

# Impact of Family Environment on Socio-Emotional Adjustment of Adolescent Girls

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## Abstract

Adjustment refers to the ability of an individual to maintain harmony between personal needs and the demands of the environment. A well-adjusted person is generally happy, efficient and socially balanced, whereas maladjustment occurs when a person fails to cope effectively with life situations. The concept of adjustment has its roots in Darwin's (1859) theory of adaptation, which emphasized survival through change. Later, psychologists broadened the term to include emotional, social and educational aspects of life. Boring (1954) explained that even simple organisms modify their behavior when faced with obstacles, showing that adjustment is a natural and universal process. According to Eysenck (1960), adjustment occurs when individual needs and environmental expectations are in balance. Strang (1957) described adjustment as a continuous life-long process, while Symonds (1933) defined it as a satisfactory relationship between the organism and its environment. Studies by Agarwal (2003) and Singh (2006) further indicate that well-adjusted students tend to perform better academically, socially and emotionally.

**Keywords: Adjustment, Family Environment, Adolescents, Secondary School Students**

## INTRODUCTION

Family environment plays a crucial role in changing a child's personality and adjustment. The family is the first social institution where children learn values, habits, emotional control and social behavior through interaction with parents and other members. A positive home environment characterized by affection, trust, communication and parental support promotes healthy emotional and psychological growth (Watson, 1957; William and Wilson, 1961). Smithson (1974) emphasized that emotional maturity develops gradually through supportive relationships within the family. Since children spend their formative years at home, the quality of parental attitudes, discipline and child-rearing practices significantly influences their behavior and development. Families that provide warmth, guidance and encouragement create children who are more confident, socially competent and capable of handling stress effectively. Recognizing the importance of adjustment in students' lives, the present study attempts to examine the relationship between adjustment and family environment among secondary school students.

Adolescence of life is one of the important stages of life that requires proper care and development. This state of life is very sensitive because children are undeveloped due to the lack of decision-making powers. Girls do not know the real life situations. At this juncture of life, girls need proper advice and guidance time. The duration of adolescence is a very important time of life. The problems of adolescents, who are not properly addressed, will lead to our adolescent psychological disturbance, mental imbalance, and physical disorder. Family is the most important primary group of society. It is the simplest and primary form of society, it is the most basic of all social groups and the first is the immediate social environment in which a child is exposed. This is an excellent primary group because it is in the family that the child develops his original view through training and teaching. Every child is born in a family that creates parents and others and because the life of children is initially centered in their families, the environment of the family becomes the primary agent of socialization. Family environment involves conditions and social climatic conditions within families (Rao, 2012). Since each family is made up of different individuals in a different setting, the environment of each family is unique. The kind of child that is born in the family environment, it sets the limits of life adjustment (Onete & Isangedighi, 2011). It also provides the basis for the ability to work during various activities. In this study, the divorced house or family is one where the marriage between the parents has been terminated as a result of some differences between husband and wife.

Divorce between married couples is the disruption of marriage bond. It is to cancel or reorganize the legal duties and responsibilities of the marriage which can be either legally (in

court or in church) and fully done. Meyer (2011) defines divorces as legal action among married people so that their marriage can end before the death of either spouse. According to Emery (2013), divorce is a formal legal or socially approved termination of marriage. It is seen by Rappaport (2013) as the end result of marital disorders, which has been developing for some time. Since the child and each family are clearly unique with the different strengths and weaknesses parents and different types of psychological consequences are associated with the divorce of parents, which are against vulnerability in some teenagers (Strohschein, 2005). Yongmin, (2001) found that the teenagers who have experienced divorce or separation from their parents show more educational, psychological, behavioral and drug-related problems than children whose families remained. Barry, (2003) said that girls are mostly affected by these problems. The deleterious effect of divorce on children's psychosocial well-being has been found by Potter, (2010) is an important factor in poor math and reading scores. It has also been seen that there is less chance of completing secondary schools for those adolescents compared to the adolescents raised in retired households (Evan, Kelly & Monkey 2001). Parents' divorce has been found to affect the physical health and longevity of adolescents. They have increased risks in tobacco related, alcohol related, and related sex sites (Kari, Hemminiki & Bowang, 2006); they are depressed (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001), Experiences a wide range of emotional responses, including anger and loneliness, depression, anxiety, increased anxiety, low life satisfaction, suicide (Lizardi, Thompson, Keye and Hasin 2010; Fuller- Thompson & Dalton, 2011), low self esteem and Self-confidence is fear, rejection, conflicting loyalty and a feeling of fault for your parents' problem. Therefore, the nature of adolescents' family environment has a very strong impact on their cognitive and behavioral development and it has an important importance in all adolescence and adulthood. According to Bjornberg & Nicholson, (2007), the assessment of family environments is usually based on dimensions like cohesion, support, conflict and hierarchy. Cohesion is an emotional bond that connects family members, which means sharing affection, friendship and intimacy. There is a perception of maternal and emotional support from the family in facing support challenges and problems; it may also be the presence of close, caring and acceptance among a teenager and his caregiver (Barrow, Schuckit, Lucht, John & Frewyberger, 2002). Conflicts involve a set of negative emotions among individuals, which can create tension, hostility, criticism, aggression with the family. After this, it follows that a teenager who experienced a general, supportive and well-integrated house, school, life took it to its fullest integration of all other associations and attitudes. While Moos & Moos (2002) concluded that adolescents living in assisted and organized families show the experience of marriage, confidence, social ability, less anxiety, less psychological health, and compare those of happy, harmonious parents. Do more good in Divorced or married distressed family. Psychological adjustment is the behavioral process through which man maintains a balance between his various requirements or the barrier between his needs and the environment. Psychological adjustment can be determined by asking the person about his feeling, attitude and cognitive, behavioral characteristics, because only according to Peterson (2005) he can assess the degree of experience of adjustment and satisfaction. The point of concern for this work is to check the relationship between family environment (cohesion and support), divorced house and psychological adjustment, self-esteem of secondary school teenagers. The family environment has been shown by various researchers to influence the psychological adjustments of adolescents, problem-solving strategies as well as the ability of self-confidence and clear goals.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The review of related literature highlights that students' adjustment is closely associated with their family environment and plays a significant role in their overall development. Adjustment has been defined as the ability of an individual to maintain a satisfactory relationship with the environment and cope effectively with personal, social and educational demands (Symonds, 1933; Eysenck, 1960). Research indicates that welladjusted students tend to show better academic performance, emotional stability and social competence. Agarwal (2003) found that academically successful adolescents demonstrated higher levels of

social, emotional and educational adjustment compared to unsuccessful students, while Singh (2006) reported that the socio-emotional climate of the school and gender differences significantly influenced students' health and social adjustment. The family environment has been recognized as the primary context for personality development, where children acquire values, behaviors and emotional security through parental interaction (Watson, 1957; William and Wilson, 1961). Studies show that family factors such as cohesion, support, independence and healthy communication positively influence adolescents' psychological well-being, whereas conflict, aggression and lack of parental involvement contribute to maladjustment. Eberhardt and Schill (1984) and Jerslid (1963) observed that children from disrupted or parent-absent families are more prone to emotional and behavioral problems. Enos and Handal (1985) and Bernard (1991) reported that high family conflict negatively affects psychological and academic adjustment, while independence and supportive parenting enhance performance. Similarly, White (1982), Mohanraj and Latha (2005), Johnson et al. (2001) and Bronstein et al. (1996) emphasized that affectionate or ganized and emotionally expressive home environments foster better socio-emotional adjustment and peer relationships. Ahmed and Nigam (2009) further concluded that a favorable home environment significantly improves academic achievement motivation. Overall, these studies consistently demonstrate that a positive and supportive family environment is essential for promoting healthy adjustment and successful development among school students.

### **EMPOWERMENT AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN RELATION TO FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**

Adolescence is the transitional period of human life that requires special attention and protection. During this period the family provides the most vital and formidable environment for the cognitive, emotional, and social development of adolescents. The family is the oldest and the most important of all the institutions that man has devised to regulate and integrate behaviour of an adolescent as he strives to satisfy his basic needs. The family is basically a unit in which parents and children, live together. Its key position rests on its multiple functions in relation to overall development of his members, their protection and overall well being. Therefore it would emerge that not only the social and physical well being of the individual is taken care of by the family, but the psychological well being as well. Family environment refers to all sorts of moral and ethical values, emotional, social and intellectual climate set up by the family members to contribute to the wholesome development. The richness of family environment is reflected in the attitude of the child. Family environment has been recognized as vital factor in moulding personality of the child. In India families, parent child relationship is the most important constituent of family environment. In India, a girl is raised with inferior status and lesser privileges as compared to the male child which may be considered as basis of her weaker empowerment. Mahatma Gandhi said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family". When the girls are empowered, they transform their own life and lives of communities. As family and school environment plays a significant role in empowerment and emotional competence of adolescent girls, the investigator found it appropriate to study the relationship between empowerment and emotional competence of adolescent girls and their family environment.

#### **Family Environment as Perceived by Adolescent Girls**

Family environment is the quality and quantity of socio-emotional support and understanding that parents provide to their children within the home. Bhatia and Chadha (2004) have illustrated eight aspects of family environment- cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, and control. Cohesion is degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another. Expressiveness is extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and express their feelings and thoughts directly. Acceptance and caring is extent to which the members are unconditionally accepted and degree to which caring is expressed in family. Conflict is amount of openly expressed aggression and conflict among family members. Independence is extent to which the members are assertive and independently make their own

decisions. Active-recreational orientation is extent of participation in social and recreational activities. Organization is degree of importance of clear organization structure in planning family activities and responsibilities. Control is degree of limit setting within a family. Buehler and Gerard (2013) described the importance of family as a key socialization context for children as they move through early adolescence. Within this complex socialization context there are potential family risk factors that may create adjustment problems for adolescents. Risk factors include socioeconomic conditions of the family, parents' psychological condition, marital relationship, and parenting skills. Cumulative risk was related with boys' higher externalizing problems and with girls' increased externalizing problems. These factors were also associated with adjustment difficulties during adolescence. Kamble (2014) also mentioned that family is major socialization agency and has great influence and bearing on the behavior of children. Although adolescents are becoming independent physically, emotionally and cognitively, but they are still in growing stage. They need a secure home base for optimum development and particularly during tough times. Parent-adolescent child relationship and caring role of parents is extremely important. Besides being authoritative parenting, parents need to develop a more collaborative approach with their adolescent children. This is important to build a strong relationship between the two. Positive relationship between parents and their adolescent children acts as a protective factor for socio-emotional wellbeing of adolescents. Prevatt (2003) examined a risk and resiliency model of children's adjustment and results revealed significant relationship between mother's reports of both family conflict and child behavior problems. Youngblade et al., (2007) have reported that negative relationships and interactions between parents and adolescents may result in conflict and there is probability that adolescents are likely to engage in risk behaviors during adolescence and later life. Family is the basic unit and interactions among family members are termed as transactions and can be positive or negative. Healthy family environment results in positive transactions; while negative environment leads to negative transactions. The family environment involves the circumstances and social climate conditions within families. The family environments can differ in many ways, for example, on the basis of socio-economic level and parenting practices (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Keeping in view the ways in the importance of family environment the present study was planned to assess the family environment as perceived by rural and urban adolescent boys and girls. It was hypothesized that rural and urban adolescents; and adolescent boys and girls will perceive their family environment in a similar manner.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that adjustment is closely related to the family environment of secondary school students. A healthy and supportive home environment greatly contributes to the emotional, social and educational well-being of children. While gender does not significantly influence adjustment, locality has a noticeable impact, with urban students showing better adjustment than rural students. Therefore, family conditions and environmental factors must be considered important determinants of students' overall development. The study emphasizes that proper parental guidance, emotional support and a positive family atmosphere are essential for developing well-adjusted individuals.

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

The results of the study have several important implications for parents, teachers and educators. Parents should create a warm, supportive and understanding home environment that encourages open communication and emotional security. Teachers should identify students who show signs of maladjustment and provide counseling, guidance and motivation to help them cope with their problems. Schools should organize parent education programs to make families aware of their role in children's development. Special attention should be given to rural students by improving educational facilities, providing psychological support and creating opportunities for their overall growth. By strengthening both family and school support systems, students can achieve better adjustment and succeed academically and socially.

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