

## Family Environment as Predictors of Adjustment among Female Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

The family plays a central role in the cognitive and emotional development of each individual. In the period of adolescence, family environment play effective role in adjustment. To study the role of these variables in adjustment, the present study was planned. The objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between measures of adjustment and family environment, and to find out the predictors of adjustment among female adolescents. The sample consisted of 134 female adolescents with 15 to 17 years age group. The adolescents were assessed with, Bell's Adjustment Inventory (Hindi Adaptation), and Family Environment Scale (Moos and Moos, 1981). The data were analyzed by using Pearson's Product Moment method of correlation, and Stepwise Regression analysis. The results revealed that (i) adjustment was found to be significant negative relationship with Cohesion, Expressiveness, Moral Religious Emphasis, Intellectual Cultural Orientation, Active Recreational Orientation, and Organization and positive association was found between adjustment and Conflict (ii) stepwise regression analysis found four main predictors of adjustment i.e., Organization, Expressiveness, Active recreational orientation and Conflict. Family environment factors, viz. cohesion, expressiveness conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, Intellectual Cultural Orientation and control together showed significant role in overall adjustment of adolescent girls. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that families should reduce conflict and increase cohesion as this may have positive effect on the psychological adjustment of the female adolescents.

**Keywords:** *Adjustment, Family Environment, Organization, Conflict*

The term adjustment is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. It is used to emphasize the individual's struggle to go along with or survive in his or her social and physical environment. Kulshrestha (1979) explained that the adjustment process is a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tensions, conflicts etc. and meet his or her needs. In this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationship with the environment. Adolescence introduces a period of significant transition in family and social role expectations, coupled with increases in the

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range and intimacy or social relationship (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987, Selman, 1980). The family interactions play an important role in the development of an individual. The healthy functioning of these interaction patterns enhances the adjustment level of the individual.

Numbers of investigations have addressed the impact of childhood social infractions and relationships on adjustment. A large number of factors associated with positive adjustment among at-risk children such as child, family, and community factors. (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). Theoretically, a number of these factors might be related to positive adjustment in young at-risk children. The main focus is on child and family factors because it is believed that the child's own characteristics and characteristics of the parents and family environment would likely be more influential than extra familial factors during the early childhood period. Rohner (1986) argues for a biologically-based need for positive interactions with caretakers, and that maladjustment is a response to rejection from caregivers.

The family in general and the parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to the child (Cox and Cox, 1979). Several Studies (Marotz-Baden et al.,1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) have demonstrated support for the notion that familial happiness is directly associated with psychologically healthy parents and children who are involved with one another in appropriate ways. Theorists have purposed that family dynamics may contribute to the maintenance of attachment styles from childhood into adulthood. (Bathelomew and Horowitz ,1991). Children from interactive and cohesive homes with low levels of conflict are better adjusted (Mchale, Kuerster and Lauretti 1996). Some of the earlier studies (Ledoux, Blakeney & Herndon 1998; Leslie 2004) found relationship between adjustment and some components of family environment i.e., Cohesion, Expressiveness, Organization and Conflict.

The family in the Indian context is in a “transitional state” (Sinha, 1984). According to Bharat (1994), the nuclear family structure is assumed to favor sharing of roles rather than a hierarchical structuring of roles, liberal rather than conservative attitudes, role diffusion, rather than role differentiation and an overall equalitarian outlook rather than a traditional outlook. Bhatti, Shah and Kumar. (1998) reported that Indian families demonstrated limited closeness and emotional separateness. They observed significant changes in the family dimension pertaining to reinforcements, social support, roles communication, cohesiveness and leadership. In a study of young adults Narayanan and Rao (2004) found that 48% of the sample had insecure attachment styles. These research findings highlight the need to understand attachment style in relation to family functioning and psychological distress in Indian population. In general, families and especially parents, are often considered to be the most important support system available to the child. The strongest factor in shaping a child's personality is his relationship with his parents (Mohanraj and Latha 2005).

The present study was aimed at exploring adolescent adjustment among females based on non-clinical sample, to examine the relationship of adjustment with all the dimensions of family environment. The generation of such knowledge explored was essential for better understanding about role of family environment on adjustment among female adolescents. The present study explores adolescent adjustment based on non-clinical sample in the Indian setting.

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### *The objectives of the study were:*

- To study the relationship between the areas of adjustment and dimensions of family environment among female adolescents.
- To study the predictors of adjustment among female adolescents.

### *In the present research the hypothesis were purposed:*

- H<sub>1</sub> Measures of Adjustment are likely to show negative association with family environment.
- H<sub>2</sub> Family environment dimensions would significantly predict overall adjustment among female adolescents.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

The present study was conducted on a sample of 134 female adolescents of XI and XII classes, with age range of 15 to 17 years. The sample was randomly selected from Bhiwani district of Haryana. All the schools were having same educational affiliation and create to the need of low to middle socio economic students. Students were contacted in their respective classes.

### *Tools-*

Following tools were used for the collection for the relevant data

- 1. Bell Adjustment Inventory (Hindi adaptation), Mohsin & Shamshad (1969)-** In the present study, Hindi adaptation of Bell adjustment Inventory was used. Mohsin – Shamshad adaptation of Bell Adjustment inventory (Hindi adaptation) consists of 135 items, which measured adjustment in four different areas – Home, Health, and Social and Emotional adjustment. – It yields a separate score as well as composite score for overall adjustment. Home adjustment is expressed in terms of satisfaction of dissatisfaction with home life. Health adjustment in terms of illness, Social adjustment in terms of shyness, submissiveness, introversion, and emotional adjustment in terms of depression, nervousness etc. High score on the inventory indicates low adjustment, and low score indicate high adjustment in different specific areas.
- 2. Family Environment Scale (Moos and Moos, 1981)-** The Family Environment Scale (FES) was developed to measure social and environmental characteristics of families. Three separate forms of the FES are also available that real form of the scale was used in the present study. The scale is based on a three-dimensional conceptualization of a family. These dimensions are: Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Independence, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual Cultural Orientation, Active Recreational Orientation, Moral Religious Emphasis, Organization, control. Internal consistency reliability estimates for the Form R subscale range from .61 to .78. Test-retest reliabilities for the Form R subscales with 2 months, 3 months and 12 months interval range from .52 to .91. These estimates suggest that the scale is reasonably stable across these time intervals.

### *Procedure*

In the initial stage, the participants were contacted in their respective classes and their willingness to participate in the study was sought. The subjects were first administered Bell Adjustment Inventory. After that Family Environment Scale were administered to the subjects on the same day in second session. All the subjects were assured that their

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responses would be kept confidential and would not affect their overall performances in the school.

### *Data Analysis*

The obtained data were subjected to a number of statistical analyses pertinent to research objectives of the study. The analyses most pertinent to the objectives are correlation and regression analysis. Correlations among variables were obtained by applying Pearson product moment method. In order to have a parsimonious picture of contribution of different dimensions of family environment on overall adjustment, regression analysis was applied.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The correlations between all possible pairs were computed by applying Pearson's product moment method. The obtained correlations are reported in Table-1. All the correlation among variables of adjustment is significant at or beyond .01 level. Overall adjustment is negatively correlated with all the dimensions of family environment except conflict.

Family adjustment has been positive association with conflict ( $r=.28, p<.01$ ). Variable of adjustment, family is negatively correlated with Achievement Orientation (AO)  $r =-.19$ , with Intellectual cultural Orientation ( $r=-.25, p<.01$ ), Cohesion (COH)  $r=-.21, p<.01$ , Active Recreational Orientation (ARO) $r =-.15, p<.05$  and with Organization, family adjustment correlates negative relationship with ( $r=-.41, p<.01$ ). Health adjustment is negatively associated with Expressiveness, the correlation is  $-.17$  which significant on .05 level, with Organization and conflict the  $r$  value is  $-.18$  and  $-.17$  which are significant a  $t .05$  level. Another area of adjustment, social adjustment is negatively correlated with EXP, ICO, ARO, MRE, IND, and ORG has correlation coefficients of  $-.18, -.20, -.21, -.19, -.18$  and  $-.21$  respectively.

The emotional adjustment has significant positive relationship with conflict which clearly show that female adolescents high on conflict experience low on emotional adjustment and vice versa. The dimensions of family environment such as COH, EXP, ICO, ARO, MRE, ORG have negative relationship with emotional adjustment in females. The results of the current study explain that female adolescents who have better family environment experienced better emotional adjustment level (Tripathi & Sahu,2019).

**Table 1- correlation between measures of family environment and areas of adjustment**

	COH	EXP	CON	IND	AO	ICO	ARO	MRE	ORG	CTL
Family Adjustment	-.21**	-.28**	.28**	.09	-.19*	-.25**	-.15*	-.30**	-.41**	-.03
Health Adjustment	-.072	-.17*	.15	-.075	.034	-.046	-.09	-.18*	-.17*	-.07
Social Adjustment	.015	-.18*	.19*	-.18*	-.18*	-.20**	-.21**	-.19*	-.32**	-.083
Emotional Adjustment	-.19*	-.20**	.24**	.012	.07	-.17*	-.15*	-.22**	-.21**	-.015
Overall Adjustment	-.17*	-.27**	.26*	-.056	.13	-.25**	-.23**	-.30**	-.37**	-.03

\*\* $p<.01$  level    \* $p<.05$  level

Family environment attract a lot of attention of investigator in relation to overall adjustment. Some components of family environment like, expressiveness (EXP), intellectual cultural orientation (ICO), active recreational orientation (ARO), Moral Religious Emphasis(MRE) and organization (Org) have negative association with overall maladjustment whereas

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conflict (CON) have positive relationship with adjustment. The hypothesis regarding the relationship between adjustment and family environment is accepted in the present study. Some of the earlier studies in this field (Ledoux et al, 1998; Leslie, 2004 and Sharma & Joshi, 2009, Sharma & Joshi, 2010, Sharma & Joshi, 2016) found relationship between adjustment and some components of family environment i.e., Cohesion, Expressiveness, Organization and Conflict. Family environment factors on home adjustment revealed that home adjustment is influenced by degree of support and help and commitment in the family (cohesion), extent to which set rules are followed in the family (control) the amount of anger and aggression in the family (conflict) the degree of interest in political, social and cultural activities (intellectual-cultural orientation) and the extent to which family members are assertive, self-sufficient and make their own decisions (independence). This is in accordance with the study of Mohan Raj and Latha (2005) which states that adolescent home adjustment is significantly related to level of perceived conflict in the family.

### *Multiple Regression Analysis*

Since one of the objectives of the study was to examine relative predictive value of family environment for adjustment among female adolescents. Multiple regression analysis was considered as one of the most pertinent statistics. The model that suits this aim is stepwise multiple regression. Table-2 shows the results to stepwise regression analysis for dependent measure adjustment. The results indicated that two significant predictors of adjustment emerged with an overall multiple R of .475.

**Table -Summary of Stepwise Regressive Analysis Dependent Variable: Adjustment**

Step	Variable	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
1	Organization (Org.)	.369	.136	30.23	.000
2	Expressiveness (Ex)	.411	.169	19.42	.000
3	Active Recreational Orientation	.444	.197	15.54	.000
4	Conflict (CON)	.475	.225	13.73	.000

Organization being most pertinent predictor of adjustment, it entered the equations at step one. The R for this variable equal to .369. It indicates that Organization among the family is a very strong predictor of adjustment among adolescents. Organization explains 13% variance in adjustment. Expressiveness appears to be another important predictor which was entered at step two. Expressiveness explains  $R^2$  (.169,  $F=19.42$ ) in adjustment among adolescents. The next pertinent predictor of adjustment is Active-Recreational Orientation (ARO). The last predictor is Conflict. The conflicts among family members clearly determine the adjustment of the adolescents. More the conflict, the poorer will be the adjustment. The results of stepwise regression analysis show clearly predictors of female adolescent's adjustment. The predictors are Organization, Expressiveness, Conflict, Active Recreational Orientation which jointly account for 22% of the variance ( $R^2 = .223$ ) in adjustment of the adolescents. The present finding is consistent with earlier study by Leslie, 2004, Sharma and Joshi, 2010, Sharma & Joshi, 2016). In Leslie's study, the main predictors are family conflict, Cohesion and Expressiveness. The findings reveal a significant relationship between specific family environment factors on adjustment among female adolescents.

Chahal et al. (2003) observed through his study of women, family cohesion, intellectual cultural orientation, achievement orientation, socialization and classmates' supports, adjustment and sociability were significantly important contributors of well-being.

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Adolescent who has positive relationships with their family are more likely to report high levels of perceived well-being. (Hair et al 2005). These researches show that family and home environment play a major role in adolescence's general well beings. If the conditions at home are congenial then their adjustment would be better. A secured emotional base is essential for the positive development of young girls. When the family members understand their members of the family girls appropriately and offer supports, their adjustment level in different areas will improve to a great extend ( Sathyabama & Eljo, 2014).

### CONCLUSION

It may be concluded from the above results that overall adjustment in family (cohesion) is affected by the degree of aid, support and commitment, to what extent the rules are followed in family (control), the degree of interest in political, social and cultural activities (intellectual-cultural orientation) and the members of the family are assertive, self-reliant and independent of their own decision (independence) (Mohanraj & Latha 2005; Sharma & Joshi, 2010; Sharma & Joshi,2016). If the adolescents are unconditionally accepted and cared for in the family, they show poor adjustments especially in these areas (home, social & emotional) because the support of parents for social interaction affects the social and total adjustment. Johnson et al. (2001) studied that lack of family harmony and an increase in inter-conflict has inadvertently provided a family environment that is linked to the increased feelings of loneliness, which can be related to problems in adolescents' social interaction. Teenage psychological adjustment and satisfaction is related to the level of perceived conflict in the family.

### Implications of the study

The study suggests that overall adjustment especially in female adolescents can be increased by having better organization, expressiveness in the family and also by having Active Recreational Orientation in the family. The family members have low level of conflict in family than the adjustment level of female adolescents will be better.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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