



RESEARCH ARTICLE

To study identity crisis of adolescents and the impact of the home Environment on them

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 25th November, 2012

Received in revised form

16th December, 2012

Accepted 20th January, 2013

Published online 14th February, 2013

Key words:

Present study,
Standardized tests,
Administered.

ABSTRACT

Adolescence and identity crisis is a much discussed phenomena. In Indian culture adolescents stay at home and with parents till or even after they become adults. It is therefore assumed that home environment plays an important role in the life of an adolescent. The present study attempts to explore the relation between home environment and identity crisis of adolescents if any. In the present study, standardized tests were administered to obtain the scores on self image of students (considered as one of the indicator of identity crisis) and scores on different aspects of home environment. Based on the results of the study, it was observed that home environment of the adolescents does not play any significant role on their identity crisis. They are able to cope well with families and live rather comfortably with them and that does not become a causal factor for identity crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

Through the span of life development, men and women under go lot of changes in their physical and psychological being. Every stage is marked by some characteristics and accompanied by some challenges. Identity formation, establishment, sustenance or loss are some issues that pose challenges in various age groups, particularly in adolescence. Identity crisis could be a common phenomena at this age. The present study intends to focus on the adolescent age group which is considered to be the formation stage as far as individual's identity is concerned. It may be considered that the phase of adolescents calls for many adjustments or coping to various factors one of them being their home environment. The home relates to a mental or emotional state of refuge or comfort. The state of a person's home has been known to psychologically influence their behavior, emotions, and overall mental health. Furthermore, places like homes can trigger self-reflection, thoughts about who someone is or used to be or who they might become. It is considered that among the environmental influences on adolescents, the family arguably has the most profound impact. Home environment is characterised by factors like warmth, emotional stability, stimulation, family cohesion, and day-to-day activities. Parents who are mentally healthy and engage in appropriate parenting practices; a cohesive, supportive, and flexible family system do contribute towards a nurturing and stimulating home environment. Research has also documented that stability in the family unit promotes positive outcomes for children within particular developmental periods. It is considered that children in stable family environments are likely to experience positive, engaged parenting and to have positive developmental outcomes.

Concepts Undertaken for the Research

Following are the concepts considered by the researcher in the present study.

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Adolescence

The study considers adolescence as a phase in the development of the life span of an individual, where one moves towards physical and emotional maturity. It is a stage of development of life when the body has taken a full growth spurt. Thus, adolescence is understood as those years of life where young boys and girls develop their cognitions in terms of their understanding, perception, imagery, etc.

Identity

The study considers identity as the individual's sense of one self. It can be explained as the image one wishes he / she should be known with or known for. It can be seen as the process of role clarification. Formation of identity would also mean developing and showcasing unique characteristics.

Crisis

In the present study, crisis is understood as an acute problem. A state marked by confusion and conflict or a situation that needs to be resolved. The word has a negative connotation and indicates trouble.

Identity Crisis

In the present study identity crisis is referred with respect to adolescent phase of life. Children in the age group of 12 to 17 years are in the stage of growing on various parameters. As they grow physically, they are also growing psychologically. Inputs on to knowledge, learning, perceptions, experience, interactions, and other cognitive processes are also increasing. They try to relate themselves to things, people, places, events, etc around them. In the process, there arises a need within them to answer the question – "Who am I?". There seems to be a need to establish their identity. However, considering the changes occurring in this phase, there is a possibility that this process of establishing identity may not be very smooth for some. It is likely to be interfered with different problems. There may

arise a certain turmoil within the child with respect to various factors. The researcher refers to such turmoil or problem among adolescents as 'Identity Crisis'.

Home Environment

Home environment is referred to the psychological situations or conditions at home and among families. It refers to ways of parenting, family structure and ways of behaving at home or with one another at home.

Significance

The present study stands significant in many aspects. As is seen in the earlier section of this topic, Identity Crisis as described by researchers means 'rediscovering of oneself' or 'establishing one's self image' during adolescents. However, it has been postulated that this process can be difficult leading to a crisis. There could be number of factors responsible for a turmoil situation in the growing years. These could be either physical and or psychological factors. Social, moral, religious, economic, cultural, value system, familial, peer group, school, teachers, etc, could be other factors. However, it is also important to find out how the home environment and the family of the adolescents contribute during this period. Whether it affects favourably or unfavourably and how children deal with it. India is considered as a growing and a fast progressing nation. It's development in many fields is considered as a responsibility of the next generation as well. Today's kids are considered as the constructive and creative generation of tomorrow. It is therefore imperative to study their growing years and how they have adjusted to their situations, if they have any problems in establishing their identities, if any or are they able to adapt to the transition to adulthood smoothly.

Objective

To study the relationship between identity crisis and home environment among adolescents.

Hypotheses

- 1) Identity crisis in adolescents will be positively influenced by their home environment
- 2) Positive and negative dimensions of parenting, will positively affect identity crisis among adolescents.

Sample information

The sample chosen for the present study was from English Medium Schools of Nashik city. It consisted of 100 boys and girls in the age group of 12 – 17 years, studying between Std 7th to 12th. The students were selected by a random sampling method. The study also included one parent of these children.

Tools Used

The study was conducted using the following tools :-
Standardized tests

Self Image Questionnaire (SIQ)

by Lalita Sharma, Agra Psychological Research Cell, Agra. According to the manual of SIQ - the questionnaire has been tested successfully for split- half (.82) as well as test-retest reliability (.69). The questionnaire also ensures high content and face validity.

Home Environment Inventory

by Dr Karuna Shankar Misra, Ankur Psychological Agency, Lucknow. According to the test manual, the split half reliabilities were worked out separately for the ten factors of the home environment inventory. The reliability coefficient ranged from .726 to .947 on the given dimensions. The inventory possesses content validity.

Multi Dimensional Parenting Scale (MDP – Scale)

by Dr N S Chauhan & Dr C P Khokhar, MAAPA Publications, Meerut, 1985. According to the test manual, split half and test retest reliabilities of the positive and negative dimensions in the scale were worked out respectively. The coefficient of reliability ranged between .529 to .656 on test-retest and from .592 to .76 on split half for positive dimensions and between .37 to .878 on test-retest and .56 to .92 on split half for negative dimensions. The coefficient of validity for positive dimension ranged from .58 to .80 and for negative dimensions from .57 to .89 on negative dimensions.

RESULTS/ANALYSIS

In the present study, an attempt is made to assess the impact of family on the adolescents identity crisis. For this multi dimensional parenting scale was administered on parents sample and home environment inventory was administered on students sample. The correlation between self image of adolescents and home environment is 0.1241 which is significantly low. However, if we compare the mean score of self image which = 84.77 and that of home environment = 52.19, it is seen that self image is a higher value and hence can be concluded that adolescents have a higher self image of themselves and they feel that their home environment does not influence them. This perception on the part of adolescents is influenced mainly by their peer group and observing other adolescents and their family environments. This was evident from the interview data of the adolescents.

Self Image and Home Environment

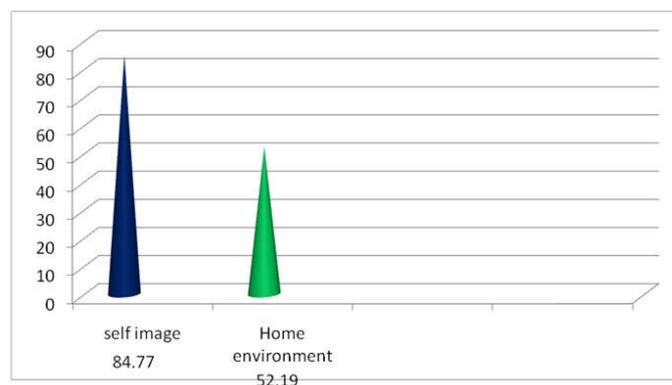


Fig. 1. A comparison graph of mean scores of self image and home environment

To assess the home environment, adolescents considered in the present study were administered home environment inventory which considered following factors which are mentioned with their mean scores and their correlation with self image, for the study under consideration –

In the present study the average scores are seen significant only for factors like reward, conformity and protectiveness to some extent. Factors like control, punishment, nurturance, and permissiveness indicate average scores and factors like social isolation, deprivation of privileges, rejection indicate low scores.

Table 1. Mean scores and correlation values of self image and factors of home environment

Factors	Mean scores	Corelation with SI
Control	55.42	0.1188
Protectiveness	66.82	0.1729
Punishment	57.55	0.0589
Conformity	71.5	0.0298
Social Isolation	28.9	0.1477
Reward	78.62	-0.0783
Deprivation or Privileges	24.25	0.1581
Nurturance	58.6	-0.1236
Rejection	26.27	0.1757
Permissiveness	53.96	-0.0443

Self Image and Factors of Home Environment

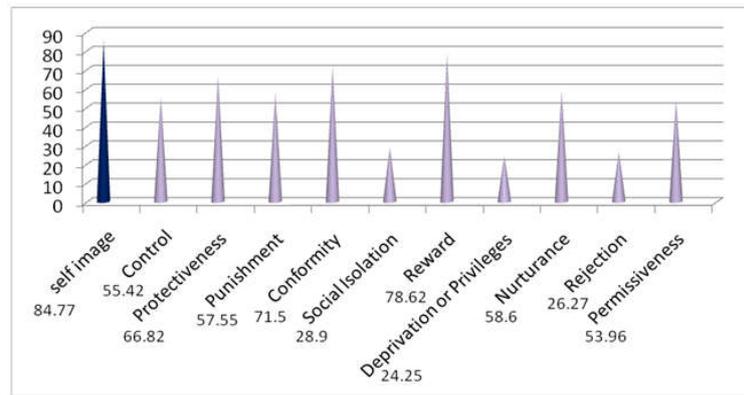


Fig. 2. A comparison graph of mean scores of self image and factors of home environment

Table 2. Mean scores and correlation values of self image of adolescents and dimensions of parenting

Factors	Mean	Corelation with SI
Self Image	84.77	
Positive dimensions of parenting	72.93	0.16926
Negative dimensions of parenting	38.	-0.0096

Self Image and Parenting Dimensions

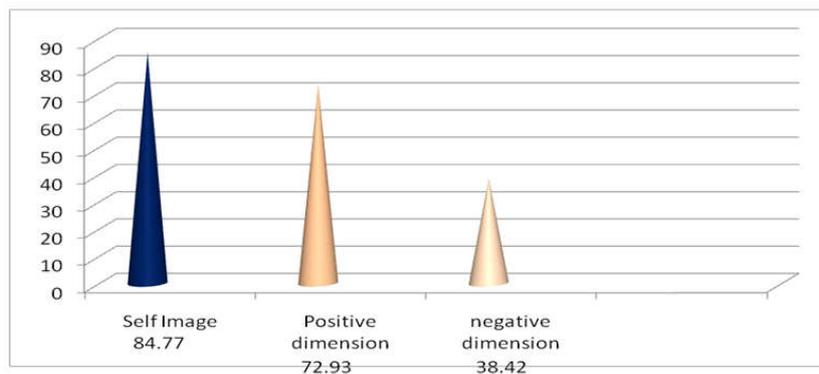


Fig. 3. A comparison graph of mean scores of self image and dimensions of parenting

However, low scores on these factors which are negative indicators would mean that adolescents do not feel that they are socially isolated by their families or deprived of privileges. They do get unconditional love from their families and enjoy freedom to be autonomous individuals. As such low scores on these dimensions is a positive indicator of better home environment. In the present study, the interaction of the researcher with the adolescents and their parents and the obtained scores on various factors revealed that adolescents feel that their parents or family or the environment in the home does not influence their self image. They feel that they are well rewarded for their behaviour by their families and that their families have no control on their behaviour. These goes on to indicate that the present generation of adolescents perceive themselves as independent members of the family capable of controlling their own behaviour. It is also seen that they do not accept high degree of authority from the family members. They perceive themselves as equal decision makers at home. To further explore this factor, parents of the adolescents under study were administered a parenting scale, where they assessed themselves as parents. The researcher attempted to correlate the positive and negative dimensions of parenting to self image respectively. Following results were obtained.

A hypothesis was stated to verify the objective. It was as follows - "Positive and negative dimensions of parenting, respectively, will affect identity crisis in adolescents". If we see the correlation score, we find that the positive dimensions of parenting which include factors like love, encouragement, acceptance, independence, democratization, dominance, progressivism, and parenting as whole, do not correlate with self image of the adolescents under study. The score on correlation of these two factors stands at 0.038, which is almost nil. On the negative dimensions of parenting which include factors like hate, discouragement, rejection, dependence, autocracy, submission, conservatism and parenting as whole, the score of correlation to self image of adolescents is -0.009. This means that if the negative factors decrease, self image increases, though in this case is seen very very marginally. This can be interpreted as - Positive dimensions of parenting are not related to self image of the adolescents while the negative dimensions of parenting may not impact self image but neither do they impact adversely. As such the stated hypothesis is rejected. This means that adolescents' identity crisis is not influenced by home environment or the family structure.

Conclusion

In the overall conclusion it can be stated that adolescents in the present study are comfortable with their home environment. They feel protected, encouraged and feel that they are looked after. Even parents seem to make their better efforts in using positive dimensions in their parenting. Adolescents in this age group hence do not face any larger conflict of identity crisis vis-à-vis the factor of home environment and parenting.

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to - Dr Suchita Kochargaonkar, Guide Students who were studied and their parents.

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