DISCUSSION

The results of this study have shown that high achievers tend to perceive greater cohesion and lesser conflict among the members of their families than do low achievers. Similarly, high achievers tend to perceive greater achievement as well as intellectual and cultural orientation in their homes than do low achievers. These trends not only provide support to the Hypothesis 1 but they seem to be consistent with what has been reported in earlier studies.

Parental education and encouragement are, for example, strongly related to improved students' achievement (Wang et al., 1996). Specifically, parents of high achieving students tend to foster greater intellectual orientation in them through positive mental predispositions toward them and encouragement provided for their progress (Robinson, 2001). Parental support and encouragement get reflected in the help they offer to the children by the way of completing the home work and discussing school activities with them (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001).

Research has shown that successful and well adjusted children belong to homes in which interpersonal relationships among the members tend to be congenial and harmonious. Parents of high achieving students, for example, are found to be trusting, loving, encouraging and showing greater tolerance toward children (Prasad, 1979). A home environment filled with frictions and conflicts among family members, on other hand, gives rise to behavioural problems and poor academic performance (Kaushik and Rani, 2005).

In general, the high quality of home environment is conducive to high level achievement. As such, when the quality of home environment gets deteriorated, the level of achievement motivation also gets pushed down
It has been, therefore, suggested that parents of low achievers should take serious steps toward providing a highly congenial atmosphere to their children, if they want their children to improve in their academics (Shah and Sharma, 1985). Parents who are well adjusted pass on their children, through “personality transmission”, attitudes and behaviour patterns that will contribute to the success of child’s adjustments. Children, in their relationships with others, show much the same patterns of behaviour they observe in their own family. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that development of undesirable attitudes and habits, which are likely to make a child act in a socially unacceptable manner, is prevented by creating a home environment of high quality. Overall, available research gives an indication that parents, who in the eyes of their children, are compassionate, loving, affectionate, understanding, good natured, sympathetic, interested in them and their affairs, and concerned about doing all they can to make the home a cheerful place, tend to create a healthy emotional climate which is conducive to better adjustment and high academic achievement. In consistency with all this, the results of the present study have shown that high achievers tend to perceive their family environment more favourably than do low achievers.

The results of this study pertaining to perceived favourableness of classroom environment have shown that high achievers tend to perceive their teachers to be more supportive, more capable of maintaining order in the classroom activities effectively, but less rigid in enforcing the rules and inflicting undue severe punishment for rule infractions than do the low achievers. This trend lends support to Hypothesis 3.

A review of literature will show that creation of supportive learning environment in the classroom enhances students’ attachment to school and engagement in classroom activities. This in turn influences students' academic performance (Osterman, 2000). Students learning in well managed
classrooms tend to get along well with each other as well as teachers, pay attention to what is being taught, and complete their assignments well in time (Blum et al., 2002). Interventions aimed at developing students' prosocial skills and fostering a more supportive, co-operative and participatory learning environment have led to increased sense of school community and commitment to the school (Battistic, 1997; Mucherach, 2003). The subjectively experienced sense of community is reported to have mediated the positive intervention effects, including improved level of academic achievement (Solomon et al., 1988).

Research has also shown that when teachers implement interventions involving proactive classroom management, interactive teaching methods, co-operative learning techniques, and interpersonal skill improvement, the result is development of positive attitudes among students, increased commitment to school on their part, and improvement in grades and standardized achievement scores in them (Hawkins et al., 1999; O'Donnell et al., 1995). Some interventions aimed at restructuring teacher roles so as to make the teachers more supportive have also been reported to be resulting in higher attendance rates, lower drop out rates, and better grades among middle and high school students (Slicker & Palmer, 1993). In some interventions, increased parents' involvement was sought along with students' bonding. Such interventions significantly decreased drop out rates, and increased students' attendance as well as standardized achievement scores (Reyes and Jason, 1991).

Learning environments filled with high degree of teacher-child conflict are conducive to greater levels of school avoidance, decreased liking for school, less self-directed behaviour, and lower levels of cooperation among students. On the other hand, teacher- student closeness promotes school bonding and attachment, and academic achievement (Birch and Ladd,
1997). It is thus obvious that social environment of classrooms in which learning takes place, can enhance or diminish the behaviours that lead to achievement. Indeed, the classroom is as important as individual abilities in determining the level of academic achievement among students (Scott Jones and Clark, 1986). The results of the present study, by providing support to Hypothesis 3, have turned out to be consistent with what other earlier studies have reported in this respect.

Hypothesis 5 states that high achievers tend to be higher in their self-esteem than do the low achievers. The results have provided support to this hypothesis. The term self-esteem has been conceptualized in this study as one's "overall sense of self-competence and self-worth". Some authors refer to it as generalized sense of one's own self-efficacy or power (Tafarodi and Swann, 1995). A person with high self-esteem, therefore, has a conviction that he/she is capable of producing desired results. As such, self-esteem is expected to play an important role in academic achievement.

The trend revealed by the findings of the present study is consistent with what has been observed about relationship between the two aforesaid variables in the previous studies. In general, a positive relationship has been observed between the two, namely, self-esteem and academic achievement (Bankston and Zhou, 2002; Kristjansson and Allegrante, 2007; Lockett and Harrell, 2003; Ross and Broh, 200; Schmidt and Padilla, 2003; Verkuyten and Brug, 2002; Wong and Watkins, 2001).

In a recent study covering 400 male and female students of Basic Education College, Kuwait, Anzi and Owayed (2005) found that academic achievement was positively correlated with both optimism and self-esteem, negatively with both anxiety and pessimism. In another study, Thomas and Brantley (2002) obtained positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement for a sample of 150 high, medium and low achievers
of a large public school. Data from Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory were correlated with grades, cumulative grade point averages, and class ranks in the above study.

Some authors (Moore, 1973; Dart et al., 1999; Wattenberg and Clifford, 1964) are of the view that self-esteem is a better predictor of academic success than measured intelligence. Underachievers have been generally found to be less confident and less ambitious (Godfery, 1970), less accepting (Purky, 1970), and lacking a sense of personal worth (Durr and Schmatz, 1964). It has been documented in research findings that feeling of worthlessness can be depressing (Battle, 1990; Bhatti, 1989; Hokanson et al., 1989), and depression generally inhibits performance. On the other hand, those students who evaluate themselves positively tend to be higher in academic achievement (Begum and Huque, 1976; Mintz and Muller, 1977).

Specific self-esteem such as self-evaluation with respect to academic intelligence (i.e academic self-concept) has also correlated positively with measures like grades awarded by teachers or marks obtained by the students in examinations (Lyon, 1990).

Researchers have focused their attention on the problem whether self-esteem is a cause or result of academic achievement. Even if it is more of a result than the cause, the fact remains that a certain level of self-esteem is required in order for a student to achieve academic success (Holly, 1987). Thus, self-esteem and academic achievement go hand in hand. On the basis of research findings, Covington (1989) asserts that as the level of self-esteem increases, so do the achievement scores; and as self-esteem decreases, so does the achievement. Furthermore, and perhaps most important, he points out that self-esteem can be modified through direct instructions, which, in turn, can lead to achievement gains. In addition, Walz and Bleuer (1992) have stated that factors which are important to school
success such as positive feelings about self, absenteeism, and school retention, are affected by successful school self-esteem programmes.

Low self-esteem has been reported to be leading to problems like drop-outs and delinquency. Kelly (1978) found that delinquency and low self-esteem were substantially correlated. He further found that as programmes were implemented to raise the level of self-esteem, the incidence of delinquent behaviour in schools declined. In a long term study of 3000 seventh grade students, Kaplan (1975) found that students with low self-esteem were more likely to adopt deviant behaviour patterns. Specifically, low self-esteem tends to serve as a strong source of anger and hostility which quite often lead to violence.

In the above light, it can be said that self-esteem is one of the non-intellectual factors which is significantly related to academic achievement. This contention has been duly supported by the results of this study pertaining to Hypothesis 5. Since self-esteem and academic achievement tend to directly influence each other, it is desirable that a nurturing or positive classroom environment be created in classrooms with the expectation that it may lead to the enhancement of self-esteem of the students.

It is worth mentioning that the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory, which has been used in this study, contains four subscales aimed at measuring evaluative attitudes of respondents toward their “self” in the following areas: social (self-peer), home (parents), school (academic), and personal (general). The results of this study, when analyzed by types of self-esteem, have indicated that high achievers tend to be higher in self-evaluation with respect to home, school and personal domains than do low achievers. Thus, barring the social domain, high achievers have turned out to
be higher in their self-evaluation in three out of four areas, in addition to their being higher in ‘overall self-esteem’ than the low achievers.

Hypothesis 7 states that high achievers tend to be more favourably disposed toward learning than do low achievers. The results have provided support to it. Attitude toward learning has been conceptualized in this study as a general affective or emotional deposition of the participants toward the process of learning. Thus the contention is that if they feel that the resultant change or modification of their behaviour is in their interest such as personal growth, academic success or other benefits, they will respond positively to participation in learning activities carried out at the school. Attitude toward learning will, in the ultimate analysis, have an impact on the desire for learning on the part of participants.

Some authors (eg. Armstrong, 1980; Armstrong and Price, 1982; Kloosterman and Cougan, 1994) are of the view that students' conception of difficulty, self-regulation and learning strategies, their anxiety and attributions to success and failure are intertwined with attitude toward learning.

Some studies on attitude toward mathematics have brought out the importance or relevance a student attaches to his/her study of mathematics. This depends on how far he perceives it to be useful to him/her. The attitude toward mathematics, in the ultimate analysis, will be governed by such perception.

Studies have shown that high achievers tend to use effective study strategies more frequently than do low achievers (Hong, 2006; Kim and Goetz, 1993; Kitsantas, 2002; Vanzile et al., 1999). Study strategies mostly used by high achievers are, comparing class notes to text books, self-quizzing, reading for understanding (Holschah, 2000), goal setting, planning
and organizing. These strategies are indicative of desire for more efficient learning on the part of high achievers. Such a desire is the result of more favourable attitude toward learning. Since low achievers are reported to be focusing on only class notes coupled with using rehearsal strategy, they do not appear to be having a strong desire for efficient learning. All this clearly points out that high and low achievers tend to differ in their attitude toward learning.

Academic achievement has been reported to be contingent on the extent to which self-regulated learning strategies are adopted by students. This is indicated by the trend observed in some studies that students with self-regulated learning strategies tend to score better grades than those who do not adopt these strategies (Yohanan and Revital, 2003). Whether or not a student would accept self-regulated learning strategies depends on, among other things, his attitude toward learning.

Students, who perceive that emphasis is laid on ‘mastery goals’ in the classroom, are reported to be using more effective strategies, preferring challenging tasks, having a favourable disposition toward a class, and a strong belief that success follows one’s efforts (Ben-Ari and Eliassy, 2003; Phelps, 2002; Albaili, 2003; Shim and Ryan, 2005). It is then obvious that ‘emphasis on mastery goal’ tends to serve as an important source of attitude toward learning. Whatever it may be, academic achievement and attitude toward learning appear to be associated closely with each other.

It has been also observed that if the physical set-up of classrooms is attractive and beneficial from the aesthetic point of view, such a surrounding is likely to create a favourable impact on the learning attitudes of students (Maslow and Mintz, 1956). To sum up, positive learning attitudes may enhance the motivation to learn, which in turn can lead to better academic performance on the part of students.
The results of this study have given a clear verdict that high and low achievers tend to differ in their perceptions of home and classroom environments, self-esteem and attitude toward learning in the predicted direction.

However, it was assumed that probably the other factors such as 'medium of instructions opted by the students' and 'sex difference' among them would not cause any cognizable impact on the aforesaid perceptions, self-esteem and attitude toward learning among them. Since no consistent indication of any sort in this respect could be noticed in the literature, it was decided to predict 'no difference' between boys and girls as well as Marathi and English medium students in perceptions, attitudes and self-esteem.

English and Marathi medium students were, therefore, not expected to differ in their perceptions of favourableness of their home environment along the dimensions of cohesion, conflict, achievement orientation, and intellectual and cultural orientation. The results, pertaining to Hypothesis 2, have supported this prediction with one exception. The Marathi medium students appear to be perceiving greater "achievement orientation" in their homes than do the English medium students. Otherwise there is no difference in perceptions of the two groups along the remaining three dimensions.

In fact, it is commonly observed that the students belonging to English medium schools are being overestimated in their capabilities and motivation to achieve higher academic performance than their counterparts belonging to Marathi medium students. As such, the former are supposed to be having greater willingness to learn and ability to comprehend the learning material than the latter. Moreover, as they tend to acquire mastery over English language, it is likely that they get an advantage of being precise and clear in their expression. All this is expected to enhance their chances of
scoring higher marks in examinations. Not only this, but their English language orientation is expected to help them in presenting themselves in a more impressive way. Many parents, therefore, are more inclined to prefer English medium schools for their children, over the schools which offer instructions in the mother tongue.

However, the results of this study have shown that the Marathi, and not English, medium students tend to perceive greater "achievement orientation" in their homes. This indicates that the parents of the Marathi medium students seem to be more concerned with creating that kind of environment for their children which would be conducive to more hard work and better academic performance on the part of children. Such type of parental support and influence have been identified as important factors affecting students' achievement (Wang et al., 1996). As far as the results of this study are concerned, Marathi medium students perceive this kind of support provided by their parents in greater degree than that perceived by English medium students.

One thing is clear that caring family environment coupled with character education, may prove more important than the medium of instructions for academic achievement (Elias et al., 2002). It is, therefore, desirable that the importance of language in which education is imparted should not be blown out of proportion. In spite of this, it would be interesting to have a glance at the results pertaining to differences in the perceptions of classroom environment between English and Marathi medium students.

The results of this study pertaining to Hypothesis 4 show that there is significant difference in perceived favourableness of classroom environment between the English and Marathi medium students along the four dimensions namely, teacher support, order and organization, teacher control,
and innovation. Marathi medium students tend to have more favourable perception of their classroom environment than do their English medium counterparts. Specifically, the former perceive their teachers to be more supportive, better in order and organization, and more innovative than do the latter. Also, Marathi medium students tend to perceive their teachers exercising lesser rigid control than do the English medium students. This implies that the latter tend to perceive their teachers to be much stricter than do the former. Though these trends do not support Hypothesis 4, they nevertheless are very interesting. English medium students might have been overestimated in their motivation and ability to achieve academic success by many people, but such participants of the present study appear to be having less favourable perception of their classroom environment than do their Marathi medium counterparts. This takes us to the consideration of an issue whether the medium of instructions opted by the students has really anything to do with the classroom learning and consequent academic performance.

Ramaswamy and Srivastava (2001) conducted a study on the impact of medium of instruction on students' classroom learning. The students were from eleven trilingual media schools of Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu. In these schools instruction was being given through three languages, namely, Tamil, Malayalam, and English. It was found that the mother tongue medium group (those who took Tamil or Malayalam as their medium of instruction) expressed themselves more freely and found school environment to be more favourable than students from English medium schools. In a study, Yip et al., (2003) examined the impact of a new language policy about the medium of instruction on science learning of secondary students in Hong Kong. The science achievement of Chinese students learning science through a second language, English, was compared with that of students receiving instruction in their mother tongue, Chinese. The data obtained through scores on a science achievement test revealed that
the English-medium students, despite their higher initial ability, performed much more poorly than their Chinese-medium peers. They were weak in problems that assess understanding of abstract concepts, the ability to discriminate between scientific terms, and the ability to apply scientific knowledge in novel or realistic situations. This finding implies that English-medium students were handicapped in science learning by their low levels of English proficiency, and learning. English as a subject through the primary years is not sufficient to prepare them for a full English immersion programme in secondary school.

Overall, results of empirical studies on the impact of mother tongue medium of instruction vis-à-vis the use of English or a non-mother tongue language as the medium of instruction are still mixed, and somewhat confusing. But, if viewed within the pragmatic perspective, the balance appears to be in favour of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Such an approach is the best for those who belong to the lower socio-economic levels, because enriched contexts in the use of the English language are not easily available to these groups of people. Inspite of this, parents tend to see only the advantage in career options that may be available to their children if they get educated through the medium of English right from the beginning level of school education (Ramaswamy, 2001).

Comparison of English and Marathi medium students in their self evaluations have revealed mixed trends. Although it was hypothesized that the two groups would not differ in their self-esteem, the results have shown that while English medium students have evaluated themselves more favourably in the home and social domains than Marathi medium students, the latter have evaluated themselves more favourably in general and in the
Marathi medium students have also turned out to be higher in the "overall self-esteem".

It appears that English medium students tend to have more favourable opinion about themselves in the context of their home and social lives. This may perhaps be due to favourable evaluations others tend to have of them in these two domains. These evaluations get reflected in the attitudes of some people, with whom they interact closely, such as family members, near relatives and neighbors. One reason, right or wrong, why these people develop favourable attitudes toward English medium students could be the overestimation of the efficacy of these students by them. After all, English medium students are supposed to be proficient in this foreign language, get exposure to a richer context, and are privileged to have greater career options available to them. The result then, is more favourable appraisals of these students by others in the home and social domains which in turn leads to more favourable self appraisals by these students.

However, this is not the case with evaluations by English medium students of themselves in the context of general self and school life. It is Marathi medium students who appear to be having more favourable self-evaluations than their English medium counterparts in this respect. Though it is difficult to explain why such differences have arisen between the two groups, it is likely that English medium students, as a group, may be finding it difficult to express themselves more freely, in the school and adjust to its environment. This probably results in the negative self-evaluation on their part in general and in the context of school life, in particular. However, studies on this issue are scarcely few in literature.

In one study Yip et al., (2007) examined the possible effects of English-medium instruction (EMI) and Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) on students' self-concept in science, as measured by students' responses to a
questionnaire. Compared to the CMI students, the EMI students showed higher self-concept in Chinese, English and Mathematics, but a lower self-concept in science. This finding suggests that the EMI students might experience greater learning problem in science than in other subjects, probably because science learning involves abstract thinking and the mastery of scientific terminology which make a high demand on language proficiency. The EMI students showed greater interest in learning science than the CMI students, indicating that they were more academically oriented. The EMI students, however, formed a lower perceived self-competence in science than their CMI peers, despite that they performed better in science achievement tests than many of the CMI students. This trend supports the view that using English for instruction may have negative effects on science learning. It is also consistent with the observation that the EMI students perceived science as more difficult to understand and learn than the CMI students. This trend, which emerged from a longitudinal study of Yip et al., (2007), suggests that it is desirable to have a further probe into the relationship between medium of instruction and self-concept.

English and Marathi medium students were not expected to differ in their attitude toward learning. This prediction, contained in Hypothesis 8, has been supported by the results. Certain issues such as students' perceptions of difficulty, self-regulation, learning strategies, anxiety and attribution of success and failure are considered to be relevant to attitude toward learning. Research conducted in different cultures has reported that a critical variable predicting academic achievement is students' approaches towards learning (Bernardo, 2003). Yohanan and Revital (2003), for example, found that students with self-regulated learning strategies scored good grades. The researchers have noticed that academic achievement was contingent upon self-regulated learning.
However, no consistent trend could be observed regarding whether students differing in the medium of instruction, also differ in attitude toward learning. Attitude toward learning appears to be governed by issues like perceived difficulties and anxiety as already mentioned above. If students of English medium, for example, encounter difficulties in comprehending the learning material presented in English language, this may make them become unfavourably disposed toward learning. But, the results of this study indicate that such issues might not have been serious enough to induce the English medium student to become unfavourably disposed toward learning. Thus, at least for the time being, it can be said that medium of instruction differences are not likely to lead to difference in learning attitudes of students. The position in this respect can become clear if more research is undertaken in future.

As for the gender differences in perception of home environment, the results have indicated that the two groups do not differ in this respect along three dimensions, namely, cohesion, conflict, and achievement orientation. However, the level of intellectual and cultural orientation as perceived by the male students tends to be higher than that perceived by the female students. Gender difference, even in interaction with the level of academic achievement, has failed to create a consistent cognizable impact on the perceptions which students have of their home environment. On the whole, predictions contained in Hypothesis 9 seem to have been supported with only one exception.

In fact, the parent-child relationship and healthy home environment, irrespective of the sex of the child, is a key component for healthy development. As against the restricted housebound role of girls, it is observed in recent years that girls are excelling in every field. They secure higher positions in academic competitions such as entrance examinations to
the various professional courses. Most of these girls, however, come from families that have had a long history of formal education. But those girls coming from the lower socio-economic strata continue to suffer from the disadvantage as revealed in some studies, (eg. Ramaswamy and Srivastava, 2001). In spite of this, research evidence indicates that girls share better relationship with their parents than boys (Sibia, Kang and Gill, 1996). However, Dutta et al., (1997), have reported that boys perceive their home environment to be more favourable than girls. But, it is true at the same time that boys are allowed to move and mix freely in outside environment while the parents are still conservative about letting their female children to wider exposure. Jun-Li (2005) reports that the role of parents significantly influences achievement more for female students than for male students. On the other hand, Kaushik and Rani (2005) have found that there is no significant difference in perception of home environment among boys and girls. Thus it appears that no consistent trend regarding the manner in which the parent-child relationship and home environment tend to affect boys and girls. That may be the reason why no consistent trend of differences in perception of home environment between boys and girls could be identified by the researchers.

The results of this study have revealed mixed trends of difference in perception of classroom environment between boys and girls. Because of lack of availability of any consistent trend in this respect, it was decided to go ahead with the prediction that boys and girls may not differ in this respect. But, this has not happened. Findings pertaining to hypothesis 10 have indicated that while boys and girls do not differ in their perceptions of classroom environment along the dimensions of teacher support and innovation, they have differed along the remaining two dimensions, viz. order and organization, and teacher control.
Some earlier studies have also reported contradictory trends pertaining to gender differences in the perception of classroom environment. One study investigated differences in boys' and girls' perceptions of their chemistry laboratory classroom environment. The findings showed that girls perceived their learning environment more favourably than boys (Queck, Wong and Frazer, 2002). Some other studies have shown that girls generally hold more favourable perceptions of their classroom learning environments than boys belonging to the same classes. (Fisher et al., 1997; Fraser et al., 1995; Henderson et al., 2000). On the other hand, some studies have reported favourable perception of classroom environment on the part of boys (Byrne et al., 1986; Goyal et al., 1988; Mishra, 2000). In general, though gender difference is looked upon as a factor in the perception of classroom environment, no consistent trend could emerge from the research in this respect.

Results of this study pertaining to gender differences in self-esteem have also revealed mixed trends. While the boys and girls have not differed significantly in self-esteem within the context of home and school settings, the former have turned out to be higher in the overall self-esteem. Boys have also been found to be higher in self-esteem in general and within the social context. Overall self-esteem is estimated by summing up the scores on all the subscales of Self-esteem Inventory except the "lie Scale". General self-esteem is estimated by summing up the scores on items belonging to the "general self-esteem" subscale. The observed trends indicate that in both these respects boys tend to be higher in self-esteem than girls. Even their social self-esteem tends to be higher than that of girls.

Can the above trends of differences be treated as indicative of a general belief in our society that males are more valued members of families as well as communities than the females? Usual observations unfortunately
give a clue to this effect in that even today many people look upon daughters as a liability and sons as an asset. The awareness of such differential on the part of boys and girls might be leading to more favourable perception of self worth among the former. If it is so, then why the two groups are not found to have differed in their self-esteem in the domains of family relationships and school life. It is, therefore, desirable to have further probing into the issue of sex differences in self-esteem. There are, however, some studies which have addressed this issue by taking into consideration cultural differences between communities or societies. One study (Orr and Dinur, 1995) investigated the effect of two multidimensional systems—namely, social setting and the self—upon adolescents' growth and development. Specifically, it was hypothesized that gender differences in adult social status are greater in kibbutz than in the Israeli urban setting, and that this gap is associated with gender differences in global self-esteem among kibbutz youth. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, and scales from Marsh's Self-Description Questionnaire III and from Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents were administered to 569 kibbutz and urban adolescents from Grades 9 to 11. Information about academic achievement and parental status was also obtained. Kibbutz mothers were found to have significantly lower social status than fathers, while kibbutz girls had significantly lower self-esteem than kibbutz boys and urban adolescents of both sexes. The organization of the self-concept of kibbutz females differed from the other groups: self-esteem was predicted not only from self-concepts in the domains of scholastic achievement and peer support, but also from the domain of parental support, from academic achievement, and from father's occupational status.

In another study (Oyefeso and Zacheaus, 1990), the influence of gender differences on the expression of self-esteem among Yoruba adolescents was assessed. It was found that male adolescents expressed
higher self-esteem than female adolescents. This finding is attributed to the differing socialization processes for males and females in Yoruba societies.

Boys and girls of 9th standard, who participated as subjects in this study, are not found to have differed in their attitude toward learning. Some previous studies, which aimed at examining gender differences in attitude toward learning, have reported that gender had no significant influence on attitude toward learning (Adu, 2002; Idowu, 1991; Majoribanks, 1987; Okpala, 1988). Thus the results of this study are consistent with those of previous studies.

Research has also been undertaken to examine the attitude toward learning specific subjects such as mathematics. According to stereotypes, boys are better at mathematics than are girls (Hyde et al., 1990). This stereotype is proclaimed in mass media headlines (Barnett & Rivers, 2004). Meta-analyses, however, indicate a pattern of gender similarities for math performance (Hedges and Nowell, 1995, Hyde et al., 1990).

The results of this study have provided very clear support to all the relevant hypotheses which contain predictions concerning differences between high and low achievers in their perceptions of home and classroom environments, self-esteem and attitude toward learning.

As for the ratings of participants by their teachers, 'high achievers' have obtained higher ratings from their teachers than 'low achievers'. The traits on which they were rated include ability to comprehend, willingness to learn, clarity in expression and curiosity to learn. All these traits are certainly relevant to academic achievement. Students, who are capable of understanding the learning material that constitutes their syllabus for various subjects, can bring clarity and precision in what they are supposed to express orally or in writing. If these capabilities are accompanied by greater
willingness and curiosity to learn, they will be motivated to put in greater amount of effort while they engage in their regular study and preparation for the periodical and final examination. All this is likely to lead to higher level of academic achievement. But, those who lack in this respect, are likely to lag behind in their academic achievement as reflected in the marks or grades received by them from the valuers. Rightly then, high achievers covered in this study have turned out to be significantly higher in all the four traits than low achievers. This not only has provided support to the concerned predictions, but has also justified the bifurcation of 400 participants into low and high achievers on the basis of criteria explained earlier.

As expected, English and Marathi students have, in general, not differed significantly in the ratings obtained by them. This indicates that Marathi medium students as a group, tend to be at par with English medium students in their capabilities to comprehend, and bring clarity in expression. Also, both the groups tend to show comparable amount of curiosity to learn material to which they are exposed. However, there seems to be an exception to these trends of similarities between the two groups, because Marathi medium students have been rated as having greater willingness to learn than English medium students. Marathi language is the mother tongue for almost everybody who has opted for it as the medium of instruction. Probably each one of them feels more comfortable while studying various subjects in Marathi. On the other hand, English being a foreign language, calls for greater efforts to comprehend and retain the material which the students of this medium are supposed to learn. Can this be accepted as a reason for greater motivation, which gets reflected in greater willingness to learn, on the part of Marathi medium students? It is better to find out definite reason through further research for this trend of difference observed in the ratings of participants by their teachers.
Finally, the interaction effect, caused jointly by the three variables, namely, level of academic achievement, medium of instruction opted, and gender difference, has revealed a very interesting trend. 'High achieving Marathi medium female students' have received higher ratings on the four characteristics mentioned earlier than all other groups differing in terms of 'achievement-medium-gender' combination. This indicates that Marathi medium girls identified as high achievers, have significantly and convincingly differed from others in the traits under consideration in the predicted direction. Their teachers have assessed them as having higher ability to comprehend, greater willingness to learn, higher ability to bring clarity in expression and more intense curiosity to learn.

To sum up, the main objective of the study has been to find out whether high and low achievers differ significantly in certain non-intellectual factors, namely, perception of home and classroom environments, self-esteem and attitude toward learning. The results can be said to have provided support to almost all major predictions in this respect.