, Alaminos to the east, Tanauan City and Malvar to the west, and Lipa City to the south. The researchers were familiar and residing to the said place.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The respondents comprised 35 adolescents belonging to broken families. The researchers excluded the adolescents aged 12 and 13 years old. The researchers believed that they were still young and emotionally immature. Also, the study was also sensitive enough for them. In addition, five out of thirty-five respondents participated in the interview.

The criteria in selecting the respondents were the adolescent aged 14-19 years old and they were belonging to a broken family. Their parents (mother and father) must be separated for at least five years and above and also either the husband or the wife abandoned the family. Also, one parent or both were having their own second family.

### **Sampling Design**

The researchers used convenience sampling technique which is a type of non-random sampling. Non-random convenience sampling technique is the process of selecting respondents based on a certain criteria. It is used for the selection of the respondents. The criteria set by the researchers in choosing the respondents are as follow: adolescents refer to age 14 to 19 who are products of broken home or family; broken family refers to a family where the father and his wife had been separated for at least five years, or either the husband or the wife abandoned the family and if one parent or both were having their own second family.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

The data gathering instrument that the researchers used is a survey type of questionnaire. It was composed of four pages. It was presented in checklist with the first part on the profile of the respondents.

The second part focused on the behavioral problems encountered by adolescents, while the third part was on the coping strategies of adolescents. Lastly, the fourth part was on the effects of behavioral problems in terms of health, emotional status, and social life of the adolescents.

Supportive to the said instrument were the result of informal interviews with the respondents regarding the effects of belonging to a broken family, the coping strategies they used to cover up their problems and the recommendations they may be given to assist students in coping with their problem.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

For data gathering purposes, the researchers first scanned and browsed related literature and studies and samples of questionnaire from other studies. Then, they formulated a set of questionnaire based on the readings of literature.

Second, the researchers wrote a waiver which allowed them to conduct a survey to the parents of the participants. The questionnaire was also attached in the said waiver.

After the approval of the questionnaires, the researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to the target respondent who are adolescents residing in different barangays of Sto. Tomas, Batangas after which the filled-up copies were retrieved through the same channel. The statistical evaluation of the raw data was computed through the Simple Frequency and Percentage for each class or category in the respondents demographic profile variables.

After conducting the survey, the researchers interviewed five out of 35 respondents with a provided list of questions regarding the effects of belonging to a broken family, the coping strategies they used to cover up their problems, and the recommendations they may be given to assist students in coping with their problem.

Lastly, the researchers set interview questions in order to validate the data given by the respondents. The interview intended to identify the effects of behavioral problems of the adolescents to their health conditions and the

recommendations may be given by the respondents to assist students in coping with their problem.

### Statistical Treatment

The researchers utilized the following statistical techniques to ensure valid and reliable analysis and interpretation of data.

Frequency Distribution was used to calculate specific values occur within a range of values. The data were collated and tabulated to determine frequency of responses. This process supplemented the use of Simple Percentage to determine the proportion of each class or category in relation to other categories and to the whole population of the study. This was used to analyze the profile of the respondents, along with their responses to the checklist items in the questionnaire.

Ranking was also used to determine the position of each class or category in a set of classes or categories.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N = 35)

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percent
<b>1.1. Age</b>		
14 – 16	19	54
17 – 19	16	46
<b>1.2. Gender</b>		
Male	22	63
Female	13	37
<b>1.3. Civil Status</b>		
Married	7	20
Single	28	80
<b>1.4. Educational Attainment</b>		
College	12	34
High School	11	31
Elementary	8	23
Vocational	4	11

Table 1 shows the data on the demographic profile of the respondents according to age, gender, civil status and educational attainment.

In terms of age, the younger group of age ranging from 14 to 16 posted a frequency of 19 or 54 percent in rank one, while in rank two was that of age range 17-19 with a frequency of 16 or 46 percent.

When grouped by gender, the male respondents comprised a frequency of 22 or 63 percent in rank one, while the female group obtained a frequency of 13 or 37 percent in rank two.

On the other hand, groupings by civil status revealed 28 or 80 percent unmarried respondents, while 7 or 20 percent married ones in respective ranks of one and two.

Finally, the distribution of the respondents by educational attainment are as follow: 12 or 34 percent college level, 11 or 31 percent high school, 8 or 23 percent elementary and 4 or 11 percent vocational graduate in consecutive ranks of one to four.

The foregoing data set the identification pattern of the respondents and there are noted variations in each grouping. This implies a reliable representation of the said distribution, which means that one of the criteria for purposively selecting the sample size was followed – that of having different types of respondents. It should be noted that the respondents were chosen through purposive sampling; hence, the rationale for citing such implication.

## **2. Perceived Behavioral Problems of Adolescents in a Broken Family**

Table 2 manifests the perceived behavioral problems encountered by the respondents.

The problems considered to a great extent in this area are those wherein majority of the respondents claimed to have encountered. Those below the 50 percent level are considered moderate, while the negligible ones are those within the lowest ranks presumed as below the 30 percent of the respondents have been impacted.

Table 2  
Perceived Behavioral Problems Encountered by the Respondents

Indicators	Frequency	Percent
Lying to parents	33	94
Going home late at night	27	77
Absenteeism	23	66
Getting in fights	22	63
Stealing	16	46
Arguing with adults	15	43
Aggressive behavior	15	43
Engaging in premarital and unprotected sex	14	40
Disrespectful behavior	14	40
Bullying	14	40
Involvement with gangs	13	37
Attention seeking	13	37
Rebelling behavior	13	37
Verbal abuse	13	37
Refusing to follow rules and regulations	12	34
Involvement in any form of gambling	12	34
Annoying other people	11	31
Being cruel to pets or other animals	9	26
Frequent mood swings	9	26
Blaming others for their own mistakes and difficulties	9	26
Obsessively playing violent video games, watching violent movies, or visiting websites that promote or glorify violence	9	26
Owns a weapon	8	23
Damaging property	7	20
Skipping school	7	20
Driving under the influence of alcohol	7	20
Behaving like a young child	5	14
Fantasizing about liking to commit acts of violence	4	11
Violent behaviors (e.g. trying to hurt or kill)	2	0.06

Hence, the problems that belong to the great extent category are as follow: lying to parents, with a frequency of 33 or 94 percent in rank one; going home late at night, with a frequency of 27 or 77 percent in rank two; absenteeism, with a frequency of 23 or 66 percent in rank three; and getting in fights, with a frequency of 22 or 63 percent in rank four. These findings indicate the common consequence of being in a broken family. The separation of parents tend to affect behavior formation among children and adolescents since they, at an early age, are seeking a home environment characterized by strong unity among members, with love and healthy home relationship. But in such case where the parents do not live together, the children tend to develop such behavior as telling lies, staying late outside the home at night, escaping classes and getting into fights. These could have been an effect of insufficient guidance and monitoring of their activities by their parents. There could also be such discriminating question that develops in the minds of the children as they compare their status with that of the children of united parents.

This matched the gathered information from the interview. Obsessively seeking for attention and love is the most common behavioral problem developed after the separation of their parents. Other substantial behavioral changes include being insensitive to feelings of others, lying to guardians, going out with friends most of the time, sensitive to talk about life, having financial problem and early employment at a young age. Furthermore, when it comes to studies, they are having a hard time especially during parent's meeting, graduation and other school affairs. Thus, whenever they see a happy and complete family, they easily get envy. One of them sees broken family as a reason why he is always destructed. He performs badly in school due to lack of inspiration. Also, one confesses that she's having trust issues. She doesn't give her trust easily.

As cited by Amato (2007), adolescence becomes risk-taking due to economic hardship, quality of parenting, and exposure to stress. Further, Ahron (2007) averred that the effort and care that parents put into establishing their post separation families are crucial and will pay off over the years in their many benefits to the children.

Meanwhile, the behavioral problems within the moderate level include the following: stealing, with a frequency of 16 or 46 percent; arguing with adults and aggressive behavior, with a frequency of 15 or 43 percent each; engaging in premarital and unprotected sex, bullying and disrespectful behavior, each with similar frequency of 14 or 40 percent; rebelling behavior and attention seeking,

with identical frequency of 13 or 37 percent each; refusing to follow rules and regulations and involvement in any form of gambling, each with equal frequency of 12 or 34 percent each; and annoying other people, with a frequency of 11 or 31 percent.

These problems were considered to have affected more than 30 percent but below 50 percent of the total respondents. What is notable in the cited behavioral problems is their close association with the traits of juvenile delinquents; hence, juvenile delinquency tends to be an effect of parental separation or that of being raised in a single parent home or two discordant families. This is probable since the lack of parental guidance and monitoring is tantamount to poor nurturing which tends to create behavioral problems among the children and adolescents.

According to Soriano (2010), delinquency is part also of the behavioral problems of the teenagers. He stated that juvenile delinquency is a criminal or antisocial behavior of children and youth. The causes of juvenile delinquency from most theories have focused on children from disadvantaged families.

Finally, the negligible items were presented in the table but no longer discussed in this study since the main focus are those considered to have great and moderate effects on more than one-third of the respondents.

### **3. Perceived Effects of Behavioral Problems**

In terms of the effects on health, 21 or 60 percent of the respondents claimed to have eating disorders. This could be due to their depression or self-pity upon being in a situation they do not like most.

On the other hand, minimal cases were observed on the following items posted on the table: diarrhea, with 11 or 31 percent in rank two; malnutrition, stomachache and chest pain, with equal frequency of 10 or 29 percent each in rank four; frequent headache, with a frequency of eight or 23 percent in rank six; constipation, with a frequency of six or 17 percent in rank seven; frequent colds and coughs along with hypertension, each with a frequency of four or 11 percent in rank 8.5; palpitation and backache, with respective frequency of two and one which are both less than one percent.



Table 3  
Perceived Effects of Behavioral Problems

Indicators	Frequency	Percent
<b>Health</b>		
1. Eating disorders	21	60
2. Diarrhea	11	31
3. Chest pain	10	29
4. Abdominal pain	10	29
5. Malnutrition	10	29
6. Frequent headache	8	23
7. Constipation	6	17
8. Hypertension	4	11
9. Frequent cough and colds	4	12
10. Palpitation	2	0.06
11. Backache	1	0.03
<b>Emotional Status</b>		
1. Low self-esteem	21	60
2. Insecurity	16	46
3. Depression	15	43
4. Mood swings	14	40
5. Self-neglect	12	34
6. Severe anxiety and fearfulness	7	20
7. Avoidant behavior	5	14
<b>Social Life</b>		
1. Problems in making friends and keeping friends	22	63
2. Peer rejection	12	34

Table 3 unveils the distributed perceptions of the respondents on the effects of behavioral problems as a consequence of being in a broken family.

The findings indicate that it could only be eating disorder which is the effect of being in a broken family. But this effect could further grow into other forms of moderate or even acute diseases if the situation is prolonged.

The survey results complemented the gathered information from the interview. Two of the respondents stated that they have no existing health problems related to their family stress. However, three of them were experiencing different health related problems from each other. One of the

respondents was having frequent headache because of too much thinking of the situation that leads to stress. The other respondent was a bulimic. She was engaged to a type of eating disorders which is Bulimia nervosa. She was engaging to binge eating. Afterwards, she will have episodes of purging. According to her, this health problem is due to her low self-esteem. Hence, she becomes conscious and sensitive to her physical. The last respondent was underweight with a height of 5'5ft. and a weight of 49kg. From the computed BMI or Body Mass Index, the result is 17.4 which belongs to the category of underweight (<18.5). According to her, she doesn't give much attention to her health and she's having a poor appetite right after the separation of her parent.

As cited by Cole (2007), it will not be surprising if the health of the teenagers will also be sacrificed as a consequence of depression for being a part of a broken family.

On the effects to the emotional status of the respondents, the following are the findings: low self-esteem, with the highest frequency of 21 or 60 percent in rank one; insecurity, with a frequency of 16 or 46 percent in rank two; depression, with a frequency of 15 or 43 percent in rank three; mood swings, with a frequency of 14 or 40 percent in rank four; self-neglect, with a frequency of 12 or 34 percent in rank five; severe anxiety and fearfulness, with a frequency of seven or 20 percent in rank six; and avoidant behavior, with a frequency of five or 14 percent in rank seven.

These emotional effects were also cited by Cole (2007), stating that aside from physical illnesses, teenagers often experience emotional distress that leads to mental illness. Teenagers with family break up experience five phases of feelings. First is the denial wherein in they cannot accept the reality of loss. In extreme cases it may be a complete denial, as if the person had not really left. There is also sometimes denial of the pain of loss, when people behave as if they are emotionally unaffected. This numbness is the way the mind protects itself from being overwhelmed by the shock of loss. Second is anger; they may be in general anger with the world, fate or God, or an anger directed towards certain people- especially the parent who was gone.

It was truly the emotion which is greatly affected by having parents who are separated. This situation is further compounded by the effects of the situation on the social life of the adolescents, as sustained by 22 or 63 percent of the respondents who claimed problems in making friends and keeping friends. Further, that of peer rejection obtained a frequency of 12 or 34 percent in rank two.

The cited findings indicate that the loss or absence of one or two parents resulting from separation or from other possible reasons could have an effect on the physical and emotional status of adolescents including the disturbance on their social life. The findings also imply that adolescents from broken families should be treated fairly in the schools to prevent further discouragement and help them cope with their situation in a positive manner. They need proper guidance and attention which might have been absent or neglected in their homes as a result of their pitiful situation. Hence, instead of driving them towards negative patterns of coping, teachers should apply their parenting role in the school to this type of adolescents.

#### **4. Coping Strategies of the Respondents**

Table 4 indicates the coping patterns utilized by the respondents as a consequence of belonging to a broken family.

The most common negative coping strategies claimed by the respondents are alcohol abuse and smoking, as sustained by their respective highest frequencies of 28 and 27 or 80 and 77 percent in ranks 1 and 2.

As cited by Cruz & Berja (2008), affected adolescents use smoking as coping mechanism to broken home. Aside from smoking, adolescents also are engaged to drinking, taking illegal drugs, sexual activity, and juvenile delinquency as coping strategies.

The other coping strategies include early engagement to sexual activity and computer games addiction, each with the same frequency of 21 or 60 percent in rank 3.5.

Moreover, the respondents also claimed to engage in social networking, as sustained by a frequency of 15 or 43 percent in rank five. Consequently, such may result in having intimate relationship at young age, as confirmed by a frequency of 14 or 40 percent in rank six. These findings are considered to be moderately utilized as they fall way below the majority level or less than half of the respondents claiming such options.

**Table 4**  
**Coping Strategies of the Respondents**

Indicators	Frequency	Percent
<b>Negative</b>		
1. Alcohol abuse	28	80
2. Smoking	27	77
3. Early engagement to sexual activity	21	60
4. Computer games addiction	21	60
5. Social networking	15	43
6. Having intimate relationship at young age	14	40
7. Bar hopping	12	34
8. Involvement on gangs and fraternities	11	31
9. Early marriage	8	23
10. Peer groups	8	23
11. Drug and substance abuse	6	17
12. Early pregnancy	5	14
13. Not engaging oneself with opposite sex	5	14
<b>Positive</b>		
1. Engaging oneself in sports	15	43
2. Spending time reading books and studying	7	20
3. Expressing oneself through art	7	20
4. Involving in out-reach programs	6	17
5. Involvement in church organizations	5	14
6. Shopping	3	9
7. Receiving achievements in school	3	9

The other coping strategies include the following: bar hopping, with a frequency of 12 or 34 percent in rank seven; involvement on gangs and fraternities, with a frequency of 11 or 31 percent in rank eight; early marriage and peer groups, each with the same frequency of eight or 23 percent in rank 9.5; drug and substance abuse, with a frequency of six or 17 percent in rank 11; and early pregnancy, along with not engaging oneself with opposite sex, each with the same frequency of five or 14 percent in rank 12.5.

These coping strategies were seldom used, as sustained by lower frequencies. Nevertheless, such circumstances should not be treated as negligible but should properly be attended to since they tend to destroy the adolescents to some particular extent.

Meanwhile on the positive coping strategies, only that of engaging oneself in sports got a higher frequency of 15 or 43 percent in rank one. It is still below the majority although the highest from the list of positive coping strategies resorted to by the respondents.

The other positive coping strategies include the following: spending time reading books and studying, along with expressing oneself through art, with identical frequency of seven or 20 percent in rank 2.5 each; involving in out-reach programs, with a frequency of six or 17 percent in rank four; involvement in church organizations, with a frequency of five or 14 percent in rank five; and shopping along with receiving achievements in school, each with the lowest frequency of three or nine percent in rank 6.5.

The findings revealed that there are many more respondents who tried negative coping strategies than positive ones. This is notable since the negative ones tend to put the adolescent to a more critical and dangerous situation so that instead of being able to minimize the disadvantages of being in a broken family, it turns to be the opposite.

The gathered information from the interview corresponded to the results of the survey. One of the respondents used to smoke and drink alcohol as her coping mechanism in order for her to forget her difficult situation for a period of time. While others dealt with their situation in a positive way. Two of them used their situation as their inspiration to study hard. They are determined to finish their studies. Other respondent diverted her attention to someone who made her feel special and loved. She became attached to someone who became close to her heart. The other one respondent used her time for leisure. She was active in sports especially in the field of volleyball.

## **5. Recommendations by the Respondents**

According to respondent's insights and advices to adolescents' who are also experiencing the same situation, optimistic attitude should be the adolescent's perspective in life. Adolescents, who are experiencing difficult family situation, should attract positivity in life by appreciating everything and every person that comes in their lives. And yet in return, made them feel loved and special. Avoid demanding too much attention for they would do undesirable things to others just to get the attention.

Furthermore, it is also advisable to be involved in sports or organizations in which they will be able to find their self-worth and they can socialize with other people. But, the most important is to have the acceptance to their

situation. Being vocal can really ease the family situation. Sharing is one step behind acceptance. It will take time to heal the pain and at the same time, to accept the current situation. This is the last step that will make them feel happy and realize that there are more people to be thankful of.

Adolescents must also love themselves. They must not stick to vices that will eventually ruin their health. Also, never let other people influence them from things that will only harm them. Always choose to be happy.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, majority of the respondents are younger adolescents, male and single while their distribution by educational attainment varies from elementary, high school college and vocational.

On the other hand, lying, going home late at night, absenteeism and getting in fights are the most common behavioral problems of adolescents from broken homes.

Consequently, to respond upon the situation, eating disorder due to depression and anxiety is the most common effect of the adolescents belonging to a broken family.

Moreover, the respondents generally utilize negative coping strategies such as smoking and alcohol abuse, while some of them engage in sports as a positive coping strategy.

Lastly, optimistic attitude towards life is recommended to adolescents who are experiencing the same family situation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the drawn conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby forwarded. Adolescents with broken family situation shall consult their teachers or guidance counselor to make better adjustments in their studies. Through effective motivational techniques, they should make them feel that adolescents are accepted as part of the group and not as outcasts.

If the situation is uncontrollable or adolescent is drowned with bad vices, then one should immediately visit a psychologist to properly diagnose and to help them recover from their current position. Adolescents could attend free seminar and counseling program provided by the volunteer psychologists. As much as possible, the talk must be centered on understanding and acceptance

of the situation without developing a feeling of hatred for their parents. Adolescent, on their part, should accept their predicaments with lightness of heart so that they may be able to take the situation as a stepping stone and not as a stumbling block and that they should, to the best of their abilities, use positive coping strategies to improve themselves despite their situations.

## REFERENCES

- Ahron, C. (2007). Adolescent adjustment following divorce as a function of family Conflict. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 111-124.
- Amato, P. (2007). The implications of research findings on children in stepfamilies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 26-46.
- Berja, C., & Cruz, G. (2008). *Roots of delinquency*. New York: Barnes and Noble/Harper and Row.
- Cole, A. (2007). *Real life issues: Family breakups*. Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Trotman and Company Limited.
- Doughty, S. (2008, October 21). *Broken home children are five times more likely to suffer mental troubles*. Retrieved July 6, 2013, from Mail Online News: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1079510/Children-broken-homes-times-likely-suffer-mental-troubles-says-Government-study.html>
- Drysdale, M., & Rye, B. (2007). *Taking side: Clashing views in adolescence*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Eshica, H. (2010). *Family transitions as stressors in children and adolescents*. Washington, D.C: American Psychiatric Press.
- Gutierrez, P. (2008). Early adolescent adjustment to recent parental divorce: The Role of Interparental Conflict and Adolescent Sex as Mediating Variables. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 624-627.
- Keith, B. (2007). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A Meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Issues*, 191-207.
- Kelly, R. (2008). The measured self-esteem of children from broken, rejected, and accepted families. *Journal of Divorce*, 363-369.
- Park, H. (2008, May 16). *Effects of single parenthood on educational aspiration and student disengagement in Korea*. Retrieved June 28, 2013, from Demographic Research: <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol18/13/>
- Ruschena, E. (2007). *Children of divorce: Stress and developmental tasks*. New York: McGraw-Hills Companies Inc.

- Shawn, M. (2008). *Surviving the breakup*. New York: Basic Books
- Soriano, O. (2010). *Juvenile delinquency and crime prevention* . Quezon City: Great Books Publishing.
- Sun, Y., & Li, W. (2007). Children of divorce: Psychological, psychiatric, behavioral problems and suicide. *Journal of the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 349-360.
- Yeo, A., & Huan C. (2007). Caught between parents: Adolescents' experience in divorced homes. *Child Development*, 1008-1029.