



Original Research Article

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Analysis of Adolescents' Personality in Context of Family Social Class

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The present study examined adolescents' personality across four different social classes (Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV) of families in G.B Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand. Families falling under social class I of the university had parent(s) working as Professor and Associate Professor in the university; those falling under social class II had parent(s) working as Assistant Professor or equivalent and Doctor in the university; those falling under social class III had parent(s) working as Accountant, Supervisor, Lab Technician and Clerk in the university and those falling under social class IV had parent(s) working as Attendant, Driver, Peon, CRC laborer, Gardner and Sweeper. Forty adolescents were randomly selected as respondents from each social class of families making a total of 160 respondents for the present study. Multi-Dimensional Assessment of Personality Scale was administered to adolescents to assess their personality. Adolescents from social class I and social class II were seen to have significantly higher academic achievement, competition, creativity, enthusiasm, excitability, general ability, guilt proneness, individualism, innovation, mental health, morality, self control, sensitivity, self sufficiency, social warmth, tension in comparison to their counterparts from social class III and social class IV. Whereas, adolescents from social class III and IV were assessed to be significantly more adaptable, bold and leading than those from social class I and II.

Introduction

The word adolescence is drawn from Latin word *adolescere*, meaning 'to grow up'. It is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood (age of majority), whose cultural purpose is preparation of children for adult roles. It is a period of multiple transitions involving education, training, employment, and unemployment, as well as transitions from one living circumstance to another. Adolescence is the second highly critical phase of life after infancy where parental support is needed to a greater extent. The period of infancy

needs more physical support and care while during adolescence more psychological support is needed. Thus, adolescence marks an important turning point in the parent-child relationship. However, adolescent stage is also a confusing time for most parents as they misunderstand their children's paradoxical behaviour and are unable to understand the attitudes that their children exhibit.

Erikson's (1968) belief is that throughout each person's lifetime, they experience different crises or conflicts. Each of the conflicts arises at a certain point in life and must be successfully resolved for progression to the next of the eight stages. The "Identity versus Role Confusion" stage consists of

adolescents trying to figure out who they are in order to form a basic identity or personality that will influence their behaviour and development throughout their lives. At this stage, they begin to explore their independence and embark on a journey of self discovery. They also need guidance at this time to enable them go through this stage with a feeling of independence and a strong sense of self. If they are successful during this stage, they will develop an ability to live by the standards and expectations of the society.

Personality is defined as the characteristic set of behaviors, cognitions, and emotional patterns that evolve from biological and environmental factors. While there is no generally agreed upon definition of personality, most theories focus on motivation and psychological interactions with one's environment. Parents play a vital role in shaping evolving adolescent's personality. Bowlby (1957) reported that in the absence of warm parental love, children face considerable problems of adjustment which may be manifested in terms of dependence, lack of initiative and responsibility. A healthy parent-adolescent relationship facilitates positive behavior patterns therefore reducing indiscipline and enhancing positive self-concept of the adolescent.

Since socio-economic status (SES) or social class largely defines the monetary and cognitive resources available with parents for investments in their child, socio-economic status is a prime factor for shaping a child's personality. Among socio-economic / social class factors, family income seems to be most related to self-esteem among adolescents (Birndorf *et al.*, 2005). Also, lack of support or a dysfunctional family environment has been described as a contributor to maladjustment, behavioral problems and drug abuse (Wentzel, 1994). Not only is the adolescent of an economically underprivileged home is denied from many of the privileges and enriching experiences enjoyed by upper and middle class children but his life values are affected by parental ambitions for him (Zenter and Bates, 2008).

Economic stress due to poverty negatively impacts quality of parenting, familial interactions, and child's adjustment (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002) which in turn increases adolescents' risk for

loneliness, depression, unruly behavior, and substance use (Conger *et al.*, 1994). Darling and Steinberg (1993) emphasized that parenting styles have a direct effect on the development of specific child behaviors and characteristics. Pinderhughes *et al.*, (2000) also reported that parental behaviors and family environments marked by repeated harsh parental discipline have been associated with the likelihood of antisocially aggressive behavior among adolescents. Kumar (2016) too reported that adolescents who belongs to high and middle socioeconomic status show better performance in academic achievement.

In the light of above discussed theoretical and empirical findings, present study was taken up with the objective to explore difference in adolescents' personality across family social class.

Materials and Methods

Locale

The present research study was carried out exclusively in G.B Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. Out of the eight schools running in the university, only five schools viz; Campus School, Government Girls Inter College (GGIC), Pantnagar Inter College (PIC), Balnilyam Junior School, Saraswati Shishu Mandir were purposively selected as a research base for the present study since they provided education up to intermediate.

Sample

Adolescents studying in 7-9 standards of the selected schools were listed and categorized under four groups on the basis of their family social class namely Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV. Social class of a family was based on parents working status in the university namely Social Class I: - Professor and Associate Professor; Social Class II:-Assistant Professor or equivalent, Doctor; Social Class III:-Accountant, Supervisor, Lab Technician, Clerk; Social Class IV:-Attendant, Driver, Peon, CRC labourer, Gardner, Sweeper. In the present study, forty adolescents were randomly selected from each social class of the family making a total of 160 respondents for the present study.

Research tools

Adolescent personality was assessed using Multi-dimensional Assessment of Personality Questionnaire (1993). MAP is a 147-item questionnaire designed to examine dimensions of adolescent personality like-Adaptability, Academic Achievement, Boldness, Competition, Creativity, Enthusiasm, Excitability, General Ability, Guilt proneness, Individualism, Innovation, Leadership, Maturity, Mental Health, Morality, Self Control, Sensitivity, Self sufficiency, Social Warmth, and Tension.

Data collection

Prior permission to contact respondents of the present study in the school itself was sought from principals of the selected schools. Thereafter, randomly selected respondents were approached and their consent for participation in the study was obtained. Respondents were administered research tools assuring confidentiality of their responses and expectation of their honest response on it.

Results and Discussion

A close perusal of Table 1 depicts significant difference in all the domains of adolescent personality across different family social classes except maturity. Adolescents from social class I and social class II reported significantly higher academic achievement, competition, creativity, enthusiasm, excitability, general ability, guilt proneness, individualism, innovation, mental health, morality, self control, sensitivity, self sufficiency, social warmth and tension in comparison to their counterparts from social class III and social class IV. Whereas, adolescents from social class III and IV reported significantly higher adaptability, boldness, leadership than adolescents from social class I and II. The probable reason might be difference in disciplinary practices, parenting strategies, availability of resources, parental guidance and counseling across family social classes which determines adolescents' opportunity for development of such personality characteristics.

The probable reason might be that the parents of high social class being better educated use effective parenting strategies to nurture and reinforce positive attributes of their child's

personality. They supervise their children closely to avoid situations that might bring them criticism. The parents are usually more tolerant to ideological differences, differing opinions and viewpoints, encourage autonomy creating an environment for development of self-governing identity of adolescents. Aggarwal and Mishra (2005) reported that various dimensions of parenting like the symbolic reward, object reward, love, demand, rejection, protection, symbolic punishment and object punishment was significantly affecting the self-confidence of the students. Love, protection, and the moderate degree of demand inculcated the feelings of security and emotional support whereas rejection, punishment (symbolic as well as object) produced anxiety, pressure, fear of failure, feeling of indifference and hesitation in the expression of feelings. Savita *et al.*, (2012) in their study reported that adolescents on the basis of family income and parental education differed significantly on their boldness, guilt proneness, leadership, maturity, mental health, self-control, self-sufficiency and tension level. A study by Pant and Singh (2017) revealed that adolescents of only highly educated mothers were found to be significantly more emotionally progressive and socially adjusted. A meta-analysis found that SES accounts for small but significant differences in self-esteem in young adulthood (Twenge and Campbell, 2002). A similar pattern emerged in the study by Robins *et al.*, (2002), who found a small socioeconomic status effect on self-esteem.

Parents of high social class also invest time and energy in supporting, motivating their children in academics understand their pressure and acknowledge their achievements. Singh and Choudhary (2015) reported that students who belonged to high and middle socioeconomic status have shown better performance in academic achievement. Creativity is one of the highest form of cognition. It requires imagination, originality and individuality. Adolescents in families with high social class feel safe, engaged, connected, and supported. Stimulating environment sets up a fertile foundation for innovation. The results of a study by Parsasirat *et al.*, (2013) reported significant positive correlation between family economic status and creativity and between parent education and creativity.

Strained family interactions, lack of reinforcing and stimulating environment, and so on leads to extreme internalizing and externalizing behaviors in adolescents. Consistent exposure to conflicts, tension within home may negatively influence adolescents' sense of self, emotional regulation, behavior patterns and in turn their interpersonal relationships. In general, antisocial behavior is highly likely when children have repeatedly experienced indifferent, unresponsive behavior from their parents (Patterson, 1982). Also, parents' own positive coping with frustration and distress serve to influence children's regulation of their

emotions (Kliewer *et al.*, 1996). Adolescents of low socio economic class often feel neglected at home and seek companionship outside home. Also, because of lack of time for strengthening parent-child relationship, peer pressure becomes more prominently influential in shaping an adolescent's personality. The peer mostly belonging to families with similar environment provide a context deficient for psychological and psychosocial well being and thus exert great influence on attributes of their personality such as the emotional and behavioral patterns, sense of self-control, self-discipline and so on.

Table.1 Mean differences in personality of adolescents from four different social classes of the G.B.P.U.A&T., Pantnagar

Domains of adolescent personality	Class I (n ₁ =40)	Class II (n ₂ =40)	Class III (n ₃ =40)	Class IV (n ₄ =40)	F Cal. (C.D)
Adaptability	7.65 ^a	7.67 ^a	9.05 ^b	9.77 ^c	7.10 ** (1.65)
Academic Achievement	9.27 ^a	9.25 ^a	7.32 ^b	6.92 ^c	10.02** (1.79)
Boldness	7.22 ^a	7.25 ^a	9.12 ^b	10.85 ^c	8.48 ** (1.53)
Competition	8.85 ^a	8.72 ^a	6.10 ^b	5.52 ^c	5.63 ** (1.38)
Creativity	10.95 ^a	10.85 ^a	8.45 ^b	6.15 ^c	15.45 ** (1.38)
Enthusiasm	10.22 ^a	10.15 ^a	9.05 ^b	7.02 ^c	12.61 ** (1.23)
Excitability	9.90 ^a	9.82 ^a	7.72 ^b	6.97 ^c	4.87 ** (1.64)
General Ability	8.37 ^a	8.32 ^a	5.02 ^b	2.47 ^c	22.76 ** (1.01)
Guilt Proneness	8.35 ^a	8.50 ^a	7.33 ^b	6.75 ^c	3.02 * (2.6)
Individualism	8.70 ^a	8.67 ^a	6.97 ^b	5.27 ^c	7.25 ** (1.66)
Innovation	8.65 ^a	8.62 ^a	6.40 ^b	5.87 ^c	7.49 ** (1.78)
Leadership	6.72 ^a	6.75 ^a	8.02 ^b	9.92 ^c	3.79 *(1.53)
Maturity	8.70	8.50	8.27	8.00	1.50 (1.15)
Mental Health	9.32 ^a	9.27 ^a	7.50 ^b	7.40 ^c	3.83* (1.54)
Morality	8.85 ^a	8.75 ^a	6.52 ^b	6.90 ^c	6.70 ** (1.89)
Self control	8.99 ^a	8.97 ^a	8.00 ^b	6.35 ^c	3.78 * (1.59)
Sensitivity	8.97 ^a	8.95 ^a	6.90 ^b	5.37 ^c	11.41 ** (1.31)
Self Sufficiency	9.50 ^a	9.47 ^a	8.10 ^b	4.89 ^c	14.27 ** (1.69)
Social warmth	9.32 ^a	9.31 ^a	8.27 ^b	8.05 ^c	3.50* (1.59)
Tension	8.35 ^a	8.25 ^a	7.35 ^b	5.43 ^c	6.25 ** (1.27)

Oketch and Ngware, (2012) asserted that household characteristics such as financial and levels of parental education determine whether a child enrolls in school, stays in school, learns and makes progress to higher levels of education. A study by Hart *et al.*, (1995) reported that lower

SES is associated with poor parental mental health, which in turn negatively influences parental functioning and parent-child interactions, predicting mental health problems in children and that lower quality of communications and interactions during early childhood have been

negatively associated with the later development of sociability and adaptability. Piotrowska *et al.*, (2015) reported that lower family socioeconomic status was associated with higher levels of antisocial behavior.

Hence, it can be concluded that adolescents from social class I and social class II reported significantly higher academic achievement, competition, creativity, enthusiasm, excitability, general ability, guilt proneness, individualism, innovation, mental health, morality, self-control, sensitivity, social sufficiency, social warmth and tension in comparison to their counterparts from

social class III and social class IV. Thus, family social class significantly determines the personality of an adolescent. Each social class has its own pros and cons for personality development during adolescence.

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