Family Environment and Psycho-social Problems among Adolescents

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A B S T R A C T

The study was conducted in rural and urban area of Hisar district. Four Government Senior Secondary Schools, two from rural area and two from Hisar city were selected at random. Total sample constituted of 240 adolescents in the age group of 16-18 years, 120 from rural area and 120 from urban area, representing both the sexes in equal number. Self-prepared interview schedule was used to collect information on personal and socio-economic variables. Family environment was assessed by Family Environment Scale (FES) by Bhatia and Chadha (1993). Youth Problem Inventory (YPI) developed and standardized by Verma (2004) was used to assess the adolescents' psycho-social problems. Correlations, ANOVA and regression analyses were used to analyze the data. Majority of fathers had education up to senior secondary level, while majority of mothers had education up to middle school level. Maximum number of adolescents belonged to lower income group followed by middle and high income groups. Results revealed that different aspects of family environment and overall family environment, except conflict, were significantly negatively correlated with different aspects of youth problems and total score of youth problems. Conflict in family was positively correlated with youth problems. Adolescents who perceived family environment as low, i.e., poor experienced more problems than those who perceived family environment as average and high. Regression analysis revealed that overall family environment and personal growth dimension of family environment were significant predictors of psycho-social problems among adolescents. Findings of the present study have implications for adolescents, their parents and other caregivers.

Introduction

Family environment include social environment which constitute conditions, circumstances and interactions among family members. Individuals must have effective and positive interactions in this social environment in order to survive and thrive. Healthy family environment results in positive interactions among family members; while negative environment leads to irritable behavior of family members. The family environments can differ in many ways, for example, on the basis of socio-economic level and parenting practices (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 2013).

Dasgupta and Sanyal (2008) reported that family serves as an enriching ground for early socialization and personality development of children. The results revealed that family environment with the provision of unconditional love and acceptance had positive impact on behavioural management skills of children.

Adolescence is the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood that requires special attention and protection. The process of adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood during which time several key developmental experiences occur. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time of considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences. Adolescents are different both from young children and from adults. Specifically, adolescents are not fully capable of understanding complex concepts, or the relationship between behavior and consequences. This inability may make them vulnerable to high-risk behaviours. Parents, members of the community and social institutions have the responsibility to both promote adolescent development and adjustment and to intervene effectively when problems arise (WHO, 2001).

Globally, 1 out of 10 (20%) adolescents encounter at least one behavioral problem. Half of lifetime mental disorders begin before the age of 14 years, and 75 per cent begin by the age of 24 years. Lack of attention to the mental wellbeing of children and adolescents, in a key phase of socialization, may lead to mental health consequences that may remain throughout life and reduces the capacity of societies' socio-economic productivity (WHO, 2001).

Keeping in view the ways in which family environment leads to youth problems during adolescence, the present study was planned to study relationship between family environment and youth problems. It was hypothesized that family environment is strong predictor of youth problems.

Materials and Methods

Locale of the study and sample selection

Hisar district of Haryana state was selected purposively. The study was conducted in rural and urban area of Hisar district. A list of villages having co-educational government schools of senior secondary level was procured from District Education Office, Hisar. Two schools from this list were selected at random. Hisar city was selected for representation of urban area. A list of government schools of senior secondary level was procured from District Education Office, Hisar. From this list, two schools were selected randomly. From each school 30 boys and 30 girls were selected at random, thus, 60 adolescents from each school. Total sample constituted of 240 adolescents, 120 from rural area and 120 from urban area, representing both the sexes in equal number.

Measures and method for data collection

Self-prepared interview schedule was used to collect information on personal and socio-economic variables. Family environment was assessed by Family Environment Scale (FES) by Bhatia and Chadha (1993). The FES consists of 69 items and is scored on a five-point scale strongly agrees (5) to strongly disagree (1). The measure consists of 8 subscales - Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Acceptance and Caring, Independence, Active-Recreational Orientation, Organization, and Control. The scale has eight positive aspects- cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization

and control; and one negative aspect, that is, conflict. These aspects were grouped under three sub scales- relationship dimensions, personal growth dimensions and system maintenance dimensions. Relationship dimensions included cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, and conflict sub-scales. Personal growth dimensions included independence and active-recreational orientation sub-scales. System maintenance dimensions included organization and control sub-scales. Total scores were also computed for family environment. Higher scores means high/better family environment and lower scores means low/poor family environment. Three categories were made on the basis of standard deviation- low, average and high. For conflict aspect of family environment, higher score means low conflicts in the family and lower scores means high conflicts in the family.

Youth Problem Inventory (YPI) developed and standardized by Verma (2004) was used to assess the adolescents' psycho-social problems. The YPI consists of 80 items and is scored on a three point scale- true (2), partially true (1) and false (0). Youth Problem Inventory consists of four aspects i.e., Family problems, School problems, Social problems and Personal problems. All the responses of Y.P.I were scored and calculated aspect wise, the sum of these items was the total raw score. In each area scores were converted into percentages as described in the Youth Problem Inventory. Data were collected personally by the researcher. Adolescents filled information on Family Environment Scale (FES) and Youth Problem Inventory (YPI). Rapport was build up with adolescents before conducting research.

Results and Discussion

Majority (54.2%) of adolescents was 17+-18 years old and 45.8% were 16-17 years old. Majority (63.3%) of adolescents belonged to

nuclear families. About half of fathers (50.4%) had education up to senior secondary level and only 6.7% had education up to graduation. Majority of mothers (75.4%) had education up to middle school. Maximum number of adolescents (81.3%) belonged to lower income group followed by middle (11.3%) and high (7.5%) income groups.

First, correlations were run to examine relationship between different aspects of family environment and different aspects of youth problems. Different aspects of family environment were cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization and control. Different aspects of family environment were grouped into three dimensions- relationship dimension, personal growth dimension and system maintenance dimension. Different aspects of youth problems included family, school, social and personal problems. Then, ANOVA was computed to examine impact of overall family environment on different aspects of youth problems. Finally, step-wise regression was run to predict relationship between family environment (relationship, personal growth and system maintenance dimensions and overall family environment) and different aspects of youth problems.

Correlations between family environment and psycho-social problems of adolescents

As shown in Table 1, family problems among adolescents were significantly negatively correlated with cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control and overall family environment, r values ranged from
-.26** to -.54**; while conflict aspect of family environment was significantly positively correlated with family problems social problems among adolescents, r=.24**. School problems among adolescents were significantly negatively correlated with

cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control and overall family environment, r values ranged from -.27** to -.64**; conflict aspect of family environment was significantly positively correlated with social problems among adolescents, r=.22**. Social problems among adolescents were significantly negatively correlated with cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control and overall family environment, r values ranged from -.15* to -.32**. Significant positive correlation existed between conflict and social problems, r=.19**

Similarly, cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control and overall family environment were significantly negatively correlated with personal problems among adolescents, r values ranged from -.23** to -.45**.

Conflict aspect of family environment was significantly positively correlated with personal problems, r=.26**. Finally, cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control and overall family environment were significantly negatively correlated with total youth problems, r values ranged from -.32** to -.68**. Conflict aspect of family environment was significantly positively correlated with total youth problems, r=.25**.

It can be interpreted from these results that different aspects of family environment, except conflict, and overall family environment were significantly negatively correlated with different aspects of psycho-social problems and total score of psycho-social problems. Conflict in family was positively correlated with psycho-social problems of adolescents.

Comparison of psycho-social problems among adolescents on the basis of family environment

Overall family environment was categorized in low, average and high categories on the basis of standard deviation. Results presented in Table 2 clearly depict that there was significant difference in family problems faced by adolescents on the basis of overall family environment. As shown in table, adolescents who perceived low overall family environment experienced greater percentage of family problems (Mean=41.45) as compared to respondents who perceived average (Mean=33.77) and high (Mean=27.77) overall family environment, F=31.72, P<0.01. Similarly, adolescents who perceived low overall family environment experienced greater percentage of school problems (Mean=33.04) as compared to respondents who perceived average (Mean=28.56) and high (Mean=21.88) overall family environment in family, F=35.07, P<0.01. Adolescents who perceived low overall family environment experienced greater percentage of social problems (Mean=45.15) as compared to respondents who perceived average (Mean=39.20) and high (Mean=33.44) overall family environment in family, F=5.72, P<0.05. Adolescents who perceived low overall family environment experienced greater percentage of personal problems and were over sensitive (Mean=46.45) than those who perceived average (Mean=43.50) and high (Mean=39.78) overall family environment, F=24.64, P<0.01.

Finally, adolescents who perceived low overall family environment experienced greater percentage of total psycho-social problems (Mean=41.08) as compared to respondents who perceived average (Mean=35.73) and high (Mean=30.25) overall family environment, F=45.87, P<0.01.

Adolescents who perceived average overall family environment reported that they experienced greater percentage of psycho-social problems than those who perceived high overall family environment in family.

It can be interpreted from these results that adolescents who perceived family environment as low experienced greater percentage of psycho-social problems than those who perceived family environment as average and high.

Regression analysis to predict impact of family environment on psycho-social problems

Step-wise linear regression was computed to predict impact of family environment on psycho-social problems. Total score of psycho-social problems was taken as dependent variables and overall family environment and different dimensions of family environment were taken as independent variables. Different aspects of family environment were grouped into three dimensions- relationship dimension, personal growth dimension and system maintenance dimension. As depicted in Table 3, in Step 1, overall family environment was predictor and independently accounted 46 per cent variance in adolescents' psycho-social youth problems (Step I), $F_{(1,239)}=201.03$, $P<.001$. In next step when personal growth dimension was added as co-variance with overall family environment, the model contributed 49 per cent of variance in adolescents' psycho-social youth problems (Step II), $F_{(1,239)}=119.39$, $P<.001$.

In Step I, relationship dimension, personal growth dimension and system maintenance dimensions were excluded. In Step II, relationship dimension and system maintenance dimensions were excluded.

It can be interpreted from these results that overall family environment and personal growth dimension of family environment were significant predictors of psycho-social problems among adolescents.

The results of the present study revealed that family, school, social and personal problems were negatively correlated with cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization and control. All these aspects were positive aspects of family environment. This means higher scores in these aspects were indicators of high or good family environment. While, conflict was a negative aspect in family environment, higher scores mean low conflicts and low score means high conflicts. Thus it can be interpreted that, poor the family environment and more the conflicts in the family, greater were the percentages of psycho-social youth problems in the areas of family, school, social, personal and overall psycho-social problems among adolescents as compared to average and high family environment. Regression analysis revealed that overall family environment and personal growth dimension of family environment were significant predictors of psycho-social problems among adolescents.

These results get support from the previous research. Research has emphasized the importance of the relationship among family members and adolescents' behaviour. Youngblade *et al*., (2007) have reported that negative relationships between parents and adolescents result in conflict and there is probability that adolescents are likely to engage in risk behaviors. Then, adolescents may disassociate themselves from the family. Prevatt (2003) also examined a risk and resiliency model of children's adjustment and found a significant relationship between mother's reports of both family conflict and child behavior problems. In another study,

Dekovic *et al*., (2004) have found that adolescents who had greater conflict with their parents were more likely to participate in delinquent and other risk behaviors.

Dasgupta and Sanyal (2008) also reported that family serves as an enriching ground for socialization of children. Family environment with the provision of unconditional love and acceptance had positive impact on behavioural

of children. Kamble (2014) also reported that family being the first and major agency of socialization has great influence and bearing on the behavior of children. Thus, in conclusion it can be said that there is evidence that contextual conditions, i.e., family environment play crucial role in adolescent development and can have either a positive or negative impact on the trajectory of adolescent behavior and social-emotional functioning.

Table.1 Correlation between family environment and youth problems

(n=240)

Aspects of family environment	Aspects of youth problems				
	Family	**School**	**Social**	**Personal**	**Total youth problems**
Cohesion	-.44**	-.53**	-.22**	-.42**	-.56**
Expressiveness	-.49**	-.57**	-.28**	-.39**	-.61**
Conflict	.24**	.22**	.19**	.26**	.25**
Acceptance and caring	-.41**	-.50**	-.25**	-.34**	-.51**
Independence	-.42**	-.45**	-.19**	-.30**	-.49**
Active-recreational orientation	-.26**	-.27**	-.18**	-.31**	-.32**
Organization	-.31**	-.38**	-.15*	-.23**	-.37**
Control	-.40**	-.39**	-.18**	-.35**	-.47**
Overall family environment	-.54**	-.64**	-.32**	-.45**	-.68**
Significant at **p <.01 and *p<.05 level of significance.					

Table.2 Comparison of psycho-social problems on the basis of overall family environment

(n=240)

Aspects of psycho-social problems	Family environment			F-value
	Low (n=32) Mean±SD	Average (n=135) Mean±SD	High (n=33) Mean±SD	
Family problems (%)	41.45[c]	33.77[b]	27.77[a]	31.72**
School problems (%)	33.04[c]	28.56[b]	21.88[a]	35.07**
Social problems (%)	45.15[c]	39.20[b]	33.44[a]	5.72*
Personal problems and over sensitivity (%)	46.45[c]	43.50[b]	39.78[a]	24.64**
Total youth problems (%)	41.08[c]	35.73[b]	30.25[a]	45.87**
Mean % in same row differ significantly at **p <.01 and *p<.05 level of significance.				

Table.3 Step-wise linear regression between family environment and psycho-social problems of adolescents

(n=240)

Model (s)	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t – value	Adjusted R^2	F-value
Variables	B	SE (B)	β			
Step I (Constant) Overall family environment	65.55 -.11	2.12 0.01	-.68	30.97** -14.18**	0.46	201.03 (df=1, 239)
Step II (Constant) Overall family environment Personal growth dimension	68.21 -.18 .20	2.11 0.02 .04	-1.02 0.40	32.26** -11.61** 4.57**	0.49	119.39 (df=1, 239)
Significant at **p <.01 and *p<.05 level of significance.						

In conclusion it can be said that there is negative relationship between cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control, overall family environment and youth problems. Conflict in family was positively correlated with youth problems. Adolescents who perceived family environment as low, i.e., poor experienced more problems than those who perceived family environment as average and high. Step-wise regression revealed that overall family environment and personal growth dimension of family environment were strong predictors of youth problems. Hence, it is important to create awareness among parents of adolescents to provide healthy family environment to their adolescent children so that they can be protected from onset of youth problems and promote socio-emotional wellbeing of adolescents.

Acknowledgement

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