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Research Paper

Perceived Stress and Family Environment in Young Adults Living Independently and Those Living with Their Families

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine the perceived stress and family environment in young adults who live independently and those who live with their families. The study also assessed whether any difference or relationship exists between perceived stress and family environment in young adults. Additionally, the influence of gender on these two factors were also assessed. The current study was a descriptive study with two scales used – The Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen, Kamarck, et al. (1983) and Family Environment Scale by Bhatia and Chadha (2012). An independent sample t-test, correlation and linear regression was used as statistical techniques for the study. The findings suggested that there is no difference in the perceived stress and family environment in young adults living away or with their families. Further gender differences were obtained between Perceived stress and several dimensions of the family environment namely Expressiveness, Conflict, control, Acceptance and Caring The results of the Pearson Correlation depicted a significant relationship between Perceived stress and several Family Environment dimensions such as Cohesion, Conflict, Expressiveness, Independence and Active-recreational Orientation. There was also an influence of Family Environment on Perceived stress among young adults.

Keywords: Perceived Stress, Family Environment, Young Adults

Throughout the years the need to have an independent life has dramatically increased. Young adulthood is the period where the need for independence is at its peak. As a young adult growing out of the cocoon they lived; moving away includes massive psychological and emotional changes within oneself.

Perceived stress is the degree to which an individual feels that they are under stress at a given point in time. Stress in itself can be defined as a particular relationship between the person and their surroundings that is viewed as overwhelming and beyond their control (Lazarus, R & Folkman, S. 1984).

Stress impacts the way individuals can concentrate, decision making and the way they can get things done in their day-to-day life (Goleman & Gurin.1993). Genes and early-life

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experiences (such as child abuse or neglect), even while you're still in the womb, can have an impact on how you manage stressful situations and may increase your propensity to overreact. In addition to the bad impacts of stress, overeating, smoking, drinking, and not exercising can also be caused by being under stress. Family stress is defined as a disruption in the family's steady condition. It encompasses anything that can disrupt the family, generate unease, or put pressure on the family system, and it might be as minor or as serious as a holocaust.

Through each stage of life, family members are connected in significant ways, and these interactions are a significant source of social influence and connection for people. When a young adult leaves their family for several reasons, they are living independently. Independent living refers to the process of moving from institutional care, parental care, or foster care to unsupervised life. Individualism simply offers a partial picture of human potential and misses how meaning is created in relationships with other people. A person does not simply develop a sense of community by being situated in a particular geographic context (Sarason, 1974). Instead, it is developed via deeds that acknowledge our solidarity and dependency on one another. This study aimed to find out the extent to which the family environment and perceived stress are connected with where a young adult lives that is independently or with family. For the longest time, research has been performed on older adults and multiple variables that may be impacted differently when they lived independently. Very little has been done to understand how stress is perceived when a young adult lives in a familial environment and when they have shifted and live independently.

METHODOLOGY

Sample
A sample of 140 young adults from India falling in the age range of 20 to 24 has been taken for the study. For the study, convenience non-probability sampling has been chosen.

Instruments
Two measures were used in this study,

- **Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)-** The perceived stress scale has an internal consistency reliability of .78 and moderate validity. Developed in 1983 by Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, the tool is significantly used to understand how an individual views various situation and perceives stress. It is a 10-item questionnaire.
- **Family Environment Scale (FES-BC)-** The concurrent validity of the scale is .66 and the split-half reliability of the English version is .95. Developed by Bhatia and Chadha in 2012, this scale consists of 69 statements. It is aimed to measure the social and environmental characteristics of families. The scale consists of eight dimensions including- cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance or caring, active recreational orientation, independence, organization and control.

Procedure
Young adults across the country were sent the online survey and only those that have either shifted the cities within the country or the ones who are living with their families currently were taken for the study. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Independent Sample t-test, Linear Regression and Pearson correlation were used to find any differences or relationship amongst the variable.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 t-test between Young Adults living independently and living with family based on Perceived Stress

Variable	Living With Family		Living Independently			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Perceived Stress	21.76	8.08	21.59	8.06	.145	.444

The results show a p-value of .444, stating that there is no difference between young adults living independently and living with families based on perceived stress. Further, the mean score between the two groups - Living with Family and Living independently depicted a slightly higher moderate perceived stress level (21.76) among young adults who lived with their families against those who lived independently (21.59).

Table No. 2 t-test of young adults living independently and living with family across the Family Environment Dimensions

Variable	Living with family		Living Independently			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Cohesion	48.21	9.70	47.40	8.61	.524	.301
Conflict	39.79	7.48	41.26	5.71	.480	.316
Acceptance and caring	41.36	8.99	40.97	6.41	.224	.412
Expressiveness	30.17	6.04	30.60	7.81	-.362	.359
Independence	28.13	5.80	29.22	4.61	-.555	.290
Active-Recreational Orientation	28.28	4.82	28.50	4.50	-.277	.391
Organisation	7.96	1.66	7.90	2.99	-.269	.394
Control	15.17	2.06	14.43	2.36	1.945	.027

Results showed that across various dimensions of the family environment the p-value was above .05 level except in the control dimension. In the control dimension, the p-value was .027 which fell under the $p <0.05$ level, depicting a significant difference between young adults on the conflict dimension. In the rest of the dimensions, the p-value however was insignificant indicating no differences in young adults.

Table No. 3 Gender Differences Based on the Perceived stress

Variable	Female		Male			
Perceived Stress	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
	23.89	6.48	18.71	6.73	.458	<0.01

There is a significant difference between males and females in terms of perceived stress. The p-value was found to be significant at the level of 0.01. It could also be understood that the mean score among females is higher than the mean score in males indicating higher levels of perceived stress in females.

Table No. 4- Gender Differences Based on the Family Environment

Variable	Female		Male			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Cohesion	47.15	9.49	48.85	8.39	-1.097	.137
Expressiveness	29.05	7.65	32.35	5.59	-2.81	.003
Conflict	38.75	6.65	40.63	6.24	-1.688	.047
Acceptance and Caring	40.21	8.18	42.43	6.71	1.703	.045
Independence	29.12	5.46	28.91	4.83	.236	.407
Active-Recreational Orientation	28.44	4.93	28.41	4.27	.033	.487
Organisation	7.89	2.88	7.85	1.65	.117	.457
Control	15.11	2.24	14.28	2.20	2.177	.016

The independent sample t-test result shows that across various family environment dimensions the gender differences varies. On the dimensions of expressiveness, conflict, control, acceptance and caring, there is a significant gender difference found while on the dimensions of cohesion, independence, organization and active-recreational orientation an insignificant difference was found stating that no gender differences persists in thee factors.

Table No. 5- Relationship between Perceived stress and Family Environment

Variable	n	t	p
Perceived Stress	140	-	-
Coheion	140	-.261	.002**
Conflict	140	-.308	0.01**
Acceptance and Caring	140	-.290	.146
Expressiveness	140	-.123	0.01**
Independence	140	-.267	0.01**
Active- Recreational Orientation	140	-.187	.027
Organisation	140	-.097	.256
Control	140	.012	.892

**Significant at 0.01 level

The results depict whether there is any relationship between perceived stress and family environment. On the Cohesion, expressiveness, independence, organisation, acceptance and caring and active-recreational orientation dimension, a low negative correlation was found. On the Conflict dimension, a moderate level of negative correlation was found. On the Control dimension, a very low degree of positive correlation was found.

Table No. 6 - Influence of Family environment on perceived stress among young adults

Independent Variable	R2	B	SEB	β	t
Constant		36.858	6.348		5.80
Cohesion		-.052	.152	-.062	-.342
Expressiveness		-.098	.086	-.098	-1.142
Conflict		-.199	.154	-.185	-1.292

Acceptance and Caring	**.119**	-.074	.173	-.081	-.428
Independence		-.163	.185	-.120	-.885
Active-Recreational Orientation		.141	.215	.093	.654
Organisation		.167	.283	.058	.591
Control		.042	.277	.014	.153

An F value of 2.22 was found along with a significance level of .03. The significance level depicted that there was an influence of family environment on perceived stress levels among young adults. The R2 column depicts the variance of independent variable on dependent variable which is found here to be 11.9 percent.

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to determine whether there was any difference between young adults living independently and those living with their families in terms of perceived stress and family environment. Young adults belonging to various backgrounds have different ways of perceiving stress. This may or not have been influenced by the family environment they lived in when they lived with them. Further, when young adult leaves home, their family environment and perceived stress may change. The results indicated no significant difference in terms of perceived stress and family environment among young adults after an independent sample t-test was performed. The result after performing Pearson correlation indicated a negative correlation between perceived stress except on the control dimension which had a relatively low positive correlation that is .012. Lastly, a linear regression analysis provided results that denoted an influence of family environment on the perceived stress among young adults. While plenty of studies have been conducted to understand how older adults perceive stress when they live away from their families, very less can be identified about young adults. The study can be beneficial in Family therapy as it hints towards the impact of the environment a child grows in. The study is also beneficial in understanding the differences in terms of the perspective of a young adult when he/she shifts away from home and how different it is. Family environment dimensions can individually be studied to understand various aspects of a family and its impact. However, the study was not limited to a specific geographical area and additionally, the sample size was comparatively small. Due to these limitations, the results may not be generalizable.

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Conflict of Interest
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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