

## Family Environmental Factors influencing on Interpersonal Problems of Adults among School Teachers and Nurses

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### Abstract

The present research is an empirical effort made to study how the family environmental factors' influence on the interpersonal problems of adults. The sample-size is 350 (comprises of 200 teachers and 150 nurses). The stratified random sampling method is adopted. The age ranges from 22 to 56 (Mean Age= 31.87).The research is executed with non-clinical samples. The tools adopted are: (1) the Family Environment Scale<sup>3</sup> and (2) Inventory of the Interpersonal Problems IIP-32<sup>8</sup>. The participants are contacted individually by the researcher and data is obtained with the help of the above mentioned tools. The descriptive statistics and correlation are used for the statistical analyses. Results indicates that the dimensions of the family environment which are cohesion, conflict, acceptance and caring, organization, expression and control significantly influence the dimensions of interpersonal problems such as domineering, intrusive, non-assertive and self-sacrifice at the 0.01 percent level of significance, and they are negatively correlated with each other. This finding supports the understanding and the development of effective strategies in psychotherapy.

**Key words:** Family Environment, Interpersonal Problems, non-clinical sampling Domineering, Teachers, Nurse and Psychotherapy.

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## Introduction

Family is the first school and the mother is the first teacher where the child learns norms, rules and regulations and certain values through modeling. Family makes an individual feel as an acceptable member and creates a sense of psychological identity that fosters the status and prestige. According to Adler, A (1964) the perception of family atmosphere is crucial where each person creates a style of life by interacting with other family members. Hence the family lays the foundation for interpersonal communication patterns and type of relationship that one would repeat later in life. Then the term family environment usually refers to the different modalities of interaction between family members, and more specifically to the levels of family communication, expressiveness, and conflict that exist among family members. It involves the circumstances and social climate conditions within families. In this context the family fosters either adoptive or maladaptive behaviors of an individual. For it would be an adaptive behavior for a child to avoid an angry parent, to withdraw from a detached parent, or surrender to a domineering parent. Thus the child learns to withdraw, learns to cling, and learns to attack or to surrender. This gives temporary relief, but in long run it causes the interpersonal difficulties and becomes the source of recurring interpersonal problems<sup>13</sup> where the behavior becomes either excess or deficit (inhibitions). Thus the interpersonal problems are present for a long time and that come up frequently and follows a familiar pattern.

Interpersonal problems include the recurrent characteristic difficulties in relating to others<sup>9</sup>, causing intense suffering and the subjective distress in relationship<sup>14</sup>, preventing a person from functioning appropriately in social relationship<sup>10</sup> where the person wants friendliness, but repeatedly experiences hostility. This occurs among friends, family, workers, partners and so on, leading them to seek psychotherapy<sup>2</sup>.

## Theoretical frame work for family environment and interpersonal problems

The question arises whether there do exist any theory that would support the research. The Schema Theory (introduced by Jean Piaget in 1923, and later brought forth as Schema Therapy by Jeffrey E. Young in 1950) sheds lights for better understanding this concept. Schema means the cognitive structure established in the mind. It does not happen all of the sudden, rather before forming schema, the person undergoes the sequences of experiences: for example, the person experiences failures after failures, then forms the dysfunctional beliefs (I can't), establishing the Schema (I am good for nothing) as maladaptive.

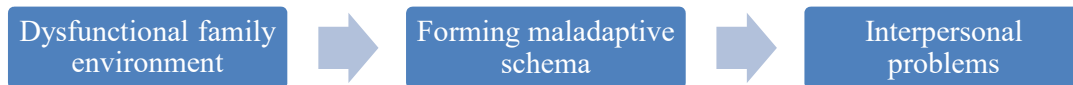
Based on this theoretical background there are indirectly connected articles precisely said that the interpersonal problems are related to the family environment which is either functional or dysfunctional. The dysfunctional family environments envisage the absence of supportive and facilitative interactions<sup>22</sup>, domestic violence<sup>18</sup>, the families that have less cohesion, less organized and less expressive<sup>20</sup>, family conflict<sup>23</sup>, harsh punishment, family violence, history of substance abuse, emotional rejection and separation of the parents early in life that were particularly important factors<sup>1</sup> contribute to the elevated levels of conflictual and critical schema - leading the members to be more distant and disorganized in interpersonal context. For the dysfunction in the family of origin<sup>7</sup> is significant and contributes twenty percent of the variance in adult life<sup>25</sup>.

Further the general psychopathology makes the association between family environment and interpersonal problems plausible. The decreased family cohesion and increased inter-parental conflict were unconsciously associated with increased feelings of loneliness, social anxiety, social avoidance<sup>11</sup>, depression, aggression and subsequent poor social adjustment<sup>5</sup>. For the early childhood behavioral approach and response meaningfully linked with the functional style of adult interpersonal behavior. The risky families

(characterized by conflict, aggression and by relationship that are cold, unsupportive and neglectful) produce disruptions in psychosocial functioning, specifically in emotional processing and social competence, and create links for understanding mental and physical health across the life span<sup>21</sup>.

Based on the schema theory and the early studies make it clear that the dysfunctional and risky family of origin contribute to the later maladaptive behavioral and interpersonal response in adult life. Thus we form the theoretical framework that the family environment affects the formation of schema and in turn influences the interpersonal relationship.

The figure-1 shows the theoretical framework



As a summary, the cognitive theory of psychopathology incorporates the environmental factors which elicit responses that confirm the belief systems (schema) about the self and others which are believed to affect interpersonal behavior and events<sup>27</sup>. For the individuals who perceive their family's cohesion weak, have difficulty in forming the social bond and interpersonal relationships<sup>28</sup>. The individuals with the greater family cohesion have better harmonious interpersonal relationship and adjustments<sup>26</sup>.

### Significance of the study

Review of literature reveals that there has no study on interpersonal problems in relation to family environment in an Indian context in particular to the service sector respondents like teachers and nurses. This fills the literature gap. The present research is undertaken with non-clinical samples. This research would help the readers to understand the interpersonal issues better. Consequently this study will assist in counseling and psychotherapy.

### Objectives

- 1) To identify the levels of family environment among the respondents.
- 2) To identify the levels of Interpersonal problems of the respondents.
- 3) To find out the relationship between the family environment and interpersonal problems.

**Hypothesis:** The research hypothesis is a tentative solution to a research problem (Kothari, C. R. 2004). Based on the above stated descriptions about the family environment and interpersonal problems, the following hypothesis is being framed:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the factors of family environment and interpersonal problems.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between the factors family environment and interpersonal problems.

### Method

Descriptive survey method was adopted. 350 samples were selected following the stratified random sampling from Cuddalore district- Tamil Nadu, consisting of 153 males and 197 females in which 200 teachers were working in private, aided and government institutions, and 150 nurses were working in private and government healthcare centers. The age was ranging from 22 to 56 (Mean Age= 31.87). The participants were contacted

individually by the researcher and data was obtained with the help of the selected tools. Before the data collection was made, oral permission was obtained from the correspondent and principles of the concerning schools and healthcare centers.

### Instruments used:

#### ➤ Inventory of the Interpersonal Problems (IIP-32)

The inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP-32) is developed and standardized by Horowitz<sup>8</sup>. The scale consists of 32 items with five- point rating scale as 0-not at all, 1- a little bit, 2-moderately, 3-quite a bit and 4-extremely. The scale measures the eight dimensions of interpersonal problems: Domineering / controlling, Vindictive / self-centered, Cold/Distant, Socially inhibited, Non-assertive, Overly accommodating, Self-sacrificing, Intrusive / Needy. The total T- score (70 and above) was used as an indicator of severity of the interpersonal problems. It has the Crobach's alpha with 0.88. Based on the stated reasons, the IIP-32 scale was selected and used for this research purpose.

#### ➤ Family Environment Scale (FES)

Family environment scale (FES) is developed and standardized by Bhatia and Chadha<sup>3</sup> for Indian Milieu. The scale consists of 69 items with five- point rating scales as 5-strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3-uncertain, 2-disagree, and 1-strongly disagree. The scale measures the three Dimensions of family environment: relationship dimensions (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict and acceptance and caring), personal growth dimensions (independence and active recreational orientation) and system maintenance dimensions (organization and control). It has overall test reliability coefficient value with 0.95. Based on the stated reasons, the FES-scale was selected and used for this research purpose.

### Analysis strategy

The statistical program IBM SPSS 21 was used for the data analysis. The descriptive statistics were adopted. For determining the relationships between the research variables of this study, Karl Pearson's moment correlation ('r') was used towards determining the significance, direction and strength of the relationship between the variables.

### Results

The research goal was to find out the relationship between family environment and interpersonal problems. The collected data was coded with IBM SPSS 21 version. The tables were obtained through descriptive analysis and correlation.

**The table-1 shows the frequency and its corresponding percentages of the responses under low, average and high levels towards the eight dimensions of the family environment**

Dimensions of family environment	qualitative norms with frequencies and percentage					
	Low	Percentage (%)	Average	Percentage (%)	High	Percentage (%)
Cohesion	164	46.85	173	49.42	12	3.42
Expressiveness	85	24.28	253	72.28	12	3.42
Conflict	159	45.42	188	53.71	3	0.85
Acceptance & caring	36	10.28	297	84.85	17	4.85
Independence	126	36.00	222	63.42	2	0.57
Active-Rec-ori	120	34.28	218	62.28	12	3.42
Organization	131	37.42	187	53.42	32	9.14
Control	143	40.85	172	49.14	35	10.00
Overall	120	34.42	214	61.07	16	4.46

Source: Primary data, Note: active-Rec-ori: active-recreational orientation

Table-1 shows the frequency and its corresponding percentages of the responses under low, average and high levels towards the eight dimensions of the family environment. It identifies the levels of family environment among the respondents. It is identified that the cohesion is found with low 164 (46.58), average 173 (49.42) and high 12 (3.42) frequencies.

The expressiveness is found with low 85 (24.28), average 253 (72.28) and high 12 (3.42) frequencies. The conflict is found with low 159 (45.42), average 188 (53.71) and high 3 (0.85) frequencies. The acceptance and caring is found with low 36 (10.28), average 297 (84.85) and high 17 (4.85) frequencies. The independence is found with low 126 (36), average 222 (63.42) and high 2 (0.57) frequencies. The active –recreational orientation is found with low 120 (34.28), average 218 (62.28) and high 12 (3.42) frequencies. The organization is found with low 131 (37.42), average 187 (53.42) and high 32 (9.14) frequencies. The control is found with low 143 (40.85), average 172 (49.14) and high 35 (10) frequencies. Overall 34.42 percentages of families had low, 61.06 percentages of families with average and 4.45 percentages of families with high frequencies on the dimensions of the family environment. The low frequencies indicate the dysfunctional on the dimensions of the family environment.

**The table-2 shows the frequency and its corresponding percentages towards the eight dimensions of the interpersonal problems**

Dimensions of interpersonal problems	Frequency (T-Score below 70 )	Percentage	Frequency (T-score Above 70)	Percentage
Domineering	200	57.14	150	42.85
Vindictive	277	79.14	73	20.85
Cold	249	71.14	101	28.85
Socially inhibited	286	81.71	64	18.28
Non-assertive	258	73.71	92	26.28
Overly accommodative	328	93.71	22	6.28
Self-sacrifice	311	88.85	39	11.14
Intrusive	258	73.71	92	26.28
overall	271	77.39	79	22.57

Source: Primary data

Note: T-Score below 70 denotes interpersonal problems (nil) and T-Score above 70 suggest interpersonal problems

Table-2 shows the frequency and its corresponding percentages of the responses under below and above levels of interpersonal problems on its eight dimensions. The individual's interpersonal problems are measured with the T-Score. From the table-2, It is identified that 200 (57.14) individuals are below and 150(42.85) individuals with above on domineering. 277 (79.14) individuals are below and 73 (20.85) individuals with above on vindictive. 249(71.14) individuals are below and 101 (28.85) individuals with above on cold. 286 (81.71) individuals are below and 64 (18.28) individuals with above on socially inhibited. 258 (73.71) individuals are below and 92 (26.28) individuals with above on non-assertive. 328 (93.71) individuals are below and 22 (6.28) individuals with above on overly accommodative. 311 (88.85) individuals are below and 39 (11.14) individuals with above on self-sacrifice. 258 (73.71) individuals are below and 92 (26.28) individuals with above on intrusive. It is found that 22.57 percentages of individuals share the eight dimensions of the interpersonal problems, for the T-score above 70 suggests the prevailing of the interpersonal problems.

**The table-3 shows the correlation between the dimensions of family environment and interpersonal problems**

Dimensions of family environment	Dimensions of interpersonal problems							
	domineering	Vindictive	cold	Soci-inhi	Non-asse	overacco	Self-sac	intrusive
Cohesion	-.192**	.044	.079	-.002	-.223**	-.001	-.242**	-.223**
Expressiveness	-.131*	-.063	-.025	-.087	-.160**	.070	-.180**	-.160**
Conflict	-.213**	-.078	-.012	-.105*	-.236**	-.095	-.245**	-.236**
Acceptance and caring	-.213**	-.008	-.042	-.032	-.169**	-.012	-.266**	-.169**
Independence	-.101	-.046	-.082	-.144**	-.083	-.101	-.121*	-.083
Active-Recreational Orientation	-.052	-.012	-.044	-.807	-.078	-.787	-.067	-.078
Organization	-.150**	-.105*	-.101	-.011	-.142**	-.021	-.224**	-.142**
Control	-.186**	-.053	-.069	-.002	-.101	-.015	-.183**	-.101

Source: primary data

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: soc-inhi- socially inhibited, nonasse: non-assertive, overacco: overly accommodative, self-sac: self sacrifice

The table-3 shows the correlation between the dimensions of family environment and the interpersonal problems. It is identified that the cohesion is at the 0.01 level of significance with domineering (-0.192\*\*), non-assertive (-0.223\*\*), self-sacrifice (-0.242\*\*) and intrusive (-0.223\*\*). Expressiveness is at the 0.01 level of significance with non-assertive (-0.160\*\*), self-sacrifice (-0.180\*\*) and intrusive (-0.160\*\*). Conflict is at the 0.01 level of significance with domineering (-0.213\*\*), non-assertive (-0.236\*\*), self-sacrifice (-0.245\*\*) and intrusive (-0.236\*\*). Acceptance and caring is at the 0.01 level of significance with domineering (-0.213\*\*), non-assertive (-0.169\*\*), self-sacrifice (-0.266\*\*) and intrusive (-0.169\*\*). Independence is at the 0.01 level of significance with socially inhibited (-0.144\*\*). Active-recreational orientation is not significant, but negatively correlated. Organization is at the 0.01 level of significance with domineering (-0.150\*\*), non-assertive (-0.142\*\*), self-sacrifice (-0.224\*\*) and intrusive (-0.142\*\*). Control is at the 0.01 level of significance with domineering (-0.186\*\*), and self-sacrifice (-0.183\*\*). Only four family environmental factors such as expressiveness, organization, conflict and independence are at the 0.05 level of significance with domineering (-0.131\*), vindictive (-0.105\*), socially inhibited (-0.105\*) and self-sacrifice (-0.121\*) respectively.

There are variables that are insignificant, but they are negatively correlated. Domineering is not significant with independence and active-recreational orientation, but they are negatively correlated. Vindictive is not significant with the dimensions of family environment except on organization, but all other dimensions are negatively correlated. Cold is not significant with any of the dimensions of the family environment, but they are negatively correlated. Socially inhibited is not significant with family environment except on conflict and organization, but they are negatively correlated. Non-assertiveness is not significant with independence, active-recreational orientation and control, but they are negatively correlated. Overly accommodative is not significant with any of the family environmental dimensions, but all other dimensions are negatively correlated. Self-sacrifice is not significant only with active-recreational orientation, but negatively correlated. Intrusive is not significant with independence, active-recreational orientation and control, but they are negatively correlated. Precisely the dimensions of family environment are either at the 0.01 level of significance or at 0.05 levels of significance, or not at all significant with the dimensions of the interpersonal problems. But all dimensions family environment and interpersonal problems are negatively correlated with each other. This reveals that the family environmental factors influence the interpersonal problems by taking the role of independent and dependent variables respectively. Further, it is clear from the table that the dimensions of interpersonal problems namely domineering, intrusive, cold and non-assertive cause the interpersonal problems among the teachers and healthcare professionals.

## Discussion

The primary intension of the research is to find out the relationship between family environment and interpersonal problems. The family environment consists of relationship dimensions (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict and acceptance and caring) that refers to the degree of commitment, support, help that family members provide to one another (the emotional bonding and the closeness), and is expressed by feelings of belonging and acceptance within the family system<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand the dysfunctional family environments portrays the absence of supportive and facilitative interactions<sup>22</sup>, domestic violence<sup>18</sup>, the families that have less cohesion, less organized and less expressive<sup>20</sup>. From the table-1, low score on dimensions of the family environmental factors indicate the unhealthy or dysfunctional family environment which in return causes the interpersonal problems.

There are 34.42 percent of families that had low frequencies which indicate the families with less cohesion, less organized, less expressive<sup>20</sup>, less independence, less active-recreational orientation, less control and more conflict<sup>23</sup>, leading to form maladaptive schemas like mistrust, abandonment, overly accommodating, social isolation and domineering<sup>16</sup> contribute to the interpersonal problems in adult life. Thus the past-life experiences influence our present life conditions.

Further, it is visibly clear from the table -2 and table-3 that among the eight dimensions of interpersonal problems, the domineering, intrusive, non-assertive and cold are very predominant. It falls into two categories: agency and communion<sup>2</sup> where agency connotes the idea of dominance, power, status and control, on the other hand communion suggests love, affiliation, union and friendliness<sup>6</sup>. Here lies the key issue in understanding the interpersonal problems, how we comprehend and integrate the tensions between the communion and agency. In our research, domineering and intrusive denotes agency. The non-assertiveness and cold signify the communion. It gets confirmed that the factors of the family environmental dimensions namely, cohesion, conflict, acceptance and caring, organization and control were significant at the 0.01 level with the domineering, intrusive, non-assertiveness and cold dimensions of interpersonal problems. The expressiveness and independence were found significant at the 0.05 level with the domineering and cold. Among these outcomes, domineering i.e. 32.57 from table-2 and cold i.e. 18.28 percent from table-2 behavior dominate the most in the adult interpersonal and linked with the family-of-origin to intimate violence in adulthood<sup>17</sup>.

Precisely the research confirms from the above tables that the family environmental factors influence the interpersonal problems and they are negatively correlated. It signifies that, if the scores on the family environment increases, the scores on the dimensions of interpersonal problem would decrease and vice -versa.

### **Implications and Limitations**

This research is done in an Indian context. This would help us to understand the relationship between the family environment and interpersonal problems better, how the family environment would influence the interpersonal relationship either healthy or conflictual. The finding would be helpful for understanding and developing strategies effectively in psychotherapy. The sampling area covered with non-clinical populations. Though the data were collected following the stratified random sampling, but it was done at the convenience of the researcher as well. Young and middle adults were included. The data analyzed for this study were originally meant for research purpose rather than clinical analysis or making diagnosis.

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**Ethical Clearance:** Ethical clearance is taken from Center for Academic Research (CARE) Annamalai University, Psychology wing.

### **Conclusion**

Family environment is the base for forming our personalities. The personal characteristics do not happen all of a sudden, rather events become experience and experience

brings added meaning and then forms the schemas which would be positive or negative. Thus if our schema is negative, then it causes the interpersonal problems.

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