



THE 18TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

New Trends in Psychology

Peculiarities of the Personality of Teenagers Raised in Single-Parent Families. Studies and Research

Doinita Popa¹

Abstract: The paper presents a series of research on the personality of adolescents raised in single-parent families focused on various aspects of emotional, social, and academic development. While there is no one-size-fits-all recipe for all teens, some studies suggest that they may experience specific challenges compared to teens raised in two-parent families. It is important to note that research results may vary and that factors such as financial resources, parents' education level, emotional stability, and family support network can significantly influence the experience of adolescents in a single-parent family. Although research highlights the challenges associated with growing up in a single-parent family, it is essential to remember that not all teenagers will experience the same problems. Each adolescent is unique and will be influenced by various factors, including individual temperament, level of parent and community support, and family financial and emotional resources.

Keywords: personality; adolescence; single parent family; parental model

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, during which significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes occur. This stage of development generally begins around age 10–12 and ends around age 18–21, although these boundaries may vary depending on cultural, biological, and individual factors.

During adolescence, young people experience rapid body growth, hormonal changes, and sexual maturation. These physical changes are accompanied by cognitive transformations, such as the development of abstract thinking, logical reasoning, and the ability to anticipate the consequences of decisions.

Socially and emotionally, adolescents are developing their identity and interpersonal relationships as they explore social roles and struggle to find their place in society. This includes establishing a sense of autonomy, developing friendships, and eventually forming romantic and sexual relationships.

Adolescence is also when young people develop beliefs, values, and opinions that will influence them throughout their adult lives. This stage of development often involves experimenting with different roles and behaviors, which can lead to greater independence and setting personal and professional goals.

¹ Lecturer, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., 800654 Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: doinitapopa@univ-danubius.ro.

Although adolescence can be a challenging and uncertain time, it is an essential stage in human development and preparation for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life.

Adolescence is a complex and vital stage in human development, and several theoretical concepts and benchmarks are essential to understanding this period.

The following conceptual benchmarks are relevant in the context of adolescence:

Biological Development. Adolescence is marked by rapid body growth and significant hormonal changes, such as puberty, which involve the maturation of the sex organs and the development of secondary sexual characteristics.

Cognitive Development. Adolescents experience significant changes in thinking and reasoning, moving from concrete to abstract and hypothetical thinking, developing metacognition, and improving problem-solving skills.

Psychosocial Development. Adolescence involves the formation of personal identity and social roles. The theories of Erik Erikson and James Marcia focus on identity development and exploration and engagement in various areas of life¹.

Moral Development. Teenagers develop their ethical beliefs and personal values as they understand the difference between right and wrong and their rights and responsibilities as members of society. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory describes the stages of moral development during this period².

Interpersonal relationships. Adolescence is when friendships and romantic relationships become more important. Young people learn to communicate and collaborate with others and navigate the challenges of social relationships, such as forming friend groups, romantic attraction, and conflict management.

Autonomy and independence. Adolescence involves the development of freedom and independence as young people begin to make decisions and assume responsibilities without relying entirely on parents or other adults.

Risk and exploratory behavior. Teens may be prone to experiencing risky behaviors such as drug use, alcohol, and unprotected sex. This may be partly due to cognitive immaturity, pressure from peer groups, and a desire to explore boundaries.

Social and parental support. Adolescence is when young people need support and guidance from parents, teachers, and mentors. A positive and supportive environment can contribute to healthy development.

2. Studies and Theories Regarding Adolescent Personality

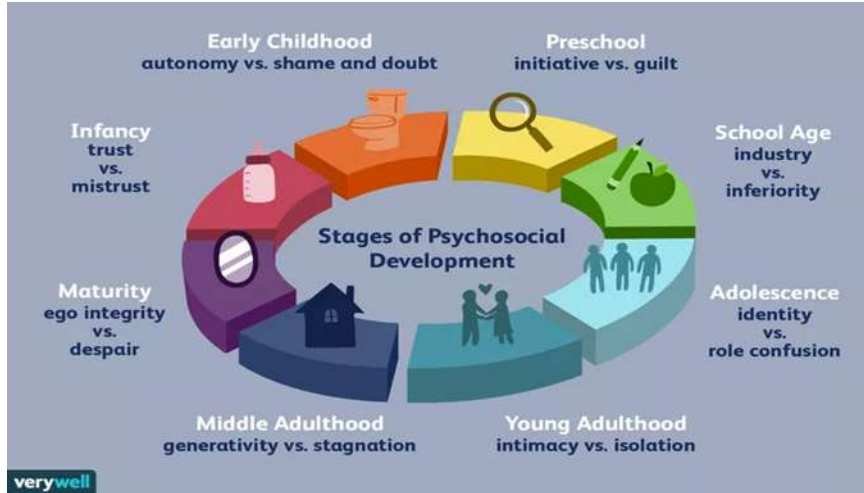
Psychologists and researchers have conducted Studies on adolescent personality over time to understand personality changes and development during adolescence. Adolescence, the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, represents a critical human development stage characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes.

Some notable studies and theories that address adolescent personality include:

¹ <https://learning-theories.com/identity-status-theory-marcia.html>.

² <https://www.verywellmind.com/kohlbergs-theory-of-moral-development-2795071>.

• Erik Erikson and the theory of psychosocial development. Erikson¹ identified eight stages of human development, each with a central crisis or dilemma. In adolescence, the specific stage is “identity versus role confusion”. During this stage, adolescents try to define and establish a solid personal identity while dealing with confusion about social roles.



Verywell / Joshua Seong

• Albert Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory.² Bandura argued that teenagers develop a sense of self-efficacy by experiencing different roles and responsibilities. Self-efficacy refers to a person’s belief in their ability to achieve goals or cope with challenges. As adolescents gain experience and manage to cope with difficult situations, their self-efficacy increases, contributing to a stable personality.



Source: The Pennsylvania State University

• Carl Rogers’ Theory of Personality³. Rogers argued that personality development is influenced by the need for self-actualization and the value conditions individuals meet. In adolescence, young people may experience problems with self-acceptance and self-valuation, which can lead to inner conflicts and difficulties in personality development.

¹ <https://www.verywellmind.com/erik-eriksons-stages-of-psychosocial-development-2795740>.

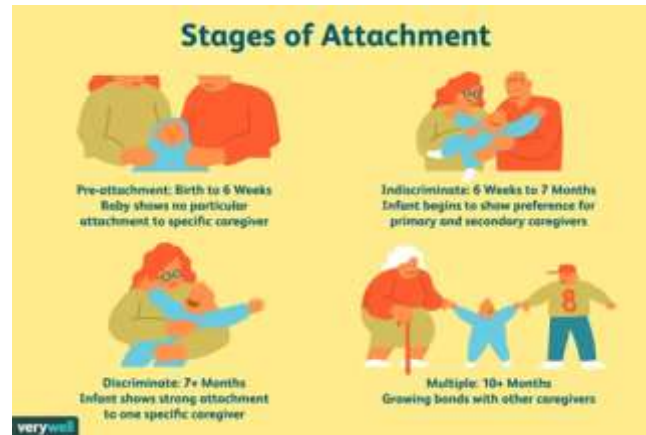
² <https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-efficacy.html>.

³ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html>.

• John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory¹. Adolescent attachment is an extension of childhood attachment theory. According to this theory, adolescent attachment relationships are crucial for developing a healthy personality. Adolescents with a secure attachment in childhood are more likely to create a stable and healthy personality.

These studies and theories are just a few research examples addressing adolescent personality. Each theory offers a different perspective and provides an in-depth understanding of how personality develops and changes over time.

Verywell / JR Bee



3. Peculiarities of the Personality of Teenagers Raised in Single-Parent Families

Adolescents raised in single-parent families may face certain peculiarities in their personality development because their life experience is influenced by the absence of one of the parents. A single-parent family is a family structure where the child lives with one parent. In contrast, the other parent is physically absent or only partially involved in the child's life.

It is important to remember that every teenager is unique and that social, cultural, and genetic influences play a crucial role in shaping their personality. However, some common traits can be found more often in teenagers from single-parent families:

1. Increased responsibility. Teenagers in single-parent families can develop greater responsibility for themselves and other family members. Sometimes they have to help more with the household chores and take on part of the care for their brothers or sisters.
2. Early maturity. Because they have more responsibility, teenagers from single-parent families may mature more quickly than their peers from traditional families.
3. The feeling of responsibility for the parent. In single-parent families, teenagers may need to support the single parent. This can lead to additional emotional burdens.
4. Deeper understanding of financial difficulties. In many cases, single-parent families face financial difficulties, and teenagers can gain a deeper understanding of these challenges and be more aware of the importance of money and budget management.

¹ <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attachment-theory-2795337>.

5. **Conflicting emotions.** Adolescents in single-parent families may experience conflicting emotions such as sadness, anger, or confusion about the absence of the missing parent or changes in family dynamics.
6. **Stronger relationships with the surviving parent.** Because of the increased time and attention, they can receive from the remaining parent, teenagers can develop a closer bond with the remaining parent.
7. **Seeking models and external support.** Adolescents in single-parent families may seek role models and support outside the family to fill in for the absence of one parent. This can be found in relatives, friends, mentors, or the community.
8. **Hope and resilience.** With all the challenges they may face, many teenagers from single-parent families can develop greater hope and strength by learning to cope with adversity and overcome obstacles.

Studies of adolescents raised in single-parent families have focused on various aspects of their development, including emotional, behavioral, and academic aspects. Some features and effects observed in previous research include:

Greater emotional stress. Teenagers from single-parent families may be more exposed to psychological stress due to the absence of one parent, financial problems, or reduced family support.

Decreased school performance. Compared to adolescents from traditional families, those from single-parent families may have higher rates of school absenteeism and lower academic achievement.

Delinquent behaviors and substance use. Some studies suggest a correlation between growing up in a single-parent family and an increased risk of engaging in delinquent behaviors or substance use in adolescence.

Ambivalent emotions. Teens in single-parent families may feel ambivalent emotions toward the absent parent, including sadness, anger, guilt, or longing.

Different interpersonal relationships. The adolescent in a single-parent family may develop different social and relational skills depending on the interaction and support he receives from the remaining parent or other support figures.

Resilience and adaptability. Despite all the challenges, teenagers raised in single-parent families can develop greater strength and the ability to adapt to change and adversity.

Research that supports the self-esteem of students who come from two-parent families may be higher compared to the self-esteem of students raised in single-parent families. However, it is essential to emphasize that several factors may influence these conclusions, and the results may vary depending on the cultural, social, and economic context.

The personal image is a base, a premise on which the personality is built, and a healthy self-image is the key to living with oneself. Much research has been concerned with self-esteem. Special attention was given to the relationship between self-esteem and the family environment, trying to identify if it is a direct relationship or if some intervening factors occur (Peterson, Cobas, Bush, Supple, & Wilson, 2004)

Although there is no single conceptualization of self-esteem, it has been considered this is a significant indicator of health and well-being (Brown, Dutton & Cook, 2001).

Self-esteem helps the person to understand and act intelligently in interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem research began with Thorndike's concern (Roco, 2001), the one who resumed the study of emotional intelligence and launched this concept in the field of psychology and sociology.

Possible reasons for this difference in self-esteem may include issues related to social support. Students from two-parent families may benefit from more significant support and attention from both parents, which can contribute to the development of positive self-esteem. In single-parent families, one parent may be less present due to the responsibilities of the single parent.

A two-parent home environment can provide a child with more examples of positive role models in terms of behaviors and achievements. These patterns can play an essential role in the development of self-esteem.

In single-parent families, the single parent may be overwhelmed with household and financial responsibilities and tasks, affecting their willingness to pay sufficient attention to the child's psychological development.

Also, students from single-parent families may feel the stigma or social pressure associated with the absence of one parent, which can negatively influence self-esteem.

4. Conclusions

Single-parent families need to provide a loving, supportive, and communicative environment for teenagers to help them develop healthily and healthily. Also, ensuring access to resources and adequate emotional support can contribute to creating an upbeat personality and overcoming the challenges specific to this type of family.

It is essential to mention that family influences are only one factor contributing to the development of a teenager's personality. Not all single-parent teenagers will exhibit the same characteristics; each individual is unique and may react differently to their circumstances.

It is important to note that these trends do not hold in all cases, and many teenagers from single-parent families develop healthy self-esteem and high achievement. It is also essential to understand that self-esteem is a complex trait influenced by factors such as family environment, education, social relationships, life experiences, and others.

As always, it is essential to treat each individual uniquely and focus on supporting their emotional and intellectual development, regardless of the family structure in which they grow up.

References

- Albu, G. (2005). *A psychology of education*. Iasi: European Institute.
- Allport, G.W. (1991). *Personality structure and development*. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.
- American Psychological Association (2002). *Developing Adolescents: A Reference for Professionals*. Washington, DC.
- Anghel, E. (2017). *Psychology of lifelong education*. Bucharest: Ed. For You.
- Băban, A. (2009). *Educational counseling. Methodological guide for leadership and counseling classes*. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. ASCR.
- Băran-Pescaru, A. (2004). *Family today: a sociopedagogical perspective*. Bucharest: Aramis.
- Braconnier, A. (2001). *Your child from 10 years to 25 years*. Bucharest: Ed. Teora.
- Clerget, S. (2008). *Crisis of adolescence - ways to successfully overcome it*. Bucharest: Ed. TREI.
- Crețu, T. (2011). *Adolescent and adult psychology*. Bucharest: Ed. Politehnica Press.
- Eftimie, S. (2014). *Aggressiveness at the age of adolescence*. Iasi: Ed. European Institute

- Ellias, J. M.; Tobias, S.E. & Friedlander, B. S. (2003). *Stimulating the emotional intelligence of adolescents*. Bucharest: Ed. Curtea Veche.
- Golu, P. (1985). *Learning and development*. Bucharest: Scientific and Encyclopedic.
- Heyman, R. (2005) *How to talk to teenagers*. Bucharest: Lucman Publishing House.
- Illeris, K. (2014). *Contemporary theories of learning*. Bucharest: Ed. TREI.
- Marcelli, D. (2007). *Depression and suicide attempts in adolescence*. Iasi: Ed. Polirom.
- Munteanu, A. (2003). *Child and adolescent psychology*. Timisoara: Ed. Augusta.
- Munteanu, A. (2009). *Psychology of ages*. Timisoara: Ed. Eurobit.
- Nicola, I. (1996). *Treatise on school pedagogy*. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical.
- Pelcaru, M. A. (2007). Family type and juvenile deviant behaviour. *Master's thesis*. University of Bucharest, Romania.
- Sălăvăstru, D.; Pânișoara, G. & Mitrofan, L. (2016). *Childhood and adolescence. Current challenges in the psychology of education and development*. Iasi: Ed. Polirom.
- Tănăsescu, I. (2012). *Child and adolescent psychology*. Bucharest: Ed. PRO.