

Personality Traits (Extraversion and Neuroticism) and Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Psychological Adjustment in Abia State.

Kenneth, Blessing Chidera

madukablessing1990@gmail.com

+2347036332445

Agbapulaonwu, Kennedy Chukwuemeka

Otto, John Ebenyi

Department of Guidance & Counselling (Educational Psychology)

College of Education

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

Abstract

The study investigated personality traits (extraversion and neuroticism) and self-efficacy as predictors of secondary school students' psychological adjustment in Abia State. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A correlation research design was adopted for the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 600 sample size from the population of 2500 SS2 students in Abia State. The researchers developed three instruments for data collection namely; "Personality Traits Assessment Questionnaire (PTAQ), Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ) and Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ) which were validated by three experts from Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The internal consistency reliability of the instruments were determined using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.83, 0.84 and 0.82 for PTAQ, SEQ and PAQ, respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions, while linear and multiple regression analyses were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that: extraversion and neuroticism jointly predicted psychological adjustment of secondary school students to a very high positive and significant extent. Self-efficacy significantly predicted psychological adjustment of secondary school students as it predicted 85.2% of the variance observed in their psychological adjustment. It was recommended among others that teachers should vary their teaching methods to accommodate the personality differences among the learners for their psychological adjustment.

Keywords: Personality traits, Self-efficacy, Psychological adjustment, secondary school students.

Introduction

Education is any activity man undertakes to achieve all-round development. However, the achievement of the above may not be possible if the students are not psychologically adjusted to their environment. Psychological adjustment is all about the overall well-being of the students and the extent they are able to adapt favourably to their psychological environment (Sultana, 2019). Oparaugo and Ebenebe (2021) emphasized that psychological adjustment involved developing strategies to manage daily demands, resolve tensions, and cultivate harmonious relationships with others. In the context of this study, psychological adjustment is the extent to which students are able to adapt favourably to the tensions and anxieties emanating from school activities, as well as view schooling from a positive perspective.

The importance of psychological adjustment of students in realizing their academic goals cannot be overstated. Lack of psychological adjustment has negative implications for students' academic output, potentially leading to poor academic performance (Ejichukwu & Anyaemene, 2022). This, in turn, may drive students to engage in maladaptive behaviours, such as risky sexual behaviour, drug abuse, examination malpractice, stealing, and alcoholism, as a defensive mechanism (Ejichukwu & Anyaemene, 2022). Conversely, psychologically adjusted students tend to think rationally, act purposefully, and effectively navigate their environment, manipulating it to their advantage for self and societal development.

Most secondary school students often face psychological adjustment issues that can impede their academic success. Akpama (in Ejichukwu & Anyaemene, 2022) suggested that these issues stem from experiential backgrounds, including parental neglect, unstable homes, emotional neglect, and inadequate home training. Such challenges lead to psychological disequilibrium, potentially driving students to unhealthy coping mechanisms like prostitution, drug abuse, and alcoholism. Conversely, well-adjusted students function effectively, perform tasks adaptively, exhibit life satisfaction, accept their personality traits, and demonstrate high self-efficacy (Ejichukwu & Anyaemene, 2022). Students struggling with psychological adjustment often possess negative personality traits and poor self-concept.

Personality can be understood in the context of this study as the sum total of inherited and acquired propensities enabling unique behavior and favourable environmental adaptation. The complex interplay of personality characteristics explains why students respond differently to identical circumstances. According to Santrock (in Yohanna, 2019) when personality traits are

mentioned, the Big Five Factors or Model, developed by McCrae and Costa, come to mind, they are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The present study examines extraversion and neuroticism as possible predictors of psychological adjustment of students in Abia state.

Extraversion is a personality trait that gauges an individual's social activity level. Watson et al. (2013) conceptualized extraversion as a multifaceted construct encompassing sociability, assertiveness, friendliness, and an overall disposition toward positive emotional experiences. These individuals tend to be talkative to draw attention. Extraverted students are likely to adjust psychologically better in school than their non-extraverted peers. Research supports this connection. Anyaemene et al. (2019) reported that extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience were significant predictors of secondary school students' social adjustment. Conversely, Rettew et al. (2021) discovered that higher extraversion levels correlated with decreased mood during the pandemic, whereas lower extraversion levels showed a slight mood increase over time. A study conducted by Tamannaefar and Rezaei (2020) suggested that there were significant relationships between extraversion and conscientiousness, academic adjustment and neuroticism respectively.

Neuroticism is a personality trait that influences emotional regulation. Individuals high in neuroticism exhibit anxiety, hostility, self-consciousness, vulnerability, and insecurity, characterized as negative emotionality (Shevaun et al., 2018). This trait leads to moodiness, discouragement, and impaired decision-making due to excessive stress and depression susceptibility. Neurotic individuals tend to be maladjusted with poor self-efficacy. Research supports this connection. Shokrkon and Nicoladis (2021) found that neuroticism negatively related to mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, while extraversion showed a positive relationship. Similarly, Ejichukwu et al. (2019) found out that extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience were significant predictors of secondary school students' social adjustment. Yusoff et al. (2023) reported neuroticism's indirect effects on burnout, with increased neuroticism leading to increased burnout. Aomo (2019) found that neurotic personality significantly predicted suicidal behavior among students. Schnuck and Handal (2020) identified neuroticism as the strongest predictor of poor social adjustment, whereas extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness predicted positive social adjustment. Bashir and Khalid (2022) revealed neuroticism as a positive predictor, while conscientiousness and extraversion were negative predictors.

Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in his or her abilities to handle various situations (Hopper, 2021). In this study's context, self-efficacy encompasses students' beliefs and thoughts regarding their abilities, capabilities, aptitudes, and strengths to successfully accomplish tasks. High self-efficacy is linked to improved psychological adjustment among students. Research supports this connection. Cordeiro and Lobo (2016) found a correlation between self-efficacy and academic adaptation. Research by Azuji (2019), Oparaugo and Ebenebe (2021), and Okafor (2021) consistently shows that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in students' adjustment, including social and psychological aspects. Although numerous studies have investigated psychological adjustment, many were conducted outside Nigeria, with few focusing on Nigerian students. Moreover, existing studies within Nigeria have largely overlooked Abia State, particularly regarding the predictive role of personality traits and self-efficacy on students' psychological adjustment. The current research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining the predictive roles of personality traits and self-efficacy in facilitating psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students face numerous psychological challenges that require constant adjustment to their academic and social environments. Successful psychological adjustment is crucial for academic success, social and emotional well-being. However, many students in Abia State lack adequate preparation for secondary education's academic, emotional, and psychological demands due to insufficient guidance counselors and psychologists.

Consequently, students struggle to cope with psychological concerns, leading to psychological disequilibrium. This may result in delinquent behaviors such as truancy, fighting, alcoholism, drug abuse, and risky sexual behaviors, ultimately becoming societal liabilities rather than assets. Educators, parents, and stakeholders are concerned, recognizing the potential impact on Nigeria's economic and technological development.

The scientific literature supports the notion that personality traits and self-efficacy play a crucial role in predicting psychological adjustment of student. However, the extent to which these factors predict adjustment among Nigerian students, particularly in diverse socio-cultural contexts, remains unclear. Therefore, the problem of this study put in a question form is: What is the extent to which personality traits and self-efficacy serve as predictors of psychological adjustment among secondary school students in Abia State?

Purpose of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives;

1. Find out the extent extraversion and neuroticism serve as predictors of psychological adjustment among secondary school students.
2. Investigate the extent self-efficacy predict psychological adjustment of secondary school students.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions;

1. To what extent do extraversion and neuroticism serve as predictors of psychological adjustment among secondary school students?
2. What is the extent self-efficacy predict psychological adjustment among secondary school students?

Hypotheses

The research examined the following null hypotheses, using a statistical significance of 0.05.

1. Extraversion and neuroticism are not significant predictors of secondary school student's psychological adjustment.
2. Self-efficacy does not significantly predict secondary school student's psychological adjustment

Methodology

A correlation research study design was employed for the study. A sample of 600 students were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique from a population of 2500 SS2 students in Abia State. The researcher developed three research instruments for data collection namely; "Personality Traits Assessment Questionnaire (PTAQ), Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ) and Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ) which were validated by three experts from the departments of Guidance and counselling and measurement and evaluation respectively from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis revealed coefficients of 0.832, 0.84, and 0.823 for the PTAQ, SEQ, and PAQ instruments, respectively. The collected data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions, whereas linear and multiple regression analysis were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

Results

The results of the study are presented below

Research Question 1

To what extent do extraversion and neuroticism serve as predictors of psychological adjustment among secondary school students?

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Extraversion and Neuroticism as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Psychological Adjustment

Source		EXT	NEU	JOINT	SPA
EXT	Pearson Correlation	1			.732
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000*
	N	600			600
	R ²	.536			
NEU	Pearson Correlation		1		.675
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000*
	N	600			600
	R ²	.456			
JOINT	Pearson Correlation			1	.976
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000*
	N	600			600
	R ²	.953			

EXT = Extraversion, NUE = Neuroticism, SPA = Students' Psychological Adjustment
 *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Data in Table 1 indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of .73 which is positive and within the coefficient limit of $\pm 0.61 - 0.80$. This indicated that extraversion to a high positive extent correlated with secondary school students' psychological adjustment. The coefficient of determination (R²) .536 indicates that 53.6% of the variance observed in secondary school students' psychological adjustment was accounted for by extraversion. Data in Table 1 further show a correlation coefficient (r) of .68 which is positive and within the coefficient limit of $\pm 0.61 - 0.80$. This indicated that neuroticism to a high positive extent correlated with secondary school students' psychological. The coefficient of determination (R²) .456 indicates that 45.6% of the variance observed in secondary school students' psychological adjustment was accounted for by neuroticism. The table indicated a joint correlation coefficient (r) of .976 which is positive and within the coefficient limit of $\pm 0.81 - 1.00$. This indicates that extraversion and neuroticism to a very high positive extent correlated with secondary school students' psychological adjustment. The coefficient of determination (R²) .953 indicates that 95.3% of the variance observed in secondary school

students' psychological adjustment was accounted for by the joint personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism.

Hypothesis One

Extraversion and neuroticism are not significant predictors of secondary school student's psychological adjustment.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Personality Traits of Extraversion and Neuroticism and Secondary School Students' Psychological Adjustment

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	257.612	2	128.806	26.411	.000
Residual	2916.153	598	4.877		
Total	3173.765	600			

Df= degree of freedom, F = F-calculated, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The data presented in Table 2 revealed a significant relationship between extraversion, neuroticism, and psychological adjustment among secondary school students. Specifically, the calculated F-value (26.411) exceeded the critical F-value (1.96) at $\alpha = 0.05$, with 598 degrees of freedom. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, which posited no significant relationship between extraversion, neuroticism, and psychological adjustment.

Table 3: Scheffe Test on Relative Contribution of Extraversion and Neuroticism in Psychological Adjustment of Secondary School Students

Source		EXT	NEU	JOINT	SPA %
EXT	Pearson Correlation	1			.732(53.6)
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000*
	N	600			600
	R ²	.536			
NEU	Pearson Correlation		1		.675 (45.6)
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000*
	N	600			600
	R ²	.456			
JOINT	Pearson Correlation			1	.976 (95.3)
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000*
	N	600			600
	R ²	.953			

EXT = Extraversion, NEU = Neuroticism SPA = Students' Psychological Adjustment

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The data in table 3 suggest that personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism had predictive indices of .73 and .68 respectively in psychological adjustment of secondary school

students. From the data on Tables 2 and 3, one can observe that extraversion had higher percentage contribution of 53.6% while neuroticism predicted 45.6% of psychological adjustment of secondary school students. The coefficient of determination (R^2) .953 indicates that 95.3% of the variance observed in psychological adjustment of secondary school students was accounted for by the joint personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism.

Research Question 2

What is the extent self-efficacy predict psychological adjustment among secondary school students?

Table 4: Correlation Matrix of Self-Efficacy as Predictor of Secondary School Students' Psychological Adjustment

Source		SE	SPA
SE	Pearson Correlation	1	.923*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	600	600
SPA	Pearson Correlation	.923*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	600	
			210
	R^2	.852	

SE = Self-Efficacy, SPA = Students' Psychological Adjustment. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 4 indicate a correlation coefficient (r) of .923 which is positive and within the coefficient limit of $\pm 0.81-1.00$. This indicates that self-efficacy correlates with the psychological adjustment of secondary school students to a very high positive extent. The coefficient of determination (R^2) .852 indicates that 85.2% of the variance observed in the psychological adjustment of secondary school students was accounted for by self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2: Self-efficacy does not significantly predict secondary school student's psychological adjustment

Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis of Self-Efficacy as Predictor of Secondary School Students' Psychological Adjustment

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	216.323	1	216.323	110.256	.000
Residual	1175.177	599	1.962		
Total	1391.500	600			

Data in Table 5 above show that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of psychological adjustment of secondary school students. The calculated f-value of 110.256 in respect of the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological adjustment of secondary school students

is higher than f-critical of 1.96 with degree of freedom of 599 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis on correlation between self-efficacy and psychological adjustment of secondary school students was rejected.

Discussion

The study's results indicate that extraversion and neuroticism were significant joint predictors of psychological adjustment among secondary school students, accounting for 95.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.953$). Specifically, extraversion contributed 53.6%, while neuroticism contributed 45.6% to the variance in psychological adjustment. These findings align with previous research by Tamannaefar and Rezaei (2020), which reported significant relationships between academic adjustment and neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness. The present study's results align with the findings of Yohanna (2019) which indicated that there is a significant correlation between personality traits and psychological adjustment. The convergence of these studies underscores the robust connection between extraversion, neuroticism, and psychological adjustment in secondary school students.

Notably, self-efficacy proved to be a significant predictor of psychological adjustment, explaining 85.2% of the variance. This finding supports Cordeiro and Lobo's (2016) research, which reported a significant correlation between self-efficacy and academic adaptation. Similarly, Azuji (2019) and Oparaugo and Ebenebe (2021) found self-efficacy to predict social adjustment and psychological adjustment, respectively. The consistency between this study's findings and previous research highlights the importance of considering extraversion, neuroticism, and self-efficacy when addressing psychological adjustment issues in secondary school students.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it was concluded that extraversion and neuroticism jointly predict secondary school student's psychological adjustment to a high and significant extent ($R^2 = 0.953$) and Self-efficacy was a significant predictor of students' psychological adjustment, accounting for 85.2% of the variance observed. These have implications for educational practice. Extraverted students may dominate classroom interactions, potentially overshadowing reserved students, leading to increased maladjustment. Again, students with neuroticism personality traits may experience difficulties with parents, teachers, and peers, hindering their ability to adjust to the academic environment. Insecure and threatening school environments can as well impede students' ability to adjust and achieve academic goals.

Recommendations

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

- 1 Parents and teachers should be informed on how to identify students with neuroticism personality trait and the need to make appropriate referral to the guidance counsellors for counselling.
- 2 Government should create a threat-free learning environment for the students to feel secured and adjusted to their learning environment.
- 3 Teachers should vary their methods of teaching and use instructional materials to accommodate both the extroverted students and the reserved ones so that the extroverts would not overshadow the reserved students or dominate classroom activities.

References

- Aomo, J. A. (2019). Neuroticism as a predictor of suicidal behavior among secondary school students in Kenya. *International Journal of Advanced and Multidisciplinary Social Science*, 5(2), 31-35. doi: 10.5923/j.jamss.20190502.03
- Azuji, I. M. (2019). Self-efficacy as a predictor of secondary school students' social adjustment in Anambra State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 3(7), 2349-2358.
- Bashir, A., & Khalid, K. (2022). Investigating determinants of psychological adjustment of Pakistani international students. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Studies*, 12(2), 1-15. doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2022.2113214
- Cordeiro, M. A., & Lobo, C. C. (2016). Self-efficacy and academic adaptation: Contributions to promote psychological adjustment. Research Gate.
- Ejichukwu, E. C., & Anyaemene, A. (2022). *Personality traits and self-efficacy as predictors of secondary school students' psychological adjustment in Anambra State* (Doctoral dissertation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University).
- Hopper, E. (2021). Self-Efficacy. ThoughtCo. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/self-efficacy-4177970>.
- Okafor, C. O. (2021). Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy as predictors of psychological adjustment among secondary school adolescents in Awka Education Zone, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education*, Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/81883436>

- Oparaugo, U. I. & Ebenebe, R. C. (2021). Self-efficacy as a correlate of psychological adjustment among secondary school adolescents in Awka Education Zone. *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research*, 9(2), 107-111.
- Rettew, D. C., McGinnis, E. W., Copeland, W., Nardone, H. Y., Bai, Y., & Rettew, J. (2021). Personality trait predictors of adjustment during the COVID pandemic among college students. *PLOS ONE*, 16(3), e0248895. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0248895
- Schnuck, J., & Handal, P. J. (2011). Adjustment of college freshmen as predicted by both perceived parenting style and the five-factor model of personality. *Journal Psychology*, 4(2), 275-284.
- Shevaun, D. N., Mroczek, D. K., & Avron, S. (2018). Neuroticism moderates the daily relation between stressors and memory failures. *Journal of Psychology and Aging*, 23(2), 287-296. doi: 10.1037/pag0000277
- Shokrkon, A., & Nicoladis, E. (2021). How personality traits of neuroticism and extroversion predict the effects of the COVID-19 on the mental health of Canadians. *PLOS ONE*, 16(5), e0251097. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0251097
- Sultana, S. (2019). Psychological adjustment and academic achievement of adolescents. Assessed on 30th November, 2022. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354117521_Psychological_Adjustment_And_Academic_Achievement_Of_Adolescents
- Tamannaefar, M., & Rezaei, H. (2020). Predicting academic adjustment based on personality traits and psychological capital. *Journal of Practice in Clinical Psychology*, 8(1), 27-38.
- Uzoka, R. N. (2018). *Educational psychology*. Hysab Publishers.
- Watson, D., Stasik, S. M., Ro, E., & Clark, L. A. (2013). Integrating normal and pathological personality: Relating the DSM-5 trait-dimensional model to general traits of personality. *Assessment*, 20(3), 312-326. doi: 10.1177/1073191113485810

Yohanna, A. (2019). Relationship between personality traits and adjustments among Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) students in communal conflict states of Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences (FUDMA Education Journal)*, 4(2), 1-15. Retrieved from <http://journal.fudutsinma.edu.ng/index.php/fujef/article/viewFile/1488/pdf>

International Journal of Educational Studies (INJEDS)