

The Correlation between College Students' Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception

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Abstract: From the perspective of individual development, this study explored the relationship between college students' childhood subjective socioeconomic status and their perception of humanization (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing). Three hundred college students were selected by random sampling method, and the data were collected by the questionnaire of childhood subjective socioeconomic status and the scale of humanizing perception. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and self-humanizing perception ($r=.229, p<.01$), and that of others ($r=.156, p<.01$). Childhood subjective socioeconomic status significantly predicted the self-humanizing perception ($\beta=0.238, p<.001$) and others ($\beta=0.223, p<.001$). The conclusion was that the childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception of college students are above the average level. Childhood subjective socioeconomic status was a significant positive predictor of the humanizing perception of self and others.

Keywords: Childhood subjective socioeconomic status; Humanizing perception.

1. Introduction of the Problem

Humanizing Perception is a general understanding of the essential characteristics of human beings, including views of oneself and others in terms of humanity. This perception can be divided into two dimensions: positive humanizing perception and dehumanizing perception. Its level reflects individual mental health and psychosocial development, making it of significant research value. Previous studies have identified two main factors that influence humanizing perception: situational factors and individual factors. Situational factors involve interpersonal environments and video games. The satisfaction of social needs, perception of threats, and sense of power, among others, all impact humanizing perception. Additionally, socioeconomic status, as a major situational factor, inevitably influences social interactions and personal feelings of power. Guinot et al. found that differences in perceived power affect an individual's cognitive perception of others and self in terms of humanity[1].

Childhood is a critical period for individual psychosocial development, and family economic status serves as an objective indicator of a child's material foundation, exerting significant and far-reaching effects on their physical and psychological development. Subjective socioeconomic status refers to an individual's perception of their relative position in the social hierarchy based on comparisons. This subjective perception includes evaluations and predictions of past, current, and future socioeconomic conditions[2]. In recent years, it has been found that subjective socioeconomic status is more sensitive than objective socioeconomic status and can capture more information. Therefore, subjective socioeconomic status has a strong predictive ability for mental and cognitive health[3].

College students are at a crucial stage in their lives, just beginning to independently engage with society, transitioning towards adulthood, and have not yet detached from their

family's objective socioeconomic status. Consequently, the subjective socioeconomic status from childhood continues to have an enduring impact[4]. Thus, conducting research that combines both aspects is feasible.

Furthermore, this study explores the relationship between college students' childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception, which is an innovative topic. In recent years, numerous studies both domestically and internationally have demonstrated the intricate relationship between an individual's mental health and their socioeconomic status. However, most research focuses on social power perception, subjective well-being, and mostly pertains to adulthood. Despite extensive research globally, there remains a lack of investigation into the relationship between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and individual humanizing perception.

2. Research Hypotheses

In this study, it is hypothesized that there is a significant positive correlation between childhood subjective socioeconomic status, as measured by the Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status Questionnaire, and humanizing perception (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing), as measured by the Humanizing Perception Scale. Specifically, it is expected that higher childhood subjective socioeconomic status will be associated with higher levels of humanizing perception.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

In this study, 300 college students were selected as participants through random sampling, and data collection was conducted using the QuestionStar platform. Among them, there were 99 male students and 201 female students, with ages ranging from 17 to 23 years old. Table 1 describes the participants based on their age and place of residence.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Participants by Academic Year

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Freshman	193	64.3	64.3	64.3
	Sophomore	59	19.7	19.7	84.0
	Junior	16	5.3	5.3	89.3
	senior	32	10.7	10.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Participants by Residence

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Urban	181	60.3	60.3	60.3
	Rural	119	39.7	39.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

3.2. Research Instruments

3.2.1. Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status Questionnaire (CSSS)

The CSSS is a self-report questionnaire designed by Griskevicius to measure participants' subjective socioeconomic status during childhood (ages 6-12). It consists of three items, each scored on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The total score is obtained by summing all item scores, with higher scores indicating a higher perceived childhood subjective socioeconomic status[5].

In this study, the CSSS demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's α of 0.85, indicating satisfactory reliability and validity.

3.2.2. Humanizing Perception Scale

The Humanizing Perception Scale was developed by Bastian, Jetten, and Radke and is used to measure self-humanizing perception. It comprises eight self-assessment items, including four items assessing universal human traits and four items evaluating unique human traits. The Other-Humanizing Perception Scale is derived from the Humanizing Perception Scale, with the subject pronoun "self" replaced by "others," assessing participants' perception of human traits in others. All items are rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), and the total score is obtained by summing all item scores. Higher total scores reflect a higher level of humanizing perception among participants[6].

In this study, the Cronbach's α for the Self-Humanizing Perception Scale was 0.79, and for the Other-Humanizing Perception Scale, it was 0.76, indicating good internal

consistency.

3.3. Statistical Analysis

The data were processed using SPSS 22.0. Differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception among college students based on demographic variables were analyzed using t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception. Regression analysis was employed to investigate whether childhood subjective socioeconomic status positively predicts humanizing perception after controlling for demographic variables.

4. Results

4.1. Differences in Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception Among College Students Based on Demographic Variables

As shown in Table 3, independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine the differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing) among college students of different genders. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status and self-humanizing perception based on gender. However, there was a significant difference in other-humanizing perception based on gender, with females showing higher levels of other-humanizing perception than males ($t = -3.006, p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Gender Differences in Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception

Variable	Male		Female		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	4.330	1.244	4.176	1.368	0.945
Self-Humanizing	4.817	0.992	4.728	0.910	0.776
Other-Humanizing	4.480	0.844	4.781	0.800	-3.006*

Note: *indicates $p < .05$. The same applies below.

As shown in Table 4, independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine the differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing) among college

students from different residential areas. The results revealed significant differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status based on residential areas, with college students residing in urban areas perceiving higher childhood

subjective socioeconomic status compared to those living in rural areas ($t = 6.150, p < .05$). However, there were no

significant differences in humanizing perception variables among college students from different residential areas.

Table 4. Residential Differences in Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception

Variable	Urban		Rural		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	4.588	1.218	3.678	1.305	6.150*
Self-Humanizing	4.807	0.901	4.682	0.988	1.130
Other-Humanizing	4.638	0.794	4.747	0.871	-1.116

As shown in Table 5, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing)

among college students of different academic years. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception variables across different academic years.

Table 5. Academic Year Differences in Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception

Variable	Freshman		Sophomore		Junior		Senior		<i>F</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	4.247	1.293	4.277	1.387	4.750	0.856	3.750	1.526	2.274
Self-Humanizing	4.748	0.881	4.746	0.961	4.766	0.916	4.828	1.233	0.070
Other-Humanizing	4.646	0.816	4.780	0.891	4.883	0.623	4.609	0.852	0.791

4.2. Correlation Analysis of Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception among College Students

The results of the correlation analysis between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception

(including self-humanizing and other-humanizing) among college students are presented in Table 6. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and self-humanizing perception ($r = .229, p < .01$), as well as a significant positive correlation between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and other-humanizing perception ($r = .156, p < .01$).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis Results for Each Variable ($N=300$)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	Self-Humanizing	Other-Humanizing
Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	4.227	1.328	1		
Self-Humanizing	4.757	0.937	.229**	1	
Other-Humanizing	4.681	0.826	.156**	.235**	1

Note: ** indicates $p < .01$. The same applies below.

4.3. Regression Analysis of Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Humanizing Perception among College Students

From Table 7, it can be observed that childhood subjective

socioeconomic status significantly and positively predicts self-humanizing perception ($\beta = 0.24, p < .001$), while the predictive effects of demographic variables (including academic year, gender, and residence) are not significant.

Table 7. Linear Regression Table for Predictors of Self-Humanizing Perception

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>			
Academic Year	0.265	0.460	0.035	0.577	0.055	4.286
Gender	-0.362	0.953	-0.023	-0.380		
residence	0.339	0.937	0.022	0.362		
Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	0.447	0.114	0.238	3.916***		

Note: *** indicates $p < .001$. The same applies below.

From Table 8, it is evident that childhood subjective socioeconomic status significantly and positively predicts other-humanizing perception ($\beta = 0.22, p < .001$). Moreover, demographic variables, namely gender ($\beta = 0.21, p < .001$), academic year ($\beta = 0.13, p < .05$), and residence ($\beta = 0.14, p$

$< .05$), also significantly and positively predict other-humanizing perception. Among these, childhood subjective socioeconomic status and gender have stronger predictive effects.

In conclusion, college students' childhood subjective

socioeconomic status can positively predict humanizing perception (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing). This indicates that the higher their perceived childhood

subjective socioeconomic status, the higher their level of humanizing perception will be.

Table 8. Linear Regression Table for Predictors of Other-Humanizing Perception

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>			
Academic Year	0.837	0.399	0.126	2.096*	0.083	6.645
Gender	2.956	0.827	0.211	3.574***		
residence	1.889	0.813	0.140	2.323*		
Childhood Subjective Socioeconomic Status	0.396	0.099	0.223	3.722***		

5. Discussion

This study utilized a self-report questionnaire survey method to investigate the relationship between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception among university students. The results confirmed the hypothesis that childhood subjective socioeconomic status is a significant positive predictor of humanizing perception (including self-humanizing and other-humanizing) in university students. The higher the perceived childhood subjective socioeconomic status, the higher the level of humanizing perception, leading to more positive perceptions of oneself and greater empathy towards others.

Analyzing the influencing factors of humanizing perception, the study found a substantial proportion of first-year students among the selected university participants (64.3%). As these students begin to integrate into society and strive to meet their social needs, they increase their opportunities to perceive human characteristics in individuals outside their immediate social circles. Individuals with higher perceived childhood socioeconomic status are more likely to proactively increase their social connections, as demonstrated by the research of Waytz and Epley, who found that individuals with fulfilled social needs are more likely to exhibit positive humanizing perception. Consequently, their level of humanizing perception is elevated[7].

Regarding differences in demographic variables, two key findings emerged. Firstly, female participants exhibited higher levels of other-humanizing perception compared to males. This difference may be related to the fact that males are more susceptible to the influence of violent video games. Compared to females, males are more likely to accept and enjoy violent game avatars, which could lead to higher levels of other-humanizing perception, as they immerse themselves in the avatars of violent games[8]. Secondly, university students residing in urban areas perceived a higher childhood subjective socioeconomic status than those in rural areas, likely due to the significant urban-rural disparities in China, with urban areas generally offering higher living standards.

The regression analysis results indicated that, apart from childhood subjective socioeconomic status, demographic variables (grade, gender, and residence) also significantly predicted other-humanizing perception. This suggests that other-humanizing perception is influenced by more factors compared to self-humanizing perception. Future research could consider incorporating these variables for further exploration.

6. Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study has yielded conclusions, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of the QuestionStar platform for questionnaire distribution and online self-reporting by participants may have compromised the reliability of the data, as it was challenging to ensure the participants' thorough and honest responses. Additionally, both the measurement of childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception relied on self-assessment, which, while convenient for obtaining participants' responses directly, may be susceptible to social desirability bias, as participants could provide socially preferred answers to gain social approval.

Furthermore, the study focused solely on college students as participants, and the sample size was relatively small. The significant disparity in the number of participants across different academic years and genders limits the generalizability of the findings to the entire population. Additionally, the selected age range of 17 to 23 years includes individuals who are in a developmental stage characterized by unstable self-concept and self-centeredness. Their perception of others and trait evaluations might be more influenced by the internet, thereby weakening the impact of childhood subjective socioeconomic status.

In future research, it is essential to use more diverse and representative samples of participants and include new variables for more in-depth exploration. For instance, Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" suggests that education is a humanizing process seeking freedom, making educational attainment a relevant variable to consider in humanizing perception research.

Overall, by addressing these limitations and incorporating a broader scope of variables, future studies can better advance our understanding of the relationship between childhood subjective socioeconomic status and humanizing perception.

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