



# TOWARDS CONSTRUCTING A CONGENIAL FAMILY ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN'S HARMONIOUS GROWTH

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**Abstract:** Family is the first social environment of a child where he fulfils his physical, mental, emotional, social and cultural needs. Family environment which is composed of family member's interaction, interpersonal relationships between the family members, parent child relationship, sibling's relationships and the child rearing practices all play an important role in the development of an individual. The healthy functioning of these interaction patterns enhances the overall personality of the child and plays a significant role in shaping the future of the children. Therefore it is very important for each family member to have a clear understanding of his roles and responsibilities in the context of family through which they can create congenial family environment for the development of each and every member of the family. The present research paper discusses the attributes of a congenial family environment. The effective communication, encouragement of each other, commitment towards family, religious orientedness, social connectedness, easy adaptability, expressing appreciation for each other, clear roles and spending quality time with each other are some of the factors that can be adopted to create congenial family environment. This research paper will help in developing an insight about the practices that should be adopted to construct a congenial family environment. A congenial family environment will amount to harmonious growth and development of the individuals in a positive manner and help in creating happy individuals who are responsible not only towards themselves, their family but also towards the society and the nation as a whole.

**Index Terms – Family Environment**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Environment is a broad and a comprehensive term. It encompasses the various moral, social, political, economic, physical, cultural and intellectual factors influencing the existence or development of the individuals. The prominent constituents of the environment are Family, food, geography, culture, religion, literature, art, music, school and media. These factors exert significant impact on framing the personality of the individuals in multiple ways. One of these prominent factors is the Family and Family Environment is a complex phenomenon created by the unique contributions of each and every member of the family. Family is an eternal school of life. It is the primary agent of socialization for the children and the nucleus of all other social institutions. Family is the first social environment of a child where he fulfils his physical, mental, emotional, social and cultural needs. Families may be of different type like nuclear family, joint family, single parent family, and many more but the quality of family environment depends upon the efforts and contributions of each and every member residing in the family because the Family environment is composed of family member's interaction, interpersonal relationships between the family members, parent child relationship, sibling's relationships and the child rearing practices and all these factors play an important role in the development of an individual. The healthy functioning of these interaction patterns enhances the overall personality of the child and plays a significant role in shaping the future of the children (Shah B., 2009). Therefore it is very important for each family member to have a clear understanding of his roles and responsibilities in the context of family.

Researchers have consistently proved that both overall family system functioning and parental behavior is positively related to the development of the children (Mc Keown et al., 1997). On the contrary poor family environment has been reported to be the reason for heightened feelings of depression and reduced social acceptance (Wentzel and Feldman, 1996 & Mc Keown et al., 1997). Family environment moulds the behavior, personality, aptitude and self esteem of the children and the type of family environment a person is getting is reflected in their personality (Reinherz et al., 1989). Family environment is very essential to meet the physical, mental, emotional, social and cultural needs of the human beings. Consciously or unconsciously the family environment moulds the behavior, personality and attitude, level of aspiration, aptitude, self-esteem and overall health of the child. It explains that if we want our children to develop into a responsible, respectable and productive member of society we should first give him a healthy Family environment.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The family environment refers to the psychological atmosphere of the family created by the efforts of each and every member of the family residing under one roof. The Family environment varies from family to family and even within the family the environment may vary from time to time according to circumstances. The family environment in which the children grow up affect their development, attitude and behavior by determining the kind of relationship they have with different family members. If the attitude of the members of the family is positive and favorable which means that family members are helpful and supportive towards each other, they have freedom to express their views, participate in social, cultural and intellectual activities and lesser conflict and control it will result in happiness amongst the family members (Thapa, 2005). Earlier studies have found that home or family environment is the important source of happiness in life (Hall, 1976; Chiasson, Dube and Blondin, 1996) And satisfaction with family environment enhances the psychological well being (Mills and Grasmick, 1992), emotional well being and connectedness amongst the family members (Wolman et al., 1994) Thus, we can say that one of the most important factors that may be the root cause of happiness is family and its environment. The Family provides appropriate climate, warmth and safety for the child to develop good ideas, habits, mode of thinking and behavior. Healthy familial relations in the home are a medium for making children into wholesome and adjustable personalities. Family is the basic unit of society and that inculcates the value i.e. caring for others, affections for others, spirit for service and virtue of love (Bhatnagar, 1977). In fact, family plays the most important part in laying the foundation for the child's personality; because they are the most influential part of child's environment. Plamentz (1993) stated that family provides all sorts of moral and ethical values, emotional, social and intellectual climate set by the family members that contribute to their wholesome development of the children in the family.

Researchers have found that Healthy Family environment is good for the mental health, physical health, social relations and academic achievements of the children (Kishore 2013; Kumar, 2013 ; Grewal, 2014 & Reena, 2019). Good family environment exerts a significant positive impact on the cognitive development of adolescents (Rashmi, 2016) and also protects the children from addictive behaviors for example Habibi (2015) studied the relationship between the family function and the internet addiction on high school female

students. Their study revealed that the internet addiction increased with enhancement of improper family function. Saini and Kaur(2016) also found that a significant negative relationship was found between Internet Usage and Family Environment and suggested that a positive and congenial family environment is helpful in preventing the students from excessive non essential internet usage.

Research have shown that good and congenial family environment can enhance the personality, health, academic achievements, motivation level, maturity level and also keep them protected from mental health problems, adjustment problems and addictive behaviors. These empirical evidences have shown that family environment plays an important role in framing the health, personality, socialization and behavior of the children. It is the joint responsibility of each and every family member to construct a conducive and congenial family environment that brings about maximum positive developmental outcomes in the personality of the children. This research paper aims to develop an insight about the attributes that defines a congenial family environment. This socially significant research paper deals with the day to day life of human beings and will provide guidance about how congenial family environment can be constructed for the harmonious growth and development of the children. Congenial Family environment will result into better and balanced individuals and hence they would be able to not only have a better life for themselves their family but also for the society and the nation as a whole.

### III CONSTRUCTING A CONGENIAL FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Many researchers have suggested the various dimensions, parameters and ways of assessing the family environment and categorizing it into good or bad family environments. This research paper discusses the constructs given by Krysan, Moore and Zill (1990) to create a Strong and Successful Family Environment. Although the constructs have been suggested by Krysan, Moore and Zill in the 1990 but these constructs holds true even in the contemporary modern society. These suggestions can be incorporated and imbibed by the family members to construct a congenial family environment for each and every member of the family. These constructs are:

**1. Communication:** In order to construct a Congenial Family Environment, the members of the family must practice effective, clear, open, honest and frequent communication with each other (Swihart,1988; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985; Lewis, 1979; Epstein, 1983; Olson, 1986).The members should not be hesitant in communicating with other family members and none of the family member should be debarred or neglected from the effective family communication practices.

**2. Encouragement of the Individuals:** A congenial family environment promotes the encouragement of each individual members through a wide range of affective dimensions related to cohesion, support, recognition, closeness, attachment and respect amongst the family members (Olson , Hamilton, McCubbin and Howard., 1982).An ideal family environment maintains the uniqueness of each family member while cultivating a sense of belongingness to the family. Family members enjoy the family framework which provides them structure but do not confine their individuality (Swihart 1988).

**3. Commitment to Family:** The members of a congenial family environment should have strong commitment towards the family. The Commitment to the family has dual aspects firstly each family member is valued, supported and sustained. Secondly each family member is committed to the family as a unit and possesses a family identity. When outside pressures (work, for example) threaten to remove family from its top priority, members experiencing good family environment take action and make sacrifices if necessary to preserve family's well-being (Stinnett, 1986).

**4. Religious Orientation:** The members of a congenial family environment must possess Religious Orientation; it encompasses spirituality, concerns for others, involvement in worthy causes, or adherence to a moral code of conduct. Religious orientation does not emphasize the frequency of visiting the religious places rather it emphasize that a good family environment is guided by an underlying moral or value system shared by all members of the family(Stinnett. 1986 ).

**5. Social Connectedness:** Families with congenial family environment are not isolated instead they are connected to the wider society. They easily get social support and are themselves also very supportive towards the society (Cowan and Cowan,1987). Such families can easily approach to the friends, family, neighbors, and community resources in case of crisis (Olson., 1982).Social connectedness also encompasses being connected to the society through participating in the ventures and issues related to some social causes.

**6. Ability to adapt:** A family's ability to adapt to stressful and potentially damaging events, as well as to predictable life-cycle changes, has been identified as an important characteristic of a strong family environment (Stinnett and DeFrain, Lewis, 1985; Olson,Hamilton, McCubbin and Howard,1982 ). "Adaptability is the ability of a marital or family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and

relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress" (Olson, Candyce and Douglas 1989). The families at different stages in the life cycle (childless, with infants, with elementary school children, with adolescents, etc.) require different levels of cohesion and adaptability. That is, a level of cohesion that is functional in a family with an infant may not be once the child is an adolescent (Olson, Candyce and Douglas, 1989). An ideal family environment is one wherein the family members easily adapt themselves according to the roles and responsibilities expected from them.

**7. Expressing Appreciation:** Appreciation refers to delivering a high level of positive reinforcement to family members, day in and day out, doing things that are positive from the other person's perspective, just for their sake and not merely as a strategy for "buying their love" (Schumm, 1986). Commitment to the family and expressing appreciation towards each other's is an important characteristic of healthy family environment.

**8. Clear Roles:** Clear roles refer to a clear, yet flexible structure in place, family members are aware of their responsibilities in and to the family. Consequently, in the face of crisis and problems, members know their roles. (Epstein, Lawrence and Duane, 1983), in a good family environment there is a clear recognition that the parents are in charge of the house. At the same time, parents are open to their children's input - the parents are rarely seen as authoritarian (Lewis, 1979).

**9. Time Spent together:** Time spent together includes quality as well as quantity of time the family members spend with each other. Members of a family experiencing good family environment should enjoy spending time with each other and doing things together (Olson, 1982; Stinnett and De Frain, 1985).

#### IV CONCLUSION

Family is the first agent of socialization for the child and family members are the first significant people in the child's life. Family is the fundamental unit of human society that lays the background for inculcation of values and is the most significant place for the development of the child. The environment provided by the family is the chief instrument to provide good life skills for social adjustment and sound personality in terms of social, emotional, cognitive, creative, moral and ethical development. Family teaches the difference between generosity and meanness, considerateness and selfishness, justice and injustice, truth and falsehood and industry and idleness. These values once learnt extend beyond the family to wider community and later affect the socialistic, political, cultural, moral and spiritual life of the individuals and extends to the nation. Therefore it is very important to maintain a congenial family environment for the happiness and prosperity of the family. However a congenial Family Environment can be created only through the joint efforts of each and every family member. The effective communication, encouragement of each other, commitment towards family, religious orientedness, social connectedness, easy adaptability, expressing appreciation for each other, clear roles and spending quality time with each other are some of the factors that can be adopted to create congenial family environment. Researchers have shown that an effective Family Environment will impact the overall growth and development of the individuals in a positive manner and help in creating happy individuals who are responsible not only towards themselves, their family but also towards the society and the nation as a whole.



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