

Home Environment and Psychosocial Competence of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT Present study is an attempt to study the impact of home environment on the psychosocial competence of adolescents. Data were collected from 100 adolescents studying in IX and X standards in English medium high schools of Dharwad. Home environment was assessed by using Mishra's Home Environment Inventory(1989), psychosocial competence was measured using Dindigal and Aminabhavi's Psychosocial Competence Scale(2007). Results revealed that adolescents with high control, social isolation, deprivation of privileges and rejection at home have shown significantly lower problem solving, decision making, coping with emotion, coping with stress and overall psychosocial competence. Children with high protectiveness, punishment, conformity, reward, nurturance and permissiveness have better empathy, critical thinking, empathy, self-awareness, coping with stress, interpersonal relations and effective communication as well as overall psychosocial competence. Findings of the study reveal the significance of home environment in the development of life skills.

INTRODUCTION

According to G. Stanley Hall (1904), Adolescence is a marvelous new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits are now born. Adolescence is a period of marked change in the person's cognitive, physical, psychological, and social development and in the individual's relations with the people and institutions of the social world. Young adolescence is a period of change more rapid than at any other time in human development other than infancy. For the adolescent, this period is a dramatic challenge, one requiring adjustment to changes in the self, in the family, and in the peer group and also in the institutions.

Among the various social groups, home occupies the first and most important place for the development of the individual. Home is the person's primary environment from the time he is born until the day he dies; hence its effect on the individual is also most significant and enduring. Home environment is the most important institution for the existence and continuance of human life and the development of various personality traits. An ideal home environment is one where there is proper reward to strengthen the desired behavior, a keen interest in and love for the child, provision of opportunities to express its views freely, where parents put less restrictions to discipline the child, not preventing the child from acting independently and not continuing infantile care, optimum use of physical and affective punishment, where the children are not compelled to act according to parental desires

and expectations, where they are neither threatened of being isolated from beloved persons nor deprived of love, respect and childcare.

Studies show that high parental involvement leads to high achievement and low parental involvement leads to low achievement (Ahuja and Goyal 2005). Parental involvement is much more likely to promote adolescent school success when it occurs in the context of an authoritative home environment (Steinberg et al. 1992). Parental acceptance and encouragement are positively related with academic school success and competence (Lakshmi and Arora 2006).

Attachment theory leads to the suggestion that the supportive function of attachment relations may be most salient during early adolescent transitions. Attachment to parents was significantly and positively correlated with measures of self-perceived competence and significantly but negatively related to adolescent feelings of depression and anxiety (Papini and Roggman 1992). M. Sarada Devi and Kavita Kiran (2002) found that there was close association between family factors and scholastic backwardness. Large family size, low educational status of parents, low parental involvement and low parental encouragement were found to be the major family factors associated with scholastic backwardness.

Kaur and Kalaramna (2004) studied the interrelationships existing between home environment, social intelligence and socio-economic status (SES) across various age levels and two sexes. Results revealed that socio-economic status has got effect on social intelligence. Home

environment also showed positive impact on social intelligence.

Daulta (2008) studied the impact of home environment on the scholastic achievement of children and found that good quality of home environment had significant positive correlation with 'high' level of scholastic achievement in boys than among girls. It was found that as the quality of home environment gets deteriorated, the level of scholastic achievement also comparatively declines in boys. Children from favourable environment homes are found to be warm-hearted, outgoing and socially more intelligent than children from unfavourable homes (Rani 1998).

Kaur et al. (2009) have observed significantly positive relationship of home environment components such as protectiveness, conformity, reward, and nurturance with self-concept. Albers et al. (2004) in 15 years follow-up study, examined the social climate and family environment and found that disturbed family functioning predicted poor quality of later intimate relationships, but did not predict other dimensions of adult social functioning.

Shek (1997) has found that family factors play an important role in influencing the psychosocial adjustment, particularly the positive mental health, of Chinese adolescents. Mohanraj and Latha (2005) observed that family environment appeared to influence home adjustment as well as academic performance.

Psychosocial Competence has been defined by WHO (1997) as "person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". "It is a person's ability to maintain state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others, in his/her culture and environment." 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. Competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context.

Linares et al. (2002) examined the relationship between parenting styles and adolescents psychosocial competence. They found that bo-

th adolescents perceiving their parents as permissive and as authoritative obtained the highest scores in perceived social competence and self-esteem.

Sim (2000) examined the importance and role of regard for parents for psychosocial competence as indicated by self-esteem and susceptibility to antisocial peer pressure. Results showed that regard for parents was positively related to psychosocial competence, being positively associated with self-esteem and negatively associated with antisocial susceptibility.

Slicker et al. (2005) surveyed regarding older adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting behaviors and their perceptions of their own life skills development. Findings suggest that positive life skills development in older adolescents is related to having been reared by a parenting style high in responsiveness.

Currently, India's education system stresses acquisition of information, knowledge and technical skills rather than psychosocial competence or realization of one's potentials. It is achievement oriented rather than child oriented. Even though, fortunately many school administrators have opened up their eyes towards the importance of life skills education, still many children are deprived of this opportunity.

The above reviewed studies reveal that most of the studies observed the impact of home environment on scholastic achievement, social competence, psychological wellbeing and adjustment. However, the studies focusing on the impact of home environment on psychosocial competence are almost nil.

Thus, the present study was undertaken with the main objective of finding the relationship between home environment and psychosocial competence of adolescents. So it was assumed that psychosocial competence of adolescents is significantly related to their home environment.

METHOD

Procedure and Participants

The sample for the present study consisted of 100 adolescents (of which 50 were boys and 50 were girls) studying in IX and X standards. The data for the present study was collected from Sharada English medium high school and Basel Mission English Medium High school of Dharwad district Karnataka, India.

Measures

The Home Environment Inventory (1989) constructed by Mishra Karuna Shankar contains 100 items related to following ten dimensions of home-environment: a) control, b) protectiveness, c) punishment, d) conformity, e) social isolation, f) reward, g) deprivation of privileges, h) nurturance, i) rejection, j) permissiveness. Test constructor makes it clear that the scale scores should be treated independently and no effort should be made to get a composite score. Each item is to be answered with the help of 5 point scale ranging from 4 to 0. Split half reliability coefficients for ten components of Home Environment Inventory range from 0.73 to 0.95. Home environment Inventory has been found to possess content validity as measured with the help of views expressed by judges.

The Psychosocial Competence Scale constructed by Dindigal and Aminabhavi (2007) was used in this study. This scale consists of 100 items, focusing on 10 different life skills, such as, 1) problem solving, 2) decision making, 3) critical thinking, 4) creative thinking, 5) empathy, 6) self - awareness, 7) coping with emotions, 8) coping with stress, 9) interpersonal relations and 10) effective communication. This is a Likert type scale having 5 response categories. There are 75 positively keyed items and 25 negatively keyed items. The positively keyed items are assigned scores from 1 to 5 whereas the negative items are scored in reverse order that is, 5 to 1. Therefore, the lower score indicates higher competence and vice versa. The authors have reported that the scale as a whole has split-half reliability coefficient by Cronbach alpha = 0.88, Spearman-Brown coefficient = 0.71 and Guttman's split-half coefficient = 0.71 ($P < 0.001$). Similarly, the concurrent validity of all subscales range from 0.38-0.76 ($P < 0.001$).

In addition to the above psychological tests, demographic information was also collected using a sheet prepared for the purpose.

Data Collection

The investigators collected the primary data by taking the prior permission from the school authorities and administered the above scales and responses were obtained from the respondents. Demographic information was also collected at the same time.

Data Analysis

SPSS programme was used to analyze the data. Multiple Correlation technique was applied to test the relationship between home environment and psychosocial competence of adolescents in terms of its dimensions and overall score.

RESULTS

It may be observed from the Table 1 that most of the dimensions of psychosocial competence are significantly correlated with most of the dimensions of home environment. To be more specific, control dimension of home environment is observed to be significantly and negatively related to problem solving ($r = -.220^*$), and decision making components of psychosocial competence ($r = -.200^*$). *** ¹In other words, adolescents with high control at home have shown significantly lower problem solving and decision making.

Protectiveness dimension of home environment is positively related to empathy dimension of psychosocial competence ($r = -.262$). This means adolescents with more protection at home have shown higher empathy.

Punishment dimension of home environment is significantly and positively related to ($r = -.240$) critical thinking dimension of psychosocial competence. This result shows that punishment at home makes the children develop the critical thinking ability.

Conformity dimension of home environment is significantly and positively related to empathy ($r = -.296$), effective communication dimension ($r = -.292$), and overall psychosocial competence ($r = -.247$). Adolescents with high conformity have high empathy, effective communication and high overall psychosocial competence.

Social isolation dimension of home environment is observed to be significantly and negatively related to problem solving behavior ($r = .289$), decision making ($r = .244$), coping with emotions ($r = .398$), coping with stress ($r = .310$) and also overall psychosocial competence ($r = .204$). It clearly reveals that the adolescents with high social isolation exhibit significantly lower problem solving, decision making, coping with emotions and coping with stress and also low overall psychosocial competence.

Table 1: Correlation coefficient values for the psychosocial competence and home environment scores of adolescents (N= 100)

Variables	HE1	HE2	HE3	HE4	HE5	HE6	HE7	HE8	HE9	HE10
PSC1	.220*	.033	.072	-.041	.289**	-.122	.261**	-.172	.198*	.057
PSC2	.200*	-.025	.085	-.003	.244*	-.093	.179	.038	.150	-.001
PSC3	-.138	.007	-.240*	-.184	.003	-.239*	-.054	-.120	-.104	-.217*
PSC4	.019	.042	-.063	-.154	-.037	-.115	-.123	-.053	-.123	-.094
PSC5	-.139	-.262**	-.179	-.296**	-.058	-.246*	.067	-.215*	-.030	-.053
PSC6	-.018	-.123	-.156	-.081	.028	-.209*	-.011	-.102	-.074	-.012
PSC7	.048	-.022	.076	.082	.398**	-.184	.308**	.000	.342**	.113
PSC8	.121	-.170	-.006	-.133	.310**	-.330**	.439**	.064	.368**	.156
PSC9	-.164	-.073	-.177	-.056	-.020	-.190	-.074	-.237*	-.078	-.093
PSC10	.017	-.111	-.124	-.292**	.050	-.295**	.062	-.118	-.049	-.088
PSC Total	.029	-.115	-.135	-.247*	.204*	-.391**	.226*	-.136	.115	-.041

* P < 0.05; Significant

** P < 0.01; highly significant

HE1-Control, HE2-Protectiveness, HE3-Punishment, HE4-Conformity, HE5-Social Isolation, HE6-Reward, HE7-Deprivation of Privileges, HE8-Nurturance, HE9-Rejection, HE10- Permissiveness, PSC1-Problem Solving, PSC2-Decision Making, PSC3-Critical Thinking, PSC4-Creative Thinking, PSC5-Empathy, PSC6-Self Awareness, PSC7-Coping with Emotions, PSC8-Coping with Stress, PSC9-Interpersonal Relation, PSC10-Effective Communication, PSC11-Overall Psychosocial Competence.¹

Reward dimension of home environment is positively and significantly related to critical thinking ($r=-.239$), empathy ($r=-.246$), self-awareness ($r=-.209$), coping with stress ($r=-.330$) and effective communication($r=-.295$) and overall psychosocial competence($r=-.391$). Adolescents with high reward show significantly higher critical thinking, empathy, self-awareness, coping with stress and effective communication as well as high overall psychosocial competence.

Deprivation of privileges dimension of home environment is negatively and significantly related with problem solving ($r=.261$), and highly significantly related to coping with emotions ($r=.308$), coping with stress ($r=.439$), as well as overall psychosocial competence ($r=.226$). That means adolescents with high deprivation of privileges have low problem solving, very low coping with emotions and coping with stress and low overall psychosocial competence.

Nurturance dimension of home environment is positively related to empathy ($r=-.215$), and interpersonal relations ($r=-.237$). High nurturance at home leads to high empathy and good interpersonal relations.

Rejection dimension of home environment is negatively and significantly related to problem solving ($r=.198$), coping with emotions ($r=.342$), and coping with stress ($r=.368$). High rejection at home hinders the development of problem solving, coping with emotions and coping with stress.

Permissiveness dimension of home environ-

ment is positively and significantly related to critical thinking dimension($r=-.217$). High permissiveness leads to high critical thinking.

DISCUSSION

The finding that adolescents with high control have shown low problem solving and decision making may be due to the fact that the children who are highly controlled by the parents at home do not have an opportunity to think flexibly and in a divergent manner. This finding converges with earlier research showing that, psychological control contributes to internalized problems, such as depression and anxiety, because the parent intrudes into the adolescent's own sense of self (Barber 2002). Findings from Lakshmi and Arora (2006) also confirmed that parental control showed negative relationship with academic success and competence.

It is found that adolescents with more protection at home have shown high empathy can be explained with the help of attachment theories. Due to close and enduring association between parents and children, adolescents learn to share and care for each other. In other words, this sharing and caring between children and parents gets reciprocated through the high empathy shown by the children. Kaur and Kalamanna (2004) found that high protectiveness resulted in increase in the patience, sensitivity, tactfulness and sense of humour dimensions of social intelligence in female adolescents.

The observed result that punishment at home makes the children develop the critical thinking ability, may be due to the fact that children who are punished optimally for exhibiting undesirable behavior start analyzing the experiences and information objectively so that they can avoid the negative consequences. This finding is supported by Larzelere's (2000) finding that spanking can have beneficial results when it is "non-abusive".

The finding that adolescents with high conformity have high empathy, effective communication and high overall psychosocial competence is attributed for the fact that adolescents with high conformity at home are compelled to understand others, other people's desires and expectations and not to be too much self-interested. This obviously results in high empathy, effective communication as well as overall psychosocial competence. Hoffman (1983) also very strongly emphasized the role of parental induction, and conversely the avoidance of power assertion and love withdrawal techniques. Parents who explain their parenting behavior to the child (especially with a focus on consequences of one's actions for others) have more empathic children.

It is found that the adolescents with high social isolation exhibit significantly lower problem solving, decision making, coping with emotions and coping with stress and also low overall psychosocial competence may be due to the fact that as children experience more social isolation as a negative sanction by the parents at home, children suffer from inferiority, insecurity, helplessness and hopelessness. This acts as a potent barrier in the development of life skills like problem solving, decision making, coping with emotions and coping with stress as well as overall psychosocial competence.

It is well known from psychological theories that reward plays a very important role in shaping the desirable behavior. The results once again confirm the same that, adolescents who have been rewarded more at home feel more acceptable, confident and self-sufficient and therefore more competent compared to those who have been rewarded less. Findings of Kaur et al. (2009) endorsed that the use of rewards and nurturance from parents should be done for positive self-concept development among adolescents.

It is observed that adolescents with high deprivation of privileges have low problem solving, very low coping with emotions and coping with

stress and low overall psychosocial competence. When parents deprive the children of their rights for love, care and respect, adolescents find themselves in a miserable condition and feel neglected. This state makes adolescents to have fewer exposures and thereby the chances for the enhancement of psychosocial competence get reduced.

The finding that high nurturance at home leads to high empathy and good interpersonal relations may be due to the fact that a keen interest in and love for the child and unconditional emotional attachment at home make the child learn the same positive behavior. Findings of Kaur and Kalarmna (2004) once again confirm that the increase in the level of nurturance of females led to increase in cooperativeness, tactfulness and sense of humour dimensions of social intelligence.

It is found that high rejection at home prevents the development of problem solving, coping with emotions and coping with stress which may be due to inadequacy and inferiority feelings in the children formed by parental rejection, that is, not allowing them to become independent and unique. This finding is confirmed by Rohner and Britner's (2002) longitudinal evidence that parental rejection tends everywhere to precede the development of a variety of mental health problems, such as depression and depressed affect, conduct problems and behavior disorders, and substance abuse.

It is observed that high permissiveness leads to high critical thinking, may be because children who are permitted to express their views freely and act according to their wishes not being restricted by their parents at home get ample opportunities to become more inquisitive and explorative and self-determining. This finding was supported by study findings by Linares et al. (2002) where they mentioned that both adolescents perceiving their parents as permissive and as authoritative obtained the highest scores in perceived social competence and self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

Home environment has been observed to have significant impact on the psychosocial competence of adolescents. Particularly high reward, high conformity, high nurturance, high protectiveness, high permissiveness at home have found to be significantly and positively re-

lated to problem solving behavior, decision making, coping with emotions, coping with stress, critical thinking, empathy, self-awareness, effective communication and overall psychosocial competence. Even the punishment dimension was also found to be positively and significantly related to critical thinking dimension of psychosocial competence.

On the other hand, high control, high social isolation, high deprivation of privileges, high rejection dimensions of home environment have observed to have adverse effect on problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, empathy, self awareness, coping with emotions and coping with stress, interpersonal relations, effective communication and overall psychosocial competence.

Exclusively urban sample of adolescents in the age group of 14-16, and no representation for respondents from the low socioeconomic groups are the main limitations of the study, which can be taken care in the future work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study show empirically the importance of home environment in the development of life skills/ psychosocial competence. This study has shed light on the fact that the home environment can be a strong source of support for developing adolescents, providing close relationships, strong parenting skills, good communication, and modeling positive behaviour, so that modifications in the home environment can be made to make it more favourable for the enhancement of psychosocial competence of the children. The findings of this study have implications for counselors, educators as well as parents that there is a need to facilitate good quality of home with proper communicative and supportive environment to their adolescent children. Accordingly, comprehensive intervention approaches can be initiated to enhance the psychosocial competence of both parents as well as their children. Even though the increasing degrees of autonomy do have importance in adolescence, the presence of strong family relationships does not wane in importance. The specific mechanisms involved in the development of psychosocial competence of adolescents could be further analyzed through future research efforts.

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