

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Harming Behavior of Junior High School Students with Absentee Parents in a Catholic University

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Introduction: Parental context significantly impacts a child's growth, whether physical, social, and emotional. Becoming a holistic being requires the integration of various life facets and emotions as one. Emotional intelligence is an essential psychological quality for individuals, especially to adolescents who face stress and pressure daily. Deficits in emotional regulation have been linked to self-harming behaviors. Self-harm encompasses a wide range of activities, and the intentionality, destructiveness, and conventionality of thoughts and acts of self-harm fall along a broad continuum. Hence, this study aimed to assess the emotional intelligence and self-harming behavior of junior high school students with absentee parents to create a program that promotes emotional resilience and self-harming prevention.

Methodology: This descriptive, comparative, and correlational study utilizes two standardized questionnaires to gather data on emotional intelligence and self-harming behavior of the Junior High School students with Absentee Parents. The collected data were analyzed both using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to describe, compare and identify patterns of relationships among the respondent's emotional intelligence and self-harming behavior. This study and its researcher follow the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) ethical guidelines.

Results: Results indicate that respondents generally possess very low emotional intelligence yet exhibit no risk of self-harming behavior. Comparative analyses revealed no significant differences in emotional intelligence based on sex, family structure, or birth order; however, regarding self-harming behavior, a significant difference was found only in sex. Finally, the study established a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-harm.

Conclusion: The findings of this study present a complex interplay between emotional intelligence and self-harm behavior among junior high school students with absentee parents. While the respondents exhibited notably low levels of emotional intelligence, it is surprising that they were classified as no risk for self-harm. It is possible that other protective factors, such as the presence of supportive relationships with extended family, teachers, or peers, may have reduced the risk of self-harm. Respondents may have developed alternative coping strategies, such as academic achievement or extracurricular involvement, and seeking help from their guidance counselors to manage emotional challenges without resorting to self-harm.

Practical Value of the Paper: The findings of the study provided baseline information to school administration and guidance counselors in formulating a holistic program that promotes emotional resilience and self-harming prevention.

Directions for Future Research: To expand the sample population, it is essential to include a wider range of educational settings and to consider including students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Utilizing a mixed-method research design may improve the analysis of results. Supplementing the self-reported data with objective measures of emotional intelligence and potentially exploring the involvement of parents or caregivers in data collection may be considered.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, self-harming behavior, descriptive-correlational, Philippines

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