

ATTACHMENT STYLES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF ADOLESCENTS: A STUDY ON THE AFFORDANCES PROVIDED BY DIFFERENT SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

NANDINI SANYAL, ARUP GHOSHAL

Keywords: Attachment Styles, Coping Strategies, Affordances, Home, Educational Institution.



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ABSTRACT

The adolescent-environment interaction process is emerging as an important area of psychological research in the context of increased instances of maladjusted behaviour among adolescents. From this perspective, the relationships of adolescents with their significant others, and the strategies adopted to deal with surging stresses of everyday life deserves special attention. Equally crucial is adolescents' perception of influential environments. To this end, the present study critically examines the effects of *attachment styles* and *coping strategies* of adolescents on *perceived affordances* of home and educational institution. The concept of *affordances* was originally proposed by Gibson (1966) and later popularized by Norman (1988) as *perceived affordances*. This study also examined the effects of *developmental stages* and *gender* of the adolescents on *perceived affordances*. A sample of 300 middle adolescents (150 boys and 150 girls) aged 14-16 years and 300 late adolescents (150 boys and 150 girls) aged 17-19 years responded to the *Relationship Scales Questionnaire*, the *Coping Checklist-1*, a scale for measuring *perceived affordances* and an information schedule. The obtained data were statistically treated using Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). Findings indicated that *perceived affordances* of home significantly varied as a function of both *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*, whereas the *perceived affordances* of educational institution varied only as a function of *attachment styles*. Moreover, differences in the perception of affordances of home and educational institution were found between the middle and late adolescents as well as between the adolescent boys and girls.

Keywords: *Attachment Styles, Coping Strategies, Affordances, Home, Educational Institution.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the developmental period of transition from childhood to early adulthood, entered at approximately 10 to 12 years of age and ending at 18 to 22 years of age (Santrock, 2004). In Hall's (1904) famous *storm-and-stress* view, *adolescence* is characterized by considerable upheaval. It is a turbulent time charged with conflicts and mood swings. The complex nature of *adolescence* is rooted in the major, interrelated changes that occur in all realms of development (Papalia *et al.* 2004). Children experience marked developmental transitions as they enter adolescence. There are rapid physical changes, such as increased hormonal levels and sexual development characteristic of puberty. Advances in cognitive development, involving increases in abstract, idealistic, and logical thought characterize this stage of development. School achievement becomes more serious as young people prepare for the world of work. The pursuit of independence and identity, as well as a need for attachment are prominent features of *adolescence*. Changes in relationships with parents and peers; frequent conflicts with parents; a strong desire and effort to conform to standards set by peer groups; establishing autonomy from the family while simultaneously maintaining connectedness; as well as defining personal values and goals are major concerns of this phase. These areas of adolescent development interact with one another to make *adolescence* an age of transition characterized by unique developmental needs. Thus, the young and somewhat inexperienced adolescents are torn between mounting developmental tasks on the one hand, and surging demands of a rapidly modernizing world, on the other.

Here, it is important to note that many things that appear tumultuous in adolescence have important productive and developmental outcomes. For instance, Piaget (1962) opined that *adolescence* is a point in development that "assures thought and affectivity of an equilibrium superior to that which existed during middle and late childhood." He later added

that, “what is striking in the adolescent is his interest in theoretical problems not related to everyday realities.” Not very different from Piaget, Vygotsky (1978) also saw *adolescence* as the door to a series of positive changes strengthening human cognition. In the present social context, these independent-thinking adolescents are engaging in creative pursuits, spreading awareness about road safety, participating in ‘city clean-up’ projects, planting trees for a healthier tomorrow, succeeding in school and board examinations and ultimately making it to good colleges.

According to Erikson (1968), the chief task of adolescents is to resolve the ‘crisis’ of *identity versus identity confusion*, so as to become a unique adult with a coherent sense of self and a valued role in society. At this time, adolescents are faced with deciding who they are, what they are all about, and where they are going in life. He also opined that some degree of identity confusion is normal in *adolescence*. Erikson (1982) stated that adolescents form their identity not by modelling themselves after other people, as young children do, but by modifying and synthesizing earlier identifications into “a new psychological structure, greater than the sum of its parts” (Kroger, 1993).

Thus, adolescence, although a vulnerable and stress-laden period, is one of the most crucial and formative stages of development in the lifespan of an individual. This transitory stage between childhood and adulthood forms the cynosure of the present study. The developmental pathway chosen “. . . turns at each and every stage of the journey on an interaction between the organism as it has developed up to that moment and the environment in which it then finds itself” (Bowlby, 1973). This viewpoint not only presumed that both, history and present circumstances are important, but also that established patterns of adaptation may be transformed by new experiences while, at the same time, new experiences are framed by, interpreted within, and even in part created by prior history of adaptation.

As children progress toward and through adolescence, they typically are exposed more frequently and for longer durations to a broader array of social networks, as the predominant family context of childhood expands to include interaction in social networks with peers and in community and school settings (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000). Moreover, as posited by some scholars (Chassin, 1997), adolescents actively choose and shape their environment and actively seek out risks because of the potential for challenge and excitement. Thus, in other words, the adolescent's behaviour, whether adaptive or destructive, can always be traced back to a social environment, be it the home, school, college, or leisure venues.

The present research takes off from the assumption that the relationship between the observer (adolescent) and the environment is reciprocal. This assumption is based on Gibson's (1991) famous *Theory of Affordances*, according to which, perception, which is influenced by the current needs of the observer, guides action in the environment and this action in turn, provides information for perception. In this study, the researcher goes on to propose that among other things, adolescents' perception of their environments is influenced by their attachment with significant people in those settings, as well as by how adaptively they are able to cope with numerous age-specific stressors in the same. The major thrust areas of the present research are detailed in the following sections.

Perceived Affordances

According to Gibson (1979), "the affordances of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes* either for good or ill." Gibson (1966) stated that *affordances* can be physical, such as affording warmth, light and illumination, but can also be provided by the presence of other people, e.g., social interaction, fighting and nurturing. The concept of *affordance* was later popularized by Norman (1988) as *perceived affordance*. According to him, *perceived affordances* are what the user understands the *affordances* to be.

Norman believed that *affordances* result from the mental interpretation of things, based on our past knowledge and experience applied to our perception of the things about us. The current research deals with Norman's (1988) concept of *perceived affordances*. Here, the researcher has focused on the social component of *affordances*, that is, that which is provided by the presence of other people.

Social Interaction and Retreat

In his three year study of adolescents, Leiberg (1995) identified two activities that adolescents appropriated places for; these activities were *social interaction* and *retreat*. Places of interaction had two purposes, firstly they enabled the adolescent to withdraw from the adult world to be with their peers, and secondly, they enabled the adolescent to encounter the adult world through social involvement in city centres. According to Leiberg (1997), places of retreat were used for avoiding other adolescents and peers.

Strong support for the relationship between adolescent environments and the need for social interaction also comes from studies of adolescents' use of shopping malls (Hopkins, 1991). These studies found that shopping malls afforded being with others and opportunities to interact with others. Lewis (1989) went so far as to describe shopping malls as a third ground between the home and the educational institution. Blatchford (1998) found the school to be an important context for social interaction. According to Cotterell (1991), social interaction also characterized adolescents' use of new leisure environments.

Like Lieberg (1997), Korpela & Hartig (1996) found that the environment is used by adolescents as a strategy for creating and maintaining one's self. More specifically, environments are used to regulate unpleasant and pleasant feelings, to maintain a coherent self-concept and a favourable level of self-esteem. Environments that support these behaviours are called restorative environments. More specifically, according to Woolley *et al.*

(1999), clearing one's mind and relaxing were associated with the adolescent's bedroom, while the town centre was found to be 'affording' 11-12-year-olds' places for quiet reflection.

In the present study, the adolescents' perception of the *affordances* of the environments was assessed in terms of how frequently they were used for purposes of interaction with significant others, enjoyment, relaxation, self-expression, security, privacy and peace. The more often adolescents used the environments for the above mentioned needs, rather than for actively avoiding people, the more favourable their perception was.

Adolescent Environments

In the present study, the dependent variables are two types of *perceived affordances* (related to the needs for social interaction and retreat), viz., *perceived affordances of home* and *perceived affordances of educational institution*.

Home

Home is a space that consists of physical places, social practices and mental meanings for young people (Aseltine, Gore, & Colten, 1994). The influence of the perceived home climate on the psychological adjustment of adolescents has been repeatedly examined (McFarlane *et al.*, 1995; Paterson, Pryor & Field, 1995). The significance of the home is widely accepted as a universal human experience (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). A home is more than a dwelling, it is 'a way of weaving up a life in particular geographical spaces' (Saegert, 1985), and 'the most important centre' in a person's life (Seamon, 1979). As such, home is a multi-dimensional concept. For example, Hayward (1977) described home as embracing a range of concepts such as family, social networks, self-identity, privacy, continuity, personalization, behaviour and the dwelling. Lawrence (1987a) suggested that the concept of home is based on cultural, socio-demographic, social, and psychological dimensions.

Based on previous studies, Tognoli (1987) outlined five general attributes of centrality, continuity, privacy, self-expression and personal identity, and social relationships, which are crucial in describing the social context of home.

- *Centrality*: Tognoli (1987) found that the quality of centrality is generally associated with home environments. Altman (1975) proposed that the home is a primary territory, and so the inhabitants expect relatively permanent, exclusive control and use of these environments. Sixsmith (1986) went on to propose that home constitutes a central and profoundly significant aspect of the lives of the inhabitants.
- *Continuity*: Tognoli (1987) suggested that having a place (home) to return to, where one feels a sense of belonging, also engenders feelings of continuity, stability, and permanence. Along these lines, Sebba & Churchman (1986) proposed that a feeling of security was commonly associated with the home, and that it was the most frequently mentioned quality of the home environment by young children.
- *Privacy*: Tognoli (1987) found evidence that feelings of privacy and refuge are important characteristics of the home (Sixsmith, 1986). As noted earlier, primary territories are areas of exclusive control by individuals or families. According to Altman (1975), control of space can be construed as control of social interactions within that space, and this implies a state of privacy, or control of access to the self. This ability to achieve optimum levels of interaction with others is an important characteristic of the home environment, permitting feelings of ease and relaxation. According to Seamon (1979), when individuals control space and have privacy needs met, feelings of comfort and freedom are possible.
- *Self-expression and Personal Identity*: Tognoli (1987) found that an important quality of home was concerned with self-expression and personal identity. Sixsmith's (1986) research found that the home provided a backdrop for individual self-expression, as

well as many significant experiences and happy occasions. When the home was familiar and known and had many personally meaningful places within it, its importance to individuals increased. In a study by Hayward (1977), subjects described how their home was closely related to their self-identity, and how it served as a symbol of both, how they saw themselves, and how they wanted others to see them.

- *Social Relationships*: An important characteristic of the home environment concern's an individual's relationships with others, or the social or interpersonal aspect of the home. Pennartz (1986) found that the atmosphere within a home was frequently described in terms of communication and accessibility to others. Sixsmith (1986) also found that the type and quality of relationships and the emotional environment which they 'afforded' were significant aspects of the social dimension of the home.

Just as the home is the centre of a spatial network which includes one's workplace, school and other points in the geographical world, so too does it occupy a place in an individual's social network. Such a social network is based on the relationships within the home, and then extends to include close friends, relatives, neighbours, and the like, with the home being the focus for a range of interlocking social networks (Lawrence, 1987a). These people may enter the home in certain social situations, and according to specific social roles, both of which are under the control of the individual living in that home.

Educational Institution

In the present study, 'educational institution' refers to both school and college. In addition to family and peer support, a growing number of studies have focused on the psychological effects of students' perceptions of school climate (Epstein, 1989; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). New social and academic pressures force adolescents toward different roles, roles that often involve more responsibility. Achievement becomes a more serious business in

adolescence, and adolescents begin to sense that the game of life is now being played for real. They even may begin to perceive current success and failures as predictors of future outcomes in the adult world. And as demands on adolescents intensify, different areas of their lives may come into conflict. Adolescents' social interests may cut into the time they need to pursue academic matters. Thus, time in school is obviously important for adolescents. How effectively they adapt to the new academic and social pressures, is determined, in part, by psychological, motivational, and contextual factors (Pintrich, 2003; Stipek, 2002). Indeed, adolescents' achievement is due to much more than their intellectual ability. For instance, students who are less bright than others often show an adaptive motivational pattern—persistent at tasks and confident about their ability to solve problems—and turn out to be high achievers. In contrast, some of the brightest students show maladaptive achievement patterns—give up easily and do not have confidence in their academic skills, for example—and turn out to be low achievers. Thus, schools are charged not only with the primary responsibility of academic achievement, but also for helping students to learn social and civic skills, and responsibilities (Marsh & Parker, 1984).

Apart from the structural or organizational characteristics of the school, (e.g., Astin, 1965) such as size and faculty:student ratios, the school climate has often been defined as the quality of interactions among and between adults and students in a school community (Kuperminc *et al.*, 1997). Researchers have commonly found that perception of school climate significantly predict psychological adjustment (Hoge *et al.*, 1990; Roeser *et al.*, 1998). Middle school students' perception of school climate, for example, appear to predict self-esteem even after accounting for demographic factors such as IQ, sex, race, single-parent family, and socioeconomic status (Bachman & O'Malley, 1986). Similarly, in their study of 1,041 White and African American adolescents from socio-economically diverse families, Roeser *et al.* (1998) reported that early adolescents' perception of overall school climate and

positive teacher regard predicted positive changes in emotional adjustment during the middle school years. In addition, an effective classroom climate fosters student satisfaction, personal growth, and achievement (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998). Early adolescents who perceived their teachers as emotionally supportive were less likely to experience alienation from school or emotional distress.

Researchers have typically found that the perceived qualities of family relationships, friendships, and school experiences are associated positively with psychological adjustment in adolescents (Eccles *et al.* 1997). According to social-cognitive theory, adolescents develop internalized expectancies about others' reactions to their own behaviours (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, adolescents' perceptions of their parents' (and others') reactions to various behaviours are likely to affect their choice of behaviours (Nelson & Crick, 1999). This development is paralleled by ongoing attachment experiences and the formation of mental representational models of parents' (and other attachment figures') availability, sensitivity, and responsiveness (Bowlby, 1969). According to Main, Kaplan & Cassidy (1985), during adolescence these models of attachment affect interpretations of the social environment and serve to obtain or to limit access to information concerning social relationships.

Attachment And Attachment Styles

Meaning of Attachment

According to Bowlby (1951), *attachment* is a binding affection or a close emotional bond between two people. More specifically, *attachment* can be defined as the emotional tone between children and their caregivers and is evidenced by an infant's seeking and clinging to the caregiving person, usually the mother (Bowlby, 1969). In other words, *attachment* refers to the emotional and physical bond between infant and primary caregiver. The usual connotation is that this kind of emotional relationship is infused with dependency: the persons rely on each other for emotional satisfaction. Bowlby (1982) hypothesized that

attachment behaviour persists throughout life, from the cradle to the grave. According to him, attachment occurs when there is a “warm, intimate and continuous relationship with the mother in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.” Ainsworth (1963) defined *attachment* as an affectional tie that one person or animal forms between himself and another specific one - a tie that binds them together in space and endures over time.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). They revolutionized the concept of a child’s tie to the mother and its disruption through separation, deprivation, and bereavement. Ainsworth’s (1972) innovative methodology not only made it possible to test some of Bowlby’s (1969) ideas empirically, but also helped expand the theory itself and is responsible for some of the new directions it is now taking. Ainsworth (1963) contributed the concept of the attachment figure as a secure base from which an infant can explore the world. In addition, she formulated the concept of maternal sensitivity to infant signals and its role in the development of infant-mother attachment patterns.

Attachment Theory is a psychological, evolutionary and ethological theory that provides a descriptive and explanatory framework for discussion of interpersonal relationships between human beings. According to Bowlby (1973), in infants, attachment is primarily a process of proximity, seeking an identified attachment figure, in situations of perceived distress or alarm. Infants become attached to adults who are sensitive and responsive in social interactions with the infant, and who remain as consistent caregivers for some months during the period from about 6 months to 2 years of age. Parental responses lead to the development of patterns of attachment which in turn lead to ‘internal working models’, which will guide the individual’s feelings, thoughts, and expectations in later relationships. The emphasis on attachment to the mother has gradually shifted to an emphasis

on the primary caregiver (which may not be the mother) and it is now recognised that children can form multiple attachments. Thus, attachment is a two way process which develops over time (Caruso, 1989). Both, the primary caregiver and the infant are active participants in this process. The key factor for the caregiver is sensitive responsiveness - the ability to attune to the child and respond to their signals. The child's responsiveness is also an important contributor to the process (Belsky & Nezworski, 1988).

Working Models of Attachment

Bowlby (1973) characterized *internal working models* as mental representations constructed from interaction patterns between individuals and their principal attachment figures. Bowlby (1989) theorized that, as the infant grows up, the pattern of behavioural transactions that characterize the attachment dyad becomes internalized. Based on experiences with attachment figures, representations of the self and others emerge, reflecting the degree to which the individual feels worthy of care and affection from others (model of self) as well as the degree to which the individual generally perceives others to be available, accepting and responsive (model of others). Internal working models are presumed to maintain a fixed pattern from which to pursue social interactions. Children usually interpret experiences in light of their working models rather than change their working models to fit new experiences. Only when experiences cannot be interpreted in the light of working models do children modify their working models (Feeney, Noller & Roberts, 1998). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) have proposed that working models consist of two parts: one part deals with thoughts about the self; the other part deals with thoughts about others. They further proposed that a person's thoughts about self are generally positive or generally negative. The same applies to a person's thoughts about others.

Continuity of Attachment

Research on attachment continuity has confirmed that stability of attachment organization is not only possible, but also normative. If an attachment relationship remains stable over time, continuity should be evident in the organization of the attachment behavioural system, such that secure base behaviour maintains a similar pattern. As children develop and are better able to provide protection for themselves, the threshold and need for overt secure base behaviour diminishes. Despite this reduction in secure base behaviour, attachment is not relinquished. According to Bowlby's (1973) theory of Internal Working Models, cognitive-affective representations of self, other, and self and other in relationship are drawn from these patterns of early attachment experience and continue to guide the individual, particularly with regard to relationships.

An important theoretical issue in attachment studies is the explanation for differences in quality of attachment. Literature provides three possible explanations. First, differences in quality of attachment can be explained by characteristics of the person reporting attachment. In most research concerning adolescent and adult attachment, attachment is studied as a general working model, which is thought to be stable throughout the life span (McCormick & Kennedy, 1994), although some changes may occur as the person experiences new attachment relationships (Bartholomew, 1993). According to this theoretical premise, quality of attachment is a characteristic of the individual. Second, differences in quality of attachment can be explained by characteristics of the attachment figure. Some features of attachment figures (e.g., sensitivity and responsiveness) are thought to be strongly related to differences in infant quality of attachment (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978). Third, differences in quality of attachment can be attributed to characteristics of the specific attachment relationship. Studies concerning infants' attachment to their mothers and fathers show that these attachments are relationship specific (Main & Weston, 1981). Research studying

attachment in adults also found that these attachments were relationship specific (Asendorpf *et al.*, 1997). This suggests that quality of attachment is a characteristic of the relationship itself rather than of either of the individuals in the relationship, a view that is also shared by some attachment theorists (e.g., Hinde, 1982).

Attachment in Adolescence

A fundamental change from infancy to adulthood is the emergence of a 'single overarching attachment organization', which predicts future behaviour with offspring and with marital partners, from the multiple distinct patterns of attachment behaviour that infants display with different caregivers (Cox *et al.*, 1992; Steele *et al.*, 1996). Thus, in addition to clarifying and sharpening the distinctions between qualities of specific relationships with the mother, with the father, and with others, the adolescent also develops an integrated strategy for approaching attachment relationships (Main & Goldwyn, 1998; Waters *et al.*, 1995). As adolescence brings with it the capacity for formal operational thinking (Keating, 1990) along with dramatic increases in differentiation of self and other (Bowlby, 1973), the development of a more overarching stance toward attachment experiences is most likely to occur during this period (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985).

Attachment Styles

Attachment style reflects a strategy for organizing emotions and cognitions pertaining to self and others (Main & Goldwyn, 1998). Bartholomew (1990) defined four attachment prototypes viz., *secure*, *fearful*, *preoccupied*, and *dismissing*, based on the intersection of the positive and negative variations in the working models of self and other. The self-model was characterized by the degree of self-worth and anxiety experienced in close relationships (e.g., neuroticism, self-esteem and acceptance). The other-model was characterized by the tendency to seek out or avoid support (e.g., sociability, extraversion, and warmth) (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994a). Bartholomew (1993) suggested that the two dimensions should be

considered simultaneously. The resulting combination of positive-negative attitudes about self and positive-negative attitudes about others yields four *attachment styles*. They are: *secure* (positive self and other), *preoccupied* (negative self, positive other), *dismissing* (positive self, negative other) and *fearful-avoidant* (negative self and other).

Secure Attachment Style

A person with a *secure attachment style* has high self-esteem and is positive about other people, so he/she seeks interpersonal closeness and feels comfortable in relationships. The secure pattern (positive self and other) is characterized by capacity for intimacy while maintaining personal autonomy. Compared to those with other attachment styles, secure individuals are less prone to becoming angry, attribute less hostile intent to others, and expect conflicts to have positive and constructive outcomes (Mikulincer, 1998). Secure individuals are best able to form lasting, committed, satisfying relationships (Shaver & Brennan, 1992).

Fearful-Avoidant Attachment Style

A person with a *fearful-avoidant attachment style* is low in self-esteem and negative about other people. The fearful pattern (negative self and other) is characterized by anxious avoidance of intimacy due to fear of loss or rejection. By minimizing interpersonal closeness and avoiding close relationships, fearful-avoidant individuals hope to protect themselves from the pain of being rejected. This attachment style is associated with negative interpersonal relationships, feelings of jealousy, and the use of alcohol to reduce their anxiety about social situations (McGowan, Daniels & Byrne, 2000).

Preoccupied Attachment Style

A *preoccupied attachment style* is defined by a negative view of self, combined with positive expectations that other people will be loving and accepting. The preoccupied pattern (negative self, positive other) is characterized by anxious pursuit of closeness and reassurance from others. As a result, preoccupied individuals seek closeness in relationships (sometimes

excessive closeness), but they also experience anxiety and shame because they feel they are not “worthy” of the other person’s love (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). Distress about the possibility of being rejected is extreme.

Dismissing Attachment Style

A very positive self-image (sometimes unrealistically positive) is characteristic of the *dismissing attachment style*, and the self-descriptions of these individuals differ greatly from the way others describe them (Onishi, Gjerde & Block, 2001). The dismissing individual views himself or herself as worthwhile, independent, and very much entitled to a close relationship; other people are more likely to view them less positively and to describe them as unfriendly and limited in social ability. A major problem is that they expect the worst of others, so they are likely to fear genuine closeness. In other words, the dismissing pattern (positive self, negative other) is characterized by high self-esteem and defensive maintenance of independence in relationships.

Thus, the need for studying the influence (if any) of adolescents’ *attachment styles* on *perceived affordances* of daily adolescent environments derives from the work of many researchers (e.g., Larson & Richards, 1991; Tidwell, Reis & Shaver, 1996) who posited that adolescent relationships have great social and emotional importance and have the capacity to set individuals on different trajectories for overall adjustment later in life. Researchers (Collins & Laursen, 2004) have also suggested that the young individuals may actively structure their social contexts differently as a function of *attachment styles* because emotions and expectations about relationships differ according to *attachment styles*.

Coping with age-typical stressors in adolescence builds on earlier experiences. A growing body of work suggests that attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1988) is a useful framework for explaining why individuals differ in the ways they deal with stressors and for understanding how these differences develop from childhood to adulthood. It has been

repeatedly demonstrated that different working models are linked to different reactions to stress in infancy and childhood (Anders & Tucker, 2000; Urban *et al.*, 1991). These working models remain valid in adolescence (Allen *et al.*, 1998) and become relatively stable aspects of personality (Shaver, Belsky, & Brennan, 2000). For instance, Seiffge-Krenke & Beyers (2004) found that adolescents classified as having ‘secure internal working models’ dealt with their problems more actively by using their social network. In contrast, individuals with ‘dismissing internal working models’ used less support seeking and more internal coping than those with ‘preoccupied working models’.

COPING STRATEGIES

The term ‘coping’ is used to refer to the process by which a person attempts to manage stressful demands. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), coping involves the “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”. *Coping strategies* are the ways people deal with stressful situations. According to Ingledew, Hardy & Cooper (1997), *coping strategies* are intended to moderate or buffer, the effects of stressors on physical and emotional well-being.

Types of Coping Strategies

There are several ways to cope with stress-evoking events and, as a consequence, there are several classification systems (Folkman *et al.*, 1986). Most classifications of coping strategies distinguish between those oriented toward approaching or actively confronting the problem and strategies oriented toward avoiding the problem (e.g., Compas *et al.*, 2001; Ebata & Moos, 1991). One of the most popular classifications of *coping strategies* is the differentiation between *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused* coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). However, some coping strategies are not easily categorized using these typologies. Thus, a third coping strategy termed as *social support* or *support-seeking coping* could be

categorized as either *emotion-focused* or *problem-focused* depending on the nature of support that is sought (Compas *et al.*, 1988). The current research uses this typology.

Problem-Focused Coping

Problem-focused (or task-oriented) *coping* is a strategy for dealing with a stressor in which the person either reduces the stressor's demands or increases his/her resources for meeting its demands. People tend to rely on *problem-focused coping strategies* when they believe their resources and situations are changeable (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The person objectively appraises the situation, works out alternative solutions, decides on an appropriate strategy, takes action and evaluates feedback.

Emotion-Focused Coping

Emotion-focused coping is a strategy that involves changing the way a person feels or emotionally reacts to a stressor. Such coping may either take the form of rumination (negative recurrent thoughts), or may involve clarifying, focusing on, and working through the emotions experienced in conjunction with a stressor. People engage in *emotion-focused coping* to prevent their negative emotions from overwhelming them and making them unable to take action to solve their problems. They also use *emotion-focused coping* when a problem is uncontrollable.

There are many ways in which we try to cope with our negative emotions. Some researchers have divided these into (Moos, 1988) –

- (i) **Behavioural Strategies:** This covers seeking alternate records – that is, trying to replace the losses involved in certain crises by becoming involved in new activities and creating alternate sources of satisfaction. It also includes openly venting one's feeling of anger and despair, and behaviour that may temporarily reduce tension, such as acting impulsively, going on an eating binge, and taking tranquillisers or other medications.

- (ii) **Cognitive Strategies:** This comprises responses aimed at denying or minimizing the seriousness of a crisis or its consequences, as well as accepting a situation as it is and deciding that the basic circumstances cannot be altered.

Social Support or Support-Seeking Coping

Individuals using this type of coping strategy perceive that *social support* is available in the form of tangible assistance, informational support and emotional support from others. Both, 'perceived support' - the belief that help is available if needed, and 'received support' - the actual help obtained, may buffer the impact of stress on physical and psychological health (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Perceived support provides a basis for positive thinking and cognitive restructuring and encourages people to believe that they have resources to call on if they wish to distract themselves from a painful situation (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). On the other hand, research on received support (Uchino, 2004) has shown that receiving information, financial assistance, or help with a task may promote effective coping in individuals responding to controllable events, and receiving emotional support and companionship may encourage effective adaptation in individuals facing uncontrollable events.

Coping in adolescence

Research on stress and coping in adolescence has primarily focused on adverse circumstances that only a small percentage of adolescents are confronted with, such as a major illness, parental divorce, the death of a close friend/ relative, or any other kind of traumatic experience (Chelf & Ellis, 2002; Drapeau *et al.*, 1999). However, the majority of stressful events in adolescence are everyday hassles, such as conflicts in school or quarrels with parents or peers (Seiffge-Krenke *et al.*, 2001). Seiffge-Krenke (1995) found that adolescents usually employ more active coping strategies in dealing with peer-related

stressors, but use more dysfunctional coping strategies when troubled by school- or parent-related problems.

From the review of past literature (Urban *et al.* 1991), it is seen that internal working models of attachment probably mediate the appraisal process. This mediation has a bearing on the subsequent selection and use of particular *coping strategies* which, in turn, determines how adaptive an outcome will be. In the current study, the researcher purports to study the influence (if any) of *attachment styles*, *coping strategies* and their mediational link on *perceived affordances* of important adolescent environments (*viz.*, home and educational institution) under neutral situations (*i.e.*, contexts that do not induce negative emotions or marked personal distress).

Specifically, the objectives of the current research endeavour are as follows:

- To observe the difference (if any) between the middle and the late adolescents' perception of *affordances* provided by the home and educational institution.
- To observe the difference (if any) between the adolescent boys' and the adolescent girls' perception of *affordances* provided by the home and educational institution.
- To observe whether the adolescents' perception of *affordances* provided by the home and educational institution vary as a function of their *attachment styles*.
- To observe whether the adolescents' perception of *affordances* provided by the home and educational institution vary as a function of their *coping strategies*.

Research Hypotheses

H1. There will be a significant effect of *developmental stages* of the adolescents on *perceived affordances*.

H2. There will be a significant effect of *gender* of the adolescents on *perceived affordances*.

- H3.** There will be a significant effect of *attachment styles* of the adolescents on *perceived affordances*.
- H4.** There will be a significant effect of *coping strategies* of the adolescents on *perceived affordances*.
- H5.** There will be a significant interaction effect of (A) *developmental stages* and *gender*; (B) *developmental stages* and *attachment styles*; (C) *developmental stages* and *coping strategies*; (D) *gender* and *attachment styles*; (E) *gender* and *coping strategies*; (F) *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; (G) *developmental stages*, *gender* and *attachment styles*; (H) *developmental stages*, *gender* and *coping strategies*; (I) *developmental stages*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; (J) *gender*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; and (K) *developmental stages*, *gender*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances*.

Additional hypotheses were framed as and when required. These sub hypotheses have been presented in the corresponding sections of Results and Interpretation.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study adopted a between-group design in order to test whether *attachment styles*, *coping strategies*, *developmental stage* and *gender* of the adolescents have any significant effects on *perceived affordances* of home and educational institution. Specifically, this study aimed to test whether adolescents categorized on the basis of their *developmental stage* (viz., middle and late adolescents); their *gender* (viz., girls and boys); their *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing adolescents); and their *coping strategies* (social-support focused, problem-focused and emotion-focused adolescents) differed in terms of their perception of *affordances* provided by two social environments (viz., home and educational institution).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The present study was conducted with 600 educated adolescents, out of whom 300 were middle adolescents (150 boys and 150 girls) and 300 were late adolescent (150 boys and 150 girls). For the current study, the multistage sampling technique (Das & Das, 1998) was used. The sampling criteria were as follows:

Inclusion Criteria for the Middle Adolescent and Late Adolescent Boys and Girls:

1. Age of the subjects: 14-16 years (middle adolescents); 17-19 years (late adolescents)
2. Educational qualification of the subjects:
 - Adolescents aged 14 years – Grade VIII
 - Adolescents aged 15 years – Grade IX
 - Adolescents aged 16 years – Grade X
 - Adolescents aged 17 years – Grade XI
 - Adolescents aged 18 years – Grade XII
 - Adolescents aged 19 years – 1st year honours course

3. Residing in different areas of the metropolitan city of Kolkata.
4. Subjects belonging to nuclear or extended families.
5. Middle-Middle or Upper-Middle class socio-economic background.
6. Hindu by religion.
7. Having only one sibling.
8. Educational qualification of the parents: At least graduation
9. Both parents are working.

Exclusion Criteria for the Middle Adolescents and Late Adolescents:

1. Single child.
2. Number of siblings more than one.
3. Subjects living in hostels.
4. Subjects who have failed in a grade.
5. Subjects who have changed schools recently.
6. History of any chronic physical and psychological disorder of the subjects.
7. History of any chronic physical or psychological disorder of the family members.
8. History of divorce, separation or remarriage of parents.
9. Subjects with one or both parents deceased.
10. Subjects living with one parent while the other parent is posted in another city.
11. Joint family.
12. Number of family members more than 6.

Instruments Used

1. *The Detailed Information Schedule:*

In this schedule, demographic, socio-economic, academic, familial and health-related information were sought.

2. *Scale for Measuring Perceived Affordances:*

The present study used the rating scale developed by Charlotte Clark & David L. Uzzell (2002) of the Department of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, U.K. Clark & Uzzell (2002) measured the affordances of the home, neighbourhood, school and town centre for adolescents. In all, 34 different affordances were measured. The affordances measured, related to two developmental needs in adolescence, the need for places of social interaction and for places of retreat.

The present study focuses on two important social environments, viz., home and educational institution (school and college). This scale has two sub-scales, viz., *Subscale A*, and *Subscale B*. *Subscale A* measures *perceived affordances of home* and *Subscale B* measures *perceived affordances of educational institution*. Each subscale has a 3-point rating scale (Never-N, Sometimes-S and Often-O) indicating how frequently a respondent uses that social environment for each of the affordances under consideration. This is essentially a self-administering questionnaire. There is no time limit to complete it. The participants were required to respond to each of the 34 items by ticking (✓) one of the options (“N”, “S” or “O”) for both the social environments. For the positively worded items Never (N) is given a score of 0, Sometimes (S) is given a score of 1, and Often (O) is given a score of 2. The reverse scoring is followed for negatively worded items. For each sub-scale, the total score is the summation of scores obtained on individual items. Higher scores indicate favourable perception of the environments with respect to the affordances being studied.

The reliabilities of *Subscale A* and *Subscale B* were calculated separately by using the Split-half method. The coefficient of reliability of *Subscale A* is 0.8945. *Subscale B* has a reliability coefficient of 0.5736. The internal consistency of *Subscale A* and *Subscale B* were found by computing the item-total correlation. The coefficients of internal consistency of *Subscale A* and *Subscale B* are 0.3799 and 0.3652 respectively.

3. Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ)

The *Relationship Scales Questionnaire* (RSQ) was developed by Griffin & Bartholomew (1994a, 1994b). This questionnaire assesses four attachment styles, viz., *secure*, *fearful*, *preoccupied* and *dismissing*. The RSQ contains 30 short statements drawn from Hazan & Shaver's (1987) attachment measure, Bartholomew & Horowitz's (1991) Relationship Questionnaire, and Collins & Read's (1990) Adult Attachment Scale. The items in the RSQ are worded in terms of general orientations to close relationships.

This questionnaire has a 5-point scale – *Not at all*, *Hardly*, *To some extent*, *Most of the time* and *Very much*. On this 5-point scale, participants rate the extent to which each statement best describes their characteristic style in close relationships. The RSQ has four subscales-*Secure*, *Fearful*, *Preoccupied* and *Dismissing*. This is a self-administering questionnaire. There is no stipulated time limit to complete it. The RSQ is designed as a continuous measure of attachment. However, if the participants must be classified into attachment styles, standard scores must be used (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994a, 1994b).

For the positively worded items 'Not at all' gets a score of 1, 'Hardly' gets a score of 2, 'To some extent' gets a score of 3, 'Most of the time' gets a score of 4 and 'Very much' gets a score of 5. The reverse scoring is followed for negatively worded items. In order to classify the participants into attachment styles, standard scores were computed.

The coefficient of reliability of the *Secure* subscale is 0.6873; of the *Fearful* subscale is 0.8787; of the *Preoccupied* subscale is 0.8585 and of the *Dismissing* subscale is 0.8498.

The *coefficients of internal consistency* of the *Secure, Fearful, Preoccupied* and *Dismissing* subscales are 0.4336, 0.5760, 0.5388 and 0.5650 respectively.

4. *Coping Checklist-1 (CCL-1)*

The *Coping Checklist-1 (CCL-1)* was developed by K. Rao, D.K. Subbakrishna & G.G. Prabhu (1989). The purpose of this checklist is to find out how respondents deal with or handle difficult situations that they have to face. The list provides some of the commonly used methods of handling stress. The total number of items reported by a respondent is indicative of the size of his/her coping repertoire. The CCL-1 has 7 sub-scales developed on an *apriori* basis and validated in a normal, community sample. There is 1 *Problem-focused* Scale (Problem solving), 5 *Emotion-focused* Scales (Distraction Positive methods, Distraction Negative methods, Acceptance/Redefinition, Religion/Faith and Denial/Blame) and the last one is *Social Support* which is a combination of both problem- and emotion-focused coping. For the present study, the scores of the 5 *Emotion-focused* Scales (*viz.*, Distraction Positive methods, Distraction Negative methods, Acceptance/Redefinition, Religion/Faith and Denial/Blame) were added to get a single score for the *Emotion-focused* Scale.

This is a self-administering questionnaire. There is no time limit to complete it. The checklist consists of 70 items. For each item there are two response options – ‘YES’ and ‘NO’. The respondent is required to circle ‘YES’ if he/she uses the method often or frequently and circle ‘NO’ if he/she uses the method infrequently or not at all. The ‘YES’ responses are scored as 1 and the ‘NO’ responses are scored as 0. The score for each sub-scale is, therefore, the sum total of the ‘YES’ responses on that scale. In the present study, the respondents were categorized into 3 coping strategies, *viz.*, *Problem-focused*, *Emotion-focused* and *Social-support focused* by using standard scores. The coefficients of reliability (split-half) and internal consistency (item-total correlation) of the CCL-1 are 0.8657 and 0.2025 respectively.

Procedure

After selecting the measures, a few arrangements were made for data collection. The selected schools and colleges were contacted. The researcher visited the educational institutions on the scheduled dates. In each educational institution data were collected from small groups of 16 students (8 boys and 8 girls), at a time, from the same grade.

Rapport was established on the first visit by explaining the purpose and relevance of the project. The students who agreed to participate in the study were requested to sign an 'Informed Consent Form'. Next, the Information Schedule was administered. The students who met the sampling criteria were screened. Then the next appointment was fixed.

On the next appointment the instructions for the questionnaires were given first and the subjects were requested to respond to the items. The timings for data collection were arranged in such a way (with the co-operation of the authorities of the respective educational institutions), that the students could respond to the questionnaires over two consecutive periods (i.e. about 90 minutes) so that they were not hurried. There was no fixed time limit for any of the questionnaires. However, the respondents were asked to complete each questionnaire in about 30 minutes.

Statistical Treatment

In the present study, the Multivariate F test (MANOVA) was used to examine whether *perceived affordances*, which was the linear combination of the measured DVs (viz., *perceived affordances of home* and *perceived affordances of educational institution*), varied as a function of the IVs (viz., *developmental stages*, *gender*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*). As the MANOVA effects were found to be significant, the next step was to conduct follow-up Univariate tests of Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) that focused on the effects of IVs (viz., *developmental stages*, *gender*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*) for each DV (viz., *perceived affordances of home* and *perceived affordances of educational*

institution) separately. Since two of the IVs (viz., *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*) had more than 2 groups, appropriate post hoc approaches (Tukey) were used to further evaluate significant effects.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The means and standard deviations of the participants' scores on the dependent variables (viz., *perceived affordances of home* and *perceived affordances of educational institution*) were calculated and presented in the following tables.

TABLE 1: Means and standard deviations of perceived affordances of home and educational institution for the total sample (N=600)

Perceived Affordances	Mean	S.D.
Home	20.4033	4.0725
Educational institution	19.6567	3.7272

TABLE 2: Means and standard deviations of perceived affordances of home and educational institution for the middle adolescents (N=300) and the late adolescents (N=300)

Developmental Stage	Perceived Affordances			
	Home		Educational institution	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Middle Adolescents	19.8333	4.1112	19.9367	3.6557
Late Adolescents	20.9733	3.9587	19.3767	3.7827

TABLE 3: Means and standard deviations of perceived affordances of home and educational institution for the adolescent boys (N=300) and adolescent girls (N=300)

Gender	Perceived Affordances			
	Home		Educational institution	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Adolescent Boys	19.7533	3.9043	19.01	3.8695
Adolescent Girls	21.0533	4.1394	20.3033	3.4667

TABLE 4: Means and standard deviations of perceived affordances of home and educational institution for the adolescents with different attachment styles (N=600)

Attachment Styles	Perceived Affordances			
	Home		Educational Institution	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Secure (N=163)	21.4785	4.2359	20.4908	3.7816
Fearful (N=130)	19.6846	3.6664	18.9846	3.7271
Preoccupied (N=164)	20.1429	4.1277	19.7532	3.7735
Dismissing (N=153)	20.1307	3.9814	19.2418	3.4736

TABLE 5: Means and standard deviations of perceived affordances of home and educational institution for the adolescents with different coping strategies (N=600)

Coping Strategies	Perceived Affordances			
	Home		Educational Institution	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Problem- focused (N=220)	20.2591	4.032	19.9682	3.6607
Social-support focused (N=192)	21.3385	4.0072	19.9531	3.799
Emotion-focused (N=188)	19.617	4.0176	18.9894	3.6622

Prior to performing Multivariate F test (MANOVA), Box's M Test was conducted.

TABLE 6: Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	173.832
F	1.143
df 1	141
df 2	70258.74
Sig.	0.117

From Table 6 it is evident that the test was not significant at 0.05 level of significance ($p > 0.05$). Thus, as the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables were equal across the groups, MANOVA was used for verification of hypotheses H1-H12.

TABLE 7: Results of MANOVA with multivariate tests (Wilk's Lambda) for determining significant effects of developmental stages, gender, attachment styles and coping strategies of the adolescents on perceived affordances

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	P
Developmental stages	0.977	6.460**	2	551	0.002
Gender	0.94	17.588**	2	551	0
Attachment styles	0.958	4.006**	6	1102	0.001
Coping strategies	0.97	4.237**	4	1102	0.002
Developmental stages x Gender	0.993	1.837	2	551	0.16
Developmental stages x Attachment styles	0.987	1.159	6	1102	0.326
Developmental stages x Coping strategies	0.985	2.149	4	1102	0.073
Gender x Attachment styles	0.987	1.196	6	1102	0.306
Gender x Coping Strategies	0.996	0.607	4	1102	0.657
Attachment styles x Coping strategies	0.989	0.496	12	1102	0.918
Developmental stages x Gender x Attachment styles	0.996	0.359	6	1102	0.905
Developmental stages x Gender x Coping strategies	0.995	0.739	4	1102	0.565
Developmental stages x Attachment styles x Coping strategies	0.987	0.583	12	1102	0.857
Gender x Attachment styles x Coping strategies	0.974	1.203	12	1102	0.275
Developmental stages x Gender x Attachment styles x Coping strategies	0.988	0.558	12	1102	0.876

**p<0.01

Table 7 shows that the overall F values for the main effects of *developmental stages*, *gender*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances* were significant at 0.01 level of significance ($p < 0.01$). Thus, **hypotheses H1 – H4 were accepted**. Thus, *perceived affordances* varied as a function of *developmental stages*, *gender*, *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*. On the other hand, the interaction effects were not significant at 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$). Hence, **hypotheses H5(A) – H5(K) were rejected**.

As the MANOVA effects were found to be significant, the next step was to statistically determine the effects of the IVs, viz., *developmental stages* (viz., middle adolescence and late adolescence), *gender* (viz., boys and girls), *attachment styles* (viz., secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing) and *coping strategies* (viz., problem-focused, social-support focused and emotion-focused) on each DV (viz., *perceived affordances of home*, and *perceived affordances of educational institution*) separately.

The sub-hypotheses to be verified are as follows:

- H1a. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *developmental stages* on *perceived affordances of home*.
- H1b. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *developmental stages* on *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H2a. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *gender* on *perceived affordances of home*.
- H2b. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *gender* on *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H3a. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *attachment styles* on *perceived affordances of home*.
- H3b. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *attachment styles* on *perceived affordances of educational institution*.

- H4a. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of home*.
- H4b. There will be a significant effect of the adolescents' *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H5a. There will be a significant interaction effect of (i) *developmental stages* and *gender*; (ii) *developmental stages* and *attachment styles*; (iii) *developmental stages* and *coping strategies*; (iv) *gender* and *attachment styles*; (v) *gender* and *coping strategies*; (vi) *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; (vii) *developmental stages, gender* and *attachment styles*; (viii) *developmental stages, gender* and *coping strategies*; (ix) *developmental stages, attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; (x) *gender, attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; and (xi) *developmental stages, gender, attachment styles* and *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of home*.
- H5b. There will be a significant interaction effect of (i) *developmental stages* and *gender*; (ii) *developmental stages* and *attachment styles*; (iii) *developmental stages* and *coping strategies*; (iv) *gender* and *attachment styles*; (v) *gender* and *coping strategies*; (vi) *attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; (vii) *developmental stages, gender* and *attachment styles*; (viii) *developmental stages, gender* and *coping strategies*; (ix) *developmental stages, attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; (x) *gender, attachment styles* and *coping strategies*; and (xi) *developmental stages, gender, attachment styles* and *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of educational institution*.

TABLE 8: Results of Univariate ANOVA with developmental stages, gender, attachment styles and coping strategies as IVs and perceived affordances of home and educational institution as the separate DVs

Source	DVs (Perceived Affordances)	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Developmental stages	home	132.908	1	132.908	8.707**	0.003
	educational institution	52.826	1	52.826	4.003*	0.046
Gender	home	209.778	1	209.778	13.742**	0
	educational institution	292.438	1	292.438	22.162*	0
Attachment styles	home	191.546	3	63.849	4.183**	0.006
	educational institution	161.064	3	53.688	4.069**	0.007
Coping strategies	home	192.574	2	96.287	6.308**	0.002
	educational institution	61.219	2	30.61	2.32	0.099
Developmental stages x Gender	home	42.935	1	42.935	2.813	0.094
	educational institution	10.672	1	10.672	0.809	0.369
Developmental stages x Attachment styles	home	52.597	3	17.532	1.149	0.329
	educational institution	46.465	3	15.488	1.174	0.319
Gender x Attachment styles	home	23.05	3	7.683	0.503	0.68
	educational institution	73.971	3	24.657	1.869	0.134
Developmental stages x Gender x Attachment styles	home	10.687	3	3.562	0.233	0.873
	educational institution	19.519	3	6.506	0.493	0.687
Developmental stages x Coping strategies	home	49.589	2	24.795	1.624	0.198
	educational institution	73.281	2	36.641	2.777	0.063
Gender x Coping strategies	home	31.203	2	15.602	1.022	0.361
	educational institution	4.781	2	2.391	0.181	0.834
Developmental stages x Gender x Coping strategies	home	9.681	2	4.84	0.317	0.728
	educational institution	30.348	2	15.174	1.15	0.317

Table 8: Cont'd

Source	DVs (Perceived Affordances)	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Attachment styles x Coping strategies	home	42.29	6	7.048	0.462	0.837
	educational institution	42.633	6	7.105	0.538	0.779
Developmental stages x Attachment styles x Coping strategies	home	51.603	6	8.6	0.563	0.76
	educational institution	47.12	6	7.853	0.595	0.734
Gender x Attachment styles x Coping strategies	home	138.368	6	23.061	1.511	0.172
	educational institution	70.205	6	11.701	0.887	0.504
Developmental stages x Gender x Attachment styles x Coping strategies	home	98.139	6	16.357	1.071	0.378
	educational institution	3.812	6	0.635	0.048	1
Error	home	8426.458	552	15.265		
	educational institution	7283.988	552	13.196		
Total	home	259712	600			
	educational institution	240152	600			

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

As is evident from the above table (Table 8), the present study reported significant effects of *developmental stages* on the two DVs, i.e., *perceived affordances of home* ($p < 0.01$) and *perceived affordances of educational institution* ($p < 0.05$). Thus, **hypotheses H1a and H1b were accepted.**

The mean scores in Table 2 indicated that the late adolescents ($M = 20.9733$) perceived home as providing higher (favourable) affordances than the middle adolescents ($M = 19.8333$). On the other hand, educational institution was perceived to be providing higher (favourable) affordances by the middle adolescents ($M = 19.9367$) than by the late adolescents ($M = 19.3767$).

Table 8 showed that *gender* had significant effects on *perceived affordances of home* ($p < 0.01$) and *perceived affordances of educational institution* ($p < 0.05$). Thus, **hypotheses H2a and H2b were accepted.**

The mean scores in Table 3 indicated that home and educational institution were perceived as providing higher (favourable) affordances by the adolescent girls ($M = 21.0533$ and $M = 20.3033$ respectively) than by the adolescent boys ($M = 19.7533$ and $M = 19.0100$ respectively).

Table 8 revealed significant effects of *attachment styles* on *perceived affordances of home* and *perceived affordances of educational institution* at 0.01 level of significance ($p < 0.01$). Thus, **hypotheses H3a and H3b were accepted.** The results presented in Table 8 indicated that *coping strategies* had a significant main effect only on *perceived affordances of home* at 0.01 level of significance ($p < 0.01$) and not on *perceived affordances of educational institution* ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, **hypothesis H4a was accepted and hypothesis H4b was rejected.**

In lieu with the MANOVA effects (Table 7) none of the univariate ANOVA results (Table 8) for the interaction effects were significant at 0.05 level of significance ($p > 0.05$). Thus, **hypotheses H5a(i)-H5a(xi) and H5b(i)-H5b(xi) were rejected.**

The sub-hypotheses with respect to the post-hoc analysis for *attachment styles* (IV) and *coping strategies* (IV) are outlined below. Due to the non-significant value of the overall F in case of the effect of *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of educational institution*, further post hoc tests were not conducted.

- H3a(i). There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.
- H3a(ii). There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.

- H3a(iii). There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.
- H3a(iv). There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.
- H3a(v). There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.
- H3a(vi). There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.
- H3b(i). There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *fearful* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H3b(ii). There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *preoccupied* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H3b(iii). There will be a significant difference between the *secure* and the *dismissing* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H3b(iv). There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *preoccupied* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H3b(v). There will be a significant difference between the *fearful* and the *dismissing* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H3b(vi). There will be a significant difference between the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*.
- H4a(i) There will be a significant difference between the *problem-focused* adolescents and the *social-support focused* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.

- H4a(ii) There will be a significant difference between the *problem-focused* and the *emotion-focused* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.
- H4a(iii) There will be a significant difference between the *social-support focused* and the *emotion-focused* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*.

The results of the post hoc analyses are presented in Table 9 – Table 11.

TABLE 9: Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to perceived affordances of home

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variables)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	p
Perceived affordances of home		Fearful	1.7939**	0.4594	0.001
	Secure	Preoccupied	1.3357*	0.4391	0.013
		Dismissing	1.3478*	0.4398	0.012
		Preoccupied	-0.4582	0.4654	0.758
	Fearful	Dismissing	-0.4461	0.466	0.774
		Preoccupied	Dismissing	-0.0121	0.4459

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 9 reveals that the *secure* adolescents significantly differed from the *fearful* ($p<0.01$), the *preoccupied* ($p<0.05$) and the *dismissing* ($p<0.05$) adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home*. Thus, **hypotheses H3a(i) – H3a(iii) were accepted**. This means that (as is evident from the mean scores in Table 4) *home* was perceived to be providing higher (favourable) affordances by the *secure* adolescents ($M=21.4785$) than by the *fearful* ($M=19.6846$), the *preoccupied* ($M=20.1429$) and the *dismissing* ($M=20.1307$) adolescents. However, the *fearful*, *preoccupied* and *dismissing* adolescents did not differ

significantly ($p>0.05$) with respect to *perceived affordances of home*. Thus, **hypotheses H3a(iv) – H3a(vi) were rejected.**

TABLE 10: Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the four attachment styles with respect to perceived affordances of educational institution

Dependent variable	Attachment styles (target variable)	Attachment styles (comparison variable)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	p
Perceived affordances of educational institution	Secure	Fearful	1.5062**	0.4272	0.003
		Preoccupied	0.7376	0.4082	0.271
		Dismissing	1.2490*	0.4089	0.012
	Fearful	Preoccupied	-0.7686	0.4327	0.286
		Dismissing	-0.2572	0.4333	0.934
		Preoccupied	0.5114	0.4147	0.606

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Table 10 shows that there were significant differences between the *secure* and the *fearful* adolescents ($p<0.01$); and the *secure* and the *dismissing* adolescents ($p<0.05$) with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*. Hence, **hypotheses H3b(i) and H3b(iii) were accepted.** From the mean scores in Table 4, it can be seen that the *secure* adolescents ($M=20.4908$) perceived the *educational institution* to be providing higher (favourable) affordances than the *fearful* ($M=18.9846$) and the *dismissing* ($M=19.2418$) adolescents.

On the other hand, the *secure* and the *preoccupied* adolescents' perception of the affordances provided by the *educational institution* did not differ significantly ($p>0.05$). Thus, **hypothesis H3b(ii) was rejected.** Similarly, there were no significant differences between the *fearful*, the *preoccupied* and the *dismissing* adolescents ($p>0.05$) with respect to *perceived affordances of educational institution*. Thus, **hypotheses H3b(iv) – H3b(vi) were rejected.**

TABLE 11: Result of Post hoc analysis (Tukey) showing mean difference between the three coping strategies with respect to perceived affordances of home

Dependent variable	Coping strategies (target variable)	Coping strategies (comparison variable)	Mean Difference (target variable - comparison variable)	Std. Error	p
Perceived affordances of home	Problem-focused	Social-support focused	-1.0795*	0.3859	0.015
		Emotion-focused	0.6421	0.3881	0.224
	Social-support focused	Emotion-focused	1.7215**	0.4009	0

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 11 reveals that there was a significant difference between the *problem-focused* adolescents and the *social-support focused* adolescents ($p<0.05$) with respect to *perceived affordances of home*. Similarly, the *social-support focused* and the *emotion-focused* adolescents' perception of the affordances provided by home differed significantly ($p<0.01$). Thus, **hypotheses H4a(i) and H4a(iii) were accepted**. This means that (as is evident from the mean scores in Table 5) *home* was perceived to be providing higher (favourable) affordances by the *social-support focused* adolescents ($M=21.3385$) than by the *problem-focused* ($M=20.2591$) and the *emotion-focused* ($M=19.6170$) adolescents. However, no significant difference was found between the *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused* adolescents with respect to *perceived affordances of home* ($p>0.05$). Thus, **hypotheses H4a(ii) was rejected**.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study supported Bowlby's (1973) conception that new experiences are interpreted in the context of established patterns of adaptation. Broadly, the study reported that generally, attachment styles and coping strategies, being characteristics of the adolescents, are carried with them into every social environment and influence adolescents' perception of the same. Further, the present researcher observed that age and gender are also important factors which influence adolescents' perception of their social environments.

Effects of Developmental Stages on Perceived Affordances of Home and Educational Institution

The study revealed that the effects of *developmental stages* (viz., middle and late) on *perceived affordances* of home and educational institution were significant. The late adolescents perceived home as providing higher (favourable) affordances than the middle adolescents. On the other hand, educational institution was perceived to be providing higher (favourable) affordances by the middle adolescents than by the late adolescents.

The above findings may be discussed in the context of the individuation process that is characteristic of *adolescence*. Youniss & Smollar (1985) claimed in their individuation theory that the individuation process consists of two conceptually independent aspects: *autonomy* that increases during adolescence and *connectedness* that is maintained. According to some researchers (Steinberg, 1990), however, the goal of adolescent individuation also includes the maintenance of close relations to their parents. Levpušček (2006) reported that middle adolescence is a period when the most pronounced changes occur in individuation. Findings show that during middle adolescence it seems that perceived support from parents declines, and perceived conflict with parents increases (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). This may be because middle adolescents desire more autonomy from parents and as a result perceive

parents as less supportive over time. As opposed to middle adolescents, late adolescents show lower dependency denial and fewer concerns about parental emotional control. Thus, the late adolescents, with a consolidated sense of self and others, and an ability to strike a balance between autonomy and connectedness, are flexible, adaptive, and open to changes in relationships. Hence, they are likely to perceive the home favourably and explore it optimally. In contrast, the middle adolescents undergo relatively more conflict and stress, particularly with respect to their struggle with the individuation process. This leads them to perceive the home as less favourable (in terms of affordances) than the late adolescents.

The present findings indicated that the middle adolescents perceived the educational institution to be providing higher (favourable) affordances than the late adolescents. Previous research (Puklek & Vidmar, 2000) reported that mid-to-late adolescents seek more intimacy with friends (mutual trust, empathy, talking about the most intimate secrets) than early adolescents. It must be noted here that during transition to middle adolescence, these individuals test their newly developed independence. During this time, adolescents often deny any need for caution or advice and practice their self-sufficiency by risk-taking behaviour (Josselson, 1980). They increase their commitment to friends, who provide the support and approval previously sought from parents. Moreover, it may have been that the middle adolescents compensated for less satisfactory relationship with parents by having more intimate relations with friends in school/college. Although, the present study did not directly measure such compensatory relationships, previous studies have reported time and again (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993) that, in the case of less satisfactory relations with parents, adolescents can compensate for deprivation of their dependency needs. In short, less successful balancing of autonomy and connectedness in relation to parents was predictive of higher friends' idealization.

Effects of Gender on Perceived Affordances of Home and Educational Institution

The study reported significant effects of *gender* on *perceived affordances* of home and educational institution. The adolescent girls perceived the home and educational institution to be providing higher (favourable) affordances than the adolescent boys. The findings of the present study are seconded by previous research (Way & Robinson, 2003) showing that the association between perceptions of family support and psychological adjustment is moderated by gender. Schwartz *et al.* (2009) found gender differences in adolescents' reports of family functioning. Girls appeared to become more satisfied with their families over time than boys. Likewise, Armsden (1986) has noted that the correlation between parental support and self-esteem is higher for girls than for boys.

Consideration of previous studies leads to the conclusion that adolescent girls tend to strive to a greater extent than boys to maintain emotional connections with their family and try to balance the striving for autonomy and a non-conflict relationship with parents. A typical gender role probably requires females, more than males, to be successful at forming and maintaining closeness and intimacy in relationships. This view has been affirmed by past researchers (e.g., Gilligan, 1977; Geuzaine *et al.*, 2000). As compared to girls, boys tend to show excessive autonomy strivings in their individuation, and the process of boys' individuation appears to be more turbulent. In research on risk-taking behaviours among adolescent boys (Galambos, 2004), this notion has been supported. In short, unlike boys, adolescent girls show greater capabilities of reaching independence while maintaining emotional proximity with their parents. Such capabilities are likely to underlie their perception of home as providing higher (favourable) affordances than the boys.

Earlier studies (Geuzaine *et al.*, 2000) have shown that adolescent girls' connectedness not only with parents, but also in other relationships might be an important element that contributes to their healthy development. Along these lines, Barber & Erickson

(2001) suggested that the foundational relationship with parents was linked to adolescents' interpersonal relationships with friends, schoolteachers, and adults in the community. Relevant literature (e.g., Crocenkenberg *et al.*, 1996; Scheier & Botvin, 1998) has also shown that through social relationships with parents, children and adolescents develop values, goals, rules, skills, and behaviours for conducting social relationships outside the home. Accordingly, in the context of the present study, it may be said that as majority of adolescent girls are able to balance the striving for autonomy and maintenance of connectedness in relationships with parents, they are likely to be able to form satisfying relationships with friends, teachers and others outside the family. Thus, as in the case of the home environment, the adolescent girls perceived the educational institution to be providing higher (favourable) affordances than the adolescent boys.

Effects of Attachment Styles on Perceived Affordances of Home and Educational Institution

Results showed that the effects of the adolescents' *attachment styles on perceived affordances of* home and educational institution were significant. Home was perceived to be providing higher (favourable) affordances by the secure adolescents than by the fearful, preoccupied and dismissing adolescents. The secure adolescents perceived the educational institution to be providing higher (favourable) affordances than the fearful and dismissing adolescents whereas there was no difference between the secure and the preoccupied adolescents' perception of the same. However, the fearful, preoccupied and dismissing adolescents' perception of the affordances provided by home and educational institution did not differ significantly.

The findings of the present study were largely supported by Altman & Low's (1992) opinion that the nature of the relationship between people and their environment parallels interpersonal relationships particularly in the phenomenon of attachment. More specifically,

Larson & Richard (1991) found that individuals may actively structure their social contexts differently as a function of attachment style because expectations about relationships differ according to attachment style. Going by attachment theory, individuals are motivated to seek relationships that are consistent with internal working models of the attachment relationship (Main & Goldwyn, 1998). Bartholomew (1990) suggested that attachment cognitions function as filters that delineate how a person applies information about past relationships in appraising the emotional consequences of present interactions. The implication is that the filters restrict access to current interpersonal data that is not congruent with working models about self and others. The present study corroborated this view.

The results of this study can be best discussed in the light of the characteristic features of the four attachment styles. To start off with, based on the conceptualizations of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), it is reasonable to suggest that the secure adolescents in this study perceived their attachment figures as *secure bases* from which they could safely explore their social environments (viz., home and educational institution) and to which they could return for comfort or connection. As secure adolescents have a high self-esteem and a positive attitude toward other people, they expect that their emotional needs will be satisfied consistently in close relationships and consequently seek interpersonal closeness and feel comfortable in relationships. Secure individuals tend to appraise stressful events as less threatening than do less secure persons (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996). Such adolescents also are more likely to disclose personal information and feelings toward significant others and express their emotions in a relatively open way. For these reasons, secure adolescents might understand the personal and the relational changes involving their parents, teachers, friends and significant others and adjust in a better way.

Adolescents with fearful attachment styles are low in self-esteem and negative about other people. The fearful pattern (negative self and other) is characterized by anxious

avoidance of intimacy due to fear of loss or rejection. Unlike the secure adolescents, they tend to have non-close, conflictual relationships with parents and teachers. By minimizing interpersonal closeness and avoiding close relationships, these adolescents hope to protect themselves from the pain of being rejected. Fearful individuals describe their parents in negative terms (Levy *et al.*, 1998), and are hostile and become angry without realizing it (Mikulincer, 1998a). This attachment style is associated with negative interpersonal relationships and feelings of jealousy (McGowan, Daniels, & Byrne, 2000).

Unlike fearful adolescents, those with a dismissing attachment style have a very positive self-image (sometimes unrealistically positive), and the self-descriptions of these individuals differ greatly from the way others describe them (Onishi, Gjerde & Block, 2001). The dismissing individual views himself or herself as worthwhile, independent, and very much entitled to a close relationship; other people are more likely to view them less positively and to describe them as unfriendly and limited in social ability. A major problem is that they expect the worst of others, so they are likely to fear genuine closeness. In other words, the dismissing pattern (positive self, negative other) is characterized by high self-esteem and defensive maintenance of independence in relationships. Dismissing adolescents have been observed to show more hostility in peer relationships, more loneliness and more helplessness (Cole-Detke & Kobak, 1996). They have difficulty in seeking support from peers and teachers and often tend to withdraw.

A preoccupied attachment style, on the other hand, is defined by a negative view of self, combined with positive expectations that other people will be loving and accepting. The preoccupied pattern (negative self, positive other) is characterized by anxious pursuit of closeness and reassurance from others. As a result, preoccupied individuals seek closeness in relationships (sometimes excessive closeness), but they also experience anxiety and shame because they feel they are not “worthy” of the other person’s love (Lopez *et al.*, 1997). An

extreme fear of being rejected often leads them to feel distressed. The hyperactivation of the attachment system in times of stress may direct preoccupied adolescents' attention toward the stressful events, increasing their need for help to such an extent that they might perceive support as unavailable or insufficient to meet their needs. Such perceptions might lead them to give up seeking help, or to seek it in an overwhelming and inappropriate manner.

Thus, it appears that secure attachment is associated with positive adaptational outcomes, whereas fearful, dismissing and preoccupied attachments, being specific types of *insecure* attachment (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999), are related to poorer personal adjustment. From a broader perspective, Main, Kaplan and Cassidy (1985) opined that during adolescence the mental models of attachment affect interpretations of the social environment, and serve to obtain or to limit access to information concerning social relationships. The results of this particular study thus led the researcher to conclude that the distinguishing characteristics of the four attachment styles are the reasons behind the observed differences in perception of affordances of home and educational institution. In short, this study does contribute to the notion that internal working models characterize how individuals perceive and behave in social interactions.

Effects of Coping Strategies on Perceived Affordances of Home and Educational Institution

The study reported that the effect of *coping strategies* of the adolescents on *perceived affordances of home* was significant. Home was perceived to be providing higher (favourable) affordances by the *social-support focused* adolescents than by the *problem-focused* and the *emotion-focused* adolescents. The *problem-focused* adolescents and the *emotion-focused* adolescents did not differ significantly in their perception of affordances provided by home. On the other hand, the effect of *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of educational institution* was not significant.

The present study focused on adolescents' 'general dispositions' to employ certain types of coping tactics, rather than on situation-specific coping. It is important to note that individuals and their environments are involved in a continuous interaction, and it is disequilibrium in the transaction balance that leads to the experience of stress and concomitant coping attempts (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988a, 1988b). Thus, as proposed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984), it seems reasonable to expect that appraisal of life events, rather than the mere presence or absence of specific events in one's life, determines individuals' adjustment to their environments.

Researchers (Herzberg *et al.*, 1999) have proposed that perception of social support derive not only from current behaviours of support providers but also from accumulated perception of the supportiveness of the environment over the life span. In the context of the present study, it may be said that the adolescents using '*social support*' as a predominant means of coping, generally believed that support would be available if needed. Also, they engaged in interaction with and exploration of the home environment, rather than actively avoiding the same. Hence, it is likely that, for such adolescents, perceived support decreased the extent to which situations were perceived as a threat to well-being and increased the belief that necessary resources were available. As revealed by earlier studies (Schonert-Reichl *et al.* 1995), the adolescents adopting *social-support* as a means of coping, request assistance from informal (e.g., parents, friends), as well as formal (e.g., teachers, school counsellors, mental health professionals) helping agents. Researchers (Kuhl *et al.*, 1997) have highlighted that selection of a source of support is a decision-making process that probably involves consideration of the problem type and the resources, and availability of potential others in the surrounding social network. Therefore, it may have been that, at home the social-support focused adolescents' *perception* of how other people would *respond* to disclosure of their problems, alongwith *expectations* of available support and nurturance,

influenced whether and to whom they would turn to for support. Perhaps, the social-support focused adolescents felt loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and viewed themselves as being part of a network of communication and mutual obligation. Thus, at home, these adolescents were probably able to seek tangible assistance (e.g., material support) and informational support (e.g., suggestions about how to manage day-to-day stresses) for controllable events, and emotional support (e.g., reassurance that he/she is a valuable individual who is cared for) for uncontrollable events. Moreover, a study by Parke & Buriel (1998) revealed that adolescents using 'social support' as a primary coping strategy attribute more importance to family support.

As opposed to the *social-support focused* adolescents, the *problem-focused* adolescents seek help primarily for task-specific problems and may be unable to explore the social aspect of the home as much as the former. Moreover, coping theorists have suggested that problem-focused coping may be most beneficial in response to controllable circumstances, such as examinations or financial troubles, and less adaptive in response to uncontrollable events such as interpersonal conflict (Compas *et al.*, 2001). *Emotion-focused* coping, on the other hand, is mainly used when events are perceived as uncontrollable and no instrumental response can change the course of events. Thus, as has been proposed by Stern & Zevon (1990), adolescents' emotion-based coping strategies may have positive associations with level of conflict in the family. This may lead these adolescents to be unable to explore the interpersonal aspect of the home optimally. Thus, based on the findings of previous research, it is not surprising that the *social-support focused* adolescents in this study, perceived home as providing higher (favourable) *affordances* than the other two groups (*viz.*, *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused*) of adolescents.

Finally, as already mentioned, the effect of *coping strategies* on *perceived affordances of educational institution* was not significant. *Coping strategies* characterize an

individual's way of behaving in a general fashion and are hence like personality characteristics, but they are more specific and are thought to come into play primarily when events become stressful (Taylor, 2006). In an environment like the *educational institution*, which imposes a certain degree of structure and regulation on the social lives of adolescents resulting in similarities in social context, adolescents are faced with more or less similar stressors. Thus, although the adolescents differed in terms of their predominant *coping strategies*, their perception of *affordance* of the educational institution was not markedly different.

In conclusion, the pattern of results suggests that attachment style and coping strategy has a 'generalized' influence on the perceived affordances of the home and educational institution. Thus, although adolescents spend most of their time at home and in the educational institution, their perception of the favourableness of the same (in terms of the satisfaction of psychological needs of autonomy, intimacy and connectedness) varies. The implication of the present research is further highlighted by the procedure adopted. That is, rather than considering reports by parents, teachers or experts, the adolescents' self-reports were sought to gain a better understanding of their relationships, their coping styles, as well as their experience in different social contexts. Moreover, this study uses an attachment model based on a network of multiple relationships rather than one that is based on attachment to one figure alone. Likewise, coping is assessed in terms of a generalized strategy rather than situation-specific strategies. Both of these have broadened the scope of the current research as they are considered to be powerful predictors of socio-emotional functioning.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Nandini Sanyal is an Assistant Professor at St Francis College For Women in Hyderabad. She has been teaching developmental psychology and behavioural statistics for over 10 years. She is a post-graduation rank holder in applied psychology and holds a doctoral degree on the subject from the University of Calcutta. She has supervised the dissertations of numerous graduate and post-graduate students and has coached several bachelors and masters students on the subject. Nandini is a prolific writer and has published in numerous international journals of Psychology. She is interested in researching various aspects of developmental psychology, specifically the adolescent-environment interaction process.

Dr. Arup Ghoshal has been active in the field of Psychology since 1968 and has vast experience in Clinical Psychology. He is a retired Associate Professor of Applied Psychology from University of Calcutta. His key contributions include leading the Service Programme Unit under the Department of Applied Psychology, since 1982. Here he was in charge of supervising in-depth psychological testing of clients referred by hospitals. During his tenure, he mentored over a dozen doctoral students and numerous post-graduate students. Since 2003 he is the secretary of the Indian Psychoanalytical Society where he contributes as a control analyst and trains students in psychoanalytical work with children and adults.

