

Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness Among Adolescents in Relation to Gender

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Abstract: *Family environment plays a vital role in the psychological and social development of adolescents and may significantly influence their experience of loneliness. The presents study aimed examine family environment and perceived loneliness among adolescent students in relation to gender in CBSE schools of Ernakulam District. A descriptive survey research design was employed. A sample comprised 80 adolescents (40 males and 40 females) studying in Classes IX and X, aged 14 to 16 years, selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using Family Environment Scale (Bhatia and Chadha, 1993) and the Perceived Loneliness Scale (Jha,1997). Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-test, Pearson's correlation coefficient SPSS version 22. The study examined gender differences in family environment and perceived loneliness and explored the relationship between the variables. The findings provide useful insights into the role of family environment in adolescent psychological well-being and may assist parents, educators, school counsellors, and policy makers in promoting supportive family relationships and reducing loneliness among adolescents.*

Keywords: Adolescents, Psychological Well-Being, Perceived Loneliness, Family Environment, Gender, CBSE schools

1. Introduction

During the life span of human beings, adolescence is an important period which lies within the age range of 13-18 years in an individual and this period begins with the sexual maturation of the child and ends by reaching the age of legal maturity. Adolescence is the transitional period from childhood to adulthood. Preparation for adulthood is the major task of Adolescence period. Before the twentieth century, people had no concept of adolescence; children were regarded as adult when they become physically mature or when they enter into the vocational world. But today in the complex and modern industrialized societies younger person's entry into adulthood takes a longer time due to educational or vocational training so that they can handle the adult responsibilities efficiently later.

Family Environment

According to Vohra (1998)- Family is the main setting for experiences of the child, particularly a young child. The family is a dynamic set of relationships among all people who live in the 'family'. Children's behaviour, ideas, thoughts and fantasies affect the lives of those with whom they live. The behaviour, ideas, thoughts and fantasies of father and mother affect the lives of their children. This group has resources that are used to adjust in life.

Loneliness

Our need to connect is innate, as human beings we are created for social interaction. The desire to belong and feel socially connected is a fundamental aspect of human development and well-being. Loneliness is defined as a negative emotional state that arises when there is a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships. It is the feeling of wanting greater social connection than you have. It is a complex and universal human emotion that arises when individuals perceive a discrepancy between their desired level of social connection and their actual level of social interaction.

2. Review of Literature

The following studies provide us with the knowledge of the general conceptualization and specific challenges which can be expected in the ongoing research, and also helps the investigator to understand the problem from different dimensions.

Family Environment

Balda, Sangwan and Kumari (2019) conducted a study in two randomly selected rural Govt. Senior Secondary schools and two urban Govt. Senior Secondary schools in Hisar District of state of Haryana in order to find out the significant differences in the perceptions of adolescents' Family Environment with respect to sex (male/female) and place of residence (rural/urban). The total sample constituted of 240 adolescents (120 boys and 120 girls) within the age ranges from 16 to 18 years. Data was collected by administering Family Environment Scale by Bhatia and Chadha (2004). Data was analyzed by computing Z test. Result showed that adolescents from urban area perceived their Family Environment as more cohesive, expressive, acceptances and caring, independence in comparison to the adolescents from rural areas.

Doley (2018) examined influence of Home Environment dimensions on academic achievement among adolescent students. The randomly selected sample consisted of 210 adolescents (105 females, 105 males). The samples were selected from the 6 secondary schools (3 from rural and 3 from urban) of the Dhemaji district, Assam.

K. Pednekar and Tung (2017) investigated the role of parent and peer attachment and family environment in discriminating between high and low Problematic Internet Use group of adolescents. The sample consisted of 611 adolescents between the age groups of 13 and 18 years. Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (Demetrovics et al., 2008), Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1983) and IPPA (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Result showed that parent and peer attachment and family environment significantly influence on the problematic internet use of the

adolescents and therefore, it significantly discriminates the high and low Problematic Internet Users.

Rajapurkar (2017) investigated the life satisfaction and family environment among adolescents. The sample consisted of 50 college-going adolescents residing in Bhopal city. The sampling was done through the convenience sampling technique. Data was collected by administering Family Environment Scale by Moos & Moos (1974) and Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Diener et al (1985). The result showed a positive and high correlation between family environment and life satisfaction among adolescents.

Bansal (2016) investigated the relationship of family environment and self-esteem of adolescents. The sample consisted of 200 adolescents (100 male and 100 female) studying in various educational institutes located in Bathinda. Family Environment Scale and Self Esteem Scale were administered for data collection. Pearson's product moment correlation and t-test were used for the data analysis. The results of the investigation showed that there exist no gender differences in all the ten dimensions of family environment and even no gender differences exist in the self-esteem of adolescents.

Mahalakshmi, Kalaivani and Pugalenthi (2015) investigated the relationship between home environment and personality among higher secondary school students. The randomly selected sample consisted of 60 (37 males, 23 females) students of Coimbatore district. The personality was assessed by administering the self-constructed questionnaire and home environment was measured by administering the Home Environment Inventory by Karuna Shankar Misra (1983). Mean, SD and T-test were computed for statistical analysis of the data. Result showed that there is significant difference in the personality with respect to gender (male & female), locality (rural/urban), type of family (nuclear/joint), medium of instruction in schools (Tamil/English) of the students.

3. Research Methodology

Methodology refers to systematic research and planning. Scientific investigation involves careful and proper adaptation of research design, use of standardized tools and tests, sampling techniques, sound procedures for collecting data, its careful study and tabulation and them, finally application of appropriate statistical tests. These steps basically enhance the predictive value of findings; thus, the findings may be generalized to predict the behaviour of population from which the sample has been drawn.

Problem Statement:

Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness of Adolescents in Relation to Gender in CBSE Schools of Ernakulam District

This research study used the descriptive method wherein "data are collected to test the hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the study". A survey method was selected for the present research study.

Variables: Variables under study in this research are as follows

- 1) Family Environment
- 2) Perceived Loneliness among adolescent students
- 3) Gender

Operational Definitions:

Family Environment: Family Environment in this current study means the adolescent students' perception about the resources, events, physical, emotional, moral, social and cultural environment and people in their own families which might have negative and positive effect on them. In the present study, family environment consists of seven independent dimensions such as Competitive Framework (Cf), Cohesion (Co), Expressiveness (Ex), Independence (In), Moral Orientation (Mo), Organization (Or), Recreational Orientation (Ro), which together give the information about physical, emotional, moral and cultural environment of the adolescents' family.

Perceived Loneliness: Loneliness is a very unpleasant and painful emotional experience for human being. It is subjective in nature. One who is alone may not feel lonely, on the other hand a person who is surrounded by a huge group of people such as friends, family members, relatives, colleagues etc. or sitting in the midst of a crowd may perceive himself or herself as being lonely. In the present study, loneliness corresponds to the score obtained by the subject on the Perceived Loneliness Scale (L-SCALE).

Gender: Gender is the state of being male or female in relation to the social and cultural roles that are considered appropriate for men and women.

Adolescents: Adolescence is also called the stage of multiple transitions and such transitions occurs in almost all aspects of an adolescents' life such as physical, psychological, social, educational, emotional, employment, standard of living etc. In this study the term adolescent means the students of class IX and X of high schools of Ernakulam city within the age group of 14 to 16 years.

Objectives: The main aim of the research study is

- To study the differences in Family Environment of Male and Female adolescents
- To study the differences in Perceived Loneliness of Male and Female adolescents
- To study the correlation between Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness among adolescents

Hypothesis: Based on the objectives of the research, the following hypotheses have been formulated

- **H₁:** There will be significant differences in Family Environment of Male and Female adolescents.
- **H₁:** There will be significant differences in Perceived Loneliness of Male and Female adolescents.
- **H₁:** There will be significant correlation between Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness among adolescents.

Sample:

To increase credibility, it is important to choose the sample that will represent the population under investigation. The

population of the study consists of adolescents with the age range of 14 to 16 years, from class IX and X.

Convenience sampling was used where 80 participants, 40 males and 40 females were given the two questionnaires and asked to complete it within time.

Inclusion Criteria:

Following inclusion criteria were adopted for selection of an adolescent in the sample:

- He/she should study in a government and private school.
- He/she should be studying in class IX or X
- He/she should be in the age group of 14-16 years.
- He/she should belong to Middle Income family.
- He/she should study in a co-educational school.
- He/she should have no apparent disability.

Exclusion Criteria:

Following exclusion criteria were followed during sample collection:

- Participants who are not the residents of Ernakulam city.
- The students who do not give consent for participation.

Measures:

Below mentioned tools/questionnaires were used to collect the data for this research study.

Perceived Loneliness Scale (L- Scale)

Perceived Loneliness Scale (L- Scale) was developed by Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha in the year 1997. L-Scale is a unidimensional self-report research tool. This scale consists of 36 items and along with each statement there are five possible responses using five-point Likert format such as Totally Agree (5), Agree (4), Can't say (3), Disagree (2), Totally Disagree (1).

Administration: This L-Scale can be used in individual as well as group testing situations. No time limit is prescribed for the administration of this scale. There are no right or wrong answers.

Scoring: Here participants respond using five – point Likert format: Totally Agree (5), Agree (4), Can't say (3), Disagree (2), Totally Disagree (1). The procedure of scoring is very simple. For 'Totally Agree' response, score of 5 is awarded, whereas 4, 3, 2 and 1 scores are given for 'Agree', 'Can't say', 'Disagree' and 'Totally Disagree' responses respectively. The encircled number indicated the subject's score on that particular item. The minimum and maximum scores range between 36 to 180. High score is interpreted as high loneliness and low score indicated low loneliness of the respondents.

Family Environment Scale (FES)

The Family Environment Scale (also known as FES in short) was developed and designed by Harpreet Bhatia and N.K. Chadha of the Department of Psychology of University of Delhi, in Delhi. This scale was published by Ankur Psychological Agency, situated at 22/481, Indira Nagar in Lucknow -226016 in the year 1993. The Family Environment Scale was meant to measure the family environment of an individual and was constructed on the basis of the Family Environment Scale developed by Moos

in 1974. This scale consisted of 69 items under three major dimensions, namely: Relationship Dimensions, Personal Growth Dimensions and System Maintenance Dimensions. Under each dimension, there were some subscales which have been mentioned below. Two types of items, positive and negative, were found in FES. First is "Relationship Dimension" which carried four sub-scales.

These are as follows:

- Cohesion
- Expressiveness
- Conflict
- Acceptance and Caring

Secondly, Personal Growth Dimensions, which had two (2) sub-scales. These are cited below:

- Independence
- Active Recreational Orientation

Thirdly, "System Maintenance Dimensions" under which two other dimensions had been found. These are as follows:

- Organization
- Control

In the FES, against each statement five response options are there, i.e. Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The items were either Positive or Negative. For positive statements, 5 for Strongly Agree, 4 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 2 for Disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. For Negative statement, 1 for Strongly Agree, 2 for Agree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Disagree and 5 for strongly disagree.

4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were identified in terms of the means and standard deviations identifying trends and distributions of scores. The data analysis was done with the help of SPSS Ver 22 and parametric tools mentioned below along with the hypothesis.

- Objective 1

H₁: There will be significant differences in Family Environment of Male and Female adolescent students
(Independent t-test)

- Objective 2

H₁: There will be significant differences in Perceived Loneliness of Male and Female adolescent students
(Independent t-test)

- Objective 3

H₁: There will be significant correlation between Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness among adolescent students (Pearson Product Moment Correlation)

5. Results and Discussion

After adopting the proper methodology in the previous chapter for the study under investigation, the next step is the statistical investigation of the data collected and the explanation of the established results.

This chapter is the foundation on which the investigator draws its conclusions and suggests the necessary recommendations. It is an essential element of the research. The usefulness of

any research entirely depends upon the fact that how much care has been taken by the researcher while the analysis has been done. The careful and comprehensive analysis makes it easy to recognize the problem under Investigation. Without the appropriate statistical analysis and explanation, the collected data does not reveal the authentic representation of the study.

The study under investigation was intended to examine the "FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND PERCEIVED LONELINESS ADOLESCENT STUDENTS IN RELATION TO GENDER."

This chapter analyzes the data collected through various data collecting tools and presents the findings of the study under investigation. The researcher kept in mind the objectives and the hypothesis while presenting the data. After the data was successfully collected, the data was then processed using Microsoft Excel 2010 Software. After that, the collected data was given the statistical treatment of "percentage Mean, S.D, t-test, and correlation" for the scrutiny of the collected data. The investigator found these statistical procedures feasible for the study under investigation for the achievement of desired objectives. The t-test was utilized to find the "difference," and the correlation technique was used to trace out the relationship among the variables. The statistical analysis of the collected data was completed while using SPSS 22 statistical software to attain the objectives of the study.

5.1 Gender

In the present study, a sample of 80 was selected through convenience sampling and data has been collected from the students.

Table 5.1: Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	50%
Female	40	50%
Total	80	100%

This research study comprises of equal number of male and female adolescent students.

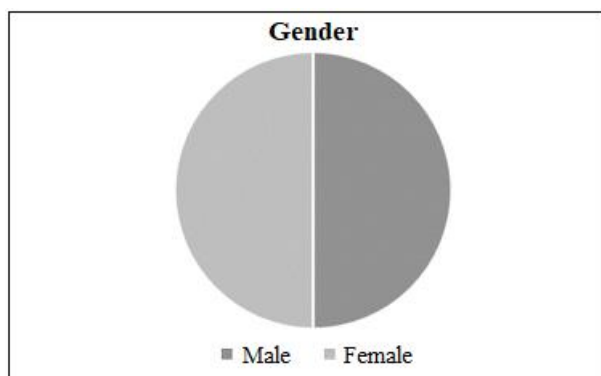


Chart 5.1: Gender

5.2 Family Environment vs Gender of adolescent students

H₁: There will be significant differences in Family Environment of Male and Female adolescent students.

Table 5.2: The mean, S.D. and t-value of gender on Family Environment and Loneliness of Adolescent Students

Groups compared	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Level of significance
Male	40	248.28	33.307	-1.5561	Not Significant
Female	40	259.68	32.192		

*Significant at 0.05 level

**Significant at 0.01 level

The result presented in Table- 5.2 on the variable Family Environment indicated insignificant difference between male and female adolescent students. The male sample had Mean value 248.28 and S.D value 33.307 respectively; whereas female sample had Mean value 259.68 and S.D value 32.192 respectively. The 't' – value -1.5561 found to be insignificant as the 't' – value was lower than critical value.

Thus, it implies that there is not significant difference between the male and female in terms of their Family Environment. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted.

It indicates that Male and Female adolescents are similar in terms of their Total Family Environment.

This present finding about overall Family Environment demonstrates the positive mental set of the parents as they treat the girl child as equal as the boy child in almost all aspects at home.

The present finding gets support from Talukdar & Sarma (2015), who reported that there is no significant difference between Male and Female adolescents in case of their Total Family Environment. However, contradictory result was found by some earlier research studies, they reported that adolescent boys perceived better Overall Family Environment as compared to their Female counterparts (Balda et al., 2019). Perhaps there is difference in Family Environment in different regions of India.

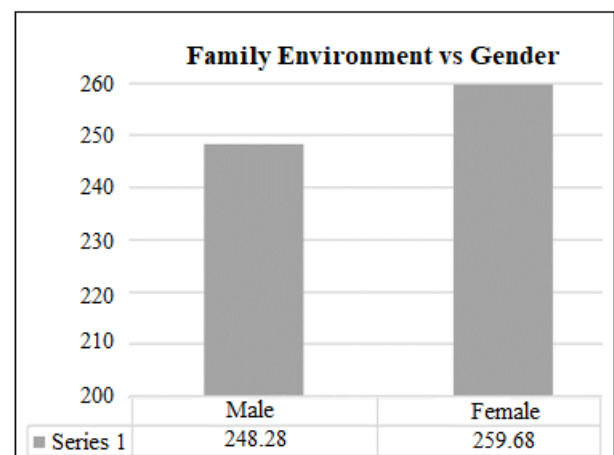


Figure 5.2: The mean of Gender on Family Environment

5.3 Perceived Loneliness vs Gender of Adolescent Students

H₁: There will be significant differences in Perceived Loneliness of Male and Female adolescent students.

Table 5.3: The mean, S.D. and t-value of gender on Perceived Loneliness

Groups compared	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Level of significance
Male	40	107.65	20.222	-0.1364	Not Significant
Female	40	108.29	21.709		

*Significant at 0.05 level

**Significant at 0.01 level

The result presented in table 5.3 on the variable Perceived Loneliness as measured for male and female adolescent students. The descriptive statistics shows the Mean and S.D values of male is 107.65 and 20.22 respectively. However, female had Mean and S.D values as 108.29 and 21.709 respectively. The 't' – value -0.1364 as shown in the table above is lower than the critical value.

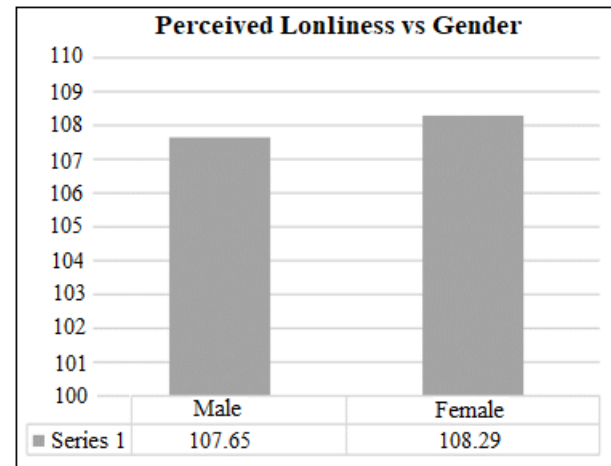
Thus, it implies that there is no substantial difference between the two groups of subjects namely male and female adolescents in terms of their Perceived Loneliness. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted, and alternate hypothesis is rejected.

It indicates that there is not any kind of disparity "difference" among the two genders on Perceived Loneliness. And result indicate that that both Male and Female adolescents do not feel lonely. This finding is indeed a positive implication for the social life of the adolescents and majority of Male and Female adolescents were found to have good relationship with family, peers as well as with teachers. The excellent social network and social skills of the adolescents could be the probable reason for their non loneliness and their social life may be acting as a protective factor against being lonely.

Previous studies found that social skills and cumulative support (parental support, inter-parental support, peer support and teachers support) are negatively related with Loneliness among adolescent students (Cavanaugh & Buehler, 2015; Lodder et al., 2016).

The present study gets support from Borooah & Mozumdar (2015) where the study on Perceived Loneliness and social Adjustment among adolescent students of Middle-income families residing in Guwahati found that there is no significant difference between Male and Female adolescent students in case of their Perceived Loneliness level and also that Perceived Loneliness is negatively related with Social Adjustment. Other studies also support the present finding (Agarwal, 2014; Shaheen et al., 2014; Rani & Kumar, 2016), where they did not find any significant difference between Male and Female adolescent students on Perceived Loneliness.

However, Nikhat (2017) found that Male adolescent students perceived more Loneliness than the Females; whereas several other studies found that Females perceived more Loneliness than the Males (Gursoy & Bicakci, 2006; Gurses et al., 2011; Al Khatib, 2012; Zarei et al., 2013; Baran et al., 2015; Vig & Gill, 2016; Sukla & Kang, 2017).

**Figure 5.3:** The mean of gender in terms of the Perceived Loneliness of adolescent students

5.4 Correlation Between Family Environment and the Perceived Loneliness of adolescent students

H₁: There will be significant correlation between Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness among adolescent students.

Table 5.4

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Correlation 'r'	Level of significance
Perceived Loneliness	107.97	20.9655	80	0.039	Not Significant
Family Environment	253.98	32.7495	80		

*Significant at 0.05 level

**Significant at 0.01 level

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the Perceived Loneliness and Family Environment of adolescent students and the results are displayed in Table no.5.4

Mean Score of Perceived Loneliness and Family Environment scores are given in table no. 5.4.

The data reveals that the mean of Perceived Loneliness score was 107.97 and the average score of Family Environment was 253.98.

From table no. 5.4, we see that the correlation coefficient (r) between Perceived Loneliness and Family Environment equals 0.039, indicating a positive relationship, and p value > 0.05 indicates that the correlation is statistically not significant, hence, the alternate hypothesis is rejected.

Overall, there is a negligible and positive correlation between Perceived Loneliness and Family Environment. And there is no sufficient evidence to conclude there is a positive linear relationship between the two.

It can be interpreted that there is no significant relationship between Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness in case of both Male and Female adolescents. However, the positive correlation denotes that as Family Environment improves (with higher scores) scores on Loneliness also increases (indicating high Loneliness) which appears quite

contradictory and unlikely. This is probably because in spite of their families having a good environment many adolescents still feel lonely as Loneliness measured by the scale is the Perceived Loneliness of the adolescents. This may also indicate that good Family Environment may not be a protective factor for adolescents against Loneliness. Be that as it may, the results show that all groups of adolescents reported low Perceived Loneliness. This is rather perplexing and perhaps the results need to be scrutinized more carefully. The question which rises is that- Is the positive correlation an artifact of the low range of scores on the Perceived Loneliness Scale (denoting non-lonely) in association with the scores on reported Family Environment (denoting good Family Environment)? When examined in such a manner the results do seem plausible.

However, the results are inconsistent with Shukla, (2017) and Demirli (2007), as they found significant relationship between Family Environment and Perceived Loneliness of adolescent students.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated family environment and perceived loneliness among adolescent students in relation to gender in CBSE schools of Ernakulam District. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage during which families support plays an important role in shaping emotional and social well-being. The study sought to examine gender differences in family environment and perceived loneliness and to explore the relationship between these variables using standardized psychological instruments. A healthy family atmosphere can promote emotional security, strengthen, interpersonal relationships, and help adolescents cope with feelings of loneliness and developmental challenges. The results of this study maybe useful for parents, teachers, school counsellors, and mental health professionals in designing interventions that foster positive family interactions and improve adolescents emotional health. Although the study provides valuable insights, its findings should be interpreted in light of certain limitations, including the relatively small sample size, convenience sampling technique, and restrictions to selected CBSE schools in Ernakulam District. Future research may include larger and more diverse samples, employ probability sampling methods, and examine additional variables such as self-esteem, resilience, social support, and academic achievement to gain a more comprehensive understanding adolescent well-being.

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