

## **A Study on the Adolescent's Perception about Their Family Environment**

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**Abstract:** *The present study is an attempt to examine the perceptions of adolescents about their family environment. Two hundred and twenty four adolescents who were in the age range of 15+ to 18+ years constituted the sample. Family Environment scale by Bhatia & Chadda (1996) was used to assess the adolescents perceptions about their family environment. Results of the study revealed that majority of the adolescents studied had average perception about cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and caring and active recreational orientation dimensions of family environment. Interestingly two thirds of the sample studied scored low on independence dimension. It is surprising to note that adolescent boys and girls did not differ significantly on any dimension of family environment. It is also evident that younger adolescents were more expressive than the older ones. It is interesting to note that adolescents of biological science group were more expressive than other arts groups and mathematics science group students.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Adolescent age is period of stress, storm and intense moodiness. Family is the most important support system available to the child. Relationship with parents is an important factor in molding the adolescent personality. Adolescents have a poor reputation of getting along poorly with their families. The teenage boy or girl may be faced with serious problems of adjustment when there is a difference of opinions, ideals and attitudes with their parents. Conflicts may arise between the adolescent and the parents that are difficult to resolve if neither is willing nor able to compromise.

Family cohesion (i.e., the emotional bonding among family members and the feeling of closeness) is expressed by feelings of belonging and acceptance within the family system (McKeown et al., 1997). Wentzel and Feldman (1996) and McKeown et al. have found that adolescent perceptions of low cohesion within their families were associated with heightened feelings of depression and reduced social acceptance. Reinherz, Stewart-Berghauer, Pakiz, Frost, and Moeykens (1989) suggest that low cohesion, expressed by feelings of not belonging, is associated with children's and adolescents' feelings and behaviour that are reflective of their family environment

#### **Objective**

- To study the perceptions of adolescents on family environment.
- To examine the differences of age, gender and group of study if any on adolescent's perception about family environment

### **II. Method**

#### **Sample**

The study was carried out in the twin cities of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. Coeducational institutions with intermediate classes were selected for the purpose of study. The sample comprised of 224 adolescent children in the age range of 15+ to 18 years.

#### **Tools used :**

- a) Family back ground information schedule to collect personal profile of the sample.
- b) Family environment scale by Bhatia & Chadda (1996) to assess the perceptions of adolescents on family environment.

#### **Data collection procedure :**

The principals of selected coeducational junior colleges were contacted and permission was taken for data collection. The family environment scale was administered on the selected adolescents. Necessary instructions were given regarding the answering of the test items. Scoring was done according to the instructions given in the manual.

**Statistical analysis used :**

Frequencies and percentages were used to depict the personal profile of the sample and adolescents perception about family environment. 'Z' test and F ratios were used to study the mean differences in perception of adolescents of different gender, age and group of study on family environment.

**III. Results & Discussion**

**General Profile of the Sample:** From the general profile of the respondents it was found that 76 percent of adolescent boys and girls fell into 16+ and 17+ years age group followed by 15+ and 18+ age group. Regarding class of study 51% boys and 47 percent girls were studying junior intermediate and the remaining of them were studying senior intermediate. Percentage distribution of adolescents based on group of study revealed that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the boys and girls have taken MPC group (mathematics, Chemistry and Physics) followed by CEC (commerce, economics and civics), MEC and Bi.P.C. compared to boys girls were more in Bi.P.C group.

**Perceptions of Adolescents on Family environment:** Effective family functioning defined by cohesion, expressiveness and high personal growth are related positively to peer relations and role compliance. The more cohesive a family, the better the individual family members to function, the better the communication between parents and children and greater the marital consensus and better the behaviour outcomes for adolescent children (Farell & Barnes, 1993). Table.1 shows the distribution of sample based on adolescents perception about different dimensions of family environment. The data collected on this aspect revealed that adolescents had average perception on dimensions like cohesion, expressiveness, conflicts, acceptance and caring and active recreational orientation dimensions of family environment. This might be due to the fact that as the respondents were from urban nuclear intact families, opportunities for emotional togetherness is more and importance is given to express individual feelings. Because of small nuclear family, children were accepted and cared for by both the parents and opportunities for more recreational activities were provided. In case of independence dimension, 2/3rds of the sample perceived that they has less freedom at home and around 50 percent perceived that they have average organizational capacities at home. These results clearly depict the characteristics of adolescence. As it is a transition period adolescent felt that they were not completely independent because parents neither treat them as children nor grown ups and put them in ambiguous position. The same may be responsible for organization and control dimension also.

**Table 1: Distribution of Adolescents Based on their perception on Family Environment**

Sl. No.	Family Environment Dimensions	Boys (112)		Girls (112)		Total(224)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Cohesion						
	Low	9	8	4	3	13	6
	Average	79	71	85	76	164	73
	High	24	21	23	21	47	21
2.	Expressiveness						
	Low	9	8	4	3	13	6
	Average	79	71	85	76	154	73
	High	24	21	23	21	47	21
3.	Conflict						
	Low	21	19	12	11	33	15
	Average	73	65	81	72	154	68
	High	18	16	19	17	37	17
4.	Acceptance & caring						
	Low	18	16	10	9	28	13
	Average	85	76	94	84	179	80
	High	9	8	8	7	17	7
5.	Independence						
	Low	66	59	66	59	132	60
	Average	43	38	46	41	84	39
	High	3	3	0	0	3	1
6	Active recreational Orientation						
	Low	27	24	23	21	50	23
	Average	74	66	81	72	155	69
	High	11	10	8	7	17	8
7	Organization						
	Low	12	11	20	18	32	14
	Average	62	55	65	58	127	57
	High	38	34	27	24	65	29
8	Control						
	Low	22	20	23	21	45	20
	Average	55	49	48	43	103	46
	High	35	31	41	36	76	34

**Table 2:** Mean differences of adolescent boys and girls on perception about family environment.

Sl. No.	Dimensions of Family Environment	Boys		Girls		'Z' value
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
1.	Cohesion	53.38	10.10	55.49	7.42	1.786NS
2.	Expressiveness	32.91	7.04	33.31	6.04	0.460 NS
3.	Conflict	41.68	8.74	41.83	7.47	0.132 NS
4.	Acceptance and caring	45.53	9.18	45.91	6.78	0.349 NS
5.	Independence	28.83	6.47	28.48	4.82	0.458 NS
6.	Active recreational orientation	27.97	5.55	27.91	4.47	0.079 NS
7.	Organization	8.24	2.19	8.21	1.81	0.099 NS
8.	Control	15.32	3.71	15.75	3.26	0.920 NS

\* $p > 0.05$ ; \*\* $p > 0.01$ ; NS: not significant

**Differences of boys and girls on perception about dimensions of family environment :** It is interesting to note from the results (table-2) that the mean values for all eight dimensions of family environment were similar for both boys and girls and did not differ significantly as 'z' values obtained were very low. Hence, it can be inferred from the results that both adolescent boys and girls had similar perception about different dimensions of their family environment as most of them were from intact families. In contrary, Carpenter and Fleishman(1987), Hussler & Stage(1992) and Georgiou(1995) reported females surpassing males interms of expressing family cohesion.

**Table 3:** Mean differences of adolescents of different age groups on perception about family environment.

Sl. No.	Dimensions of Family Environment	Age in Years				'F' value
		15+	16+	17+	18+	
1.	Cohesion	54.64	54.85	54.65	52.18	1.338NS
2.	Expressiveness	33.32	33.43	31.63	25.33	2.284*
3.	Conflict	40.90	42.44	42.00	40.40	0.613 NS
4.	Acceptance and caring	45.16	45.94	46.07	45.00	0.229 NS
5.	Independence	28.51	28.95	28.53	27.95	0.286 NS
6.	Active recreational orientation	28.80	28.56	27.60	25.81	0.137 NS
7.	Organization	8.45	8.20	8.39	7.59	1.959 NS
8.	Control	15.96	15.41	15.77	14.77	0.522 NS

\* $p > 0.05$ ; \*\* $p > 0.01$ ; NS: not significant

**Mean Differences of adolescents of different age groups on perception about dimensions of family environment :** Analysis of variance was carried out to see whether there was any significant difference in the perception about family environment of different age groups. It is of interest to note from the results (table-3) that the adolescents of different age groups differed significantly in perception about expressiveness dimension of family environment as the mean scores for different age groups ranged from 25-33. The results clearly indicate that younger adolescents(15+,16+) had better perception about expressiveness dimension (33.32,33.43) of their families than older adolescents who were in 17+ and 18+ years age group(31.67,25.33) and the difference is significant at 5% level. This might be due to the fact that younger adolescents still consider themselves as children, hence were more free to express their feelings than older adolescents who were in transition period. For the remaining seven dimensions, adolescents of different age groups did exhibit similar perceptions, which is evident through 'F' ratios obtained which are not significant.

**Table 4:** Mean differences of adolescents of different groups of study on perception about family environment.

Sl. No.	Dimensions of Family Environment	Group of study				'F' value
		CEC	MEC	Bi.PC	MPC	
1.	Cohesion	53.48	54.77	55.43	54.56	0.436NS
2.	Expressiveness	31.40	34.38	34.84	32.96	3.046*
3.	Conflict	41.16	43.25	42.51	41.01	0.934NS
4.	Acceptance and caring	45.27	45.90	45.82	45.96	0.098 NS
5.	Independence	28.45	29.36	29.25	28.10	0.627 NS
6.	Active-recreational orientation	27.15	28.56	28.17	28.16	0.143 NS
7.	Organization	8.34	8.63	8.00	8.00	1.175 NS
8.	Control	15.15	15.27	15.92	15.82	0.678 NS

\* $p > 0.05$ ; \*\* $p > 0.01$ ; NS: not significant

**Mean Differences of adolescents of different groups of study on perception about dimensions of family environment :** Results on perception of adolescents of different groups of study on different dimensions of family environment are presented in table-4. From the results it is clearly evident that group of study had significant impact on the adolescent's perception about expressiveness dimension of family environment. Adolescents of M.E.C group and Bi.P.C group scored higher than M.P.C and C.E.C group and the difference

was significant at 5% level. For the other seven dimensions of family environment, Adolescents of different groups of study did have similar perceptions, hence did not differ significantly.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

From the results of the study it can be concluded that majority of adolescents studied had average perception about their families on dimensions like cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and caring, active recreational orientation and conflict. Majority of the sample felt that they were given less independence at home. Gender differences were not noticed in the perception of adolescents on all eight dimensions of family environment. However, younger adolescents who were from biological science group were more expressive than older and who were from other three groups of study. The results of the study clearly indicates that there is a need to take measures to improve adolescents perception about three dimensions – organization, control and independence to make them potential individuals of tomorrow.

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