

## INFLUENCE OF JOINT PERSONALITY TRAITS ON OPTIMISM IN STUDENTS ACADEMIC WORK IN RIVERS STATE

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of joint personality traits on optimism in students academic work in Rivers State. The joint personality traits are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The joint personality traits were the independent variables while optimism in students academic work was the dependent variable one research question and one corresponding hypothesis guided the study. Correlational design was adopted in the study. A sample of 400 students was drawn from the population, using simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected using two instruments namely: Joint Personality Traits Assessment Scale (JPAS) and Optimism in Academic Work Assessment Scale (OAWAS) multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to answer the research question while ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression were used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that the joint personality traits showed significant relationship with optimism in student's academic work. Based on the findings, appropriate recommendations were made among which are that; the government should employ professional guidance counselors in all the public and private secondary schools in Rivers State to assist students, especially those with neurotic personality traits that are less optimistic in their academic work.

**Keywords:** Joint Personality Traits, Optimism and Students Academic Work.

### INTRODUCTION

In psychology, trait theory (also called dispositional theory) is an approach to the study of human personality. Trait theorists are primarily interested in the measurement of traits, which can be defined as habitual patterns of behaviour, thought and emotions, Saul (2003). According to this perspective, traits are relatively stable overtime, differ across individuals and influence behaviour.

The term "Personality traits" refers to enduring personal characteristics that are revealed in a particular pattern of behaviour in a variety of situations. In the words of Wayne Weiten, he defined personality trait as a durable disposition to behave in a particular way in a variety of situations". Weiten (2007) adjectives such as honest dependable, moody, impulsive, extravagant, domineering, friendly, conscientiousness, agreeable, anxious, excitable etc. describe dispositions that represent personality traits.

Gordon Allport was an early pioneer in the study of traits, which he sometimes referred to as dispositions. In his approach central traits are basic to an individual's personality, whereas secondary traits are more peripheral. Common traits are those recognized within a culture

and may vary between culture, cardinal traits are those by which an individual may be strongly recognized. Since Allport's time, trait theorists have focused more on group statistics than on single individual. Allport called these two emphases "Nomothetic" and "idiographic" respectively.

The grouping of the traits has led to what is known as "joint personality traits" or the "Big five model of personality trait" virtually all trait models, and even ancient Greek philosophers, include extraversion Vs introversion as a central dimension of human personality. Another prominent trait that is found in nearly all models is neuroticism, or emotional instability.

Evolutionary psychology examines behavioural processes in terms of their "adaptive value for members of a species over the course of many generations" Bruck and Allen (2003), Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (1999) maintained that the "Big Five" traits are present across a variety of cultures because they had significant adaptive value for humans. These "Big five" personality traits otherwise known as joint personality traits are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The acronyms used to refer to these joint personality traits are; OCEAN, CANOE or NEOAC. The Big five model is able to account for different traits in personality including optimism without overlapping.

On the other hand, optimism as defined by Seligman is "how people interpret themselves in cases of success and failure" Seligman (2003). A happy and healthy optimistic student is often a more successful student; an optimistic student is also likely to be back to school sooner. While many things contribute to health and happiness, numerous studies have cited the importance of positive state of mind (optimism) when it comes to failure in examination. Having an optimistic outlook is a key asset when dealing with the adversity of physical and/or mental harm. It can also play a large part in how efficient and effectively they recover.

Optimism was introduced by Dr. Martin Seligman E. P. It is a theory of positive psychology which suggests positivity as a skill that can be developed as any other. According to Theo in his study, optimism allows the individual to turn negative thoughts around. He defined it as "the ability to see the future as a positive, bright and hopeful" and "reframe adversity when it strikes".

Optimism has been defined by Rick (2013) as "simply seeing the silver" while others see optimism as a personality trait. The behaviourist sees it as an explanatory style. The benefits of an optimistic outlook are many; optimists are higher achievers and have better overall health, they believe bad events to be more temporary than permanent and bounce back quickly from failure, they are also of the view that good things happen for reasons that are permanent. Optimists point to specific temporary causes for negative events, they compartmentalize helplessness, they blame bad events on causes outside of themselves.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The secondary school students also possess some level of joint personality traits. The personality traits possessed by each individual determine how they interpret circumstances, events, failure, defeat, success and rejection they encounter in the course of their study. Some of them are optimistic while some are not optimistic in the way they interpret success or/and

failure in relation to their academic work. This is the rationale behind choosing this topic for investigation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate joint personality traits as correlates of optimism in students academic work in Rivers State.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant to the students especially those that are optimistic in their academic work and those with low optimism in their academic work. The study will also expose the teachers to the several reasons for low optimism in academic and how they can be of help to the students. The study will also have great impact on the school counsellors on how to change the attitude of the students who are pessimistic and those with low optimism.

### **Research Question**

1. To what extent is the personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) jointly related to optimism in students academic work?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between joint personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) and optimism in student's academic work.

### **Method**

The research design used in this study was correlational research design. The population comprised all senior secondary school students in public and private schools in Rivers State, and there are 346 public and private schools in Rivers State. The sample size for this study was 400 senior secondary school students in public and private school in Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used. Two instruments titled: "Joint Personality Traits Assessment Scale" (JPAS) and "Optimism in Students' Academic Work Assessment Scales" (OSAWAS) were used to collect data from the senior secondary school students.

The two instruments were validated in terms of content and face validity by two experts in measurement and evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counselling University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the instruments, (JPAS) and (OSAWAS) was determined through test-retest method.

The reliability coefficient obtained were 0.99 for (JPAS) and 0.89 for (OSAWAS) respectively which means that the instruments are reliable for the study. Multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to answer the research question while ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression were used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

Analysis of data in this study was done in line with the research question and hypothesis.

**Research Question One:** To what extent is the personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) jointly related to optimism in students academic work?

**Table One:** Summary of multiple regression analysis of the relationship between the joint personality traits and optimism in students academic work.

Variables	Mean $\bar{X}$	sd	R	R-square	Adjusted R
Optimism in students academic work	77.94	14.45			
Openness to experience	16.93	3.19			
Conscientiousness	16.59	3.32	0.458	0.21	0.008
Extraversion	15.84	3.18			
Agreeableness	16.94	3.90			
Neuroticism	12.9	3.69			

The result in table one revealed that the mean score of the students are 77.94, 16.93, 16.59, 15.84, 16.94 and 12.9 for optimism in student's academic work, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism respectively. The multiple regression coefficient obtained is 0.458 while the  $R^2$  is 0.21. This means that the five personality traits jointly had a high relation with optimism in students academic work and that about 21% of the variations in optimism among senior secondary school students can be explained by their personality traits while the remaining 79% may be due to other factors outside the scope of this study.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between joint personality traits of (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) and optimism in student's academic work.

**Table Two:** Summary of one way ANOVA showing the relationship between the joint personality traits and optimism in student's academic work.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	$\frac{-2}{X}$ Means Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	1723.722	5	344.744	1.665	0.014
Residual	81572.588	394	207.037		
<b>Total</b>	<b>83296.310</b>	<b>399</b>			

Table two shows that the calculated f-value of 1.665 was significant at 0.014 levels which is less than the chosen 0.05 level of probability. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between the joint personality traits and optimism in students academic work.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Multiple regression analysis and ANOVA were performed on research question 1 and hypothesis 1 respectively. The results obtained indicated a high positive relationship for the research question. The joint personality traits when taken together on hypothesis testing were found to be insignificantly related to optimism in student's academic work. This means that even though the personality traits were found from the research question 1 to have a high positive relationship with optimism, this value is statistically insignificant. One reason for this could be the impossibility of individual to possess all the personality traits at equal measure since most of the traits are direct opposites of the other. This result agrees with the works of Paula (2006) Engler (2009) and Carlson et al (2010) which are of the opinion that the kind of personality trait an individual possess will determine how such a person reacts to events and situations around them especially in their academic work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study. Government should ensure that professional guidance counsellors are posted to all secondary schools in Rivers State as stated in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education. Guidance counsellors will assist students to be optimistic in their academic work.

## CONCLUSION

This study was aimed at determining the influence of joint personality traits as correlates of optimism in students' academic work in Rivers State. The joint personality traits studied were openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The study showed that there is a relationship but insignificant between the joint personality traits and optimism in students academic work in Rivers State.

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