

Do teacher-assessed grades lead to unfair outcomes for students depending on their personality traits?

High intellect/imagination scores are more strongly associated with better results in Leaving Certificate English under teacher assessed grades than under traditional exams

INTRODUCTION

- Previous research¹ indicates that high socio-economic status (SES) students may have certain Big Five personality traits which lead to higher grades, leading to educational inequality
- This research investigated whether teacher judgements are important in causing this relationship

RESEARCH QUESTION

- The Leaving Certificate is usually graded through anonymously marked exams. However, due to the covid-19 pandemic, students in 2020 and 2021 received predicted grades, based mostly on the judgement of their class teacher
- If the relationship between a high-SES trait and high grades is stronger for students who took teacher-assessed grades compared to students who took exams, then teachers may be overestimating the grades of students with high-SES personality traits
- Data were collected through an online survey (n=99) of students who took higher level English, Irish, and maths for the Leaving Certificate between 2016 and 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by the Laidlaw Foundation and supervised by Dr Yekaterina Chzhen and Dr Kristin Hadfield.

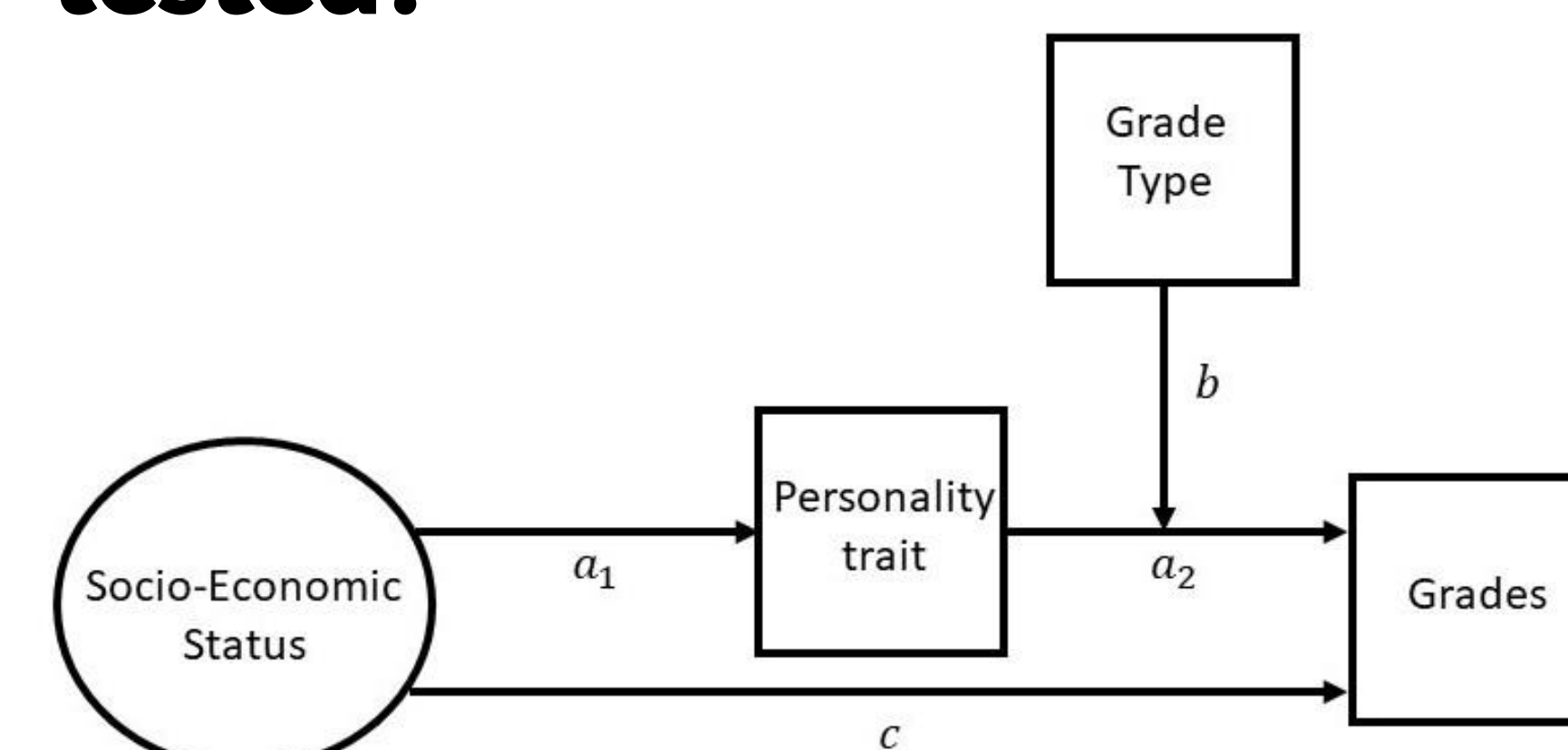
RESULTS

- High intellect/imagination scores were more strongly associated with better grades in English under predicted grades than under exams
- This trait is associated with creativity and imagination
- However, the hypothesis regarding SES could not be tested (see right)

DISCUSSION

- The findings provide justification for the inclusion of personality questions in future large-scale studies of the topic
- It is possible that English teachers in the sample overestimated the grades of students with high intellect/imagination, leading to unfair outcomes for students
- However, the sample was small and self-selected, meaning that results cannot be generalized to the wider population
- Future research should directly investigate the effect of teachers' perceptions of their students on the predicted grades those students receive
- Other subjects and subjects at ordinary level should be investigated too

How was the hypothesis tested?



Conceptual Model

This diagram above summarises the hypothesis set described in the introduction. Each arrow represents a hypothesised causal relationship.

- A high level of socio-economic status causes someone to develop a certain personality trait (a_1), and this personality trait leads to higher grades (a_2)
- Socio-economic status affects grades in other ways, which are represented by pathway c
- However, grade type changes the strength of the relationship between the personality trait and grades, making it stronger when grades are predicted by class teachers, and weaker when grades are the result of anonymously marked exams (b)

The relationships proposed in this model were then tested using structural equation modelling. Unfortunately, the sample size was too small to test the model, meaning that the research can neither support nor reject the hypothesis.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A simpler analysis was then carried out using multiple linear regression to test the strength of the relationships between each personality trait, subject and assessment type. SES was not included in this analysis

After applying a Bonferroni correction, the effect discussed in the Results section was significant at the 5% level, meaning that there is a less than 5% chance that the result was coincidental.

¹Kaiser, Till, and Christian Schneickert. 2016. "Cultural Participation, Personality and Educational Inequalities." *Sociological Research Online* 21 (3): 41–56.