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# Extraversion and Conscientiousness as Correlates of False Hope Syndrome among Secondary School Adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate extraversion and conscientiousness as correlates of false Hope Syndrome among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study with three corresponding null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational research design. Two instruments were utilized in the collection of data namely: Personality Inventory for Adolescents (PIA) and Adolescents False Hope Syndrome Inventory (AFHSI). A sample of 200 adolescents was drawn from 6,045 secondary school adolescent students using simple random sampling technique in a multistage sampling procedure. Pearson Product Moment Correlation were employed in answering research question 1 and 2 while Pearson Product Moment Correlation p-value was used to test the hypotheses 1 and 2. Research question 3 was answered with multiple regression and hypothesis three was tested with ANOVA associated with multiple regression. The findings of the study showed that Extraversion and Conscientiousness had significant positive relationship with false hope syndrome and also extraversion and conscientiousness contribute 29.1% of false hope syndrome among adolescents. The study concluded that extraverted and conscientious adolescent students are likely to become victims of false hope syndrome. It is recommended that counsellors and teachers should create greater awareness on the relationship between personality traits and false hope syndrome in order to encourage adolescents to adopt appropriate means of improving their personality.

**Keyword:** Extraversion, Conscientiousness and False Hope Syndrome

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## INTRODUCTION

Most current theories of emotion do not include hope, as an emotion; at least not as a prototypic emotion. In previous times, especially during the medieval period, before the industrial revolution, when there were no benefits of scientific knowledge and technology to explain most natural phenomenon, hope was considered one of the fundamentals of emotions (Averil, 2019). Hope was seen as an emotion and compared to two other emotions being love and anger. Hope is the belief in a positive outcome related to events and circumstances in one's life. Syndrome is a set of symptoms occurring together or a condition characterized by a set of associated symptoms. Syndrome is a set of

opinions; a way of behaving that is typical of a particular type of person, attitude or social problem (Hornby, 2015); or with adolescents as in this study. False hope can be seen as the tendency to generate shallow hope that can change one's life or habit despite a track record of failure. It is a hope based entirely around a fantasy or an extremely unlikely outcome. False hope syndrome is abundant in issues involving health and education. Everyone wants good health, and success but often cannot have it and do not want to do things required to get good health, success or any other thing which is beneficial to life.

False hope syndrome refers to cases in which individual repeatedly try and fail to achieve a goal because they have unrealistic expectations about their likelihood of success (Polivy and Herman, 2012). Some sorts of self-change are feasible, but we must learn to distinguish between realistic and unrealistic self-change goals, between confidence and overconfidence. Overconfidence breeds false hope, which engenders inflated expectations of success and eventually the misery of defeat (Polivy and Herman, 2012). This is a serious problem of psychological health importance, because the frustration and depression that follow such condition is capable of causing serious mental health problems and in extreme cases, death. Adolescence is a period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages ten to nineteen (Arnett, 2019). Adolescence is characterised by marked physiological changes, development of sexual feelings, efforts towards the construction of identity, and a procession from concrete to abstract thought (World Health Organisation, 2013). It is the period of transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood.

Adolescents are the most vulnerable to false hope syndrome because they want academic excellence, good shape, good health and fame, yet lack determination to pursue it or arrive at their dreams. Many adolescent girls who are fat feel unhappy about their shape and in a bid to lose weight do strenuous exercises and also eat too little so as to become slim, and become frustrated when they do not get the desired results. Many young and old people alike have unrealistic expectations about their ability to change their behaviour in general not only due to New Year's resolution which produces the false hope syndrome. For instance, despite prevailing view that smoking is addictive, 60% of adolescents and 48% of adult smokers believe that they could smoke for a few years and then quit if they decided to, thus seeing quitting smoking as being easier than it actually is (Arnett, 2019).

False hope syndrome among adolescents involves exaggerated feelings of control and over confidence about their ability to change their behaviour successfully. When goals are set and there is no equal determination to back it up with consistent hard work, failure is the result and over time when the conditions persists, false hope syndrome will set in. Personality on the other hand involves the overt and covert behaviour of an individual (Tanner, 2011). Personality is the totality of what differentiates an individual from other people. Personality refers to our behavioural patterns, cognitions and emotions. Our personality would then be defined in terms of the impression we make on others, that is, what we appear to be (Schulz and Schultz, 2005). Five personality types have been identified namely: extroversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness and agreeableness (Costa and McCrae, 2005).

This paper considered extroversion and conscientiousness as correlates of false hope syndrome among adolescents. Extroverts are sociable, like parties, have several friends, need to have people to talk to, do not like reading or studying by themselves. They crave excitement, take chances, often stick their necks out, act on the spur of the moment and are generally impulsive (Uzoeshi, 2015). The tendency for extroverted adolescents to impress friends, take chances and the fact that they are impulsive could place them at greater risk of falling prey to false hope syndrome. They may

impulsively set unachievable targets in their bid to impress friends. This is especially applicable to issues such as maintaining a certain body image, eating healthy foods and quitting smoking.

On the other hand, conscientious persons are careful, reliable, hardworking and organized individual. They are usually self-disciplined, optimistic and achievement oriented in terms of planning for future goals (Uzoeshi, 2015). Adolescents with this personality type appear to be in control of their future goals, and more likely to set achievable goals and pursue them successfully. Nevertheless, the fact that they are adolescents who in spite of their personality type are adventurous still may make them prone to false hope syndrome. In this situation, their optimistic and achievement oriented nature might make them to persist in pursuing a goal even in the face of failure.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

False hope syndrome has been noticed to be a source of problem among adolescents. When unrealistic goals are set and there is no corresponding determination and hard work to achieve the set goals, adolescents are put-off, depressed and frustrated. In order to continue in their pursuit for success, they develop coping skills in form of false hope syndrome, hope and wish “to make it make them continue”, even in the face of failure. Adolescents usually have the tendency of setting unrealistic goals for themselves because of their characteristic nature of having a false impression of their self-image and capabilities as well as their adventurous nature. Extroverted adolescents seem to be more likely to be adventurous, hence, embarking on tasks that will put them in the spotlight without having the self-efficacy needed to achieve such task. On another hand, conscientious adolescents who are goal-directed may not be able to do an adequate assessment of the requirements for achieving such goals leading to successive failures at achieving a set goal that may be actually unrealistic for them.

Although previous studies found that extraversion correlated more with optimism than with hope (Ekechukwu, 2015); both constructs (optimism and hope) are also seen to be overlapping (Anderson, 2011). The current study decided to look at extrovert and conscientious personality as correlates of false hope syndrome among adolescents.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate extraversion and conscientiousness as correlates of false hope syndrome among adolescents. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- (i) Investigate the relationship between extraversion and false hope syndrome among adolescents.
- (ii) Investigate the relationship between conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents.
- (iii) Examine the joint relationship between extraversion/conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between extraversion and false hope syndrome among adolescents?
2. What is the relationship between conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents?
3. What is the joint relationship between extraversion, conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents?

## **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

- i) There is no significant relationship between extraversion and false hope syndrome among adolescents.
- ii) There is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents.
- iii) There is no significant joint relationship between extraversion/conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents.

## **Methods**

**Research Design** The design of this study was correlational intended to find out the relationship that exists between extraversion and conscientiousness personality type and false hope syndrome among adolescents.

## **Population for the study**

The population consisted of six thousand forty-five (6045) public senior secondary school students in Obio/Akpor local Government Areas of Rivers State.

## **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample for the study was 200 adolescents in public senior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State. The sample size was drawn using simple random sampling techniques.

## **Instrumentation**

Self-structured and validated Personality Questionnaire for Adolescent (PQA) containing 20 items (10 each on extraversion and conscientiousness) was used to collect data on adolescent students' personality type, while another self-structured instrument named Adolescents False Hope Syndrome Questionnaire (AFHSQ) containing 10 items was used to collect data on secondary school students' false hope syndrome. The instruments PQA and AFHSQ contained items designed to elicit information on respondent personality types and false hope syndrome respectively. Both instruments were responded to on a Likert-type four scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. Both instruments were subjected to reliability testing using the test-retest method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyzed the result and a reliability index of .69 and .73 respectively were obtained for PQA and AFHSQ. The instruments were, therefore, regarded as reliable and used for the study.

## **Data Analysis**

Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10.0. The hypotheses postulated for the study were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and ANOVA at 0.05 alpha level.

## **Results and Discussion**

Research question one: What is the relationship between extroversion and false hope syndrome among adolescents?

**Results Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between extroversion and false hope syndrome.

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment correlation of extraversion and false hope syndrome**

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	r	Sig	P-Value	Decision
Extraversion	20.72	3.11	200	198	0.38	0.071	0.05	Retain
False hope syndrome	23.42	4.56						Ho1

The result of the data analysis as shown in table 1 indicates that the students had a mean value of 20.75 and SD= 3.11 for the section on extraversion, while their mean false hope syndrome was 23.42 and SD = 4.56. The correlational coefficient obtained from the analysis further showed that a value of 0.38 was gotten which indicates a weak relationship between extraversion and false hope syndrome. Testing of the associated hypothesis yielded a value of 0.071, which was greater than the p-value of 0.05. This result showed that there is a weak but positive significant relationship between false hope syndrome and extraversion. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

**Research question Two:** What is the relationship between conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents?

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents.

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment correlation of conscientiousness and false hope syndrome**

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	r	Sig	P-Value	Decision
Conscientiousness	21.52	2.91	200	198	0.813	0.0005	0.05	Reject Ho2
False hope syndrome	23.42	4.56						

The result of the data analysis as shown in table 2 indicates that the students had a mean value of 21.52 and SD= 2.91 for the section on conscientiousness, while their mean false hope syndrome was 23.42 and SD = 4.56. The correlational coefficient obtained from the analysis further showed that a value of 0.813 was gotten which indicates a strong relationship between conscientiousness and false hope syndrome. Testing of the associated hypothesis yielded a value of 0.0005, which was less than the p-value of 0.05. This result showed that there is a significant strong and positive relationship between false hope syndrome and conscientiousness. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant joint relationship between extraversion/conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents.

**Research question Three:** What is the joint relationship between extroversion, conscientiousness and false hope syndrome among adolescents?

**Table 3: Multiple regression coefficient of extraversion and conscientiousness on false hope syndrome**

	<b>R = 0.531</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.301</b>		<b>Adj R<sup>2</sup> = 0.291</b>
<b>Model</b>	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
<b>Regression</b>	7342.670	2	1223.778	12.065
<b>Residual</b>	68060.816	198	101.432	0.0005
<b>Total</b>	75403.487	199		

According to the result displayed in Table 3, a multiple regression coefficient of 0.531 was gotten from the joint contribution of extraversion and conscientiousness on false hope syndrome. From the same table, it was shown that an  $R^2$  of 0.301 was gotten, with a corresponding Adj  $R^2$  of 0.291. On the basis of the Adj  $R^2$ , it therefore implies that 29.1% of false hope syndrome among secondary school students' adolescents can be explained by the joint contribution of learning styles. The remaining 70.9% can be attributed to other factors such as family background, peer relationship, school environment, teachers' classroom management etc. These values obtained were further subjected to ANOVA associated with multiple regressions to test their significance. The result obtained showed an F-value of 12.065 at 6 and 200 degrees of freedom, with an associated p-value of 0.0005, which was less than the chosen alpha of 0.05. This result therefore suggests that the learning styles had a significant joint contribution on false hope syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The result of the study showed extraversion has a low relationship with false hope syndrome. This result implies that students who are high on extraversion have a low level of false hope syndrome. This result also showed that this low relationship was statistically significant. This result is not surprising to this researcher because when students or any individual gets satisfaction from public engagements, that student is likely to enjoy interaction with people and not believing in themselves which is the hallmark of false hope syndrome.

The result of the study showed that conscientiousness had the highest relationship with false hope syndrome. This result is expected and not surprising because the personality trait of conscientiousness enables a person to be committed to their studies as well as expend whatever resource possible to achieve the goal. So therefore, students who are high in conscientiousness are most likely to continue on a task believing that success will come out from it. It is therefore not surprising that this study found out that conscientiousness is the biggest predictor of false hope syndrome among the students that were studied.

From the analysis of research question six and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 3, it was revealed that extraversion and conscientiousness had a significant joint contribution on false hope syndrome among secondary school student's adolescents. Furthermore, with an F-ratio of 12.006, collective relationship was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of significant.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the finding of this work, the researcher concluded that extraverted and conscientious adolescent secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria are prone to developing false hope syndrome. This calls for a review of the status of guidance and counselling and the introduction of health counselling in our secondary schools.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

1. Extroverts and conscientious adolescents need to be guided by school counsellors to set realistic and achievable goals for themselves so as to avoid falling victim to false hope syndrome and the attendant reduced self-esteem.

2. Qualified guidance counsellors and health counsellors should be posted to all our secondary schools so that adolescents at this level of education should be assisted to identify their strengths and weaknesses and thereby become able to set goals that are within their limits.
3. Teachers need to teach the adolescents on how to develop coping skills, to enable them recover from the consequences of false hope syndrome without losing their self-esteem in the process.

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