



Impact of family environment on adolescents aggression

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ABSTRACT

The present study “impact of family environment on adolescents aggression” was undertaken with the specific objectives viz., (i) to find out the level of family environment among adolescents, (ii) to find out the relationship of adolescents’ aggression with family environment. The data was collected from Hisar District of Haryana. A total sample of 250 adolescents’ in the age group of 13-15 years was randomly selected. Standardized scale of Family Environment Scale by Bhatia and Chadha (1993) was used to measure the family environment of the adolescents. The collected data were tabulated, processed and analyzed by employing statistical technique *i.e.* frequencies and correlation. The results of study indicated that adolescents of Haryana had a moderate level in most of the family environment dimensions. Aggression had positive and significant correlation with conflict dimension while negatively and significantly correlated with cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and caring, active recreational organization, independence, organization and control dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

Family is the most important part of the child’s environment (Adams, 1966). The experiences that individual has in early life at home with his family in general and his parents in particular are major determinants of a person’s adjustment process during adolescence and in later life (Jayanagraja, 1985). Children of physically punitive parents tend to use similar aggression when relating to others. Their parents often disciplined them by screaming, slapping, and beating - thus modeling aggression as a method of dealing with problems (Patterson *et al.*, 1982). The family environment is influenced by a number of factors like the nature of family constellation; number of children in the family; marital relationships between husband and wife; maternal (paternal) employment; and socio-economic and religious background of the family. The family environment

possesses a certain consistency so that the impact of the same basic values, individuals, material objects etc., is felt over and over. Paternal influence may not be felt in a specific situation, but the attitudes and ideas expressed day after day inevitably leave their mark. Family is the backdrop in which the child learns to deal with emotions, drives and to handle problems in a socially acceptable manner when the family does not help the youngsters to adjust to the environment, they lose effective agent of socialization and hence create stress and anxiety among its members especially the adolescents as in adolescence, the development of independence from the family and adjustment to various social and environmental demands is vital, as the young people have to learn to meet everyday challenges of social relationships, educational attainment and employment (Sud and Sethi, 2008). These novel experiences and demands may evoke anxiety and stress coupled with other emotional reactions. Keeping

this in mind the study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To study the level of family environment among adolescents.
- To find out the relationship of adolescents' aggression with family environment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the schools of Hisar district of Haryana. 250 adolescents each in the age group of 13-15 years from school of Hisar district was purposively selected for the present study. The psychological variable in the present study was family environment and the dependent variable was aggression. Standardized scale of Family Environment by Bhatia and Chadha (1993) was used to measure the family environment of the adolescents and Aggression scale developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar (2012) was used to study the nature of adolescent aggressive behaviour. Assigned score values for adolescent family environment were given to high, average and low. The items measuring of particular dimension positively and responded as 'True' or 'Yes' was given a score of one. The negatively worded items were given a score of 'zero' for a true response and a score of one for false response. The higher the score, the higher was the subject on that dimension. In aggression scale, statements were in two forms *i.e.* positive and negative. 30 statements were in positive form and 25 were in negative forms. Higher scores show higher aggression level and lower scores show lower aggression level. Frequencies, percentages and correlation were used to draw meaningful inferences.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads :

Levels of family environment among adolescents in Haryana :

Results showed that large percentage of adolescents had moderate to low level of family environment in almost entire dimensions of family environment which approximately ranged from 70.00 per cent to 80.00 per cent. This indicates that higher percentages of adolescents are not having good family environment factors in their family. Further, results of Haryana exposed

that more than half of the adolescents had moderate level (64.80%) of cohesion, 72.00 per cent of adolescents had moderate level of expressiveness and 58.00 per cent had moderate level of conflict illustrating that conflict among family members affects adolescents' behaviour which can be the reason for their frustrating nature. The results of the present study get support by Sharma (2012) who found that family environment plays an important role in the development of aggressive tendencies. Empirical findings indicate that decreased family cohesion and increased inter-parental conflict can inadvertently provide family environment that are associated with increased feeling of loneliness, which may be associated with problems in adolescents' social interaction (Johnson *et al.*, 2001). Research regarding level of family conflict suggests that a conflictual family environment is associated with adolescents' insecurity and psychological distress, as well as aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder (Wissink *et al.*, 2006).

Data in Table 1 pertaining to acceptance and caring highlighted that moderate level of acceptance and caring accounted for 82.00 per cent of adolescents and more than half of the adolescents had low level of independence (65.60%) indicating that in Haryana parents give less independence to adolescents specially girls because of conservative nature as they feel, with independence they will not follow the age old traditions and take decisions according to their wishes. Most of the adolescents had moderate level of active recreational organization (60.00%). 48.80 per cent of the adolescents had moderate level (40.80%) of organization and 52.80 per cent had moderate level of control in Haryana state. Mishra and Shanwal (2014) interpreted that if the child reared in cohesive, communicative and less conflictive atmosphere and receive love and autonomy from the family members than his self perception about their abilities may be high. It help them to develop optimistic approach in life (Singh and Udainiya, 2009 and Schunk and Meece, 2006).

Data in Table 2 indicates that most of the respondents in Haryana state had high level of aggression (48.80%) followed by average (42.80%) and low level (8.40%). It can be said that in Haryana the social status of adolescents in rural areas is not very good and in urban areas lack of opportunities and resources have put tremendous pressure on adolescents which has developed an aggressive behaviour to deal with all the stress and anxiety that they develop when dealing with environment.

Adolescent development is deeply rooted in the immediate environment in which a young person lives. The most significant contributing environmental factor may vary depending upon whether the aggression has an early or after onset, for example, early aggression is most likely to stem from familial factors and a “later starter” is more significantly affected by factors outside the home including the school, neighborhood and peer conditions (Fraser, 1996). Hence, the nature of the child’s family plays a significant role in the potential development of early aggressive behaviour.

Relationship of adolescents’ aggression with family environment :

Table 3 highlights the correlation of adolescents’ aggression with family environment. The analyzed data indicated that aggression had positive and significant correlation with conflict (r= 0.16, p<0.05) dimension while

negatively and significantly correlated with cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and caring, active recreational organization, independence, organization and control (r= -0.15, -0.13, -0.15, -0.20, -0.19, -0.17 and -0.24, respectively). It may be interpreted as adolescents high on cohesion have tendency to be less aggressive. Lack of co-operation among family members may lead to aggressive behaviour whereas better family relations decrease the level of aggression.

It was also found that with increase in aggression only conflict dimension of family environment increases significantly. This suggests that conflict in the family may make adolescents vulnerable towards diffusion, directionless and aimlessness. Frequent emotional outbursts lead to bitter family relationships due to approach-avoidance conflicts leading to double bind affect hence giving rise to the feelings of insecurity and identity crisis (Campbell *et al.*, 1984; Nelson *et al.*, 1993 and

Sr. No.	Family environment dimensions	Haryana		
		High	Moderate	Low
1.	Cohesion	2 (0.80)	162 (64.80)	86 (34.40)
2.	Expressiveness	14 (5.60)	190 (76.00)	50 (20.00)
3.	Conflict	70 (28.00)	145 (58.00)	35 (14.00)
4.	Acceptance and Caring	-	205 (82.00)	45 (18.00)
5.	Independence	2 (0.80)	84 (33.60)	164 (65.60)
6.	Active recreational organisation	38 (15.20)	150 (60.00)	62 (24.80)
7.	Organisation	68 (27.20)	122 (48.80)	60 (24.00)
8.	Control	37 (14.80)	132 (52.80)	81 (32.40)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Aggression	Haryana	
	Low	Average
	21 (8.40)	107 (42.80)
		122 (48.80)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Sr. No.	Family environment dimensions	Haryana (n=250) (r)
1.	Cohesion	-0.15*
2.	Expressiveness	-0.13*
3.	Conflict	0.16*
4.	Acceptance and caring	-0.15*
5.	Active recreational organization	-0.20*
6.	Independence	-0.19*
7.	Organization	-0.17*
8.	Control	-0.24*

* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

Sharma, 2009). Singh (2011) showed that aggression was found to be positively associated with neuroticism, and conflict dimension of family environment. It suggests that higher the conflict in family higher the risk to engage in aggressive behaviour. The finding points reveal the fact that people high on conflict tend to have higher tendency for aggression. Aggression was found to be negatively correlated with cohesion. This observation is in the direction of some earlier researches (Esfandyari *et al.*, 2009 and Hennig *et al.*, 2005). Studies further suggested that family risk factors, such as weak affective cohesion and low parental support, are more strongly related to aggressive behaviour (Blum *et al.*, 2003 and Flood-Page *et al.*, 2000).

Conclusion :

On the basis of the results of the present study it can be concluded that level of family environment do play a vital role in moulding aggression in adolescence, Independence experienced by adolescents was at a very low level as Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict and other factor are at a very moderate levels thus creating an environment where adolescents feel restricted not just in the family but in society too, which is the major cause of their aggressive behaviour. Family environment almost plays a spearhead role in developing an adolescents ability to deal with the stress and distress of day to day environment inside the family and in society outside. Relationship of adolescents' aggression to family socio-economic variables also play a part in structuring the aggressive behaviour within adolescents. Poor family and socio-economic variables can lead to behavioural problems among adolescents which consequences in aggressive behaviour. With higher aggression in adolescents, conflict in family environment dimensions was considerably high. Thus concluding that if our family will provide better environment for dealing and understanding of ever changing tendencies of growing adolescents the stress and anxiety they experience can be reduced considerably and *vice versa*.

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