

The Relationship between Parents and their Adolescent Children with Special Reference to Consensual and Contentious Separations.

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between Maltese adolescents and their parents, with a particular focus on families where the parents are separated. In all, 25 families coming from non-distressed, distressed and separated families were interviewed, including 24 fathers, 24 mothers and 30 children aged 11,13 and 15 years of age. Each participant was interviewed separately. The methodology adopted was based on framework analyses. A number of findings had direct implications for the court system and the judicial process, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary professional support to the judiciary. Important findings related to the lengthy duration of the proceedings in court and its implications for children, the need for children to be heard by trained professionals who give them adequate time and a fair say in the court process and the need for parents to receive parental education prior to their separation and divorce by way of helping them protect their children at a time when they are particularly distressed. Another important finding was the requisite to deal with marital breakdown over time, through ADR and mediation, as this was seen to be more appropriate for addressing children's needs.

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