

Significance of Home Environment in Adolescent Psychological Well-Being and Distress

Jeny Rapheal

Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

Varghese Paul K

Prajyoti Nikethan College, Pudukkad

This study investigates the role played by home environment of adolescents in their psychological well-being, anxiety and stress. A sample of 152 students was selected from five schools of Thrissur district of Kerala State. Four psychological scales namely Home Environment Inventory, Psychological well-being scale, IPAT anxiety scale, and Students Stress Scale (SSS) were administered to collect data. Statistical analysis was carried out with the help of SPSS version 20. The complete correlation matrix revealed significant linear relationship between variables of home environment and stress, anxiety, psychological well-being of the selected sample. MANOVA analysis highlighted significant difference between the participants belonging to low, average and high levels of home environment variables respectively in their psychological well-being, stress and anxiety. Multiple regression was performed to estimate the predictive power of different groups of independent variables classified according to their perceived effect on Home Environment was also highly significant, which reiterates the claim that home environments of adolescents contain causal pathological elements that have the potentiality to incur direct consequences on their mental well-being.

Keywords: Home Environment, Adolescents, Psychological Well-Being, Stress, Anxiety

Adolescent psychology has always been curious about the potentiality of environment on adolescents in determining their overall well-being. The environment constituting the entire span of life experiences of adolescent population is mainly comprised of two major institutions—home and school. Of these, home environment, which is more influential in the formation of their basic personality, consists of innumerable forces that can be classified as direct causal factors capable of contributing to the psychological well-being as well as to the psychopathology of adolescent group. Previous and current research results keep on substantiating this view.

Jagapreeth Kaur (2013) in his study titled "Home environment as a predictor of psychological well-being among adolescents" observes that ambience of a home dominated by conformity, reward, and nurturance have significant predictive value in the psychological well-being of adolescents. Self concept of adolescents is a by-product of psychological environment of their home says Lau Sing et

al. (2000). Shek (1997) has found that family factors play an important role in influencing psychological adjustment, particularly positive mental health of Chinese adolescents. Cohen and Brook (1987) assessed family risk factors related to future development of adolescent psychopathology in an eight year longitudinal study. Lohman and Jarvis (2000) assessed the relationship between family members coping strategies and their family environment. Broken home has been found to have ill effects on adolescent development (Faubert et.al. 1990; Kurdek and Fine, 1993; & Sun, 2001). Personality formation as a function of home environment has been a focus of a number of researches (Forman and Forman, 1981; Majoribanks, 1996; Lau and Kwok, 2000, Kaur and Jaswal, 2005; Lakshmi and Arora 2006) as cited by Kaur (2009) in "Gender differences in perceptions of home environment among Indian adolescents". There is extensive research that highlights the link between family environment and adolescent depression (Micucci, 2009).

Home environment can be viewed as a dynamic system characterized by continuous interaction of subjective and objective elements or forces. Of the subjective elements, parenting style is the substratum upon which overt and covert forces of family dynamics thrives. At the same time, perception of an adolescent about this subjective home environment is largely shaped by his/her interaction with parents and siblings. Influence of objective factors such as gender, size of family, financial status of family, number of siblings, birth order, educational status of parents etc are more or less fixed and may not be amenable to modifications though their role in the personality formation of adolescents cannot be ruled out. Studies in psychology related to the subjective, psychological home environment of adolescents are plenty. However, there is an alarming dearth of studies that have adopted a collective approach to the scientific analysis of subjective, objective, social and cultural forces underlying the family dynamics of which an adolescent is a part. To be particular, there isn't even a single study in this area based on adolescent population of Kerala State.

In this 21st century there is a rapid reorientation of family dynamics and family structure, thanks to cultural depletion effects of globalization. Thus, there is an emerging trend for integrating adolescent counseling & psychotherapy with 'family/parental counseling & psychotherapy' in the adolescent mental health scenario.. Adolescence is a phase of development in which relationship with caretakers takes a serious shift in its quality and intensity (Daniel, Wassell, & Gilligan, 1999). Any intervention strategy opted for adolescent mental health will prove itself futile if implemented without referring to the environment of home to which he/she belongs. Studies prove that, almost all psychological aberrations observed in the adolescents have their root cause in their immediate environment. In the case of psychiatric treatment of youth, it has been suggested that a minimum, good clinical practice should include the involvement of family (Bickerton, Hense, Benstock, Ward, & Wallace, 2007). Carr (2009) argued that family-based therapies are as effective as individual cognitive-

behavioural therapy and psychodynamic therapy in the specific treatment of major adolescent depression. Lerner (2009) similarly calls for the integration of family therapy into treatment for adolescent depression. In tandem with these scientific ventures, we hope that findings of this study, in addition to contributing to adolescent counseling and psychotherapy will help to evolve a new model or pattern that can be followed by parents and caretakers of adolescents in order to ensure an ideal home environment for them. Also, it will reveal which emotional climate or pattern of interaction of family members and what conditions of physical environment of a home can prove hazardous to the mental health of adolescents in the long run.

The present study analyzes the impact of home environment on psychological well-being, stress and anxiety of adolescents and explores the objective as well as subjective factors constituting their home environment. The attempt was to distinguish the factors of home environment that have predictive power in their psychological distress. Here, measurement of distress is confined to two dimensions namely anxiety and stress levels of adolescents. Also, the researchers were interested in analyzing the role played by the type of school and place of residence in determining the well-being of adolescents. However, all hypotheses are mainly centered on the linear relationship between the home environment and psychological well-being, anxiety and stress. Hypotheses related to the significance of differences among adolescents belonging to low, average and high levels of home environment were also meticulously analyzed.

Method

Sample:

The sample consisted of 152 students selected from two private schools, two aided schools and one government school, respectively from Thrissur district of Kerala State, by convenient sampling. There were 86 male students and 66 female students. The mean age of the participants was 15.84. Four scales namely, Home environment scale by Karuna Shankar Mishra, IPAT anxiety scale

by Samuel E Krug, Psychological well-being scale by Devendra Sing Sisodia and Student's stress scale by Zaki Akhtar were administered to students after getting informed consent from their parents and school authorities. Data analysis was carried out with the help of SPSS version 20. Here, home environment was the independent variable and psychological well-being, anxiety and stress served as dependent variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was estimated to understand the nature and significance of relationship between the variables. To get a clear picture of the difference between students belonging to low, average, and high groups of Home Environment variables, in their Psychological well-being (PSW), Anxiety (ANX) and Stress a detailed MANOVA was performed. Also, to estimate the predictive power of independent variables (HE) on PSW, Anxiety and Stress, their 10 sub variables were categorized into three groups based on the perceived identical effect they are likely to make on the Family Environment.

Group 1: Control, protectiveness & conformity

Group 2: Punishment, deprivation of privileges, rejection & isolation

Group 3: Nurture, permissiveness & reward

Multiple regression analysis was carried out to estimate the predictive power of each group of independent variables.

Measures:

Home Environment: Home Environment of the participants was assessed using Home Environment Inventory (HEI) prepared by Karuna Shankar Mishra. It consists of 10 subscales namely, A-Control, B-Protectiveness, C-Punishment, D-Conformity, E-Social Isolation, F-Reward, G-Deprivation of privileges, H-Nurturance, I-Rejection and J-Permissiveness. It is a 5-point Likert scale and each subscale contains 10 questions. HEI claims high content as well as criterion related validity. Established reliability coefficients of dimensions are: A-.879, B-.748, C-.947, D-.866, E-.870, F-.875, G-.855, H-.901, I-.841, J-.726, respectively.

The inventory also provides norms for low, average and high levels of Home Environment

dimensions. For example, a percentile score ranging from P25 to P75 will indicate average level for a particular dimension of Home Environment whereas scores ranging between P5-P10 come under low level of the same dimension. The scores of the 10 subscales of Home Environment cannot be added together as each dimension stands alone with their own cut off values for low, average and high levels.

Psychological well-being: Psychological Well-Being Scale prepared by Devendra Sing Sisodia was used to estimate Psychological well-being of students. This is a 5-point Likert scale, which estimates psychological well-being along five dimensions namely, Satisfaction, Efficiency, Sociability, Mental Health and Interpersonal relationship. Its test-retest reliability is .87 and internal consistency is .90. Besides, the face validity scale claims high content validity. Validity coefficient against external criteria is .94.

Anxiety: IPAT anxiety scale by Samuel E King was used to assess the anxiety level of participants. It consists of 40 items of which, first 20 items measure overt anxiety and next 20 items measure covert anxiety. The scale, which is often administered in clinical practice has test re-test reliability score .80 and its split half reliability is .78. It claims remarkable cultural and content validity.

Stress: Students Stress Scale (SSS) by Zaki Akhtar was administered to the participants to estimate their stress level. It consists of 51 items. In addition to assessing the stress level, it claims to be helpful in exploring basic academic pressures burdening school going children. Split-half and test-retest reliabilities of the scale are .78 and .71 respectively. Its construct validity is .72.

Operational definition of variables

Control-A: Autocratic atmosphere in which many restrictions are imposed on the children by parents in order to discipline them.

Protectiveness-B: Prolongation of infantile care, sometimes, to the extent of prevention of independent behavior.

Punishment-C: Physical as well as affective punishment to avoid the occurrence of

undesirable behavior.

Conformity-D: Parent’s directions and commands or orders with which the child is expected to comply by action

Social isolation-E: Use of isolation from beloved persons except family members for negative sanctions

Reward-F: Material as well as symbolic rewards to strengthen or increase the probability of desired behavior.

Deprivation of privileges-G: Controlling children’s behavior by depriving them or their rights to seek love, respect and child care from parents.

Nurturance-H: Existence of excessive unconditional physical and emotional attachment of parents to the child with keen interest in and love for the adolescent.

Rejection-I: Conditional love extended as if child has no right as a person, no right to express his feelings, no right to uniqueness and no right

to become an autonomous individual.

Permissiveness-J: Total absence of interference from parents with provision of opportunities for the adolescent to express his views freely and act according to his desires.

Psychological well-being: A measure of subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life’s experiences and one’s role in the world of work, sense of achievement, utility, belongingness and no distress and dissatisfaction or worry. It is measured along the following dimensions.

Stress: A particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.

Anxiety: Anxiety can be defined as “subjective feelings and thoughts and observable fight-flight-freeze behavior, but also in physical symptoms such as palpitations, trembling, and shortness of breath.” (Muris, Mayer, Freher, Duncan, & van den Hout, 2010).

Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the entire sample (N=152)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	PSW	ANX	Stress
Mean	20.4	26.8	24.9	29.6	9.71	30.6	7.55	23.9	10.2	21.5	189.6	36.3	158.2
SD	6.08	6.7	6.07	6.04	6.19	6.50	5.4	6.17	6.12	5.42	18.29	7.94	29.71

A-control, B-protectiveness, C-punishment, D-conformity, E-isolation, F-reward, G-deprivation of privileges, H-nurturance, I-rejection, J-permissiveness, PSW-psychological well-being, ANX-anxiety

Of the Home Environment variables, the mean value for “Reward” is the highest (M= 30.6, SD=6.50) which was followed by conformity, protectiveness, punishment, nurture, permissiveness, control, social isolation, and rejection. (See Table:1)

Table 2. Correlation between subjective variables of Home Environment and dependent variables

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
PSW	.17*	.23**	.118	.23***	-.09	.5****	-.02	.40****	-.12	.06
ANX	-.008	.059	.117	.14*	.26***	-.20**	.29***	-.16*	.27***	.03
STRESS	.094	.25***	.41****	.36****	.37****	.047	.27****	-.06	.17**	-.03

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, ****p<.0000

A-control, B-protectiveness, C-punishment, D-conformity, E-isolation, F-reward, G-deprivation of privileges, H-nurturance, I-rejection, J-permissiveness, PSW-psychological well-being, ANX-anxiety

Almost all domains of Home Environment exhibited significant positive correlation with psychological well-being, except punishment, rejection, social isolation and permissiveness. Control and permissiveness does not have any significant correlation with stress or anxiety. All other domains exhibited significant correlation with stress or anxiety or both. (see Table:2)

Manova Summary

Table 3. Significant Multivariate Effects of HE variables on PSW, ANX and Stress

Independent Variables	Wilk's L	F	P-value	Eta-square (Partial)	Power
Control	.951	1.243	.284	.025	.487
Protectiveness	.913	2.269	.037	.044	.790
Punishment	.897	2.727	.014	.053	.870
Conformity	.862	3.772	.001	.071	.962
Isolation	.882	3.166	.005	.061	.921
Reward	.753	7.473	.000	.132	1.000
Deprived Privileges	.831	4.750	.000	.088	.990
Nurturance	.772	6.770	.000	.121	.999
Rejection	.926	1.931	.076	.038	.709
Permissiveness	.961	.985	.437	.020	.388

PSW-Psychological Well-being, ANX-Anxiety

Overall results indicate that subjective home environment variables has pertinent role in the mental well-being of adolescents. We hope that extensive research on this topic in the backdrop of domestic and social life of adolescents will bring forth new insights into the person-environment exchanges or interactions. Moreover, revelations of a detailed study on this , will equip caretakers of adolescents with a new perspective regarding the gravity of impact the physical and psychological environment can have on the mental health of adolescent population of Kerala State. What all conditions of his/her environment will be more conducive to assist an adolescent to grow and develop into a successful personality is still an enigma for psychologists and sociologists as well. Researches intended to delineate etiology of stress and anxiety in the psychosocial environment of adolescents have to be updated intermittently as the social scenario is in a perpetual flux owing to globalization and consequent cultural depletion. This demands drastic changes from the parents in their ways

of dealing with adolescents as previously set standards of rearing often fail to make an impact and elicit desirable behavioral outcomes from growing children. According to Aparajita (2011) fluid transitional state of Indian families causes ambiguities in roles, responsibilities, relationships, values and models of emulation and the family emotional support structure is weakening. The range and variety of problems that Indian families face are widespread and developmental in nature (Choudhury 2006). This study will do justice to the manifold attempts made by social scientists to resolve the issue. Finally, findings of this study would contribute to adolescent and parent/family counseling and psychotherapeutic interventions.

References

- Anita, V. & Ivana, M. (2006) Family and coping factors in differentiation of childhood anxiety and depression. *Psychology and psychotherapy: Theory, research and practice*, 79 (2) 199-214
- Bradly S., Peterson, Daniel S. Pine, Patricia Cohen & Judith S., Brook. (2001). Prospective,

- Longitudinal Study of Tic, Obsessive Compulsive, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders in an Epidemiological Sample. *J. AM. ACAD. Child adolescent. Psychiatry*, 40-6, June 2001.
- Bickerton, A., Hense, T., Benstock, A., Ward, J., & Wallace, L. (2007). Safety first: A model of care for working systematically with high risk young people and their families in an acute CAMHS service. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 28(3), 121-129
- Bruch, M. A. & Heimberg, R.G. (1994). Differences in perceptions of parental and personal characteristics between generalized and non-generalized social phobics. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 8, 155-168
- Carr, A. (2009) The effectiveness of family therapy and systemic interventions for adult-focused problems. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 31, 46-74.
- Chowdhury, A. (2006). Family life education in the sociocultural context. In: A Chowdhury, DK Carson, C Carson (Eds.): *Family Life Education in India - Perspectives, Challenges and Applications*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, pp.1-30
- Chowdhury, A. (2011) Empowering At-risk Families through Effective Parenting and Family Learning Process. *Studies in Home Community Sciences*, 5(1) 51-61
- Cohen, P. & Brook, J. (1987) Family factors related to the persistence of psychopathology in childhood and adolescents. *Psychiatry*, 50 (4), 332-345
- Daniel, B., S. Wassell, & R. Gilligan (1999). *Child Development for Child Care and Protection Workers*. Jessica Kingsley publications, London
- Fauber, R., Forehand, R., Thomas, A. M., & Wierson, M. (1990) A mediational model of impact of marital conflict on adolescent adjustment in intact and divorced families: *The role of disrupted parenting Child development*, 61, 1112-1113
- Forman, S. G., & Forman, B. D. (1981). Family environment and its relation to adolescent personality factors. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 45, 163-167
- Glenn Lerner (2009) *Integrating family therapy in adolescent depression: an ethical stance* Article first published online: doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6427.2009.00468.x
- Jagpreeth Kaur (2009). Gender differences in perceptions of home environment among Indian adolescents. *Journal of social and psychological sciences*. ISSN 1756-7483, Oxford Mosaic publications.
- Jagpreeth Kaur, Rana J. S. & Rupinder Kaur (2009). Home environment and academic achievement as correlates of self-concept among adolescents. *Studies on home and community science*. 3(1), 13-17, KER Publishers
- Jagpreet, K. & Dalvir, S. (2013). Family environment as a predictor of psychological hardiness among adolescents. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4 (3), 407-411
- Jagpreeth Kaur (2013) Home environment as a predictor of psychological well-being among adolescents. *International journal of education and psychology in the community IJEPC* 3(1), 22-33
- Joseph A. Micucci. (2009). *The Adolescent in Family Therapy, Second Edition: Harnessing the Power of Relationships*. The Guilford Press
- Kaur, R. & Jaswal, S. (2005). Relationship between strategic emotional intelligence and family climate of Punjabi adolescents. *Anthropologist*. 7(4). 293-298.
- Kurdek, L.A., & Fine, M.A. (1993) The relation between family structure and young adolescents: appraisals of family climate and parenting behavior. *Journal of family issue*, 14, 279-290.
- Lakshmi, A. R., Arora M., (2006). Perceived parental behaviour as related to student's academic school success and competence. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 32, (1), 47-53
- Lau, Sing and Kwok, Lai-Kuen (2000). Relationship of family environment to adolescents' depression and self-concept. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal*, 28 (1): 41-50
- Lohman, B. J., & Jarvis, P. A. (2000). Adolescent stressors, coping strategies, and psychological health studied in the family context. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(1), 15-43.
- Majoribanks, K. (1996). Family socialization and children's school outcomes: An investigation of a parenting model. *Educational Studies*, 22(1), 3-11.
- Muris, P., Mayer, B., Kramer-Freher, N., Duncan, S. & Hout, van den, A. (2010). Children's internal attributions of anxiety-related physical symptoms: Age-related patterns and the role of cognitive development and anxiety sensitivity. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 41 (5), 535-548.
- Paiva, N. D. (2008). South Asian parents' constructions of praising their children. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 13(2), 191-207. doi: 10.1177/1359104507088342

- Reeve, J. (2002). Self-determination theory applied to educational settings. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 183–203). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press
- Sarah, R., Susan, S. C. & Saba, S. (2012) The Relationship Between Perceived Parental Rejection and Adjustment for Arab, Canadian, and Arab Canadian *Youth Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 43(1) 84–90
- Saraswathi, T. S. & Dutta, R. (2010). India. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Developmental Science* (pp. 465–485). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Shek, D.T.L. (1997). Family environment and adolescent psychological well-being, school adjustment, and problem behavior: A pioneer study in a Chinese context. *Journal of genetic psychology*. 158(4): 467-479
- Sudir Kumar, C. T. & Chandrasekaran, R. (2000). A study of psychological and clinical factors associated with adolescent suicide attempts. *Indian J Psychiatry*. 42(3): 237–242.
- Sun Y (2001). Family environment and adolescent's well-being before and after parent's marital disruption: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 697-713
- Whaley, S. E., Pinto, A., & Sigman, M. (1999). Characterizing interactions between anxious mothers and their children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 67, 826–836.

Jeny Rapheal, Research Scholar, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore - 641 046.

Varghese Paul, K., PhD, Head, Department of Psychology, Prajothi Nikethan College. Pudukkad, Kerala. E-mail: vpssy2013@gmail.com.

JIAAP Full Text Back Volumes (2005 to 2010) are available at www.medind.nic.in IndMED

A Bibliographics Data-base of Indian Biomedical Research

It is a matter of great pleasure that for appropriate publicity of Indian Biomedical Research, Indian MEDLARS Centre, under the National Informatics Centre, has designed and developed a database entitled IndMED meeting international standards. The database is accessible fulltext on internet at the website <http://medin.nic.in>. Fulltext of 38 journals taken up for the IndMED. Authors are requested to include abstracts with their papers. While sending their papers for publication in future.

For IndMED details please write to:
Bibliographics INformatics Division
National Informatics Centre
(Department of Information Technology)
A-Block, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road,
New Delhi - 110 003, India.

Telephone : 91-11-24362359, Fax : 91-11-24362628, Email : medinfo@nic.in