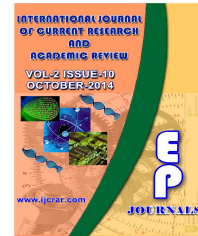




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The effect of family environment on the adjustment patterns of adolescents

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A B S T R A C T

The present investigation was undertaken to study the effect of family environment on adjustment patterns. For this 70 adolescents studying undergraduate programmes were randomly selected from the Arts and Science Colleges of Puducherry. Family Environment Scale by Harpreet and Chadha (1993) and Adjustment Inventory for College students constructed and standardized by Sinha and Singh (1971) was used for data collection. Analysis was done by using one way ANOVA. Findings of the study revealed that family environment has significant effect on the adjustment patterns of the students.

Introduction

Modern life places a variety of stresses on the institution of family that constantly challenge its survival and its adaptive mechanism. Family is a primary socialization unit and is, therefore, considered to be a very important factor influencing the development of a child (Ozcinar, 2006). The patterns of interaction and behaviour of the family members play a vital role in the behaviour and adjustment patterns of an individual (O'Leary, 1995). Parents who are friendly with their children provide information about how people deal with one another in a social situation, follow certain procedures, and engage in cooperative behaviour (Lindsey et al., 1997).

It was also confirmed through various studies that if family relationship has been good the adolescent will develop into a well adjusted individual (Woolf, 1963).

Authoritativeness of parents was associated with a positive pattern of adjustment, while autonomy was associated with a negative pattern of adjustment (Beyers and Goossens, 1999). According to McFarlane et al. (1994), family environment plays a very important role on the emotional adjustment of adolescents to understand the social adaptation pattern.

Family environment continues to be of crucial importance throughout adolescence and young adulthood (Van Wel, 2000). Parental control, exercised in a supportive environment is widely recognized as a facilitator of social development in adolescents (Adams and Bennion, 1990). A research study made by Mohanraj and Latha (2005) also found that the relationship with parents is the strongest factor that moulds a

child's personality. Another study conducted by Herman et al. (2007), also found that family cohesion and supportive relationships between family members are associated with adolescent psychological adaptation and lower depression. Above all family with conflict environment is associated with adolescents' insecurity and psychological distress, as well as aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder (Wissink et al., 2006).

Though many research studies proved that adolescents who are grown with support and care of the family members, openness, assertiveness and responsibilities are better adjusted than those who are from dissociative families, still there is some setback in the behaviour of our Indian students. Particularly the students who are doing under graduation in Govt. Arts and Science Colleges show unruly behaviour, and disobedience. On this ground an attempt was made to study the effect of family environment on the adjustment patterns of adolescents who are studying under graduation in Govt. Arts and Science Colleges.

The main objective of this study is the effect of family environment on the adjustment patterns of adolescents studying in under graduate programmes of Arts and Science Colleges of Puducherry.

Hypothesis

Family environment do not have significant effect on the adjustment patterns of adolescents.

Method

Sample

The population of the present research consists of the students studying Under

Graduate programmes in various Govt. Arts and Science Colleges of Union Territory of Puducherry. About 70 students were approached at random for data collection. The convenient sampling method was employed. The data were collected individually from the students through questionnaire.

Tools

Family Environment Scale

Family Environment Scale developed by Harpreet and Chadha (1993) was used to assess the family environment of students. The scale consists of eight dimensions like Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, Acceptance and caring, Independence, Active recreational orientation, Organization and Control. This scale has the reliability of 0.87 and a validity of 0.82 and hence it was used in its original form.

Adjustment inventory for college students

The Adjustment inventory for college students developed by Sinha and Singh (1971) was used to measure adjustment of adolescents. It seeks to discriminate well adjusted students from poorly adjusted students in respect of five areas of adjustment viz., Home, Health, Social, Emotional, and Educational. The total score ranges from one to 102 and Lower the scores indicates excellent adjustment and higher the score very unsatisfactory adjustment. The scale has reliability coefficient of 0.94 and hence it was used in its original form.

Results and Discussion

Family factors associated with the development of child and adolescent mental health problems have been studied intensively for several decades. In addition

to inherited vulnerability, parenting experiences were shown to have a major impact on the development of child mental health difficulties (Hoghughi, 2004). Family environment influences adolescent's psychological adjustment to a large extent

(Jewell and Stark, 2003). The findings of the present research study also inferred that family environment do have a significant effect on the adjustment patterns of adolescents.

Table.1 Mean, S.D. and F-ratio for the Adjustment Patterns of Adolescents on the basis of their Family Environment

Family Environment Dimensions	Degree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F
Cohesion	High	13	69.77	17.75	8.21*
	Moderate	15	55.07	21.80	
	Low	42	43.43	21.57	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Expressiveness	High	27	65.78	20.78	15.54*
	Moderate	18	49.06	20.29	
	Low	25	35.92	16.93	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Conflict	Low	16	70.94	18.68	12.62*
	Moderate	33	49.27	20.97	
	High	21	37.90	19.22	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Acceptance & caring	High	25	65.28	20.20	9.97*
	Moderate	24	45.17	21.18	
	Low	21	40.05	20.25	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Independence	High	12	71.25	18.02	19.96*
	Moderate	11	70.36	16.18	
	Low	47	41.02	19.14	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Active-Recreational orientation	High	13	72.54	19.21	16.75*
	Moderate	5	75.20	5.22	
	Low	52	43.04	19.79	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Organization	High	3	70.33	23.71	11.93*
	Moderate	16	70.00	17.38	
	Low	51	43.65	20.71	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	
Control	High	9	82.78	9.69	15.42*
	Moderate	24	51.21	18.63	
	Low	37	42.78	21.36	
	Total	70	50.81	23.08	

*significant at 0.05 level.

It has been evident from the table that the adolescents from families which have high degrees of commitment, help and support their family members show better adjustment (43.43) than the adolescents hailing from families which have average (55.07) and low (69.77) cohesive environments (Table 1). This finding was supported by the research study carried out by Johnson et al. (2001). They proved that decreased family cohesion can be associated with problems in adolescents' social interactions.

Expressiveness is an extent to which family members are encouraged to act openly and express their feelings and thoughts directly. Adolescents from highly expressive families show better adjustments (35.92) than the adolescents from families which have average (49.06) and low (65.78) expressiveness. Conflict among family members does harm the adjustment of adolescents of the family. Adolescents from families which have low conflict show better adjustments (37.90) than the adolescents from families which have average (49.27) and high (70.94) conflict. Research regarding level of family conflict suggests that a conflict family environment is associated with adolescents' insecurity and psychological distress, as well as aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder (Wissink et al., 2006).

Acceptance and caring is the extent to which the members are unconditionally accepted and the degree to which caring is expressed in the family. This study proves that adolescents from families which have unconditional acceptance for its family members show better adjustments (37.90) than the adolescents from families which have average (49.27) and low (70.94) acceptance. Independence is the extent to which family members are assertive and

independently make their own decisions. Adolescents from families which have freedom and independence to its members show better adjustments (41.02) than the adolescents from families which have average (70.36) and low (71.25) independence.

Active- Recreational Orientation is the extent of participation in which social and recreational activities. Adolescents from families which have freedom and independence to its members show better adjustments (41.02) than the adolescents from families which have average (70.36) and low (71.25) participation in the recreational activities. Families which have high degree of delegation of planning family activities and responsibilities, grow better adjusted adolescents (43.65) than the adolescents from average (70.33) and low (70.33) organization. This result was also supported by the research study made by Paul (1996), revealed that there is significant degree of conflict with less cohesion and organization in the emotionally disturbed families.

Control is the degree of limit setting within the family. Families which have highly controlled environment grow better adjusted adolescents (42.78) than average (51.21) and low control (82.78). Families are lower on cohesion and independence and higher on conflict and control (Fox et al., 1983).

Conclusion

From the above results it may be concluded that all the family environment factors, viz. cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization and control together showed significant effect on the adjustment patterns of adolescents.

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