

Exploring the Interrelation of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment in Young Adults: A Correlational Study on Family Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, and Acceptance and Caring

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to explore the interrelation of family environment and work and social adjustment in young adults: A correlational study on family cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and acceptance & caring. The study involved 100 participants from Kolkata selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected using the Family Environment Scale developed by Dr. Harpreet Bhatia and Dr. K. Chadha and the Work and Social Adjustment Scale developed by Mundt et al. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were done to find out the results. The findings of the study revealed that work and social adjustment were found to have a significant relationship with cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and acceptance and caring domains of family environment. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant interrelation between dimensions of family environment and work and social adjustment in young adults.

Keywords: *Family Environment, Work & Social Adjustment*

The family environment is a crucial factor in shaping the adjustment patterns of young adults. A supportive family environment can contribute to better work adjustment by providing emotional stability and encouragement. Additionally, the family environment influences social adjustment by fostering positive relationships and social connectedness. Families, especially parents, are often seen as the primary support system in shaping an individual's character. As a primary socialization context, the family is a significant influence on child development (Ozcinar, 2006). The family environment remains a key factor in adolescence and young adulthood (Van Wel, 2000).

The significance of family members in one's life cannot be overstated, as strong emotional bonds foster long-term commitment between parents, children, and other relatives. The experiences a teenager has within their family greatly influence their future and their interactions with society and peer groups, ultimately shaping their social maturity (Unisa, 1995). Given the impact of psychological functioning on the daily lives and social adjustment

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of young individuals, studying the influence of the family environment on the emotional adjustment of adolescents is highly relevant (McFarlane et al, 1995). Family harmony and supportive relationships among family members are associated with better psychological adjustment and reduced anxiety among adolescents (Herman et al, 2007).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Family environment: Concept and Definitions

The definition of family environment states that "it includes all the circumstances and social conditions within a particular family" (Rao, 2012). The family environment is an arrangement where the connections and activities of everyone in the family are interdependent. A family environment characterized by a sense of togetherness and care, which results from the strong bonds of family members, significantly contributes to the development of an individual's attitudes, thinking, and personality. Strong relationships among family members create a home atmosphere that is characterized by a sense of concern and belonging, which is crucial for the development of a child's attitude, way of thinking, and personality. In an engaging home setting, the child can improve herself and maximize their abilities and strengths.

When there is ignorance in the family, the kids get depressed, and their personality doesn't grow as it should. The person loses a sense of love and belonging in such a family, which has a detrimental effect on their schooling. These people experience loneliness and neglect, which lowers their self-esteem.

Factors effecting Family Environment:

- **Cohesion:** Family cohesion may be defined as "the emotional bonding members have with one another and the degree of individual autonomy a person experiences in the family system (Olson et al,1979)." The goal of strong cohesion is to create an encouraging and positive atmosphere where members feel safe and connected. This can lead to better communication, cooperation, and overall well-being within the family. On the other hand, low cohesion can lead to a more disconnected and potentially stressful family environment.
- **Emotional expressiveness:** Emotional expressiveness can be defined as "an individual's ability to communicate emotional states through nonverbal movements and gestures, including through the face (Friedman et al, 1980)." Empirical data confirm that the emotional expressiveness of the family has a special effect on the child, especially if it creates a certain atmosphere that moderates the behavioral practices of children and the development of social-emotional (Darling and Steiberg, 1993) or moral competence (Hoffman, 1983).
- **Conflicts:** Family conflict can be defined as an incompatibility of behaviors, cognition (including purposes), and/or affects between individuals and groups that can lead, or not, to an aggressive expression of this social incompatibility" (Boardman et al, 1994). Because family members can have different opinions and attitudes, conflicts in the family are inevitable, and some types of conflicts between family members are very important for the proper development of the family.
- **Acceptance and Caring:** "Acceptance in the family context can be defined as a two-way process. In one way, it is about recognizing and meeting your child's needs and rights, about protecting, providing for, and caring for your child. In a second way, it is also about allowing your child to have opportunities to express personal agency and

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creativity, about your child feeling able to contribute, love and to show compassion, assume accountability, carry out duties, and participate in group celebrations (Woodhead, 2008).”

- **Independence:** "The extent to which family members are supported to accept their differences and are sufficient in themselves" is one way to define it (Moos et al,1974).
- **Active-Recreational Orientation:** It refers to “how much a family engages in activities that broaden their perspectives and cultures. Recreation is also crucial in a family because without it, the atmosphere becomes monotonous and uninteresting (Moos et al,1974).”
- **Organization:** It is described as "the extent to which a pattern or structure is common in a society (Moos et al,1974)."
- **Control in a Family:** It can be called the rules that every family follows and the procedures that control a family. In a family, control is crucial because it serves to unite the members in some way (Moos et al,1974)."

Work & Social Adjustment: Concept and Definitions

Adjustment refers to the process through which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the external circumstances that affect the fulfillment of these needs (Shaffer, 1961). The adjustment patterns of adolescents are greatly influenced by the family environment, as family members play a crucial role in nurturing, protecting, and influencing one another. Faulty family patterns can have a significant impact on various areas, including work adjustment and social adjustment.

1. Work adjustment: It may be defined as “an ongoing process in which the worker and the work environment continually respond to each other to maintain correspondence” (Dawis 1984). The family environment can have a profound effect on work adjustment in several ways:

- **Stress:** Stress related to family issues can spill over into the workplace, affecting concentration, decision-making, and interactions with colleagues.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Striking a balance between work and family responsibilities can impact an individual's ability to focus on work tasks effectively.
- **Work-family conflict:** Conflict between work and family responsibilities can lead to emotional exhaustion and lower work engagement, ultimately affecting one's ability to adjust at work.
- **Academic pressure and risk of burnout:** Adolescents experiencing high levels of academic pressure and work-family conflict may face challenges in their future work adjustment.

These factors highlight the importance of a supportive family environment in facilitating better work adjustment. Emotional stability and encouragement provided by a supportive family can enhance work performance, while conflict can lead to negative outcomes.

2. Social adjustment: It may be defined as "accommodation to the demands, restrictions, and mores of society, including the ability to engage in satisfying interactions and relationships and to live and work with others in harmony (APA dictionary)." Households with antisocial or uncontrollable youngsters often have poor family relationships and limited social connectedness.

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REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURES

Rhoades (2014) investigated the correlation between family conflict, positive and negative emotions toward family, and social adjustment among college students. The study utilized a structural equation model to show that the relationship between family conflict and social adjustment was influenced by the emotions college students experienced toward their families. Additionally, a multiple-group analysis showed that college students from both divorced and nondivorced households could benefit from this mediation strategy.

Pollastri (2018) examined the relationship between social adjustment and emotional expressivity toward friends and nonfriends in a sample of late adolescent males, through the lens of masculinity research that argues that, in some situations, men's lesser emotional expressiveness may be useful. The findings showed that emotional expressivity was only linked to improved social adjustment for these boys when it took place in a friendly setting. Boys who showed more "expressive flexibility," that is, expressed themselves more to friends than to strangers, also reported having the best social adjustment.

Baojuan Ye (2021), aimed to explore the impact of family cohesion on the social adjustment of university students in China. The results indicated that family cohesion and a sense of security were beneficial factors, while interpersonal disturbance posed a risk to social adjustment. Additionally, a sense of security and interpersonal disturbance played multiple mediating roles in the relationship between family cohesion and social adjustment. These findings could be utilized to develop strategies to enhance the social adjustment of university students as they transition into adulthood.

Tahir (2022) studied the impact of the home environment on students' social adjustment of secondary school students in Kashmir. The research findings indicated a significant link between the home environment and social adjustment. Moreover, the data highlighted notable differences in mean scores between male and female students concerning home environment and social adjustment.

Teymori (2023) studied social adjustment by considering emotional adjustment and psychological cohesion, with the mediating influence of family resilience. The findings indicated that the proposed model exhibited a strong fit, as emotional adaptation, psychological cohesion, and family resilience displayed a positive and significant association with social adaptation ($p < 0.01$). The direct paths from cognitive and emotional adaptation, psychological cohesion, and family resilience to social adaptation were also significant ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, the indirect paths from cognitive and emotional adaptation, as well as psychological cohesion, to social adaptation were significant when mediated by family resilience.

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METHODOLOGY

Aim

The present study aims to explore the relationship between Family environment and Work and Social Adjustment in young adults concerning Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, and acceptance & caring dimensions of a family environment.

Objectives

- To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the Cohesion dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the Expressiveness dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the Conflict dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the Acceptance & caring dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.

Hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between the Cohesion dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- There is a significant relationship between the Expressiveness dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- There is a significant relationship between the Conflict dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- There is a significant relationship between the acceptance & caring dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.

Sample

The sample of the present study was drawn using a purposive sampling technique selected from Kolkata and its surrounding area. The sample consisted of 100 participants. The ages of the young adults range from 15 – 25 years.

Tools Used

The following tools were used for collecting the data to study the research.

- 1. Personal Data Sheet:** The personal data sheet was prepared to gather the basic required socio-demographic details of the participants including name, age, Sex, Educational Qualification, Occupational Status, Family Type & Socioeconomic Status.
- 2. Family Environment Scale:** The family environment scale was developed by H. Bhatia and N.K. Chadha (1993) is based on Moos' (1974) family environment scale. It consists of three dimensions that were taken from Moos' scale but with certain modifications to the original. These are 1) Relationship Dimension including Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, and acceptance & caring 2) Personal Growth Dimension including Independence and Active-Recreational Orientation, and 3) System Maintenance Dimension including Organization and Control. Participants were required to read the instructions and determine which statements apply to their family and which do not. The options for response include SA for 'Strongly Agree', SD for 'Strongly Disagree', A for 'Agree', N for 'Neutral', and D for 'Disagree'. Positive

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items were scored as 5,4,3,2,1, and negative items were scored as 1,2,3,4,5. Higher scores in Cohesion, Expressiveness, and acceptance & caring domains indicate high Cohesion, Expressiveness, and acceptance & caring in family and vice-versa. Higher scores in Conflict indicate low conflict in the family and vice-versa.

3. **Work and Social Adjustment Scale:** The initial version of the Work and Social Adjustment Scale (WSAS) was developed by Isaac M. Marks. The most recent and commonly used iteration of the WSAS, published in 2002 by Mundt et al, includes five items that assess impairment in interpersonal relationships. It is a self-report measure where participants were asked to indicate their levels of impairment in areas related to occupational and interpersonal functioning through five questions. Each item provides a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 (no impairment) to 8 (severe impairment). Higher scores indicate greater levels of impairment in respondent's work and social life while lower scores suggest lower impairment in functioning, it serves as a tool to assess how certain conditions may interfere with an individual's daily life.

Procedure for Data Collection

The procedure for data collection involved personally contacting all participants and establishing rapport. Participants were briefed about the aim of the study. Clear instructions were given based on the questionnaire used. Participants were assured that their information would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes. They were encouraged to be open and honest in their responses. The scales were then administered, and data was collected.

Statistical Analysis

For the data analysis purpose of the present study, Descriptive statistics (Mean and SD) were calculated. Then, Pearson Product Moment correlation was done to find out the direction of the relationship of Family environment with Work and Social Adjustment in young adults.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The present study aims at exploring the relationship between Family environment and Work and Social Adjustment in young adults concerning Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, and Acceptance & Caring dimensions of family environment.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics concerning family environment and Work and Social Adjustment.

Variables		Young Adults (N=100)	
		Mean	SD
1. Family Environment	a. Cohesion	51.7	6.63
	b. Expressiveness	31.2	5.06
	c. Conflict	39.7	6.35
	d. Acceptance & caring	43.7	5.83
2. Work and Social Adjustment.		14.7	7.92

The data included a total of 100 participants who belonged to the age group 15- 25 years. The overall mean score is given in table 1. The means of cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and acceptance & caring falls under the average category, this means that most respondents have an average amount of cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and acceptance, & caring in their family. Similarly, the mean of work and social adjustment falls under the average category

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which means that most of the respondent deal with an average amount of impairment in their functioning.

Table 2: Correlation between Cohesion dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment.

Variables		Expressiveness	Work and social adjustment
Expressiveness	Pearson's r	—	-0.461**
	p-value	—	< .001
	N	—	100
Work and Social Adjustment	Pearson's r	-0.461**	—
	p-value	< .001	—
	N	100	—

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level*

The correlation between the Cohesion dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment shows that there is a significant negative relationship between the variables. The result can be interpreted that young adults who have high cohesion in the family will have lesser impairment in their work and social life. Thus, H1 is accepted. Research showed that strong family cohesion contributes positively to an individual's adjustment, while dysfunctional cohesion can lead to adjustment difficulties. Understanding these dynamics can help in promoting healthier family relationships and better outcomes for individuals.

Table 3: Correlation between Expressiveness dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment.

Variables		Cohesion	Work and Social Adjustment
Cohesion	Pearson's r	—	-0.340**
	p-value	—	< .001
	N	—	100
Work and Social Adjustment	Pearson's r	-0.340**	—
	p-value	< .001	—
	N	100	—

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level*

The correlation between the expressiveness dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment shows that there is a significant negative relationship between the variables. The result can be interpreted that young adults who have high expressiveness in the family will have lesser impairment in their work and social life. Thus, H2 is accepted. Research conducted by Jhonson (2010), showed that individuals from families with lower levels of emotional expression, tend to suppress their emotions, and experience considerably greater challenges in adjusting to college compared to their counterparts from families with higher levels of emotional expression.

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Table 4: Correlation between Conflict dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment.

Variables		Conflict	Work and social adjustment
Conflict	Pearson's r	–	-0.487**
	p-value	–	< .001
	N	–	100
Work and Social Adjustment	Pearson's r	-0.487**	–
	p-value	< .001	–
	N	100	–

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level*

The correlation between the conflict dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment shows that there is a significant negative relationship between the variables. When conflict is healthy and productive, it provides opportunities for growth and learning. Healthy conflict allows people to understand different perspectives and encourages open communication, problem-solving, and better adjustment. Conflict exposes individuals to diverse viewpoints, helping them learn about others' experiences and worldviews. It can lead to innovative solutions and novel approaches to problems. Elizabeth scott (2022) viewed conflict as a natural part of life and believed that learning effective conflict management strategies is essential for overall well-being. The result can be interpreted that young adults who experiences some amount of conflict in the family will face a lesser amount of impairment in their work and social life. Thus, H3 is accepted.

Table 5: Correlation between Acceptance & Caring dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment.

Variables		Acceptance & Caring	Work and Social Adjustment
Acceptance & caring	Pearson's r	–	-0.442**
	p-value	–	< .001
	N	–	100
Work and Social Adjustment	Pearson's r	-0.442**	–
	p-value	< .001	–
	N	100	–

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level*

The correlation between the acceptance & caring dimension of family environment and work and social adjustment shows that there is a significant negative relationship between the variables. The result can be interpreted that young adults who have high acceptance & caring in the family will have lesser impairment in their work and social life. Thus, H4 is accepted. Research conducted by Carrasco (2019), suggests that Parental acceptance (both from mothers and fathers) is closely associated with children's psychological adjustment. The way parents care for their children plays a crucial role in their emotional and behavioural adjustment.

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Findings

- There is a significant relationship between the Cohesion dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- There is a significant relationship between the Expressiveness dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- There is a significant relationship between the Conflict dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.
- There is a significant relationship between the acceptance & caring dimension of Family Environment and Work and Social Adjustment.

CONCLUSION

From the above results, it may be concluded that the family environment plays a vital role in the adjustment patterns of young individuals. Struggles within the family can lead to obstacles in different areas of life. Hence, a nurturing family environment is crucial for improved adjustment. Based on the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between Family environment and Work and Social Adjustment in young adults concerning Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, and acceptance & caring dimensions of family environment.

Limitations

The limitations of this study stem from its design, methodology, and data collection methods, which influence the application and interpretation of the findings. The major limitation of the present study is that conducting one-on-one interviews with participants could have provided deeper insights into their individual experiences. The multifaceted nature of the family environment made it challenging to systematically investigate all domains, thus only a few domains were investigated. The participants came from diverse educational backgrounds, and controlling for this heterogeneity in educational qualifications was not possible. Convenience samples were utilized, which may not accurately represent the broader population. A comparative study among males and females could have provided better knowledge about gender differences and issues in adjustment.

Scope for further research

There is immense possibility for further research in the area of Family environment and Work and Social Adjustment among people belonging to different groups of society and even among people of different age groups. Exploring the other dimensions of the family environment and how it affects the adjustment pattern of an individual could also be done. Conducting a comparative study based on gender differences. Additional investigation could involve exploring the effects of different family and school experiences on adolescents' adjustment during significant life changes, such as the transition to high school.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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