Mental retardation is not only a pervasive and profound problem, but it is also possibly the largest area of morbidity and one which is still largely of unknown causation.

For purposes of assessing growth and developmental potentials and the consequent licenses for special kinds of treatment and rehabilitative measures, the mentally retarded community is divided into the educable, the trainable and the custodial. It is only the educable section that can benefit from enriched intervention programmes where the emphasis is on the development of adjustive skills rather than skills which require cognitive intervention. The intervention programmes being limited in their period of skill inculcation time and the minimal availability of such programmes brings the focus to the family of the retardate, as a primary intervention agency for the reinforcement and maintenance of the inculcated skills within the retardate.

To assess the dynamisms and variables within the family milieu of an E.M.R. child functioning in a school, and the dynamisms within the family milieu of an E.M.R. child, who has already left the school and is functioning within the family, the present cross sectional study was developed in two phases.

The initial phase of the research investigation involved a time phased classification of the E.M.R. sample,
functioning within the special school milieu, into two criterion groups of improvers and deteriorators. This was implemented with the help of the school reports of the retardate's psycho social and cognitive functional levels at two stages of the educational career, the beginning and the end of the retardates academic year in the school. The classification of the sample was further based on the retardates performance on a test of social maturity on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale and the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children to assess the performance IQ level. These tests were also administered at the beginning of the academic year and at the end of the year. Treating the data obtained at the initial level, as a baseline, the data obtained at the final level was regarded as the criterion for classifying improved or deteriorated functioning of the retardate.

This was followed by an in-depth identification and analysis of the dynamisms and variables operative within the family milieu with the help of a Family Attitude Questionnaire developed by the researcher for the present research purpose. The retardate's perception of his family, school and self was assessed with the help of a Retardate Attitude Questionnaire also developed to suit the present research aim. An attempt was made to establish a relationship between the retardates psycho social progress or deterioration with relevant dynamisms operative within the
family milieu and the retardates perceptions of his family, school and self.

The study at the initial phase also undertook a descriptive analysis of the special school setting. This involved a critique of the working model of the special school goals and curricula, and an analysis of the special teachers' perceptions of competencies relevant to the teaching of exceptional children. The latter aim was facilitated with the help of a Competency List which was administered to the teaching personnel.

The study at the second phase involved a classification of the E.M.R. children who had left the special school milieu 3/4 years ago. The classification was based on the family assessment of the retardates psycho social functioning at the retardates school leaving stage and the present day status. The retardate's school leaving functioning level was considered as a baseline for the retardate's categorization as an improver or deteriorator.

The study at the phase II further involved an assessment of the dynamisms within the family of the E.M.R. children. The family dynamisms were related to the efficacy of the family milieu in maintaining the already inculcated skills within the retardate and to induce an effective vocational and rehabilitational competence within the retardate.
To assess the direction of differences between the two criterion groups of the improvers and the deteriorators, at both the phases, a bivariate analysis was utilized.

The results at phase I indicated a significant difference between the family environments of the improvers and the deteriorators and the perceptions of the two criterion groups, of improving and deteriorating retardates, towards their family, school and self. The conclusions arrived at, established a positive relationship between a congenial, warm and stimulating family milieu and the retardate's psycho-social and adjustive improvement in performance within the special school milieu. The improvers were also characterized with favourable attitudes and perceptions towards and of, his self, family and school. The deteriorators displayed a trend of unfavourable perceptions of their family and school milieu and their own self. The deteriorator's families were characterised with basic hostility and negativism towards the E.M.R. child. The deteriorating retardate perceived his environment as hostile and uncaring and an assessment of the family environment revealed distinct pathological trends of non acceptance, rejection, lack of supervision, hostility etc.

The results at phase II indicated the failure of the families of the deteriorators to function effectively as maintenance agents of the skills inculcated within the retardate and to induce any form of vocational competence
and rehabilitation within the retardate. The improvers families on the other hand were characterized by the family developing certain intervention strategies to maintain a level of psycho social adequacy within the retardate. The improvers were also characterized by a high degree of vocational competence.

The study undertaken was a cross sectional one to identify and analyse dynamisms within the family milieu of a E.M.R. child functioning within a special school and functioning outside the purview of a special school, i.e., solely within the functional family unit.