



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Family communication patterns, individual's overall conflict resolution style, and cognitive flexibility among young adults

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### Abstract

The dissertation delves into the intricate dynamics of Family Communication Patterns and its profound relationship on an individual's Conflict Resolution Style and Cognitive Flexibility. The three variables together can form the futuristic contours of an individual's life. Understanding the intricate interplay of these factors becomes paramount, for they are not merely aspects of academic curiosity, rather they are the very heartbeats of our life. The study encompasses a sample size of 207 young adults, and meticulously employs The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES-IV), the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) by Kurdek, and the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (Dennis & Vander Wal, 2010) as its research tools. The primary objective was to unravel the multifaceted relationship between Family Communication Patterns, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility among adults, with a specific focus on understanding the impact of Family Communication Patterns on an individual's Conflict Resolution Style and Cognitive Flexibility. The findings of the study revealed compelling insights into the interconnectedness of these variables. The implications of these findings are far-reaching, with potential applications in the realms of psychology, family therapy, and interpersonal communication. The study underscores the need for further exploration into the development of interventions tailored to enhance Family Communication Patterns, thereby fostering more adaptive Conflict Resolution Styles and greater Cognitive Flexibility among young adults. Additionally, the longitudinal impact of these variables together warrants comprehensive investigation, offering a rich avenue for future research endeavors.

**Keywords:** Family Communication; Conflict Resolution; Cognitive Flexibility; Young Adults

### 1. Introduction

In the sophisticated tapestry of human relationships, communication serves as the binding thread, weaving together the intricate dynamics of familial bonds. The family unit, frequently seen as the foundation of social existence, is an ecosystem characterized by a myriad of interactions, ranging from the mundane to the profound. Carter and McGoldrick (2005) elucidated that the family serves as the primary environment for our development and maturation, being the origin of our initial relationships and interactions with the world.

Family is one of the fundamentally shaping units of an individual's life, the essence of which can stay with an individual forever. Families are like mosaic art; the diversity is what makes it beautiful. The assortments in the personality of individuals in one family unit, is truly astounding.

Moghe (2016) conducted a study at Savitribai Phule Pune University. The study aimed to explore how parenting styles and communication styles of parents influence the personality of adolescents, with perceived parenting style acting as a mediating variable. The findings indicated that perceived parenting style significantly influenced both the

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communication styles of parents and the personality of adolescents. Additionally, the communication styles of parents were found to be significantly related to the personality of adolescents.

Conflict is an inevitable facet of family life. It is, at times, the crucible in which familial bonds are tested and refined. Conflicts can arise from diverse sources, including differences in values, expectations, and individual needs. How these conflicts are addressed and resolved is pivotal to the overall health and stability of familial relationships. Conflict resolution styles are the strategies and approaches individuals employ when dealing with conflicts within the family. These styles can vary greatly, from collaborative and compromising approaches to more avoidant or competitive ones.

Umennuihe, C. L., Eya, D. N., Nwobi, C. A., & Obiora, J. I. (2023) conducted a cross-sectional survey involving 5,238 students from 16 secondary schools in Udenu local government area, Enugu State, Nigeria. Their research explored the correlation between family communication patterns and conflict management styles among adolescents. The study revealed that the type of communication pattern within families influenced how adolescents handled conflicts. Specifically, adolescents from families with protective communication patterns tended to avoid confrontations, while those from families with pluralistic communication patterns leaned towards collaborative conflict resolution methods. The research concluded that family communication environments play a significant role in shaping adolescents' approaches to managing conflicts in their relationships.

Singh and Nayak (2016) investigated the influence of family communication patterns (FCPs) on adolescents' selection of conflict resolution strategies in their study published in the *International Journal of Conflict Management*. The research revealed that adolescents' choice of resolution strategy depends on the type of communication environment within the family. This study sheds light on how family communication dynamics can impact adolescents' approach to conflict resolution.

Cognitive Flexibility is defined as the capacity to adjust and modify one's cognitive processes and approach to problem-solving when faced with varying situations and conditions. It reflects an individual's capacity to shift mental gears, consider alternative viewpoints, and approach challenges from multiple angles. Cognitive flexibility is not limited to a specific domain. Instead, it represents a more general cognitive aptitude that can be applied in various aspects of life, including decision-making, creativity, and social interactions. It empowers individuals to navigate uncertainty, overcome obstacles, and thrive in environments that require adaptability. These cognitive skills rely on a network of brain regions, notably including the prefrontal cortex (PFC), anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), posterior parietal cortex (PPC), basal ganglia, and thalamus.

In another study by Koesten, Joy & Schrodt, Paul & Ford, Debra (2009), the relationship between family communication environments, cognitive flexibility, and young adults' well-being was investigated. This study explored how cognitive flexibility partially mediates the impact of family communication environments, encompassing expressiveness and structural traditionalism, on young adults' well-being. The authors suggest that family communication environments can shape cognitive flexibility, subsequently influencing young adults' well-being.

In perpetuation, Conflict Resolution and Cognitive Flexibility are crucial for an individual's growth. It makes the individual progress, and adapt efficiently to new situations throughout life.

Given the criticality of both cognitive flexibility and conflict resolution in an individual's life, delving into their potential roots becomes imperative, leading to the exploration of Family Communication Patterns. Investigating the interconnections among Family Communication Patterns, an individual's Conflict Resolution Style, and their Cognitive Flexibility forms a vital triangle for examination.

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## **2. Materials and method**

### **2.1. The Research Design**

A Non-Experimental Quantitative, and Correlational Research Design including both descriptive and inferential statistics has been adopted for this study.

### **2.2. Statement of the Problem:**

To understand the relationship between Family Communication Patterns, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility among adults; and to understand the difference in Family Communication Patterns as well as Cognitive Flexibility based on and Individual's Conflict Resolution Style.

### *Objectives of the study*

- To find the relationship between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults.
- To find the difference in Family Communication Patterns based on Individual's Conflict Resolution Style.
- To find the difference in individual's Cognitive Flexibility based on individual's Conflict Resolution Style.
- To find the difference in Family Communication Patterns among males and females.
- To find the difference in Conflict Resolution Styles among males and females.
- To find the difference in Cognitive Flexibility among males and females.

### **2.3. Hypotheses**

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in Family Communication Patterns, based on the individual's Conflict Resolution Style.
- Ho3: There is no significant difference in Cognitive Flexibility based on individual's Conflict Resolution Style.
- Ho4: There is no significant difference in Family Communication Patterns among males and females.
- Ho5: There is no significant difference in Conflict Resolution Styles among males and females.
- Ho6: There is no significant difference in Cognitive Flexibility among males and females.

### **2.4. Operational Definitions**

#### *2.4.1. Family Communication Patterns*

Family communication patterns refers to the exchange and reciprocation of interaction between members of the family towards each other.

#### *2.4.2. Conflict Resolution Styles*

Conflict Resolution Styles can be defined as the way or strategy of an individual that is adopted in order to navigate a conflict situation in their life.

#### *2.4.3. Cognitive Flexibility*

Cognitive flexibility refers to the cognitive ability to be able to voluntarily switch between mental tasks and adapt to ever-changing situational demands.

#### *2.4.4. Young Adults*

According to Erikson, young adults are ones who follow the years after adolescence that is individuals aged 19- 40 years of age.

#### *2.4.5. Variables*

Family Communication Pattern, Conflict Resolution Style and Cognitive Flexibility are the three variables of the study. Family Communication Patterns is the dependent variable whereas Conflict Resolution Style and Cognitive Flexibility are the independent variables.

### **2.5. Demographic Details**

Demographic details collected for the purpose of research are age, gender, and family type.

### **2.6. Universe of the Study**

The population for the study is young adults. Young adults as per the relevance for my study are from age 20 years to 30 years. Both males and females are included in the study.

### **2.7. Geographical Area**

The geographical area focused for the study was Bangalore, India.

## **2.8. Sample Distribution**

The sample includes young adults with the age range of 20-30 years. 88 males and 119 females have participated in the study, making it a total of 207 young adults.

### *2.8.1. Inclusion Criteria*

- Young adults with age range of 20- 30 years.
- Young adults who can read and understand English.
- Young adults who have both parents.

### *2.8.2. Exclusion Criteria*

- Young adults who do not identify as male or female.
- Young adults who have mental health issues.
- Young adults who have been diagnosed with any psychological disorders or major trauma.

### *2.8.3. Sample and Techniques*

Simple Random Sampling method has been used for data collection.

## **2.9. Research Ethics followed**

All the appropriate ethical measures were adhered to in the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point. The questionnaires and statistical software were used in accordance with their respective norms, with data being handled sensitively and analyzed as per the manuals. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

## **2.10. Tools for the Study**

The tools used in the study were The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES-IV) for assessing the Family Communication Patterns, The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) for assessing the Individual's Conflict Resolution Styles, and The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI) for measuring Cognitive Flexibility.

## **2.11. Statistical Analysis**

The findings are examined through correlation analysis to grasp the connection between the variables. Independent Sample T-Test is employed to discern distinctions between males and females, while ANOVA is utilized to comprehend the variances in Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility according to individuals' Conflict Resolution Styles.

## **2.12. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics**

Descriptive Statistics is used to synopsise the data, as well as understand the representation of the population. Inferential Statistics is used to test the hypotheses using Correlation, Regression, Independent Sample T-Test, and ANOVA.

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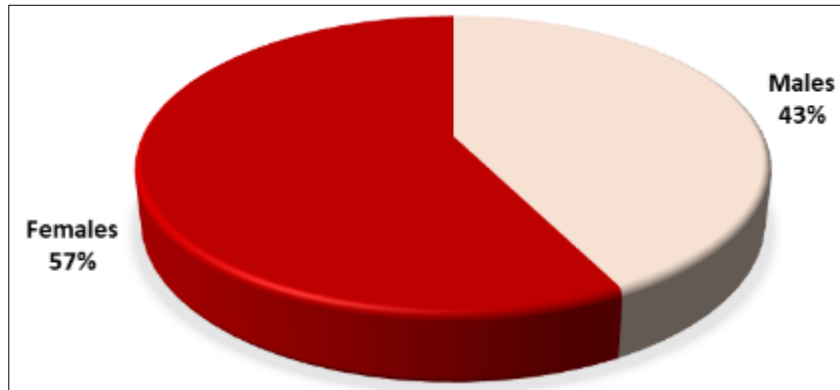
## **3. Results and discussion**

The aim of this research was to investigate the correlation between Family Communication Patterns, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility among adults. Additionally, it sought to explore variances in Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility based on an Individual's Conflict Resolution Style. The study employed the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES-IV) developed by Olson (2011), the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) by Kurdek (1994), and the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI) created by Dennis and Vander Wal (2010). These instruments were administered to a sample of 207 participants, comprising 88 males and 119 females. The survey consisted of a total of 46 items encompassing the three scales. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 21.0, with parametric statistical techniques applied due to the normal distribution of the data as confirmed by normality tests.

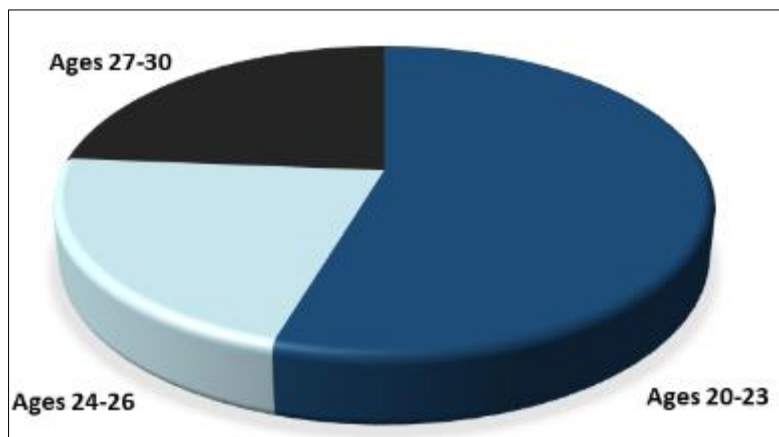
**Table 1** Socio-demographic details of the participants

|                         | Gender | N   |
|-------------------------|--------|-----|
| Age Range (20-30 years) |        | 207 |
|                         | Male   | 88  |
|                         | Female | 119 |

Table 1. shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants. The sample comprised 207 (N=207) young adults aged 20-30, with 88 males and 119 females.



**Figure 1** Representation of Gender



**Figure 2** Representation of Age

**Table 2** Results of the Descriptive Statistics

|                               | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Family Communication Patterns | 35.67 | 9.718          |
| Conflict Resolution Styles    | 2.21  | 0.726          |
| Cognitive Flexibility         | 97.82 | 17.007         |

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of Family Communication Patterns, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults aged between 20 and 30 years. For Family Communication Patterns, the mean is 35.67 with a standard deviation of 9.718, ranging from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 50. Conflict Resolution Styles display a mean of 2.21 and a standard deviation of 0.726, with values ranging from 1 to 4. Lastly, Cognitive Flexibility demonstrates a mean of 97.82 with a standard deviation of 17.007, varying from a minimum of 54 to a maximum of 138.

**Table 3** Results of Correlation between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults.

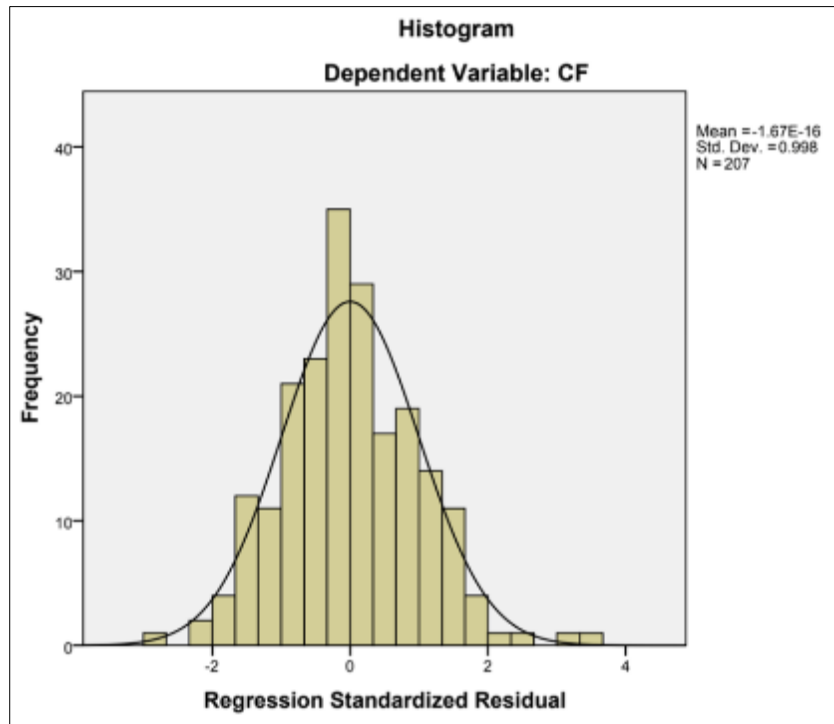
|                               | Family Communication Patterns | Cognitive Flexibility |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Family Communication Patterns | 1                             | 0.384**               |
| Cognitive Flexibility         | 0.384**                       | 1                     |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the relationship between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults. The data reveals a correlation coefficient of  $r = .384^{**}$ , ( $p < 0.01$ ) for Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility. These findings suggest a notable positive correlation, implying that as Family Communication Patterns improve, so does an individual's Cognitive Flexibility. Consequently, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which posits no significant relationship between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults, is refuted, underscoring the existence of a significant association between these variables in this demographic.

**Table 4** Regression Results

| Predictor                     | R     | R Square | Estimate | SE    | t    | p     |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------|----------|-------|------|-------|
| 1 Model                       | 0.384 | 0.148    |          |       |      |       |
| Intercept                     |       |          | 73.827   | 4.171 | 7.70 | <0.01 |
| Family Communication Patterns |       |          | 0.673    | 0.113 | 5.96 | <0.01 |



**Figure 3** Regression Histogram

Table 4 shows the outcomes of the regression analysis with Family Communication Patterns as the predictor variable. The correlation coefficient (R), indicating the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables, is 0.384, signifying a positive correlation between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.148, indicating that 14.8% of the variance in Cognitive Flexibility is explained by Family Communication Patterns. The regression coefficient (Estimate) is 0.673, suggesting that, on average, Cognitive Flexibility is expected to increase by 0.673 units for every one-unit increase in family communication patterns, holding other variables constant. The p-value is less than 0.01, indicating the statistical significance of the regression coefficient. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility, concluding that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between these variables.

**Table 5** Results of Independent Sample T-Test regarding the difference in Family Communication Patterns, Individual's Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility between males and females

| Variables                     | Gender | N   | Mean   | SD    | t     | p     |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Family Communication Patterns | Female | 119 | 34.63  | 9.81  | -1.80 | 0.073 |
|                               | Male   | 88  | 37.08  | 9.45  |       |       |
| Conflict Resolution Styles    | Female | 119 | 2.25   | 0.727 | 1.00  | 0.097 |
|                               | Male   | 88  | 2.16   | 0.725 |       |       |
| Cognitive Flexibility         | Female | 119 | 96.13  | 17.14 | -1.67 | 0.317 |
|                               | Male   | 88  | 100.10 | 16.64 |       |       |

Table 5 shows the outcomes of the Independent Sample T-Test concerning variations in Family Communication Patterns, Individual Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility between males and females. The findings suggest that there is no substantial difference in the patterns of Family Communication, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility based on gender. Consequently, the null hypotheses, which posit no significant difference in Family Communication Patterns, Individual Conflict Resolution Style, and Cognitive Flexibility among males and females, are upheld.

**Table 6** Results of Difference in Family Communication Patterns and Individual's Cognitive Flexibility based on Individual's Conflict Resolution Style using ANOVA

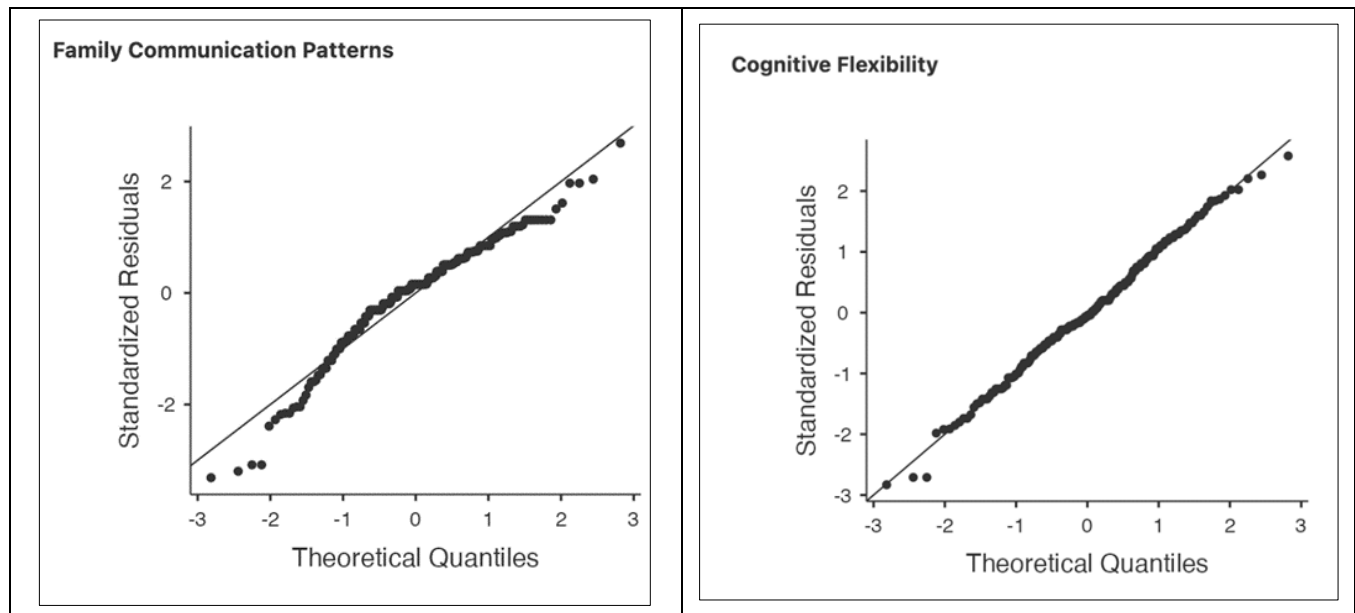
|                               |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | p       |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|---------|
| Family Communication Patterns | Between Groups | 4239.285       | 3   | 1413.095    | 18.852 | 0.000** |
|                               | Within Groups  | 15216.377      | 203 | 74.958      |        |         |
|                               | Total          | 19455.662      | 206 |             |        |         |
| Cognitive Flexibility         | Between Groups | 3831.457       | 3   | 1277.152    | 4.650  | 0.004*  |
|                               | Within Groups  | 55750.929      | 203 | 274.635     |        |         |
|                               | Total          | 59582.386      | 206 |             |        |         |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows the comparison of Family Communication Patterns and Individual's Cognitive Flexibility across different Conflict Resolution Styles. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine potential variations in these factors based on an individual's Conflict Resolution Style.

Subsequent to the ANOVA, a post-hoc analysis, utilizing Tukey adjustment for multiple comparisons, was performed to delineate the specific nature of the observed effects. The findings revealed significant differences in Family Communication Patterns between individuals employing Conflict Engagement and Positive Problem-Solving Conflict Resolution styles. Additionally, a significant difference in Cognitive Flexibility was observed between individuals employing Positive Problem Solving and Acceptance Conflict Resolution Styles.

Further analysis utilizing Eta Squared for effect size estimation yielded a score of 0.217 for Family Communication Patterns, indicating a Large Effect Size, and a score of 0.643 for Cognitive Flexibility, indicating a Medium Effect Size. Consequently, the null hypotheses (Ho2 and Ho3) suggesting no significant differences in Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility based on individual Conflict Resolution Styles were rejected.



**Figure 4** One Way ANOVA Plots

#### 4. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore the connections between Family Communication Patterns, Individual Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults. It also aimed to investigate potential disparities in these factors between males and females, as well as differences based on individual Conflict Resolution Styles. The data was collected from 88 males and 119 females aged 20-30 in India, utilizing the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES-IV), Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI), and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI). Statistical analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS 21.

To assess the impact of Family Communication Patterns on Cognitive Flexibility, Linear Regression analysis was employed, revealing a significant positive correlation between the two variables. Young adults reporting more positive family communication patterns tended to exhibit higher levels of cognitive flexibility. Similarly, a moderate positive relationship was observed between Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility, rejecting the hypothesis (Ho1) suggesting no significant relationship between these variables.

ANOVA analysis indicated significant differences in both Family Communication Patterns and Cognitive Flexibility based on individual Conflict Resolution Styles. Notably, individuals with Conflict Engagement and Positive Problem-Solving styles demonstrated distinct Family Communication Patterns, while those with Positive Problem-Solving and Acceptance styles showed differing levels of Cognitive Flexibility. Effect size analysis revealed a large effect for Family Communication Patterns and a medium effect for Cognitive Flexibility, rejecting hypotheses (Ho2) and (Ho3) which suggested no significant differences in these variables based on Conflict Resolution Styles.

Gender differences in the three variables were examined using Independent T-Tests, revealing no significant disparities in Family Communication Patterns, Conflict Resolution Styles, or Cognitive Flexibility between males and females. Thus, hypotheses (Ho4), (Ho5), and (Ho6), positing no significant gender differences in these variables, were accepted.

In summary, this study found significant relationships and differences in Family Communication Patterns, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Cognitive Flexibility among young adults. However, no significant gender differences were observed in these variables within the sample.



## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgement*

The successful completion of this research wouldn't have been possible without the unwavering support and contributions of numerous individuals who deserve heartfelt acknowledgement.

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflicts of interest to report.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

As this study was done for dissertation purpose, approval was taken from the college committee.

### *Statement of informed consent*

All the participants included in the study provided written informed consent prior to their participation in the study.

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