

An Exploratory Study of the Link Between Ego-maturation Task and Ego-maturation Crisis During Adolescence in a Nigerian Sample

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ABSTRACT The study explored the relationship between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation crisis during adolescence as postulated by Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977). The participants employed for the purpose of the study include 50 male and 50 female adolescents randomly picked from four secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Their ages ranged from 16 to 20 years with a mean age of 18 years. The study made use of Adolescent Ego Maturation Questionnaire (AEQ). Data analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Technique and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) led to the acceptance of the three hypotheses stated above. This result implies that Ausubel's (1977) and Kirk's (1977) positions regarding the relationship between ego-maturation task and crisis during adolescence may not adequately and appropriately explain the reality of this phenomenon in Nigeria. Consequently, it was suggested that African researchers in the area of human development should focus more on studies aimed at revealing the dynamics of developmental task and the attendant crisis in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from child to adult gradually takes place during a period known as adolescence, which lasts for several years (Baron, 1995). This stage of human development has been viewed as beginning with the onset of puberty, which is defined as sudden spurt in physical growth accompanied by sexual maturity, and as ending when individual assume the responsibilities associated with adult life (Rice, 1992). The adolescent period has often been considered to be characterized by inevitable storm and stress (Beinstein, 1997). This period according to Beinstein, involves some dramatic changes that are challenging because the period is characterized by the manifestation of self against biosocial influences on the personality of the individual. Typical of this period are problems of moral reasoning and action, identity crisis, sexual expressions, volitional dependence,

egocentrism and detachment. This is so because this period is a transitional stage in human development that prepares the individual for adult role in the society. In order to fit in effectively into the adult status and perform the expected roles, the individual's personality must develop to assume a new status with a new goal orientation. Consequent upon this, the individual is found to engage in various tasks or what could be termed "developmental problems" as dictated by this change. These tasks according to Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977) are referred to as ego-maturation tasks. These tasks center around the individual's effort at establishing a new status in the face of problems associated with satellization and attachment. Satellization and attachment according to Bowlby (1969) explains the importance of the degree of a set of attachment behaviours, emotional identity, and volitional dependence, which account for a great deal of the interaction between infants and their caregivers. The disruption of this important aspect of human development is associated with intense emotional reactions (Bowlby, 1969).

Associated with ego-maturation tasks is what Kirk (1977) referred to as ego-maturation crisis, which occurs as a result of the ego-maturation task, existing as a form of detachment and desatellization in order for the adolescent to attain the status and goal orientation of adult personality. Supporting this position is Erikson's (1950, 1987) proposal that development proceeds through a series of distinct stages, each defined by a specific crisis. According to Erikson, these crises, in turn, result from the fact that as individuals grow older, they are confronted with new combinations of biological drives and societal demands. The biological drives reflect individual growth and physical change, while the societal demands reflect the expectations and

requirements of society for people at different ages. Since differences exist in personality development and formation partly consequent upon child rearing practices or techniques and for the fact that we know that culture affects personality development (Olowu and Akotia, 2001) it is only reasonable to theorize that the relationship that is said to exist between ego maturation task and ego – maturation crisis as revealed above may vary from one individual to another and from one cultural setting to the other. With regard to this, the present study is designed to empirically verify the existence of this phenomenon in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the following research questions are of importance.

- (i) Is the relationship between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation crisis as theorized by Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977) typical of Nigerian adolescents?
- (ii) Of what effect is gender on ego maturation task and ego maturation crisis?

To this end, the following hypotheses were put to test.

- (i) There is no significant relationship between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation crisis among adolescents in Nigeria.
- (ii) There is no significant relationship between male adolescents' ego maturation task and female adolescents' ego maturation task.
- (iii) There is no significant relationship between male adolescents' ego-maturation crisis and female adolescents' ego-maturation crisis.

METHOD

Subject: Participants consisted of 100 adolescent students (50 males and 50 females) randomly drawn from four secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Their ages ranged from 16 to 20 years with a mean age of 18 years.

Instrumentation: The Adolescent Ego-maturation Question-naire (AEQ) adapted from the works of Bowlby (1969), Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977) was employed. The questions were in three sections. The first section (A) relates to personal data such as age, sex and school address. The second section (B) assesses ego-maturation task with 24 items in a "narrative style". Participants are expected to pick the most appropriate option out of four to fill in the blank

spaces. For example, the first sentence in the "narrative style" method says "At my age", "I..... like to take decisions on my own". For the blank space, options include, "Always"; "Frequently", "Often", and "will not". Section C is made up of 18 items measuring ego-maturation crisis during adolescence with a self-rating 5-point Likert type scale of "Not at all"; "Often"; "Undecided"; "Frequently" and "Always".

To ensure construct validity of the questionnaire, extensive use was made of the factors identified by Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977) as characterizing ego-maturation task and crisis. Reliability test was carried out using a sample of 10 respondents randomly chosen. A student t-test comparison coefficient of 0.86 at ($P \leq 0.05$) was obtained.

Procedure: The selected schools were visited by the researchers to administer the questionnaire. Before this visit however, familiarization visits were made to the selected schools to explain the purpose of the research to the Head teachers and to seek their consent. The administration of the questionnaires was done in some classrooms where participants were gathered. The purpose of the study was explained and the researchers were always present in the classroom to clarify any doubts and misunderstandings encountered by participants in the course of completing the questionnaire.

RESULTS

The data gathered by this study was analysed using the Pearson product moment correlation technique, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Our analysis supports the three hypotheses formulated for this study as revealed in tables I, II and III. These hypotheses are as follow:

- (i) that there is no significant relationship between ego maturation task and ego-maturation crisis among adolescents in Nigeria.
- (ii) that there is no significant relationship between male adolescents' ego maturation task and female adolescents' ego-maturation task.
- (iii) that there is no significant relationship between male adolescents' ego-maturation crisis and females' adolescents' ego-

maturation crisis.

The table 1 above provides us with the evidence to accept the first hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation crisis among adolescents in Nigeria. This is because the calculated "t" (0.0249) is less than the table value (1.98)

Going through table 2, it is obvious that

Table 1: Test of coefficient of correlation between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation Crisis

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	t' calculated
Ego-Maturation Task	100	16.06	80.98		
Ego-Maturation Crisis	100	5.80	29.64	98	0.0249

$P \leq 0.05$, $r = 0.0018$

there is no significant relationship between male adolescents' ego-maturation task and female adolescents' ego-maturation task. The reason for this conclusion is that F-calculated (0.0396) is less than the table value (3.92) at 0.05 level of significance.

The results highlighted in table 3 also allow

Table 2: Test of comparison of mean score between male and female adolescents on ego-maturation task

Source	DF	SS	MS	F
Groups	1	519.84	519.84	
Error	98	1285172.84	13119.00	0.0396
Total	99	1285692.68		

$P \leq 0.05$

us to accept our hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between male adolescents' ego-maturation crisis and female adolescents' ego-maturation crisis. This is so because F-calculated (0.0847) is less than the

Table 3: Test of comparison of mean score between male and female adolescents on ego-maturation crisis

Source	DF	SS	MS	F
Groups	1	148.84	148.84	
Error	98	1756.42	172129.16	0.0847
Total	99	1905.26		

$P \leq 0.05$

table value (3.92) at .05 level of significance.

DISCUSSION

From our study, it was revealed that there is no significant relationship between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation crisis contrary to the views of Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977). While the sample used for this study may not be regarded as representing the entire adolescent population in Nigeria, this result implies that the theory of the relationship between ego-maturation task and ego-maturation crisis as given by Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977) may not adequately explain the reality of the developmental tasks or challenges and behavioural and emotional reactions associated with them in Nigeria. This result suggests that ego maturation task, as a product of ego functioning among adolescents in Nigeria does not pose any threat to satellization and attachment. This may be as a result of the fact that the Nigerian society is based on collective-derivative principle (Olowu and Akotia, 2001). According to Olowu and Akotia (2001) the self in Africa is a derivative of group ideals. Consequently, ego-maturation task and crisis in Africa and specifically in Nigeria cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of earned status and volitional independence otherwise referred to as desatellization as posited by Ausubel (1977) and Kirk (1977).

Moreover, analysis of the study data also reveals that gender has an effect on ego-maturation task and crisis. This position is supported by the acceptance of hypotheses II and III. This result is in line with our expectation that sex-role stereotype or beliefs could be an important factor in the evolvement and manifestation of ego-maturation task and crisis. This assumption is in line with Deaux's (1993) assertion that gender stereotypes continue to persist and to exert strong effects on developing children.

On the whole the results of this study underscores the need to consider the influence of culture in researchers' effort at generating theories aimed at explaining human personality development. This assertion is in line with Nsamenang's (1997) position that Africans develop within the precincts of their own cultural imperatives and existential realities, which seem to differ from the Euro-American.

From the foregoing, it is suggested that researchers in the area of human development in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole should focus more on research aimed at studying the dynamics of developmental task and crisis in Nigeria. Specifically, factors such as parental education, influence of western education, socio-economic status, child rearing practices and sex-role orientation as they relate to or affect ego-maturation task and crisis should be investigated. The result of this effort will go a long way in our effort at building human developmental theories that are Afro-centric in nature.

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