ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychiatry

AGE DIFFERENCE VIS-À-VIS PERCEIVED FAMILY AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT – A STUDY ON KOLKATA CITY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present investigation is to study the family environment and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city. A group of 360 individuals (180 male and 180 female) belonging to three zones of 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 between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to North and Central zone of Kolkata city differ significantly in terms of perceived family and social environment. On the contrary, inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to South zone of Kolkata city do not differ significantly in terms of perceived family environment but differ significantly in terms of perceived social environment. Adequate measures may be taken to reduce the problem.

Introduction:

Family is the institution where a child is born and therefore, its impact in the overall development of child is immense as accepted by almost all schools of thought of psychology (Kumar & Lal, 2014). The family is a social institution which is strongly connected by bonds of attachment, care, support, control and discipline (Sharma, 2014). Bhatia and Chadha (2004) have illustrated eight aspects of family environment - cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, and control. Healthy family environment results in positive transactions; while negative environment leads to negative transactions. The family environment involves the circumstances and social climate conditions within families. It is in the family where a child learns to use their mental faculties (Kalapriya, 2016). Problematic behavior like drug abuse, alcohol abuse and risky social behavior of adolescent are indicative of adolescent belonging to troubled family environment (Kim et al. 2018). Human social environments encompass the immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and cultural milieus within which defined groups of people function and interact. Components of the social environment include built infrastructure; industrial and occupational structure; labor markets; social and economic processes; wealth; social, human, and health services; power relations; government; race relations; social inequality; cultural practices; the arts; religious institutions and practices; and beliefs about place and community. Social environments are dynamic and change over time as the result of both internal and external forces (Barnett & Casper, 2001).

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). 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 (Zunzunegui et al., 2003). The social environment broadly influences health and health behaviors by shaping social norms, providing resources and opportunities for healthful behaviors, and buffering negative health outcomes (McNeill et al., 2006). 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 (Stafford et al., 2008) and in older adults (Friedman et al., 2012). The Social Interaction Theory of Ransford states that social relationships can improve mental health through physical activity (Ransford, 1982). Social cognitive theory (SCT) describes the triadic reciprocal determinism among the environment (e.g., well-maintained sidewalks and social support), individual (e.g., self-efficacy), and behavior (e.g., physical activity). Consistent with SCT, perceptions of equipment accessibility, neighborhood safety, social support, and self-efficacy have been identified as correlates of self-reported physical activity in adolescent girls (Dunton et al., 2003; Motl et al., 2002; Saunders et al., 2004). Social status and social support are measures of the social environment that are directly associated with health behaviors (Sorensen et al., 2003). Previous research has shown that subjective social status in the community and in society are distinct constructs and are independently associated with psychological functioning, health behaviors and physical health outcomes, such that poor/low social status is associated with poor health outcomes (Wolff et al., 2019; Reitzel et al., 2013). Similarly, social support, defined as the resources provided by other people that can influence an individual's ability to cope with stress has been associated with perceived health and mental health outcomes (Cohen, 2004; Oxman et al., 1992). Although review studies have consistently shown that resource-poor social environments predict poor health the mechanisms and processes linking the social environment to psychological health and well-being need further investigation (House et al., 1988). Considering all these the present investigation has been designed to study the family environment and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city.

Objectives:

I) To study the family environment and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to North zone of Kolkata city.

II) To study the family environment and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to Central zone of Kolkata city.

III) To study the family environment and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to South zone of Kolkata city.

Hypotheses:

Hypothesis I (a): Perceived family environment as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to North zone of Kolkata city between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years differ significantly.

Hypothesis I (b): Perceived social environment as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to North zone of Kolkata city between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years differ significantly.

Hypothesis II (a): Perceived family environment as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to Central zone of Kolkata city between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years differ significantly.

Hypothesis II (b): Perceived social environment as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to Central zone of Kolkata city between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years differ significantly.

Hypothesis III (a): Perceived family environment as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata city between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years differ significantly.

Hypothesis III (b): Perceived social environment as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata city between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years differ significantly.

Sample: A group of 360 individuals (180 male and 180 female) belonging to three zones (North, Central and South) of Kolkata city were selected as sample. Stratified random sampling technique was followed. Pertinent characteristics of the subjects are:

a) Age: 41-50 years and 51-60 years
b) Gender: Male and female
c) Duration of stay in the same environment: At least 10 years

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 30 statements answerable in Yes/ No type.
All the questionnaires are developed by the investigators.

Administration, Scoring and Statistical Treatment:
General Information schedule, Perceived Family Environment Questionnaire and Perceived Social Environment Questionnaire were administered to selected group of subjects by giving proper instructions. Data were collected and properly scrutinized. Scoring was done with the help of standard scoring key. Tabulation was done for each group and each zone separately. Frequency, percentage and chi-square test were used.

Results and Interpretations:
Data inserted in Table-1 reveals that the inhabitants belonging to North zone of Kolkata city differ significantly in terms of perceived family and social environment. The reasons behind the difference in case of perceived family environment are mainly: a) property disputes create unhealthy relationship among the family members, b) elderly people are not properly looked after by other family members, c) now-a-days generation gap disturbs family structure. On the other hand, the reasons behind the perceived social environment are mainly: a) excessive tolerance enhances the amount of torture on women, b) people are more concerned about himself/herself than others, c) people are not aware about their human rights, d) pornography plays an important role in spreading crime, e) social security is almost nil in the existing condition.

Thus, the Hypothesis I (a) and Hypothesis I (b) are accepted.
Table-1: Family and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants (age group- 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years) belonging to North zone of Kolkata city.

Age group	Perceived Family Environment			Perceived Social Environment		
	Yes	No	Chi-square value	Yes	No	Chi-square value
41 to 50 years	434	166	15.33*	1400	400	6.12**
51 to 60 years	491	109		1460	340	

* Difference is significant at 0.01 level
** Difference is significant at 0.05 level

Data inserted in Table-2 reveals that inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to Central zone of Kolkata city differ significantly in terms of perceived family and social environment. Significant differences are mainly due to viz.; a) property disputes create unhealthy relationship among the family members, b) too much demand creates poor relationship among the family members, c) extra marital relationship is an important factor for committing crime, d) children are more pampered by providing material goods. Besides this, significant difference in case of perceived social environment are mainly, a) internet access increases the amount of cybercrime, b) people are more concerned about himself/herself than others, c) political conflict is the main reason for antisocial activities d) illegal drug trade make the society disabled, and e) excessive alcohol intake give birth to crime trends.

Thus, the Hypothesis II (a) and Hypothesis II (b) are accepted.
Table-2: Family and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants (age group- 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years) belonging to Central zone Kolkata city.

Age group	Perceived Family Environment			Perceived Social Environment		
	Yes	No	Chi-square value	Yes	No	Chi-square value
41 to 50 years	416	184	10.25*	1200	600	16.22*
51 to 60 years	465	135		1311	489	

*Difference is significant at 0.01 level

Data inserted in Table-3 reveals that inhabitants between the ages 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years belonging to South zone of Kolkata city differ significantly in terms of perceived social environment. Excessive tolerance enhances the amount of torture on women, people are more concerned about himself/herself than others, child abuse is considered as a great problem in the society, rape is one of the traumatic events in the present day society, gender discrimination sometimes creates problems, people are facing problems due to lack of patience, internet access increases the amount of cybercrime are the main reasons in case of perceived social environment, but no significant difference was observed in case of perceived family environment.

Thus, the Hypothesis III (a) is rejected and Hypothesis III (b) is accepted.

Table-3: Family and social environment as perceived by the inhabitants (age group- 41 to 50 and 51 to 60 years) belonging to South zone Kolkata city.

Age group	Perceived Family Environment			Perceived Social Environment		
	Yes	No	Chi-square value	Yes	No	Chi-square value
41 to 50 years	372	228	3.74**	1211	589	10.19*
51 to 60 years	404	196		1299	501	

*Difference is significant at 0.01 level

** Difference is insignificant

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be said that inhabitants belonging to North, Central and South zone of Kolkata city differ significantly in terms of perceived family and social environment except perceived family environment at South zone of Kolkata city. Adequate measures may be taken to get rid of the problem related to perceived family and social environment.

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