Influence of Socioeconomic Background on the Personality of Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Ado-Ekiti Nigeria

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Abstract: This research work was designed to examine the influence of socio-economic background on the personality of adolescents in public and private senior secondary school in Ado-Ekiti in order to compare the differences and similarities based on the personality traits. Data were collected from 200 participants comprising 50 males and 50 females (100) from both public and private schools which sum 200 participants selected through non-probability sampling. Measures were obtained on the personality of subjects with the use of the Big five personality inventory developed by John O.P Donahue E.M. & Kentle R.L. [6]. The data collected were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and correlation) and independent t-test was used to test for comparison. The result of the findings revealed that Adolescents from low socio-economic background are high on extraversion than Adolescents from high socio-economic background. Adolescents from low and high socio-economic background possess similar level of agreeableness. Adolescents in public schools are higher on agreeableness trait than their counterparts in private schools; also the result shows that Adolescents in private schools are high on conscientiousness trait more than their counterparts in public schools. This research additionally indicate that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Adolescents in private and public schools on extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience trait.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a time of life when the crave for love and excitement, new sensations accelerated development and feelings are very strong. Hall, [5]. Hall developed the term ‘Adolescence’ and defined it as a time when younger individual’s experience emotional and behavioural confusion, prior to establishing stability and reaching adulthood. Arnett [1] described adolescence as a period of “Storm and Stress.”

Adolescence period is a critical period in an individual’s life and it is clear that we are influenced and affected by the individual’s interaction from birth. Neuroticism is a long-term tendency to be in a negative emotional state. People with neuroticism tend to have more depressed moods; they suffer from feelings of guilt, envy, anger and anxiety, more frequently and more severely than other individuals. Neuroticism is the state of being neurotic. An individual with neuroticism is typically self-conscious and shy. Extraversion is associated with leadership behaviour. Extraverts are more likely to assert themselves in groups; It makes sense these individuals often takes on leadership roles when working with other people.

Socio-economic status is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation; it is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. Researches indicate that socio-economic background is a key factor that influences quality of life for children, youth and families. Santrock [6] defines socio-economic status as “the grouping of people with similar occupational, educational and economic characteristics”. Woolfolk[10] calls socio-economic status “the relative standing in society based on income, power, background and prestige”. Santrock [9] adds that an important qualification is “the ability to control resources and participate in society reward”. Adolescent Socio-Economic Status (SES) is usually determined by the SES of their family. The SES of the family is calculated based on the measure of income, occupation, education, neighborhood and political power. How well can the family members meet their financial responsibility? What prestige is associated with the occupation of the head of the house-hood? All these questions relate to the concept of “socio-economic status.”

The Economic status of family determines what the family’s social status will be. Economic insecurity increases emotional insecurity. Poverty in many cases causes aggressive personality problems such as stealing, truancy etc. In studies of some group, it has been found that children of low socio-economic status tend to be somewhat more authoritarian in their attitude toward certain form of socially disapproved behaviour. (Casirj, [2].
According to Gouc [4] socio-economic background is relative standing of a family in a society based on its income, power, background and prestige. It can also be the relative position of a family or individual on hierarchical social structure based on access to or control over wealth, prestige and power. Various studies have been carried out to investigate the effect of socio-economic background on the personality of Adolescents. For example it was found that students from low socio-economic status (ISES) are more likely to drop out of school as they face more challenges than children from High socio-economic status (HSES), and their inadequate financial income creates frustration, and sense of helplessness which in turn have an effect on their personality. Cherulnik and Wilderman [3] found that people living in an upper middle-class setting were judged to have more favorable personality traits than people living in a lower middle-class setting.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research participants

The total numbers of two hundred (200) respondents were selected from two different secondary schools (public and private) schools. One hundred (100) students were sampled of equal number of sex (50males and 50females) from two different senior secondary schools. The private school chosen was New Creation College and the public school was Christ School all in Ado-Ekiti.

2.2 Research instruments

A Questionnaire was used to collect information for this study. It incorporates Sex, Age, Ethnic group, socio-economic status of the parents or caregiver of the participant, and the the Big Five personality inventory.

2.3 Procedure of data collection

The questionnaire was administered to a total number of 100 students of two secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti, SS1 and SS2, Science, Commercial and Art Students of equal numbers of both boys and girls assembled in a class room and each were given a copy of the questionnaire.

2.4 Hypotheses

Adolescents from high socio-economic background will have higher scores on extraversion trait than those from low socio-economic background.

Adolescents from low socio-economic background will have higher scores on conscientiousness trait than those from high socio-economic background.

Adolescents from low socio-economic background will have higher scores on the neuroticism trait than those from high socio-economic background.

Adolescents from high socio-economic background will have higher scores on openness to experience trait than those from low socio-economic background.

Adolescents from public schools will manifest the agreeableness trait, conscientiousness trait extraversion trait, neuroticism trait and openness to experience trait more than their counterparts from private schools.

3. Results.

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis comparing the mean scores of participants from low and high socioeconomic background on extraversion ($t_{198} = 2.38, P < 0.05$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Background</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis comparing the mean scores of participants from low and high socioeconomic background on agreeableness ($t_{198} = 0.64, P > 0.05$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Background</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis comparing the mean scores of participants from low and high socioeconomic background on conscientiousness trait ($t_{198} = 0.68, P > 0.05$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Background</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cons.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personality | Socioeconomic Background | N | X | S.D | df | t  
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
Neuroticism | Low | 10 | 5.5 | 1.8 | 8 | 0.3  
| High | 91 | 5.4 | 1.8 | 5 |  

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis comparing the mean scores of participants from low and high socioeconomic background on neuroticism ($t_{198} = 0.34, p > 0.05$)  

Personality | Socioeconomic Background | N | X | S.D | df | t  
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
Openness | Low | 10 | 6.8 | 1.5 | 8 | 1.9  
| High | 91 | 6.4 | 1.3 | 4 |  

Table 5: Independent t-test analysis comparing the mean scores of participants from low and high socioeconomic background on openness ($t_{198} = 1.93, p > 0.05$)  

Personality | Socioeconomic Background | N | X | S.D | df | t  
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
Conscientiousness | Low | 10 | 7.2 | 1.9 | 8 | 0.6  
| High | 91 | 7.0 | 1.9 | 3 |  

Table 6: Independent t-test analysis comparing tscores of participants from private and public schools on personality types (df=198, N=100)  

Personality | School Type | X | S.D | t  
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
Extraversion | Private | 5.63 | 1.57 | 1.53  
| Public | 5.30 | 1.48 |  
Agreeableness | Private | 7.38 | 1.82 | -2.46  
| Public | 7.98 | 1.62 |  

4. Discussion and conclusion

Hypothesis one states that Adolescents from high socio-economic background will have higher mean scores on extraversion trait than those from low socio-economic background. The result shows that, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of adolescents from low and high socio-economic background on extraversion trait.

Adolescents from low socio-economic background are more high on extraversion than those from high socio-economic background. According to this presence findings, this is because adolescents from low socio-economic status are low on needful resources, this propel them to seek help from others either for financial sake or material sake. This state of wants is a factor that facilitates interaction of adolescents from low socio-economic background with others in the environment. Unlike those that are from high socio-economic background, whom are to some extent contended and hopeful on their human and material resources, they mostly live a enclosed quarters distinct from other residence, due to the fact that they have access to all they want, it lowers how they relate with others in their environment.

According to the result gotten from this findings, parents from high socio-economic background (SEB) with harsh style of training their children won’t allow their children to mingle with people around them, even instruct their children to limited friends in school. Adolescents from low socio-economic background have more population than those from high socio-economic background (SEB) because parents from low SEB allow their children to socialize by attending event like ogun festival, go to river to swim, goal post, involving in different kind of activities that bring s pleasure in the environment like catcher, suwe, tente, playing of ball e.t.c.

For adolescents from low SEB, they socialize by greeting people around them, but those from high SEB have little time to do that, because they are mostly introvert type, always indoor while majority of adolescents from low SEB are mostly extrovert type and authoritarian. They usually have the desire to visit recreational centre, museum, tourist centre and show room. But since they don’t have money for these, they go for an alternative.
They are always active to relate with their environment.

Adolescents from high SEB parents drive their children to school, even some get their children a driver and instruct the driver to take their children early to school and bring them home when is closing hour. There is no room for adolescent from high SEB to relate with people around with maximum time. Though few adolescent from high SEB are extrovert type, many have an introvert personality because they are mainly instructed to their home with all available resources needed, no much freedom like those from low SEB, that is to say, adolescents from low SEB will be more sociable in the aspect of relating freely with the environment than those from high SEB. According to the result of this findings, it is revealed that most adolescents from low SEB party a lot than those from high SEB.

This is in line with previous studies reported by Casirj [6] that shows that children of low socio-economic status tend to be somewhat more social and authoritarian in their attitude toward certain form of socially disapproved behaviour.

Hypothesis two states that adolescents from high socio-economic background will have higher mean scores on agreeableness trait than those from low socio-economic background. The result revealed that adolescents from low and high socio-economic background are not different in the possession of the agreeableness trait because the both status of adolescent get along well in every type of environments they find themselves and also able to tolerate others attitude, being friendly, softhearted, generous and outspoken. As individual from high socio-economic background can be outspoken, been able to express his/herself, so applicable to the individual from low socio-economic background.

This research shows that adolescents from both low and high socio-economic background have similar level of agreeableness. This report support Kohn [7] who conducted a study of the social class values of four families with children of the fifth grade of public and parochial schools and concluded that parents of all social classes have value that is related to their social class, and that parents believe it to be important for children to develop traits of honesty, obedience, and consideration for others.

Hypothesis three states that Adolescents from low socio-economic background will have higher scores on conscientiousness trait than those from high socio-economic background. The result shows that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of adolescents from low and high socio-economic background on the conscientiousness trait. This implies that adolescents from both high and low socio-economic backgrounds possess similar level of conscientiousness trait, been attentive to others around them, organized in their look and ways they address people around them. As majority students from low socio-economic background are hardworking, same applicable to few adolescents in high socio-economic background.

Hypothesis four states that, Adolescents from low socio-economic background will have higher scores on the neuroticism trait than those from high socio-economic background. The result revealed that adolescent from low and high socio-economic backgrounds are not different in the possession of neuroticism trait.

This present study shows that adolescents from both low and high Socio-economic background have similar level of Neuroticism.

Hypothesis five states that, Adolescents from high socio-economic background will have higher scores on openness to experience trait than those from low socio-economic background. The result revealed that adolescents from low socio-economic background possess the openness to experience trait more than their counterparts from high socio-economic background.

Adolescent from low socio-economic background are much exposed to new ideas because they are exposed to different kind of experience which they can adapt to, unlike those from high socio-economic background who are limited to their environment and have limited means to consider new ideas because of their limited experience. Hypothesis six states that, there will be a significant difference in the personality traits of adolescents in private and public schools. The result revealed that adolescents in public schools possess the agreeableness trait more than their counterparts in private schools which means there is a probability for adolescent from public school to be high on agreeableness trait by getting along well with people around, been friendly, trusting and very much outspoken because of the level of sociability in them, interacting well with others. Freedom of speech is more accommodating in public school and this enable them to relate and adapt to all manner of conditions, easy to make friends with adolescents from low and high background unlike those from private school, few students possess that kind of personality trait because they are restricted to themselves and conditioned to their own limited environment.

The result of this research also shows that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of adolescents in private and public schools on the conscientiousness trait which means that adolescents in private schools possess the conscientiousness trait more than their counterpart in public schools, that is to say, adolescents in private school are more relaxed, organized with their ways of expressing their feelings to people around them while interacting. Unlike adolescents from public school, due to the conduct of the school and the students from different low socio-economic background with different kind of aggressive temperament which
influence their peers and the poor school environment makes them not to be organized, which brings about the low score on conscientiousness.

Additionally to this result revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of adolescents in private and public schools on the extraversion trait, neuroticism and openness to experience trait respectively. The six hypothesis was partially supported while the other five hypothesis was not supported.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusion was made that:

a) Adolescents from low socio-economic background are more sociable, gregarious and partying than Adolescents from high socio-economic background.

b) Adolescents from low and high socio-economic background get along well with others in the environment, friendly, trusting, generous, compassionate about things and the both classes of socio-economic background are having similar level of outspokenness.

c) Adolescents from low and high socio-economic background are having similar level of conscientiousness trait.

d) Adolescents from low and high socio-economic background are having similar level of neuroticism trait, emotionally stable or unstable.

e) Adolescents from low socio-economic background are more thoughtful and rational in considering new ideas than adolescents from high socio-economic background.

f) It is indicated that adolescents in public schools are more tolerant, friendly than adolescents from high socio-economic background.

g) This also indicates that adolescents in private schools are more organized, systematic, and efficient than their counterparts in public schools.

h) Additionally adolescents in private and public schools are not different in the possession of extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience trait, that is to say both private and public schools are similar on these personality traits.

4.1 Recommendation

It is hereby recommended that Government should address the problem of poverty so there will be high level of conscientiousness among adolescents. The issue of unemployment should also be solved because when there is provision of job with attractive pay parents from low SES are able to take proper care of their children (adolescents).

5. References

[1] Arnett J.J G. Stanley Hall’s Adolescence; Brilliance And nonsense. History of psychology, 2006, 9 (3)


