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## Personality Variables And Academic Adjustment Of First Year Students' In Public Universities In Rivers State

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### Abstract

This study investigated personality variables and academic adjustment of first year students in public universities in Rivers State. The study adopted the correlational research design. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised all year one students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, totaling about 22,104. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 400. The instruments for data collection were the "Personality Variables Questionnaire for Students" (PVQS) and "Academic Adjustment Questionnaire" (AAQ). The AAQ was divided into two sections, section A contained the demographic data of respondents while section B comprised the responses on items pertaining to level of agreement on academic adjustment. The PVQs were subdivided into subscales: Openness to experience, conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism. The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. The reliability coefficient of the AAQ yielded 0.81, while that of the PVQs yielded 0.76. Data generated from the study was analyzed using simple regression method with the aid of the SPSS software. The findings of the study revealed that personality variables predicted academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. From the findings of the study it was recommended among others, that students should seek counselling regularly to deal with personality disorganization.

**Keywords:** Personality variables, academic adjustment, public university, guidance and counselling

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### Introduction

It is believed that for a nation to experience quality education, that is, a process where the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning would meet-up with prescribed standard, the quality of her students cannot be overlooked (Olofintoye, 2015). The attempt to have quality in tertiary education implies that the students must also possess desirable attributes and values. It is important to emphasize that first year students' in tertiary schools are confronted with some biological and psycho-social concerns. In order to be considered high-quality an education system should be effective in both impacting academic knowledge and fostering students' acquisition of social and

personal skills that constitute to optimum school functioning and enable them to successfully cope with future developmental tasks.

This expanded role, coupled with the recent focus on the need for schools to act as agent for promoting well-being, has resulted in a growing body of research into school adjustment and associated variables (Slem et al., 2017), with particular attention being paid to adolescent students' strengths. These needs for personal fulfillment and social acceptance must be satisfied if a wholesome personality is to be attained. Enhancing quality education therefore does not end at providing cognitive impetus or meeting-up with academic or certification requirements, but includes an adjustment situation in which students would realize their strengths and weaknesses and how to cope with them. The nature of students' adjustment should be seen as a central or major determinant of the extent of quality that could be expected in an educational system.

Adjustment, in psychology, refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. Human beings are able to adjust to the physical, social and psychological demands that arise from having inter-dependability with other individual. Adjustment, as process describes and explains the ways and means of an individual's adaptation to his self and his environment without reference to the quality of such adjustment or its outcome in terms of success or failure. It is an organizational behaviour in life situations at home, at school, at work, in growing up and in ageing. It helps one to keep out basic impulses at tolerable levels, to believe in one's own abilities and to achieve desired goals. Thus, adjustment helps for self-initiated growth and development along intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and vocational dimensions. Adjustment refers to the psychological process through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It connotes conformity; it deals with the way an individual adapts to his environment and demand of life (Martins, 2021). This includes how he relates to others (interpersonal) and how he deals with his responsibilities and inner feelings. Psychologically, adjustment helps the individual to cope with demands and pressure of the outside world as well as the needs, desires and conflicts experienced from within.

Academic or school adjustment plays a fundamental role in an individual's life, and it is like a pillar on which the individual life is based. It is not only related to an individual's progress and achievement, but also their attitudes towards school, anxieties, loneliness, social support and academic motivation (Palak et al., 2017). Academic adjustment is the process of adapting to the role of being a student and to various aspects of the school environment (Palak et al., 2017). They maintained also that failure to adjust can lead to mental health issues and school refusal or school dropout and may require school counselling. If a student is well adjusted to his environment, then he or she will be motivated to excel in the activities assigned during school, and it leads to academic achievement. Academic achievement is greatly based upon adjusting abilities of students. An individual is not born adjusted; it is his or her capabilities that make him or her adjusted in any environment.

Research on school adjustment (Duncan et al., 2020) has shown that children who adjust to their school are more likely to succeed in the future and are less likely to face dropout risks, whereas children with school adjustment problems have greater difficulty in their academic and social relationship in later educational stages. Awokiyesi et al. (2014) investigated social adjustment and emotional stability as correlates to the academic performance of 2,001 students in the school of public and allied health in Babcock

University, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that social adjustment and emotional stability have a positive correlation with academic performance.

Academic adjustment is related to several variables. One of such variables is personality. Napoli et al., (1988) cited in Kinanee (2020), have defined personality as the individual's unique and dynamic pattern of thoughts, feelings and actions. According to Ezeh (2020), personality is the consistent ways in which the behaviours of one person differ from others, while Lefton (2018) notes that personality is a set of relatively permanent behavioural features that describe how a person reacts to the environment. In addition, McDowell (2020) in his own reaction to the concept of personality opines that personality is the characteristic ways in which one thinks and behaves as the person adjusts to the environment. It also includes the person's propensity to behave in a consistent and distinctive style (traits); the values, motives, genetic blue print, attitudes, emotional reactivity, abilities, self-image, intelligence as well as the person's observable behaviour patterns. In other words, personality has both internal and external elements. The external elements or traits are observable behaviours that will give information about someone's behaviours, e.g., we can observe how somebody interacts with others and how comfortable he/she acts in social settings. However, the internal states represent the thoughts, values, and genetic characteristics that could be inferred from the observable behaviours (Mischel, 2018). Personality variables are individual characteristics that remain constant over time and in various situations.

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality has been recognized as the most popular model during the last several decades, referring to the major 5 personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) (Klimstra et al., 2014). Shultz and Shultz (2013) have explained these five personality traits.

People with openness to experience are original, independent, creative and daring. They are interested in many things, and have appreciation for art, fantasy, and aesthetics. People who are low on this trait are conventional, enjoy having routines, and less creative and are not flexible (Mischel, 2018).

People with conscientiousness are careful, reliable, hardworking, and organized. They have a tendency to be orderly and dutiful, showing self-discipline. People who are low on this trait are antisocial, not very dependable, less good-oriented, and have a tendency toward criminal behaviour (Klimstra et al., 2014). People with the personality trait of extraversion are sociable, talkative, fun-loving, and affectionate; they treat people warmly. People who are low on this trait are reserved, shy, less involved in social situations, and are often quiet (Shultz & Shultz, 2013).

People with agreeableness are good - natured, softhearted, trusting and courteous. People with the trait tend to trust others more, are straight forward, model, and co-operative with others. People who are low on this trait are usually unfriendly, suspicious, uncooperative, self-centred, and manipulate their social relations (Klimstra et al., 2014). People with neuroticism tend to be worried, insecure, and nervous. They get angry easily, and express hostility and depression. People who are low on this trait are even tempered, calm, unemotional and hardy (able to live through difficult conditions) (McDowell, 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the process of school learning activities and situations, students may encounter some psychological and social problems which may result in worries, anxieties and frustrations. The failure of undergraduates in universities to adjust academically can lead

to mental health issues and school refusal or school dropout. If students are not well adjusted to their school environment, then they will not be better motivated to excel in the activities assigned during school, and this could lead to poor academic achievement. Students who have developed inadequate personality feel insecure and are obsessed by feelings of inferiority. They tend to think of themselves as unwanted, unacceptable and incompetent. They lack the courage to meet the demands and expectations of school learning. Over the years, students in tertiary schools have been facing some school adjustment problems which result in frustrations and anxieties. The researcher believes that poor school adjustment of students in tertiary institutions is due to inadequate personality and poor parenting style. A student with an inadequate or maladjusted personality tends to be more anxious and less well-adjusted and less effective in the tasks at school. Students who are raised under unhealthy parenting style tend to perform poorly in schools and become educationally or academically maladjusted. Hence, the investigated personality variables and academic adjustment of first year students' in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study was to investigate personality variables and academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The objectives of the study include the following:

1. Determine the extent to which openness to experience predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which conscientiousness predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.
3. Investigate the extent to which extraversion predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were stated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does openness to experience predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does conscientiousness predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does extraversion predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses testable at 0.05 level of significance were stated to guide the study:

1. Openness to experience does not significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.
2. Conscientiousness does not significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.
3. Extraversion does not significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Methodology**

The researcher adopted correlational research design in the study. Nkwankwo (2013) explains that correlational research design is used when a researcher is interested in determining the relationship between two or more variables. The population of the study comprised 22,124 year one students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru

University of Education, Port Harcourt. This comprised of 11,582 year one students in Rivers State University and 10,542 year one students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The sample of the study was 400 year one students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample of the study was determined using Taro Yamane. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study.

Two self-structured questionnaires were used for data collection which are titled: Personality Variables Questionnaire for Students (PVQS) and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ). The PVQS and AAQ are segmented into two sections A and B. The section A contains information of the personal data of students while section B contains information on the personality variables and academic adjustment of students. Both the PVQS and AAQ are patterned alongside the modified 4-point Likert Scale. The responses and the weights of the PVQS and AAQ are as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) = 4, High Extent (HE) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1. However, the PVQS have sub-scales which are: Openness to experience sub-scale, Agreeableness sub-scale, Conscientious sub-scale, Extraversion sub-scale and Neuroticism sub-scale. These instruments were validated by two experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. The experts perused the instruments in terms of content and face validity. Their suggestions, corrections and recommendations were incorporated into the final draft of the instruments. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The responses of the students were subjected to statistical analysis. The openness to experience sub-scale yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.78; the Conscientiousness sub-scale yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76; and the extraversion sub-scale yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79. However, the entire length of the PVQS was 0.82. On the other hand, the AAQ was 0.81. Simple regression analysis was used to answer the research questions and to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question One:** To what extent does openness to experience predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State?

**Hypothesis One:** Openness to experience does not significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

**Table 1: Summary of Simple Linear Regression Model of Openness to Experience on Academic Adjustment of Year one Students**

Model	R	R Squ	Adjusted R Squ	Std. Error of the Estim
1	.6	.483	.484	3.3015

  

ANOVA Associated with Simple Regression					
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value
Regression	3319.456	1	3319.456	86.22	.001
Residual	15245.327	396	38.498		
Total	18564.783	400			

Table 1 shows the model summary of openness to experience on academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The simple linear regression model gave a coefficient of 0.695,  $R^2$  of 0.483 and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.484. This shows that openness to experience accounted for 48% variation in academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

The table also reveals the results of ANOVA associated with simple regression which yielded an F-value of 86.22 at degree of freedom between 1 and 396 respectively. The p-value of 0.001 is less than the level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is **rejected**. It, therefore, indicates that, openness to experience significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does conscientiousness predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State?

**Hypothesis Two:** Conscientiousness does not significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

**Table 2: Summary of Simple Linear Regression Model of Conscientiousness on Academic Adjustment of Year one Students**

Model	R	R Squ	Adjusted R Squ	Std. Error of the Estim		
1	.6	.412	.414	3.1011		
ANOVA Associated with Simple Regression						
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value	
Regression	3112.453	1	3112.453	94..63	.011	
Residual	13025.310	396	32.892			
Total	16137.763	400				

Table 2 shows the model summary of conscientiousness on academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The simple linear regression model gave a coefficient of 0.642,  $R^2$  of 0.412 and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.414. This shows that conscientiousness accounted for 41% variation in academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

The table also reveals the results of ANOVA associated with simple regression which yielded an F-value of 94.63 at degree of freedom between 1 and 396 respectively. The p-value of 0.011 s less than the level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is **rejected**. It, therefore, indicates that, conscientiousness significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent does extraversion predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State?

**Hypothesis Three:** Extraversion does not significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Summary of Simple Linear Regression Model of Extraversion on Academic Adjustment of Year one Students**

Model	R	R Squar	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.335	.117	.119	2.5214		
ANOVA Associated with Simple Regression						
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value	
Regression	1397.998	1	1397.998	35.55	.025	
Residual	15570.690	396	39.32			

Total	16968.688	400
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Table 3 shows the model summary of extraversion on academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The simple linear regression model gave a coefficient of 0.335,  $R^2$  of 0.117 and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.119. This shows that extraversion accounted for 12% variation in academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

The table also reveals the results of ANOVA associated with simple regression which yielded an F-value of 35.55 at degree of freedom between 1 and 396 respectively. The p-value of 0.025 is less than the level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is **rejected**. It, therefore, implies that, extraversion significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

### Discussion of Findings

The result of research question one and hypothesis revealed openness to experience significantly predict the academic adjustment of first year students in public universities in Rivers State which gave a coefficient of 0.695,  $R^2$  of 0.483 and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.484. This reveals that openness to experience accounted for 48% variation in academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The table also revealed the results of ANOVA associated with simple regression which yielded an F-value of 86.22 at degree of freedom between 1 and 396 with its corresponding p-value of 0.001 which is less than the chosen significance level of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected. It, therefore, indicates that openness to experience significantly predicts the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. This result is supported by Onyekuru and Zuru (2018) that the personality trait of openness to experience was significantly related to school adjustment of secondary school students.

Result in table 2 revealed that conscientiousness significantly predict the academic adjustment of first year students in public universities in Rivers State which gave a coefficient of 0.642,  $R^2$  of 0.412 and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.414. This shows that conscientiousness accounted for 41% variation in academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The table also revealed the results of ANOVA associated with simple regression which yielded F-value of 94.63 at degree of freedom between 1 and 396 with its corresponding p-value of 0.011 which is less than the chosen level of significance of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected. It, therefore, indicates that conscientiousness significantly predicts the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. The result of the present study is an agreement with Kim et al (2021) that the personality trait of conscientiousness positively influenced the academic adjustment of middle school students.

The result is also in agreement with Mathew (2020) that conscientiousness predicted the scholastic adjustment of secondary school students. This result of the present study is because people with conscientiousness personality trait are careful, reliable, hardworking, and organized. Because these individuals are dependable, organized and careful they take academic work seriously. In addition, the result revealed that other variables may contribute to academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

Result in Table 3 revealed that extraversion significantly predict the academic adjustment of first year students in public universities in Rivers State which gave a coefficient of

0.335,  $R^2$  of 0.1117 and adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.119. This shows that personality trait of extraversion accounted for 12% variation in academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. Result in Table 3 also revealed that results of ANOVA associated with simple regression which yielded an F-value of 35.55 at degree of freedom between 1 and 396 with its corresponding p-value of 0.025 which is less than the chosen significance level of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected. It, therefore, implies that extraversion significantly predict the academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

The result of this present study is in agreement with Okoro and Vincent (2019) that there is a positive correlation between extraversion and school adjustment of secondary school students. This result of the present study is also in agreement with Adekula and Simeon (2016) that the personality trait of extraversion predicted school adjustment of nursing students. This result of the present study is because although people with extraversion are sociable, fun-loving and friendly etc, they may as well not pay attention to details and also become reserved. Such negative behaviour may impact negatively on academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State. In addition the result revealed that other variables may contribute to academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Conclusion**

Personality variables and parenting styles play important roles in helping students achieve school or academic adjustment. This is because the academic improvement of the individual depends on the personality traits and parenting styles under which those individuals are raised. Thus, personality traits and parenting styles are useful in understanding the way or manner the individual adjusts to academic or school works. Based the results of the study, the researcher concludes that personality variables (Openness to experience, neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness) significantly predict academic adjustment of year one students in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the study the study recommended thus:

1. Students should understand their personality traits through effective counselling
2. School counsellors should regularly organise counselling programmes to help students deal with personality disorganization or maladjustment.
3. Lecturers should discourage students from developing neuroticism as this may not allow them to adjust in school.

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