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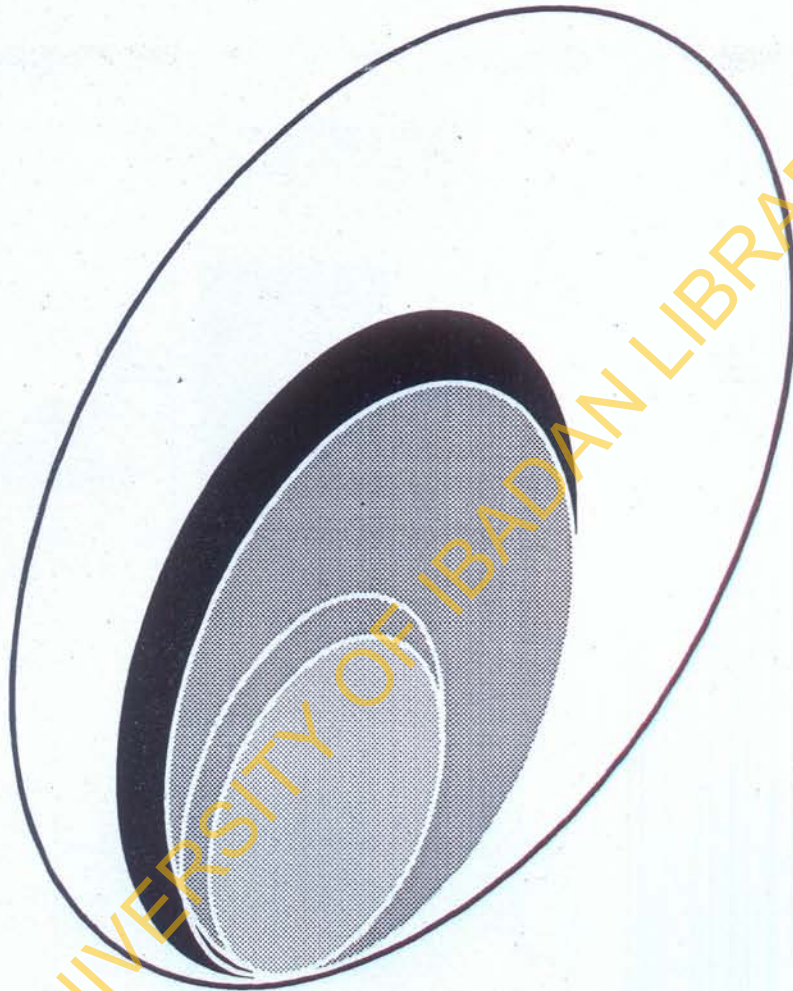
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Personality Factors and Residential Differences in Perceived Quality of Life of Rural and Urban Dwellers in Two Communities in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the personality correlates and residential differences in the perception of quality of life in one rural community and one urban community in Ekiti State, South West Nigeria. It is a cross sectional survey with 400 respondents drawn using accidental sampling technique from the general adult population of the two communities with a mean age of 35.9 and standard deviation of 9.6. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire made up of two validated scales (perceived quality of life & NEO-FFI personality inventory). Result of the data analysis revealed that personality factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism) jointly predicted perceived quality of life and the overall percentage contribution was 16%, ($F(5, 394) = 15.0$; $R = .40$; $R^2 = .16$; $p < .05$). Meanwhile, only openness to experience significantly independently predicted perceived quality of life ($\beta = .39$, $t = 8.41$, $p < .05$) while the remaining four factors did not. It was also found that urban dwellers have significantly higher perception of quality of life than rural dwellers ($t = 4.10$; $df = 398$; $p < .05$). It is, therefore, recommended that government should facilitate rural development in terms of provision of essential amenities in order to improve the quality of life the rural dwellers.

Introduction

Quality of Life (QOL) as a concept has attracted a lot of research and policy attention in recent time among social scientists and health professionals (Flora, 2004; Bramston, Chipuer and Pretty, 2005; Moshen and Afshari, 2009; Olapegba, 2010). To underscore the importance of

quality of life even the World Health Organization (WHO) has set up a group dedicated to the study of the concept with a view to improve quality of living. It is obvious that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be summarized to mean an aggregated attempt by nations to improve the quality of life of the citizens of the world.

World Health Organization Quality of Life Group (WHOQOL-Group) has defined quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (WHOQOL-Group, 1993). In a similar submission, Lawton (1997) stated that QOL is known as the worth of life of an individual, a multidimensional evaluation, by both intrapersonal and social- normative criteria, of the person and environment of the individual. In addition, Bramston (2005), Fakhoury and Priebe (2002), and Olapegba (2009) have also asserted that QOL is multidimensional and not one-dimensional in nature and as such attempt at measuring the construct should take into consideration the various dimensions indicated in literature overtime.

However, a major controversy in the QOL life study has been the objective versus subjective dimensions. Earlier studies which are majorly medical and health-related have concentrated on the objective domain with little or no consideration for the subjective dimension. Proponents of the objective approach to quality of life have often emphasized characteristics like schools, cultural offerings, aesthetic properties, the climate, healthcare system, employment opportunities as indicators of environmental quality, while characteristics of a person in quality of life include income, health status, mental health status, disease profiles, educational level, and housing situation. These taken together are the objective indicators of quality of life, an individual's QOL is adjudged by his or her aggregate on these indicators (Ventegogt, Merrick, and Andersen, 2003).

Other scholars have argued that using objective indicators as measures of QOL is in a sense defective because the individual

under consideration does not have an input in the judgment (Cummins, 1997; Olapegba, 2008; and Flora, 2004). The argument is that the subjective aspect of QOL is as important if not more important than the objective indicators. The perception of people as to how good a life they think they are having has to do with how they will cope in situations, with implications for their psychological wellbeing. It then follows that if one believes that quality of life is inherently subjective, it may then be possible to test indicators by the extent to which they predict the quality of life reported by groups of people.

There is dearth of documented research on studies of quality of life in Nigeria, especially as regards the subjective domain of the construct. The view studies that may be considered are medical based and ailment specific. There is no evidence of data based research looking at the joint influence of the living environment and personality factors on the perception of quality of life in Nigeria. The present study is designed to investigate the influence of place of residence and personality factors on perceived quality of life. The Nigerian society is divided along rural/urban dimensions; the urban areas are usually thickly populated due to influx of people from the rural areas. The notion is that there are more social amenities and opportunities in the urban centres than in the rural areas, hence it is assumed that quality of life will be higher in the urban centres. However, this assumption needs to be empirically investigated when one considers the fact that there are several challenges that urban and rural dwellers contend with that are likely to affect their perception of quality of life. Some of the challenges include, high crime rate, crowding, transportation problem, high cost of living, challenge of

climate change, environmental pollution etc.

As a psychological issue, perception can be a function of several factors, this means two individual may experience identical stimulus but perceive it differently. In this regard the subjective nature of perception may likely influence the quality of life. Specifically, people living in the same environment may report different levels of quality of life. A prominent model of personality is the five factor model (FFM) made popular by Costa and McCrae (1992), this model identified five broad domains of personality used to describe human personality. The domains include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Openness to experience has to do with depth and variability which is a person's imagination and readiness to tolerate new ideas. People who are high in this construct are assumed to have broad interests and liberal with a penchant for novelty while those low on the construct are said to be conservative and conventional preferring familiar issues and terrain (Howard & Howard, 1995).

Conscientiousness on the other hand is a measure of goal-directed behaviour and control over impulses. According to Costa and McCrae (1992), the more conscientious a person is, the more competent, dutiful and responsible they appear. The extraversion trait has to do with an outgoing character, extraverts tend to be more physically active, adventurous, assertive, and sociable while the introverts are more quiet, reserved and shy. Agreeableness refers to tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than being antagonistic. According to Howard and Howard, (1995) and McCrae and John (1992), neuroticism is a measure of emotional control whereby, low level of neuroticism indicates emotional stability

whereas high level is an indicator of emotional instability. It is important to note that these personality traits are measured on a continuum, and as such people possess them in degrees rather than in absolute terms, this is an indication that positions of individuals on the continuum may determine their perception of quality of life.

This study thus examines the extent to which these personality factors will predict perceived quality of life in general and also to see if there exists any difference in the perception of quality of life between rural and urban dwellers given the differences in the environments.

Methods

Research Design

This study is a cross-sectional survey carried out among the general population in a rural community (Ido Ekiti) and an urban community (Ado Ekiti) both in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The dependent variable is Perceived Quality of Life (PQOL) while the independent variables are conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience and neuroticism.

Settings

The study was carried out in two communities (Ado Ekiti and Ido Ekiti) of Ekiti State in Southwest Nigeria. Ado Ekiti by its features is an urban centre predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba people; it is the capital of Ekiti State housing all the bureaucratic apparatus of the state government in addition to two tertiary institutions, two television stations, two radio stations, few large scale industries and several medium scale enterprises. Ado Ekiti is largely a civil servant town and the commercial hob of Ekiti State. Ido Ekiti on the other hand is in Ido/Osi Local Government Area in the northern part of Ekiti State, it is an agrarian community

whose dwellers are predominantly farmers with pocket of traders.

Participants

The study participants were made up of 400 people drawn from the general population of Ido Ekiti and Ado Ekiti in South-West Nigeria using accidental sampling technique. There were 231 (57.8%) males and 169 (42.3%) females with ages ranging from 18 to 63 with a mean age of 35.9 and standard deviation of 9.6. Christians were 233 (58.3%), Muslims 139 (34.8%) while traditional worshippers were 28 (7.0%).

Instrument

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising three sections. Section A tapped the demographic information of the participants like age, sex, name of town, occupation etc. Section B is the modified version of the Likert format perceived quality of life scale developed by Olapegba (2010). The scale originally contained 22 items with Reliability Alpha of .67, for the present study the scale was translated into Yoruba language for comprehension among the rural dwellers and some of the urban dwellers who do not speak the English language. The translated version was validated through a pilot study which led to the removal of 10 items with factor loading below .35. The remaining 12 items yielded Reliability Alpha of .78. Section C of the questionnaire is the NEO-FFI 10 item version of the big five personality inventory by Costa and McCrea (1992), this is also in the Likert format. The personality factors measured were openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The Reliability Alpha for the 5 subscales are .97, .76, .74, .85, and .78 respectively.

Procedure

The study was carried out in two phases; the first phase was the pilot stage whereby the instruments were administered to 70 participants for the purpose of establishing the validity of the instrument and generating the psychometric properties. With the validity established and psychometric properties derived, the study proceeded to the second phase which was the actual fieldwork. Four hundred and seventy five (475) questionnaires were administered based on preference of the respondents (i.e. the English or Yoruba version). Participants were told that there was no right or wrong answers and that no harmful consequence is envisaged, also they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses while as well told that they were free to withdraw their participation whenever they feel like. Verbal consent was obtained before administration of the questionnaires. Of the 475 questionnaires, only 400 were found useful for the purpose of analysis. In all, the field work took about three weeks to complete.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using the simple multiple regression analysis to estimate the independent and joint influence of the personality factors on perceived quality of life. And t-test of independent means to test for difference between rural and urban dwellers on perceived quality of life.

Results

The result in Table 1 indicated that openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism jointly predicted perceived quality of life and the overall percentage contribution is 16%, ($F(5, 394) = 15.0; R = .40; R^2 = .16; p < .05$). This means that when the variables are taken together they will significantly

predict perceived quality of life in a general population. However, the individual predictions of the personality factors showed that only openness to experience significantly predicted perceived quality of

life ($\beta = .39$, $t = 8.41$; $<.05$) while conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism did not independently predict perceived quality of life.

Table 1: Summary of simple multiple regression analysis showing the relationship between the big five personality factors and PQOL

Model	Beta	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
Extraversion	-.03	-.54	>.05				
Agreeableness	-.05	-.93	>.05				
Conscientiousness	-.03	-.57	>.05	.40	.16	15.0	<.05
Neuroticism	-.04	-.87	>.05				
Openness	.39	8.41	<.05				

Table 2: Summary of t-test of independent means showing the difference in PQOL of Rural and Urban Dwellers

Perceived Quality of Life	Location	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Quality of Life	Urban	200	49.5	4.95	398	4.10	<.05
	Rural	200	47.2	5.96			

Result in Table 2 indicated that there is significant difference in the perceived quality of life people living in urban centre and rural centre ($t = 4.10$; $df = 398$; $p < .05$). Specifically, the means showed that urban dwellers have higher perception of quality of life compared to rural dwellers.

Discussion

The two-pronged focus of this study was to investigate how well the personality factors (openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism) will predict perceived quality of life on one hand, and the difference in the perception of quality of life between rural and urban dwellers.

The findings indicated that the five personality factors jointly predicted perceived quality of life of the participants. The import of this finding is that if personality is taken as a composite construct, it will significantly predict people's perception of quality of life, specifically, the factors jointly contributed 16% to the prediction, meaning that other variables not considered in the study make up the remaining 84%. This particular result is in consonance with the findings of Mohsen and Afshari (2009) in a similar study carried out in Iran, they reported that personality factors are significant predictors of life satisfaction.

However, when the independent influence of the personality factors on perceived quality of life were considered, it was shown that only openness to experience significantly predicted perceived quality of life while extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism did not significantly predict perception of quality of life. This finds support in the work of Mohsen and Afshari (2009) where it was reported that not all personality factors considered significantly independently predicted life satisfaction, extraversion and neuroticism were found to be the strongest predictors of life satisfaction. It is observed that different personality factors independently predicted perceived quality of life in the present study compared to the work of Mohsen and Afshari (2009), this could be as a result of cultural value differences amongst the two cultures. Nigeria is a more diverse and heterogeneous society than Iran, hence the differences in perception and social dynamics.

It was also found that urban dwellers significantly reported better quality of life than rural dwellers. This is an indication that people value the amenities that are available in the urban centres and considered access to such as indicators of a better life whereas, those in the rural areas develop a sense of deprivation by the non availability of these amenities. This clearly indicates that the environment is a strong influence on people's perception, this is in line with the submission of Woodward (2002) that the individual one mixes with and where one lives tend to contribute to one's perceived quality of life. In a similar finding, Olapegba (2011) in a study of quality of life of people living near refuse dumpsite submitted that environmental factors and adaptation are very strong predictors of perceived quality of life in that particular population, this is also in line with the

assertion of Eyles (1990) that quality of life is linked to quality of environment.

Conclusion and Policy

Recommendations

A major implication of this finding is that rural dwellers are aware of amenities in the urban centres which if present in their environment will enhance both their actual and perceived quality of life and they long for these amenities. To this end, government should embark on rural development programmes, make available facilities and social amenities that will enhance quality of life among the rural populace, strengthen the third tier of government to effectively meet the needs of the rural populace. In addition, the issue of environmental degradation should be addressed in the agrarian community in order for people's source of livelihood not to be compromised and the environment made sustainable as a way of ensuring that people's right to meaningful life is protected. After all, a high quality of life will lead to a healthy workforce which invariably will lead to higher productivity.

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