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Psychological Differentiation of Secondary School Children in Relation to their Family-Structure and Self-Concept

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Abstract:

The present study is an attempt to investigate whether psycho-social variables namely gender differentiation and family-structure are significantly related to psychological differentiation and self-concept of secondary school students. The key construct of the present research was formulated by Witkins (1962).

For this study 100 boys and 100 girls of secondary schools of Patna (Bihar, India) were incidentally selected. For this purpose, the personal data sheet was filled by the students and Witkin's Embedded Figure Test and Mohsin's Self-Concept Scale were administered to the respondents.

Keywords: Psychological differentiation, gender differentiation, self-concept.

1. Introduction

How individuals learn i.e. a person's learning style has been the subject of learning style theory over the last fifty years. For this purpose, Witkin began his studies on American subjects with objects specifying certain characteristics and modes of perceiving the external world. Witkin et al (1962, 1964, 1967, 1974, 1975) described two aspects of cognitive style: field dependent and field independent. Persons who see the world more analytically in terms of either an inherent structure or the one imposed by the person himself, is known as the field independent person and at the other extreme, those who are unable to isolate figure from ground and see the world globally rather than in terms of its constituent elements are field dependent persons.

Self-concept is one of the significant psychological theories for developmental, social, clinical and specifically educational outputs. It is common sense that positive self-concept may contribute positively in enhancing the academic achievements, his personal beliefs or what he calls the 'self-image' (Marsha, 1990). It is a perception that individuals have of their own worth. This includes a composite of their generalized view of social acceptance and their feelings about themselves and others (Bellmore and Cillessen, 2006).

Family structure has an important role on the development of people of India. In western countries, the concept of joint families does not exist; unlike in India where both joint family and nuclear family systems are prevalent. In India, especially in villages, life is centered on the family, and the entire livelihood of these families is dependent on agriculture. However, due to modernization and the influence of globalization, the life-styles of towns and cities have started changing. Fast paced modern life replaced the slower traditional one. Joint families broke up to form nuclear families. Children in these nuclear families received more liberties and freedoms, which was not possible in its joint counterpart. As a result of these liberties and freedoms they develop self-confidence which in turn helps them in handling difficult problems. With self-confidence, qualities such as initiative, enterprise and urge to handle changing situations has been seen in the nuclear family.

A study conducted by B Onyekuru (2015) found that higher proportion of male students was field independent while comparatively more number of female students was field dependent. Maghsudi (2007) reported that there were mixed evidence of the relationship between gender and field-independence-dependence cognitive style.

Studies by Srour et al (2013) showed that male students in terms of their cognitive style are more field independent than female students and there was no significant difference between boys and girls in terms of their self-concept. A study by K Sanchla (2014) revealed that there is no significant difference in self-concept of secondary school students, boys and girls.

In a paper titled "Perceptual Differentiation as a Dimension of Cognitive Psychology by De and Reeta (1991), an attempt was made to clarify the sex difference in cognitive style. Witkin Embedded Figure Test was used for measuring cognitive style in terms of FI-FD results which indicated cognitive style of both boys and girls were significantly different. The obtained results were similar to those of Witkin (1954), Fiebert (1967), Tharakan (1987) and Hanson and Johnson (1986).

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To study and compare male and female students in terms of their cognitive style.
2. To study and compare male and female students in terms of their self-concept.
3. To study and compare subjects of joint family and nuclear family in terms of their cognitive style.

3. Hypotheses

1. Male students in terms of their cognitive style are more likely to be significantly more field independent than their female counterparts.
2. Male and female students are expected to differ significantly in respect to their self-concept.
3. Subjects of nuclear family are likely to be more field independent than those of joint family and vice versa.

4. Method

4.1. Sample

Sample consisted of 100 boys and 100 girls of secondary schools of ages between 12 and 17 years who voluntarily participated in this research.

4.2. Tests and Tools

- 1) A personal information data sheet was used to collect the necessary information.
- 2) Witkin's Embedded Figure Test was used for measuring the psychological differentiation of the respondents and their respective scores were recorded separately in terms of time in seconds for boys and girls.
- 3) Mohsin's self-concept scale was used for measuring self-concept for boys and girls.

The test was administered in two phases, (i) Group test (ii) Individual test i.e. Witkin's Embedded Figure test.

Statistical analysis was done by using mean and standard deviation and data was subjected to inferential statistics with the use of t-test.

5. Result

| Sex | N | Mean | SD | SE _M | SE _D | t |
|-------|-----|-------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Boys | 100 | 53.42 | 16.16 | 2.02 | 2.214 | 2.014 |
| Girls | 100 | 48.96 | 7.26 | | | |

Table 1: Showing Means, SDs, SEs for field independent scores of both sexes and t-test of significance.

Result of the above table indicated that the mean scores of field independent were higher in the boys group than in the girls group. The obtained t-ratio (df=198) was significant at .05 level. Thus, it may be concluded that the boys are more field independent than girls.

| Sex | N | Mean | SD | SE _M | SE _D | t | p |
|-------|-----|-------|------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-----|
| Boys | 100 | 25.25 | 5.06 | .45 | .695 | 3.309 | .01 |
| Girls | 100 | 27.82 | 5.88 | .53 | | | |

Table 2: Showing Mean, SD, SE_M and SE_D of self-concept scores of boys and girls and t-test of significance.
df = 198

The result of the above table shows that mean of the girl students (27.82) is larger than that of the mean of the boys (25.25) and t is significant at the .01 level of confidence. Hence, it can be concluded from the above table that there is significant difference between self-concept scores of boys and girls and the second hypothesis is retained.

| Family | N | Mean | SD | SE _M | SE _D | t | p |
|---------|-----|--------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|------|------------|
| Nuclear | 96 | 56.29 | 10.305 | 1.341 | 2.166 | 2.35 | 0.05 level |
| Joint | 104 | 51.196 | 14.238 | 1.701 | | | |

Table 3: Showing Mean, SDs, SE_M, SE_D, scores in field independence of joint and nuclear family subjects and t-test of significance.
df = 198

The third hypothesis was that nuclear family subjects are likely to be more field independent than those of the joint family and vice-versa which stands retained by the above mentioned result.

6. Discussion

The first hypothesis was retained which said male students in terms of their cognitive style were more likely to be significantly more field independent than their female counterparts. This finding is not surprising in our society where the male child right from birth gets preference over the female child in all respects i.e. rearing, food, education, autonomy etc. So, it is quite obvious that the boys and girls differ significantly in their cognitive style.

A similar reason would be assigned to the acceptance of second hypothesis that male and female students were expected to differ significantly with respect to their self-concept.

The third hypothesis was that subjects of nuclear family were likely to be significantly more field independent than those of joint family and vice-versa. It is a common observation that children of nuclear family get more attention from their parents, better economic, social and educational facilities as compare to the children of joint families. These factors definitely help the children of nuclear family grow more field-independent.

7. Conclusion

In the light of the results mentioned above, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Male students in terms of their cognitive style are likely to be significantly more field independent than their female counterparts.
- Male students differ significantly from the female students in terms of their self-concept.
- Irrespective of sex differences the subjects of nuclear family were more field independent than joint families.

8. References

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