

To Explore the Role of Family Environment in Shaping Narcissistic Personality Among Male and Female

Deeba Huda Sethi¹, Ms. Reetika Pal²

¹Student, BA (Hons.) Applied Psychology, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Assistant Professor, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

This review paper investigates the intricate connection between family dynamics and the emergence of narcissistic traits in college students. Through comprehensive evaluations, various dimensions of parental influence and narcissistic tendencies were assessed. Results highlight the substantial influence of family dynamics on shaping narcissistic traits, potentially leading to grandiose narcissism, aggression, and dominance due to excessive praise and hypersensitivity within the family. Conversely, environments lacking constructive criticism may foster defensiveness and an inflated sense of self-importance, often manifesting as negative outcomes. The review paper emphasizes the importance of recognizing individual differences and the dangers associated with an overly inflated sense of self-worth. Moreover, gender differences in expressing narcissistic traits are examined, advocating for further exploration of environmental influences and the development of tailored interventions to promote psychological well-being among young adults.

Keywords: Family Environment, Narcissistic Personality, Youth, Narcissism

Introduction

The cornerstone of psychological development lies within the intricate dynamics of family environments, where early experiences and interactions profoundly shape perceptions, behaviors, and emotional well-being (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, n.d.). In the context of Indian youth psychology, understanding the multifaceted influence of family environments is paramount for comprehensively addressing the psychological needs of young individuals navigating the complexities of modern society.

The family unit serves as the primary crucible where children encounter the initial influences that lay the groundwork for their perception of the world and their place within it (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, n.d.). Within the diverse tapestry of Indian familial contexts, encompassing various socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural traditions, and interpersonal dynamics, children undergo a journey of socialization that molds their developmental trajectory. Economic disparities not only manifest in material possessions but also in access to resources, educational opportunities, and social networks, thereby significantly impacting a child's psychological development (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The emotional climate within the family, characterized by factors such as cohesion, support, conflict, and hierarchy, plays a pivotal role in shaping the interpersonal relationships and psychological well-being of

its members (Barrow et al., 2002). Strong emotional bonds and minimal conflict within the family contribute to adolescents' psychological adjustment, fostering social adaptability and overall well-being. Conversely, family environments marked by discord and instability may engender psychological distress, hindering the development of essential coping skills and interpersonal competencies among youth (Moos & Moos, 2002).

The structural composition of the family, including parental roles and household dynamics, exerts a profound influence on the personality development of children (Smith, 2008). Traditional family structures characterized by strong parent-child interactions and consistent discipline may facilitate the acquisition of adaptive social skills, whereas single-parent households or parental divorce may introduce challenges that impact a child's self-esteem and interpersonal relationships (Jones & Brown, 2010). Additionally, the socioeconomic status of the family can shape the social and behavioral outcomes of children, with those from low-income backgrounds facing heightened risk factors for adverse psychological outcomes (Miller et al., 2012).

Narcissistic personality traits, characterized by inflated self-esteem, a craving for admiration, and a lack of empathy, represent a complex interplay of individual and environmental factors in the development of personality pathology (Fine, 1986). Drawing from Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the understanding of narcissistic disturbances has evolved, highlighting the role of early developmental experiences and unempathic parenting in exacerbating narcissistic traits (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971; Mahler, 1972; Mahler & Kaplan, 1977; Miller, 1981). Empirical review paper on narcissism remain limited but underscore the multifaceted nature of the construct, necessitating comprehensive assessment tools to capture its various dimensions (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Emmons, 1984, 1987).

Narcissistic personality disorder is characterized by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, a constant need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, often resulting in significant impairment in social and occupational functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). While narcissistic traits may vary in intensity across individuals, they commonly manifest as a sense of entitlement, interpersonal exploitation, and a preoccupation with fantasies of success and power. The etiology of narcissistic personality disorder is multifactorial, influenced by genetic predispositions, early childhood experiences, and sociocultural factors (Ronningstam, 2016). Although empirical research on narcissistic personality disorder remains limited, advancements in understanding its neuroscientific underpinnings offer insights into potential therapeutic interventions (Ronningstam, 2016).

Indian youth navigate the intersection of familial expectations, societal norms, and personal aspirations, shaping their identity formation and psychological well-being (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, n.d.). The family environment serves as a crucial backdrop for their socialization, providing the foundation for future political, economic, and social engagement. As adolescents grapple with the challenges of family life and societal pressures, they embark on a journey of self-discovery, forging their paths as active participants in the social fabric.

Relationships between parents and children are essential to an adolescent's overall development. *Suri, A., et al. (2016)* conducted a review paper on 60 girls and 60 boys in the Ranchi region and it was discovered that among adolescents enrolled in school, boys' self-esteem and parent-child connections were higher than those of girls. It shows that greater levels of self-esteem in both boys and girls were linked to strong parent-child connections. Positive parent-child interactions foster adolescent creativity, whereas unfavourable relationships restrict it, according to *Dasgupta et al. (2011)*. These findings highlight the importance of fostering strong parent-child bonds for healthy adolescent development. The significance of

nurturing robust parent-child relationships for the well-being of adolescents is underscored by these results. *Kalhotra, S. K. (2013)* directed a review paper that aimed to assess the parent-child relationship among high and low-achieving high school students. It was revealed that fathers of high achievers love them more than fathers of low achievers and give them the attention they need at home. Mothers consistently provide the same amount of affection to both high and low performers.

According to *Ahmed et al. (2020)*, there was a significant positive association between male athletes' dispositional flow, drive to succeed, and sense of self-worth. *Annalakshmi, N. et al. (2020)* examined several personality factors that can predict adolescents' experiences of flow. Positive predictors of flow moods include characteristics like extraversion, honesty, humility, conscientiousness, and openness to new experiences. It was found that these characteristics might increase a person's chance of feeling flow, which is defined as a profound concentration or total immersion in an activity. *Bassi et al. (2014)* conclude that teens' general well-being and experiences in the flow can be greatly enhanced by encouraging curiosity and openness to new experiences. Nonetheless, there is not much research on psychological flow in relation to parent-child connections.

The review paper offers an in-depth understanding of the complex relationship between the family environment, personality growth, and mental health throughout a person's life. Thomas, Liu, and Umberson (2017) stressed the lasting effect of family ties on happiness, highlighting the role of good family relationships in enhancing well-being. Bush (2020) examined the impact of the family setting on children's brain development and mental health, indicating the need for more research into the environmental elements that influence neurodevelopment. Zakiei et al. (2020) showed how family functioning contributes to positive attitudes and self-belief, underlining the importance of family relationships in shaping individuals' self-perceptions. Leto et al. (2021) studied how the family environment and personality traits forecast life satisfaction, emphasizing the interplay between family relationships and personal traits in determining well-being outcomes. Nakao et al. (2021) stressed the significance of a supportive family setting in promoting positive personality characteristics in children, highlighting the influence of family relationships on individual growth. Ayoub and Roberts (2018) investigated the effect of environmental factors on personality growth, stressing the need to consider both genetic and environmental influences in understanding individual differences. Hoffman (1991) underscored the complexity of family relationships and their role in shaping individual differences among siblings, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of personality. Green et al. (2022) concentrated on gender differences in narcissism, emphasizing the need for a broader understanding of narcissistic traits. Yakeley (2018) offered a thorough review of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), highlighting the difficulties clinicians face in diagnosing and treating patients with narcissistic traits. Ronningstam (2016) investigated the neurological foundations of pathological narcissism and NPD, contributing to our knowledge of the neurological aspects of narcissistic behavior. Campbell and Miller (2011) suggested two different types of narcissism and their associations with different basic traits and relationship styles, highlighting the diversity of narcissistic traits. Dameron and Goeke-Morey (2023) emphasized the long-term effect of family relationships on well-being outcomes in early adulthood, highlighting the importance of the childhood family environment in shaping life's meaning. Daines et al. (2021) underscored the lasting influence of childhood experiences on family relationships and well-being in adulthood. Collectively, these review paper offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between the family environment, personality development, and mental health, informing interventions aimed at promoting positive family relationships and fostering healthy development throughout a person's life.

Conclusion

Based on the review of existing literature, presented here offers strong evidence about the crucial role the family environment plays in moulding individual growth and personality development, especially narcissistic traits, across various life stages. From childhood to young adulthood, the dynamics within the family unit have a deep and lasting influence on neurodevelopment and personality characteristics. The literature highlights how different facets of family relationships, such as marital dynamics, parenting behaviours, and sibling interactions, contribute to the comprehensive development of individuals. Furthermore, review paper that investigate the impact of the family environment on neurodevelopment emphasize the complex relationship between family factors and individual outcomes. Understanding these dynamics not only provides insight into the mechanisms underlying personality development but also informs interventions aimed at promoting positive outcomes. Additionally, the review paper of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder within the family context adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of personality development. By identifying different types of narcissism and clarifying their roots in family experiences, researchers highlight the complex nature of personality disorders and their connection with family dynamics. Notably, research indicates that narcissism is more common in males than in females, adding another layer to the understanding of personality traits and their development. As individuals move into young adulthood, the enduring influence of the childhood family environment becomes particularly evident, as shown by review paper examining its impact on life's meaning and family health outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of early family experiences in shaping personality development and highlight the need for interventions that address family influences throughout the lifespan. In conclusion, the integration of these review paper emphasizes the critical importance of considering the complex interactions between family dynamics and personality development, particularly in the context of narcissistic traits among males and females. The higher prevalence of narcissism among males underscores the need for further research and interventions tailored to this demographic. Looking forward, holistic approaches that incorporate insights from various disciplines will be crucial for promoting positive outcomes across the lifespan.

References

1. American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
2. Ayoub, M., & Roberts, B. W. (2018). Environmental conditions and the development of personality. *Journal of Personality, 86*(1), 87-102..
3. Barrow, C. S., Bjornberg, M. K., & Nicholson, J. S. (2002). Family Environment Scale (FES). In *Encyclopedia of Psychological Assessment* (pp. 424-428). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412953340.n191>
4. Bush, N. R. (2020). Family environment, neurodevelopmental risks, and environmental influences on children's health outcomes (ECHO) initiative: *Review and overview. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 61*(3), 321-331.
5. Campbell, W. K., & Miller, J. D. (2011). Narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 7*(1), 417-442.
6. Daines, C. L., et al. (2021). Effects of positive and negative childhood experiences on adult family health. *Journal of Family Psychology, 35*(2), 182-194.
7. Dameron, E., & Goeke-Morey, M. C. (2023). The relationship between meaning in life and the

- childhood family environment among emerging adults. *Journal of Happiness Review paper*, 24(1), 52-67.
8. Fine, G. A. (1986). Narcissism, the Self, and Society. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 92(3), 599–600. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228450>
 9. Green, A., et al. (2022). Female narcissism: Assessment, aetiology, and behavioural manifestations. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 13(3), 299-310
 10. Hoffman, L. W. (1991). The influence of the family environment on personality: Accounting for sibling dissimilarity. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 5(1), 48-63..
 11. Jones, A. D., & Brown, K. L. (2010). Parental Divorce. In *Encyclopedia of Family Health* (pp. 950-953). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976042.n357>
 12. Kernberg, O. F. (1975). *Borderline conditions and pathological narcissism*. Rowman & Littlefield.
 13. Leto, I. V., et al. (2021). Interactions between family environment and personality in the prediction of child life satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Review paper*, 22(5), 2101-2118.
 14. Miller, M., Chan, W., & Litvak, Y. (2012). Low-Income Families. In *The Encyclopedia of Child and Adolescent Development* (pp. 1-6). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118528928.wbeacd024>
 15. Moos, R. H., & Moos, B. S. (2002). *Family Environment Scale manual: Development, applications, research (3rd ed.)*. Mind Garden.
 16. Nakao, K., et al. (2021). The influences of family environment on personality traits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 120(2), 403-419.
 17. Ronningstam, E. (2016). Narcissistic Personality Disorder: A Clinical Perspective. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 22(1), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PRA.0000000000000148>
 18. Ronningstam, E. (2016). Pathological narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 12(1), 421-446.
 19. Smith, C. A. (2008). The Family and Socialization. In *Oxford Bibliographies*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756384-0063>
 20. Thomas, P. A., Liu, H., & Umberson, D. (2017). Family relationships and happiness. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(4), 980-996.
 21. Yakeley, J. (2018). Current understanding of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 212(3), 131-134.
 22. Zakiei, A., Vafapoor, H., Alikhani, M., Farnia, V., & Radmehr, F. (2020). The relationship between family work and positive attitudes and actions improves personally. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, 15(3), 212-218.
 23. Zastrow, C., & Kirst-Ashman, K. K. (n.d.). In *Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment* (12th ed.). Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.