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Relationship between Child Abuse and the Trait of Introversion - Extroversion among Senior Secondary Students in Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Survey data collected from 2,000 senior secondary class two (SSII) students in Cross River State, Nigeria were analyzed to determine the influence of child abuse and the trait of introversion-extroversion among senior secondary school students. Four dimensions of child abuse - physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as child neglect were studied. Contingency chi square (X^2) was used in testing the hypothesis for introversion-extroversion behavior among senior secondary school students at the 0.05 alpha level of significance. The result obtained showed a significant influence of child abuse on introversion-extroversion characteristics among senior secondary school students in the study area. Students who were abused were more likely to become introverts than those not abused.

[122]

Key words: introversion, extroversion, personality traits, non conforming, extroverted individual.

INTRODUCTION

In almost all societies, there are people with a piquancy (excitement) for living characterized by an ability to get along with almost everyone. There are also others who are unhappy and are incapable of making friends or even getting along with members of their families. Students in this group are withdrawn and unwilling or unable to make use of their abilities and may engage in activities that tend to be destructive to both themselves and others. One also observes that while some students are happy, feel secure, easy-going and conforming, others feel insecure and tend to be aloof and appear generally non-conforming. This is always a matter of concern to teachers and school administrators.

[123]

Extroversion-introversion is a personality trait typified by energetic, enthusiastic, sociable and talkative attitude at one end to retiring, sober, reserved, silent and cautious attitude at the other (Baron, 2006). Passer and Smith (2001) indicated that an extroverted individual is sociable, outgoing, talkative, responsive, easygoing, lively, carefree and have a leadership quality, whereas an introverted individual is passive, careful, thoughtful, peaceful, controlled, reliable,

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even-tempered and calm. Eysenck (1975) found that people show certain kinds of characteristic scores on the last two of his basic personality dimensions-as could be measured by a test called "*The Eysenck Personality Inventory*". For instance, if one inherits a highly sensitive over-aroused nervous system, he is likely to be strongly affected by environmental rewards and punishment such as physical abuse or any form of neglect and this would develop conditional responses very easily. This high state of conditionality will result in one who learns and follows the rules and avoids too much stimulation: an introvert. One with under-aroused nervous system will not be as sensitive to rewards and punishments and thus will not easily learn to play by the rules. But such a person constantly seeks arousal through excitement and change, thus becoming an extrovert.

One's personality represents high levels of organization of his motives, habits, attitudes and value system (Sawney and Telford, 1975). Landin (1975, 1981) affirmed that even within limits of lawful behaviour, each person develops in a different set of circumstances and so develops a unique variety of behaviour. The unique behavioral patterns acquired by the individual are those peculiar to him and constitute his personality.

Brown and Hendrick (1971) conducted three studies on effects of introversion and social perception on the subjectivity perceptions of extroverts and introverts using the technique of factor analysis. In two of their studies, they observed that both introverts and extroverts had extroverted aspirations. The result were confirmed and extended in the third study with a larger sample of subjects. Both introverts and extroverts showed veridical perception of actual private self and actual social self. However, the ideal conceptions of both personality types tended to be extroverted in nature. Eysenck (1970) stated that it was easier to socialize introverts than extroverts. The hypothesis that aggressive and sexual impulse are more readily socialized in introverts than extroverts implies that the introversion-extroversion dimension is a significant source of variance in crime and delinquency and adjustment and interpersonal relations. McLaughlin and Eysenck (1977) found extroverts superior to introverts on both easy and difficult pairs-associate tasks and introverts were less resistant to response competition in a serial-learning task.

Extroversion, with its component traits of sociability, tempo and vigor, predisposed individual towards positive affect whereas neuroticism - general emotionality, impulsivity, fears and anger predisposed individuals towards negative effect. It is a product of a person's interaction [124] with the environment. Good parental care usually serves to guarantee the development of a healthy personality. Thus, in all cultures, parents or care givers strive to give adequate attention, love and care to their offspring. Childhood is entitled to special care and assistance and for full and harmonious development of his or her personality characteristics, a child should grow up in family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (UNICEF 2001 and 2003). However, some parents and care givers still consider their relationship with their children based on the fading concept of "*spare the rod and spoil the child*". Thus, parents and care givers often maltreat, neglect, or even fail to provide the necessary love, care and attention for the normal development of a child's personality. There are also cases of physical abuse, exploitation, deprivation, exposure to certain adverse conditions, sexual abuse, child labour and child trafficking (Isangedighi, 2007).

An average of three cases of child abuse were yearly in Okene, Nigeria (Femi, 2004) and the average age of the victims was 7 years, while that of the assailant was 26 years. Some of the effects of child abuse may be feeling of distress and trauma, leading to introversion or extroversion. Although several studies has been carried out on introversion and social perception, extroversion and anti-social behaviour or the influence of extroversion on neuroticism, little emphasis has been placed on the effect of child abuse on introversion-extroversion. Our objective was to deter-

mine the relationship between child abuse and introvert - extrovert attitudes among secondary school students in cross River state, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

A total of two thousand (2000) students randomly selected from twenty secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria were used for the study. The subjects (1000 males and 1000 females) were aged between 15 and 17years. A standard questionnaire - Students Opinion Questionnaire (SOQ) was used for data collection. This was divided into three sections: Section A elicited demographic information such as age, sex, school type and class from the respondents; Section B was a 20 Likert-type scale that measured the prevalence of child abuse, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and child neglect; Section C was a 10-item Likert-type scale that measured respondents' introversion-extroversion characteristics. A total of 2000 copies of the questionnaire were administered, out of which 1,973 were properly filled and returned.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using Contingency Chi-square (X^2). The hypothesis that Child abuse does not significantly influence introversion-extroversion characteristics in senior secondary school students was tested at the 5% level of significance. [125]

RESULTS

The results of the Chi-square analysis are presented in Table 1 for physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and child neglect respectively. The expected frequencies are in parenthesis, while the observed frequencies are those without parenthesis.

The analysis presented in Table 1 shows chi-square values of 402.21 for physical abuse, 228.98 for sexual abuse, 621.83 for emotional abuse and 556.81 for child neglect. Each of these values was higher than the critical X^2 value of 5.99 at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the research hypothesis that of each of the four forms of child abuse is a significant negative influence on the trait of introversion-extroversion among senior secondary school students in Cross River State. In each of the four instances, the significant differences between observed and expected frequencies were in the low and high level groups. In other words, most students with high levels of abuse were introverts. This confirms the preposition of Sarason and Sarason (1987) that abused children talked less and made fewer social responses, apart from engaging in little exploratory or inquisitive behaviour and feeling depressed. Thus, they are highly affected by environmental rewards and punishment. It therefore follows that a child who is constantly abused has the tendency to become an introvert. [126]

CONCLUSION

Students who were abused were more likely to become introverts than those not abused. Hence, the government at all levels should carry out an enlightenment campaign on the influence of child abuse on introversion-extroversion characteristics of students. Social support network and psychotherapeutic interventions should be provided for victims to prevent further damage to their personality. School guidance counselors should be encouraged to assist abused children so as to help them develop a positive personality.

Table 1. Chi-Square analysis of the influence of child abuse on introversion-extroversion status of Senior Secondary School students.

Variables	Groups	Introverts	Extroverts	Total	Cal X^2
Physical Abuse	Low	197 (369)	324 (152)	521	
	Moderate	587 (541)	177 (223)	764	
	High	618 (488)	74 (200)	688	
	Total	1398	575	1973	402.21*
Sexual abuse	Low	305 (360)	203 (148)	508	
	Moderate	391 (485)	293 (199)	684	
	High	702 (553)	79 (228)	781	
	Total	1398	575	1973	228.98*
Emotional abuse	Low	224 (473)	423 (194)	667	
	Moderate	524 (465)	132 (191)	656	
	High	630 (460)	20 (190)	650	
	Total	1398	575	1973	621.83*
Child neglect	Low	262 (476)	410 (196)	672	
	Moderate	410 (382)	129 (157)	539	
	High	726 (540)	36 (222)	762	
	Total	1398	575	1973	556.81*

* Significant at $p = 0.05$; critical $X^2 = 5.99$

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