The Relationship between Family Strength of Female Middle School Students and their Adjustment to School Life

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study aims to examine the relationship between family strength of female middle school students and their adjustment to school life. Methods/Statistical Analysis: The subcategories of Family Strength are made of 20 questions in 4 sections-communication among family members, the ability to solve problems, family bonds, and sharing value systems. Adaptation to school is composed of four subcategories-relationship with teachers, relationship with school friends, classes at school, and rules at school. The collected data was analyzed through descriptive statistics of SPSSWIN (ver. 18.0) program and the statistics technique of ANOVA, Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Findings: The total mark of family strength was 3.93±0.68, the total mark of adaptability to school was 3.30±0.49, and the total mark and sub-elements showed correlations. The result implies that sharing a value system within family is very important. Application/Improvements: The importance of family relationship should be acknowledged to share a value system, and various programs that connect family, school, and community should be devised to create a positive relationship.

Keywords: Adjustment to School Life, Family Strength, Female Middle School Students

1. Introduction

Adolescents, who are in the transient period of growth, are emotionally anxious and confused, and have immature cognitive ability. For students, school is a social environment that they spend most of their daily life, and is very important in their growth and development. Adaptation to school makes it possible to predict adaptation to society in the future and for the successful adjustment to school, personal relations are as important as scholastic performance. As students who adapt well to school life have positive feelings, attitudes, and motivations toward school education, their personal relations are good, scholastic performances improve, behavioral characteristics are developed desirably, and these benefit personal and social improvement. Therefore, at family, community and national level, school education is a big target of interest and students’ adjustment to school is also an issue of interest.

Especially middle school years, the early adolescence, is the time when students leave childhood and need to adjust physically, psychologically, and socially to the changes in the environment. In Korea’s educational reality especially, students are pressured and stressed by educational expectations and it is hard to develop a positive attitude toward oneself or the world. In many cases, students do not accept and adjust to the changes in a healthy way, and get to have negative attitude\(^1\). When school is viewed as a place to help students adjust to the changes in the IT-oriented society, to provide them with energy to be creative, and to prepare them to develop desirable personal relations, adolescents’ adaptation to school should be treated more importantly than other things\(^2\). For such reasons, there have been many studies on the way to improve adjustment to school life. Among them, the study results on promoting adjustment to school life show that school adjustments are multiply affected by four factors-factor of family, school, local community, and personal factor\(^3\). In regard to the factor of family, which can be considered
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In C area. A survey was conducted by the researcher in person, on the 163 students who listened to the explanation about the research and agreed to participate voluntarily. 170 questionnaires were collected and excluding 7 incomplete questionnaires, 163 of them (95.8%) were used for analysis.

2.2 Research Tool

2.2.1 Family Strength

In order to measure Family Strength, this study used the measurement of in⁸, which was made to fit for Korean culture and family. The subcategories of the measurement of Family Strength are made of 20 questions in 4 sections-communication among family members, the ability to solve problems, family bonds, and sharing value systems. Likert measurement was used for questions with maximum score of 5, and scores were given for each question from 1, representing ‘never’, to 5, representing ‘always’, with higher score meaning better Family Strength.

2.2.2 Adaptation to School

As for the tool for research, this study used what in⁹ modified and complemented to fit for middle school and high school based on ‘the test paper about children's adaptation to school life’ by in¹⁰. This test is composed of four subcategories-relationship with teachers, relationship with school friends, classes at school, and rules at school.

- Relationship with teachers: The level of harmonious relationship with teachers, how much the student asks for help, response to scalding, the appropriateness of expression of positive feelings.
- Relationship with school friends: How smooth the relationship with friends is, how active in school life, interest in friends.
- Classes at school: The level of attention in class, curiosity about new things, difficulty in studying, completing given tasks.
- Rules at school: If the student acts right in various situations in school life, while controlling his or her own behavior.

There are 32 questions in total with each section composed of 8 questions. Questions were given scores from 1, meaning ‘never’, to 5, meaning ‘always’ according to the measurement of Linkert with maximum score at
5. The higher the scores in relationship with teachers, relationship with school friends, classes at school, and rules at school, the better it can be interpreted that the student adapts to school life. However, negative questions (15, 21, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31) were calculated inversely.

2.3 Data Analysis
The collected data was analyzed through descriptive statistics of SPSSWIN (ver. 18.0) program and the statistics technique of ANOVA, Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

3. Research Finding
The general characteristics of the objects are shown in Table 1. As for the school years, first graders were 20.2%, second graders were 43.6%, and third graders were 36.2%. As to religions, extra group including no religion took 44.2%, and Christians were 38.0%. Regarding household financial status, 66.9% said ‘affluent’, and as for their position in their family, first children was the majority, taking 48.5%. As to the level of health, 38.2% said ‘generally healthy’, 32.5% said ‘very healthy’, 19.6% answered ‘average’, and as for academic performance, 65.0% said ‘average’, and 20.2% answered ‘high’.

| Characteristics     | Category   | N(%)       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|
| Grade              | 1          | 33(20.2)   |
|                    | 2          | 71(43.6)   |
|                    | 3          | 59(36.2)   |
| Religion           | Protestant | 62(38.0)   |
|                    | Catholic   | 9(5.5)     |
|                    | Buddhism   | 20(12.3)   |
|                    | Others     | 72(44.2)   |
| Economic status    | high       | 46(28.2)   |
|                    | middle     | 109(66.9)  |
|                    | low        | 8(4.9)     |
| Position in their family | first  | 79(48.5) |
|                      | second     | 71(43.6)  |
|                      | third      | 11(6.7)   |
|                      | ≥ fourth   | 2(1.2)     |
| Health state        | Very healthy | 53(32.5) |
|                      | Generally healthy | 63(38.7) |
|                      | Average    | 32(19.6)  |
|                      | poor       | 15(9.2)   |
| Score               | high       | 33(20.2)   |
|                      | middle     | 106(65.0)  |
|                      | low        | 24(14.7)   |

Female middle school students’ Family Strength and school life and the results of subcategories are shown in Table 2. The total score of Family Strength was 3.93±0.68 and the scores of subcategories were: Communication with family members, 3.29±0.34; ability to solve problems, 4.06±0.65; family bonds, 4.02±0.6; and sharing value systems, 3.92±0.69. The total score of adaptation to school life was 3.30±0.49 and for subcategories, relationship with teachers stood at 3.68±0.50; relationship with friends was 3.83±0.53; classes at school marked 3.47±0.52; and rules at school was 3.51±0.49.

| Characteristics                             | M±SD    |
|---------------------------------------------|---------|
| Family Strength                             | 3.93±0.68|
| Communication with family members           | 3.29±0.34|
| Ability to solve problems                   | 4.06±0.65|
| Family bonds                                | 4.02±0.67|
| Sharing value systems                       | 3.92±0.69|
| Adaption to school life                     | 3.30±0.49|
| Relationship with teachers                  | 3.68±0.50|
| Relationship with friends                   | 3.83±0.53|
| Classes at school                           | 3.47±0.52|
| Rules at school                             | 3.51±0.49|

The comparison between Family Strength according to general characteristics and adaptation to school is presented in Table 3. First of all, Family Strength showed statistical difference depending on school year, household financial status, position in their family, and level of respondent’s health. Regarding school years, first graders showed higher measurement than second and third graders and as for household financial status, compared to affluent students, students from hard-up families marked lower score. As for the position in the family, first children marked higher than second children, and regarding the level of respondent’s health. Those who answered ‘very healthy’ showed higher score than those who said ‘unhealthy’. Adaptation to school showed statistical difference depending on school year, religion, household financial status, level of respondent’s health, and academic performance. In terms of school year, third graders marked higher than second graders, and regarding religion, Christian students had higher score than others including no religion. As for household financial status, ‘affluent’ students showed higher score than ‘average’ or ‘hard-up’ students, and regarding the level of respondent’s health, ‘very healthy’ students showed higher mark than
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'generally healthy' ones, and 'average' students marked higher score than 'generally healthy' ones. As to scholastic performance, those who get good grades showed better adaptability to school life than those with average or low grades.

The correlations between Family Strength of female students, adjustment to school, and their subcategories are shown in Table 4. All the factors showed interrelations, and among them, the subcategory of Family Strength, which revealed the closest relationship with adaptation to school, was 'sharing value systems', which was followed by 'family bonds'.

4. Discussion

This research showed that Christian students marked high level of Family Strength and students from hard-up families marked low score in Family Strength. This result corresponds to the study of in\(^7\), and the study of\(^1\)\(^1\) on adolescents' Family Strength and adaptation to school.

As for the average of subcategories of Family Strength, family bonds stood at 4.02; ability to solve problems was 4.06; communication with family members was 3.29; and sharing value systems marked 3.92. Except for communication with family members, in all other subcategories, this study result showed higher average compared to the study of\(^1\)\(^1\), whose subcategories scored an averages of 3.55 in family bonds; 3.46 in ability to solve problems; 3.49 in communication with family members; and 3.22 in sharing value systems. In the study conducted on high school students regarding parents' child-rearing attitude and Family Strength, among the subcategories of Family Strength, family bonds marked the highest, which was a similar result but religion did not show significant relevance. Financial stability was shown to be one of the important variables to raise Family Strength. Among demographic variables, first children had high level of Family Strength, which is thought to be the result of spending more time with parents. Regarding the number of siblings, several siblings displayed good result as was shown in the study which found that the number of siblings is an influential variable\(^6\). Factors that influenced adjustment to school were in the order of relationship with friends, relationship with teachers, rules at school,

Table 3. The comparison between family strength and adaptation to school (N=163)

| Characteristics | Category | Family Strength | t/F  | p     | Adaptation to school | t/F  | p     |
|-----------------|----------|-----------------|------|-------|----------------------|------|-------|
| Grade           | 1        | 4.18±0.52       | 3.479| 0.033 | 3.35±0.26            | 5.342| 0.006 |
|                 | 2        | 3.87±0.68       |      |       | (a>b, a>c)           |      |       |
|                 | 3        | 3.86±0.52       |      |       | 3.19±0.34            |      |       |
|                 |          |                 |      |       | 3.37±0.36            |      |       |
| Religion        | Protestant| 4.08±0.68       | 1.926| 0.127 | 3.41±0.38            | 3.837| 0.011 |
|                 | Catholic | 3.97±0.86       |      |       |                      |      |       |
|                 | Buddhism | 3.83±1.12       |      |       |                      |      |       |
|                 | Others   | 3.80±0.52       |      |       |                      |      |       |
| Economic status | high     | 4.07±0.66       | 4.282| 0.015 | 3.33±0.33            | 5.019| 0.008 |
|                 | middle   | 3.91±0.57       |      |       | (a>c)                |      |       |
|                 | low      | 3.41±0.43       |      |       | 3.30±0.34            |      |       |
|                 |          |                 |      |       | 2.93±0.26            |      |       |
| Position in their family | first  | 4.07±0.57       | 3.743|       | 3.34±0.38            | 1.848|       |
|                 | second   | 3.78±0.59       |      | 0.012 | (a>b)                |      | 0.141 |
|                 | third    | 4.03±0.70       |      |       | 3.24±0.30            |      |       |
|                 | ≥ fourth | 3.35±0.43       |      |       | 3.36±0.29            |      |       |
|                 |          |                 |      |       | 2.95±0.02            |      |       |
| Health state    | Very healthy | 4.14±0.56       | 3.780|       | 3.36±0.36            | 4.723|       |
|                 | Generally healthy | 3.87±0.63   |      | 0.12  | (a>d)                |      | 0.003 |
|                 | Average | 3.81±0.50       |      |       | 3.17±0.29            |      | (a>b, b>c) |
|                 | Poor    | 3.68±0.68       |      |       | 3.38±0.29            |      |       |
|                 |          |                 |      |       | 3.38±0.45            |      |       |
| Score           | high     | 4.00±0.68       | 0.521| 0.595 | 3.58±0.53            | 10.627| 0.000 |
|                 | middle   | 3.93±0.66       |      |       | 3.27±0.43            |      | (a>b, a>c) |
|                 | low      | 3.81±0.77       |      |       | 3.02±0.49            |      |       |

*p<0.05, **p<0.001
and classes at school, while in the study of the order was different: Relationship with friends, relationship with teachers, classes at school, and environment at school. The difference seems to originate from the different study objects, middle school students and high school students. In the study of which examined predictors of family strength and resilience on adolescents’ empowerment, subcategories showed high marks in the order of ‘solving family’s problem’, and ‘communication with family members’. In this study, the order was ‘the ability to solve problems’, ‘family bonds’, ‘sharing value systems’, and ‘communication with family members’ so the two studies had ‘solving family’s problem’ in common as the most influential factor.

The subcategory of Family Strength that showed the highest relationship with adjustment to school was ‘sharing values systems’. This result was a little different from the research of which studied on teenagers from low income families about household financial status, Family Strength, and self-respect. In that research, family bonds turned out to have the highest influence on teenager’s self-respect. The research conducted with high school students as the study objects, ‘adaptation to school friends’ (M = 3.30) was the most influential factor, which was followed by ‘adaptation to school life’ (M = 3.28), ‘adaptation to teachers’ (M = 2.62), ‘adaptation to classes’ (M = 2.55), and ‘adaptation to school’ (M = 2.43). Generally the score of this study for adaptation to school was higher than the median of 3, revealing different results for middle school and high school study objects. As for the influence of Family Strength on adaptation to school, there were positive relationships with all the subcategories. The study of had the same result so it supports the result of this study. Also, their study showed another similar aspect in that the subcategory which showed the closest relationship with adaptation to school was ‘sharing value systems’. These results implicate that the decreasing score, in adaptation to school as students move up to higher level of schools, signifies their quality of life gets worse. They also imply that sharing family values is really important. Therefore, we should recognize the importance of creating healthy family relationship to share value systems, and various programs should be prepared to connect family, school, and local community

### Table 4. Correlation between family strength, adjustment to school, and their subcategories

| Variables               | Family Strength | Communication with family members | Ability to solve problems | Family bonds | Sharing value systems | Adaption to school life | Relationship with teachers | Relationship with friends | Classes at school | Rules at school |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Family Strength         | 1               | .720**                          | .731**                   | .725**      | .725**               | .174                   | .330                     | .259                 | .369            | .402**         |
| Communication with family members | .720**          | 1                               | .903**                   | .802**      | .803**               | .201                   | .380                     | .357                 | .485            | .482**         |
| Ability to solve problems | .731**          | .903**                          | 1                        | .870**      | .829**               | .206                   | .352                     | .306                 | .468            | .461**         |
| Family bonds            | .725**          | .802**                          | .870**                   | 1           | .841**               | .231                   | .332                     | .362                 | .438            | .407**         |
| Sharing value systems   | .725**          | .803**                          | .829**                   | .841**      | 1                    | .273                   | .357                     | .319                 | .444            | .455**         |
| Adaption to school life | .174            | .201**                          | .206**                   | .231**      | .273**               | 1                      | .279                     | .304                 | .405            | .369**         |
| Relationship with teachers | .330**          | .380**                          | .352**                   | .332**      | .357**               | .279                   | 1                        | .505                 | .369            | .406**         |
| Relationship with friends | .259**          | .357**                          | .306**                   | .362**      | .319**               | .304                   | .505                     | 1                    | .468            | .273**         |
| Classes at school       | .369**          | .485**                          | .468**                   | .438**      | .444**               | .199                   | .369                     | .468                 | 1               | .341**         |
| Rules at school         | .402**          | .482**                          | .461**                   | .407**      | .455**               | .244                   | .406                     | .273                 | .341            | 1              |

*p<0.05, **p<0.001
for the creation of positive family relationship\textsuperscript{14}. As for religion and the awareness of financial status that positively affected Family Strength, supportive programs should be developed for positive influences, in the current situation where families of various types get increasingly diverse.

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6. References

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