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Temperament among Children of Employed and Unemployed Mothers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The main objective of this investigation was to study temperament among children of employed and unemployed mothers. Sample: The sample consisted of 120 children of employed and 120 children of unemployed mothers of Varanasi city, in the age range of 9 to 16 years. Tools: (1) the Multidimensional Personality Inventory for preadolescents (aged 9 to 12 years) and (2) the Multidimensional Personality Inventory for late adolescents (aged 13 to 16 years), developed by the researcher and by Manju Agrawal, were used to collect data. Statistical analysis: The data obtained were analysed using the t-test. Result: The results revealed a significant difference in temperament between children of employed and unemployed mothers.

Keywords: Employed Mothers, Unemployed Mothers, Temperament

I. INTRODUCTION

Temperament is one of the main dimensions of personality and refers to a person's reactions to emotional situations.¹ The affective realm of behaviour, which is related to emotion, is made up of temperamental or stylistic traits. A temperamental trait deals with pervasive, unchanging qualities, such as tempo, form and persistence, across a large variety of specific responses. By knowing a person's temperament one can estimate that person's personality, because temperament is related to emotional consistency or imbalance and is considered one of the important facets of personality. Personality is the sum total of biological, innate and acquired dispositions. It is a composite of mental abilities, interests, attitudes, temperament and other variables characterising thought, feelings and behaviour. Constitutional theory, the oldest theory of personality, suggests that there is a relationship between a person's physique and behaviour. According to this theory, one's physique determines one's temperament, a general term used to represent the emotionally toned aspects of personality. In Sheldon's research, hundreds of terms describing aspects of temperament were selected and finally reduced to fifty. A group of college students was rated on each of the traits represented, traits such as relaxation in posture and movement, love of physical exertion, directness of manner and so forth. Statistical analysis

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¹ GORDON W. ALLPORT, PERSONALITY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION (1937).

suggested that the apparently separate traits fell into three groupings, with the items within each group being closely related. One of these groupings, or dimensions of temperament, was designated 'viscerotonia' because the many related items had some reference to visceral comforts, such as the joy of eating, joviality and relaxation. Another dimension was given the name 'somatotonia' because the relevant items involved bodily (somatic) activity, as in competitiveness, energetic movement and aggressiveness. The third dimension, 'cerebrotonia', was so named because the various related traits suggested a dominance of cerebral processes, as in apprehensiveness, restraint, shyness and hypersensitivity. The investigator found that it was feasible to represent the dimensions of temperament, as in the case of physique, on a seven-point rating scale. Thus a person with extreme viscerotonia might be rated 7-1-1, one with extreme somatotonia 1-7-1, and one with extreme cerebrotonia 1-1-7. Case studies filled out the impressions gained from the ratings. A student rated 6-3-2 for temperament presented, among many other aspects, a persona of "joviality". Another, rated 2-7-1, could be characterised as "boiling over with energy". Still another, rated 1-3-7, was characteristically "tense and apprehensive". There were, of course, individuals who were rated as intermediate on all three dimensions.

On the correlation between physique and temperament, separate ratings of 200 male college students for physique and temperament yielded correlations (r) in the neighbourhood of .80. This high correlation is not surprising in view of the facts that (1) the same investigator did both ratings, (2) there was a tripartite classification of both physique and temperament, and (3) both sets of ratings were on a seven-point scale. Indeed, the investigators admit possible bias, but feel that it is not responsible for the correlation obtained.

Critics of the view that this research has revealed a significant correlation between physique and temperament emphasise the bias inevitably involved.

There are also some doubts concerning the generality of Sheldon's data. He used well-fed American college students. A study of human semi-starvation, however, revealed that somatotypes vary with nutrition: all the subjects eventually approached or reached an ectomorphic physique. The investigator concluded, in effect, that the technique of somatotyping would appear to be more useful for determining the state of nutrition than for determining the inherent constitution. Unlike Sheldon's Harvard group, most of the Oxford students had average physiques. Extreme mesomorphs, men with proportionately large bone and muscle development, were absent.

On the basis of correlation, we would not be justified in concluding that physique determines temperament, or vice versa. Both might depend to a large degree upon glandular functioning.

We may conclude that temperament is influenced by how other people react to our physical characteristics. If they avoid us or cause us to suffer indignities because of our physique, we may respond by becoming aggressive or, on the contrary, by “crawling into our shell”. If they lionise us because of our fine physique or handsome appearance, we may strut like the “cock of the walk”; we may become conceited, domineering or merely patronising. Thus the significance of our physical make-up from the standpoint of personality cannot be considered apart from its social impact and from how the person himself reacts to it. A person’s physique is to him the “image of himself”. Thus the predominant endomorph may learn that he is expected to be jovial, and he may look upon himself as a jovial person.

Turning to the situation of employed and unemployed mothers, it may be mentioned that in India, unlike men’s employment, women’s employment is necessarily viewed in the context of their social, marital and familial roles and relationships. When women cross the threshold of their homes to enter the world of paid work, their employment is seen as intruding upon their primary responsibility of home-making. They are expected to redeploy their traditional roles of wife, mother and home-maker in order to accommodate their “non-traditional” roles as earners. A large number of women in India are engaged in paid work, and their work is often seen as an extension of their primary roles in the family. When mothers shoulder responsibilities other than child-rearing and home-making, their ways of handling children are expected to differ from those of mothers who are full-time home-makers. Against this dominant view of motherhood as the major objective of an Indian woman’s life, the employment status of the mother is expected to have serious consequences for children’s emotional development. It has been observed that children of employed mothers differ from children of unemployed mothers in respect of hyperactivity, hard work and aggressiveness.² Rani also reported that children of working mothers were shy and tense in the absence of love and affection.³ By contrast, Verma (1986) found that children of working mothers were less affected in respect of emotional stability, and showed more egoistic feeling in their relations with other children and more unusual behaviour than the children of non-working mothers. Hyde, Else-Quest, Goldsmith and Biesanz found that a child’s difficult temperament was significantly associated with the mother’s work outcomes, including the quality of her work role and the rewards she derived

² D. Rani, *Personality Characteristics of the Children of Working and Non-Working Mothers* (1975) (unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, D.I.E., Dayalbagh, Agra).

³ *Id.*

from combining work and family, and that the evidence was consistent with a structural model in which the mother's sense of parenting competence and her depressed affect mediated these effects.⁴ In a study of parental deprivation and some personality components, Kumar found that male respondents showed more security and aggression than their female counterparts in both the deprived and the non-deprived groups.⁵

It can therefore be said that a mother's absence has a negative impact on the personality development (including the temperament dimension) of her children. Considering the role of these differences in an individual's actions, the present study was designed and the following hypothesis was formulated.

II. HYPOTHESIS

There will be a significant difference between children of employed and unemployed mothers on the temperament dimension of personality.

III. SAMPLE

The sample of the present study consisted of 120 children of unemployed mothers and 120 children of employed mothers. They were selected at random from different parts of Varanasi, and their ages ranged from 9 to 16 years. They lived with their parents. All the mothers were matched on age and education.

IV. TOOLS

The Multidimensional Personality Inventory developed by the researcher and the Multidimensional Personality Inventory constructed by Manju Agrawal⁶ were used to assess the temperament dimension of the children's personality.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to compare children of employed and unemployed mothers on the temperament dimension of personality. Scores on the Multidimensional Personality Inventory for preadolescents and the Multidimensional Personality Inventory for late adolescents were worked out for both groups and analysed. Means and standard deviations were computed for the different sets of data, and the t-test was used to find the significance of

⁴ Janet Shibley Hyde, Nicole M. Else-Quest, H. Hill Goldsmith & Jeremy C. Biesanz, *Children's Temperament and Behavior Problems Predict Their Employed Mothers' Work Functioning*, 75 CHILD DEV. 580 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00694.x>.

⁵ Ramendra Kumar, *A Study of Parental Deprivation and Some Personality Components* (2007) (Ph.D. thesis, Jai Prakash University, Chapra).

⁶ MANJU AGRAWAL, *MANUAL FOR MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSONALITY INVENTORY* (Agra Psychological Research Cell n.d.).

the mean differences between the two groups on both inventories. The findings of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference between the two groups on the temperament dimension of personality.

Dimension	Group	N	M	SD	t	P
Temperament	Group I	120	48.88	5.19	4.34	.01
	Group II	120	46.17	4.92		

Table 1: Temperament as reported by different groups

Note: Group I = children of unemployed mothers; Group II = children of employed mothers.

Table 1 indicates that children of unemployed mothers scored ($M = 48.88$) slightly higher than children of employed mothers ($M = 46.17$). The difference between the two groups is significant at the .01 level. The hypothesis was therefore accepted. This means that the children of unemployed mothers have a better temperament than the children of employed mothers. This result may be read alongside the work of Hyde, Else-Quest, Goldsmith and Biesanz, who investigated the reverse relationship, namely spillover from the mother role to the work role, in a sample of more than 300 families. At 4 months, 12 months, 3.5 years and 4.5 years of age, the child's difficult temperament was significantly associated with the mother's work outcomes, including work role quality and rewards from combining work and family, and the evidence was consistent with a structural model in which the mother's sense of parenting competence and her depressed affect mediated these effects.⁷

It is ordinarily said that children of employed mothers are neglected owing to a lack of parental patronage, attention and proper care, and that they feel insecure, isolated and poorly adjusted in comparison with the children of unemployed mothers. Today, however, this view is contested because of modernisation, industrialisation, civilisation and urbanisation. It is often said that children are the future of the nation, meaning that they constitute the country's next generation. Hence their growth and development are of prime consideration, and they should be carefully nurtured in every walk of life.

Environmental, social and political changes and the all-round economic development of the country have brought about intellectual changes. India is now increasingly influenced by Western ideas, which value all-round freedom and resist any control. This does not mean that children should be paid proper attention. They take care of themselves.

⁷ Hyde et al., *supra* note 4.