

Adolescent's Adjustment to Family Dynamics in Delhi: A Comparative Analysis by Gender

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Abstract

This study examined adolescents' adjustment to their family environments, drawing on a sample of 200 participants (100 boys and 100 girls), aged 16 to 18 years, selected through convenience sampling from the Delhi region. Data was collected using the "Family Environment Inventory" and the "Adjustment Inventory for School Students" (1993). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 26, applying tools such as mean, standard deviation (SD), t-tests, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed no appreciable gender differences in home environment characteristics such as cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control, and degrees of emotional, social, and educational adjustment. However, significant correlations were found between the adjustment levels of boys and girls with respect to their family environments. The study's literature review incorporated research conducted over the last ten years in the field of adolescent adjustment and family dynamics, providing a comprehensive understanding of trends and gaps in this area. Despite its insights, the study faces certain limitations, including the use of a non-representative sample, geographical restrictions, a cross-sectional design, and a reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce biases. Although gender did not emerge as a significant factor influencing family environment and adjustment, the findings emphasize the importance of nurturing supportive family environments to promote positive developmental outcomes for adolescents. Future research should address these limitations by employing larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal designs to better capture the complexities of family dynamics in adolescent development.

Keywords: Adolescent, family dynamics, adjustment, gender differences, Delhi, supportive environment

INTRODUCTION

The life of an individual is a wonderful gift awarded by Nature. This gift initiates the process of unending growth, development, and learning, the rate of which may vary throughout the lifespan.

Human development encompasses diverse stages of life, including infancy, childhood, adolescence, and old age (Sawyer et al., 2018) [1]. However, adolescence is particularly significant, as this is when growth, development, and learning are believed to reach their pinnacle. All things considered, adolescence is the second decade of life, a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. All facets of life—physical, mental, social, and emotional—are growing throughout this time (Costello et al., 2011) [2]. During this stage, adolescents step into a competitive world and face pressure from multiple fronts: parents and teachers expect academic excellence, while peer pressure compels them to conform to their peer group.

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Adolescence: A Crucial Transition Period

Adolescence is a transitional phase characterized by significant changes that shift individuals from childhood to adulthood. These changes result from the interplay between individual behaviour, development, and relationships. As adolescents spend considerable time in school, this environment becomes crucial for their social interactions, serving as a space for both constructive and disruptive behaviours (McLeod et al., 2003) [3]. During this period, adolescents seek freedom while schools emphasize discipline; they search for identity and connection, often facing contradictions in their experiences. Effective school-based intervention plans can enhance students' mental health and empower staff to engage positively with them, promoting well-being and reducing psychiatric symptoms among diverse adolescent groups (Bennouna et al., 2019) [4]. Understanding and supporting adolescents during this pivotal period is essential for fostering personal growth and shaping their future societal roles (Smetana et al., 2006) [5].

The Importance of Adjustment in Modern Life

In the emerging modern era, life is becoming increasingly complex, problematic, and conflicting. To make life more stress-free and manageable, adjustment is essential. We use adjustment as a tool to help us deal with life's difficult truths. It is regarded as an indicator of harmonious behaviour, allowing others in society to recognize an individual as well-adjusted (Sommerfield et al., 2000) [6]. Actually, adjustment is the process by which an individual keeps their wants and the factors affecting their fulfillment in balance. The concept of adjustment is as old as human society itself; it was borrowed from biology and modelled after the biological term "adaptation." Adjustment, therefore, encompasses how an individual adapts to their environment and the demands of life (Hampel et al., 2006) [7]. This includes interactions with others and the ability to manage responsibilities and inner feelings. Psychologically, adjustment enables individuals to cope with external demands and pressures, as well as with their own needs, desires, and internal conflicts. It can be defined as "the psychological process of adapting to, coping with, and managing problems, challenges, and the requirements of daily life." Additionally, it refers to an individual's ability to fit into their environment effectively (Folkman et al., 2004) [8].

Home Environment

An adolescent is like a blank canvas shaped by various influences, including parents, siblings, teachers, peers, and society. Recently, educators and psychologists have focused on the home environment's impact on adolescent behaviour. The "home environment" refers to the interdependent behaviours and relationships among family members (Bradley et al., 2000) [9]. A stimulating home environment that fosters achievement and affection is linked to better performance in children. Positive physical, social, and intellectual aspects of the home shape individuals and lead to improved performance and adjustment in life (Baumeister et al., 2003) [10]. The home environment influences self-confidence, intelligence, personality, learning ability, behaviour, lifestyle, emotions, and habits. Conversely, an unfavourable home environment can lead to behavioural problems and maladjustments. Essentially, the home environment encompasses all conditions that influence a child's physical, intellectual, and emotional development (Bagais et al., 2023) [11].

Theoretical Framework

Adolescence is a critical stage of development where family plays a key role in shaping emotional, social, and educational adjustment. The ability of an individual to deal with difficulties in a variety of areas is referred to as adjustment, and family situations can either help or impede this process. Moos and Moos identify several dimensions of family dynamics, such as Cohesion, Conflict, Expressiveness, Acceptance and Caring, Independence, Organization, and Control, which impact adolescents' behavior, relationships, and ability to adapt. Adolescents from cohesive and supportive families tend to display better emotional and social adjustment, while those from conflict-prone households often struggle. However, adjustment outcomes are also influenced by gender, as boys and girls may respond differently to family dynamics due to socialization patterns.

Boys are often encouraged to develop independence, whereas girls are socialized to express emotions more openly, which can shape their coping mechanisms and behavior within the family. Although some research highlights gender differences in adjustment, others report no significant variation, underscoring the need for further exploration, especially in urban contexts like *Delhi*. Adolescents in Delhi face unique stressors, including *academic pressure*, *population density*, and *diverse family structures*, which may further influence how family dynamics affect their adjustment. Families with strict control and organization may foster academic success but limit emotional expression, whereas high conflict may impair adjustment across all domains.

This study draws on three theoretical frameworks to better understand adolescent adjustment within these dynamics. Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes how adolescents' development is shaped by the interaction between individuals and their environments, with family as a key component of the microsystem. Social Learning Theory explains that adolescents observe and internalize behaviors modeled by family members, often adopting gender-specific roles based on family expectations. Family Systems Theory further highlights that the family operates as an interconnected unit, where changes in one member's behavior affect the entire system, making adolescent adjustment dependent on the overall family dynamic. Understanding these interactions is essential to evaluating how gender and family traits shape adolescents' ability to adjust emotionally, socially, and academically.

By focusing on *Delhi's urban setting*, this study investigates whether gender differences exist in adolescents' adjustment to family dynamics and examines the relationship between *family traits* and *adjustment levels*. The knowledge gathered from this study will help to clarify how crucial it is to create nurturing home circumstances in order to assist the development of healthier adolescents. In particular, while the study anticipates no significant gender differences, it explores how both boys and girls adjust to their family environments differently, offering nuanced insights into the complex interplay between *gender*, *family dynamics*, and *urban stressors*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The "Influence of Home Environment on Adjustment of Adolescent Girls" was investigated by Prachi Shukla (2017) in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh [12]. Involving 100 girls aged 13-16 from two colleges, the study utilized the Adjustment Inventory and Home Environment Inventory to assess correlations between home environment dimensions and adjustment. The findings revealed that control positively correlated with social adjustment ($r=.263^{**}$), while permissiveness correlated with emotional adjustment ($r=0.204^*$), highlighting the significant role of home environment in shaping adolescent girls' adjustment.

The study "Gender differences in adjustment among the college students of Jammu city" was carried out by Dr. Abhishek Chowhan in 2019 [13]. This study included 100 college students (50 boys and 50 girls) and employed the Saxena Adjustment Inventory to measure adjustment levels. Statistical analyses indicated that female students were better adjusted than male students across all areas of adjustment, underscoring the importance of gender in understanding adolescent adjustment dynamics.

A 2019 study by Santwana G. Mishra was titled "Gender-wise Study of Family Climate for Adolescents in Urban India [14]." Involving 309 adolescents (163 boys and 146 girls) aged 14-15, this research utilized the Family Climate Scale to assess interpersonal relationships within families. Results indicated that male adolescents reported a more favourable family climate than females, suggesting persistent traditional gender biases that affect adolescents' experiences at home.

Rakhi Ghatak (2018) investigated "Home Adjustment of Adolescents" with a sample of 100 higher secondary students from Singur, West Bengal [15]. The study employed the Home Adjustment Scale to evaluate adjustment capacities and found significant gender and location differences in home adjustment, indicating that boys and girls have different adjustment capacities based on their living environments.

The study "A Correlative Study of Family Environment and Resilience of Adolescents" was carried out by Alice Nassy in 2017, involving 403 adolescents from various schools in Telangana [16]. The study, which used the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale and the Family Environment Scale, demonstrated a strong relationship between resilience and family environment, highlighting the ways in which supportive family dynamics might improve adolescents' capacity to handle adversity.

Significance

The significance of this research on adolescents' adjustment to family dynamics in Delhi lies in its exploration of how gender influences this adjustment during a critical developmental stage. By revealing that there are no significant gender differences in various dimensions of family environment and adjustment, the study challenges traditional perceptions of gender roles within familial contexts. This finding is crucial for mental health professionals and educators, as it underscores the need for inclusive support systems that cater to all adolescents, regardless of gender. Additionally, the research provides valuable cultural insights into family dynamics in India, contributing to a broader understanding of adolescent development and informing future interventions aimed at promoting positive family relationships and mental health outcomes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The present research had aimed to study the relationship of Gender Difference in the Adolescent's Adjustment style to Their Family Environment factors

OBJECTIVES

1. To compare the adjustment styles of male and female adolescents.
2. To examine the differences in family environment traits among adolescents based on gender.
3. To explore the relationship between adjustment styles and family environment traits among adolescents.

HYPOTHESES

1. The adjustment styles of male and female teenagers will not differ significantly.
2. Adolescent males and females will not differ much in their family environment characteristics.
3. Adolescents' family environment characteristics and adjustment styles will be negatively correlated.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

200 subjects were selected 100 boys and 100 girls through convenience sampling technique in the age range of 16 to 18 years. The students were selected from Delhi area as shown in Table 1.

Variable

The variable of the present study shown in Figure 1 are as follows:

- *Independent variables:* Gender (Boys and Girls), and Home Environment (Good and Poor.).
- *Dependent variable:* Adjustment (Emotional, Social and Educational) Variables

TOOLS USED

Following tools were employed for data collection.

1. Adjustment inventory for school students by Singh and Sinha (1968).
2. Family Environment Inventory by Harpreet Bhatia & N. K. Chadha (1993).

Table 1. Overview of data collection and analysis framework.

Evaluation of test	Statistical methods in particular applied to specific hypotheses
Main type of data	Questionnaire and experimental data
Analyses type	Quantitative
Sample group	10th, 11 th , and 12th
Tools	1. Adjustment inventory for school students 2. Family environment scale

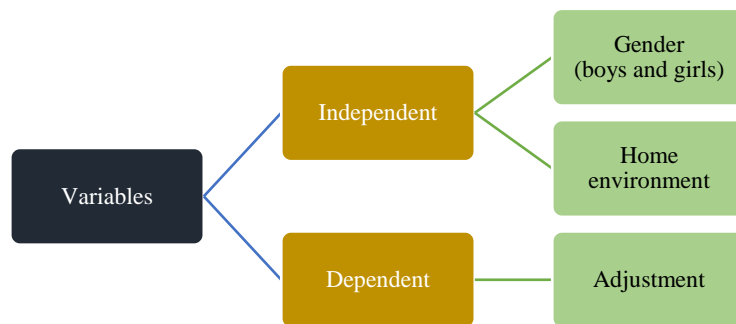


Figure 1. Relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Description of the Test

Adjustment Inventory for School Students

In the present study the inventory used to measure adjustment was developed by Singh and Sinha (1968) [17]. In three categories of adjustment—emotional, social, and educational—the adjustment inventory separates secondary school pupils who are well-adjusted (ages 14 to 18) from those who are not. There are 60 goods in the inventory, with 20 items in each category that need adjusting.

- *Reliability:* The Split-half method, the Test-Retest method, and the K-R formula-20 were used to determine the reliability coefficient. The reliability of the test-scores has been found to be 0.124.
- *Validity:* The validity of the test was found by correlating common criteria of adjustment test result, the values ranging from 0.25 to 0.73.

Family Environment Scale

Based on Moos's (1974) family environment scale, Boyd et al., (1997) used the Family Environment Scale (FES) [18]. There are 69 items on this English-language scale. Dimensions and their sub dimensions are included in this scale described as:

1. *Relationship dimensions*
 - *Cohesion* • *Expressiveness* • *Conflict* • *Acceptance and Caring*
2. *Personal growth dimensions*
 - *Independence* • *Active* • *Organization* • *Control*
 - *Scoring:* Positive items are scored 5,4,3,2,1, and negative items are scored 1,2,3,4,5 on the five-point scale, which includes Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.
 - *Reliability:* Each half test had a split-half dependability score. The entire test's reliability coefficient, as determined using the Spearman Brown prophecy formula, was 0.95.
 - *Validity:* The validity of the test was found by correlating common criteria of family environment, the values ranging from 0.25 to 0.45.

Data Analysis Technique

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, along with graphic representations, were utilized to assess the general nature of the data. T-tests were used to assess the significance of mean differences pertaining to different groups and factors. Additionally, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Test was used to explore relationships between means across different groups and variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of the data dynamics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis posited that there would be a significant difference in adjustment styles between adolescent girls and boys. However, analysis revealed that the mean adjustment score for boys was 141.71 (SD = 13.32) while for girls it was 143.38 (SD = 14.61), indicating no significant difference in adjustment styles between genders. Consequently, this hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that both genders exhibit similar adjustment styles during adolescence.

According to the second hypothesis, there would be notable gender disparities in the aspects of the family environment. The results indicated that boys had a mean score of 31.15 (SD = 2.92) and girls had a mean score of 30.46 (SD = 3.11), with no significant difference found between the genders. Thus, this hypothesis is also rejected, indicating that both male and female adolescents perceive their family environments similarly.

The third objective aimed to explore the correlation between adjustment styles and family environment traits among adolescents. The findings showed a negative relationship between adjustment styles and family environment factors for boys, with a correlation coefficient of $r(100) = .015$ and a *p*-value of .881, indicating no significant relationship. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted for boys but requires further investigation for girls.

While this study did not find significant gender differences in either adjustment styles or family environment traits among adolescents, it highlights the need for supportive family environments to foster healthier adjustment outcomes. These results are consistent with earlier studies showing that adolescents' experiences in their family dynamics may be influenced by traditional gender biases. Future research should continue to explore these relationships with larger and more diverse samples to gain deeper insights into adolescent adjustment processes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there are no significant gender differences in adjustment styles or family environment traits among adolescents, indicating that both boys and girls exhibit similar experiences in these areas. In particular, there were no discernible differences in coherence, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control, and emotional, social, and educational adjustment levels. However, a significant relationship was found between boys' adjustment and their family environment, suggesting that supportive family dynamics may enhance boys' adjustment capabilities. The relationship for girls has to be investigated more. All things considered; these results highlight how crucial it is to create fair family settings in order to promote the development of healthy adolescents.

Implications

- *Implement adjustment programs:* Schools should develop programs tailored to meet the diverse adjustment needs of adolescents.
- *Foster a supportive atmosphere:* Create a positive and open environment that encourages interaction between students and teachers.
- *Encourage engagement:* Offer physical, social, and recreational activities to help students explore their talents and promote well-being.
- *Understand family dynamics:* Teachers should gather information on students' family environments to better support their development.
- *Enhance guidance and counselling:* Establish robust counselling services in schools, ensuring programs are sensitive to adolescents' psychological, social, and emotional needs.

Limitations

Delimitation in research refers to choices that the researcher makes for the study that are under the control of the researcher. It limits the scope and defines the boundaries of the study. The study is conducted at a single specific Area and these results may not seem generalizable beyond another Sector. The study is also limited only to the home environment and adjustment level leaving behind the other factors which are also affected to students. The population of the study also limits itself to the age group of 16-18 years who are the student's college. It is nonetheless true that, given the study's sample size, it did not accurately reflect all of the pupils. A note of caution may be essential when generalizing the study's findings. Despite the limitations, the findings have thrown light on the further need on how to improve home environment and adjustment style of students.

Recommendation

- Further research can be conducted in a broader perspective by taking other variables such as teacher taught relationship, rapport between school and parents, parental educational programmes, mental health of adolescents and so on.
- Some experimental studies can be conducted to see the effect of educational programmes to improve parent-child relationship and parental involvement to realize the potential of the child.
- The present study was confined to 200 students of 11th and 12th class belonging to Delhi area. Further study can be conducted on a larger sample on senior secondary, college and university students from other districts and states.
- The present study was done from randomly collected school only. Similar study can be conducted on public and private school students.

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