

Perceived Family and Social Environment - A Study on Inhabitants Belonging to North, Central and South Zone of Kolkata City

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Abstract: *The aim of the present investigation is to study the family and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city. 90 inhabitants (30 from North, 30 from Central and 30 from South zone) belonging to Kolkata city were selected as sample. Perceived Family Environment Questionnaire and Perceived Social Environment Questionnaire along with a General Information Schedule were administered to the selected group of subjects by giving proper instruction. Findings revealed that inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city have expressed negatively in four significant areas related to perceived family environment viz., children are more pampered by providing material goods, demanding relationship, neglecting attitude towards elderly people, poor relationship among family members. In case of perceived social environment, seven important areas have been identified where inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata have expressed negatively. The significant factors are antisocial activities, over-density related problem, rape, too much diversity, gender discrimination, increasing cyber-crime and lack of awareness regarding human rights.*

Keywords: Perceived Family Environment and Perceived Social Environment

1. Introduction

Family is the basic unit and interactions among family members are termed as transactions and can be positive or negative. Healthy family environment results in positive transactions; while negative environment leads to negative transactions. Family environment is the quality and quantity of socio-emotional support and understanding that parents provide to their children within the home. Bhatia and Chadha (2004) have illustrated eight aspects of family environment - cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, and control. Buehler and Gerard (2013) described the importance of family as a key socialization context for children as they move through early adolescence. Kamble (2014) also mentioned that family is the major socialization agency and has great influence and bearing on the behaviour of children. Youngblade and his associates (2007) have reported that negative relationships and interactions between parents and adolescents may result in conflict and there is probability that adolescents are likely to engage in risk behaviours during adolescence and later life. The family environment during childhood and adolescence can shape the psychosocial adjustment and health outcomes in adolescents and young adults both with and without chronic illness (Schanberg, 1998; Wickrama, 2003). In typically developing children, negative family environments (e.g., high in conflict) have been associated with poorer physical, health, and psychosocial functioning in adulthood (Repetti, 2002).

The influence of family processes in the course of human development is widely recognized in the psychological literature (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). In recent decades, there has been accumulation of evidence suggesting the association

between dysfunctional family relationships and adjustment problems in childhood and adolescence (Chedid, Romo, & Chagnard, 2009). Moreover, the growing expansion of the field of Positive Psychology has increasingly led researchers to investigate the impact of the family on psychological adjustment. Among the family characteristics that are relevant to the study of psychological dimensions, those related to the family environment or climate are highlighted, i.e. the individual's perception of the quality of relationships within the family (Teodoro, Allgayer, & Land, 2009). As suggested by family systems theory (Baird & Grant, 1998; Christie-Seely & Crouch, 1987), child and adolescent mental health is influenced substantially by the family context and interactions among and between family members (Letourneau et al., 2013). Research overwhelmingly supports the notion that the parent-child relationship plays a critical role in the development of, vulnerability to, and protection against psychological maladjustment (Montague, Cavendish, Enders, & Dietz, 2010; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994; Stewart & Suldo, 2011; Yap et al., 2014).

The social environment includes the groups to which we belong, the neighbourhoods in which we live, the organization of our workplaces, and the policies we create to order our lives. The physical and social environments do not exist independently of each other; any environment is the result of the continuing interaction between natural and man-made components, social processes, and the relationships between individuals and groups (Syme, 1992). Recently, increasing attention has been paid to the importance of the distal (i.e. further away from the individual) social and physical environment in explaining mental health. Research has shown that the neighbourhood environment is a setting which exposes people to factors that can be either beneficial or harmful to mental health (Stafford, 2011). Having positive perceptions of

characteristics relating to neighbourhood social capital (neighbourhood social cohesion, interpersonal trust and norms of reciprocity) has been consistently related to a lower prevalence of mental health conditions in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies conducted in the general population (Whitley et al. 1999; Almedom, 2005; Stafford et al. 2008; Modie-Moroka, 2009) and in older adults (Friedman, 2012). A growing body of public health research suggests that perceptions of neighbourhood safety are linked to health outcomes (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2000; Chandola, 2001; Ziersch, Baum, MacDougall, & Putland, 2005; Baum, Ziersch, Zhang, & Osborne, 2009). Perceiving one's neighbourhood as unsafe has been significantly associated with anxiety (Middleton, 1998), poor health outcomes (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2000), and poor self-rated health (Chandola, 2001).

Factors in the social environment that are important to health include those related to safety, violence, and social disorder in general, and more specific factors related to the type, quality, and stability of social connections, including social participation, social cohesion, social capital, and the collective efficacy of the neighbourhood (or work) environment (Ahern and Galea, 2011). Social participation and integration in the immediate social environment (e.g., school, work, and neighbourhood) appear to be important to both mental and physical health (DeSilva et al., 2005). Higher quality social environments often correspond to better health, but it can be difficult to summarize simple relationships between the social environment of the neighbourhood and active living (Diez Roux & Mair, 2010). Some of the major social environmental factors investigated include social cohesion/capital, fear of crime and physical activity modelling and support. Conceptually, it is easy to imagine that walking might provide the opportunity to develop neighbourhood ties. In some cases walking does relate to a stronger sense of community and greater trust in neighbours (French et al., 2014). However, other research has found that more workable environments were less satisfying and had less social cohesion (Grasser, Titze, & Strongerger, 2016). Social environments lacking basic resources—healthy food, safe housing, living-wage jobs, decent schools, supportive social networks, access to health care and other public and private goods and services—present the highest public health risk for serious illness and premature death (Evan et al. 1994; Daniel, 2000). Conceptualizing health as a product, in part, of social conditions facilitates the identification of relationships between social determinants and health outcomes that may be amenable to community interventions (Anderson et al. 1999). The Social Interaction Theory of Ransford states that social relationships can improve mental health through physical activity (Ransford, 1982). Considering the above the present investigation has been designed to study the family and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata City.

1.1 Objectives

- 1) To study the family environment as perceived by the inhabitants belonging to north, central and south zone of Kolkata city.

- 2) To study the social environment as perceived by the inhabitants belonging to north, central and south zone of Kolkata city.

1.2 Hypotheses

Hypothesis-I: Inhabitants belonging to North and Central zone, Central and South zone and also South and North zone of Kolkata city do not differ among themselves in terms of perceived family environment.

Hypothesis-II: Inhabitants belonging to North and Central zone, Central and South zone and also South and Central zone of Kolkata city do not differ among themselves in terms of perceived social environment.

1.3 Study area and sample

90 inhabitants (30 from North, 30 from Central and 30 from South) belonging to Kolkata city were selected as sample following the stratified random sampling technique. The pertinent characteristics of the sample are as follows:

- a) Age : 41 to 50 years
- b) Gender : Male
- c) Educational Qualification : Graduate
- d) Duration of stay in the same environment : At least 10 years

1.4 Tools Used

- 1) General Information Schedule: It consists of items, viz., name, address, age, educational qualification, duration of stay in the same environment etc.
 - 2) Perceived Family Environment Questionnaire: It consists of 10 statements answerable in Yes/ No type.
 - 3) Perceived Social Environment Questionnaire: It consists of 20 statements answerable in Yes/ No type.
- All the questionnaires are developed by the investigators.

1.5 Administration, Scoring and Statistical Treatment

Questionnaires are administered to selected group of inhabitants by giving proper instructions. Data were collected and properly scrutinized. Both the qualitative and quantitative analysis was done. Chi-square test was used.

2. Results and Interpretations

The present study intends to find out the nature of family and social environment as perceived by graduate male inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone in Kolkata city.

Table 1: Findings from Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Family and Social Environment

Measures		North		Central		South	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Perceived Family Environment	Total Response	224	75	205	95	185	115
	Mean of Response	75	2.50	6.83	3.17	6.17	3.83
Perceived Social Environment	Total Response	478	122	411	189	403	197
	Mean of Response	15.93	4.07	13.70	6.30	13.43	6.57

Table 2: Chi-square values & results for testing the significance of mean association of responses of Perceived Family Environment and Perceived Social Environment between different zones of Kolkata.

Measures	Zone	Chi-square Value	df	Results	Remarks
Perceived Family Environment	North vs. Central	3.185	1	p value > alpha value (p > 0.05)	Statistically not significant. Hence, H ₁ is rejected.
	Central vs. South	2.92	1	p value > alpha value (p > 0.05)	Statistically not significant. Hence, H ₁ is rejected.
	South vs. North	12.14	1	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. Hence, H ₁ is accepted.
Perceived Social Environment	North vs. Central	19.48	1	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. Hence, H ₂ is accepted.
	Central vs. South	0.24	1	p value > alpha value (p > 0.05)	Statistically not significant. Hence, H ₂ is rejected.
	South vs. North	24.02	1	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. Hence, H ₂ is accepted.

Analysis of data reveals that inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city expressed negatively in five significant areas, viz., a) children are more pampered by providing materials goods, b) too much demand creates poor relationship among the family members, c) elderly people are not properly looked after by other family members, d) poor relationship among the family members increases unhealthy atmosphere, e) now-a-days generation gap disturbs the family structure. The maximum 'Yes' response was given by the inhabitants belonging to North, then Central and then South.

On the other hand, two another significant areas also highlighted in connection with perceived family environment, viz. i) there is none in the family who can solve the problem and ii) extra-marital relationship is an important factor in committing crime. The maximum 'yes' response was given by the inhabitants belonging to South, then Central and then North zone of Kolkata city.

It can further be said that inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city expressed negatively in seven significant areas related to perceived social environment, viz., a) Antisocial activities are increasing day by day, b) Too much diversity within society creates problem, c) Rape is one of the traumatic event in the present day society, d) Do's and don'ts of the society are not properly accepted by human being, e) Gender discrimination sometimes creates problem, f) Internet access increases the amount of cybercrime, g) People are not aware about human rights.

The maximum 'Yes' response was given by the inhabitants belonging to North, then Central and then South. More or less same opinion in Yes response was given by the inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city are a) theft and robbery are increasing day by day and b) fast changing life style creates negative impact on human being.

3. Conclusion

Inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city expressed negatively in four significant areas viz., children are more pampered by providing material gifts, demanding relationship, neglecting elderly people, poor relationship among family members. In case of perceived social environment, seven important areas have been identified where inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata have expressed negatively. The significant factors are antisocial activities, over-density related problem, rape, rules of the society not being properly

accepted by the members, gender discrimination, increasing cybercrime and lack of awareness regarding human rights.

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