



## The Role of Sex in the relation of Family Environment and Hostility

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### Abstract

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Family, especially in India is an important unit and primary agent for shaping the behaviour of an individual. In social development, family structure, function, environment, interpersonal relations etc are playing a major role. The type of family, members and their psychological characteristics definitely influence the motivation, personality of the adolescence. It is through the family the child develops self-confidence, values, esteem, attitudes etc. Hostility, an attitude that involves dislike and negative evaluation of others behaviour is present everywhere including family even between siblings. Very few studies were conducted directly dealt with the role of sex (male & female) in the relationship of family environment and hostility. Results of this study revealed that the dimensions of hostility such as cynicism and acting out is found to have significant difference in the relationship between males and females.

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Adolescence is considered as flourishing years of one's life. Most of their attitudes, interest, beliefs are shaped, modified, changed and developed during this period. The values and personal goals are developed and modified during this period. They understand the meaning, importance and essentiality of family, friends, significant others in this period. In the adolescence stage peers becomes the central part of adolescence in shaping the personality, attitudes, thinking etc. During this period the time spent within the family member's decreases, but still family members play an influential role in adolescent life's.

The influence of family processes in human development is widely recognised by researchers (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Smetna, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Research shows that family environment continues to be crucial importance in adolescence and adulthood (Van-Wel, 2000). According to Moss (1989) family environment "is the global image that people form about their family based on the experience with family members". Family environment whether it is positive or negative affect the psycho-social development and wellbeing of adolescence (Sharma, Jagiriti, & Malhotra, 2010). Adolescents who are nurtured in a positive family environment such as warm, supportive, cohesion and expressiveness have shown more mental health (Farokhzad, 2014). Negative family environmental factors such as lack of family cohesion, lack of affection, neglect, aggression (Vangelisti, Maguire, Alexander, & Clark, 2007) is negatively affect adolescence self esteem. Adolescents self reported levels of wellbeing are related to the perception of family environment. Wentzel and Feldman (1996), Mckeown, Garrison, Jackson, Cuffe, Addy and Waller (1997) found that adolescent perception of low cohesion within their families were associated with heightened feelings of depression and reduced social acceptance. Reinherz, Stewart-Berghauer, Pakiz, Frost and Moeykens (1989) suggest low cohesion expressed by feelings of not belonging is associated with children's feelings and behaviour that are reflective of their family environment. Divya and Manikandan (2012) reported that family environment and self esteem are significant variables in developing hostility among individuals. In another study Divya and Manikandan (2012) found that locus of control and assertiveness of an individual significantly contributes the development of hostility among adolescents. The demographic variables such as religious affiliation, educational status

and ordinal position along with family environment also found to be influencing the adolescents hostility (Divya & Manikandan, 2012).

Studies show that boys and girls differ significantly on different dimension on family environment. Girls perceived family environment as with respect to gender girls perceived more conflict than boys. Boys on the other hand perceived more control than girls (Mohanraj & Latha, 2005). Sharma (2014) and, Tung and Dhillon (2006) reported a significant difference on cohesion dimension of family environment among girls compared to boys. Houston and Vavak (1991) stated that low positive involvement; high levels of hostile controlling behaviour from the parents are the important factors for the development of hostility among adolescence.

Hostility in children is a personality characteristic which causes great concern to parents, educators and others involved in child rearing practices. Hostility is a strong impulse inspired by the feelings of anger and everyone has them from time to time. Hostility includes emotional, behavioral and cognitive elements. Anger constitutes the behavioural component. The cognitive element consists of negative expectations and attitudes towards others such as cynicism, suspiciousness and harmful intentions (Smith, 1994). Research has shown that the belief system of hostile individuals is characterized by vindictiveness, pessimism, hopelessness, unrealistic expectation of self and others and desire to avoid difficulties (Vandervoort, 2006). Hostile individuals were found to have irrational beliefs relating to self, others and external world (Vandervoort, 2006). Hostility affects the adolescence mental and psychosocial areas such as poor academic achievement, impaired social functioning, suicide and substance abuse. Additionally hostility is associated feature of numerous externalizing and internalizing problems like bullying, arguing, depression, anxiety and withdrawal (Festen, 1996; Whalen, Jammer, Henker, & Delfino, 2001; Hampson, Andrews, & Barckley, 2007).

Gender has been investigated in relation with hostility among university students. (Kay, Duerksen, Pike, & Anderson 2003; Hamdan-Mansour, 2010;) and found no difference in hostility between male and female university students. But many other researchers reported that male students were more engaged in overt hostility than female students (Starch, Bagner, Geffken, & Baumeister, 2004; Brody, 1985; Friedman, Harris, & Hall, 1985) Stoney and Engebretson (1994) suggested that women and men display their hostility through different means. Lee and Kleinman (2000) found that woman have a tendency to direct their pain and sorrow inwardly. Weng-Lin, Lue, Chen, Wu, and Cheng (2008) found males score higher than females in expressive hostility behaviour and females have significantly higher scores in suppressive hostility than males. Weng, Lin, and Jiang (2010) found that both suppressive hostility and expressive hostility is found high among females.

The basic unit of a society is the family and where individuals are moulded in to a person of perfect human being. The culture, values, personality pattern, even mental health and wellbeing of a person is rooted with the family. Joint family was the salient feature of traditional Indian society. Families in modern society have undergone drastic change in structure, environment, values due to modernisation and urbanisation. In the virtual world the family prayers, family get together, love, guidance and support are considerably less. Nowadays parents are busy with their jobs and their children and grandparents are isolated, which affects the mental, emotional and psychological wellbeing of individuals. And children spent their time viewing television, internet and play violent video games which may increase their hostility. This study aims at to find out whether sex of the individuals has any role in the relationship of family environment and hostility.

### Objective

1. To find out whether sex makes any significant difference in the relationship of family environment and hostility

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## Participants

Participants of this study consisted of 298 students from various schools situated in Kerala. Respondents' institutions were either aided by the state government and private self managed schools. Among the total participants 135 were boys and the remaining 163 were girls. The participants were hailing from rural and semi urban area. The age ranges from 16 to 17.

## Instruments

1. Family Environment Scale: in what type of family environment the participants lives was measured using the Family Environment Scale. The participants were asked to respond to the statements either yes or no. A numerical weightage of 1 for correct answer and 0 for incorrect was given to the responses. Sum of the score of each item in the scale yields a total family environment score for each participant. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be .80. The face validity of the scale has been assured by many experts (Divya & Manikandan, 2010).
2. Multiphasic Hostility Inventory: This is a five point likert scale developed by Jayan & Shari (1995) consists of 44 items. Multiphasic hostility measures hostility on the basis of two dimensions that is experience and expression of hostility. Experience of hostility is a subjective process including angry feelings or cynical thoughts. Expression of hostility is more observable components which include acts of verbal and physical aggression. The components of hostility that come under experience are self criticism, guilt and cynicism. Expression of hostility includes acting out, criticism of others and projection hostility. The reliability of the scale was determined by odd even reliability. The product moment correlation between the tests was found to be .75. The correlation coefficient obtained was .64. The face validity of the scale has been assured by many experts in the field (Jayan & Baby Shari, 1995).

## Procedure

With the consent of institutional heads the researchers met the participants in their class room and explained the purpose, use, confidentiality etc and requested their participation in this study. After their consent the research instruments were administered among them. Separate instruction was given for each instrument and also cleared their doubts if any while responding to the instruments. After completion the response sheets were collected back and scored as per the scoring scheme proposed in the manual. Then the collected data were fed into a spread sheet; analyzed using statistical package for social science.

## Results and Discussion

To have a general idea of the nature of the distribution of the variables such as family environment and dimensions of hostility for both sexes, the mean, standard deviation, and size of the sample were calculated and are presented in the table 1.

Table 1  
Mean SD and N of Hostility and Family Environment by Sex

Sex	Statistics	selct	Guilt	Cyni	Crit	act out	projho	totho	fato
Boys	Mean	16.82	15.65	19.01	21.87	16.48	14.43	104.26	49.39
	N	135	135	135	135	135	135	135	135
	S.D	3.176	3.130	5.092	4.310	4.950	3.824	14.838	6.579
Girls	Mean	16.63	15.71	17.72	21.68	15.85	13.85	101.45	51.88
	N	163	163	163	163	163	163	163	163
	S.D	2.719	3.111	4.806	4.699	5.571	3.900	16.895	7.094
Total	Mean	16.72	15.68	18.31	21.77	16.14	14.11	102.72	50.76
	N	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298
	S D	2.931	3.114	4.971	4.521	5.300	3.87	16.031	6.966

(Note: Selct=Self criticism, Guil= Guilt, Cyni=Cynicism, Crit=Criticism, Actout=Acting Out, Projho=Projection Hostility, Tottho=Total Hostility, Fato=Family Environment)

The mean scores of boys and girls on their family environment, hostility and its dimension were calculated and found that the mean scores of boys and girls were more or less equal. A closer examination of the mean scores, it can be seen that boys were expressing more cynicism (Mean=19.01, SD=5.09) than girls (Mean=17.72, SD=4.81). Similarly acting out and projection hostility, boys scored comparatively higher than girls.

To test the nature of relationships of family environment and hostility and dimension for the total sample correlation was calculated and presented in table 2.

Table 2  
Correlations of variables under study (N=298)

Variables	Selfct	Guilt	Cyni	Crit	Actout	Projho	Totho	Fato
Selfct	-							
Guilt	.191**	-						
Cyni	.425**	.247**	-					
Crit	.182**	.145*	.245**	-				
Actout	.354**	.184**	.527**	.374**	-			
Projho	.278**	.247**	.334**	.153**	.337**	-		
Tothos	.587**	.467**	.760**	.580**	.781**	.598**	-	
Fato	-.257**	-.236**	-.269**	-.090	-.150**	-.235**	-.308**	-

\*p< 05, \*\*p< 01

(Note: Selct-Self criticism, Guil- Guilt, Cyni-Cynicism, Actout-ActingOut, Projho-Projection Hostility, Tottho-Total Hostility, Fato-Family Environment Total)

From table 2, it can be seen that hostility and its dimensions were significantly and negatively correlated with family environment except criticism of others. Inter correlations between overall multiphasic hostility and its sub variables such as self criticism, guilt, cynicism,

criticism of others, and acting out, projection hostility was calculated and the results showed that there is significant positive correlation between the variables of hostility and its dimensions. The highest correlation was found between acting out and overall multiphasic hostility ( $r=.781$ ) and the least correlation between guilt and criticism of others ( $r=.145$ ).

The results of correlation in total sample revealed significant correlation between the variables, to achieve the objective separate correlation for boys and girls were calculated, then the significant difference of these relationships were tested by converting correlation into  $Z_r$ . The results are presented in table 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3

*Correlations of Hostility and Family environment of Boys (lower half) and Girls (Upper half)*

Variables	Selct	Guilt	Cyni	Crit	Actout	Projho	Totho	Fato
Selct	-	.223**	.369**	.219**	.419**	.369**	.591**	-.232**
Guilt	.160	-	.287**	.174*	.182*	.310**	.482**	-.292**
Cyni	.481**	.208*	-	.259**	.599**	.413**	.761**	-.353**
Crit	.142	.108	.229**	-	.441**	.273**	.627**	-.170*
Actout	.284**	.189*	.434**	.275**	-	.404**	.817**	-.238**
Projho	.180*	.173*	.229**	-.012	.239**	-	.674**	-.270**
Totho	.595**	.455**	.760**	.511**	.724**	.487**	-	-.379**
Fatot	-.287**	-.177*	-.130	.029	-.001	-.168	-.179*	-

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

(Note: Selct-Self criticism, Guil- Guilt, Cyni-Cynicism, Actout-Acting Out, Projho-Projection Hostility, Totho-Total Hostility, Fato-Family Environment Total)

The results of correlation between hostility dimension of boys revealed that self criticism was positively correlated with cynicism ( $r=.481$ ,  $p < .01$ ), acting out ( $r=.284$ ,  $p < .01$ ) ( $r=.595$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and with projection hostility ( $r=.180$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The variable guilt was positively correlated with cynicism ( $r=.208$ ,  $p < .05$ ), acting out ( $r=.189$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and projection hostility ( $r=.173$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The variable Cynicism was positively correlated with criticism of others ( $r=.229$ ,  $p < .01$ ), acting out ( $r=.434$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and projection hostility ( $r=.229$ ). The variable Criticism of other was positively correlated with acting out ( $r=.275$ ,  $p < .01$ ) only and acting out was found to be significantly positively correlated with projecting hostility ( $r=.239$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Family environment was found to be significantly negatively correlated with only two dimensions of hostility such as self criticism ( $r=-.287$ ,  $p < .01$ ), guilt ( $r=-.177$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and hostility total ( $r=-.179$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

When the same variables were correlated each other among girls, the correlation matrix (table 3, upper half) revealed that all the correlation values were significant. The result shows that self criticism is positively correlated with guilt ( $r=.223$ ,  $p < .05$ ), cynicism ( $r=.369$ ,  $p < .05$ ), criticism of others ( $r=.219$ ,  $p < .05$ ), acting out ( $r=.419$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and projection hostility ( $r=.369$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Another component guilt is positively correlated with cynicism ( $r=.287$ ,  $p < .01$ ), projection hostility ( $r=.310$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and criticism of others ( $r=.174$ ,  $p < .05$ ), acting out ( $r=.182$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Cynicism is positively correlated with criticism of others ( $r=.259$ ,  $p < .01$ ), acting out ( $r=.599$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and projection hostility ( $r=.413$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Criticism of others is positively correlated with acting out ( $r=.441$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and projection hostility ( $r=.273$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Acting out is positively correlated with projection hostility ( $r=.404$ ,  $p < .01$ ), finally total hostility score is positively correlated with self criticism, guilt, cynicism criticism of others, acting out and projection hostility. The variable family environment is negatively correlated with the dimensions of hostility.

Table 4

Significance of difference of correlation of Family Environment and Hostility between boys and girls

Group	Variables	Selct	Guilt	Cyni	Crit	Actout	Projho	Totho
Boys	Family Environment	.80	.177	.13	.02	.001	.168	.179
Girls		.232	.30	.37	.170	.238	.28	.379
't' value		0.41	1.05	2.06*	1.28	2.03*	0.96	1.81

\* $p < .05$

(Note: Selct-Self criticism, Guil- Guilt, Cyni-Cynicism, Actout-ActingOut, Projho-Projection hostility, Tottho-Total Hostility)

Correlation of boys and girls were calculated separately and converted into Zr. The converted Zr value for male and female for each variable were compared and found that no significant difference in the relationship between hostility and family environment of boys and girls except in cynicism and acting out. This implies that participants whether they are boys or girls; they were equally treated by their parents or guardians generally. The family environment in which they live gives a feeling of equity. But the relationship of family environment-cynicism ( $t=2.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and family environment-acting out ( $t=2.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ) of boys and girls were significantly differ.

From the results it can be observed that perception of family environment of girls plays a crucial role in their personality and the development of hostility. From this study it can be concluded that perception of family environment of girls and boys is different. Research also showed that aggressive and hostile behaviour originate from the family While considering the perception of family environment with respect to sex girls perceived more conflict than boys. Boys on the other hand perceived more control than girls (Mohanraj & Latha, 2005). Houston and Vavak (1991) stated that low positive involvement; high levels of hostile controlling behaviour from the parents are the important factors for the development of hostility among adolescence. Research also revealed that negative family environment predict increasing levels of hostility among adolescence (Mathews, Wodall, Kenyon, & Jacob, 1996).

### Conclusion

The objective of this study was to find out the role of sex in the relation of family environment and hostility. Results revealed that the dimensions of hostility such as cynicism and acting out in relation to family environment significantly differ among boys and girls. The magnitude of the correlation of family environment and hostility of girls seems to be higher than boys. From the result it can be seen that perception of family environment of girls plays a crucial role in their personality and the development of hostility. From this study it can be concluded that perception of family environment of girls and boys is different and interpreting and doing counselling the counsellor or experts should view this problems as per the subjects biological sex. The study stress the importance of providing family therapy, family training programmes and family oriented perspective in the intervention and prevention of hostility. Spoth, Redmond and Shin (2000) in their study point out that brief family intervention programme can reduce hostile behaviour among adolescence.

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