Home Environment and Perfectionism: What influence do they have on Social Cognition among Teenagers?

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the issue of social cognition among teenagers has drawn the attention of scholars and researchers in the field of Psychology, particularly Developmental Psychology. However, there is limited understanding of how home environment and perfectionism influences social cognition of teenagers. Consequently, this study investigated the influence of home environment and perfectionism on social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and total of 352 teenagers in Secondary Schools located in Akoko North East Area of Ondo State, were selected using purposive and accidental sampling techniques. The age of the participants was between 10 to 19 years (Mean =13.31; SD=1.99. The participants responded to measures of social cognition (α=.89), home environment (α=.75), and perfectionism (α=.87). Multiple Regression Analysis was used in testing the two hypotheses. The results revealed that home environment significantly predicted social cognition (β= .10, t= 1.99, p<.05). Similarly, perfectionism significantly predicted social cognition (β= .49, t= 9.92, p<.01). The study concludes that home environment and perfectionism are crucial factors influencing social cognition of teenagers. Based on this finding, the study recommends that psychosocial programs aimed at improving social cognition of teenagers should be centered on creating a conducive home environment and in teaching self-compassion and realistic goal-setting.

Keywords: Social cognition, home environment, perfectionism, teenagers.

INTRODUCTION

Social cognition is an interdisciplinary concept that integrates aspects of social interactions and cognitive development (Akunne et al., 2023). While the social aspect refers to how people connect with each other, engage in social interactions and are affected by social institutions and norms, the cognitive aspect is concerned with the internal mental processes like thinking, perceptions, and learning. The term originates from the Latin word “cognoscere” which means to know, understand or gain knowledge (Rakesh et al., 2024).

Therefore, social cognition can be defined as the processes that enable people to interpret and respond to their social environment (Arioli et al., 2018). Social cognition incorporates the ways in which people perceive social information, evaluate others’ intent, and make evaluations about emotions and behavior (Ayansola, 2021). Fundamentally, it constitutes the core mechanism through which social interactions can be interpreted and understood such that one anticipates other people’s actions and reacts to them accordingly. Social cognition could be explained, as well, as the process whereby people form impressions about themselves and about the world around them.

The cognitive theory provides an essential basis for social reasoning, collective behavior, empathy, and knowledge of societal norms. Social cognition forms an important part of behavior management in social and cultural contexts (Ayansola, 2021). The capacity of inferring mental states like intentions, beliefs, emotions, etc. lies at the heart of social cognition, and it is important to many capacities such as empathy, cooperative and conflict management, and moral decision-making (Preckel et al., 2018). They enable people to cope socially and adapt to implicit norms and rules, thereby promoting social coherence within society.

Deficiencies in social cognition have been associated with certain mental disorders like autism spectrum disorder, schizophrenia, and traumatic brain injury (Allain et al., 2019).

Social cognition is considered in a variety of scientific fields, all using different theoretical and methodological approaches (Arioli et al., 2018). In psychoanalytic theories, the question of unconscious drives and relational experiences influencing one's capacity to comprehend the social aspect is raised (Cabaniss et al., 2024). Social psychology considers the role of social situations and environment in developing the abilities of a person to think socially (Merhad et al., 2023). The area of developmental psychology is concerned with the study of emergence and development of one's social cognition skills throughout their entire life cycle, stressing on the importance of learning and attachment relations (Badarneh et al., 2024). In turn, in cognitive neuroscience, social cognition is approached from a neuroscientific perspective, where neural substrates that underpin social cognition are studied and such structures of the brain as the medial prefrontal cortex, temporoparietal junction, and the amygdala are revealed as essential structures participating in processes of recognizing emotions or theory of mind (Cassel et al., 2016).

Owing to its significant role in the formation and sustenance of interpersonal relationships, a problem in social cognition is bound to impact the level of functioning of an individual (Sravanti, 2017). Such impairments may make it difficult for a person to gain access to social resources, navigate social roles, and engage in reciprocal relationships; skills that are necessary for good psychological well-being and effective community integration. Thus, social cognitive deficits not only impede human interaction but also deny an individual the advantages that accrue from such interactions (Henry et al., 2016).

Teenage age is a developmental stage where social cognition plays a particularly vital role, helping individuals navigate peer relationships and societal expectations (Andrews et al., 2021). Despite its importance, there remains a limited body of research on the range of factors that influence social cognition among teenagers. While existing studies have explored variables such as educational attainment, self-efficacy, cognitive biases, social categorization, and emotional intelligence as potential predictors (Bandura, 2012; Nnorom et al., 2020; Ratner, 2020), a closer review of the literature reveals that these are not exhaustive. Notably, limited attention has been given to the influence of the home environment and personality traits like perfectionism in shaping teenagers' social cognitive development. To address this gap, the present study aims to investigate how home environment and perfectionism function as determinants of social cognition in teenagers.

The first psychosocial factor in the study that might relate to the social cognition of teenagers is the home environment. The home environment is defined as the different factors and conditions in which the child develops cognitively, behaviorally, and psychologically (CFollins, 2017). These factors can be material in nature, such as poverty, or emotional and psychological, due to parent-child interaction and social conditions, such as neglect and emotional deprivation. Different lifestyles according to residential areas, including urban versus suburban life, can also influence the developmental process. According to Wori et al. (2023), teenagers from different families will have different home environments, leading to favorable or unfavorable developmental conditions.

The family is one of the most important contexts for development from childhood through teenage years, especially during these years of early adolescence, which is characterized by great plasticity of cognitive and affective processes (Roostin, 2018). In addition, many family experiences that occur in childhood have a significant effect on the teen's self-perception, cognitive development, and psychological resilience. The members of the family who have an impact on the child's development, such as parents and siblings, either develop a positive perception of oneself and high cognitive flexibility or, on the contrary, prevent their development due to neglect or instability (Ekanem, 2015). According to Adebule (2014), stability and consistency in the family environment are very important for cognitive development. The instability of the family caused by socio-economic or emotional instabilities may impair the intellectual activity of a teenager and school performance.

A healthy home environment consists of parent warmth, provision of stimulation and safety and cleanliness in the household (Khan et al., 2019). An environment that is secure and nurturing helps in not only healthy

development of the child during childhood but also contributes to good mental health and cognitive development during adolescence (Luby et al., 2022). According to Chukwudi (2013), a situation where parents provide an environment that is supportive both in terms of emotional and resources encourages the young adult to develop curiosity and improve their cognitive abilities. Availability of learning materials, emotional stability and a tranquil home environment help in the development of the teenager. Noisy and chaotic households discourage cognitive development and affect the overall health of the individual (Douglas, 2012).

The impact of the home environment on social cognition depends on the emotional and relational characteristics of the home (Li et al., 2023; Loi et al., 2026). The presence of structure and support allows teenagers to develop key social cognitive skills such as empathy, emotional regulation, and perception of the intentions of others (Andrews et al., 2021). In case of dysfunctional and chaotic households, the development of these skills might be difficult for teenagers who would struggle to understand the rules of social behavior or form healthy relationships with other people (Tian & Chen, 2024). According to Liquigan (2023), the family environment becomes decisive when it comes to defining the course of development because it affects not only cognitive and emotional well-being of teenagers but also their psychological future. Choi and Cho (2020) found that an optimistic home environment contributes to motivation and personal development of adolescents. Additionally, according to Steinmayr et al. (2019), strong family ties and cultural identification contribute to social cognition through strengthening social values and increasing motivation.

Another significant variable analyzed in this study which might affect the social cognition of teenagers is perfectionism. Perfectionism is defined as a multi-dimensional psychological construct which not only involves the striving for perfection, but also involves excessive internal motivation for establishing impossibly high standards combined with the fear of failure and self-criticism (Olaseni et al., 2024). While adaptive perfectionism leads to goal-attainment and self-control, maladaptive perfectionism is considered negative, especially in adolescents (Radhu et al., 2012).

Teenagers suffering from maladaptive perfectionism often have high levels of stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem since they are always concerned about their underperformance or criticism (Chęć et al., 2019). Such psychological pressure might affect their socialization processes in the form of their avoidance tendencies as they do not want to be judged or not live up to someone's expectations. In the context of the learning process, perfectionists tend to study obsessively and be afraid of taking any intellectual risks that might influence the development of their creativity (Lin & Muenks, 2022). Gradually, cognitive rigidity linked with perfectionism may develop into severe disorders, like anxiety, depression, or even burnout (Wegerer, 2023).

External factors tend to exacerbate the perfectionist behaviors. Societal expectations, peer pressure, and family demands, especially within the environment of competitive education, lead to the formation of an ideal among teens wherein one's self-esteem is based on achieving perfection (Flett et al., 2016). Social media also plays a significant role since it promotes images of perfection and success, thus increasing pressure on the individual. Moreover, teenagers may internalize those ideas, causing suppression of emotions, lack of vulnerability, and problems with cultivating self-compassion. According to neuropsychological studies, perfectionism causes greater cortical inhibition which affects emotional control and cognitive flexibility (Robinson & Abramovitch, 2020).

It is essential to understand the role of perfectionism with respect to social cognition. The way that teenagers see themselves is directly affected by this. Moreover, how they relate to others and perceive others can also be influenced by the same. For example, teenagers who exhibit high levels of perfectionism are more likely to concentrate on their flaws and disregard or ignore their successes (Løhre et al., 2024; Verfaellie et al., 2021). Such an imbalanced perception of self may cause one to feel inadequate despite being successful (Boone et al., 2022; Kearns et al., 2019). Rather than forming authentic connections, perfectionist teens may become trapped in cycles of social comparison and negative self-evaluation, ultimately impeding the development of healthy social cognition (Blackburn et al., 2025).

The reviewed studies on the connection between home environment, perfectionism and social cognition showed that there is paucity of data as regards the level to which of home environment and perfectionism predict social cognition of teenagers. Most studies were conducted outside Nigeria, which failed to capture the context of Nigeria. There were also limited studies on home environment, perfectionism, and social cognition in teenagers' population. Therefore, the present study will explicitly examine the level to which home environment and perfectionism independently predict social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. The following hypotheses were therefore, proposed in line with the gaps identified in the extant literature:

- Home environment will significantly predict social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State, Nigeria.
- Perfectionism will significantly predict social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State, Nigeria.

METHOD

Design and Participants

The cross-sectional survey design was used in this study to gather data from three hundred and fifty two (352) teenagers in Secondary Schools at Ikare Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. The participants age ranged 10 to 19 years with Mean score of 13.31, and standard deviation of 1.99. A total of 194 (55.1%) were male, while 151 (42.9%) were female. However, 7 (2.0%) did not reveal their gender. Their religions showed that 218 (61.9%) were Christians, 116 (33.0%) were Muslims and 3 (0.9%) were belonged other religions. However, 15 (4.3%) did not report the religion they belonged to.

Instrument

The questionnaire was used in collecting data from the participants. The questionnaire was in 4 sections (A, B, C and D).

Section A: Socio-Demographic Information

Socio-demographic information of participants was gathered using this section. The socio-demographics listed include age, gender, religious affiliation, and class in college.

Section B: Social Cognition Scale (SCS)

Social cognition was measured using the Social Cognition Scale (SCS) by Fuentes et al. (2007). The scale consist of 39 validated items that measures cognitive skills of individuals. Sample items include "I make friends easily", "I am confident on dates", "I feel sorry for others when bad things happen to them", "I listen to adults when they are talking to me", and "I try to understand how my friends feel when they are angry, upset, or sad". All items were rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 0=Never, 1=Sometimes, and 2=Very often. Using the current sample, a Cronbach's Alpha .89 was obtained. High score on the scale indicated high level of social cognition and vice versa

Section C: Home Environment Scale (HES)

Home environment was assessed using Home Environment Scale by Muthee (2009). The scale has 29 validated items, 24 items are worded positively while 5 are worded negatively. The positive and negative items were mixed together in the scale. Sample items include "My parents do not let me mix freely with other children around my house", My parents/guardian supervises me when I am doing school assignments", My parents/guardian check on my monthly, termly, and yearly examination progress report" and "my parent/guardian enquires about my class room position (rank) after every terminal examination". All items were rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 1= Not at all, 2=Sometimes, and 3= Always. Muthee (2009) reported a Cronbach Alpha of .71.

Based on the current sample, a Cronbach's Alpha .75 was obtained. High score on the scale means better parental involvement in child's work at home, while low score indicates lesser parental involvement in child's work at home.

Section D: Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

In this study, perfectionism was assessed using Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) developed by Frost et al. (1990). The scale comprises of 35 validated items. The FMPS has 4 sub-scales of perfectionism. The sub-scales are: concern over mistakes and doubts about actions (13 items), excessive concern with parents' expectations and evaluation (9 items), excessively high personal standards (7 items), concern with precision, order and organization (6 items). The instrument was rated on a 5 point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree). Sample items include: "It is important to me that I am thoroughly competent in what I do" and "I hate being less than the best at things". However, in this study, all 35 items were computed and 4 dimensions combined as composite score for overall perfectionism, with higher score indicating high levels of perfectionism. Frost et al. (1990) reported a Cronbach Alpha of .83. Based on the current sample, a Cronbach Alpha of .87 was obtained.

Procedure

The researcher obtained a duly signed and stamped letter of permission to conduct the study from the ethics committee of the Department of Pure and Applied Psychology, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. This was done to ensure that the study posed no psychological or physical threat to the participants. The participants consented to the study via instructions on the questionnaire designed for the study. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and they were all assured of confidentiality of the information on the questionnaire, as it was intended for research purpose only. Anonymity of participants was ensured. The study adopted accidental sampling technique in selecting available teenagers in Secondary Schools at Ikare Akoko, Ondo State. A total of Four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered but only three hundred and fifty two (352) retrieved and found useful for the analysis. This gives a response rate of 88%. Data collection spanned four (4) weeks.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Test of Study Hypotheses

In testing the independent predictive power of the independent variables (home environment and perfectionism) on the dependent variable (social cognition), a multiple regression analysis was employed. The result is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Influence of Home Environment and Perfectionism on Social Cognition among Teenagers

Predictors	**β**	**t**	**P**	**R**	**R^2**	**df**	**F**	**P**
				.51	.26	2,322	21.99**	<.01
Home Environment	.10	1.99*	<.05					
Perfectionism	.49	9.92**	<.01					

** p< 0.01, * p < 0.05, N= 352

The result in Table 1 above revealed that home environment significantly predicted social cognition (β= .10, t= 1.99, p<.05) among teenagers in Ondo State. This implies that the various physical, social, and emotional conditions within a household that shape a teenager's cognitive, behavioral, and psychological development are significant determinants of their level of social cognition. This supported the formulated hypothesis one, and it was therefore accepted.

Also, as indicated in the result above, perfectionism significantly predicted social cognition (β= .49, t= 9.92, p<.01) among teenagers in Ondo State. This implies that perfectionistic characteristics among teenagers

such as personal standards, concern over mistakes, perceptions of parental expectations, and organization, will determine the mental processes involved in interpreting and responding to their social environment. This supports the formulated hypothesis two and it was therefore, accepted.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated home environment and perfectionism as predictors of social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. The results of this study showed that home environment significantly predicted social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. This confirmed hypothesis one which stated that home environment will significantly predict social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. This was with the indication that the various physical, social, and emotional conditions within a household that shape a teenager's cognitive, behavioral, and psychological development is a significant determinant of their ability to mentally processes, interpret and respond to their social environment.

This finding provided support to some past studies (e.g., Bayotlang et al., 2025; Elujekwute et al., 2021; Fishbein et al., 2019; Kumari & Kamala, 2023; Olatunde et al., 2024; Wori et al., 2023), which revealed that home environmental influences the social cognitive development of teenagers. The results of this study also supported the findings of Nampijja et al. (2018), Nnorom et al. (2020), Okudo et al. (2023), Tahir et al. (2022), and Yang et al. (2021), with the findings of their studies revealing that home environment is a significant predictor of social cognition.

In this study, the home environment emerged as a significant predictor of teenagers' social cognition. One possible explanation is that households that encourage open communication provide teenagers with regular opportunities to interpret social cues, articulate their thoughts, and engage in meaningful dialogue which is crucial for social cognitive development (Vyas & Tomar, 2022). Further, teenagers also tend to mimic the social skills they see at home.

Whenever the parents and the siblings around them demonstrate empathy, cooperation, and good conflict resolution, they become role models for teenagers from whom they can learn about social skills (Vyas & Tomar, 2022). In addition, the safe and supportive home environment promotes healthy emotional development and cognitive development as well. In contrast, disorganized or unsafe living conditions may increase stress levels, thereby disrupting the development of essential social skills (Vyas & Tomar, 2022).

In addition, this study revealed that perfectionism was a significant predictor of social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. This finding confirmed hypothesis two which stated that perfectionism will significantly predict social cognition among teenagers in Ondo State. This finding underscores the crucial role that perfectionism play in shaping social cognition of teenagers. In particular, the positive correlation implies that teenagers who have higher levels of perfectionism also have higher levels of social cognition. It implies that perfectionistic characteristics among teenagers such as personal standards, concern over mistakes, perceptions of parental expectations, and organization are connected to how teenagers perceive and interpret their social environment. These results are consistent with earlier studies (for instance, Bisht & Sethi, 2025; Oloidi et al., 2022; Samfira & Paloș, 2021; Demirtas-Zorbaz, 2019) where perfectionism is identified as a significant predictor of social cognition.

In this study, perfectionism was found to significantly predict social cognition among teenagers. One of the reasons for this may be the tendency of perfectionist adolescents to constantly monitor and evaluate themselves. As a result of this excessive inner self-focus, they may be very aware of the nuances in other people's facial expressions and tones of voices and how they might judge them (Molnar et al., 2023). The fear of doing something wrong or being viewed poorly by others makes them vigilant about the reactions they elicit and try to change their behavior accordingly to avoid disapproval. The need to pay attention to the social environment may help to develop certain aspects of social cognition, namely the theory of mind and perspective taking.

Furthermore, perfectionism can be linked to the social awareness of teenagers regarding social expectations, peer relations, and self-presentation. The ability to judge one's performance in light of personal standards

and expectations may motivate them to be mindful of social signals and other people's responses (Molnar et al., 2023). These characteristics may relate to certain facets of social cognition, including the comprehension of social situations and the perspectives of other individuals. It is however important to note that the connection between perfectionism and social cognition may vary depending on the specific components of perfectionism that are at stake, for example, being worried about errors and fearing failure. When teenagers are overwhelmed by internal pressure, they may misinterpret social signals or find it difficult to empathize with others, as their mental resources are consumed by self-focused concerns (Molnar et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that home environment significantly predicted social cognition among the respondents. Similarly, perfectionism significantly predicted social cognition among the respondents. It was therefore recommended that efforts should be made in maintaining positive home environment. Parents and guardians should encourage open communication, emotional validation, and a balance between expectations and autonomy because nurturing and emotionally supportive home fosters social cognition.

It was also recommended that teachers, parents and psychologists should teach teenagers self-compassion and realistic goal-setting, as this can help improve social cognition. Also, schools, educators and parents should introduce social-emotional learning programs to help teenagers develop self-awareness, empathy, and appropriate social skills. Lastly developmental psychologists should also be consulted on better ways to improve social cognition of teenagers through home environment and an understanding of perfectionistic tendencies.

Despite the contribution of the study to the extant literature on social cognition, it had some limitations. The study relied on self-reported data collected through questionnaires. This method may not always ensure complete honesty from participants. The study was also limited to teenagers in Ikare Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, which might affect the level to which the study can be generalized. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. As such, future studies should consider these observed gaps so as to facilitate comprehensive understanding of the influence of home environment and perfectionism on social cognition among teenagers.

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