

# Influential factors on ethnocentrism psychology essay



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The current study examines the relation of dimensions of ethnocentrism relate to social-structural factors such as socioeconomic status, feeling of anomie, and authoritarianism. Using clustered sampling, five hundred students were selected from ten high schools in Ahvaz city, Iran. Results of Structural Equation Modeling showed that SES has direct positive effect on ethnocentrism. In addition, being mediated by feeling of anomie and authoritarianism, SES indirectly relates to ethnocentrism. Similarly, anomie mediates the effect of SES on authoritarianism. Feelings of anomie was found to have an indirect effect on dimensions of ethnocentrism via authoritarianism. Findings confirmed the proposed conceptual path model which are in harmony with findings from other countries. The influence of the feeling of anomie in the model is highlighted since it has extremely large effect size on dimensions of ethnocentrism.

## **Introduction**

Ethnocentrism is a broad term introduced by William Graham Sumner (1907/2002) that pertains to having in-group attitudes of superiority as compared to out-groups. This concept is usually addressed in the literature as having favorable attitudes/preferences toward one's own group or group members and having unflavored evaluations/attitudes/feelings regarding other ethnic groups (Andersen & Taylor, 2007; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Segall, 1979). Alternatively, ethnocentrism may be viewed as a perceptual process that provides the individual a frame of references that overlooks existence of other reference frames (Porter & Samovar, 1976). In other word, ethnocentric attitudes are about the imposition of the personal understanding of the social world on others (Lustig & Koester, 2003). For

example, ethnocentric individuals are more likely to have biased attitude toward out-groups, evaluate them as dishonest, and treat them with injustice (Neuliep, Hintz, & McCroskey, 2005). This definition touches on the nature of ethnocentrism which illuminates how this concept relates to authoritarian/dogmatic ideology (Mayer, 2012).

In the current article we investigate how such reference frames may relate to societal-structural factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), feelings of anomie, and authoritarianism within Iranian context. Iran is a home to several ethnic groups who are living in geographically diverse provinces. For example, Kurds are living in the western provinces, Baluchis in the east, Turks in the northwest, Arabs in the southwest, and Persians in the central provinces of Iran (Aghajanian, 1983). Research has shown that Iranian ethnic groups are ethnocentric and pessimistic toward the out-groups (Amirahmadi, 1987; Asgharzadeh, 2007; Fokoohi & Amoosi, 2009; Haghish, Heydari, Biegler, Pfuhl, & Teymoori, 2012; Koutlaki, 2010; Moghadas Jafari, Sheikhavandi, & Sharifpour, 2008; Rabani, yazdkhasti, Hajiani, & Mirzaei, 2009; Shaffer, 2002). But it would be interesting to examine if their ethnocentric attitudes relate to societal factors mentioned above.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Socioeconomic status (SES) is defined one of the most researched terms in social science which pertains to one's overall social, educational, and economic status (Adler et al., 1994). Since the previous research findings have shown that SES relates to feelings of anomie, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism, we will address these relations one after another and propose a model explaining how these factors relate to each other.

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## Relation of SES with Authoritarianism

Pioneers of psychodynamics school have mentioned socioeconomic status as a factor influencing authoritarian personality. For example, Fromm (1941/1994) indicates that development of authoritarian personality should be considered within societal structures, including socioeconomic status (Scheepers, Felling, & Peters, 1990). Lipset (1959) proposed the theory of working class authoritarianism which has triggered a vast amount of research. He underlines that working classes are more likely to be authoritarian because they have lower education, reading and knowledge, financial security and they also have lower participation in social activities and political organization. Further research confirmed the relation of SES and authoritarianism and showed that authoritarian patterns are more common in lower SES families (Assadi et al., 2007; Floyd & Saitzyk, 1992; Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002; Lipsitz, 1965; Napier & Jost, 2008). In addition, SES also influences parent's child-rearing practices (Brezina & McCarthy, 2004; Kohn & Schooler, 1969; Miller, Slomczynski, & Schoenberg, 1981; Slomczynski, Miller, & Kohn, 1981; Wright & Wright, 1976; Xiao, 2000). For instance, parents with lower SES status are more likely to have authoritarian parenting style which itself promotes authoritarianism among their children (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Brooks, 1996; Crockett & Meidinger, 1956; Duckitt, 2001; Duriez, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2007, 2008; Floyd & Saitzyk, 1992; Gecas, 1979; Hoff et al., 2002; Kohn, 1977; Kohn & Schooler, 1969; Lins-Dyer & Nucci, 2007; Scodel & Freedman, 1956; Scodel & Mussen, 1953). Similarly, insecure parent-child attachment which is also more common in lower SES families promotes

authoritarian traits in children (Oesterreich, 2005; Roccato, 2008; Weber & Federico, 2007). Research in Iran also suggests that both parenting style and authoritarian patterns are widespread in lower SES Iranian families (For review see Heydari, Teymoori, & Haghish, in press).

### SES and Feelings of Anomie

Anomie originates from anomia a Greek word which means absence of law (Caruana, Ramaseshan, & Ewing, 2000). Anomie has been studied in micro scale, by taking people's perspective toward one another and their society into account and macro scale, discussing how anomie hurts society's functionality and groups of people (Haghish et al., 2012). Theory of anomie indicates that anomie occurs as a result of rapid social changes such as war, splendor, recession, and fast population growth (Durkheim, 1951, 1984) or when the society fails to satisfy people's goals due to discrepancy between cultural aspirations and the legitimate means of achieving them (Merton, 1938). Consequently, people lose their faith in their society's norms, rules, and boundaries and develop feelings of distrust toward one another and their society (Durkheim, 1951, 1984; Morrison, 1995).

The larger the gap between the cultural aspirations and legitimized means, the more people feel unsatisfied in reaching their goals. Haghish et al.

(2012) reported a significant and high positive correlation between socioeconomic status and feelings of anomie. They also discussed that based on socioeconomic status, people experience different level of dissatisfaction in anomic status i. e. presumably, people of middle and lower SES experience more dissatisfaction since they have limited sources compared to

upper class. Similar result between anomie and SES has been reported in other studies (Bell, 1957; Heydari, 2010; Lee & Clyde, 1974; Menard, 1995; Mizruchi, 1960; Rushing, 1971; Teevan, 1975).

### Relation between SES, Feelings of Anomie, and Authoritarianism with Ethnocentrism

We have discussed and presented evidence that socioeconomic status relates to anomie and authoritarianism in a way that people with lower SES are more vulnerable to both anomic dissatisfaction and authoritarian traits. Empirical research showed that all of these societal factors significantly relate to ethnocentrism. For example, Scheepers, Felling, and Peters (1992) reported a negative correlation between SES and ethnocentrism. Navah and Taghaviniasab (1387) also showed that SES and relative level of political and economic deprivation that people experience influence ethnocentrism and ethnic divergence in Iran.

Other studies have also reported significant positive relation of authoritarianism and ethnocentrism (Adorno et al., 1950; Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Lutterman & Middleton, 1970; McDill, 1961; Meloen, Van der Linden, & De Witte, 1996; Mulford & Murphy, 1968; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Van Ijzendoorn, 1989, 1990). In addition, Srole (1956) and Scheepers et al., (1990, 1992) believed that anomic situation leaves the person with powerlessness and frustration feeling which such a sphere propels them toward to excessive in-group identification that in one hand leads to authoritarianism and in the other hand provides a good environment for

developing the ethnocentrism by such excessive identification. Thus, the anomie can lead to ethnocentrism through authoritarianism as well.

There is also a reason to assume that anomie promotes authoritarianism.

DISCUSSION AND REFERENCES NEEDED. according to the mass society theorists (Arendt, 1951; Fromm, 1994) and recent theorization (Oesterreich, 2005) as well , it is more likely to be done through an anomic condition.

Based on the literature, we advance a model to be examined in a single path analysis as shown in figure 1. Using a single path model is a new feature compared to the previous studies in this field. Furthermore, this study is carried out in Iran and thus, it would be interesting to see how our result relates to Western studies on authoritarianism, anomie, and ethnocentrism.

Based on the theory of Merton (1938, 1968) who holds SES as a source of anomie, and subsequent speculations (Heydari, Teymoori, Nasiri, & Haghish, 2012; Napier & Jost, 2008; Scheepers et al., 1990; Srole, 1956) we expect to find a negative relation between anomie and socioeconomic status. Similarly, we anticipate negative relation between SES and authoritarianism based on the working class authoritarianism theory of Lipset (1959). WE also predict to find a positive relation between feelings of anomie and authoritarianism (Arendt, 1951; Fromm, 1994; Heydari et al., 2012; Oesterreich, 2005).

Finally, all of the SES, authoritarianism, and anomie were assumed to be related to ethnocentrism as well.

Anomie

Subjective Socioeconomic

Authoritarianism

Ethnocentrism

Figure 1. Illustrating the relation between SES, Anomie, Authoritarianism, and Ethnocentrism

## **Methodology**

### **Participants and procedure**

A sample of 500 high-school students, who were chosen by the cluster method of sampling from ten high schools of Ahvaz, Iran were required to fill out the questionnaires whose participations were voluntary as well. Twelve participants were purged from the analysis due to their incomplete answers. Participants were 14 to 18 year-old ( $M = 16.14$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) and included 283 males, 194 females. The subjects were told that the participation is voluntary and assured the anonymity of the questionnaires and confidentiality of the answers.

### **Instruments**

Socioeconomic Status. SES was measured by Nabavi et al.'s (2009) Subjective SES Scale which comprises six items. The scale measures the individuals' perception about their socioeconomic status and social class (Nabavi, Hosseinzade, & Hosseini, 2009/1387), and has been applied to other researches in Iran (Hagish, Heydari, Pfuhl, Biegler, & Teymoori, 2012, In press; Heydari, Teymoori, & Nasiri, In press; Heydari et al., 2012) as well. The items were in Likert format ranging from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) and the sum of the scores indicate the position of the individual in social



structure where higher score implies higher social class and better socioeconomic status. Nabavi et al (2009) reported an Alpha coefficient of 0.71 and Heydari et al.'s (2012) reported the internal consistency of 0.75 for the scale. In the current study, alpha coefficient of .70 was found.

**Authoritarianism Scale.** Authoritarianism scale is a 12-item scale developed and validated based on F-personality scale (Adorno et al., 1950) Right Wing Authoritarianism scale (Altemeyer, 1998) by Heydari et al., (2012). Items were developed considering the socio-cultural context of Iran. Some items are as follows: " people should obey their superiors whether or not they think they are right". " Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn". Participants responded the items on a 5-point Likert scale from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The scale has an alpha coefficient of 0.88. Research using this scale has shown predictive validity for the scale through its association with socioeconomic status and parental control (Heydari, Teymoori, & Haghish, Submitted). Similarly, significant relationship was acquired between this scale and anomie (Heydari et al., 2012).

Scheepers et al.'s (1992) examined the ethnocentrism from two dimensions of negative attitude toward out-group and positive attitude toward in-group members.

**Ethnocentrism.** For measuring ethnocentrism Navah et al., (2010) scale was used which measures ethnocentrism within the socio-cultural context of Iran (Navah, Heydari, & Froutan Kia, 1389/2010). Similar to Scheepers et al. (1992), the `scale includes two five-item subscales which measure in-group

ethnocentrism (favorable attitude toward in-group) and out-group ethnocentrism (unfavorable attitude toward out-groups). The scale require the respondents to rate the items based on Likert format, ranging from 5- “strongly agree” to 1- “strongly disagree” and has a Cronbach’s alpha of .85 (Nabavi et al., 2009/1387). Similarly, the criterion validity of the scale was obtained through its significant association with authoritarianism,  $r = 0.51$ ,  $p < .01$ , and socioeconomic status,  $r = 0.14$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Anomie. To measure anomie, the nine-point revised instrument of Srole (1956) was translated into Persian. Since the 1960s, this scale has been used in sociological studies for measuring anomie (McDill, 1961; Scheepers et al., 1992). To maximize the variance, the original scale was elaborated by replacing yes/no responses with a Likert scale. All the scale’s items were described at either end by 1 (Strongly Agree) and 5 (Strongly Disagree). The scoring was applied such that the higher the sum of the scale, the greater are the individuals’ anomie feelings. To determine the validity of the translated questionnaire, 40 participants were surveyed and an Alpha coefficient of 0.66 was obtained.

## Results

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysis of the data. In analyzing the mediation effect and indirect effects, SEM and Bootstrapping methods using Amos 16.0 were applied. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the research variables including means, standard deviation, minimum score, and maximum score. According to Table 1, the mean score of feeling of anomie (Mean = 29.95 and maximum score of scale is 45), authoritarianism (Mean = 34.27 and maximum score of scale is 60), and in-  
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group ethnocentrism (Mean = 18.36 and maximum score of scale is 25) is high. Table 1 shows the correlations among research variables as well. Socioeconomic status has negative significant correlation with anomie, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism. Anomie, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism from both dimensions have positive correlation with each other.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the research variables and their inter-correlations

Variables

Mean

Std. Deviation

Minimum

Maximum

1

2

3

4

5

1. Socioeconomic S.

15. 85

4. 62

5. 00

25. 00

—

—

—

—

—

2. Anomie

29. 95

7. 36

9. 00

45. 00

-. 50\*\*

—

—

—

—

### 3. Authoritarianism

34. 27

9. 29

15. 00

60. 00

-. 41\*\*

. 42\*\*

—

—

—

### 4. Ethnocentrism in-g.

18. 36

5. 08

5. 00

25. 00

-. 35\*\*

. 40\*\*

. 31\*\*

—

—

5. Ethnocentrism Out-g

14. 59

5. 30

5. 00

25. 00

-. 31\*\*

. 38\*\*

. 32\*\*

. 58\*\*

—

Note: \*\* =  $p < .01$ , (2-tailed)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was carried out to examine whether socioeconomic status is related to ethnocentrism through anomie and authoritarianism. To evaluate the fit of the conceptual model, Maximum

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Likelihood method was chosen. The SEM was done in two stages which the measurement model is first confirmed separately and then the full structural model is entered into the analysis. Separate measurement models were carried out for the each constructs to examine the confirmatory factor analysis (to determine the fit of the measurements). CFA illustrate the degree of the degree of model fit, the explained variances and standardized residual for the measurement variables, and the adequacy of the factor loading (Byrne, 2010). The items with low factor loading were dropped once at a time from the scale which the number of the dropped items was shown in the Table 2. Alpha Cronbach of the items was also given to show the internal consistency of the scales.

Table 2. The reliability and factor loading of items

Variables

Alpha Conbach

Number of Dropped Items

Range of items' Factor Loadings

1. Socioeconomic S.

. 88

0

. 54 -. 99

## 2. Anomie

. 78

3

. 48-. 67

## 3. Authoritarianism

. 78

3

. 49-. 81

## 4. Ethnocentrism in-g.

. 79

0

. 62-. 68

## 5. Ethnocentrism Out-g

. 88

0

. 63-. 69



After confirming the modified scales at the measurement model section, the conceptual model would be ready to be examined in the structural equation modeling. The model hypothesized that the socioeconomic status is related to the in-group and out-group ethnocentrism directly and indirectly being mediated by authoritarianism and anomie. The final model is presented in Figure 2 in which the non-significant paths were omitted, however the path of authoritarianism to in-group ethnocentrism was close to but not significant which has been left on the model due to its importance in the hypotheses.

R<sup>2</sup> is 0.33 for in-group ethnocentrism meaning that 33 percent of the authoritarianism is explained by the research variables and 0.26 for out-group ethnocentrism implying that 26 percent of the out-group ethnocentrism is explained by the socioeconomic status, anomie and authoritarianism. The model yielded to poor goodness of fit by obtaining significant Chi-Square ( $\chi^2 = 972.70$ ,  $df = 391$ , relative Chi Square = 2.49,  $p < .001$ ). However, satisfactory model fit was obtained by other fit indices including comparative fit index (CFI = .918), Incremental Fit Index (IFI = .919), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI = .909) which the value of more than .90 shows acceptable model fit (Byrne, 2010). Another important indicator of model fit is root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) showed good model fit (RMSEA = .055) which the value less than .08 considered good model fit (Ho, 2006). The significance and other coefficient of the structural model are presented at Table 3.

Table 3. The coefficients of each causal path in the model

Estimate

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S. E.

Beta

C. R.

P

Anomie <--- SES

-. 322

. 042

-. 46

-7. 610

\*\*\*

Authoritarianism <--- SES

-. 115

. 030

-. 21

-3. 796

\*\*\*

Authoritarianism <--- Anomie

. 184

. 052

. 24

3. 525

\*\*\*

Our-group ethno <--- Authoritarianism

. 351

. 092

. 22

3. 808

\*\*\*

In-group ethno <--- Authoritarianism

. 142

. 080

. 10

1. 764

. 078

Out-group ethno <--- Anomie

. 493

. 087

. 39

5. 648

\*\*\*

In-group ethno <--- Anomie

. 530

. 089

. 46

5. 964

\*\*\*

In-group ethno <--- SES

-. 106

. 039

-. 13

-2. 722

. 006

Figure 1: Significant Estimated Path Coefficients of the Hypothesized Model

There are some indirect effect of socioeconomic status on ethnocentrism via anomie and authoritarianism, another indirect effect of socioeconomic status on authoritarianism via anomie, and lastly the indirect effect of anomie on ethnocentrism via authoritarianism which all of them require further examination. The results of significance of the indirect effects using the bootstrap procedure based on 5000 samples to derive a 95% confidence bias-corrected confidence interval is shown in Table 4.

The bootstrapped estimate of the mediated effect is statistically significant for socioeconomic status relationship to in-group and out group ethnocentrism via authoritarianism and anomie (BC-Bias Corrected = -.20, ER = .043,  $p < .001$ ; BC-Bias Corrected = -.22, ER = .038,  $p < .001$  for in-group and out group ethnocentrism respectively) and significant indirect effect of socioeconomic status on anomie via authoritarianism is found as well (BC-Bias Corrected = -.06, ER = .019,  $p < .001$ ). Anomie has significant indirect effect on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism via authoritarianism as well (BC-Bias Corrected = .03, ER = .015,  $p < .036$ ; BC-Bias Corrected = .07, ER = .025,  $p < .001$  for in-group and out group ethnocentrism respectively).

Table 4. Bootstrapping: The indirect effect of socioeconomic status and anomie on ingroup ethnocentrism

Standardized Indirect Effect

(Point Estimate)

Standardized Indirect error

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Bootstrapping

BC Percentile 95% CI

Lower Upper

DV: In-group Eth

IVs

Socioeconomic st.

-. 20\*\*\*

. 043

-. 295 -. 123

Anomie

. 03\*

. 015

. 002 . 065

DV: Out-group E IVs

Socioeconomic st.

-. 22\*\*\*

. 038

-. 297 -. 149

Anomie

. 07\*\*\*

. 025

. 027 . 128

DV: Authoritar. IVs

Socioeconomic st.

-. 06\*\*\*

. 019

-. 103 -. 027

BC – Bias Corrected, \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $P < .001$

Thus, socioeconomic status has significant indirect effect on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism via authoritarianism and anomie and significant indirect effect on authoritarianism via anomie. Anomie has also significant indirect effect on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism via authoritarianism which the total effect size of the exogenous variable on endogenous variable are reported in Table 5. As can be seen on the Table 5, the most effective construct in this model is anomie with having very large effect size of . 56 on both in-group and out-group ethnocentrism. Interestingly, the anomie and

socioeconomic status have the same effect size on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism.

Table 5: Direct, Indirect and Total effects of Latent Exogenous Variables on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism and authoritarianism

Direct Effect

(DE)

Indirect Effect

(IE)

Total Effect

(TE)

DV: In-group Eth

Exogenous

Socioeconomic st.

-. 11

-. 20

-. 11 + -. 20 = -. 31

Anomie

. 53



. 03

$$. 53 + . 03 = . 56$$

DV: Out-group E

Exogenous

Socioeconomic st.

-. 09

-. 22

$$-. 09 + -. 22 = -. 31$$

Anomie

. 49

. 07

$$. 49 + . 07 = . 56$$

DV: Authoritar.

Exogenous

Socioeconomic st.

-. 12

-. 06

$$-.12 + -.06 = -.18$$

## Discussion

Research has shown that ethnocentrism significantly relates to racism, xenophobia, prejudice, dogmatism, and inflexibility (important citation is required).

It was found that the socioeconomic status, anomie, and authoritarianism are effective factors on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism. They had significant positive association with each other. Most specifically the socioeconomic status has indirect effect on in-group and out-group authoritarianism via the mediation effect of anomie and authoritarianism. In addition, the anomie has indirect effect on in-group and out-group ethnocentrism via the mediation effect of authoritarianism.

Consistently, the significant association of the ethnocentrism with anomie, authoritarianism, and socioeconomic status has been found previously (Adorno et al., 1950; Hagish et al., 2012, In press; Heydari et al., 2012; Laythe et al., 2001; Lutterman & Middleton, 1970; McDill, 1961; Scheepers et al., 1990, 1992; Srole, 1956), what was the driver of conducting such study over again was the novelty of the sample which such a study has not been conducted in Iran and besides bringing all these factors together in Structural Equation Modeling as well. A great proportion of ethnocentrism variance was explained by the research variable which show how such a intergroup feeling are rooted in social structure which influence such distorted intergroup relation directly and indirectly through the feeling of anomie and authoritarian personality. More importantly, the feeling of

anomie played a very crucial role here by having very large effect size which the mean of the participants in this construct was very high. As explained in Heydari et al., (2012) paper, the dramatic changes during last decades (revolution, in 1979, major structural and cultural changes since revolution, rapid population growth, eight years' war with Iraq, international blockades, expansion of the mass media, and qualitative expansion of higher education facilities) drive the society anomic. Society members need to adapt to the vast major changes, and a feeling of anomie can be a consequence of lack of adaptation to these major changes. This explanation is consistent with Durkheimian approach toward anomie. Rapid vast social changes can be a cause of anomie (Durkheim, 1897/1966).

The significant association of socioeconomic status with authoritarianism was consistent with the authoritarianism working class theory (Lipset, 1959, 1963) and subsequent empirical research on it (Heydari et al., Submitted; Heydari et al., 2012; Napier & Jost, 2008). Merton (1938, 1968) theory of anomie also predicted the significant association of social structure which embodied in socioeconomic status with feeling of anomie among society actors. Previous studies reported the significant association of socioeconomic status with anomie (Carr & Hauser, 1976; Heydari, Teymoori, & Nasiri, In press; Heydari et al., 2012; Lee & Clyde, 1974; Menard, 1995; Rushing, 1971; Teevan Jr, 1975) which is completely akin with the result of the current study. In line with what has been called as a “ flight into security” (Oesterreich, 2005), the authoritarianism has significantly related to authoritarianism as well which is in line with what has been found previously. Besides that the mediation effect of the anomie for the relation of

socioeconomic status to authoritarianism has been supported and in harmony with the previous findings (Heydari et al., 2012). In fact, authoritarianism is reproduced itself in the context of social class in one hand and through the feeling of anomie on the other which the anomie feeling is itself a product of the social class as well. Though theoretically speaking, the authoritarianism is considered as a mode of adaptation to anomic situation and insecure position in social structure which all of these lead the society members toward ethnocentrism.