

THE INFLUENCE OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY FACTORS ON LECTURERS – STUDENTS' INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of the Big Five Personality Factors on lecturers – students' interpersonal relationship. Two hundred and Seventy respondents were randomly selected to participate in the study. The data for the study were collected using two already validated instruments, viz, (i) Interpersonal Scale (ii) The Big Five Inventory (BFI). Three hypotheses were formulated and analysed using t-test, multiple regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical method and tested at 0.05 level of significance. A significant difference was observed between lecturer and students interpersonal relationship ($t = 2.372$, $df = 268$, $P < 0.05$). It was found that the predictor variables accounted for 19.4% of the total variance in lecturers – students' interpersonal relationship. Consciousness has the highest beta value ($B = -.618$; $t = 7.007$; $p < .05$) significant at less than .05 alpha level; followed by Neuroticism with beta value of ($B = -.495$; $t = -.576$; $p < .05$), followed by agreeableness ($B = .805$; $t = -.576$; $p < .05$), followed by openness to experience ($B = .522$; $t = 5.243$; $p < .05$); and lastly by extraversion ($B = .576$; $t = -4.069$; $p < .05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should establish educational programs where skills in interpersonal relationship and communication can be taught so that people can be successful both at home and in the workplace as they exhibit interpersonal and social skills, courteousness, respectful communication and networking skills.

Keywords: Interpersonal relationship, personality factors, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness.

Introduction

It is a well known fact that no man on earth can completely stand alone without interacting with others within his or her immediate environment in a social context. Thus, the basic characteristics common to all human beings are interactions, interrelationship and interdependence within the environment in which he/she lives. The nature and environment in which we live to a large extent determines the intensiveness of our interaction and interrelationship. "The greater the interpersonal interaction, the more a person becomes more human, better adjusted, and more exposed to increasing number of conflicts. (Ayodele, 2010; Hammed, (2003).

Relationship quality is a key indicator of individual psychosocial adjustment. The nature of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship among individuals especially in our educational institutions varied as the individual members themselves. Also, numerous other factors such as personality, attitudes and environment factors affect the totality of one's relationship (intra and inter) in many ways. At one extreme, these relationships can be personal and positive. This is the case when individual interact meaningfully, share mutual friendship and be personal and negative. This happens when individual dislike one another, create tension and crisis for one another or try to humiliate the personality of one another (Ayodele & Bello, 2008; Limber, 2002, Rigby, 2002).

Most conceptual models that address the provisions of friendship include separate dimension that describe negative and positive features of the relationship (Furman, 1989 in Burk & Lausen, 2008). Negative relationship qualities encompass rivalry, betrayal, hostility, antagonism and competition. Positive relationship qualities encompass companionship, intimacy, assistance, loyalty, caring, warmth, closeness and trust. From psychological standpoint, effective and collaborate relationship within an environment/organization will bring about a stimulating environment in which love, trust, cooperation and collaboration can be built towards the betterment of every individual therein and the success of the environment. On the other hand, such environment will be characterised with tension, anxiety, frustration and at large an environment where individuals are made to internalize and exhibit violence, in order, to endanger themselves and other people's peace and right (Ayodele, 2010).

The journey to communication and interpersonal relationship begins with peoples' intra personal relationship. When they begin to be in contact with their felt feelings, sense them in their

bodies, verbalize them in their minds and finally express them outwardly in their behaviour, they also open doors to contacting their needs. Interpersonal relationships are created by people who are willing to be in full contact with their feelings and needs and equally be interested in others' feelings and needs. The giving and receiving exchange is the building block to developing close relationships with others (Rosenberg, 2003).

Findings of self-disclosure research (Benger, 2005) shows that disclosure increases with increased relational intimacy. Disclosure increases with the need to reduce uncertainty in a relationship and tends to be reciprocal, incremental, and symmetrical. Liking is related to positive disclosure, but not to negative ones. Positive disclosure does not necessarily increase with the intimacy of the relationship; but negative disclosure is directly related to the intimacy of the relationship. Relationship satisfaction and disclosure have a curvilinear relationship satisfaction that is highest with moderate levels of disclosure.

Mullum (1998) posits that close personal relationships include assuming responsibility for one's feelings, thoughts and actions in the relationship; being open and revealing with innermost thoughts and feelings; showing understandings at various levels of communication through increased knowledge, good listening skills on a daily basis, deep and loving understanding; showing commitment to the welfare of each other; showing caring for each other's physical safety and psychological well-being; constructive use of anger, non-exploiting sexual relationships, shared activities and joint interest but allowing each other some space to be different; spending time together as much as possible; lack of defensiveness, that is needing to deny or distort incoming information and feeling safe to give and receive feedbacks on each other's comments, actions and lifestyle.

In psychology, the Big Five personality factors are the classification of a person's personality into the categories of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. The 'Big Five', as they are called, are five broad factors of personality traits discovered through empirical research (Goldberg, 1993). The Big Five personality factors can be summarised as follows:

Neuroticism: A tendency to easily experience unpleasant emotions such as anger, anxiety, depression, vulnerability, hostility and impulsiveness

Extraversion: Energy, urgency and the tendency to seek stimulation and the company of others.

Conscientiousness: A tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully and aim for achievement.

Agreeableness: A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.

Openness to experience: Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination and curiosity.

Hence, the 'Big Five' personality traits serve an integrative function - because it can represent the various and diverse systems of personality description in a common framework.

A number of meta-analyses have confirmed the predictive value of the Big Five across a wide range of behaviours. Saulsman and Page (2004) examined the relationship between the Big Five personality dimensions and each of the 10 personality disorder categories in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-IV). Across 15 independent samples, the researchers found that each disorder displayed a unique and predictable five-factor profile. The most prominent and consistent personality predictors underlying the disorders were positive associations with neuroticism and negative associations with Agreeableness.

In the area of job performance, Barrick and Mount (1991) reviewed 117 studies utilizing 162 samples with 23,994 participants. They found that conscientiousness showed consistent relations with all performance criteria for all occupational groups. Extraversion was a valid predictor for occupations involving social interaction (e.g. management and sales). Furthermore, extraversion and openness to experience were valid predictors of training proficiency criteria.

In specific terms, this study sort to determine the combine and relative influence of neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness on lecturer – students' interpersonal relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the extent at which personality factors such as neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness to experience and consciousness influence the interpersonal relationship in our educational institutions especially the relationship between lecturers and students.

Statement of Hypotheses

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students.
2. There is no significant composite contribution of the big five personality factors to the predictions of lecturer – students' interpersonal relationship
1. There is no significant relative contribution of the Big Five personality factors to the prediction of lecturer - students' interpersonal relationship.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive survey research design where questionnaire were used to collect data from the respondents on the studied variables.

Participants: A sample of 270 participants comprises of 70 lecturers, 100 undergraduates and 100 postgraduates were selected by stratified random sampling technique from Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago – Iwoye and Babcock University, Ilisan, (both are private and public Universities) in Ogun State, Nigeria. The age range of the participants was between 19 and 58, while the mean age was 28.70 years with a standard deviation of 4.33.

Measures:

- **Interpersonal Scale (SI):** This is a 10 - items sub-scale of the sense of competence scale (SCS) developed by Janosik *et al* (1987) designed to elicit data about one's interpersonal and intellectual competencies. The items are scored on a four – point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The reliability coefficient for the 10-items interpersonal subscale was .79. Using the Cronbach's alpha model, the reliability coefficient for the SCS was calculated at 0.78 (Janosik, *et al*, 1987). Azeez (2008) reported a linear relationship between the scale and emotional intelligence ($R = .079$). Ayodele (2010) found high correlation between the scale and relational factors.
- **The Big Five Inventory (BFI):** The BFI was developed by John and Srivastava (1999). It is a multi-items inventory of 50 items, sub-divided into 5 namely Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Consciousness. The items are scored on a four – point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The BFI is reported to have overall alpha of 0.84 while the neuroticism scale = .82; extraversion = 0.86; openness to experience = 0.82; agreeableness = 0.86 and consciousness = 0.87. BFI has been used among African subjects and reported valid and not culturally biased (Idowu & Oledikwa, 2003).

Procedure: A set of questionnaires for assessing the variables of the study were administered on the sample through assistance of four (4) colleagues from the institutions selected for the study. A total of 270 questionnaires were distributed and found useable for the data analysis.

Data Analysis: CS – Pro was used for the data entry while analysis was done using SPSS 13.0. The Cronbach's alpha for BFI and interpersonal relationship is calculated which is 0.793, showing the highest level of reliability of the data. The data analysis based on earlier set hypotheses involved the use of multiple regression analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the independent t-test statistics.

Results

The tables presented below show the difference, composite effect and the relative contribution of the big five personality factors on the lecturers - students' interpersonal relationship.

Table 1

T-test analysis showing difference in the interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students.

Variable	N	X	SD	df	T-cal	T-cal
Lecturer	70	24.75	5.13			
				268	2.372	1.96
Students	200	28.19	6.04			

P < 0.05

The table shows that there is a significant difference in the interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students ($t = 2.372$, $df = 1.92$, $P < 0.05$). The calculated t - value of 2.372 is higher than the critical table value of 1.96. Thus, the earlier null hypothesis stated was rejected.

Table 2

Analysis of the composite effect of the predictor variables on interpersonal relationship

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
Regression	3276.112	5	655.222	11.298	.000*
Residual	15309.864	264	57.998		
Total	18585.976	269			
Multiple R	= .411				
Multiple R ² (Adj.)	= .194				
Stand error estimate	= 3.262				

Table 2 shows the regression value for the combined effect (0.411) and the adjusted R² (0.194). This implies that 19.4% of the variance in the lecturers - students' interpersonal relationship is accounted for by the personality factors. The table also shows that the f -value (11.298) is significant at .000, a level that is less than 0.05. This shows that the personality factors have significant effect on interpersonal relationship between the lecturers and students.

Table 3

Test of significance of Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t-ratio	Sig
	B	SE	Beta			
(Constant)	32.006	2.698			12.179	.000
Neuroticism	-.342	.116	-.618		-6.208*	.000
Extraversion	-.307	.128	-.495		-4.069*	.011
Conscientiousness	-.363	.189	.803		7.007*	.207
Openness to experience	-.288	.107	.522		5.243*	.010
Agreeableness	-.401	.122	.576		- 6.085*	.000

a. Dependent variable: Interpersonal relationship

*Significant at <.05

Table 3 shows the relative contribution of each predictor variable to the variance in interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students. Conscientiousness has the highest beta value (7.007) significant at less than .05 alpha level; followed by Neuroticism with beta value of -.618, followed by agreeableness (-.576), followed by openness to experience (5.243); and lastly by extraversion (-4.069) also significant at 0.05. Therefore, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness and extraversion are potent personality factors to the prediction of lecturers – students' interpersonal relationship.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that there is a significant difference in the interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students. Results in table 1 show that the lecturers have a mean score of 24.75 which is significantly less than the mean score of the students (28.19). The hypothesis was rejected. This result is in line with the findings of Skiffington (2003) that quality and healthy interpersonal relationship have their foundation in effective interpersonal skill. Also, the findings of Goldman (2005) lend a good credence to this study that a good relationship is a mutual filling of needs.

The outcome of this study also indicated that the independent variables were significant predictors of interpersonal relationship between lecturers and their students. The study further found that conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience and extraversion are potent personality factors to the prediction of interpersonal relationship. It is not surprising to find conscientiousness to be the most potent predictor than other predictor variables. Results from this study support earlier studies (Saulsman & Page, 2004; Barrick & Mount, 1991), which found the predictive value of the Big Five across a wide range of behaviours.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the mediating role of the Big Five personality factors in predicting the interpersonal relationship between students and lecturers. Study results show that the Big Five personality factors are potent factors in the prediction of human beings psychobiosocial adjustment to life and living. It is therefore recommended that both children and adults need to learn and re-learn the skills of interpersonal relationship and effective communication. It is also recommended that government should establish educational programmes where skills in interpersonal relationship and communication can be taught so that people can be successful both at home and in the workplace as they exhibit interpersonal and social skills, courteousness, respectful communication and networking skills.

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