

PASTORAL CARE RESPONSE TO ADOLESCENT CRISIS AMONG CHRISTIAN HOMES

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the issue of adolescent crises within Christian homes and the potential pastoral care responses. It acknowledges adolescents' challenges and changes, including physical, psychological, and emotional development. The paper discusses the role of parents and the influence of peers in adolescents' identity development and potential crises. It specifically addresses Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and its relevance to adolescent identity versus identity confusion. The paper seeks to identify pastoral care interventions to minimise and address adolescent crises within Christian families.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Adolescent Crisis, Pastoral Care, Christian Homes, Identity Development.*

Introduction

The adolescence age has been known for its attachment to different crises at different stages. This age crisis appears to be one of the most essential though controversial in the history of psychology, which several scholars have debated. This stage of human development has been viewed as a life process accompanied by growth in the form of physical and

psychological changes that include attitudes, traits, behaviors, cognition, and emotions. In adolescence, many changes can affect a person's thoughts and character. These changes mark that someone has reached adolescence.

Adolescents in their environment (i.e., schools) will try to show their identity through their talents or by making achievements in their schools. Nonetheless, not all adolescents can get through this phase in life. No doubt, the parents play veritable roles in the lives of adolescents as they seek to discover their identity due to factors such as puberty, ego development, role confusion, agitation for freedom from parental control, and others that would be mentioned in this study. Given this bedrock, this paper shall examine how adolescent crisis could be reduced to its barest minimum or curbed using pastoral care interventions.

Overview of Adolescent Crisis

As pictured in the introductory section, adolescence is a crucial moment for the continuation of human life. It is a moment when young people face different phases of challenges capable of making or marrying their future ambition, career or moral life in the general public. This view corresponds with Muhammad Harianto (2020), who contends that many changes can affect (positively or negatively) a person's thoughts and character (p.2). He notes further that such changes are markers and can dictate who adolescents will be when they reach adulthood. Hence, he argues for the need to pay painstaking attention to some physical and psychological changes in adolescents; this attention is expected to be given or made available by parents and older adults.

Many scholars and intellectual individuals have pointed to identity location as one of the adolescents' main phases of confusion. According to Harianto (2020, 2), identity discovery among adolescents is often enhanced by parents and peers. He echoed the place of parents supporting whatever their children do to find their true identity, while some see their adolescents as though they have not fully become one, hence, are treated like children. On the other hand, the impact of friendship on identity discovery is enormous on the physical and psychological development of adolescents who will live. This view has been corroborated by A. Oswalt (2010), as cited in

Hariato (2020, 2), who notes that adolescents discover their identity through involvement in social relationships more profoundly and emotionally than in childhood. Nonetheless, it can be argued here that the type of friends or peer group an adolescent chooses has a way of affecting their identity discovery in the proper manner or adversely.

Based on the above notes, Harianto (2020) contends, “During this phase, adolescents experience many problems and social conflicts not limited to personal problems, but social challenges also arise, which may include debates with friends, and mismatches between groups, among others (p.3). This view, on the one hand, suggests that adolescents learn to understand who they are and what their lives could be like in the company of friends or peer groups. On the other hand, the essentiality of paying attention to the cliques the adolescent move with and selecting who amongst them to follow would determine whether or not they will develop in a reasonable manner or on the contrary.

Against the above note, Larasati (2017, 25) says it is essential always to create a supportive environment with continuous guidance since adolescents experiencing this psychosocial conflict tend to do some explorations and discoveries to get their true sense of identity and morality. In this challenging stage, there is a possibility to have identity repudiation for adolescents who fail to cope with problems. This is in tandem with Erikson’s (1968, 94) identity status of psychological development stages theory. He notes that identity crisis in adolescents is marked by identity status at the same time. He noted eight stages of psychological development in human beings; however, one is peculiar to adolescents: identity versus identity confusion and intimacy versus isolation.

Identity versus Identity Confusion

Identity versus Identity Confusion is the fifth psychosocial conflict of Erikson’s psychosocial development stages. The stage can be found in adolescence, around 12 to 18 years. Forming an ego identity is necessary for this stage (Erikson 1980, 94). In this challenging stage, there is a possibility to have identity repudiation for adolescents who fail to cope with problems. He believes that each psychosocial

development stage will encompass a crisis which impacts the next stage of the psychosocial development stages theory. In this case, a crisis is not a damaging crisis.

Erikson's (1968, 16) crisis is now being accepted as designating a necessary turning point, a crucial moment when development must move one way or another, marshalling growth, recovery, and further differentiation of resources. In other words, Erikson believes people should undergo a crisis to reach a higher stage of the psychosocial development stages theory (Larasati 2017, 28). According to Erikson (1968), adolescents face the stage of exploring a new sense of continuity and sameness. In this stage, social conditions play a significant role in developing and shaping identity, in which there is an ego identity; at this moment, adolescents commonly show a different character significantly (p.128). While experiencing an identity crisis, adolescents usually have questions about "who am I?" "What do I want to be?" and "what am I expected to be?". In order to answer those questions, adolescents like to do some explorations and discoveries (Larasati 2017, 28).

Identity Diffusion Status

Identity diffusion status marks the phenomenon of an identity crisis. It becomes one of the processes of adolescents in finding a sense of themselves. This identity status shows that adolescents are unsure about their personality and wants (Larasati 2017, 28). The uncertainty towards adolescents' sense of self may include some aspects of life such as their education, occupation, religion, and culture. Erikson (1968) in Foelsch *et al.* (2014: 23) mentions that the lack of the capacity for self-definition or identity diffusion can be reflected through emotional instability. In other words, adolescents with the status of identity diffusion may tend to suffer acute upset. Also, adolescents undergoing identity diffusion status tend to have excessive self-awareness, making it difficult to form relationships. They have an incapacity of self-definition from the beginning.

Thus, the relationship of adolescents in this status will last for a short time. Furthermore, having trouble establishing decisions and concentrating on specific tasks can also be the characteristics of identity diffusion status. In such identity

status, significant relations must perform continuous guidance to set apart adolescents undergoing identity diffusion status to choose a negative identity (Larasati 2017, 28). Some factors trigger adolescents to be classified in identity foreclosure status, and the most influential of the factors is the role of parents (McInerney 2013, 388). Based on the above notes, Larasati (2017, 31) concludes that adolescents who live in a scope where their parents have specific desires towards their children may naturally adopt what their parents want or already have. However, parents who get involved in their children's crises too excessively may cause the feeling of discontent in the upcoming stage of psychosocial development. Aside from parents, peers in school and the neighborhood also play an essential role as role models in triggering adolescents to experience this identity status.

Moratorium Identity Status is the concept of identity crisis during adolescence and is directly connected to the phrase identity moratorium status. Erikson, referenced in Larasati (2017, 32), defined "moratorium" as a time when teenagers explore to discover a societal niche that suits them and appears especially tailored for them. In other words, every adolescent experiencing an identity hiatus will probably conduct research and make some findings to determine their identity. Adolescents' investigations and discoveries can occasionally be harmful. They could attempt to adopt several personas and roles. Adolescents are in the identity moratorium period, marked by a lack of commitment to particular roles, beliefs, or values (p.32).

Identity Foreclosure Status

Unlike identity diffusion status, identity foreclosure status is marked by the commitment to specific roles, beliefs, and values made by adolescents in the status. Those who are experiencing identity foreclosure status determine their identity too early. Shaffer (2008, 190) observes that adolescents in this status have established their assumptions and commitment to certain beliefs, values, and roles without further identification and exploration. They also have premature decisions towards ideologies and occupations without considering their self-potential. Even though identity foreclosure status is classified as one process of forming identity, adolescents experiencing this status are not forming their own identity since they do not want to do or have limited or no chance to explore their self-potential (Larasati 2017, 30).

Deviant Behaviors in Adolescents

Deviant behavior can be described as non-compliance to the norms and regulations of the society, culture, organisation, institution and legislation. The origin of deviant behavior could be traced along with the origin of the human race. Deviant behavior has been seen among people right from the beginning of the existence of human beings (Rebellow 2015, 583).

Deviant behavior by adolescents includes but are not limited to antisocial, wrongful, delinquent, aggressive, self-destructing, and suicidal acts. These acts may lead to various abnormalities in personal development. Often these deviations include children's reactions to difficult life circumstances (Wolfe *et al.* 2014). The causes of deviant behavior are related to conditions of upbringing, peculiarities of physical development and one's social environment. The adolescent, evaluating his or her body, takes note of the norm, his physical superiority or inferiority, and concludes his or her social significance and value (Berdibayeva *et al.* 2016, cited in Hanmoglu 2018, 134).

Adolescent deviant behavior often has social causes, such as educational and upbringing disadvantages. Delinquency shoots from the house in most cases. The first shoots of deviance are carried out due to fear of punishment or as a protest, which then turns into a reflex-like stereotype (Denzin, 2010). The causes of deviant and delinquent behavior in adolescents stem from lack of supervision, attention from relatives, fear of punishment, dreaminess, the desire to eliminate the guardianship of caregivers or parents, ill-treatment by comrades, and in an unmotivated thrust to change the status quo. Vagrancy may also lead to delinquency.

Conversely, early alcohol and drug abuse among teenagers are motivated by a desire to be in the company of adults, feel mature, satisfy curiosity, or change the prevailing mental state. In alcohol consumption, they feel there is a cheerful mood, increased self-confidence, and disinhibition (Berdibayeva *et al.*, 2016). In most cases, children with abnormal behavior in society reside in families with single parent, or this social cell is dysfunctional; therefore, they need distinctive assistance to coordinate their behavior (Hannoglu 2018, 135).

Factors Influencing Crisis among Christian Adolescents

According to Rebellow (2015), the deterioration in moral standards and non-adherence to norms seen among adolescents is confusing. It raises many questions about the factors responsible for these behaviors. She argues that adolescents cannot be solely blamed for their behaviors; the contributing factors for these deviant acts must be well-checked and analysed. Features like the educational system, family and parenting, peers, and social support system play a pivotal part in influencing the behaviors of adolescents (Rebellow (2015, 584). This author noted four factors that influence crisis among adolescents in general, which is also applicable to Christian adolescents across the globe. These factors are but are not limited to the family atmosphere, school environment, peer influence, and media.

Family Atmosphere

The family environment plays an essential role in the personality development of adolescents. Parent's failure to discipline children is one of the reasons for adolescents' deviant behavior. Affirmatively, parents are responsible for providing a healthy environment for their children. However, when they fail in this responsibility, children become deviant, which continues in their adolescence.

School Environment

School environment plays a veritable role in adolescents becoming deviant. When the educational system pressurises the students with a heavy workload without a proper channel for recreation, adolescents might pick up undesirable attitudes and behaviors. A school without a counsellor fails to address the holistic needs of its adolescents, amongst other wards.

Peer Influence

Most adolescents are influenced by peer attitude and behavior. They are apt to learning the behavior of their friends irrespective of whether it is positive or negative. To be accepted in their peer group, adolescents adopt any extreme behavior that might become hazardous to themselves or others.

Media

Media is the mirror of society. The influence of media on the behavior of adolescents is enormous. The industry's glamour and the actors' fame have blinded youth from consequential reasoning. Hence, the deviant behavior of adolescents has its roots in the environment in which he/she lives. Factors such as the family, school environment, peer influence and media decide the kind of youth they build for the country.

Conversely, Damre (2022) affirms that “The physical and psychological characteristics of adolescents and the nature of developmental tasks which they are expected to perform often pose particular challenges and problems for adjustment. Adolescents face problems related to their homes, school and society” (p.1230). He itemised in a tabular form the following as factors promoting crisis among adolescents, as revealed hereinafter:

Self-Related	Home Related	School Related	Society Related
Body Image	Authoritative parenting	Strict teachers	Gender bias
Pimples	Poor rapport with parents	Partial treatment	Caste related problems
Complexion	Lack of communication	Closed school atmosphere	Generation gap
Eating disorder	Low socio-economic background	Not acceptable classmates	Repressive atmosphere
Body changes	Non-conducive atmosphere	Poor marks	Over expectations
Moodiness	Space constraint	Too much homework	Lack of friends
Touchiness	Comparison with others	No co-curricular participation	
Anger			
Hypersensitivity			
Feeling of rebel			
Crushes			
Infatuation			
Daydreams			
Personality			

Source: Gokul Shamrao Damre (2022).

The table above revealed, in detail, primary and secondary factors influencing adolescent crisis. It reveals that virtually all adolescents, including Christians, often undergo one or several of the picture painted in the table above. When any of the portrayed related crisis onsets is encountered, it turns many adolescents wild and uncontrollable. This view agrees with Hashmi (2013), who says, “Because adolescents are independent and mobile than they were as children, hence, they are often out of the direct physical control of adults. Adolescents’ moral and behavioral code determines their behavior in these circumstances. The parent’s guide rather than directly controls the adolescents’ actions” (p.25). Nonetheless, adolescents can also be positive and free of crises, particularly when trained in the Lord’s way.

Pastoral Care Intervention to Crisis among Christian Adolescents

A crisis intervention can be described as the process which focusses on resolution of the immediate delinquent through the use of personal, social and environmental resources. Crisis intervention is a support we render immediately, it is an instant attention and someone’s immediate needs. Crisis intervention can be described as an urgent psychological intervention after the exposure to a traumatic event with the purpose to restore psychological stability and self-adaption (Flannery & Everly, 2000). Ahmad (2019) describes crisis intervention as a short-term psychological aid to restore disequilibrium. Greenstone and Leviton (2002, as cited in Ahmad, 2019), state that crisis intervention consists of six components: firstly, immediacy, where intervention should take place immediately to relieve distress. Secondly, control, where the individual providing help enters the crisis scene with support, being direct, and removing the individual in need from the crisis if possible. Thirdly, assessment entailing evaluating the crisis and obtaining all relevant information. Fourthly, disposition where the individual providing help focuses on identifying resources, solutions, and options with the individual in need. Fifthly, referral where the individual in need is referred to relevant professionals for further treatment.

Lastly, following up with the individual in need. According to Ahmad (2019), it is essential to avoid a one-size-fit all approach and therefore the individual proving help, needs to think creatively and practically. Hence, before various models and techniques can be implemented to intervene in a crisis, it is essential to first ensure

the safety of the individual in need (James & Gilliland, 2012). Psychological first aid [PFA] can be seen as the first order intervention that stabilises the individual in need and establishes a safe and supportive relationship before the intervention can begin (James & Gilliland, 2012). PFA serves as a fast method to assess risk, given that the individual providing help observes accurately, speak in a calm and slow tone, listen, and provide practical assistance where necessary (Brymer et al., 2006).

Conclusion

Having explored the pastoral care response to adolescent crisis among Christian homes, it is worthy of note that parents, society, peer influence and social media will determine whether adolescents will become voice among voices or voice among the voiceless.

Against this back ground, it is therefore expected of all the stakeholders involved in adolescent training such as pastoral care givers, parents, institutions and the society to provide an enabling environment for adolescents through immediacy, control, assessment, disposition, referral and follow up so as for them to be free to be pouring out their minds and be expressing their minds without fear or intimidation.

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