

## FAMILY FUNCTIONING AS DETERMINANT OF SELF-REGULATION IN ADULT OFFSPRING

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### Abstract

The current study investigated the role of family functioning in determining self-regulation. Having reviewed the literature, it was hypothesized that family functioning would significantly determine self-regulation in adult offspring. Total sample was one hundred and forty ( $n=140$ ) adults including seventy ( $n=70$ ) male and seventy ( $n=70$ ) female. Entire sample was drawn from 14 departments of University of Gujrat through convenient sampling technique. Data was gathered using Demographic Information Form, McMaster General Family Functioning Scale (Epstein, Levin & Bishop, 1976) and Self-Regulation Scale (Schwarzer, Diehl & Schmitz, 1999). Linear Regression Analysis has demonstrated family functioning as significant determinant of self-regulation in adult offspring.

**Key words:** Family Functioning, Self-Regulation, Adult, Offspring

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## Introduction

The family is a foundation of social, psychological and emotional well-being for an individual. Family is also responsible for providing financial assistance, flourishing and grooming of the members of society (Alesina & Guiliano, 2010; Bogenschneider et al., 2012). Strong and healthier family environment gratifies almost all kinds of needs including social, traditional, divine, well-being, scholastic, accommodating needs, etc (Fisher et al., 1999). Good and effective family functioning depends on appropriate customs, traditions, communicative style, sharing commemorations, punctuality/obligation of time, affection, care, optimisms and so on (Kennedy & Spencer, 1994). Maintenance, decision making, problem resolving, sharing, better communication of the family members are the building blocks of healthy family functioning (Silburn et al., 2006; Zubrick, Williams, Silbani, & Vimpani, 2000).

Family functioning plays an important role in personality development. A lot of studies have proved the significant influence of families on the children development (Arendell, 1997; Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Baumrind, 1996). Healthy family functioning leads to better self-growth (Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999). Mental health is also heavily influenced by quality of bonding and association among family members (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Whereas, chaos in home is associated with anger, aggression and limited attentional focusing (Dumas et al., 2005). Family functioning is also closely linked to greater level of self-regulation. Positive behavior support within family predicted self-regulation and changes in self-regulation with the passage of time (Moilanen, Shaw, Dishion, Gardner & Wilson, 2009). Negative parenting, behaviors and practices were found to be inversely related to self-regulation (Eisenberg, Spinrad & Eggum, 2010; Moilanen et al., 2009).

In a study, Herawaty and Wulan (n.d) found out a significant relationship between family functioning and learning capacities based on self-regulation among teenagers. Hosseni and Samani (2012) carried out a study to examine family dimensions (affective responsiveness, family roles and emotional functioning) in relation to self-regulation (metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy and motivation) in children. Results have shown that affective responsiveness significantly predicted metacognition, family roles significantly predicted cognitive strategy and emotional functioning significantly predicted motivation in children.

As previously evident that family functioning shapes personality and determines behavior of an individual, in the light of this, the current study has been designed to assess family functioning as determinant of self-regulation in adult offspring. Self-regulation is essential to cope with past stressful life events. Self-regulation is related to adaptive functioning also (Buckner, Mezzacappa & Beardslee, 2009). A self-regulated person is goal oriented and has focused style of working. Albeit, family is the first institution of learning for a person, therefore, good family functioning can make offspring able to regulate them and exhibit more adaptive responses in problematic situation. The present study will draw attention towards the importance of family functioning in developing self-regulation among offspring. In this context, following hypothesis was framed;

Family functioning will significantly determine self-regulation in adult offspring

## Methodology

### *Sample:*

The sample of the current study comprised of one hundred and forty ( $n=140$ ) adults. Among them seventy were males and seventy were females. Using convenient sampling technique, sample was drawn from 14 departments (Botany, Zoology, Biochemistry, Physics, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Mathematics, History, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Mass-Communication, Economics, Statistics) of University of Gujrat. Adults with minimum age of 21 years, unmarried, living with immediate family, belonging to intact family, not residing in hostel and not having any kind of physical abnormality were included in the present study.

### *Measures:*

Demographic Information Form (DIF) covering the information related to age, gender, marital status, family system, family status, number of family members, head of the family, socio-economic status, current residency, was used.

Family functioning was examined using 12- items McMaster General Family-Functioning Scale (Epstein, Levin & Bishop, 1976). Though scoring method of this measure is different therefore, higher scores indicate poor family functioning and lower score indicate good family functioning. Reliability of this scale is 0.92.

Self-Regulation among participants was examined through Self-Regulation Scale (Schwarzer, Diehl & Schmitz, 1999). It consisted of 10 items and sum of all items indicate self-regulation. Reported test-retest reliability of Self-Regulation Scale is .62, whereas Cronbach alpha is 0.76.

**Procedure:**

First, permission was taken from head of the department to carry out the present study. Then, students of selected departments were approached for data collection. They were briefed the research purpose, ethics of confidentiality, responsibility and risk/benefit ration in order to have their written consent for being participants of the present study. For data collection, Demographic Information Form, McMaster General Family Functioning Scale and Self-Regulation Scale were administered. Statistical analysis of obtained data was done by computing Linear Regression Analysis with the use of SPSS, Version-16.0

**Results**

**Table: 1a**

*Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of Family Functioning as determinant of Self-Regulation*

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ΔR<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Std. error of the estimate</i>
1	.430 <sup>a</sup>	.185	.179	4.79928

a. Determinant: (constant), Family-functioning

**Table: 1b-ANOVA**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Regression	722.823	1	722.823	31.382	.000 $\alpha$
Residual	3178.570	138	23.033		
Total	3901.393	139			

- a. Determinant: (constant), family-functioning  
b. Dependent variable. Self-regulation

**Table: 1c – Coefficients**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Slope</b>	<b>Std. Error of</b>	<b>Standardized</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Slope</b>	<b>slope</b>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
Constant	37.003	1.553		23.832	.000
Family functioning	-.382	.068	-.430	-5.602	.000

Dependent variable: Self-regulation

Linear Regression Analysis has revealed a significant relationship between family functioning and self-regulation ( $R = .430$ ) and as well as statistical significance of the findings ( $F(1, 138) = 31.382, p = .000$ ). Family functioning, independent variable, has emerged as significant determinant of self-regulation in adult offspring ( $\beta = -.430, t = -5.602, p = 0.000$ ). According to the scoring procedure of family functioning scale, lower full scale score indicates good family functioning and higher full scale score indicates poor family functioning (Epstein et al, 1976). Whereas, higher scores on Self-Regulation Scale indicate high self-regulation and lower scores on Self-regulation Scale indicate low self-regulation (Schwarzer et al.,1999). Therefore, the interpretation of the negative sign with Beta and t values in the current analysis is

that good family functioning significantly determines more self-regulation or poor family functioning determines less self-regulation in adult offspring.

## Discussion

The fundamental function of a family is to instill beliefs, values and suitable behavior in offspring and the manners family interact with them lead to wide range of developmental outcomes (Agha, Zia & Irfan, 2008). Self-regulation among offspring is one of the outcomes of family functioning. As also has been found out in the current study that family functioning is a significant determinant of self-regulation in adult offspring ( $\beta = -.430, t = -5.602, p = 0.000$ ).

Functions of a family include providing supportive and positive environment to offspring in which they feel mentally and emotionally secured. Good family functioning facilitates smooth physical and psychological growth of a child. Better feelings in living environment improve functioning in other areas of life. For instance; at personal and societal level, person becomes more self-regulated. Self-regulation is the person's ability to sustain his or her focus of attention on the targeted goal and to face the hurdles comes in the way while pursuing the goal (Schwarzer et al., 1999).

Children belonging to functional families can easily sustain their attention on pursuing goals and can adapt to situation. Family environment assists in reducing feelings of shame/ guilt and emotional problems. Internalized shame and emotional problems are also associated with degree of dysfunctions (Hadeley, Holloway & Mallinckrodt, 1993). Life hurdles and events make a person vulnerable to psychological problems. Those psychological problems impair personal, social and occupational functioning. Obviously, when adult offspring get disturbed, they will not be able to sustain their attention on desired goal and surrender in front of existing problems. At that point, if they find their family supportive and functional, they would be having less difficulty in regulating them in terms of controlling attention and utilizing coping skills. Emotionally and mentally stable adult can better sustain their attention on their targeted goal and cope up with the problematic environment. Therefore, adult offspring reporting more family functioning also reported to be more self-regulated in the current study.

People also need to have clear perception of self in order to be self-regulated. People well aware of their needs, strengths and weaknesses are mostly use consistent approach in daily life. All these abilities like consistency, tolerance, self- recognition are built in healthy family environment. Family functioning is a significant predictor of self-concept in adults (Rashid, 2007). Functional homes also help in gaining independence (Balk, 1995). In ideals homes, children are encouraged to think independently that lead normal development of personality (Jaffe, 1998). Good family functioning developed self-concept among offspring that further seemed to help in exhibiting more self-regulation in the current study.

Functional family environment provides more support to offspring that is essential to be self-supporting in later life. Maternal supportive parenting was positively associated with effortful control (Spinard et al., 2007). On the other hand, chaotic environment impede the development of self-regulatory skills (Evans et al., 2005). Without having understanding regarding actions-outcomes contingences, children have difficulty in regulating their actions (Skinner, Johnson, & Snyder, 2005). Good Family functioning provides perfect setting to offspring to great extent that they do not have confusion regarding action-outcomes contingencies; as a result, they learn to regulate their actions, even in problematic situation, as also has been proved in the current study.

The essence of the overall all research findings is that family functioning determines self-regulation in adult offspring. Functional families in terms of cooperation, support, ideal setting for growth boost the self-regulatory attitude in children. And self-regulated offspring are able to have greater control over their emotions and behaviors towards the attainment of desired goals.

### **Implications, Future Directions and Limitations**

Family is a prime source of physical and as well as psychological comfort for all of us. Family environment is evident to be associated with psychopathology (Rashid, 2007), psychological adjustment (Drotar, 1997) and academic performance (Capraro, Capraro & Wiggins, 2000, as cited in Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafique & Berhan, 2011) among offspring. The present study findings also have highlighted another significant contribution of family

functioning to self-regulation in adult offspring. Parents, caregivers and other family members can boost self-regulation among offspring by making their family environment more functional.

Self-regulated people avoid the actions that are not good in long run despite having attraction on the short term basis (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Self-regulation involves social consciences and encourages a person to do right thing (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008). Thus, there is no difficulty in accepting that our society needs self-regulated citizens to sustain harmony and peace. In future, self-regulated offspring can serve the nation well. They can also build functioning family for next generation. Without any doubt, self-regulation will benefit the children in other areas of life such as; academics, career building. Parents/caregivers and other family members can learn from the present research findings in order to improve family functioning leading to self-regulation in offspring.

The present study findings also have implications for mental health professionals and family therapists. They can train family members specially parents to reduce family conflicts, negativity, criticism or hostility within family environment in order to make their children psychologically healthy and self-regulated.

In spite of a significant contribution in the area of family studies, the current study has some limitations. For instance; demographics were not controlled such as socio-economic status, number of family members, number of earning members, educational background of family members etc. Moreover, dimensions of family functioning were not examined in the context of self-regulation. Future researches focusing on the role of demographics and dimensions of family functioning in the context of self-regulation will be more beneficial for parents, children, mental health professionals and whole society as well.



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