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Perceived Family Environment in Relation to Adjustment and Academic Achievement

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The study aimed to investigate the relationship between family environment, the home adjustment and academic achievement in adolescents. The adolescents (106-Boys and 86 girls) were assessed using the Moos and Moos Family Environment Scale and Bell's adjustment inventory. Academic scores were taken from the school records. Family environment appeared to influence home adjustment as well as academic performance. The majority of the sample perceived their family as cohesive, organized, achievement oriented and emphasizing on moral – religious issue with minimal conflict. cohesion, conflict, control, intellectual – cultural orientation and independence in the family environment influenced home adjustment. Academic performance was significantly related to independence and conflict domains of family environment. Boys and girls differed in perception of the home and environment.

The image of adolescence is a time of storm and stress, intense moodiness and preoccupation with the self has permeated both professional and lay perspectives on this developmental period. The families in general and parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to the child. The strongest factor in moulding a child's personality is his relationship with his parents. If his parents love him with a generous, even flowing, non-possessive affection and if they treat him as a person who likes themselves, has both rights and responsibilities, then his chances of developing normally as well and good. But if they diverge from this, the child's development may be distorted (Cox & Cox, 1979). Adolescents have a poor reputation of getting along poorly with their families. The teenage boy or girl may be faced with serious problems of adjustment when there is a difference of opinions, ideals and attitudes with their parents. Conflicts may arise between the adolescent and the parents that are difficult to resolve if neither is willing nor able to compromise. It takes all the tact and understanding of parents to handle their teenage son or daughter (Coleman, 1974). Families of delinquent or uncontrollable adolescents are characterized by poorer family relationships and less social connectedness. In general, these families are lower on cohesion and independence and higher on conflict and control (Fox et al., 1983). The family environment also affects the academic achievement, which is the product of maturational forces within the adolescent and the experiences provided by the environment (Bernard, 1971).

Several researchers have studied the influence of family environment on adolescent adjustment and academic achievement. Studies of Paul (1996) revealed that there is significant degree of conflict with less cohesion and organization in the emotionally disturbed families. Families of successful students showed high achievement orientation and organization in the family regardless of social class (Paul, 1988). Steven (1990) showed a concomitant relationship between family environment and school outcome variables. The results of Whitehead and Deborah (1991) study indicated that best predictor of grade point average was the intellectual cultural orientation of the family environment. In India, several investigations have assessed the differential effects of family interactions on psychiatric disorders. Preet (1992) studies of family environment of psychiatric patients in comparison to a control group resulted in significant differences in the psychiatric group and the control group. A study by Nihiral et al., (1985) has revealed significant influences of changes in home environment on social adjustment in adolescent.

This study explores the relationship between family environment, home adjustment and academic achievement. The objective of the study was to focus on the perception of family environment and it's influence on home adjustment and academic performance in adolescents.

Method

Sample

The sample comprised of 109 adolescents in the age group of 14, 15 and 16 (mean age 14.78 ± 0.79) studying in classes IX, X, and XI. They were studying in private schools following the Central Board of Secondary Education and situated in South of Chennai. The sample belonged to middle and higher socio-economic class in

majority of the sample (68.7%) father alone was employed 70% of mothers were homemakers. The monthly income ranged from Rs. 15,000 to 50,0000 62% lived in nuclear families with 60% having one sibling. The sample was homogeneous in age and the family background.

Tools

Family Environment Scale (Moos and Moos, 1986): It is one of the nine social climate scales. The FES is used to describe and compare family social environment, contrast parents-child perceptions and examine actual and preferred family milieu. The three forms of FES are (i) Real Form (form R) (ii) the ideal form (Form I) and (iii) the expectations form (form E). Form R was used in the current study.

The ten FES subscales assess three underlying domains or sets of dimensions.

➤ Cohesion. Expressiveness and conflict subclass measure the relationship dimension.

➤ The personal growth or goal orientation dimensions are measured by the Independence, Intellectual-Cultural orientation, Achievement orientation. Active recreational orientation and Moral-religious emphasis subscales.

➤ The system maintenance dimensions are measured by organization and control subscales.

The scale consists of 90 items and 9 items in each subscale in the form of statement. The respondent answered "True" if it is true most of the time. The number of "True" responses is counted for each sub-scale. There is no aggregate score for the scale. All the sub-scales are scored separately.

Bell's Adjustment Inventory Revised (1962): only 33 items comprising the home adjustment dimension was administered.

The respondents were instructed to respond either "yes" or "No" for each statement. Scoring is according to manual.

The academic performance scores were collected from the school records. The total marks of the IInd terminal exam were converted into [percentage to measure academic performance into classes of Ist, IInd and IIIrd.

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of FES subscale for the Indian and American normative sample.

FES Dimensions	Mean	SD	Mean (Normative American Sample)
Cohesion	6.99	1.83	6.09
Expressiveness	4.73	1.87	5.45
Conflict	2.85	1.90	3.31
Independence	5.55	1.60	6.61
Achievement Orientation	6.29	1.40	5.47
Intellectual Cultural Orientation	5.71	1.83	5.63
Active Recreational Orientation	5.10	2.05	5.35
Moral Religious Emphasis	5.47	1.68	4.72
Organization	6.25	1.80	5.41
Control	4.15	1.99	4.34

Table 2: Regression scores of components of FES on home adjustment.

Family Environment	Multiple R	R^2	F value
Cohesion	0.252	0.27	73.49**
Conflict	0.629	0.38	59.63**
Control	0.661	0.43	49.50**
Intellectual Cultural Orientation	0.679	0.46	40.70**
Independence	0.688	0.47	34.04**

**p<0.01

Table 3: Significant factors of Family environment predicting academic achievement.

FES	Multiple R	R^2	F value
Independence (+)	0.21	0.04	9.69**
Conflict (−)	0.25	0.06	9.20**

** p < 0.01

Table 4: Correlation between home adjustment and academic achievement.

Academic Achievement	Home adjustment
	R=0.6**

** p < 0.01

Table 5: Gender differences in FES subscales

	COH	EXP	CONF	IND	ACHO	ICO	ARO	MRE	ORG	CON
BOYS	7.1	4.5	2.6	5.5	6.4	5.6	5.2	5.4	6.1	4.4
Girls	6.9	4.8	3.2	5.6	6.1	5.9	4.9	5.4	6.4	3.8
t-value			1.96*							1.96*

* p < 0.05

The mean and SD of FES is presented in table-1. On comparison with the American normative families (n=125) the present sample shows higher scores in cohesion achievement motivation, moral religious emphasis and organization. Scores are lower in independence and conflict. The differences in the mean scores were generally small, although for expressiveness, independence and conflict the differences were more than one score point.

Multiple regression analysis was carried out with home adjustment as dependent variable and family environment subscales as independent variables. All the family environment components were entered in a stepwise manner. Family factors namely cohesion, conflict, control, intellectual-cultural orientation and independence emerged as significant contributors to home adjustment contributing the total of 47% of variance (Table-2). The maximum variance was predicted by cohesion (27%). Secondly by conflict (11%), followed by control (5%), intellectual-cultural orientation (3%) and independence (1%). The results showed that home adjustment is significantly predicted by family environment.

Regression analysis was also carried out to understand the predictors of academic achievement. Independence and conflict of family environment did contribute minimally (10%) to academic achievement (table-3). This relationship between family environment and academic achievement was further substantiated when data on home adjustment and academic achievement were correlated. A significant positive relationship emerged (0.60, p < 0.001) between the variables (table- 4).

Perception of family environment in relation to gender status was evaluated. The findings (table-5) show that boys and girls do not differ much in most of the family environment components. The 't' test shows that conflict and control are significantly related to gender. Girls perceived more conflict in the family and boys perceived more control.

Discussion

The findings reveal a significant relationship between specific family environment factors on home adjustment and academic achievement. When compared to the standardized norms available on American normative sample majority (60%) of the present sample, perceive their families as supportive, and helpful (cohesiveness), exhibiting a desire to achieve (achievement orientation), participating in religious activities (moral-religious emphasis), planning family activities and responsibilities (organization) and low in arguments and fights (conflict). The lower scores on expressiveness and independence may be due to the influence of culture. Culture curtails us to openly express feelings and discuss personal problems, the freedom to think things for ourselves and make our own decisions. The sample perceived moral religious emphasis as more in the family. The stress on ethical and religious issues and values is more in our culture and this could be the reason. High achievement orientation is a clear indication of the middle and high middle class families stress on the importance of success in schoolwork. Based on the family environment scores it can be inferred that the present sample of adolescence have high self-esteem. This is based on the fact that self-esteem is closely related to high cohesion independence and low conflict in the family (Hirsch and Moos, 1985).

Family environment factors on home adjustment revealed that home adjustment is influenced by degree of support and help and commitment in the family (cohesion), extent to which set rules are followed in the

family (control) the amount of anger and aggression in the family (conflict) the degree of interest in political, social and cultural activities (intellectual-cultural orientation) and the extent to which family members are assertive, self sufficient and make their own decisions (independence). This is in accordance with the study of Enos and Handal (1985), which states that adolescent psychological adjustment, and satisfaction is significantly related to level of perceived conflict in the family.

Factors of independence and conflict emerged as predictors of academic achievement. Independence positively contributes to academic achievement. When adolescents perceive their families as self sufficient, having freedom to make their own decisions then academic performances increases. Conflict on the other hand negatively contributes to academic performance. When adolescent perceive more anger, criticism and arguments in the family their academic performance goes down (Bernard, 1991).

Results prove that home atmosphere influences academic achievement. Home atmosphere should be conducive to academic performance. Parents who create home atmosphere, which fosters learning have children who are academically inclined (White, 1982).

On gender comparison, girls perceived more conflict than boys. This may be due to role expectations. At adolescence, girls are subjected to more heavy sex role constraints and must contend with culturally created values in the family. They are more vulnerable to social criticism. Boys, on the other hand perceived more control i.e., they perceived that their family has set rules and emphasize on following rules in the family. The boys are more sensitized than girls by control in the family.

Parent-adolescent relationship is a dynamic continually one and the adjustments that each makes to accommodate the changes will play a critical part in determining the adolescent's development, his home adjustment and academic achievement. This study established that family factors play an important role in adolescent's adjustment and academic performance.

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