

Influence of locality, age and gender on personality traits of urban and rural adolescents

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Abstract: The present study was carried out to understand the different personality traits of adolescents in 2012-13. The sample comprised 256 adolescents (128 boys and 128 girls) in the age range of 13-19 years from urban and rural areas of Dharwad taluk of Karnataka. The background information of the adolescents was collected with the help of Self-structured questionnaire. Big Five Inventory was used to understand the personality traits of adolescents. The results revealed that urban and rural adolescents differed significantly in terms of agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability, while they were similar in two personality traits *i.e.*, extroversion and openness to experience. Further, results indicated that early and late adolescents differed significantly in terms of emotional stability. Boys were better in extroversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability traits whereas girls were better in agreeableness and openness to experience traits.

Key words: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional stability, Extroversion, Openness to experience

Introduction

The passage from childhood to adulthood is marked by a long transitional period known as adolescence. Many developmental changes take place during this period including personality development. Personality traits are usually conceptualized as complex biologically based bipolar dimensions of emotional, cognitive and behavioural dispositions, which are largely heritable and relatively consistent across situations and time (McCrae and Costa, 2008). According to social scientists, personality is the sum total of behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and values that are characteristic of an individual. No two individuals have the same personalities. Each individual has his or her own way of interacting with other people and with his or her social environment. Our personality traits determine how we adjust to our environment and how we react in specific situations.

In earlier days personality was believed to be the product of heredity and that the child was a 'chip off the old block'. Today there is ample evidence that personality pattern is the product of both heredity and environment. On the genetic side, genes appear to account for about 50 per cent of any given personality trait. The other 50 per cent accounts to environmental influences. Environment is made up of everything and everyone around the individual. It includes home, school, neighbourhood, family, friends, teachers, etc. McCrae *et al.* (2002) found that personality factors were reasonably invariant across 12 to 18 years ages with little individual difference. Further, Neuroticism appeared to increase in girls and openness to experience increased in both boys and girls while mean levels of extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness were stable. Allik *et al.* (2004) reported that personality trait structure matures and become sufficiently differentiated around age 14-15 and grows to be practically distinguishable from adult personality by age of 16. Personality of adolescents becomes more differentiated with age along with the growth of mental capacities, the correlations among the personality traits and intelligence become smaller. Hence

the present study was carried out with the objectives to understand the personality traits of urban and rural adolescents and to study the influence of age and gender on personality traits of adolescents.

Material and methods

The population of the study consisted boys and girls from 8th, 9th, 10th standards from high schools and PUC-1st and PUC-2nd year from junior colleges of urban and rural areas of Dharwad taluk. There were totally 256 adolescents in the age range of 13-19 years (128 adolescents each from urban and rural areas) and they were selected through random sampling technique. The background information of the adolescents was collected with the help of structured questionnaire and further information about personality traits of adolescents was collected using the Big Five Inventory developed by John *et al.* (1991). The data was analysed in terms of number and percentages and t-test was computed to make comparison between groups.

Results and discussion

The data presented in Table1 indicates that the urban and rural adolescents differed significantly with respect to some of the personality traits like agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability wherein urban children were better with respect to conscientiousness while rural adolescents were better with respect to agreeableness and emotional stability. However, both the groups were found similar with respect to the other two personality traits namely, extroversion and openness to experience. This indicates that with respect to conscientiousness, urban adolescents have more tendencies to show discipline, act dutifully and aim for achievement, preference for planning rather than spontaneous behaviour which influences the way in which they control, regulate and direct their impulses. With regard to agreeableness trait rural adolescents showed differences in general concern for social harmony, value getting along with others, tendency to be

Table 1. Personality traits of urban and rural adolescents

N=256

Table 1: Personality traits of urban and rural adolescents							
Locality	Levels of extroversion						t-value
	Low	Average	High	Total	χ^2	Mean \pm S.D.	
Urban	-	85 (66.41)	43 (33.59)	128 (100.00)	6.61	30.77 \pm 3.70	0.38
Rural	6 (4.69)	80 (62.50)	42 (32.81)	128 (100.00)		30.57 \pm 4.75	
Levels of agreeableness							
Urban	1 (0.78)	35 (27.34)	92 (71.88)	128 (100.00)	2.51	36.11 \pm 4.47	2.85*
Rural	-	31 (24.22)	97 (75.78)	128 (100.00)		38.56 \pm 5.72	
Levels of conscientiousness							
Urban	2 (1.56)	27 (21.09)	99 (77.35)	128 (100.00)	2.83	36.74 \pm 5.04	2.41*
Rural	6 (4.69)	26 (20.31)	96 (75.00)	128 (100.00)		35.45 \pm 5.93	
Levels of emotional stability							
Urban	3 (2.34)	77 (60.16)	48 (37.50)	128 (100.00)	2.56	30.50 \pm 5.52	2.22*
Rural	2 (1.56)	68 (53.13)	58 (45.31)	128 (100.00)		31.98 \pm 5.13	
Levels of openness to experience							
Urban	2 (1.56)	50 (39.06)	76 (59.38)	128 (100.00)	2.26	65.02 \pm 8.13	0.95
Rural	5 (3.91)	59 (46.09)	64 (50.00)	128 (100.00)		64.04 \pm 8.39	

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage, * $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance

compassionate and co-operative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. They are generally considerate, friendly, generous, helpful and willing to compromise their interest with others and have an optimistic view of human nature as compared to urban counterparts. While with respect to emotional stability, rural adolescents tend to remain more stable and calm, free from persistent negative feelings, less easily upset and are less emotionally reactive.

The possible reason may be attributed to the cultural differences in which they were raised or the child rearing practices followed in the two areas. It may also be due to the differential exposure or opportunity available for the adolescents in the two areas. There is also impressive evidence, ranging from studies of temperament in infants to investigations of personality dimensions in adults, that these five personality characteristics have a high genetic component. Roy (2002) showed that the personality patterns of the four metropolitan cities of India (Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai) were significantly different in four personality factors such as dull-bright, submissive-assertive, tough minded-tender minded and group dependent-self sufficient. Jyothi and Devi (2011) found that majority of the rural child labourers, both boys and girls were found low in most of the positive traits of personality like adaptability, academic performance, competition, creativity, enthusiasm, individualism, independence, leadership, social warmth and boldness. However, they were found average in dimensions like curiosity, excitability, general ability, maturity, mental health and morality. Savita and Duhan (2012) revealed that rural adolescents were significantly higher in their boldness,

leadership, sensitivity and social warmth. Significant results were also found in the level of general ability, guilt proneness, mental health, self-sufficiency and tension.

Further, the study (Table 2) showed that early and late adolescents differed significantly in terms of emotional stability indicating that the early adolescents (13 to 16 years) were relatively calm and balanced as compared to the late adolescents (17 to 19 years) whereas the two groups were found to be similar in extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. This may be because personality traits remain relatively stable through adolescence and resemble the mean levels of adults. McCrae *et al.* (2002) found that in three samples of adolescents from two countries, the United States and Belgium girls between age 12 and 18 increased in neuroticism, both boys and girls increased in openness, and there were no consistent changes in other personality traits. Allik *et al.*, (2004) reported that as the level of openness increased the levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness decreased between 12 and 18 years of age. Similarly, McCrae *et al.* (2002) also found that personality factors were reasonably invariant across ages. Neuroticism appeared to increase in girls, and openness to experience increased in both boys and girls while the mean levels of extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness were stable.

The results (Table 3) of the present study revealed that gender had no significant influence on the personality traits of adolescents. Further, comparison of mean scores indicated that boys were better in extroversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability traits whereas, girls were found to be better

Influence of locality, age and gender on.....

Table 2. Influence of age on personality traits of adolescents

N=256

Table 2: Influence of age on personality traits of adolescents							
Age	Levels of extroversion				χ^2	Mean ±S.D.	t-value
	Low	Average	High	Total			
Early adolescence (13-16 years)	4 (2.48)	108 (67.08)	49 (30.44)	161 (100.00)	1.50	30.55 ±4.20	0.55
Late adolescence (17-19 years)	2 (2.11)	57 (60.00)	36 (37.89)	95 (100.00)		30.85 ±4.33	
Levels of agreeableness							
Early adolescence (13-16 years)	1 (0.62)	41 (25.47)	119 (73.91)	161 (100.00)	0.61	36.21 ±5.24	1.46
Late adolescence (17-19 years)	0	25 (26.32)	70 (73.68)	95 (100.00)		35.23 ±4.96	
Levels of conscientiousness							
Early adolescence (13-16 years)	5 (3.11)	32 (19.88)	124 (77.01)	161 (100.00)	0.19	35.78 ±5.36	0.70
Late adolescence (17-19 years)	3 (3.16)	21 (22.11)	71 (74.73)	95 (100.00)		35.28 ±5.74	
Levels of emotional stability							
Early adolescence (13-16 years)	3 (1.86)	83 (51.55)	75 (46.59)	161 (100.00)	4.81*	31.83 ±5.42	2.33*
Late adolescence (17-19 years)	2 (2.11)	62 (65.26)	31 (32.63)	95 (100.00)		30.22 ±5.19	
Levels of openness to experience							
Early adolescence (13-16 years)	3 (1.86)	63 (39.13)	95 (59.01)	161 (100.00)	3.89	65.07 ±8.05	1.31
Late adolescence (17-19 years)	4 (4.21)	46 (48.42)	45 (47.37)	95 (100.00)		63.66 ±8.63	

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage, * $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance

Table 3. Influence of gender on personality traits of adolescents

N=256

Gender	Levels of extroversion				χ^2	Mean ±S.D.	t-value
	Low	Average	High	Total			
Boys	4 (3.13)	78 (60.94)	46 (35.93)	128 (100.00)	2.10	30.81 ±4.47	0.47
Girls	2 (1.56)	87 (67.97)	39 (30.47)	128 (100.00)		30.55 ±4.03	
Levels of agreeableness							
Boys	1 (0.78)	35 (27.34)	92 (71.88)	128 (100.00)	1.65	35.77 ±5.61	0.17
Girls	-	31 (24.22)	97 (75.78)	128 (100.00)		35.88 ±4.72	
Levels of conscientiousness							
Boys	3 (2.34)	27 (21.09)	98 (76.57)	128 (100.00)	0.27	35.92 ±5.05	0.85
Girls	5 (3.91)	26 (20.31)	97 (75.78)	128 (100.00)		35.33 ±5.84	
Levels of emotional stability							
Boys	2 (1.56)	74 (57.81)	52 (40.63)	128 (100.00)	0.85	31.36 ±5.10	0.37
Girls	3 (2.34)	71 (55.47)	54 (42.19)	128 (100.00)		31.11 ±5.62	
Levels of openness to experience							
Boys	5 (3.91)	55 (42.97)	68 (53.12)	128 (100.00)	2.43	64.10 ±8.84	0.79
Girls	2 (1.56)	54 (42.19)	72 (56.25)	128 (100.00)		64.93 ±7.74	

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

in agreeableness and openness to experience traits. This indicates that boys were characterized by positive emotions, surgency, tendency to seek company of others, self-disciplined, act dutifully, calm, balanced, etc. whereas girls were compassionate, cooperative, imaginative and curious. The possible reason may be the social desirability bias that leads men and women to endorse gender related traits, and some traits such as fearfulness may be less undesirable for women than for men. This may also be attributed to differences in parenting styles wherein boys and girls are socialised differently to some extent in all societies. Boys are more often allowed freedom to experiment and participate in physically risky activities. Girls are encouraged to learn to do domestic tasks and to participate in child rearing activities. Gender differences in personality traits have been documented in many empirical studies. The findings are in conformity with results reported by Chandrasekaran (2008). Zupancic *et al.* (2008) reported that gender differences were small and similar across countries wherein girls were perceived to be more conscientious and agreeable relative to boys, especially from middle childhood onwards. The possible reason for the above

findings may be attributed to the cultural differences in which they were raised or the child rearing practices followed in the two areas. It may also be due to the differential exposure or opportunity available for the adolescents in the two areas. There is also impressive evidence, ranging from studies of temperament in infants to investigations of personality dimensions in adults, that these five personality characteristics have a high genetic component.

The present study indicated that the adolescents were average in all the personality traits. Further, results indicated that urban adolescents were better with respect to conscientiousness while rural adolescents were better with respect to agreeableness and emotional stability, while they were similar with respect to the other two personality traits namely, extroversion and openness to experience. Developing all personality traits during adolescence is very important since it is considered as a critical time for developing self identity, learning skills and accepting changes for a healthy lifestyle. In this connection there is a need to sensitise parents and community to develop all personality traits and enhance them both in urban and rural areas.

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