



## Home Environment as Percieved by Adolescents of Kerala

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### Abstract

*The study which took place in the Thrissur district of Kerala state explored the psychological environment of 290 families of adolescents using Home Environment Inventory prepared by Karuna Shanker Misra. The aim of the study was to get a clear picture of how adolescents perceived their home environments. A detailed frequency table revealed the nature of distribution of various aspects of the psychological environment prevalent in the families of selected adolescents. T-test and single factor ANOVA were the main statistical tests carried out to estimate the differences in the perceived home environment of adolescents along four dimensions namely, gender, age, place of residence and the type of school studied. Gender difference was very prominent in six aspects of the perceived HE. The type of school adolescent studied exhibited a significant role in seven aspects of HE. Meanwhile age and place of residence of adolescents were significant only in two dimensions of HE namely control and permissiveness.*

**Keywords:** Adolescent, home environment, school, family.

### Introduction

Investigations of environmental psychology to delineate the forces operative in one's environment and their impact on the personality and well-being of individual are increasingly getting interested in how individual perceives the environment rather than what all things constitute the environment itself. Meanwhile, a growing body of research keeps on affirming that in the person-environment interactive realm, genetic disposition of the individual has untenable role in determining how environment affects the individual. Genetic disposition being a predetermined entity is not always amenable to manipulation for amelioration or for drawing enduring conclusions in terms of their impact on the manifold forces operative in one's immediate environment. In this scenario, perceptual world of the individual seems to function as an interface between the immutable genetic disposition and ever dynamic crude environmental forces and it is more amenable both for exploration and manipulation.

Perceptions in themselves are learned conclusions ingrained in the cognitive structure of the individual, in terms of intermingled myriad stimulus-response patterns. They are flexible, accessible for reorientation with one's conscious effort. They manifest as primary spontaneous cognitive responses of the individual to various environmental situations. For the same reason, assessing the perception of the individual about various environmental situations is as important as diagnosing the environment itself for fact finding. Moreover, perceptual errors if not addressed, will remain as inscrutable bulwarks to any investigation aimed for betterment of human life. Because, in

many ways, how an individual perceives a situation proves to be more significant than what the situation itself is.

Coming to family environment, it is a part of a larger environment constituting the society as a whole and an important focus of study to understand many of the sources of unhealthy and troubled adolescents<sup>1</sup>. Rapid changes in the culture due to globalization and depletion of traditional values often confound the understanding of adults about how an adolescent perceive their family environment. Parents, teachers and other care takers have to constantly review their attempts to comprehend the perceptual patterns extant in the consciousness of a modern adolescent. Home, which constitutes the immediate environment of an adolescent, is a system whose texture and tone is saturated mainly with parental practices and parental beliefs. Studies keep on reiterating the ineluctable role of immediate environment in the well-being of adolescents. In his paper about the role family environment interactions in child maladjustment Chen<sup>2</sup> tests the hypothesis related to statistical interaction between child temperament and two aspects of family environment, maternal negativity and positivity and household chaos. Maternal negativity and child problem behavior were most strongly associated for children who were low in effortful control and living in chaotic home. Jeremia et al<sup>3</sup> observes that family cohesion a key predictor of adolescent behaviors changes in response to adolescent response. Suninder and Rube<sup>4</sup> in an attempt to describe emotional autonomy in relation to family environment, for females in both the age groups observes that the family environment dimension of cohesion, expressiveness, independence, organization etc. have significant negative correlations with emotional autonomy dimensions. Positive correlations are found with conflict and

control in relation to emotional autonomy dimensions. In the case of males during middle and late adolescent years, there are lesser family environment variables significantly correlating with emotional autonomy dimensions. Adolescents with high control, social isolation, deprivation of privileges and rejection at home have shown significantly lower problem solving, decision making, coping with emotion, coping with stress and overall psychosocial competence. Children with high protectiveness, punishment, conformity, reward, nurturance and permissiveness have better empathy, critical thinking, empathy, self-awareness, coping with stress, interpersonal relations and effective communication as well as overall psychosocial competence. Findings of this study reveal the significance of home environment in the development of life skills. Ritu et al<sup>5</sup> in a study titled "Impact of family structure on social and emotional maturity of adolescents" observes that adolescents from joint family were more personally, interpersonally and socially adequate and thus, socially mature than those from nuclear family. Similarly, they were significantly higher on emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration and independence component of emotional maturity than those from nuclear family. Social maturity and emotional maturity was found to be significantly positively correlated across types of family integral to it. All these studies reveal the indispensable role of family environment in the psychological growth and development of adolescent life.

The present study is an attempt to evaluate how adolescents of Kerala perceive their home environment. It tries to depict the psychological environment of Kerala home along ten dimensions mainly control, conformity, punishment, rejection, social isolation, reward, nurture, protectiveness, permissiveness

and deprivation of privileges from the standpoint of adolescents. The role of age and gender in the perception of home environment of adolescents was studied in detail. Influence of place of residence and type of school in the same was also explored in detail.

An analysis in this line will unearth the psychodynamics behind the family environment of adolescents. Also it may dispel the myths cherished by parents regarding their parental beliefs and practices so far. Because, in a home, the cardinal path connecting parental practices and the behavioral outcomes of adolescents is the perception of adolescents about those parental practices. The perception and attitude of adolescents towards their parents and the family is the basis of their behavioral and emotional responses. The ever widening gulf between parental expectations and behavioral outcomes of adolescents can be alleviated only through the better understanding of how adolescent perceive their environment rather than what all things constitute the environment itself.

**Instrument:** Home Environments of the participants were assessed using Home Environment Inventory (HEI) Prepared by Karuna Shankar Mishra. It consist of 10 subscales namely, A-Control, B-Protectiveness, C- Punishment, D-Conformity, E-Social Isolation, F-Reward, G-Deprivation of privileges, H-Nurturance, I-Rejection and J-Permissiveness. It is a 5 point Lickert scale and each subscale contains 10 questions. Home Environment Inventory (HEI) claims high content as well as criterion related validity. Established reliability coefficient of each dimension are A-.879, B-.748, C-.947, D-.866, E-.870, F-.875, G-.855, H-.901, I-.841, J-.726 respectively.

**Table-1**  
**Details of the selected sample**

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Type School			Gender			Place of Residence			Age		
	N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%
Gov	86	26.5	Male	190	65.5	Rural	127	39.2	13-15	49	15.1
Aided	141	43.5	Female	100	34.5	Urban	163	50.3	15-17	204	63
Private	63	19.4							17-18	37	11.4

**Table-2**  
**Frequency distribution table for the subscales of Home Environment Inventory**

HE variables	High	Average	Low	Total
A-Control	27 (9.3%)	54 (18.6%)	209 (72.1%)	290
B-Protectiveness	51 (17.6%)	41 (14.1%)	198 (68.3%)	290
C-Punishment	105 (36.2%)	119 (41.0%)	66 (22.8%)	290
D-Conformity	55 (19%)	27 (9.3%)	208 (71.7%)	290
E-Social-Isolation	5 (1.7%)	68 (23.4%)	217 (74.8%)	290
F-Reward	46 (15.9%)	208 (71.7%)	36 (12.4%)	290
G-Deprivation of privileges	7 (2.4%)	70 (24.1%)	213 (73.4%)	290
H-Nurturance	31 (10.7%)	63 (21.7%)	196 (67.6%)	290
I-Rejection	25 (8.6%)	58 (20%)	207 (71.4%)	290
J-Permissiveness	53 (18.3%)	40 (13.8%)	197 (67.9%)	290

## Methodology

Home environments of 290 families as perceived by adolescents were assessed by distributing Home Environment Inventory in two government, two private and two aided schools of Kerala state after getting informed consent from parents and authorities of the institution. Age of participants ranged from 13 to 18. Mean age was 16.38. Of the students, 163 belonged to urban area and 127 were from rural area. They were given instructions regarding the purpose and nature of the study. Detailed frequency table was prepared to get the exact nature of distribution of Home Environments of Kerala. Pictorial representation of the same was also tried using bar graphs. T-test helped to evaluate the role of gender and place of residence (rural/urban) on the perception of adolescents about their homes while One way ANOVA helped to distinguish different age groups in the same. The role of type of school also was explored using One way ANOVA. All statistical tests were carried out using SPSS-version 20.

## Results and Discussion

A-control, B-protectiveness, C-punishment, D-conformity, E-social isolation, F-reward, G-deprivation of privileges, H-nurturance, I-rejection, J-permissiveness

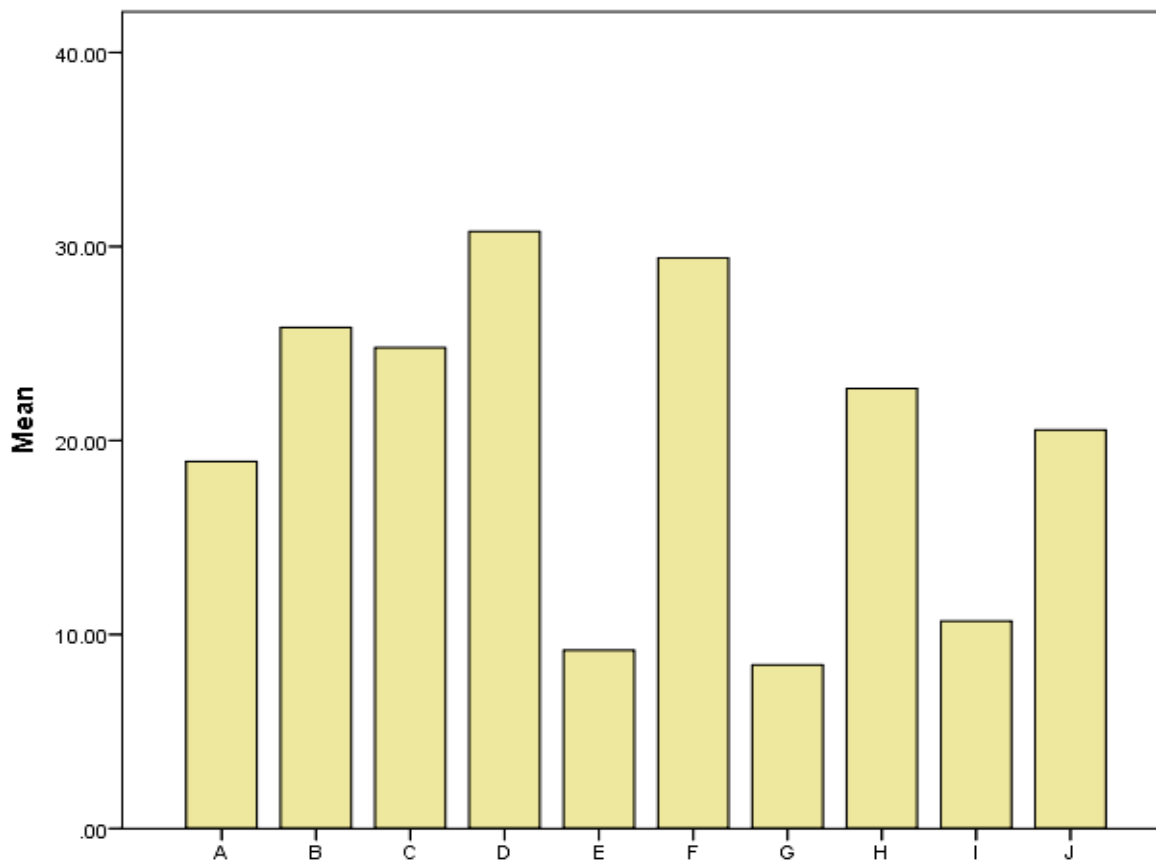
Only 9.3% of the selected adolescents report high controlling environment in their homes. 18.6% was average and 72.1% was low (table-2). This clearly indicates increasing democratic approach in parenting new generation. There wasn't significant gender difference in the perceived control as per t-test ( $t=-1.244$ ,  $p<.05$ ) (table-3). At the same time, rural and urban families show difference in controlling their wards ( $t=2.705$ ,  $P<.01$ ) (table-4) with rural parents executing more control compared to urban. Adolescents of government, aided or private school never felt any significant difference in "control" they experienced at home ( $F(2,287)=1.716$ ,  $P=.182$ ) while age difference was visible in the perceived control as per ANOVA results ( $F(2,287)=2.999$ ,  $P=.05$ ) (table-6)

**Table-3**  
**t-test result for gender difference in the perceived Home Environment**

Home Environment	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	P-value
A-Control	Male	18.61	6.1	-1.244	.215
	Female	19.51	5.7		
B-Protectiveness	Male	24.42	5.5	-5.909	.000
	Female	28.51	5.6		
C-Punishment	Male	24.14	6.01	-2.609	.010
	Female	26.05	5.9		
D-Conformity	Male	30.42	4.8	-1.576	.117
	Female	31.45	5.51		
E-Social Isolation	Male	9.72	6.60	2.204	.028
	Female	8.18	5.06		
F-Reward	Male	28.42	5.69	-4.196	.000
	Female	31.29	5.47		
G-Deprivation of privileges	Male	8.67	5.67	1.066	.288
	Female	8.0	4.73		
H-Nurturance	Male	21.77	6.11	-3.808	.000
	Female	24.40	5.28		
I-Rejection	Male	11.41	5.83	3.072	.002
	Female	9.34	5.22		
J-Permissiveness	Male	20.87	6.43	1.452	.148
	Female	19.93	4.52		

**Table-4**  
**t-test result for difference in the perceived Home Environment of urban/rural students**

Home Environment	Place of Residence	Mean	SD	t-value	P-value
A-Control	Rural	19.98	5.83	2.705	.007
	Urban	18.09	5.97		
B-Protectiveness	Rural	26.44	6.17	1.556	.121
	Urban	25.36	5.60		
C-Punishment	Rural	24.53	5.95	-.640	.522
	Urban	24.99	6.12		
D-Conformity	Rural	31.33	5.04	1.645	.101
	Urban	30.34	5.09		
E-Social Isolation	Rural	9.50	5.88	.757	.450
	Urban	8.94	6.36		
F-Reward	Rural	29.34	5.93	-.178	.859
	Urban	29.46	5.66		
G-Deprivation of privileges	Rural	8.93	5.61	1.377	.169
	Urban	8.06	5.16		
H-Nurturance	Rural	22.94	5.92	.669	.504
	Urban	22.47	6.00		
I-Rejection	Rural	10.02	5.67	-1.770	.078
	Urban	11.21	5.70		
J-Permissiveness	Rural	18.32	5.72	-6.058	.000
	Urban	22.28	5.37		



**Figure-1**  
**Kerala Home Environment As Perceived By Adolescents**

**Table-5**  
**One-way ANOVA for difference in the means of perceived HE for students belonging to different types of schools**

HE	Type of school	Mean	SD	Df	F-value	P-value
A-Control	Govt	18.05	6.35	2, 287	1.716	.182
	Aided	19.5	5.83			
	Private	18.73	5.69			
B-Protectiveness	Govt	26.88	6.27	2,287	3.268	.040
	Aided	25.83	5.665			
	Private	24.41	5.558			
C-Punishment	Govt	23.31	6.126	2,287	8.234	.000
	Aided	26.23	5.525			
	Private	23.59	6.366			
D-Conformity	Govt	30.57	5.61	2,287	.859	.425
	Aided	31.16	4.867			
	Private	30.21	4.803			
E-Social Isolation	Govt	7.78	5.43	2,287	3.295	.038
	Aided	9.70	6.257			
	Private	9.97	6.586			
F-Reward	Govt	31.45	5.119	2,287	12.016	.000
	Aided	29.26	5.689			
	Private	26.95	5.840			
G-Deprivation of privileges	Govt	6.91	4.960	2,287	5.120	.007
	Aided	9.12	5.043			
	Private	9.02	6.210			
H-Nurturance	Govt	24.87	5.712	2,287	18.759	.000
	Aided	22.90	5.515			
	Private	19.19	5.749			
I-Rejection	Govt	9.30	5.170	2,287	3.871	.022
	Aided	11.43	5.838			
	Private	10.94	5.844			
J-Permissiveness	Govt	20.72	5.687	2,287	.229	.796
	Aided	20.64	5.738			
	Private	20.11	6.383			

**Table-6**  
**One way ANOVA to explore difference in age groups in their perceived HE**

HE	Age level	Mean	SD	Df	F-value	P-value
A-Control	13-15	20.61	5.49	2,287	2.999	.051
	15-17	18.39	6.09			
	17-18	19.57	5.71			
B-Protectiveness	13-15	26.73	6.04	2,287	.712	.492
	15-17	25.7	5.68			
	17-18	25.43	6.76			
C-Punishment	13-15	25.8	5.51	2,287	.856	.426
	15-17	24.69	6.09			
	17-18	24.24	6.41			
D-Conformity	13-15	31.49	5.47	2,287	3.413	.034
	15-17	30.99	4.98			
	17-18	28.83	4.72			
E-Social Isolation	13-15	8.88	5.85	2,287	.614	.542
	15-17	9.07	6.24			
	17-18	10.22	6.17			
F-Reward	13-15	30.08	6.23	2,287	2.788	.063
	15-17	29.62	5.42			

	17-18	27.37	6.73			
G-Deprivation of privileges	13-15	9.18	4.69	2,287	.590	.555
	15-17	8.29	5.55			
	17-18	8.19	5.25			
H-Nurturance	13-15	23.86	5.52	2,287	2.302	.102
	15-17	22.7	6.04			
	17-18	21.08	5.90			
I-Rejection	13-15	9.24	5.4	2,287	1.924	.148
	15-17	10.96	5.79			
	17-18	11.16	5.57			
J-Permissiveness	13-15	17.29	4.49	2,287	11.223	.000
	15-17	20.97	5.8			
	17-18	22.65	6.4			

Protectiveness a quality exercised by care takers towards adolescents is defined as prevention of independent behavior and prolongation of infantile care. Study reveals a significant gender difference in the perceived protectiveness adolescents experienced in their homes ( $t=-5.909$ ,  $P<.000$ ) (table-3) with females scoring high in this. This gives a glimpse into the gender bias extant in Kerala families where male progenies are guaranteed autonomy over many life situations while girls are restricted freedom and deemed inferior to boys in many respects. But majority of the families were low (68.3%) (table-2) in this quality of their environment and 17.6% were high. ANOVA result for students belonging to government, aided and private schools indicated significant difference in the "protectiveness" they experienced at home ( $F(2,287)=3.268$ ,  $P<.05$ ) (Table-5), indicating that there do exist difference in parental practices and emotional attachments among parents of students belonging to various educational institutions. Understanding the nature of this tenuous link between parenting and schooling is an area which needs in-depth exploration.

Kerala families which were in the grip of patriarchy decades ago, profusely punished their children as a part of disciplining them. In this modern era too, it has not fully abolished the practice as 36.2% of families score high in punishment subscale. And only 22.8% was low. The rest is average. Female adolescents perceives their home environment to be more punitive compared to males ( $t=-2.609$ ,  $P<.01$ ) (table-3). Strikingly high significant difference was observed in the punishing environment of homes of adolescents belonging to government, aided and private school ( $F(2,287)=8.234$ ,  $P<.000$ )(table-5). Students from aided school exhibited high mean level for punishing home environment. This may lead one to conclude that it was the middle class family which scores high in punishment because upper class families usually opt for private schools for the education of their wards. But it is to be noticed that mean punishment was equal for private and government school students. As before, paradox behind this observation too needs further investigation in order to be resolved.

Indian families are considered to be saturated with collectivistic culture where conformity over autonomy is exhorted in relationships between parents and children. But the in the present study 71.7% of Kerala families were low in "conformity"(table-2). This again, enhances the view that traditional family processes are giving way to more flexible and autonomy oriented parenting. The impact of western culture on the outlook of family makers and the disappearance of joint family system in the Kerala society can be stated as the reasons behind these observations. There wasn't any significant difference in the perception of adolescents regarding this quality of home environment along male-female, rural-urban or aided-private-government dimensions. Still, adolescents belonging to different age group perceived their home to be different in "conformity" and this difference was significant ( $F(2,287)=3.413$ ,  $P<.05$ ) Mean of perceived "conformity" was low for the students belonging to higher age group (Table-6).

"Social Isolation" which some parents implement as a part of disciplining their wards is an extreme form of psychological control in which the adolescent is isolated from beloved persons for negative sanctions. But only 1.7% families scored high in it and 74.8 % was low (table-2). But boys who usually have a preference for freedom and autonomy perceive high in social isolation compared to girls ( $t=2.204$ ,  $P<.05$ )(table-3) and there is significant difference in the students belonging to private, aided and government schools in the same ( $F(2,287)=3.295$ ,  $P<.05$ )(table-5) aided and private students experiencing high in it.

Only 15.9% of Kerala families ensured highly "rewarding" home environment and 71.7% scored average in the same (table-2). Boys perceived their home environment to be less rewarding than girls. And this difference in their perception was highly significant ( $t=-4.196$ ,  $P<.000$ )(table-3). This seems to be in line with the previous observation about "protectiveness" in which boys scored low. Also, it is important to notice that students in the government school perceived their home environment to be more rewarding compared to those in aided and private institutions and this difference was remarkably significant ( $F=12.01$ ,  $P<.000$ )(table-4). Unearthing the reason

behind such a difference demands further investigation which is beyond the scope of this study.

“Deprivation of privileges” is the worst form of psychological control in which parents control children’s behavior by depriving them of their rights to seek love, respect and childcare from parents. Luckily, Kerala families were low in this practice (73.4%) though 2.4% of families scored high in the same (Table2). Yet, aided and private school students perceived their homes to be high in this, compared to government school students and this difference was considerably significant ( $F=5.120$ ,  $P<.01$ ) (table-5).

Existence of excessive unconditional physical and emotional attachment of parents with the child ensures a nurturing home environment which is an essential ingredient in the psychological well-being of an adolescent. And more than half of selected families (67.6%) of Kerala score low in “Nurturance” dimension of home environment (table-2). The gender difference in the perceived nurturing environment among adolescents was highly significant with girls scoring high ( $F=-3.808$ ,  $P<.000$ )(Table-3). Also highly significant difference in the same was observed among adolescents reported from aided, private and government institutions. As before, students of government school scored high in this positive dimension of home environment ( $F(2,287)=18.759$ ,  $P<.000$ ) (table-5).

8.6% of the selected families, seems to be giving the adolescents of the selected sample a “high” feeling of “rejection” in their homes. According to operational definition, an adolescent perceive their home environment to be exercising “rejection” towards them, when parents extend conditional love recognizing that child has no right as a person, no right to express his feelings, no right to uniqueness and no right to become an autonomous individual. Boys perceive this more to be so in their families compared to girls and this difference in their perception was significant ( $t=3.072$ ,  $P<.01$ )(table-3). As observed before, government school students felt this negative quality of their home less compared to their counterparts in other institutions and this difference too was significant ( $F(2,287)=3.871$ ,  $P<.05$ ).(table-5)

“Permissiveness” is a quality of parenting characterized by attempts to ensure provision of opportunities to child to express his views freely and act according to his desires with no interference from parents”. In moderate level it enriches the child life through intellectual and emotional stimulation and nourishment though, sometimes it deprives the child of a concrete frame of reference in many decision making situations. However, 67.9% of families was low in this quality while 18.3% being high and 13.8% being average in the same (table-2). Though there wasn’t any significant gender difference in the perceived “permissiveness”, adolescents belonging to rural area scored high compared to their counterparts in urban area ( $F(2,287)=-6.058$ ,  $P<.000$ )(table-3). This may be because urban

parents were more demanding and cautious of the behavioral outcomes of their wards than parents belonging to rural area. Or rural life might give adolescents much opportunity to exercise their autonomy in many matters compared to urban adolescents in their home. Also adolescents belonging to upper age group experienced much permissiveness in their environment. ANOVA results reveals this fact ( $F(2,287)=11.223$ ,  $P<.000$ )(Table-6).

## Conclusion

What one observes from the above results is, “conformity” and “reward” were the qualities widespread across the psychological environment of Kerala families (figure-1) though most families shared a “low” level of conformity and average level of “reward”. The quality that was only scantily present in the family was “deprivation of privileges”, “rejection” and “social isolation” in that order. This indicates the presence of positive home environments in the lives of adolescent population. At the same time, Kerala families are yet to rise to optimal level of positivity essential for the psychological health and well-being of adolescents. Prevalence of low “nurturing” environment in the homes is indicative of this. Also, disciplining ambience of homes are not altogether promising from the view point of proponents of “unconditional positive regard”(example- Carl Roger (1961))<sup>5</sup> for the healthy development of a personality. The results of subscale “punishment” in the Home environment Inventory reveals this (table-2). Also nature of pervasiveness of control, conformity, protectiveness and permissiveness too ratifies this view.

A piece of information revealed by this study is worth noticing. Adolescent students belonging to Government schools of Kerala exhibited high, significant mean levels in the more or less positive dimensions of Home Environment Inventory namely Nurturance, Reward and protectiveness and low in negative dimensions like punishment, social isolation and deprivation of privileges (refer table-5). It is to be noted that in Kerala, usually, students from lower strata of society opt for government institutions as they can not afford private or aided institutions. Also parents of these students may not be highly educated. This observation may force one to conclude that economic or social status is not a factor that can influence an adolescent’s perceptions and feelings about the emotional ambience of his home.

A large scale investigation across the state will bring forth more vivid picture of facts observed here. Parental awareness programmes in view of ameliorating adolescent well-being should be backed by the evidences from the studies like this. For instance, parents should be aware of the fact that the same parenting style or attitude can not be effective both for their male and female progenies. There does exist significant gender difference in the perception of adolescents about the various events occurring in their family ambience. Parents need not always be aware of these differences in the psychological

outlook of their wards. Counseling and psychotherapeutic attempts to resolve adolescent issues will be very much benefitted from the results of studies of this kind. Finally, it will do justice to all scientific efforts to understand the human development as a bi-directional influence (Bronfenbrenner 1979)<sup>6</sup>, as a common equation of man and environment.

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