SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES: THE PREDICTIVE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS

Njoku, Joyce Ugochi (Ph.D.)

Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Akaninwor-David, Anna N

Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to investigate the extent to which personality traits determine the social adjustment of students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study was guided by two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses respectively. The study adopted the correlational research design using a sample of 236 students with physical disabilities drawn using purposive sampling techniques. An instrument titled Personality Traits and Social Adjustment Inventory (PTSAI) was used for data collection which was adequately assessed for reliability and validity. The Multiple regression coefficient was used for data analysis for the research questions, while ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression were used for analysis of corresponding null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained from the analysis showed that personality traits had a significant influence the social adjustment of individuals with physical disabilities, with openness to experience having the highest prediction, while neuroticism had the least prediction. On the basis of the results, it was recommended that educational psychologist should endeavor to design and develop programmes that can facilitate the optimal social adjustment of students with physical disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

The award winning movie "Enitan" aptly captured the challenges facing students with one form of disability or the other (Bako, 2013) As the story goes, Enitan, the major character in the movie had dyslexia, a learning disability disorder that inhibits adequate pronunciation and writing of words or even sentences. She became the centre of ridicule for classmates both in and off the classroom. Her teacher, not understanding her disability status insisted that she performs equally like other students in the class. Her home teacher resigned because he saw nothing positive from his effort. The story above adapted from a true life experience would no doubt resonate with teachers,

students, sibling and parents of students experiencing one form of disability or the other. The student in focus may seem detached, withdrawn and even incapable of forming normal social bond with teachers and family members. As teachers, these researchers have experienced the isolated nature of most students who had various forms of disability. The quest for understanding how they students with disability adjust to the age-appropriate social expectation is what led to the current study.

As stated by Asiwe and Omiegbe (2014:24) disability education or education for the handicapped is a subset of special education "which is concerned with the education of individuals such as physically

EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)

challenged, disadvantaged and the gifted who would not benefit from the average classroom instruction". The criteria for the definition of disability can take multiple forms including statistical, biological or normative as posited by Wasserman, Asch, Blustein and Putman (2015). As such their classification of disabilities into the following categories of psychological disabilities, cognitive disabilities, hearing disabilities, visual disabilities, brain disabilities and physical or orthopedic disabilities fits the context of a Nigerian environment where lack of adequate screening tools has hindered interest in the psychological and social adjustment of students with disabilities. This study shall therefore be focused on the social adjustment of students with physical disabilities.

Physical disability refers to a family of severe physical conditions that adversely affects a person's ability to function optimally in any domain of performance e.g. cognitive, social, emotional and movement. Of all disabilities, physical disability is the most obvious as its effects are external and conspicuous (Rose, Sweverer & Espelage, 2012). It is therefore not surprising that students with physical disabilities are up to four times more likely to be victimized and ostracized by peers, teachers and even family members, when compared to other forms of disabilities such as cognitive or psychological (Rose, 2010) While some students with physical disabilities display tendencies for poor social adjustment, others seems to flow better in social settings.

This study adopts the definition of Jean (2010) who defined social adjustment as the process by which a person (including students) adjust to the social environment of a place and then operationalized it by giving specific examples such as students' perception of their non-academic lives, number of extra-curricular activities participated in, hours spent in social activity and informal interactions with teachers and other staff. Research by Adams and Proctor (2010) showed that variables such as problem solving skill, attributional style, stressful events and perceived social support all contribute to the level of social adjustment students exhibit. However, previous studies have not investigated the extent to which personality traits influences the social adjustment of students with physical disability. It is therefore against this background that the present study investigated the extent to which personality traits influences the perceived social adjustment of students with physical disability in Port Harcourt Metropolis City Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The term 'personality' refers to a pattern of relatively permanent traits and unique characteristics that add both consistency and individuality to a person's behaviour (Feist & Feist, 2008). Schultz and Schultz (2013) defined personality as the unique relatively enduring characteristics of an individual that differentiates him/her from others. Although various dimension of personality has been identified in the scientific literature, the big five dimension of personality by McCrae and Costa (2008) is the most popular theory of personality. This theory posits that personality is broadly classified into five traits which are: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversión, agreeableness and neuroticism. Openness to experience refers to the trait of intelligence, curiosity and imagination of the individual. Personality trait of conscientiousness is the dimension that represents an individual who is diligent and tends to be reliable in their actions and whatever they find themselves doing. Agreeableness represents the helpful, forgiving and trusting people who often show respectable work behaviour. Extraversión traits includes being outgoing talkative, noisy, social poise, assertiveness and enjoying being in social situations. Agreeableness represents the helpful, forgiving and trusting people who often show respectable work behaviour (McCrae & Costa 2008).

The extent to which personality traits influences social adjustment have been investigated by other researchers. Azic, Becivic and Jokovcic (2010) investigated the contribution of personality traits and social adjustment to life satisfaction in college freshmen using a sample of 492 freshman from University of Rijeka in Croatia. Two instruments were used for data collection namely Students' Adaptation to College Questionnaire and the Big Five Inventory. Data analysis was done using means, standard deviation, independent sample t-test and hierarchical regression. Result revealed that personality traits of extraversión, openness to experience and conscientiousness have positive relationship with social adjustment and overall life satisfaction. Azic et al study is different from the present study to the extent that this study will utilized adolescents in secondary schools as the sample for the study, as against university freshmen they used as their sample.

Nagle and Anand (2012) investigated on empathy and personality traits as predictors of adjustment among Indian youths using a sample of 52 adult males who volunteered for the study. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. Data for the study were collected using the Jackson Personality Inventory for personality traits, Empathy Quotient for empathy and the Bell Adjustment Inventory for adjustment. Data analysis was done using simple correlation and regression analysis. Result from

the study revealed that personality traits like interpersonal affect and conformity facilitated the process of adjustment, whereas traits like anxiety worked in the opposite direction. The present study is different from the former study to the extent that the former utilized standardized instruments for the collection of data, while the present study will collect data by means of researcher-developed instrument. Furthermore, while Nagle and Anand used adult males as their sample, this study will use both male and female adolescent students who are physically challenged.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present study was to investigate the extent to which personality traits influence social adjustment among students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area. In specific terms, the objectives of this study were

1. Investigate how personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) jointly predict social adjustment of students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area.
2. Investigate the independent contributions of personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) on social adjustment of students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were answered to guide this study.

1. To what extent does personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) jointly predict social adjustment among students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. To what extent do personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) independently predict social adjustment of students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.5 level of significance were formulated to guide this study

1. The combined influence of personality traits do not significantly predict the social adjustment of students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area.
2. Personality traits do not independently have significant prediction on the social adjustment of students with physical disabilities in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State.

METHODS

Design: The correlational research design was used in this study since data on physically challenged children reported emotional intelligence were collated used to predict their social adjustment. A sample of 237 students with physical disability in Port Harcourt Metropolis was chosen for this study using the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique was adopted for the study because the researcher did not have access to the specific number of students with physical disabilities in the area under investigation.

Instrumentation: For data collection is a non-cognitive, multivariate instrument titled Personality Traits and Social Adjustment Inventory (PTSAI). The instrument was divided into two sections labeled A to C. Section A of the instrument was aimed at collecting demographic information from the respondents such as their gender, age, family type etc. Section B is a 50-item questionnaire developed to assess students' personality traits. This section was constructed using a modified 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), scored as 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. This instrument was adapted from Oliver (1999) Big Five Inventory. Section C of the instrument is a 20-item scale developed to assess the social adjustment of the respondents. This section of the instrument was adapted from Iyomatare (2016). This section was constructed on a four point likert scale of Always applies to me, Sometimes applies to me, Seldom applies to me, Never applies to me scored as 4, 3, 2, and 1 point(s) respectively. For the section on emotional intelligence, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of 0.91, 0.83, 0.71, 0.74 and 0.68 were obtained agreeableness, extraversión, openness to experience, neuroticism and conscientiousness respectively. Finally, the section on social adjustment yielded an alpha

EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)

coefficient of 0.69 which indicated that the instrument possessed ample reliability for use.

Data Collection and Analysis: Copies of the two instruments were administered directly to the respondents by the researcher, with the help of two research assistant, after receiving permission from the principal or the school head. The instruments were then collected on the spot after it has been completed by the students. The research questions were answered using multiple regression coefficients and beta values associated with multiple regression, while ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression were used for testing the corresponding null hypotheses where applicable.

Table 1: Joint prediction of personality traits on social adjustment

MODEL SUMMARY			
Model	R = 756	R-Squared = 0.571	Adjusted R-Squared = 0.562
ANOVA			
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	16708.842	5	3341.768	61.231	.0000
Residual	12552.562	250	54.576		P<0.05
Total	29261.407	235			

An observation of the values shown in Table 1, indicates that when the joint prediction of personality traits on social adjustment of students with physical disabilities was conducted, an R value of 0.756 was obtained with an R^2 value of 0.571 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.562. On the basis of the adjusted R-Squared, it can be seen that 56.2% variation in the social adjustment of students with physical disabilities can be attributed to the joint contribution of personality traits.

Furthermore, the result of the ANOVA associated with multiple regression showed that an F value of 61.231 was gotten with an associated p-value of 0.000 at 5 and 230 degrees of freedom. From this result obtained, it can be seen that personality traits had a significant joint predictive power on the social adjustment of youths with physical disability in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 2: Beta values associated with multiple regression of personality traits on social adjustment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.617	6.543		4.221	.000
	OPENNESS	.753	.174	.255	4.337	.000
	NEUROTICISM	-.982	.193	-.277	-5.088	.000
	AGREE	-.007	.079	-.004	-.091	.928
	CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	.622	.151	.246	4.111	.000
	EXTRAVERSION	.522	.149	.175	3.494	.001

On the basis of the standardized beta coefficients shown in table 2, it can be seen that openness to experience had a beta value of 0.255 with an associated t-value of 4.337 and a p-value of 0.000. This result showed that openness had a positive but significant independent prediction on social adjustment of students with disability. Regarding neuroticism, it was shown had a beta value of -0.277 with an associated t-value of -5.088 and a p-value of 0.000. This result showed that neuroticism had a low negative but significant independent prediction on social adjustment of students with disability. On its own, the result showed that agreeableness had a standardized beta value of -0.004, with a t-value of -0.91 and an associated p-value 0.000. This result indicates that agreeableness does not have any significant impact on social adjustment. For conscientiousness, the result showed that it had a significant independent prediction on the social adjustment of students with physical disabilities as the standardized beta coefficient obtained which was 0.246 and a t-value of 4.111 with a p-value of 0.000. Finally, the result for extraversion showed that the standardized coefficient value obtained was 0.175 with a t-value of 3.494 and a significant value of 0.001 which was not

significant.

DISCUSSION

The result from the study showed that personality traits is a significant determinant of social adjustment among students with physical disability in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This result is not surprising because the personality traits of a person determines their behavior including how they relates with others. Furthermore the result showed that openness to experience had the highest independent prediction on their social adjustment followed by extraversion, conscientiousness and lastly agreeableness. This result is not surprising but expected because it is this researcher's personal opinion that students who are open to new experience interacts well with others and can blend into new environments. The result from this study is similar to that obtained by Azic et al (2010) who found out that personality traits of extraversion had a significant prediction on the social adjustment of college students in Croatia. Also, Nagle and Anand (2012) found out that personality traits of freshmen in India had a significant predictive power on the social relationships with their peer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion reached, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should endeavor to integrate personality assessment in the counselling services they provide to students in school so as to improve their social adjustment.
2. Parents should work with school authorities to develop a programme for assisting students improve their social adjustment, especially those with disabilities.
3. Educational psychologist should endeavor to design and develop programmes that can facilitate the optimal social adjustment of students with physical disabilities.
4. Peer education and mentoring programmes should be established to improve the level of interactions between students so that they can develop positive social adjustments in relations with their peers

REFERENCES

1. Adams, K. S. & Proctor, B. E. (2010). Adaptation to college for students with and without disabilities: Group differences and predictors. Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 22(3),166-176
2. Asiwe, C. C., & Omiegbe, O. (2014). Legal and ethical issues of persons with special needs in Nigeria. Educational Research and Reviews, 9(15), 516- 522.
3. Azic, S., Becivic, I., & Jokovcic, I. (2010). The contribution of personality traits and academic and social adjustment to life satisfaction and depression in college freshmen. Horizons of Psychology, 19 (3), 5-18.
4. Bako, I. (2013). Enitan. YouTube Video. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZygWbfjHhM &feature=youtu.be
5. Feist, J., & Feist, G. J. (2008). Theories of personality (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill
6. Iyomatere, F. E. (2016). Influence of parenting styles and birth order on social adjustment of secondary school students in Delta State. University of Port Harcourt: Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis
7. Jean, D. (2010). The academic and social adjustment of first generation college students. Retrieved July 2016 from DomaPP01.shu.edu/ depth/uc/ apps/ Jean-DanielDoctorate.PDF?
8. McCrae, R. R. & Costa, P. T. (2008). Four ways five factors are basic personality and individual difference. New York: Guilford Press.
9. Nagle, Y. K. & Anand, K. (2012). Empathy and personality traits as predictors of adjustment in Indian Youth. Industrial Psychiatry Journal, 21(2), 125-129.
10. Rose, C. A. (2010). Bullying among students with disabilities: Impact and implications. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), Butlying in North American schools: A socio-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention (2nd ed., pp. 34-44). Mahwah, NJ: Eribaum.
11. Shultz, D. P. & Shultz, S. E. (2005). Theories of personality. CA: Belmont: Cengage Learning
12. Wasserman, D. T., Asch, A., Blustein, J. & Putman, D. (2015). Disability: Wellbeing, Health and personal relationship. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/ disability