

A Cross-Sectional Survey on the Impact of Family Environment on the Mental Wellbeing of School Going Girls in Selected Higher Secondary Schools, Villupuram

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Abstract: *The family environment is a crucial determinant of mental health in girls. While a positive and supportive home promotes psychological resilience and emotional stability, dysfunctional family dynamics can lead to lasting emotional and behavioral issues. Interventions at the family level, including improved parenting practices and emotional support systems, are essential to ensure the mental well-being of girls. The problem statement is A Cross-Sectional Survey on the Impact of Family Environment on The Mental Wellbeing of School Going Girls in Selected Higher Secondary Schools, Villupuram. The objectives are to assess the level of impact of family environment on mental well being among school going girls in selected higher secondary school and to determine the correlation between the family environment and mental well being among school going girls in selected higher secondary school. Research design used in this study was descriptive cross-sectional design. The population for study consisted of 100 school going girls. Stratified random probability sampling technique was used to choose the sample. Self-Structured 5-point scale was used to assess the type of family environment and level of mental well being of school going girls. The collected data was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted by using descriptive and inferential statistical method. The study findings reveal that 78% of girls live in positive family environment, 20% live in moderate family environment and 2% of girls live in poor family environment. The result shows that 43% of girls have good mental wellbeing, 52% have moderate mental wellbeing & 2% of girls have poor mental wellbeing. It was evident that the family environment is positively correlated with mental wellbeing of school going girls. It can be concluded that a good family environment may have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of school going girls.*

Keywords: Family environment, Mental wellbeing, School going girls

1. Introduction

The family environment plays a fundamental role in shaping an individual's personality, values, emotional well-being, and social behavior. It is the first social setting where a person learns communication, cooperation, love, discipline, and resilience. A

strong and healthy family environment is the foundation of a child's emotional, social, and psychological development. It provides love, support, understanding, and safety- all of which are essential for well-being. A positive family environment is built on mutual respect, open communication, and shared responsibilities. When family members feel heard and valued, it fosters trust and closeness. Parents who actively listen and spend quality time with their children encourage self-confidence and good behavior. It is also important for families to manage conflict constructively. Disagreements are natural, but how they are handled shapes the environment. Calm discussions, compromise, and forgiveness strengthen family bonds.

In a world filled with distractions and stress, creating a peaceful home atmosphere helps everyone feel more connected whether it's shared meals, weekend activities, or just talking about each other's day, small moments matter. Ultimately, a nurturing family environment helps each

member feel loved, supported, and secure. It's not about being perfect- it's about being present, understanding, and committed to one another. The family is the primary source of emotional, social, and psychological development in children. For girls, the family environment plays a pivotal role in shaping mental well-being due to their heightened emotional sensitivity, societal expectations, and developmental needs. A nurturing and supportive family can act as a buffer against stress, while a dysfunctional environment may contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

Chronic family conflict and exposure to domestic violence have been strongly associated with emotional disorders in girls. Such environments increase vulnerability to PTSD, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Emotional neglect, including a lack of affection and recognition, can lead to feelings of rejection and low self-worth in girls, which may develop into mental health disorders. Low socioeconomic status and cultural factors, including traditional gender norms, influence family stress and expectations placed on girls. These pressures can negatively impact girls' mental health and identity formation

An authoritarian parenting style can result in poor emotional outcomes due to excessive control, while permissive parenting may lead to anxiety due to a lack of boundaries.

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Positive sibling relationships offer emotional support, while extended family members can provide alternative attachment figures in dysfunctional homes. Such relationships can act as protective factors for girls' mental health. Girls raised in emotionally nurturing homes exhibit higher emotional intelligence, stronger interpersonal relationships, and lower incidences of mental illness in adulthood. Conversely, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) within the family predict poor long-term mental health outcomes.

Programs that teach communication, emotional support, and conflict resolution are effective in promoting girls' mental well-being. Family therapy, parent training programs and adolescent counseling can address dysfunctional dynamics and improve psychological outcomes. Thus, the family environment plays a crucial role in shaping the mental health of girls. Investing in creating nurturing, supportive, and communicative home settings is a key in improving long-term mental well-being among girls. Policy makers, educators, and mental health professionals must prioritize family-based strategies to support girls' emotional and psychological development.

2. Need for the Study

The mental well-being of adolescent girls is a growing area of concern globally, with increasing reports of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and emotional distress. According to the World Health Organization (2021), mental health issues begin as early as age 14, with girls often at greater risk due to both biological and socio-cultural factors.

A study by UNICEF (2021) reported that nearly 1 in 7 adolescents (aged 10–19) worldwide experience mental disorders. Girls were more likely than boys to report feelings of sadness, loneliness, and hopelessness, often linked to family pressures and emotional neglect.

In India, the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS, 2016) estimated that approximately 9.8 million children aged 13–17 years suffer from mental health issues, with depression and anxiety more prevalent among girls. Family conflict, lack of parental attention, and emotional abuse were significant contributing factors

A cross-sectional study conducted in urban schools in India by Sharma et al. (2019) found that:

- 26% of school-going adolescent girls showed signs of depression.
- Of these, 65% cited family-related stress, including parental conflict, pressure to excel, and lack of emotional support, as a primary cause.

According to a study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health (Merikangas et al., 2010):

- Adolescents living in homes with high parental conflict or low parental warmth were 2 to 3 times more likely to report mental health symptoms.
- Girls, in particular, were more vulnerable to internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression) than boys in such environments.

Child Trends (2018) reported that:

- 44% of adolescent girls who lived in single-parent or high-conflict households reported poor mental health outcomes compared to 22% from stable two-parent homes.

Table 1: Specific Risk Factors Identified

Family Factor	Impact on Girls
Parental conflict / domestic violence	Increased risk of PTSD, anxiety, and emotional insecurity (Evans et al., 2008)
Emotional neglect	Strong predictor of low self-esteem and depressive symptoms (Dubowitz et al., 2001)
Over-controlling parenting	Correlated with high anxiety and perfectionism in adolescent girls (Baumrind, 1991)
Lack of parental communication	Associated with feelings of isolation and suicidal ideation (Ackard et al., 2006)

The data highlights a significant correlation between family environment and mental health among school-going girls. Emotional neglect, lack of parental warmth, conflict, and rigid parenting are all statistically linked with increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders in girls. These findings underscore the urgent need for family-based interventions and school mental health programs that address root causes at home. Hence the investigator felt the importance of family environment in nurturing the mental needs of the girls.

Statement of the Problem

A Cross-Sectional Survey on the Impact of Family Environment on the Mental Wellbeing of School Going Girls in Selected Higher Secondary Schools, Villupuram

Objectives of the study

- 1) To assess the level of impact of family environment on mental well being among school going girls in selected higher secondary school.
- 2) To determine the correlation between the family environment and mental well being among school going girls in selected higher secondary school.

Delimitations

- 1) This study is limited to school going girls in age group of 12 to 17 years in selected higher secondary school.
- 2) This study is limited to sample size of 100.

3. Review of Literature

Gargi Sharma, Kumud Pandav and Sukhjot Kaur Lally (2015) conducted a study to find out relationship between family environment and subjective well-being of adolescents. Sample comprised of 160 school students between the age ranges of 16 -21 years old. Family Environment Scale (FES) by Dr. Harpreet Bhatia and Dr. N. K. Chadha and PGI General Well Being Measure developed by Dr. Santosh K. Verma was used for the purpose of the study. This study adapts normative survey research design and using stratified random sampling, 160 students from different school of Lovely Professional University was taken. Result shows that there is positive relation between family environment and well-being. The matrix of coefficient of correlation indicates that family environment and wellbeing scores are positively correlated ($r = 0.30$).

Thus, increase in family environment led to increase in the wellbeing scores.

Malkeet Kaur, Shamshir Singh Dhillon, Ranjit Kaur (2015) conducted to examine the relationship between family environments with mental health of adolescents of Sirsa district. The family environment of the adolescents was assessed by using family environment scale by Dr. Harpreet Bhatia and Dr. N. K. Chadha and mental health of the adolescents was assessed by Mental Health Check list by Dr. Parmod Kumar. 60 Adolescents including boys and girls were chosen from one school in urban area and another from rural area through random sampling technique. The result shows that there exists no significant relationship between mental health and family environment among adolescents, no significant difference in mental health of rural and urban adolescents and significant difference in family environment of rural boys and girls adolescents.

Sushil Kumar Maheshwari, Rintu Chaturvedi, Sandhya Gupta (2020) conducted a study to assess the impact of family environment on the mental well-being of adolescent girls in selected villages of Western Punjab, India. Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional survey approach was used to assess the family environment and mental well-being of conveniently selected 900 adolescent girls (age of 11–19 years) in selected villages of Punjab using socio demographic data sheet, Family Environment Scale and Warwick Edinburgh mental well-being scale. Results shows that approximately two third (36.7%) of the adolescent's girls have below average mental well-being, whereas the majority (62.2%) of adolescent girls have average, and only 1.1% have above average mental well-being. Mental well-being was positively correlated with cohesion, acceptance, and caring at $P < 0.01$ level, and expressiveness, independence, active recreational orientation, and organization were positively correlated at $P < 0.05$ level. Conflict and control were not significantly correlated with mental well-being. It is concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between various domains of family environment with mental well-being among adolescent girls.

Jasvir Kaur, Deepika Vig, and Asha Chawla (2021) conducted to study the family environment as determinant of mental health among rural adolescents. The study was based on 200 adolescents (i.e., 100 boys & 100 girls). The sample was randomly selected from two Government Senior Secondary Schools of villages Bhaini Baringa and Talwandi Rai of Ludhiana district of Punjab. Adolescents living with an intact family and with at least one sibling and grandparent with them were the final respondents. Mental Health Battery and Family Environment Scale were used to assess the mental health and family environment of the adolescents, respectively. Results of the study revealed that majority of adolescents had very poor mental health and average level of family environment. Mental health status revealed that highest percentage of adolescents (29%) had very poor mental health followed by average (21%). Lowest percentage of adolescents (11.50%) was found at excellent level of mental health. family environment data revealed that maximum percentage of adolescents perceived their family environment to be average (32%) followed by above average

(28.50%) level of family environment. Gender differences in the overall data with regards to family environment revealed significant differences at average level where proportion of adolescent girls was significantly higher than adolescent boys indicating that girls perceived their family environment to be average in every aspect as compared to male counterparts. Further, most of the family environment related variables were found to be significantly and positively correlated with the mental health of the adolescents except religious orientation, social connectedness and time spent together.

Amol Kanade, Klarupti Athawle, Manoj Mante, Sonali Padvi, et al (2021) conducted to study the impact of family environment on the mental well-being of adolescent girls. The research design used for the study was Non experimental descriptive research design. Simple random sampling technique was used where in 300 samples from selected areas. The major finding showed that the results reveal that majority 180 (60%) have average mental well-being, 90 (30%) have below-average mental well-being, and only 30 (10%) have above average mental well-being. mental well-being of adolescent girls was significantly positively correlated with the family environment ($r = 0.405^{**}$, $P \leq 0.01$). It is concluded that a good family environment may have a positive impact on the mental well-being of adolescent girls. Moreover, mental well-being is positively correlated with cohesion and acceptance and caring on (0.300 and 0.449, respectively) at ($P = 0.01$ level) and expressiveness, independence, active recreational orientation, and organization at (0.230, 0.253, 0.254 and 0.263, respectively) at ($P = 0.05$ level).

4. Methodology

Research Approach

Quantitative Research approach

Research Design

Non experimental, descriptive, cross-sectional research design

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam

Population

All school going girls studying in Higher Secondary Schools, Villupuram.

Target Population:

All school going girls studying in Higher Secondary Schools, Villupuram.

Accessible Population:

School going girls in age group of 12-17 years in Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam, meeting the sampling criteria

Sample

Sample was selected school going girls in age group of 12-17 years in Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam

Sampling Technique

The subjects of the present study were selected by stratified random sampling technique.

Sample Size

Sample Size was 100 school going girls

Sampling Criteria**Inclusion Criteria**

- School going girls in age group of 12 to 17 years
- School going girls residing with both living parents & guardian.

Exclusion Criteria

- School going girls residing in orphanages and hostels

Data Collection Tool

Section A: Consists of demographic variables such as Age, Education, Religion, Parents' income, Parents' education, Parents' Occupation, Locality, Family type.

Section B: Self structured 5-point Family Environment Scale to assess the Family Environment of school going girls studying in Higher Secondary Schools. This section assesses perception of family environment, including support, communication, conflict and parental involvement.

Total Score: 12 items x 5=60 points

Interpretation of scores

48-60 - Positive Family Environment

36-47 - Moderate Family Environment

Below 36- Poor Family Environment

Section C: Self structured 5 point Mental Wellbeing Scale to assess the mental well being of school going girls studying in Higher Secondary Schools. This section explores emotional and psychological well being. Samples will indicate how often they have experienced feelings or situations in the past two weeks related to the items.

Total Score: 8 items x 5=40 points

Interpretation of scores

32-40 Good Mental well being

24-31 Moderate mental well being

Below 24 Poor mental well being.

Data Collection Procedure

The study is conducted on 100 School going girls in age group of 12-17 years in Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam by stratified random probability sampling technique who meets the inclusion criteria. The investigator obtained formal permission from the principal of Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam to conduct this study. Data was collected after the Researcher obtained consent from the participants, ensuring confidentiality and maintained good rapport.

Data Analysis

The data obtained was analyzed in terms of the objective of the study using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, mean and correlation test was applied.

Conflict of Interest

No

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data obtained was analyzed in terms of the objective of the study using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, mean and correlation test was applied.

The analyzed data was interpreted in 3 sections:

Section: A Frequency and percentage distribution of selected demographic variables of school going girls.

Section: B Type of Family Environment among School Going Girls.

Section: C Level of Mental Well-being among School Going Girls.

Section; D correlation between the family environment and mental well being among school going girls

Section A

Table 2: Frequency and Distribution of Demographic Variables of School Going Girls, N = 100

Demographic Variables	Frequency (n = 100)	Percentage
1. Age in years		
a) 12 – 13 years	63	63 %
b) 14 – 15 years	34	34 %
c) 16 – 17 years	3	3 %
2. Class / Grade		
a) 7 th – 8 th Std	63	63 %
b) 9 th – 10 th Std	34	34 %
c) 11 th – 12 th Std	3	3 %
3. Area of residence		
a) Urban	22	22 %
b) Rural	56	56 %
c) Semi Urban	22	22 %
4. Socio Economic Status		
a) Upper class	2	2 %
b) Middle class	94	94 %
c) Lower class	4	4 %
5. Living with		
a) Both parents	94	94 %
b) Single parent	5	5 %
c) Caretaker / Guardian	1	1 %
6. Father's occupation		
a) Coolie worker	15	15 %
b) Self employed	39	39 %
c) Private employed	40	40 %
d) Govt. employed	6	6 %
7. Mother's occupation		
a) Coolie worker	7	7 %
b) Self employed	72	72 %
c) Private employed	13	13 %
d) Govt. employed	8	8 %

Section B

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Type of Family Environment Among School Going Girls.

N = 100

TYPE	Frequency	Percentage
	N	%
Positive family environment	78	78 %
Moderate family environment	20	20 %
Poor family environment	2	2 %

Table 3 reveals that 78% of girls live in positive family environment, 20% live in moderate family environment and 2% of girls live in poor family environment.

Section C

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage distribution of Level of mental Well-Being among School Going Girls, N = 100

Level of Impact	Frequency	Percentage
	N	%
Good Mental Well-being	43	43 %
Moderate Mental Well-being	52	52 %
Poor Mental Well-being	5	5 %

Table 4 reveals that 43% of girls have good mental wellbeing, 52% have moderate mental wellbeing & 2% of girls have poor wellbeing.

Section D

Table 5: Correlation between the family environment and mental well being among school going girls, N = 100

Variables	Correlation (r)	P Value
Family environment	0.30	0.01 & 0.05**
Mental wellbeing		

Table 5 reveals that the family environment is positively correlated with mental wellbeing of school going girls. It can be concluded that a good family environment may have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of school going girls.

5. Discussion

The aim of the study was to assess the level of impact of family environment on mental wellbeing among school going girls.

The descriptive cross sectional research design was adopted to assess the level of impact of family environment on mental wellbeing among school going girls. The investigator utilized stratified random sampling technique to select the sample and findings of the objectives are discussed below.

Objective:1

To assess the level of impact of family environment on mental well being among school going girls in selected higher secondary school.

Table 3 reveals that 78% of girls live in positive family environment, 20% live in moderate family environment and 2% of girls live in poor family environment.

Table 4 reveals that 43% of girls have good mental wellbeing, 52% have moderate mental wellbeing & 2% of girls have poor wellbeing.

The findings of the study were supported by study conducted by Rita Rani Talukdar and Kakali Goswami Department of Psychology, Gauhati University, Assam to explore Psychological wellbeing and family environment and role of it as the predictor of psychological well-being. The sample of the study consists of 50 students pursuing post- graduation from Gauhati University. The Psychological well being scale developed by Carol Ryff (1995) and Family Environment Scale developed by Bhatia and Chadha (1996), standardized psychological tests were used to measure the psychological constructs in the study. The mean value showed high level of well being among the students. The results showed that family environment is an important significant predictor of psychological well being. It indicated that family environment and psychological wellbeing share important relationship in students' life.

Objective: 2

To determine the correlation between the family environment and mental well being among school going girls in selected higher secondary school.

Table 5 reveals that the family environment is positively correlated with mental wellbeing of school going girls. It can be concluded that a good family environment may have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of school going girls.

The findings of the study were supported by study conducted by B. Sathyabama et al Guest Lecturer, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University College, Perambalur to examine the relationship between family environment and its influence on mental health of adolescent girls. The family environment of the respondents was assessed by using Family Interaction Pattern Scale developed by Bhattia(1986) and mental health of the respondents was assessed by General Well Being Scale (Positive Mental Health) by S. K. Verma (1986). 90 adolescent girls were chosen through disproportionate sampling procedure in Government Higher Secondary School. Data was analyzed in terms of percentage, anova and coefficient of correlation. Results indicated that more than half of the respondents have low scores in various dimensions (reinforcement, social support system, role, communication, cohesiveness and leadership) of family interactions and mental health of adolescent girls. The statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between the family interactions and mental health of adolescent girls. The findings of the study will help to understand the role of family environment to enable the adolescent girls to cope with the challenges that arise in these critical transitional periods.

6. Summary, Conclusion & Recommendations

The study was conducted to assess the level of impact of family environment on mental wellbeing among school going girls studying in Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam.

100 samples in the age group of 12-17 years were selected for the study based on inclusion and exclusion criteria by using stratified random probability sampling technique. The tool consists of Section –A demographic variables, Section – B Self- structured 5-point Family Environment Scale to assess the Family Environment of school going girls studying in Higher Secondary Schools, Section –C Self structured 5 point Mental Wellbeing Scale to assess the mental well- being of school going girls studying in Higher Secondary Schools. The researcher obtained formal permission from the principal of Rajashree Sugar Ramakrishna Vidyalaya higher Secondary School, Mundiampakam to conduct this study. Data was collected after the Researcher obtained consent from the participants, ensuring confidentiality and maintained good rapport. The data obtained was analyzed in terms of the objective of the study using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, mean and correlation test was applied.

7. Major Findings of the Study

Out of 100 girls 63(63%) were in the age group of 12-13 years, 34(34%) were in the age group of 14-15 years and 3(3%) were in the age group of 16-17 years.

Regarding class/grade 63(63%) were in 7-8, 34(34%) were in 9-10 and 3(3%) were in 11-12.

In regard to Area of residence 22(22%) were in urban, 56(56%) were in rural, 22(22%) were in semi urban.

Regarding Socio economic Status 2(2%) were in upper class, 94(94%) were in middle class, 4(4%) were in lower class.

Regarding girls living with 94(94%) were with both parents, 5(5%) were with single parents, 1(1%) were with caretaker/guardian.

In regard to Father's occupation 15(15%) were coolie worker 39(39%) were self- employed 40 (40%) were private employed and 6(6%) were Govt.employed.

Regarding Mother's occupation 7(7%) were coolie worker 72 (72%) were self- employed 13(13%) were private employed and 8(8%) were Govt.employed.

78% of girls live in positive family environment, 20% live in moderate family environment and 2% of girls live in poor family environment.

43% of girls have good mental wellbeing, 52% have moderate mental wellbeing & 2% of girls have poor wellbeing.

The family environment is positively correlated with mental wellbeing of school going girls. It can be concluded that a good family environment may have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of school going girls.

8. Recommendations

Family members especially parents should spend qualitative time with their adolescent girls and create home atmosphere to feel free for them. Therefore, it helps them not only to ensure their mental health but also safe and secure environment for them.

The present study was limited to a group of school going girls. Hence, further studies can be conducted on a large sample size with different variables on the different population to assess the relationship of family environment on mental well being.

9. Conclusion

The family environment is positively correlated with mental wellbeing of school going girls. So, it is concluded that a good family environment may have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of school going girls.

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