

Innovations

Personality Traits and Attitude to Learning of Students in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship that exists between personality traits and attitude of students towards learning. A total of five hypotheses were tested in the study. The study adopted the co relational research design. A total of 384 students (192 males and 192 females) were recruited to participate in the study but 372 finally participated. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was adequately validated with a reliability index of 0.89 for Personality Traits Rating Scale and 0.92 for Students' Attitude Towards Learning Rating Scale. The Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to analyse the data. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that the five personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticisms and openness to experience had significant relationship with students' attitude towards learning. The study recommended that personality assessment should be carried out on students as part of their entry qualification.

Keywords: *Personality Traits; Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticisms; Openness to Experience; Students' Attitude Towards Learning.*

Introduction

One of the goals of education is to trigger behavior change in the learner. All efforts put in place by teachers, management, government and other stakeholders is geared towards improving the performance of students. This is because performance is the measurement of learning. Students are deemed to have learnt subject matters when their performance is high. Different factors can account for high performance. The triad of education, which include the teacher, the student and the subject matter, represent the major factors responsible for high performance. One of such factors, which is domiciled in the learner is attitude towards learning.

According to Alkaff (as cited in Dewi, 2021), attitude plays an important role in learning as it determines to a large extent, learners' behaviors, i.e., action taken to learn, or efforts exerted, during the learning process. As the behavioral results of perceptions, attitudes can be defined. In other words, it refers to acts or responses that are motivated by people's emotions. Samadani and Ibnian (2015) claim that attitudes

can be both explicit and implicit. Explicit attitudes are those that we are consciously aware of and that have a direct impact on our actions and beliefs. Despite being unconscious, implicit attitudes nonetheless influence our ideas and behaviour.

Attitude, as one of the determinants of learning, can guide learners to learn subject contents. Gajalakshmi (2013) contends that as student attitudes are fundamental to learning, they should be incorporated into learning pedagogy. It is one of the key elements that the learning process cannot be separated from. Attitude towards learning is made up of three distinct components; cognitive, affective, and behavioural.

The cognitive component involves learners' understanding of the process of learning. It can be broken down into four steps: combining the old and new knowledge, producing new knowledge, vetting new knowledge, and using the new knowledge in a variety of contexts. The affective component involves beliefs and emotions that characterize learning. The process of learning involves emotions. It implies that a range of emotions that are triggering pupils' expression as a result of learning activities exist. Many different emotional aspects have an impact on it. The affective component of attitude is characterized by valuing, belief, interest, and expectancies (Getie, 2020). In it, the teacher and his students participate in a variety of emotional activities, and a variety of emotional fruits are produced. The learners' attitudes can be used to communicate whether they like or dislike the things or environmental circumstances. Learners' internal thoughts and emotions have an impact on their viewpoints and attitudes toward the desired knowledge. The behavioral component deals with the way one behaves and reacts in various situations. This component enables the learner to take action towards the learning process. It includes deliberate step taken to acquire knowledge such as going to class, paying attention to teaching, doing assignments and making further research on what is being taught in class.

Students with a positive attitude towards learning a particular subject are likely to be more motivated to manage their own learning and develop the requisite skills to become effective learners of that subject. Thus, attitudes play a critical role in fostering deep approaches and long-lasting learning. Stimulation of high levels of interest and motivation resulted in significant improvement in high-order (deeper) learning performance (Hong & Lin, 2011). In contrast, low levels of attitudes toward learning are likely to result in students' apathy toward learning or dropout from school.

The attitude of an individual depends heavily upon different stimuli. Various researchers have developed taxonomies of factors influencing learners' attitude, including personality factors, educational factors, social factors, and others like age and sex (Ehrman, 1996; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Spolsky, 1989; Van Ells et al., 1984). However, the focus of this study will be on the personality traits that determines students' attitude towards learning.

Individual distinctions in cognition, emotion, and behavior are referred to as personality traits (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2010). The way a person interacts with their physical and social surroundings is defined by a particular and recognizable pattern of thoughts, emotions, and action. Personality traits could be defined as permanent qualities that enable individuals to exhibit consistent behavior under different conditions (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2014).

There are several theories such as psychoanalytic, behavioral, characteristic properties, biological, humanistic and cognitive theories that aimed to describe and define personality throughout history. But for the purpose of this study, personality is conceptualized in accordance with the five-factor model. The five-factor model is well established in the literature and has been validated against many different criteria

including academic performance and career success. It is particularly well suited for use in this study since it has also been validated against the criterion of academic performance (Lounsbury, et. al. 2009).

The five-factor model of personality is a comprehensive model that views personality as a multidimensional construct consisting of five components consisting of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticisms and openness to experience. These five dimensions have proven to be stable across diverse populations in a variety of research settings. They have also demonstrated strong predictive validity. Research has produced considerable evidence that individual differences in the five factors account for differences in the ways people think, feel, and interact with others.

Extraverts tend to be talkative, social, gregarious, and assertive (Barrick et al., 2001), and experience positive effects such as energy, zeal, and excitement (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Agreeableness is the tendency to be trusting, compliant, caring, and gentle (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Agreeable people are generally good natured, cooperative, supportive, caring, and concerned for others (Barrick et al., 2001). They generally trust and believe that others are honest and well-intentioned (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Conscientiousness is comprised of two related facets: achievement and dependability, and Conscientiousness has been found to be the major component of integrity (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Conscientious individuals are likely to be dependable, responsible, rule abiding, and achievement-oriented (Barrick et al., 2001). In addition, Costa and McCrae (1992) claim that the hallmark of Conscientiousness is self-discipline. The tendency to have poor emotional adjustment and to suffer unfavorable outcomes including anxiety, insecurity, and aggression is known as neuroticism (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Psychological distress is more likely to affect neurotic people, and they typically handle stress worse than other people do (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Openness is the disposition to be imaginative, unconventional, and autonomous (Hogan & Ones, 1997). Individuals with great Openness to experiences are attentive to and curious about both their inner and outer world (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Several studies have linked personality to attitude. For example, To dorovic, et al. (2011) found that a positive attitude correlated with the Openness to Experience trait in the Costa-McCrae's Five Factor Model of Personality (FFM), and Prather-Jones (2011) found that attitudes were also related to personality characteristics such as intrinsic motivation, flexibility and enjoyment of variety. According to Bentea's (2015) research, instructors who had a good attitude about their work exhibited the following traits: "generosity", which includes a willingness to be involved and act on behalf of others and to solve common problems; "claim" which involves having good analytics and observation skills to be able to perceive any dysfunctions in the social system to which they belong (organization, group, family) or any violation of their rights, be able to react immediately, and have the courage to express their position in front of colleagues or principals; "involved", which means to be involved in causes that are not own so as to resolve common problems and to help others without waiting for anything in return and without feeling a special effort or sacrifice; and "altruistic-selfishness", which involves offering to help, being willing to intervene to resolve common problems; and having an internal locus of control.

In view of the above, the researcher has observed that in as much as several studies have been carried out personality traits and attitude. It seems a research gap exists in literature on the impact of personality traits on students' attitude towards learning, especially with particular reference to Nigerian students. This study therefore aims to bridge the existing gap by providing empirical evidence to show the nature of the relationship between personality traits and students' attitude towards learning in Delta State, Nigeria. The study tested the underlisted hypotheses:

- There is no significant relationship between levels of extraversion personality and students' attitude towards learning

- There is no significant relationship between levels of agreeableness personality and students' attitude towards learning
- There is no significant relationship between levels of conscientiousness personality and students' attitude towards learning
- There is no significant relationship between levels of neuroticisms personality and students' attitude towards learning
- There is no significant relationship between levels of openness to experience personality and students' attitude towards learning

Methods

Design of the Study

The study adopted the correlational research design, which was designed to find out the relationship that exists between personality traits and students' attitude towards learning.

Participant Selection

A total of 384 students were sampled from senior secondary schools in Delta State to make up the sample for the study. The students were made up of 192 males and 192 females, selected through proportionate stratified sampling and convenience sampling techniques. The proportionate stratified sampling was used to select the students from each of the selected schools in the 25 local government areas of the state on the basis of their population strength. Using the convenience sampling technique, the researcher recruited only students who were available and are willing to participate in the study, having met the criteria of being a student from the selected schools.

Measures

Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire contains two measures; Personality Traits Rating Scale and Students' Attitude Towards Learning Rating Scale. The Personality Trait Rating Scale was adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI), developed by Golberg (1993). The scale is a self-report scale that is designed to measure the big five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness). It contains 41 items, measured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree.

The Students Attitude Towards Learning Rating Scale was adapted from Assessment of Students' Attitudes towards Studying(ASAtS) Questionnaire, developed by Brahm and Jenert (2015). The scale is a self-report scale that is designed to measure students' attitude towards learning. It contains 39 items, measured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. Some of the items were modified to accommodate the abilities of senior secondary school students. In order to determine the reliability index of the two rating scales, for the purpose of domesticating them, 50 copies were administered to secondary school students who were not part of the study. The data was analysed with the use of Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient. Coefficient obtained include 0.89 for Personality Traits Rating Scale and 0.92 for Students' Attitude Towards Learning Rating Scale. These coefficients were above the recommended benchmark of 0.70, which implies that the two rating scales are highly reliable and fit for use on the population.

Data Collection

The researcher recruited and trained five research assistants who went with him to administer the questionnaire to the students in their various schools. The students were required to rate their level of agreement on the various instrument using the 4-point scale provided. Salient areas of the instrument were explained for the understanding of the students. The completed questionnaire was retrieved immediately to avoid loss of data. The process from the recruitment and training of research assistants to the administration of the instrument took a period of six weeks. At the end of the exercise, a total of 384 copies of questionnaire was administered and 372 were returned, indicating 97% retrieval rate.

Ethical Considerations

For ethical purpose, permission was sought and obtained from the principal of the various schools. The researcher went along with the research assistants to meet the principals in persons. The purpose of the visit was provided and permission was obtained. The principals gave a written note to the class teachers who assisted in administering the instrument to the students. The students were informed that the process is completely voluntary and that they were free to decline or discontinue the exercise whenever they feel uncomfortable with the process. Some of the students decline participating in the exercise while others agree to participate. An informed consent was obtained from those who agree to take part in the exercise. Nothing was held against those who decline to participate in the exercise.

Data Analysis

The Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient was used to analyse the data. The hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used in the analysis.

Results

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between levels of extraversion personality and students’ attitude towards learning

Table 1: Pearson’s correlation analysis of the relationship between levels of extraversion personality and students’ attitude towards learning

Variable	n	Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² %	p	Remark
Extraversion	372	28.72	4.64	0.401	0.161	16.1	0.000	Significant
Attitude		80.38	8.95					

Table 1 shows a Pearson’s correlation coefficient, which was used to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between levels of extraversion personality and students’ attitude towards learning. The result shows that $r = 0.401$, $r^2 = 0.161$, $r^2\% = 16.1$ and $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that a significant relationship exists between levels of extraversion personality and students’ attitude towards learning. Levels of extraversion personality contributed 16.1% to the variability in attitude of students towards learning.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between levels of agreeableness personality and students' attitude towards learning

Table 2: Pearson's correlation analysis of the relationship between levels of agreeableness personality and students' attitude towards learning

Variable	n	Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² %	p	Remark
Agreeableness	372	24.53	4.16	0.363	0.132	13.2	0.000	Significant
Attitude		80.38	8.95					

Table 2 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was used to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between levels of agreeableness personality and students' attitude towards learning. The result shows that $r = 0.363$, $r^2 = 0.132$, $r^2\% = 13.2$ and $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that a significant relationship exists between levels of agreeableness personality and students' attitude towards learning. Levels of agreeableness personality contributed 13.2% to the variability in attitude of students towards learning.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between levels of conscientiousness personality and students' attitude towards learning

Table 3: Pearson's correlation analysis of the relationship between levels of conscientiousness personality and students' attitude towards learning

Variable	n	Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² %	P	Remark
Conscientiousness	372	20.91	3.57	0.229	0.052	5.2	0.000	Significant
Attitude		80.38	8.95					

Table 3 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was used to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between levels of conscientiousness personality and students' attitude towards learning. The result shows that $r = 0.229$, $r^2 = 0.052$, $r^2\% = 5.2$ and $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that a significant relationship exists between levels of conscientiousness personality and students' attitude towards learning. Levels of conscientiousness personality contributed 5.2% to the variability in attitude of students towards learning.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between levels of neuroticisms personality and students' attitude towards learning

Table 4: Pearson's correlation analysis of the relationship between levels of neuroticisms personality and students' attitude towards learning

Variable	n	Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² %	p	Remark
Neuroticisms	372	33.09	7.71	0.122	0.015	1.5	0.019	Significant
Attitude		80.38	8.95					

Table 4 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was used to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between levels of neuroticisms personality and students' attitude towards learning

The result shows that $r = 0.122$, $r^2 = 0.015$, $r^2\% = 1.5$ and $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that a significant relationship exists between levels of neuroticisms personality and students' attitude towards learning. Levels of neuroticisms personality contributed 1.5% to the variability in attitude of students towards learning.

Ho₅: There is no significant relationship between levels of openness to experience personality and students' Attitude towards learning

Table 5: Pearson's correlation analysis of the relationship between levels of openness to experience personality and students' attitude towards learning

Variable	n	Mean	SD	r	r ²	r ² %	p	Remark
Openness to Experience	372	15.71	4.96	0.202	0.041	4.1	0.000	Significant
Attitude		80.38	8.95					

Table 5 shows a Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was used to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between levels of openness to experience personality and students' attitude towards learning. The result shows that $r = 0.202$, $r^2 = 0.041$, $r^2\% = 4.1$ and $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that a significant relationship exists between levels of openness to experience personality and students' attitude towards learning. Levels of openness to experience personality contributed 4.1% to the variability in attitude of students towards learning.

Discussion

The first finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between levels of extraversion personality and students' attitude towards learning. This finding implies that students' attitude towards learning is likely to be influenced by their levels of extraversion personality. The possible reason for this finding may be because of the contrasting tendencies of individuals on the both extreme ends of the extraversion personality. For instance, extroverts show a preference for seeking, engaging in, and enjoying social interactions, whereas introverts tend to be reserved and withdrawn in social settings – often preferring to avoid social situations altogether. The finding is in line with Octavia (2017), who found that there is a positive moderate correlation between extraversion trait and students' attitudes, and a positive strong correlation between introversion trait and students' attitudes.

The second finding showed that a significant exists between levels of agreeableness personality and students' attitude towards learning. This finding shows that students high on agreeableness personality may be more positively predisposed to learning than their counterparts low on agreeableness. This is probably because agreeable individuals find it important to get along with others. They are willing to put aside their interests for other people. These individuals are helpful, friendly, considerate, and generous. Agreeable students display cooperative attitudes which indicate that they are usually cooperative, trusting and helpful and more likely to meet deadlines. Taking these characteristics into account, it may be predicted that agreeableness would be positively associated with positive attitude towards learning (Köseoğlu, 2016).

The third finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between levels of conscientiousness personality and students' attitude towards learning. This finding implies that conscientiousness personality has a way of influencing students' attitude towards learning. The reason is perhaps because conscientious

people tend to work diligently to achieve goals they've set for their future. They are responsible, reliable, organized, and hard-working. They also pay attention to detail to make sure they deliver on their promises. Costa and McCrae (1992) provided evidence that Conscientiousness is likewise related to academic performance. John et al. (1994) found that Conscientiousness predicted school performance. Wagerman and Funder (2007) also found that Conscientiousness was a valid and unique predictor of college performance.

The fourth finding showed that a significant relationship exists between levels of neuroticisms personality and students' attitude towards learning. This finding implies that neuroticism personality can likely influence students' attitude towards learning. This is because individuals high on levels of neuroticism respond poorly to environmental stress, interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and can experience minor frustrations as hopelessly over whelming. Brown, et al. (2004) who found that neuroticism was associated with lower levels of ability to collaborate in groups.

The fifth finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between levels of openness to experience personality and students' attitude towards learning. This finding that to some extent, openness to experience has a way of influencing students' attitude towards learning. This is likely a result of high levels of openness in individuals, who are frequently driven to learn about novel concepts and broaden their knowledge. According to research, both intelligence and so-called "crystallized intelligence" are correlated with being open to new experiences. Todorovic, et al. (2011) found that a positive attitude correlated with the Openness to Experience trait. John et al. (1994) found that Openness predicted school performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship that may exists between the five personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticisms and openness to experience, and students' attitude towards learning. The analysis of data obtained in the field work shows that a relationship exists among the five personality traits and students' attitude towards learning. Hence, the study conclude that personality traits of students are strong predictors of their attitude towards learning. In view of this conclusion, it is therefore recommended that personality assessment should be carried out on students as part of their entry qualification. This will enable schools to place them in special classes that will afford remedial training on attitude towards learning, especially for students whose personality traits may not favour positive attitude towards learning.

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