Original Research Article

A STUDY ON HOME ENVIRONMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH STATUS AMONG FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

**ABSTRACT**

The present research explored the impact of home environment and mental health status among hundred female students studying in government and private secondary schools of Hawalbagh block, Almora District, Uttarakhand. Utilizing the 'Home Environment Scale' constructed and validated by Akhtar & Saxena, 2013 and the 'Mental Health Battery' constructed and validated by Singh & Gupta, 2019, the study aimed to identify any significant differences and relationship in perceptions of home environment and mental health status among female students from government and private schools. Data was analyzed through mean, standard deviation, t-test and Pearson correlation of coefficient in SPSS. Findings revealed no significant differences in home environment and mental health status between the two groups. However, a significant positive correlation was found between home environment and mental health outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of a nurturing home environment in promoting mental well-being, regardless of the type of school attended. The study highlights the need for further research to explore how different aspects of the home environment impact mental health of female students.

**Keywords:** **Home Environment, Mental Health, Government and Private Female Secondary School Students**

**INTRODUCTION**

The primary objective of secondary education is not only to impart academic knowledge but also to foster the development of individual identities among students (Abdirahman et al., 2012). Additionally, students realize the significance of acquiring skills and strategies that enable them to become productive members of society (Kapur, 2021). Therefore, secondary education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' futures, laying the groundwork for their eventual success and happiness. While it is our aspiration to enroll children in outstanding schools, it is crucial to acknowledge that their educational outcomes are significantly influenced by their home environments (Mayuri, 2003). The family is the most influential factor in a child's life, where initial relationships are formed, personal space is learned, and communication skills are developed, thus shaping their sense of belonging and worth (Peecook, 2000; Lokuwam et al., 2020). The term 'home environment' encompasses all conditions impacting individuals from childhood through adulthood. Many high-performing students come from families that provide nurturing and supportive environments (Bandhana & Sharma, 2012).

For secondary students, the home environment is more crucial for their development and well-being in various ways. It acts as a foundational support system, offering emotional encouragement and stability essential for their mental health during the critical adolescent years (Allroggen et al., 2016; Singh, 2018). Furthermore, the home significantly impacts academic achievement by providing a conducive space for learning, equipped with resources like books and technology (Moeller et al., 2022). Active parental involvement in education, including guidance and setting academic expectations, plays a crucial role in motivating students and fostering their dedication to learning (Vedeler, 2023). Beyond academics, familial traditions and cultural beliefs imparted at home influence students' values, attitudes, and behaviors, contributing to their moral development and sense of identity (Nguyen et al., 2019). Positive role models in the home environment also impart essential life skills such as responsibility, respect, and resilience, crucial for navigating challenges outside the home (Gondiawati & Nurhayati, 2024). Ultimately, the home serves as a cornerstone in the holistic development of secondary students, providing the necessary emotional, academic, and social support for their success in academics, emotional well-being, and social interactions (Bøe et al., 2014; Llorca-Mestre, 2017; Xiong et al., 2023). Parents and caregivers who foster a positive and supportive home environment play an indispensable role in their child's overall growth and future accomplishments (Von Stumm & Plomin, 2015; Allroggen et al., 2016).

According to the report '*Children in India'* by UNICEF majority of adolescents in the world live in India, where they make up nearly a fifth of the country's population (243 million) (Mehra et al., 2022). Many students in this age group struggle with anxiety, depression, self-harm, substance abuse, and other mental health problems that can impact their academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being (Reddy, 2019; Rajkumar, 2022). In the study, Malhotra & Patra (2014), observed that according to a meta-analysis, psychiatric illnesses affect 23.3% of school-aged children and adolescents and 6.5% of the general population. India has the highest rate of teen suicide internationally (Patel et al., 2012). According to the National Mental Health Survey, India (2015–2016), mental problems are 7% more common in 13–17-year-olds and are almost equally prevalent in both the genders (Gururaj et al., 2016) however, a systematic review indicates that prevalence of psychiatric disorders among adolescents ranged from 0.48% to 29.40% (Bhola & Kapur, 2003). Srivastava et al. (2016), found a significant gap in understanding students' mental health needs. According to the study, up to 23.3% of secondary school children have considerable mental health illness, and suicide is the leading cause of death in Indian teenagers (Roy et al., 2019).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) emphasized that, "infancy, childhood and adolescent stage are critical for mental health development, presenting both vulnerabilities and opportunities." WHO (2022), also highlighted that school-based social and emotional learning programmes are particularly effective globally, regardless of economic status. These programmes complement the goals of the Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030, which aims to promote mental well-being, prevent mental disorders, provide care, enhance recovery, and reduce the impact of mental health challenges worldwide (WHO, 2021; WHO, 2022; WHO, 2023).

A positive and supportive home environment is crucial to shaping a child's academic success, emotional and mental health. Girls' education in this context is vital to the advancement of society. Therefore, it is required for girls to be in an understanding, loving, friendly and caring home environment so that they may express their thoughts and feelings effectively. Mental Health in this connection play an important role, as it is the reflection of the highest principle of mind and thought, and said to be a key developer of whole personality of an individual. Due to the importance and profound interdependency of the above-mentioned parameters the investigators decided to carry out research among female secondary school students of government and private schools in Almora District of Kumaun region, Uttarakhand.

# STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

# The problem identified for this study was stated as follows, “A Study of Home Environment and Mental Health Status among Female Secondary School Students.”

# OBJECTIVES

The present study was directed by the following objectives:

1. To compare the home environment status among female students studying in government and private secondary schools.
2. To compare the mental health status among female students studying in government and private secondary schools.
3. To analyze the relationship between the home environment and the mental health status of female students.

# HYPOTHESES

In the context of specific objectives of present study and to facilitate appropriate statistical testing, following hypotheses, framed in null form, were proposed to be tested:

* 1. There is no significant difference in the home environment status among female students studying in government and private secondary schools.
	2. There is no significant difference in the mental health status among female students studying in government and private secondary schools.
	3. There is no significant relationship between home environment and mental health status among female students.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, a descriptive survey research method was employed. Female students studying in secondary schools of Hawalbagh block of Almora district in Uttarakhand were the population. From four schools, (two government secondary schools and two private secondary schools) sample of hundred female students were selected by random sampling technique. To gather data 'Home Environment Scale (HES-AASS)' constructed and validated by Akhtar & Saxena (2013) and 'Mental Health Battery' constructed and validated by Singh & Gupta (2019) were adopted. To study the impact of home environment and mental health status among female students from government and private secondary schools, home environment and mental health status were considered as independent variables. The data was analyzed by implying mean, standard deviation, t-test and Pearson correlation of coefficient in SPSS. The sub-section will offer a detailed analysis of the current study.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data along with the interpretation is as follows:

# Table 1: Comparison of Home Environment among Female Students of Government and Private Secondary Schools

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of School** | **N** | **Mean** | **SD** | **t-value** | **Significance at 0.05 Level** |
| Government | 50 | 136.88 | 14.67 | 0.59 | NS |
| Private | 50 | 139.34 | 25.24 |

Results obtained in Table 1 reveals that the female students enrolled in government and private schools were found to be more or less similar in their Home Environment scores as the ‘t’ value (t= 0.59) was obtained to be non- significant at 0.05 level of significance. However, it is also revealed from Table 1 that mean score on home environment (M=136.88) obtained by the female students of government schools was less in comparison to the mean score (M=139.34) obtained by the female students of private schools. Lack of time, proper education, and low socio-economic condition of the families of female students as reported by the respondents in the data sheets from government schools are the key reasons. The family members culturally were unable to talk openly with their teenage daughters about their concerns, which results low educational status, detachment and loneliness among girls. Sahoo (2016), stated that as females transit into adolescence, their interpersonal connections frequently shift towards detachment and separation from both themselves and others. This circumstance leads the participants to experience feelings of being rejected by their family and a lack of emotional closeness.

# Table 2: Comparison of Mental Health Status among Female Students of Government and Private Secondary Schools

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of School** | **N** | **Mean** | **SD** | **t-value** | **Significance at 0.05 Level** |
| Government | 50 | 81.69 | 7.21 | 0.24 | NS |
| Private | 50 | 82.10 | 9.42 |

Results obtained in Table 2 reveals that the female students enrolled in government and private schools were found to be more or less similar in their mental health status as the ‘t’ value (t= 0.24) was obtained to be non-significant at .05 level of significance. However, it is also revealed that mean score on mental health (M=81.69) obtained by the female students of government schools was less in comparison to the mean score (M=82.10) obtained by the female students of private schools. This may be due to the negligence, lack of guidance and counseling facilities in government schools and limited understanding among parents, that they don’t focus on the problems related to the mental health of female students who underwent through a lot of changes viz. physical, emotional, and social during adolescence. According to Shek (2002), there was a significant relation between family functioning and indicators of adolescents' mental health.

# Table 3: Relationship between Home Environment and Mental Health Status among Female Students

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Correlation Value** | **Significance at 0.01 Level** |
| Home Environment | 0.30 | S |
| Mental Health Status |

Results obtained in Table 3 reveals significant positive relationship between home environment and mental health status among female students as the ‘r value’ (r= 0.30) was obtained to be significant at .01 level of significance. The findings above indicate that the mental health status of female students is strongly dependent to their home environment. Sathyabama & Eljo (2014) found significant relationship between family environment and mental health status of females, which directly upholds the current finding. Various studies also supported the finding as Chahal (2003) found family cohesiveness, intellectual culture, success oriented; socializing and peers' support, adjustment, and sociability were significant contributors to mental health of women. Positive ties with their families are associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing in adolescents (Hair et al., 2005). These studies indicate that mental health is significantly influenced by family and home environment of an individual.

**MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions reached may be summed up as follows:

1. Female students from government and private secondary schools were found to be more or less similar to their home environment status.

2. Female students from government and private secondary schools were found to be more or less similar in their mental health status.

3. Significant correlation was identified between home environment and mental health status among female students.

The null hypotheses were designed to test the significance of the comparison and the relationship between home environment and mental health status among female students from government and private secondary school. Hypothesis 1 and 2 were accepted, as the results showed that female students from both government and private schools were similar in terms of their home environment and mental health status. However, null hypothesis 3 was rejected, as it was observed that the home environment and mental health status of female secondary school students were correlated. The findings suggested that improvements in home environment could contribute to enhanced mental health status among female secondary school students, and vice versa.

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, parents, researchers, and NGOs regarding the need for a supportive home environment and the importance of sound mental health for secondary school students. To help students effectively, schools should create special support programs tailored to their different home situations. Teachers and counsellors need training to recognize mental health issues related to home life and connect students with the right help. Working closely with families through workshops can encourage good mental health practices at home and improve communication between home and school. Schools should also promote a positive atmosphere with things like peer support groups and mindfulness activities like yoga. More research, especially long-term studies, is needed to understand how changes at home affect students' mental health.

Additionally, schools should also promote healthy social interactions among female students to help foster a sense of inclusion and lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation. Both government and non-governmental organizations should actively involve social scientists, such as social workers, in the parent-teacher association. Their participation can offer valuable guidance to parents and educators on effective strategies for engaging with teenage girl students and supporting their mental health. If feasible, a dedicated body should be established for female students at the school level, providing peer support under the supervision of experts to help students address their individual challenges. Ultimately, by creating a nurturing and supportive environment and offering appropriate resources and guidance, governments, parents, schools, and teachers can contribute to the mental well-being of female secondary school students. Lastly, advocating for policies that prioritize mental health funding and address the impact of family conditions and income levels on students is crucial for creating a supportive home and school environment where all students can thrive emotionally and academically.

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