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Parental Marital Status and Its Association with Child Mental Health (Anxiety & Depression) in Drukgyel Central School, Paro

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between parental marital status (intact, divorced, widowed, separated) and children's mental health, particularly the prevalence of anxiety and depression among children in varying family structures within the unique and evolving socio-cultural context of Bhutan. A survey was administered to 367 Bhutanese children in grades seven to 12. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7; anxiety) questionnaire, Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9; depression), and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. Although the study found no significant difference in depression levels among children, the results indicated a significant difference in anxiety levels between children from intact and non-intact families. Therefore, there is an urgent need for culturally specific policy interventions in Bhutanese schools and communities to support the mental health of children from diverse family structures and rapidly changing family environments.

Keywords: Parental marital status, anxiety, depression, mental health, inferential, thematic analysis, intact, non-intact

Introduction

Anxiety and depression are the most commonly reported mental health issues among children and adolescents in Bhutan. For instance, the number of people with depression and anxiety was four times and three times higher during this time, according to the research conducted by Dorji et al. (2023). **Dema (2024)** also reported that anxiety is still one of the common mental health issues that young people in Bhutan are dealing with. In the UK, a lot more children are being referred for medical attention. Accordingly, NHS Digital (2023) recorded that anxiety and depression rose from 2019 to 2023. This shows the urgent requirement of restorative programmes needed to prevent these problems.

According to Halliwell's (2024) report, clinical referrals for child anxiety more than doubled in the UK from 2019 to 2024, indicating an urgency for effective prevention and intervention programmes. Such psychological issues often arise from academic pressure, domestic instability, and community expectations. Also, children from non-intact families are at a higher risk of experiencing anxiety and depression as compared to children from intact families (Bettelheim, 2024; Johnson, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). In addition, children from non-intact families tend to exhibit higher rates of fear, sadness, withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts (Wang et al., 2023; Obeid et al., 2021) compared to children from intact families.

Similarly, in Bhutan the cultural beliefs influence and discourage children from seeking help (Johnson, 2024; Dorji et al., 2023). Additionally, post-divorce parenting practices and parental rejection experiences profoundly affect children's long-term mental health (Zhao et al., 2023). Thus, studying how family structures shape children's mental health is vital for developing timely and eclectic support strategies.

Quite recently, international studies also revealed higher risk of children experiencing anxiety and depression compared to those from intact families (Auersperg et al., 2019; Obeid et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2023). In Bhutan, as the divorce rate increased by 3.4%, the prevalence of anxiety and depression nearly tripled between 2011 and 2021 (NSB, 2022; Tsheten et al., 2023). This is consistent with the UNICEF's (2023) report that the status of anxiety and depression in Bhutan stood at 30% and 7%, respectively. Despite prioritised effort on children's mental well-being, it remains urgent to examine how family instability affects the mental health of children and adolescents in Bhutan.

Main Research Question

How does parental marital status affect the prevalence of anxiety and depression among students?

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of anxiety among students?
2. What is the prevalence of depression among students?
3. How does family structure (intact vs. non-intact) influence anxiety and depression levels in students?
4. How do students perceive the effect of their parents' marital status on their mental health?

Null Hypothesis

1. There is no statistically significant difference in anxiety among students based on their parents' marital status.
2. There is no statistically significant difference in depression among students based on their parents' marital status.

Significance of Research

The findings of this research may inform school-based mental health initiatives, guide parental counseling efforts, and contribute to policy developments aimed at supporting students from diverse families. This study may also assist policymakers in prioritising the establishment of institutions for children from broken families to develop emotional resilience and psychological well-being.

Research Design

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design since it allowed the researchers to collect and analyse quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to substantiate the initial findings. A total of 367 participants from Drukgyel Central School were selected using stratified random sampling. Education Management Information System (EMIS) was extensively used to identify students from four different family structures, wherein the population was divided into four distinct subgroups (strata) based on family structure. This method was purposefully used to ensure that smaller subgroups were proportionally represented, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection

Instruments

The GAD-7 (Generalized Anxiety Disorder) and PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire) scales were used for the quantitative data collection because they are internationally standardised benchmarks for assessing anxiety and depression, allowing the findings to be compared with global trends while providing a reliable baseline for the Bhutanese student population. Similarly, for qualitative data collection, semi-structured interview questions were used to explore participants' lived experiences and perceptions, thus allowing researchers to localise the data and understand how family values and social stigma interact with mental health outcomes measured by standardised scales.

Reliability and Validity

Pilot test

A pilot study was conducted on all 367 participants to test the reliability of the Generalized Anxiety Disorder -7 (GAD-7) and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained for the tools were 0.842 for GAD-7 and 0.831 for PHQ-9. This indicates that GAD-7 and PHQ-9 could be used for screening anxiety and depression in this research context.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were cleaned to ensure dataset quality and reliability, involving the removal of duplicate entries, treatment of missing values, and checks on response consistency. The results were analysed using JASP 0.19.3 (Intel) and Microsoft Excel. An inferential statistical test, specifically a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine the significant differences that existed in anxiety and depression levels among the students from various groups. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were computed to determine the prevalence of anxiety and depression levels among the participants. Qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, which identifies patterns and themes in emotional experiences, family structure, and coping strategies.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Board, and participants' informed consents were obtained from students and their guardians. Over the course of the research process, participants' information remained strictly confidential, and participation was completely voluntary. Furthermore, participants were free to withdraw at any point without having to face any negative consequences.

Literature Review

Effect of Parental Marital Status

The review of literature is organised around four interlocking strands: family structure and its limits as an explanatory variable; interparental conflict and the quality of caregiving; socioeconomic conditions and social support as moderators; and the cultural framing within which separation, single parenthood, and family change acquire meaning.

Family structure and the limits of structural explanations

Existing literature consistently connects parental separation, divorce, and single-parent households with high rates of depression and anxiety among children (Auersperg et al., 2019; Wasserman, 2020). Comparative studies generally report that children in intact households show stronger emotional resilience and academic engagement than children in disrupted family forms (Wang et al., 2023; Bester & Malan-Van Rooyen, 2015). However, this structure is now being increasingly contested. Garriga Alsina and Pennoni (2020) found that the negative impact of parental breakup on children is often caused by family conflict before the separation rather than separation itself. Wu et al. (2008) report that when parents-child relationship is constant, apparently, the negative effect of parental separation attenuated significantly. Additionally, the study further supplements that adverse childhood experiences, particularly abuse and chronic neglect account pose long-term emotional and mental health struggles otherwise attributed to marital dissolution.

Inter-parental conflict and caregiving quality as mechanisms

The productive analytical approach focuses on interpersonal conflict and supporting quality as primary causes of child wellbeing (Ward & Lee, 2020; Kapetanovic & Skoog, 2021). The hostile, unsolved interpersonal conflict directly predicts both mental distress and behavioural issues in children, independent of family structure (Warmuth et al., 2020). Conversely, when interpersonal conflict is constructively defined by open communication and negotiated resolution, it functions as a developmental scaffold for children's psychosocial competence (Li et al., 2020).

The primary underlying mechanism in relationships is the spillover effect, whereby chronic interpersonal conflict erodes caregiving quality by practicing the harsher disciplinary practices and emotional unavailability, which children subsequently internalise as attachment insecurity (Warmuth et al., 2020; Phua et al., 2023). Conversely, closeness and open communication serve to scaffold children's subsequent psychosocial competency (Kapetanovic & Skoog, 2021; Li et al., 2020). However, a critical ambiguity persists within this literature regarding whether interpersonal conflict and caregiving quality exert independent influence. Resolving this empirical gap carries vital implications for the design of targeted family-level interventions, a limitation the present study is uniquely positioned to address.

Socioeconomic conditions and social support as moderators

Economic context significantly complicates both structural and relational accounts. Children's wellbeing is not shaped by family structure alone. Financial hardship and material disadvantage can place pressure on children and may make the effects of family disruption more difficult (Lacey et al., 2022; Hannighofer et al., 2017). At the same time, strong support from family members, friends, and the wider community can help children cope better, reduce depressive symptoms, and improve their life satisfaction even after family disruption (Nagy-Pénczes et al.,

2020; Wu et al., 2020). Therefore, studies that do not consider socioeconomic background may wrongly link children’s difficulties only to family structure, when some of these difficulties may actually come from financial hardship. This means that support from family, friends, and financial help can reduce or increase the effects of changes in parents’ marriage. The implication is both methodological and substantive. Studies that examine marital status without considering socioeconomic position are likely to misattribute effects originating from material hardship to family form.

Cultural framing and the Bhutanese context

Existing evidence is overwhelmingly drawn from Western and East Asian populations, which may not translate to the unique culture of the Himalayan region. Bhutan presents a distinctive configuration due to matrilineal inheritance practices, the relative ease of customary separation, and the policy framework of Gross National Happiness. Despite these factors, empirical research in Bhutan remains sparse and rarely centers the child’s perspective or disaggregates outcomes by family form.

Results

Table 1 shows demographic information on parental marital status across four different categories of marital status of parents.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Parental Marital Status, Demographic Characteristics (N = 367)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Married	164	44.69%
Divorced	131	35.69%
Widowed	61	16.62%
Separated	11	3.00%
Total	367	100

Table 1 outlines demographic distributions of participants across four different family structures. The largest group of participants are from married (intact) families consisting of 44.69% (n = 164). This is followed by 35.69% (n = 131) divorced and while widowed and separated families account for 16.62% (n = 61) and 3.00% (n = 11) respectively. The data reveal the majority of participants (55.31%) are from non-intact families. Therefore, this suggests that more than half of the population in this study are from non-intact families, and participants may have undergone significant transitions in their family structure.

Research questions

1. What is the prevalence of anxiety among students?

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Students on the Prevalence of Anxiety

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
Score 0 - 4	221	60.22%
Score 5 - 9	103	28.07%
Score 10 - 14	32	8.72%
Score greater than 15	11	3.00%
Total	367	100%

Table 2 shows that the majority of the participants reported sub-threshold levels of anxiety. In particular, 88.29% of participants fell within the range of minimal to mild, indicating that while most participants are functioning within normal psychological bounds, nearly a third (n = 103; 28.07%) exhibit mild symptoms that may benefit from preventive mental health programmes. An important clinical concern is that 11.72% (n = 43) of participants reported moderate-to-severe anxiety. Thus, this group likely experiences symptoms that significantly disrupt daily social interactions. These findings align with recent reports documenting rising psychological distress in Bhutan.

2. What is the prevalence of depression among students?

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Students on the Prevalence of Depression

Score	Frequency	Percentage
Score 0 - 4	201	54.77%
Score 5 - 9	110	29.97%
Score 10 - 14	31	8.45%
Score 15 - 19	17	4.63%
Score 20 - 27	8	2.18%

Total	367	100
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Table 3 shows that the prevalence of depression follows a parallel trend, with 93.19% of participants falling within the range of minimal-to-mild. However, the remaining 6.81% of participants reported experiencing moderate-to-severe depression, indicating a significant burden of mental health. In the Bhutanese context, 2.18% ($n = 8$) of participants who reported severe depression represent an acute high-risk group. Therefore, it is imperative to interpret these figures in light of the fact that social stigma regarding mental health disorders in Bhutan often acts as a deterrent to full disclosure. Consequently, these frequencies may represent the visible demand while masking a larger underlying need for services. These localised findings provide the empirical foundation necessary to address gaps in research on adolescent wellbeing as Bhutanese society transitions to different family structures.

3. How does family structure (intact vs. non-intact) influence anxiety and depression levels in children?

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in anxiety among students based on their parents' marital status.

A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the influence of marital status of parents on students' anxiety. The result in table 5 indicates a statistically significant difference in anxiety scores across the four marital groups, $F(3, 363) = 5.545, p < .001$. These results lead to rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that marital status influences anxiety. Importantly, the computed effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.044$) suggests that parental marital status directly accounts for approximately 4.4% of the variance. Though this effect is small to medium, it provides critical empirical evidence that family structure is a determinant of psychological well-being in the Bhutanese context.

Table 4 shows a clear hierarchy of psychological distress. The lowest mean in anxiety ($M = 2.890$) shown by the students from the intact families suggests that family unity is a significant protective factor against the development of anxiety symptoms. Conversely, students from separated families experienced the highest level of anxiety ($M = 5.727$), with scores that were nearly double those of peers from intact families. This report suggests that acute instability related to family separation is even more distressing to Bhutanese children than the long-term adjustments following divorce and widowhood.

Furthermore, a post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test was conducted to confirm that the main cause of statistical significance was the divergence between intact and non-intact families. Significant differences were found between students from intact families and those from divorced, widowed, and separated families at $p < .05$, as shown in Table 6. Therefore, the lack of significant differences between the non-intact groups (divorced

vs. separated, divorced vs. widowed, and separated vs. widowed) indicates that any form of familial disruption, regardless of its specific cause, results in a comparable and heightened benchmark of anxiety for the children. These findings highlight that the transition away from a traditional intact family structure—often a consequence of the rapid urbanisation and societal shifts discussed in earlier sections—may be a contributing factor to the rise in psychological vulnerability among Bhutanese youth.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics on Anxiety and Parental Marital Status

Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	SE	CV
Divorced	131	4.328	3.718	0.325	0.859
Married	164	2.890	3.714	0.290	1.285
Separated	11	5.727	3.101	0.935	0.542
Widowed	61	4.492	4.342	0.556	0.967

Table 5
Analysis of Variance on Anxiety and Parental Marital Status

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Marital Status	241.592	3	80.531	5.545	< .001	0.044
Residuals	5272.338	363	14.524			

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 6
Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test on Anxiety and Parental Marital Status

		Mean Difference	95% CI for Mean Difference		SE	df	t	P _{Tukey}
			Lower	Upper				
Divorced	Married	1.438	0.285	2.591	0.447	363	3.220	0.008
	Separated	-1.399	-4.487	1.689	1.196	363	-1.169	0.647
	Widowed	-0.164	-1.688	1.361	0.591	363	-0.277	0.993
Married	Separated	-2.837	-5.901	0.227	1.187	363	-2.390	0.081

		Mean Difference	95% CI for Mean Difference		SE	df	t	p _{Tukey}
			Lower	Upper				
	Widowed	-1.602	-3.077	-0.126	0.572	363	-2.802	0.027
Separated	Widowed	1.235	-1.987	4.458	1.248	363	0.990	0.755

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant difference in depression among students based on their parents’ marital status.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to determine whether parental marital status influences the students’ depression level. The result analysis indicated no statistically significant difference in depression level across the four groups of families, $F(3, 363) = 2.336, p < .074$, thus leading to retaining the null hypothesis. Although statistical significance was not reached, the $p = 0.074$ suggests the need for further qualitative investigation. The calculated effect size ($\eta^2 = .019$) suggests parental marital status accounts for 1.9% of the variance in depression scores, indicating that other internal and external factors play a vital role in influencing depressive symptoms in Bhutanese children, as shown in Table 8.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, Table 7 shows a clear pattern in the group means for depression. Students from intact families had a mean score of $M = 3.860$, whereas those from separated families reported the highest mean score of $M = 6.364$. This pattern is consistent with the anxiety analysis, suggesting that family instability may increase vulnerability. Therefore, from Bhutanese sociocultural perspectives, cultural stigma may exacerbate the underreporting of depressive symptoms, thereby narrowing score variability among groups. Furthermore, rapid urbanisation and the shift from extended to nuclear families may be creating a shared baseline of stress that affects all Bhutanese students, regardless of their parents' marital status.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics on Depression and Parental Marital Status

Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	SE	CV
Divorced	131	4.992	4.482	0.392	0.898
Married	164	3.860	4.440	0.347	1.150
Separated	11	6.364	4.925	1.485	0.774
Widowed	61	4.770	4.599	0.589	0.964

Table 8

Analysis of Variance on Depression and Parental Marital Status

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Marital Status	141.618	3	47.206	2.336	0.074	0.019
Residuals	7336.099	363	20.210			

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

4. How do students perceive the effect of their parents' marital status on their mental health?

Thematic analysis of participant transcripts indicates that students from non-intact families tend to internalise familial instability. Many participants described emotional struggles that are marked by deep sadness and a sense of being unloved in the family. They often express feelings of worthlessness and guilt in their family circumstances. In addition, Participant 2 and Participant 6 recount that parental separation is more than just a structural change in the family; it serves as a significant psychosocial stressor that quietly erodes a child's sense of self. These qualitative accounts reinforce the quantitative findings regarding the rise in anxiety and depression among affected groups, thereby demonstrating that family conflict is widely perceived as a direct contributor to clinically significant psychological distress.

Moreover, marital status impacts children's daily social and academic performance beyond their emotional well-being. Participants from non-intact families reported feelings of social withdrawal from their peers, a decline in academic grades, and difficulties in concentration, which are depressive symptoms with preoccupied thoughts closely linked to their home situations. Thus, these difficulties indicate that Bhutan's rapid urbanisation and evolving family structure towards nuclear families risk the loss of the wider communal safety nets that traditional families provided, leaving them more exposed to both academic setbacks and social disconnection.

The data analysis also revealed one of the most striking patterns across the interviews – the reluctance to seek help, even among students experiencing prolonged emotional distress. Most participants felt that school-based support was unnecessary and that cultural and social stigma created a barrier to help-seeking thoughts and behaviours. In contrast, students from intact families described greater emotional stability and resilience, and intact parents were described as a **protective buffer** that fosters emotional security. Therefore, these findings emphasise the urgent need to transition from general support to **specialised interventions** targeted to the unique vulnerabilities of children navigating parental separation.

All of the findings from the four sub-questions contribute to answering the main research question: *How does parental marital status affect the prevalence of anxiety and depression*

among students?

The study indicated that parental marital status significantly influenced the prevalence of anxiety among the participants. A statistical test also revealed that participants from non-intact families had significantly higher levels of anxiety as compared to participants from intact families. Moreover, participants from intact families reported the lowest levels of anxiety, with scores nearly double to those from intact families, while participants from separated families experienced the highest. This family structure accounted for nearly 4.4% of the variance in anxiety scores, indicating family disruption – such as divorced, widowed and separated – was a comparable indicator for escalated psychological distress among youth. In contrast, no statistically significant difference was observed among divorced, widowed and separated families. Qualitative data revealed that participants from intact families expressed that their families provided them with emotional stability; however, participants from non-intact families internalised this instability, expressing feelings of insecurity, guilt, sadness, worthlessness, and feeling unloved by their family members.

Conversely, the study indicated there was no statistically significant difference in depression levels among participants based on their parental marital status. Similarly, descriptive data showed a similar trend. Participants from non-intact families showed higher depression mean scores than those from intact families. The lack of a significant difference in depression levels indicates that, besides parental marital status, such as parental rejection, and socioeconomic status, other external factors may be playing a major role in influencing depressive symptoms. Moreover, researchers also noted that rapid urbanisation and evolving family structure contribute to emotional instability among children. Despite the statistical findings, participants from non-intact families reported social withdrawal and difficulty concentrating, which affected their daily lives and highlighted a perceived negative impact on their mental well-being.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated a significant difference between children's anxiety and parental marital status. However, no significant difference was found between children's depression and parental marital status. Overall, the majority of the participants experienced mild to moderate levels of anxiety and depression, the details of which are provided below.

When it comes to the prevalence of anxiety among students, the findings of the study showed that 88.29% of participants reported experiencing minimal to mild levels of anxiety. This indicates that, for most individuals within the sample, anxiety did not reach a concerning threshold. In contrast, the study found that nearly 12% of participants experienced moderate to severe anxiety. This group experienced a significant impact on their daily activities. Therefore, there is a need for timely support from relevant stakeholders. The anxiety levels highlight that the majority of participants in the study had lower anxiety levels, while there was also a smaller

group that may be at higher risk and in need of greater attention from clinical professionals.

In addition, the findings revealed that majority of students (93.19%) exhibited minimal to moderate symptoms of depression indicating that for most individuals, depressive symptoms remained at a manageable level. The findings also revealed that only a small proportion of the participants (6.81%) experienced moderate to severe symptoms of depression. However, the study indicated that this 6.81% of participants were at greater risk and needed psychological support, while the majority of participants had lower levels of depressive symptoms. This revealed the existence of a smaller but important group experiencing more severe depression.

The findings from the study strongly suggested how family structure (intact vs. non-intact) influenced anxiety and depression levels in Bhutanese children. For instance, the ANOVA finding revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the anxiety levels among the four marital groups (married, divorced, widowed, and separated). The result was also consistent with similar findings by Hannighofer et al. (2017), which showed that children in non-intact families had a significantly higher risk of emotional or behavioural problems, including anxiety and depression.

A statistically significant difference in anxiety levels between students from married parents and those from all other marital status groups strongly indicates that existing efforts may be insufficient, despite the efforts made by the government and non-governmental organisations (NGO) to minimise the negative impact on mental health in schools and in the wider communities.

This result may be associated with the psychological and financial support and care available for students whose parents are intact. Conversely, students from divorced, widowed, or separated parents appear to have comparatively less access to the abovementioned support and care. This finding is in line with the findings of Tran et al. (2023), and Assari and Moghani Lankarani (2021), who reported that children with separated or divorced parents and those from poor economic status are more likely to experience depression and psychological challenges. Therefore, parental rejection plays a significant role in triggering depression in children.

Nevertheless, the ANOVA finding revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in depression levels between the four marital groups (married, divorced, widowed, and separated). The results of this study are consistent with similar findings by Awadalla (2020), which stated that there were no significant differences in depression levels among university students based on their parental marital status.

Even though this finding is less commonly reported in the field of literature, this suggests that other factors contribute to depression besides parental marital status. According to Sofrona and Giannakopoulos (2024), parental rejection plays a crucial role in influencing depression by

pointing out many other factors that influence depression besides parental marital status. Therefore, parental rejection exacerbates depression in children.

How do students describe the influence of their parents' marital status on their mental health experiences? The qualitative data reveal that students perceive parental marital status as a significant contributing factor influencing their emotional and academic wellbeing. Most participants stressed that children from intact families tend to have emotional stability, emotional support, and academic encouragement. On the contrary, children of divorced, widowed, or separated parents regularly expressed feelings of insecurity, isolation, and diminished self-esteem. This finding is also consistent with other studies that children from intact families exhibit greater emotional stability and academic achievement as compared to those from non-intact families (Amato, 2010; Tran et al., 2023).

On the positive note, it was found that resilience and determination can be nurtured in non-intact families. Notwithstanding the fact that students struggled to seek professional support from relevant stakeholders like counsellors, teachers, and mental health professionals, the majority sought support from their parents and relied on self-coping strategies. This finding is similar to the findings of Rickwood et al. (2005) showing social stigma, lack of awareness, and underestimation of personal distress as the main barriers to seeking help among adolescents. The gap between seeking help and professional intervention indicates that students' mental health needs are not easily accessible within the school-based and community-based support systems.

Conclusions

The current study aimed to determine the relationship of children's mental health and parental marital status and the prevalence of anxiety and depression among school students. The results indicated that the majority of the students had minimal to mild anxiety and depression. However, there was also a small group of students with moderate-to-severe anxiety and depression, which might require immediate intervention from professionals, such as school counsellors and health professionals.

The findings also revealed that students from intact families experienced a low level of anxiety compared to their peers from non-intact families. This study further revealed that there was no significant difference in depression among the four groups of families. What it this suggests is that there are other factors contributing to depression in students.

It was found that the participants' perspectives differed between non-intact families and intact families, particularly in their social contexts. Participants from intact families were more likely to report a greater sense of stability and security in their daily lives. Conversely, participants from non-intact families tended to report insecurity, isolation, fear of social stigma and neglect, and a lack of focus on daily activities, leading to lower academic scores and increased mental

health problems.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. It did not gather information from participants with divorced parents regarding the timing of their parents' divorce or which parent they resided post-separation. Likewise, the study did not inquire participants with widowed parents about the date of their parent's death or whether the deceased was the father or the mother. Furthermore, the study did not examine the social and cultural backgrounds of participants' parents or the regions from which they originated.

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