

## **Influence Personality Traits and Career choice of Tertiary Institution Students in North Western Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examined the influence personality traits and course of study among higher institution students in north western Nigeria. The study hypothesized that there is no significant difference between personality and course of study among higher institution students. Descriptive survey design was utilized to test the hypotheses formulated in the course of this study and 389 was used as a sample of study Eysenck Personality Inventory Scale (EPI) was used to collect data from the sample and the academic records of 389 students from eight Colleges of Education were used as sample. The study employed independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance to determine the extent of differences between personality and student's course of study. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference between Science and Arts students in their level of personality scores. The study therefore, recommends that personality of student should not be considered as a yardstick for allocating a course to students. Primarily, the interest and aptitude of students should always be given preference, this is with a view to ensuring and predicting better academic outcome on the part of students. Furthermore, Teachers should also ensure that equal treatment is given to without preference to their personality.*

**Key words:** Personality, Course of Study, Tertiary Institution and North West

### **Introduction**

Career choice is one of factors that are being reckoned with in a bid to build an individual personality. Personality has been conceived as a social stimulus value that is how an individual affects other person with whom he comes in contact, whether he is impressive or repulsive, or has a dominating or submissive personality. Personality from this point of view becomes identical to reputation and impression, mostly in terms of physical appearance, clothing, conversation and etiquette. According to Chauhan, (2007) is in selecting applicants for various jobs and courses. The interviewers take into consideration the total picture of an individual's organized behaviour.

Sambo (2011) pointed out that personality is multi-dimensional, it is affected by heredity, learning, motivation, intelligence, creativity – virtually everything that makes the individual what he is at a point in time. Confronted with any of the enormous complexity of personality, psychologist initially sought to organize their data by adopting a definition of personality as an experimental starting point or by proposing a theory by means of which personality can be generally explained.

Based on psychological perspective, personality could be viewed in two broad dimensions, viz: extraversion and introversion. These important variables are often used to classify individual based on their prevailing temperaments, hence, individuals' personality are identified based on the way they react to a given stimuli. According to Ostendorf et al., (1992) extraversion is the personality trait which covers these kinds of people in our society. However, a person who is more reserved, less likely to be social and tends to be discomfort with interacting with strangers is the trait opposite to the extraversion and is termed as introversion (Goldberg, 1992).

According to Mukherjee (2002), Personality is unique pattern of behavioural and mental processes that characterizes an individual's interactions with the environment. The key word in the definition of personality is the word 'individual'. Personality psychology is the study of individuals, with special emphasis on what makes a person unique. In another perspective, personality was conceived as adjustment of individual in his environment. In this definition, an individual since birth attempt to adjust to his environment. Every individual therefore develops his own unique way of adjustment in the society. According to this approach, personality is an individual characteristics pattern of behaviour. An individual through his continuous reactions attempt to adjust himself in his environment. Thus, it could be inferred that the sum of individual's movement as he adapts himself to the environment is his personality.

According to summative approach, personality emphasizes the importance of sum of total of difference processes and activities of individual such as innate dispositions, habits, impulses and emotions etc. Gestalt psychologists did welcome this approach by objecting to the idea of aggregation or sum total of part without introducing the concept of organization and integration of parts into a total whole (Chauhan, 2007). It could be recalled that Gestalt psychologists believed that unless whole is understood, the meaning of parts could not be determined.

For integrative personality lay emphasis on the integrative of personality and its definite pattern of organization. Chauhan (2007) cited that Warren's dictionary defines personality as integrative organization of all the cognitive, affective, conative and physical characteristics of an individual as it manifests itself in focal distinction from others. Moreover, as a combination of factors, as the way one perceives oneself, as an integration of identities and simply a behaviour. The definitions of personality do overlap, however, and put together – adding and subtracting where necessary they form a fairly complete picture of what personality is. Moreover, the developmental theories of career emphasize the importance of personal interests, skills, and values when expressing the barriers in decision-making (Newton, & Grayson, 2003). The values of the individuals affect their attitudes, behaviours and thoughts.

Alkhelil (2016) asserted that making right choice of a career requires considering the possessed individual values are the source of individual differences. They function to

evaluate own behaviours and attitudes as well as others. Values vary from person to person and the social and personal preference is the result of continuous beliefs that act in a particular way of living and behaving or vice versa. It also allows us to find good and bad, right and wrong.

The derailment in career development according to Kemboi, Kindiki & Misigo (2016) is due to lack of Secondary School and University plans that provide students with sound occupational information and self-awareness. On this note, students are likely to face barriers that may deter their optimal career development. It is on record that while factors such as gender, peer pressure, parents, exam grades and career status are by and large the first to be considered by students during career decision making process.

It is very pertinent to note that a career choice that is compatible with one's personality type is believed to be reinforced and rewarded by an academic environment. Mungai (2007) and Schmidt (2001) recommended that a study be done in post-secondary level of education to establish course satisfaction. It is on this note that this study was undertaken to establish the congruence between personality types and career choice as well as course satisfaction. In a study conducted by Kemboi, Kindiki & Misigo (2016) it was established that students' personality types had a significant relationship with career choice. The students who are of investigative personality types in an investigative career choice are more than students who are of other personalities.

Despite the fact that personality has been conceived as a social stimulus value that is how an individual affects other person with whom he comes in contact, whether he is impressive or repulsive, or has a dominating or submissive personality. Personality from this point of view becomes identical to reputation and impression, mostly in terms of physical appearance, clothing, conversation and etiquette. This concept of personality according to Chauhan (2007) is relevant in selecting applicants for various jobs and courses. The interviewers take into consideration the total picture of an individual's organized behaviour. The choice of careers has remained a constant challenge for students and career counsellors as they search for a career decision making process that is both developmentally comprehensive and designed to prepare students for life-long career planning.

Kemboi, Kindiki & Misigo (2016) pointed out that the derailment in career development is due to lack of Secondary School and University plans that provide students with sound occupational information and self-awareness. On this note, students are likely to face barriers that may deter their optimal career development. It is on record that while factors such as gender, peer pressure, parents, exam grades and career status are by and large the first to be considered by students during career decision making process, thus, little or no consideration is given to personality types.

**Neuroticism is one of the traits that account for peculiar personality dimension.**

According to Kwon (2020), **neuroticism** is a broad personality trait dimension representing the degree to which a person experiences the world as distressing, threatening, and unsafe. Each individual can be positioned somewhere on this personality dimension between extreme poles: perfect emotional stability versus complete emotional [chaos](#). Highly neurotic individuals tend to be labile (that is, subject to frequently changing emotions), anxious, tense, and withdrawn. Individuals who are low in neuroticism tend to be content, confident, and stable. It is obvious that some students use to develop series of phobia especially at tertiary institution if they are devoid of much needed motivation and thus, such negative perception might have negative influence in their career.

Neuroticism is associated with distress and dissatisfaction. Neurotic individuals (that is, those who are high on the neuroticism dimension) tend to feel dissatisfied with themselves and their lives. They are more likely to report minor health problems and to feel general discomfort in a wide range of situations. Neurotic individuals are more prone to negative emotions (such as anxiety, depression, anger, and guilt). [Empirical](#) studies suggest that extremely high levels of neuroticism are associated with prolonged and [pervasive](#) misery in both the neurotic individuals and those close to them.

Conversely, Lucas and Diener (2021) maintained that extraversion is a broad personality trait that encompasses a number of more specific characteristics such as sociability, assertiveness, high activity level, positive emotions, and impulsivity. The nature of the trait and its defining characteristics has changed considerably over time, and a number of different mechanisms have been proposed to underlie the trait. These mechanisms include individual differences in conditionability, arousal level, and sensitivity to rewarding stimuli. Modern extraversion research focuses on understanding the characteristic patterns of feelings and behaviours associated with extraversion, and linking these patterns to specific psychophysiological mechanisms.

Choosing a course or career at tertiary institution is one of the fundamental aspects that determine individual success in his/her future life or career. Jamini-Gashi and Berxulli (2017) asserted that career certainty is seen to be connected with personality traits congruent with chosen career. Individuals with higher congruence between personality and their chosen career, also show higher certainty in their career decision making, supporting Holland's theory. Thus, it is obvious that students' choice course of is often guided by their performance aptitudes test in the yesteryears, however, students are now given free chance to select whichever course they are interested in without any recourse to their per personality traits (neurotics or extroverts) as to whether they will perform better or not. Therefore, this study is basically intended to find out if there is any relationship between personality traits (neuroticism & extraversion) and course of study amongst tertiary students in north western Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

1. To determine the influence of neuroticism on the course of study among tertiary institution students.
2. To determine the influence extraversion on the course of study among tertiary institution students.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the influence of neuroticism on the course of study among tertiary institution students?
2. What is the influence of extraversion on the course of study among tertiary institution students?

### **Null Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference between neuroticism and course of study among tertiary institution students.
2. There is no significant difference between extraversion and course of study among tertiary institution students.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was utilized to test the hypotheses formulated in the course of this study, it is worth to note that this design describes the degree to which two or more variables are differ in quantitative techniques. The population for this study consisted of all Colleges of Education students drawn from Federal and States Institutions in North-west zone of Nigeria. The estimated number of NCE III students in the institutions was 9,191 students, for the purpose of this study; the samples were drawn from the Sciences and Arts/ Social Science courses. Based on the assumption that the admissions into the Colleges of Education are centrally regulated by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), it is expected that the admissions were based on merit as each student was expected to have a minimum requirement of five credits including English and Mathematics before being admitted into Interim Joint Matriculation Board programmes.

A total of 389 students were selected using proportional sampling technique that is out of the total of 3,040 NCE III students from eight Colleges of Education as subject of this study and the sample selected from each institution was purposive and for the ease of carrying out the research. The sampling was guided by the table provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining sample size from a given population. The samples were drawn from the 300 level students of Colleges of Education among sciences, arts and humanities course combinations.

Eysench Personality Inventory (EPI) designed by psychologist H.J. Eysench and S. B.G. Eysench (1969). In the questionnaire categorical options were given in form 'Yes' and 'No' for the respondents to select. The items measure Neuroticism (N), Extroversion (E) and

Lie (L). The ‘L’ scale does not measure directly a personality factor; thus, it measures faking. The ‘N’ scales measure the level of neuroticism and emotional stability. While ‘E’ scale measure extroversion – introversion. The respondents were scored based on the key provided in order to determine the numbers that represent each aspect for feasible analyses. The questionnaire was found suitable for the purpose of this study, hence the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of .95 was obtained. The study utilized the mean scored students obtained based on the responses of the subjects to the questionnaire and from various records of students based on course of study (Arts and Sciences) within the sample institutions with permissions. The grade point average (GPA) score of students were obtained as a data matrix. The independent t-test was used to analyze the data obtained from the institutions

### Results

This study investigated whether students differ in their personality and course study in tertiary institutions in north-western Nigeria, thus, a total of 389 students were used from the eight sampled institutions. The independent t-test was utilized to test the differences of students’ personality based on the summative mean scores in various courses of study. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The analyses of the results were presented in the following tables:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between neuroticism and course of study among Tertiary institution students.

**Table 1:** Results of t-test analyses on differences between neuroticism scores and course of study

Variable	Course group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal.	t-cri.	P
Neuroticism	Science	169	11.53	5.13	387	1.34	1.96	0.18
	Arts/Humanities	220	10.97	3.12				

*P > 0.05, t computed < 1.96 at df 387*

Based on the results of t-test statistics on Table 2 above, there is no significant difference between Science and Arts students in their level of Neuroticism score. This is because the calculated significant p value of .180 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance and the t computed value of 1.34 is lower than the 1.96 critical *t* value at df 387. Their mean neuroticism levels are 11.53 and 10.97 by Science and Arts students respectively, implying that both have almost the same level of neuroticism. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of neuroticism between science and Arts students is hereby accepted.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between extraversion and course of study among tertiary institution students.

**Table 2:** Results of t-test analyses on differences between extraversion scores on the basis of course of study

Variable	Course group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal.	t-crit	P
Extraversion	Science	169	10.24	2.70	387	.504	1.96	.615
	Arts/Humanities	220	10.10	2.70				

***P > 0.05, t computed < 1.96 at df 387***

Based on the results of t-test statistics on Table 2 above, there is no significant difference between Science and Arts students in their level of extraversion score. This is because the calculated significant p value of .615 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance and the t computed value of 0.504 is lower than the 1.96 critical t value at df 387. Their mean extraversion levels are 10.24 and 10.10 by science and Arts students respectively, implying that both have almost the same level of extraversion. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the level of extraversion between science and Arts students is hereby accepted and retained

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study was primarily conducted to find out the extent to which some personality traits differ from the course of study subscribed by Colleges of Education students in North Western Nigeria. Two components of personality traits were compared between arts and science students in order to establish and or justify a basis for selection of students into the said programmes.

In the first place, the results of the study indicated there is no significant difference between neuroticism and course of study (both arts and sciences). This finding was supported by a study conducted by Kemboi, Kindiki & Misigo (2016) in which they discovered that there is no significant relationship between personality types and career choice, hence, it was established that students' personality types had no significant relationship with career choice. The students who are of investigative personality types in an investigative career choice are more than students who are of other personalities. Similarly, the current study lend support to the findings of Jamini-Gashi and Berxulli (2017) whose results do not show significant differences in career certainty between adolescents with consistency between enterprising personality traits and enterprising careers, and those without such consistency. In the same vein, Alkhelil (2016) discovered that there is no correlation between neuroticism and course of study, however, the results of his study revealed that neurotics are more likely to choose managerial and technical roles thus lending support to the present study.

The results also indicated there is no significant difference between neuroticism and course of study (both arts and sciences). On the contrast, Alkhelil (2016) discovered that people ranking high in extraversion are more likely to choose technical roles unlike arts courses. The study revealed that there was positive correlation between extraversion as personality trait and technical roles as a career choice. It could there be inferred that there is the tendency for extroverts to engage in an activity that will promotes their entrepreneurial skills other that engaging divergent production.

### **Conclusion**

The study attempted to find out the difference between personality traits and course of study amongst tertiary institution students in North Central Nigeria. The study intended primarily to find out whether courses of study are being imposed on students as a result of which most students do not often accept responsibility on any academic failure they experienced in their academic pursuits. The results of this study did not reveal any influence of personality traits (neuroticism & extraversion) and course of study among colleges of education students in North Western Nigeria. Thus, the study concluded that students' personality traits have no relationship with their course of study. In view of the findings of this study, it would be most appropriate for tertiary institutions to support the activities of counselling centres in order to assist students towards overcoming various academic hurdles with view to maintaining good psychological adjustment and balance in their educational pursuit.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study did not reveal any significant relationship between personality traits and course of study. The study therefore recommends that:

1. Career guidance should be intensified with a view to counselling students on choice of appropriate course of study based on their aptitude, interest and capabilities with a view to enhancing better academic performance.
2. Experts in various field such as medical doctors, engineers, tailors, hair dressers etc should be invited especially at secondary school level to present lectures on various areas of specialization with a view to give insight to students on their future careers.

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