Anusandhanvallari
Vol 2025, No.1
December 2025
ISSN 2229-3388

A Study of Home Environment and Self Concept in Relation to Family Structure of School Going Children

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between home environment and self-concept among adolescents in relation to their family structure. Using a descriptive survey method, a sample of 200 school-going adolescents aged 13–16 years was purposively selected from public schools across districts in Haryana. The sample included 100 students from nuclear families and 100 from joint families, with equal gender distribution. Standardized tools—Home Environment Inventory and Self-Concept Scale—were administered, and data were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test. The results revealed significant differences in various dimensions of home environment and self-concept between adolescents from joint and nuclear families. Particularly, joint families showed higher scores on various dimensions of home-environment and self-concept. The study underscores the critical influence of family structure and home dynamics on adolescent development.

Keywords: Adolescents, Family structure, Home Environment, Self-concept, Educational Psychology

Home Environment

The home environment is universally acknowledged as the primary social context in which a child develops cognitive, emotional, and social competencies. It refers not only to the physical aspects of the household—such as space, cleanliness, and access to learning resources—but also the relational and psychological climates shaped by parents and family dynamics (Bradley & Caldwell, 1984). The quality of a child's home life, including the availability of intellectual stimulation, emotional warmth, parental involvement, and support, plays a central role in shaping a child's academic and psychological outcomes (Gitterman&Germain, 2008).

According to Yana A. Klimova (2024), the home "occupies a central position in children's psychological development, offering the foundation for self-awareness and identity formation." Children from enriched home settings—characterized by affection, consistency, and encouragement—tend to exhibit higher academic achievement and emotional regulation (Klimova, 2024). Conversely, a chaotic or emotionally deprived home environment may hinder developmental milestones, contributing to internalized distress and poor academic performance.

The emotional climate of the home, especially the interactions between parents and children, substantially affects children's motivation and sense of agency. "Children who perceive their homes as secure and loving are more likely to approach challenges confidently," noted George S. Carvalho and Teresa Vilaça (2024), in their work on health promotion in public education.

Additionally, socioeconomic variables, including parental education level, employment status, and housing stability, create differing levels of access to developmental opportunities. Ayano Yamaguchi, Christina D. Bethell, and Yuki Yamaoka (2024) found that children's reported quality of life during the COVID-19

pandemic was tightly linked to "how much they felt heard at home," reinforcing the idea that relational factors within the home are foundational to well-being and adjustment.

Self-Concept

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves across various domains—academic, social, physical, and emotional. This self-evaluation evolves through childhood and adolescence, as children interpret feedback from their environments and internalize their experiences. Psychologist Carl Rogers (1951) emphasized that a well-adjusted self-concept emerges from an environment that offers unconditional positive regard and consistent validation.

In the context of child development, self-concept is crucial because it influences motivation, interpersonal behavior, emotional regulation, and academic engagement. When children are supported, praised for effort, and allowed autonomy, they develop a positive self-image (Harter, 2012). On the other hand, frequent criticism, neglect, or punitive discipline can diminish self-worth and lead to maladaptive patterns of self-evaluation.

According to SnežanaBlagdanić and MirjanaMarušićJablanović (2024), students' self-concept is intimately tied to environmental identity, meaning how they perceive their place and competence within key social structures—particularly family and school. In their study on Serbian children, they found that "environmental affect and emotional literacy" played significant roles in predicting not only ecological awareness but also how students saw themselves in the social hierarchy.

Further, Alice M. Gitere (2024) emphasized that differing parental expectations based on gender can affect children's self-concepts. In her study of parental value systems in Kenya, she concluded that "mothers and fathers have divergent expectations based on the child's sex, which in turn molds the child's own internal narrative about competence and worth."

The Role of Family Structure

Family structure—whether nuclear, single-parent, joint, or blended—affects not only resource availability but also the psychosocial climate in which a child grows. Each structure presents distinct challenges and opportunities for the child's self-concept and emotional well-being.

In nuclear families, the presence of both parents often ensures more balanced emotional and logistical support, but this is not universally beneficial. It depends largely on the parenting style and inter-parental harmony. Children from nuclear families with harmonious relations tend to exhibit higher self-esteem and better school engagement (Amato & Keith, 1991).In contrast, children from single-parent families may face economic stress and parental overburden, which can impact the quality of parent-child interactions. Nonetheless, this structure does not inherently impede development. In cases where single parents are emotionally supportive and involved, children may develop resilience and independence. As Yamaguchi et al. (2024) note, "the perception of being emotionally supported is a more significant predictor of well-being than the actual number of caregivers present."

Joint and extended families provide the advantage of shared responsibilities, but they may also include conflicting messages from multiple authority figures, possibly complicating identity formation. In cultures where collectivism is dominant, such as India or parts of Africa, joint families are common and can instill strong social identities and interdependence (Gitterman&Germain, 2008).

Blended families (step-families) present unique relational complexities, as children must adapt to new parental figures and siblings. Trust issues, perceived parental favoritism, or competition among step-siblings can undermine self-concept, especially if transitions are abrupt or inadequately explained.

Importantly, the family's emotional atmosphere—marked by warmth, responsiveness, and communication quality—is more predictive of child outcomes than its structural configuration. As per Carvalho and Vilaça (2024), "emotional bonds and open dialogues within the home context hold more developmental significance than biological lineage."

Association among Home Environment, Family Structure and Self-Concept

The relationship between home environment, family structure, and self-concept is complex and interdependent. For instance, a child in a single-parent family who experiences unconditional love, effective communication, and structured discipline may have a healthier self-concept than a child in a two-parent home characterized by neglect or conflict. The quality of interactions, rather than the quantity of caregivers or income alone, influences developmental outcomes.

Yana A. Klimova (2024) emphasizes that the child's sense of self is formed "not solely through introspection but primarily in response to how they are seen and treated by key adults in their environment." As such, self-concept becomes a mirror reflecting the messages children receive at home—about their abilities, worth, and expectations.

Family structures influence the roles and responsibilities a child assumes, which in turn can shape identity. For example, in many single-parent families, children—especially older siblings—may be required to assume adult-like responsibilities, which could foster maturity or stress, depending on the support received (Gitere, 2024).

Moreover, educational outcomes are often mediated by how children perceive themselves in relation to their environment. Children with positive self-concept are more likely to take academic risks, persist in the face of difficulty, and engage meaningfully in peer relationships (Harter, 2012).

During adolescence—a critical period for identity formation—these influences become more pronounced. Blagdanić and Jablanović (2024) observe that "environmental cognitive skills" serve not only academic purposes but also enable students to critically interpret their social standing, thus reinforcing or challenging self-concept.

Review of Literature

Arun, Ravikumar, and Makhija (2015) conducted a study highlighting that adolescents with high self-concept were more likely to belong to families that encouraged open dialogue, autonomy, and emotional availability. Family warmth significantly predicted self-perception.

Sahariah and Saikia (2015) studied adolescents in Guwahati and found that although the overall family relationship was not significantly linked to self-concept, adolescents from nurturing homes displayed higher emotional stability. The study emphasized the importance of a favorable home environment in adolescent psychological health.

Sahoo and Choudhury (2015) linked childhood obesity with diminished self-concept and found that children from disrupted or conflict-prone homes were more vulnerable to emotional eating and low self-esteem. Family structure, especially single-parent households, was a contributing factor.

Kaur, Satish, and Pandey (2016) found a significant association between depressive symptoms, poor family environment, and low self-concept among adolescents. The study emphasized that a child's emotional security is deeply rooted in their perception of home safety and cohesion.

Noronha, Monteiro, and Pinto (2018) analyzed academic performance and found that children with higher self-esteem often belonged to nuclear families with active parental involvement. Their findings emphasized that autonomy and academic encouragement at home enhance both self-concept and outcomes.

Bhatt and Mishra (2021) examined Indian young adults and found that perceived family environment, particularly emotional expressiveness and conflict resolution, was significantly associated with positive self-concept. The study highlighted how family dynamics shape identity in collectivistic cultures like India.

Bhardwaj and Cheema (2021) discovered that self-esteem and academic achievement among adolescents were positively correlated with a supportive home environment. Homes with democratic parenting styles were especially influential in fostering self-confidence and goal orientation.

Kumar and Behera (2022) synthesized literature on foundational skills and found that differences in home literacy and numeracy environments strongly influenced children's early learning and confidence. Children from resource –rich families showed greater self-assurance and task persistence.

The review of related literature reveals a clear and consistent pattern: the home environment and family structure exert a significant influence on the self-concept of school-going children affirm that supportive, emotionally rich, and communicative family settings contribute positively to children's self-perception, academic success, and emotional regulation. Conversely, dysfunctional family relationships, inconsistent parenting, or structurally disrupted families (such as single-parent homes without adequate support) tend to correlate with lower self-esteem and psychological stress among children.

Key findings across diverse geographical and socio-cultural contexts in India—ranging from urban to semi-urban settings—emphasize the role of warmth, autonomy, structured discipline, and active parental involvement. These factors shape a child's self-concept regardless of family configuration (nuclear, joint, single-parent). The insights gained underscore the necessity to approach child development from a family systems perspective, wherein both environmental inputs and family typologies are integral.

Furthermore, literature indicates gaps in understanding how these relationships manifest across age groups, genders, and cultural identities. While research confirms correlation, there is a need for more in-depth, contemporary Indian studies that integrate structural variables (like family type) with subjective constructs (like self-concept) in the school-going demographic.

Justification of the Problem

This study is justified by the growing need to understand the developmental implications of changing family structures and varied home environments in modern India. With an increase in nuclear and single-parent families, and post-pandemic disruptions to home dynamics, children's emotional and self-perceptual development faces new challenges. Current Indian research lacks focused inquiry into how specific family types influence children's self-concept during their formative school years. Given the centrality of self-concept to academic success and emotional well-being, and the importance of early intervention, this study aims to fill a critical gap. It will offer educators, counselors, and policymakers the empirical insights needed to support children from diverse familial backgrounds more effectively.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know the home environment of school going adolescents in relation to family - structure.
2. To assess self-concept of school going adolescents as an impact of family structure.

Hypotheses

1. Home-environment will effect significantly from family structure of school going adolescents.
2. Family structure will effect significantly on the self-concept of school going adolescents.

Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey method to explore the relationship between home environment, self-concept, and family structure among school-going adolescents.

Sample

A total of 200 students, aged 13–16 years, were purposively selected from public schools from sonepat district of Haryana. The sample included 100 adolescents from joint families and 100 from nuclear families, with an equal distribution of 50 boys and 50 girls in each group. Data collection involved obtaining permission from school authorities, securing informed consent from participants, and administering standardized tools.

Tools used

Two primary tools were used: the Home Environment Inventory (HEI) by K. S. Mishra (1985) to assess aspects of the home environment, and the Self-Concept Scale by Dr. S. P. Ahluwalia and Dr.Hari Shankar Singh (2004) to evaluate various domains of self-concept. Participants also completed a demographic form detailing age, gender, family type, education, and other background information. Ethical procedures were followed, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Statistical Techniques Used

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test) to examine differences in self-concept and home environment based on family structure.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Comparison of dimensions of home –environment and overall Home- environment of Nuclear and Joint family respondents

Home-Environment	Nuclear Family(N=100)		Joint Family(N=100)		t-Value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Control	19.55	3.42	21.16	4.87	2.70**
Protectiveness	21.36	4.18	24.56	5.12	4.83**
Punishment	12.99	4.33	16.98	5.73	5.55**
Conformity	29.42	1.58	29.41	2.55	.03
Social-Isolation	11.00	2.13	10.64	3.51	.87
Reward	21.09	5.28	23.47	6.17	2.92**
Deprivation of privileges	13.30	6.05	16.89	7.98	3.58**

Nurturance	21.38	4.75	24.83	6.47	4.29**
Rejection	15.13	6.72	19.44	6.74	4.52**
Permissiveness	17.88	3.25	18.33	4.22	.84
Overall Home-Environment	183.10	20.94	205.71	17.26	8.33**

**Significant at .01 level *Significant at .05 level

Table 1 showed significant difference between nuclear and joint families on some dimensions of home environment and overall home-environment. Mean difference clarified that home environment of nuclear family had significant difference from joint family on the dimensions of control ($t = 2.70$, $p<0.01$) ,protectiveness ($t = 4.83$, $p<0.01$) ,punishment ($t = 5.55$, $p<0.01$), reward ($t =2.92$,$p<0.01$), deprivation of privileges ($t =3.58$,$p<0.01$), Nurturance ($t = 4.29$, $p<0.01$), rejection ($t = 4.52$, $p<0.01$).Apart from above dimensions overall home environment of nuclear family had significant different from joint family ($t =8.83$,$p<0.01$). Some dimensions of home-environment like conformity, social isolation and permissiveness did not show significant difference. It can be observed that conformity, social isolation and permissiveness are same in both nuclear and joint family.

Table 2: Comparison of dimensions of self-concept and overall self-concept of Nuclear Family and Joint Family respondents

Self-Concept	Nuclear Family (N=100)		Joint Family (N=100)		t-Value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Behaviour	12.38	1.26	12.60	1.09	2.45*
Intellectual and School status	13.93	1.62	14.32	1.21	1.99*
Physical appearance and Attributes	8.34	0.89	8.62	.52	2.70**
Anxiety	7.31	1.36	8.42	1.43	5.60**
Popularity	8.84	1.30	8.99	1.08	.88
Happiness and Satisfaction	6.61	1.51	7.01	1.49	1.98*
Overall Self-Concept	57.41	4.00	59.96	3.81	4.61**

**Significant at .01 level *Significant at .05 level

Table 2, denoted significant difference between nuclear and joint family on some dimensions of self-concept and overall self-concept. Mean value indicated that self-concept of nuclear family had significant difference from joint family on the dimensions of Behavior ($t = 2.45$,$p<0.05$), Intellectual and school status ($t =1.99$, $p<0.05$), Physical appearance and attributes ($t =2.70$, $p< 0.01$), Anxiety ($t = 5.60$, $p<0.01$) and Happiness and satisfaction ($t =1.98$, $p<0.05$) .Apart from above dimensions of self-concept overall self concept of nuclear and joint family are significant differ ($t=4.61$,$p<0.01$). Popularity dimension of self concept did not show any significant difference. It can be observed that popularity of both nuclear family and joint family adolescents are same.

Findings of the Study

According to the study, family structure has a substantial influence on teenagers' home environments and self-concepts. Adolescents from joint families performed much better on key elements of the home environment such as nurturance, protectiveness, punishment, and reward, suggesting that joint families may provide more emotionally enriched and structured settings. In addition, joint families had a considerably superior overall home environment than nuclear families.

In terms of self-concept, adolescents from joint families outperformed their nuclear family counterparts in areas such as behavior, intellectual status, physical appearance, anxiety, and happiness and satisfaction. The overall self-concept was found to be more positive among joint family adolescents.

However, dimensions of home-environment like popularity, conformity,and permissiveness and popularity dimension of self-concept showed no significant differences, indicating some aspects of development remain consistent across family types.

Discussion

Family structure has a big impact on home environment. So far, we've examined this variable in terms of nuclear and joint families. The researcher discovered significant differences between adolescents from nuclear and joint families in the dimensions of control, protectiveness, punishment, reward, deprivation of privileges, nurturance, and rejection, as well as in the overall home environment, with the exception of conformity, social isolation, and permissiveness (Table 1). The mean result indicated that adolescents in joint families have a better home environment than those in nuclear households. The obtained results are supported by the findings of Panda, B.N (1997), who investigated the impact of values, creativity, and adaptability on academic achievement of secondary school students from joint and nuclear families. They discovered that all three dependent variables have a significant impact on secondary students' academic achievement. They discovered that students from joint families had a higher value pattern than students from nuclear families, and they also perform better at the academy where they study than students with low value patterns.

Our result was further corroborated by the findings of Jayachandran, S. (2008). She conducted research on higher secondary students from nuclear and joint families' academic performance and adjustment. Students from joint families are better adjusted than those from nuclear families, according to her findings. It is made clear that a key factor in students' academic success is their familial environment and adaptability.

Apart from that, there are considerable differences between nuclear and joint families in terms of behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and qualities, anxiety and happiness, and self-concept satisfaction, as well as overall (Table 2). Mean values indicated that adolescents in joint families have a better self-concept than those in nuclear households.

Sweeney and Bracken's (2000) study "Influence of family structure on children's self-concept development" supported the findings of the current study. The study looked at how students' multidimensional self-concepts varied depending on their family arrangement. Participants included 815 adolescents and preadolescent children aged 9 to 19, drawn from 17 sites across the four primary regions of the United States. Students were divided into five family types: intact, reconstituted, mother-headed, single parent mother-headed, and single parent father-headed. The findings revealed that students from single-parent families had considerably lower global self-concept ratings than students from intact families. Students from reconstituted families have better self-concept than intact families.

Turunen et al. (2017) validated the study's findings by investigating self-esteem in children from various living arrangements and found that joint family had a favorable influence on self-concept development.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study hold important educational implications. Since home environment significantly influences adolescents' self-concept, schools and educators should adopt a more family-sensitive approach when addressing students' emotional and academic needs. Teachers, counselors, and school administrators must be trained to recognize how family dynamics impact learning behavior, social adjustment, and classroom engagement.

It is recommended that schools initiate parent orientation programs that promote emotionally supportive parenting across family structures. For students from nuclear families or those experiencing weak home environments, additional emotional and academic support systems—such as mentoring, peer counseling, or mental health interventions—should be established. Furthermore, curriculum designers should incorporate life-skill education that helps adolescents build self-awareness, resilience, and interpersonal competencies.

Limitations and Suggestions

1. A comparative study between male and female adolescents can be done.
2. A large sample size can be used for the better result of the study.
3. Result can be more generalized by collecting the representative sample from different regions of the state.

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