



EXTRAVERSION, NEUROTICISM AND OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE AS PREDICTORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Students' adjustment to social concerns in school is considered one of the main indicators of success or failure in school. This study in essence investigated Extraversion, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience as Predictors of secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra state. Three null hypotheses guided the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational research design was used for this study. The population of the study comprise 40,161 SS1 and SS2 students' from which a sample of 2,400 students was selected using simple random sampling and disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument "Personality Traits Assessment Questionnaire (PTAQ)" was used for the study. The instrument is a standardized questionnaire which have been previously validated by experts and used in conducting studies in Nigeria. The reliability of coefficients include extraversion, 0.87; neuroticism, 0.85; openness to experience, 0.70 while the reliability coefficient for Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) is 0.93. Data collected were analyzed using regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that Extraversion, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience significantly predicted the social adjustment of the secondary school students. It was recommended that the school guidance counsellors should help counsel secondary school students to understand their personality traits and the personality traits of others. This will enable them appreciate their individual differences which will likely enhance their social adjustment..

KEYWORDS – Social adjustment, personality traits, investigated Extraversion, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience secondary school, students, predict, Anambra State.

1. INTRODUCTION

Students' unique traits in interpreting their surroundings are a fundamental component of their overall social adjustment in school. The student's unique personality traits have the tendency to shape their social world and contribute to their overall development both within and outside the school. The school, being the major socialization institution for any child, is one of the most important foundation pillars on which the child's personality develops. Children learn proficiencies in various abilities like learning process and homework, social communications, handling emotion, and the management of day-to-day interactions at home and school. The impact of the school is such that school-related changes may lead to significant changes in the students' social world. Thus, those who possess the traits to manage the changes would likely adjust better.

Adjustment is a behavioural process by which human beings and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. Adjustment helps for self-initiated growth and development along intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and vocational dimensions (Singh, 2006). These include how the individual relates to others and how he or she deals with the responsibilities and inner feelings. Adjustment could take place by one adjusting the self to the situation or by changing the surroundings. According to Osa-Edoh and Iyamu (2012), the ability of a person to adapt to various rules and regulations of a given society calls for social life adjustment. Adjustment to the social situation results from interactions between persons and their environment that are perceived as straining or exceeding their adaptive capacities and threatening their well-being (Nader-Grosbois, Baurain and Mazzone, 2012). Social adjustment could include how the person interacts with others or how the person adapts to social expectations. Hence, in the context of this study, social adjustment refers to the ability of students to function in their immediate environment and participate in social activities, become attuned to the environment in such a way that they can build and maintain reasonable relationships and accommodate people around themselves irrespective of the situation that they find themselves.

Students' uniqueness in interpreting their surroundings in order to build and maintain reasonable relationships and accommodate people around them is a characteristic likely to be associated with certain personality traits possessed by the individual. Thus, understanding of the students' social adjustment may require deducing the personal factors (traits) that are likely to influence their adjustment, and the specific personality traits responsible for a better social adjustment.

Personality trait according to Weiten, Lloyd, Dunn and Hammer (2009) is seen as a set of

psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring that influence the individual's interactions with, and adaptations to, the physical, and social environment. Similarly, Daminabo (2008), viewed personality traits as the sum total of the qualities that differentiates people or the stability of a person's behaviour across different situations. In such instance, sustainability of any social relationship could be affected by behavioural adjustment problems relating to personality traits of the individual.

In view of the above, an individual's personality is the totality of a person's behaviour which encompasses his thoughts, feelings and observable behaviour. This means that personality accounts for consistent and persistent behaviour of individuals. For example, an individual could be described as being intelligent, cheerful, hopeful, outgoing or friendly. The impression people have about such an individual is interpreted as the individual's personality. Hence, in the context of this study, personality trait refers to human characteristics that are responsible for the difference which distinguishes an individual from another and could be used to predict one's behaviour.

Personality trait includes multiple traits that help to explain why students do not all act alike in the same situation. The personality traits that seem to have received much attention in literature is the "Big Five" model by McCrae and Costa (2006) which consists of five aspects of personality, namely: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Among these five facets, the traits of extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience were examined in this study as possible predictors of students' social adjustment in schools in Anambra State.

According to Watson, Stasik, Ro and Clark (2013) people who score high in extraversion are characterized as outgoing, sociable, upbeat, friendly, assertive and gregarious. They are referred to as extraverts or positive emotionality in some trait models. They are usually talkative and always drawing attention to themselves.

Likewise, people who score high in neuroticism are said to be anxious, hostile, self-conscious, insecure, and vulnerable. This personality trait is called negative emotionality. They are always anxious and tend to suffer from depression. Individuals here are often moody and easily discouraged. This state of emotion according to Shevaun, Mroczek and Avron (2008) hinders them from thinking clearly, making rational decision and coping with stress.

Openness to experience on the other hand is a personality trait that people who register high on it are said to be open to experience, have general appreciation for art, emotion and adventure (Quevedo & Abella, 2011). They are not stereotype but try new ideas. They are very imaginative and curious. They

do not hold tenaciously to traditional or conventional ideas. They are intelligent, investigative and sensitive to beauty. They are creative; they can be controversial since they are unconventional. On the contrary people who score low on openness to experience tend to be more reserved and conventional. They hold firmly to traditional beliefs. They are sceptical about new ideas and may not be comfortable with new scientific and technological developments.

From the foregoing, it could be understood that traits are characteristic behaviours that consistently differentiates one individual from another. They are stable predisposition to act or behave in a consistent manner (Nairae, Lindsay, Paulhus, & Smith, 2010). So, personality characteristics of students that are socially adjusted are likely different from those found among individuals that are not socially adjusted. Studies (example, Christensen, 2012; Eyong, David & Umoh; 2014; Maurice, Peter & Caleb, 2016; Sanja, Ivanka & Ines, 2010; Schnuck & Handal, 2011; Thomas, Robert, Reidar & Monica, 2015) have investigated the contribution of personality traits to college adjustment, social adjustment, academic achievement and life satisfaction. Most of these studies were conducted outside Nigeria, while a few are conducted within Nigeria. However, none of the studies sought to determine empirically whether these variables predict the social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. This has thus left a gap in literature that need to be filled. Consequently, there is the need to determine how far students varying personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience could contribute to how they adjust in any given social environment.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students' adjustment to social concerns in school is considered one of the main indicators of success or failure in school. The students' adjustment level would possibly be considered as a measure of student's ability or inability to face problems resulting from fulfilling their academic, social and emotional needs. Since students attending secondary school in Anambra State are mostly in their adolescent stage, they are usually faced with adjustment problems which tend to be associated with various physical changes, psychological changes, behavioural changes, cognitive changes among others.

It is usually challenging for such a child to cope up with the various adjustment problems since it tend to emerge from diverse sources like home, school and within peer group. Many of these students that are unable to handle problems encountered in their social lives are likely not to perform well and are usually withdrawn, shy and anti-social among their mates. Nevertheless, if the student is able to attain a good social adjustment in school, the student will likely be able to form a good relationship with

others in the school which would likely lead to enhanced academic wellbeing.

However, many of the students like those in Anambra State secondary seem inadequately prepared for the psychological, emotional and academic realities of the secondary education. Hence, a good number of them are often times unable to deal with the situation they find themselves. They tend to engage in delinquent offences like truancy, fighting, pilfering and other undesirable behaviours. Although studies have been carried to address these adjustment concerns, a good number of the studies were conducted in Western countries and hence do not seem to address the concerns of students attending secondary schools in Anambra State. This study is geared towards addressing these concerns in order to fill the identified gap in knowledge. The study thus investigated personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience as predictors of secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to investigate personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience as predictors of secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. How extraversion personality traits of secondary school students predict their social adjustment.
2. How neuroticism personality traits of secondary school students predict their social adjustment.
3. How openness to experience personality traits of secondary school students predicts their social adjustment.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to students, guidance counsellors, school authorities, and teachers.

The findings will likely help the students see the relationship between some of their personal traits and their social adjustment. It will help students to understand their personality traits and discover how best to relate with people in their environment harmoniously. For the guidance counsellors, the results of the research will broaden the frontiers of knowledge in the area of guidance and counselling by providing information on the personality traits of the students which guide their designing appropriate guidance and counselling programmes and services in schools.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses testable at 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

1. The personality trait of extraversion is not a significant predictor of social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State

2. The personality trait of neuroticism is not a significant predictor of social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State
3. The personality trait of openness to experience is not a significant predictor of social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State

3 METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is correlational research. This study was carried out in Anambra State. The State is one of the thirty-six states of Nigeria. It is located in the South-Eastern part of the six geopolitical zones in the country. The population comprised 40,161 SSI and SS2 senior secondary school students from the six education zones in Anambra State.

4. SAMPLING DESIGN

The sample size for this study was 2,400 students. The sample size was selected through a multi stage sampling method. The research instrument titled “Personality Traits Assessment Questionnaire (PTAQ)” developed from International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) by

Goldberg (1996) was used for data collection. The Personality Trait Assessment Questionnaire is a standardized instrument and was adopted for use in this study. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha statistical method. Coefficient alphas obtained were extraversion, 0.87; neuroticism, 0.85 and openness to experience, 0.70. Copies of the questionnaires were distributed personally to the respondents.

Statistical design

The questionnaires was retrieved, scored and then analysed. The null hypotheses were tested using Simple Regression Analysis.

5. RESULTS

Data collected from the field for this study were analyzed and the summaries were presented in charts and tables to highlight the findings.

Testing the Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1

Extraversion personality trait does not significantly predict social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State

Table 1: Regression Analysis Test of Significance of Secondary School Students’ Extraversion Personality Trait as a Predictor of Their Social Adjustment

Variable	r	R ²	R ² change	B	BETA	% var added	Crit. Pvalue	Cal.Pvalue	Cal.t	df	Remark
Extraversion	0.082	0.007	0.007	0.115	0.082	0.70	0.05	0.000	4.014	2367	S

Table 1 reveals that extraversion personality trait of school students in Anambra State had R² change of 0.007. It also shows that extraversion had the predictive power of 0.70 percent for secondary school students’ social adjustment. Also at 1df numerator, 2367df denominator and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t value is 4.014 and has probability value of 0.000 which is less than the

critical Pvalue of 0.05. Therefore the 1st null hypothesis is rejected. Extraversion personality trait is a significant predictor of secondary school students’ social adjustment in Anambra State.

Null Hypothesis 2

The personality trait of neuroticism does not significantly predict social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State

Table 2: Regression Analysis Test of Significance of Secondary School Students’ Neuroticism Personality Trait as a Predictor of Their Social Adjustment

Variable	r	R ²	R ² change	B	BETA	% var added	Crit. Pvalue	Cal.Pvalue	Cal.t	df	Remark
Neuroticism	-0.106	0.011	0.011	-0.122	-0.06	1.10	0.05	0.000	-5.162	2367	S

Table 2 above reveals that neuroticism personality trait of school students in Anambra State had R² change of 0.011. It also shows that neuroticism had the predictive power of 1.10 percent for secondary school students’ social adjustment. More so, at 1df numerator, 2367df denominator and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t value is -5.162 and has probability value of 0.000 which is less than the critical Pvalue of 0.05. Therefore the

2nd null hypothesis is rejected. Neuroticism personality trait does significantly predict secondary school students’ social adjustment in Anambra State.

Null Hypothesis 3

The personality trait of openness to experience does not significantly predict social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra State

Table 3: Regression Analysis Test of Significance of Secondary School Students’ Openness to Experience Personality Trait as a Predictor of Their Social Adjustment

Variable	r	R ²	R ² change	B	BETA	% var added	Crit. Pvalue	Cal.Pvalue	Cal.t	df	Remark
Openness to experience	0.041	0.002	0.002	0.064	0.041	0.20	0.05	0.041	2.019	2367	S

Table 3 reveals that openness to experience personality trait of school students in Anambra State

had R² change of 0.002. It also shows that openness to experience had the predictive power of 0.20

percent for secondary school students' social adjustment. More so, at 1df numerator, 2367df denominator and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t value is 2.019 and has probability value of 0.041 which is less than the critical Pvalue of 0.05. Therefore the third null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that openness to experience personality trait does significantly predict secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that that extraversion personality trait is a significant predictor of secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State. What this implies is that extraversion personality trait could forecast whether a student will have good or poor adjustment. The findings of the study are in agreement with Schnuck and Handel (2011), and Christensen (2012) which indicated that extraversion personality trait predicted social adjustment. Since this study revealed that students have poor social adjustment, the finding thus revealed that though students high in extraversion tend to seek out social stimulation and opportunities to engage with others, it is nowhere a guarantee that such students would have good social adjustment. Nevertheless, the finding is not supported by the previous study of Hayes and Joseph (2003) which showed that extraversion was linked to a person being socially adjusted. This does not seem to be the case with the finding of the current study as majority of students' indicted poor adjustment. The reason for this could be attributed to the idea that people who are high in extraversion need social stimulation to feel energized. They gain inspiration and excitement from talking and discussing ideas with other people. It could be possible therefore that the students are not getting enough social stimulation they need to feel thrilled which might also be necessary for their social adjustment.

More so, the findings of the study revealed that neuroticism personality trait is a significant predictor of secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State. This finding implies that neuroticism personality trait could forecast whether students would have good or poor social adjustment. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Gleckel (2015), Maurice, Peter, and Caleb (2016), and Quevedo and Abella (2011). These studies indicated that neuroticism predicted social adjustment and that neurotic individuals were poorly adjusted socially. This leads to the conclusion that, as many scholars proposed, neuroticism has a negative effect on performance, by creating negative emotions, withdrawal tendencies and a negative reaction to the fear of failure which would likely affect the students' social adjustment negatively.

The reason for this finding could be attributed to the notion that students with neurotic personality traits more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and minor frustrations as

hopelessly difficult. Their negative emotional reactions tend to persist for unusually long periods of time, which means they are often in a bad mood. For instance, Gleckel (2015) noted that neuroticism is connected to a pessimistic approach toward work, confidence that work impedes personal relationships, and apparent anxiety linked with work. Hence, problems in emotional regulation can diminish the ability of the students that scored high on neuroticism to think clearly, make decisions, and cope effectively with social situations.

Findings of the study further revealed that openness to experience personality trait does significantly predict secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State. This implies that openness to experience personality trait could foretell whether students will have poor or good social adjustment. This finding is in accord with the findings of Schnuck and Handel (2011) that openness to experience is a significant predictor of social adjustment. The finding thus suggests that students who have openness to experience personality traits tend to reflect the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty. They may likely adopt a more logical approach to interacting actively with their fellow students in school.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the study concludes that personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience are significant predictors of social adjustment of secondary school students in Anambra state.

8. IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications were observed:

School guidance counsellors likely see the need to engage students in counselling to understand their personality traits and the personality traits of others. This will enable them appreciate their individual differences which will enhance their social adjustment. The understanding of these personality traits will help school guidance counsellors to apply counselling strategies and skills that can help result in a better social adjustment of secondary school students. More so, teachers need to work closely with the school guidance counsellors to ensure that measures such as organizing seminars and workshops are taken to improve students' social adjustment.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School guidance counsellors should help counsel secondary school students to understand their personality traits and the personality traits of others. This will enable them appreciate their individual differences which will likely enhance their social adjustment.

2. Teachers and school administrators should collaborate with the school guidance counsellors to ensure that measures such as organizing seminars and workshops are taken to improve students' social adjustment.

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