

A Comparative Study between Introverts and Extraverts in their Conforming Behaviours among Students at Galaxy International School in Ghana

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Abstract

This study sought to compare conforming behaviors between extraverted and introverted students at the Galaxy International Junior High School. A sample of 20 (ten introverts and 10 extraverts) were selected through the administration of the Eysenck Personality Inventory. Five confederates were also selected. Subjects took part in a conformity experiment whereby washroom symbols were presented to them. The subjects were asked to identify whether the symbols were female or male after listening to the wrong responses of the confederates. Correlation and Independent t tests were used to analyze the results. The study showed that student introverts conformed more than extraverted students. Introverted females also conformed more than introverted males and a positive relationship was established between the age of subjects and conforming behavior. It was recommended that further studies on cultural influence on conformity among introverts and extraverts be done and larger samples should be used.

Key words:Introverts, extroverts, Galaxy International Junior High School, confederates, conforming behaviors.

Introduction

Personality is the unique pattern of enduring psychological and behavioral characteristics by which each person can be compared and contrasted with other people (Bernstein *et al.*, 1997). These traits may be unique, common to some group or shared by the entire species but their pattern is different for each individual. Thus, although people are like others in some ways, they all have unique personalities (Feist & Feist, 1998). Many personality theorists have made significant contributions to the study of personality like Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Hans Eysenck and others.

Carl Jung was the first personality theorist to talk about introversion and extraversion. Jung recognized various psychological traits that are formed out of two basic attitudes. The attitudes were introversion and extraversion (Feist & Feist, 1998). According to Jung, an attitude is a predisposition to act or react in a characteristic direction. To him, every individual has both an introverted and extraverted attitude. An individual who is introverted will, therefore, have both introverted and extraverted attitudes with the introversion being dominant. An extravert, on the other hand, has both introverted and extraverted attitudes with extraversion being dominant (Feist & Feist, 1998). Conformity is a type of social influence in which individuals change their attitudes or behavior to adhere to existing social norms. The change is a response to real or imagined group pressure. Conformity is one of the most influential forces that society has on an individual (Baron *et al.*, 2009).

Relevance of the study

This study is very crucial considering the target population which are students. With the current rise in drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, delinquency and others among Ghanaian students, the vulnerability of the youth needed to be examined. Baumeister (1999) established the fact that student peer pressure is more than just a phase. It can be a negative force in their lives, often resulting in their experimenting with tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs. This present study seeks to create the awareness that students, just like children and adults, have different personalities that impact on their behavior. These personalities can also contribute to the likelihood of them engaging in activities that are detrimental as a result of influence from others.

Findings of the study will help educational institutions design certain programmes that will teach students to embrace their different personalities. It will also show them how vulnerable their personalities make them in terms of peer pressure and indicate ways that can help them combat this menace.

Purpose of the Study

This study intended to:

- 1) Find out the relationship between personality traits and conformity among the students
- 2) Determine whether there were gender differences in personality and the tendency to conform among students
- 3) Discover whether there was a relationship between age and conforming behavior among students.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives:

- 1) Students who are introverts are more likely to conform than those who are extraverts.
- 2) Introverted male students will conform more than introverted females.
- 3) There will be a positive relationship between age and conforming behavior among students.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted in the conforming behavior phenomenon. For instance, a study compared conformity among students of two different cultures at certain developmental stages. The study investigated the relative conforming behavior of American and Brazilian students ranging from ages 9 to 21 years. The results showed that Brazilians conformed more than the Americans and curvilinear trends of conformity by sex to increasing age (Sistrunk *et al.*, 1971). Research on the effects of group size on conformity has shown that groups influence the extent to which people conform to the norms of the group (Stang, 1976).

In a study that sought to find sex differences in conforming behavior among undergraduate students, it was discovered that females tended to conform more to group opinions than their male counterparts (Eagly *et al.*, 1981). A study by Bond and Smith (1996) also discovered that people in collectivistic cultures conformed to a higher degree than people from individualistic cultures. This finding was established through a meta-analytic review of 17 countries with the classic Asch line-judgment task. This present study is aimed at finding out if these findings in foreign cultures are also applicable to the Ghanaian students.

Methodology

Participants

This study was conducted at Galaxy International Junior High School in East Legon, Accra which has a total population of 50 students. This school was chosen because students in Junior High school are aged between 11 and 15, which are the early student years where there is peer pressure. The subjects were purposively sampled based on their personality traits. The Eysenck Personality Inventory was used to select ten (10) introverts and ten (10) extraverts. This was done by administering the questionnaire to the entire population several times until the desired number of introverts and extraverts was obtained. Five (5) students were also selected randomly and trained as confederates.

The design of this study was quasi-experimental because of the manipulation of the independent variables which were the personality traits and also the fact that subjects were not randomly assigned into groups. The subjects were placed into two groups of introverts and extraverts based on their scores on the Eysenck Personality Inventory which has a reliability above 0.74.

Procedure

Images of male and female washroom symbols were shown to them and they were asked to identify whether the symbol represented a male or female. The confederates, who were trained to give wrong answers, responded first. The experimental subject was then asked to respond. The responses made by experimental subjects were recorded by an assistant.

Washroom symbols that were drawn on cards were presented to the subjects during the conforming experiment. The subjects, who scored 12 and above out of the 24 items on the introversion scale, took part in the experiment. Similarly, subjects who scored 12 and above out of the 24 items on the extraversion scale, were also used for the conformity experiment. The responses from the experimental subjects who conformed to the responses of the confederates scored three (3) marks while those who did not scored one (1) mark.

Results

The first hypothesis was aimed at finding out whether there is a difference in conforming with regards to students who are extraverts and introverts. The independent *t* test was used to compare the mean scores of conforming behaviors both introverted and extraverted students. The results are shown in Table 1 are that introverts conformed more than the extroverts

The second hypothesis predicted that introverted females will conform more than introverted males. The independent *t* test was used to compare the mean scores of conforming behavior of extraverted males and introverted females. The results were that there was a significant difference in conforming behaviors of introverted males and females. The results are shown in Table 2.

The third hypothesis assumed that there would be a positive relationship between age and conforming behavior among students. This was tested using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to find out the relationship between the age of the students and their conforming behavior. Results are shown in Table 3. It was observed that there was a significant positive correlation between the age of the students and their conforming behavior.

Discussion, Recommendation and Conclusion

This study was conducted to find the relationship between personality traits (introversion and extraversion) and conforming behavior among junior high school students. The first objective was geared towards finding out the relationship between personality and conforming behavior. Based on this, it was found that introverted students conformed more than those who are extraverts. This was likely as a result of the strength, immediacy and number of people that were present as stated by the Social Impact Theory (Martin & Hewstone, 2002). The strength of a group refers to the status of the influencing group. In this study, the influencing group were the confederates, were also the classmates of the experimental subjects. The influence the confederates had was strong due to the fact that they were peers of the experimental subjects and thus the tendency for the subjects to assume their answers were correct and conform to them. The immediacy or physical closeness of the confederates with the experimental subjects also had a role in the conforming behavior of the latter. During the experiment, they were all seated close together. The confederates, who were five in total, also outnumbered the experimental subject and thus had an impact on the subjects' behavior.

The Students who were introverts also probably conformed more than their extraverted counterparts as a result of their lack of assertiveness. This is because according to the Big Five Factor model, extraverts tend to be much more assertive than introverts (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007). This makes it hard for introverts to voice out their opinions and views with confidence thus making them keep their true opinions to themselves and conforming to the group. The number of people present in the experimental situation can also affect conforming behavior. Groups influence the extent to which people conform to the norms of the group (Stang, 1976). As mentioned earlier, the number of confederates also influenced the responses of the student introverts. This confirms that there are indeed, differences between personality traits of students and their likelihood to conform.

The second objective looked at the possibility of gender differences affecting the tendency to conform in introverts. The findings suggested that introverted females are more likely to conform than introverted males. This is a similar finding to a study that investigated sex differences in conforming behavior (Eagly *et al.*, 1981). Males conformed less due to their gender role which emphasizes independence from others. Introverted females probably conformed more because of their personality which tends to make them less assertive as according to the Big Factor Model (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007).

The final objective intended to find out whether there was a relationship between age and conforming behavior among students. It was found that an increase in age of the students leads to an increase in conforming behavior. This finding is comparable to a study that compared conforming behavior between Brazilian and American students ranging from 9- 12 years in which it was found that conforming behavior increased among the older Brazilian students (Sistrunk *et al.*, 1971). The Developmental theory of conformity suggests that children experience developments in cognitive skills, communication skills, concepts and acts of friendship as they spend more time with their peers and less time with their parents. The extensive time students spend with their peers in addition to cognitive and communication developments may contribute to the increase in conformity as age increases. As students get older their cognitive growth may influence their sense of attachment to their peers. As a result, older students may feel more attached to their peers and therefore be more accepting of their opinions or norms.

The increase in conforming behavior as a result of the increase in age of students may also be due to the collectivistic culture these students belong to. Collectivistic cultures place more emphasis on group consensus and harmony. People in such cultures tend to be very attached to their groups and desist from deviating from group norms. This is similar to the finding that suggested that people who belong to collectivistic cultures tend to conform more than people in individualistic cultures (Bond & Smith, 1996). Older students therefore conform more to their peers' opinions because they are more embedded in the collectivistic culture than their younger counterparts.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following have been recommended:

There is the need to use a larger sample size to enhance the external validity and therefore enhance generalizations. The influence of culture on the conforming behavior of introverts and extraverts should also be investigated since culture seems to have an impact on conformity as was found in a study by Bond and Smith (1996). This study did not look at this concept due to insufficient resources. Students should be made aware of the reality of personality differences and the fact that there is nothing wrong with being different from others in

terms of opinions, beliefs, values just to mention a few. This can be executed through after school talks where psychologists are invited to create this awareness, or it can be incorporated in school curriculum.

Conclusion

This study was carried out at Galaxy International School Students to find out the conforming behavior between introverted and extraverted students. It was found out that student who are introverts conformed more to the responses of their peers than the extraverted ones. Introverted females also conformed more than extraverted males and a positive relationship was established between the age of subjects and their conforming behaviors. Based on the findings, it was recommended that future studies in this area should use a larger sample size to enhance external validity and generalizations of findings. Cultural impact on conforming behavior among personality traits should also be examined. In summary, there are differences between the conforming behavior of introverts and extraverts.

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Table 1- Independent t- test, Means of scores of student introverts and student extraverts

Subjects	N	Mean	S D	df	t	sig
Introverts	10	2.80	1.03	18	0.43	0.04
Extraverts	10	2.00	1.05			

The results of the Independent *t* test presented in Table 1 indicates that there is a significant difference between the conforming scores of student introverts and student extraverts as indicated in the independent *t* test ($t = 0.43$, $df = 18$, $p = 0.04$, one-tailed).

Table 2- Independent t- test, Means of scores of introverted males and introverted females

Subjects	N	Mean	S D	df	t	sig
Introverted males	5	2.50	1.00	8	0.66	0.02
Introverted females	5	2.90	1.15			

Results of the Independent *t* test in Table 2 above shows that there was a significant difference in the conforming behaviors of introverted males ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.00$) and introverted females ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.15$) as indicated in the independent *t* test ($t = 0.66$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.02$, one-tailed).

Table 3: Summary of correlational scores between age and conforming behavior among students

Conforming Behavior		
Age	Pearson Correlation	0.39*
	Sig(one-tailed)	0.04
	N	20

It was observed that there was a significant positive correlation between the age of the students and their conforming behavior ($r = 0.39$, $N = 20$, $p = 0.04$, one-tailed). It was a moderate correlation with 15% of the variance explained.