

Personality Traits and Career Maturity among Secondary School Students in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between personality traits and career maturity among secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. The descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for the study. The population comprised ten thousand and ninety three secondary school students. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection of three hundred and fifty students for the study. Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) and Big Five Inventory (BFI) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated and the reliability coefficients of CMI and BFI were .73 and .80 respectively for this study. Data collected were analysed using correlation and multiple regression analyses. Results showed that five personality traits jointly and significantly predicted career maturity of secondary school students. Extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience positively and significantly predicted career maturity of students. However, neuroticism personality trait had a negative and significant predictive capacity on career maturity. It was concluded that personality traits were significant factors influencing career maturity of secondary school students. It was recommended that parents, teachers and school administrators should provide healthy environment that would help students develop appropriate personality traits that would enhance their career maturity.

Keywords: Personality, traits, career, maturity, students.

Introduction

The goals of education are multiple but one of its major goals is to help an individual understand himself and make decisions related to his career. One of the crucial

decisions a young adolescent must make is the selection of an occupation. There are many available career options for adolescents but making wise and realistic choices is a major challenge among them. Many adolescents make career choice based on factors such as skills, interest and values (Atli, 2017). However, it is important that adolescents attain sufficient maturity to make a wise career choice. The greater the maturity, the greater the probability that the individual would make wise, sincere and satisfactory career decisions. Career maturity helps the individual to cope with developmental tasks at different stages of vocational development.

According to Leong and Barak (2001), career maturity is a readiness to deal with the vocational development tasks appropriate to an individual's life stage. As stated by Busacca and Taber (2002), career maturity is a prerequisite for making wise and realistic occupational choices. Therefore, the more mature an individual is, the more he/she would choose an occupation that is realistic and incorporates his or her self-concept. Low career maturity could result to inappropriate career choice (Zunker, 2006). Therefore, for an individual to make career choice, he/she should have gained a certain level of career maturity as a developmental task.

Many studies have shown that most secondary school leavers in Nigeria made very poor vocational decisions because of vocational aspirations. It had been reported that students selected occupations mainly because of the magnitude of initial salary, future financial prospects and job security, positions, glamour and prestige attached to them (Ayodele, 2018). For instance, most young people in Nigeria prefer medicine, engineering, law, banking, architecture, and pharmacy as professions they intend to enter into upon graduation from school without adequate knowledge of what it takes to succeed and achieve in those occupations (Ogunsanwo, 2000).

Babatunde (2017) found that majority of secondary school students in Nigeria had a very low career maturity. Adegoroye, Batunde, Ibimiluyi and Ajagbe (2011) discovered in their study that many Nigerian secondary school students had low career maturity status. Also, Salami (2008) reported the prevalence of low career maturity among secondary school students in Nigeria. This has resulted to the problem of making unrealistic occupational choices and subsequent maladjustment on the job among the people already in the labour market (Ogunsanwo, 2000).

The researchers of this present study observed high level of career immaturity among adolescents in Akoko North West Local Government Area of Ondo State. In addition, many secondary school leavers were observed living with their parents and undecided

about their future careers. Many of these youths appeared not to have adequate knowledge and information about the available career opportunities in Nigeria. Hence, a study on the career maturity of secondary school students in Akoko North West Local Government Area of Ondo State was considered worthwhile.

Researchers have found gender (Ottu & Idowu, 2014), identity status (Salami, 2008), self-concept (Gulbahce, 2007), and socio-economic status (Yon, Joeng & Goh, 2012) as important factors influencing career maturity of adolescents. Very few studies in Nigeria have considered the relationship of career maturity to personality types.

Personality is the intellectual, affective and behavioural differences that distinguish one individual from others (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2010). There are so many models of personality traits. The five personality traits model is preferred in this study because of its consistency in defining personality. In the five-factor model, personality traits are presented as extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to expression dimensions (Costa & McCrae, 1995).

According to Costa and McCrae (1992), extraversion is referred to the social adaptability of a person. It includes traits such as sociability, assertiveness, activity and talkativeness. Persons with extraversion personality traits are sociable (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swan, 2003). Students who are sociable, outgoing, gregarious, warmhearted, expressive and talkative in their approach to career choice can be expected to display higher levels of career decidedness and comfort. This position is consistent with the findings observed by Lounsbury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005). Atli (2017), Kolawole (2017) and Savickas, Briddick and Watkins (2002) found a positive relationship between extroverted personality traits and career maturity.

Neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative affect such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt (Lucas & Donnellan, 2011). Neurotic persons tend to be annoyed, stressed, unsociable, nervous, embarrassed, uncertain, doubtful, and dejected (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Students with a greater negative affect had less knowledge about occupations, training and academics options than their non-neurotic peers (Meldahl & Muchinsky, 1997). Atli (2017) found that neuroticism had a negative relationship with career maturity.

Openness to experience refers to how willing people are to make adjustments in accordance with new ideas or situations. Individuals with openness to experience personality traits are curious, versatile thinkers; they are creative, sensitive to changes,

imaginative, open to innovations, and risk-taking individuals. Students who are more open to new experience may be well disposed to exploring career alternatives and career input from teachers, counsellors, parents and other sources of information (Nauta, 2007). Studies have shown that openness to experience personality traits positively predicted career maturity (Atli, 2017; Ottu & Idowu, 2014).

Agreeableness is a personality trait that manifested itself in individual's behavioural characteristics that are perceived as kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm and considerate. A person who is highly agreeable will exhibit pro-social forms of behaviour. They are more sociable and always desire to please other people and are willing to help those in needs. Agreeableness comprises such attributes as being kind, trusting, considerate and cooperative (McCrae, 1994). Salgado (1997) found that agreeableness is related to success. The co-operative nature of agreeable individuals may lead to success in occupations where teamwork and customer service are relevant (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999). Agreeable students are more prone to trusting information about career choices and listening to the advice of others (Lounsbury, Hutchens & Loveland, 2005). The research carried out by Atli (2017) found a significant positive relationship between agreeableness and career maturity.

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which an individual pushes toward personal goals. It is the personality trait of being careful, orderly, self-discipline, or vigilant. It is the desire to do a task well and to take obligations to others seriously (Lounsbury & Gibson, 2006). Students who are organized, disciplined and structured in their approach to career choice can be expected to show higher levels of career decidedness and comfort to their decision. A more orderly, structured student may be more systematic in choosing a career path and exploring alternative career direction (Lounsbury, Hutchens & Loveland, 2005). Ottu and Idowu (2014) found a significant positive relationship between conscientiousness and career maturity.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how personality types relate with career maturity of secondary school students. In addition, determining the correlation between personality traits and career maturity of secondary school students would help to better serve career counselling services and guidance applications for secondary school students. Goldberg (1993) explicitly recommended in his study that researchers should concentrate on linking personality structure to career development and adjustment. Accordingly, the present study examined the relationship of career maturity to personality traits. Most of the studies on the relationship of career maturity to personality reviewed were carried out in Europe and Asia. Few studies on these

variables have been reported in Nigeria. This is an important gap which this study sought to fill.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of correlation between personality types and career maturity of secondary school students?
2. What is the joint contribution of personality types to career maturity of secondary school students?
3. What is the relative contribution of each personality type to career maturity of secondary school students?

Methodology

The survey type of descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised ten thousand and ninety three (10,093) public secondary school students in Akoko North West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of three hundred and fifty (350) students randomly selected from seven public secondary schools. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to choose three hundred and fifty (350) students (Male = 187, 53.4%; Female = 163, 46.6%) for the study. The participants' ages ranged from 9 – 23 years. The mean age was 15.69 years (S.D. = 1.837).

The Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) developed by Crites and Savickas (1995) and Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John and Srivastava (1999) were used for data collection. The Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) scale was used to measure the attitudes and competency that are important in making decision about one's career. It is a 4 point likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale has 50 items. The psychometric properties of CMI are satisfactory. Internal consistency reliability for the attitude section range from .73 to .75 and .58 to .90 for the competence section. The internal reliability coefficient for Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) was 0.87 in the current study. The Big Five Inventory developed by John and Srivastava, (1999) is a 44 item inventory that assessed the Big Five personality domains of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness. Participants responded by indicating their level of agreeableness to each of the 44 item statements using a four point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 4 (strongly agree). The test retest reliability coefficient for Big Five Inventory (BFI) average was .80 (range .71 - .88). The alpha reliabilities average was .70 (range .63-.84). The two instruments used in the study were validated by experts in Tests and Measurement.

The researchers and one trained research assistant primarily administered the questionnaire in the schools selected for the study. The researchers carefully explained the essence of the questionnaires and how to fill them properly to the students. This was done to prevent cases of invalid responses. Items in the questionnaires were patiently read by the students, sufficient time was given each respondent to patiently fill the questionnaires. Completed copies of the questionnaires were collected on the same day. Fifteen working days were used for administration of the instruments. This approach proved very effective as 100% rate of return of the questionnaires was achieved. Data collected were analyzed with the use of Correlation and Multiple Regression Analyses. The results were held significant at 0.05 level using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

Presentation of findings

Research Question 1: What is the level of correlation between personality types and career maturity of secondary school students?

Table 1: The Inter-correlational Matrix of the Independent Variables (Personality types) and Dependent Variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Extr aver sion	Agreea bleness	Conscient iousness	Neuro ticism	Open ness	Career Maturity
Extraversi on	350	20.40	2.86	1					
Agreeable ness	350	28.31	4.05	.22**	1				
Conscienti ousness	350	28.01	4.39	.26**	.47**	1			
Neuroticis m	350	20.49	2.87	-.02	-.20**	-.15**	1		
Openness	350	28.94	3.63	.30**	.35**	.37**	-.12**	1	
Career Maturity	350	136.93	11.06	.31**	.43**	.61**	-.26**	.42**	1

The inter-correlations between career maturity and personality types are shown in Table 1. The correlation values range between -.14 and .61. The findings revealed that there were significant positive correlations between career maturity and extraversion ($r = .31, p < .05$), agreeableness ($r = .43, p < .05$), conscientiousness ($r = .61, p < .05$), and openness to experience ($r = .42, p < .05$). There was a negative significant relationship between career maturity and neuroticism ($r = -.26, p < .05$).

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of personality types to career maturity of secondary school students?

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on Sample Data

R= .678

R-Squared=.460

Adjusted R-Squared= .452

Standard Error of the Estimate= 8.189

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Source of Variance	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19630.868	5	3926.174	58.550	.000
Residual	23067.486	344	67.059		
Total	42698.354	349			

Table 2 shows that there was linear positive relationship between the predictor variables (personality types) and criterion variable (career maturity) among secondary school students. The R-Squared value of .46 indicated that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience jointly explained 46% of the variance in career maturity. The standard error of 8.189 indicated that on the average students deviated from the true value by 8.189 limits of that measure. The analysis of variance for the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio of 58.55 which was significant at 0.05 level ($F_{(5, 349)} = 58.55, p < .05$). The implication of this result is that the combination of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience significantly predicted career maturity of secondary school students.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of each personality type to career maturity of secondary school students?

Table 3 shows the contribution of each independent variable to career maturity. The highest contribution was observed to come from conscientiousness ($\beta = .445, p < .05$), followed by openness to experience ($\beta = .157, p < .05$), extraversion ($\beta = .120, p < .05$), agreeableness ($\beta = .116, p < .05$), and neuroticism ($\beta = -.144, p < .05$). Neuroticism made negative significant contribution to the dependent variable, in such that as the level of neuroticism in the respondents was increasing, their career maturity status was decreasing.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis on Prediction of Five Factor Personality Traits for Career Maturity

Predicted Variables	Predicting Variables	B	Standard Error	B	T	P
	Constant	84.619	6.005		14.09	.000
Career Maturity	Extraversion	.462	.164	.120	2.825	.005
	Agreeableness	.317	.127	.116	2.508	.013
	Conscientiousness	1.121	.117	.445	9.572	.000
	Neuroticism	-.554	.157	-.144	-3.535	.000
	Openness to Experience	.478	.137	.157	3.504	.001

Discussion of findings

The results of the inter-correlation and regression analyses in the present study revealed that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience jointly and significantly predicted career maturity of secondary school students. A positive correlation was found between extroversion and career maturity. Indeed, career mature attitudes incline individuals to look ahead, take a proactive approach and actively involve themselves in career planning activities. Such persons willingly find and use all available good resources for career planning (Savickas, Briddick & Watkins, 2002). Such ones are fond of making inquiries and obtaining useful information about careers by interacting with others (Atli, 2017). These attributes could be responsible for the significant positive relationship found between extraversion and career maturity. Persons with extraversion personality traits are sociable (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swan, 2003). The outcome of this study agrees with the findings of (Atli, 2017; Kolawole, 2017; Savickas, Briddick & Watkins, 2002).

Another finding of this study is that conscientiousness personality trait positively predicted career maturity. The conscientious individuals usually demonstrate high level of self-control and very active in planning, organizing and carrying our tasks (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Individuals with high score in conscientiousness dimension are very logical, diligent, reliable, focused, responsible, concerned about averting risks and focus more on achieving success in whatever they have planned to do. These characteristics are significant for career maturity as individuals with high scores in career maturity are expected to possess appropriate attitudes and competencies that would help them make realistic career choices. Lounsbury and Gibson (2006) stressed the attributes of conscientiousness as orderliness, self-discipline, deliberation, dependability and competence. Career decidedness are logically related to such

characteristics, students who are organized, disciplined and structured in their approach to career choice can be expected to show higher levels of career decidedness to their decision. A more orderly, structured student may be more systematic in choosing a career path and exploring alternatives in career direction. The finding of the present study is consistent with the outcome of the research carried out by Ottu and Idowu (2014).

This study also found that agreeableness significantly predicted career maturity of secondary school students. Agreeable persons are kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm and considerate. A person who is highly agreeable exhibits pro-social forms of behaviour. They are more sociable and always desire to please other people and are willing to help those in need. Agreeable students are more prone to trusting information about career choices and listening to the advice of others (Lounsbury, Hutchens & Loveland, 2005). Individuals with agreeableness personality traits have polite, affectionate manners and prefer to work in team. Agreeable people are usually sympathetic to others and eager to help, believing that others too are helpful. These characteristics could assist such individuals to get useful career information from others including school guidance counsellors that would help them make appropriate and realistic career decisions. Agreeable students usually receive more attention and support from teachers and counsellors in career planning and development. The research carried out by Atli (2017) found a significant positive relationship between agreeableness and career maturity. Also, the result of this study is in agreement with Lounsbury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005) who found a positive relationship between career decidedness and agreeableness.

Another finding of the study is that openness to experience positively and significantly predicted career maturity. One can explain this finding on the ground that individuals with openness to experience personality trait are active in imagination, willing to question authority, prepared to entertain new ethical and social ideas, curious about inner and outer world and their lives are experientially richer (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Nauta (2007) emphasized that individuals with openness personality traits are more aware of and in need of information on career choices than others. They are curious, versatile thinkers, imaginative and open to innovation. McCrea (1994) reiterated that individuals with openness personality aim to renew, explore and discover things via reading and travelling activities. Career maturity is achieved through reading of books and exploring other channels of getting information to learn more about career. This study agrees with the findings of Atli (2017).

The negative significant relationship found between neuroticism was not surprising because neurotic individuals tend to be annoyed, stressed, unsociable, nervous, embarrassed, uncertain, doubtful, unconfident and dejected. They are emotionally reactive because their ability to deal with difficult situation is weak. In addition, individuals with neurotic personality types lack self-esteem, are introverted and regard change as a threat to them. Meldahl and Muchinsky (1997) found that college students with a greater negative affect had less knowledge about occupations, training and academics options than their non-neurotic peers. These traits could prevent students with neurotic personality from striving diligently to get adequate information about available careers. Hence, their career maturing status would be negatively and significantly affected. This finding of this study agreed with Kolawole (2017) who found a negative significant relationship between neuroticism and career maturity of secondary school students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides additional evidence for the predictability of career maturity by personality types. Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience personality types were positive significant predictors of career maturity of secondary school students while neuroticism personality traits inversely and significantly predicted career maturity of the students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Career planning interventions should be mounted, maintained and sustained in secondary schools for the purpose of facilitating career development of all students.
2. Guidance counsellors should use appropriate guidance programme and psychological interventions to enhance the social skills of students for the purpose of enhancing their career maturity.
3. School counsellors should pay more attention to students with neuroticism personality traits and provide needed help by planning their access to and exploration of career information at their disposal.
4. Schools should promote a good environment that would not only focus on academic curriculum but also aims at overall development of students by encouraging them to participate in numerous activities which may in turn help them improve their career maturity.
5. Career counsellors should promote adequate career information for the students. They should be encouraged to explore various careers and consult widely so as to improve their career maturity.

6. Parents, teachers and school administrators should provide healthy environment both at home and school that would help students develop appropriate personality traits that would enhance their career maturity. This is very important because environment is one of the major factors influencing human personality development.

7. Students should be exposed to career counselling at an early stage in life. This would equip them with appropriate and adequate career information to enhance their career maturity irrespective of their personality types. This would also guide them in making realistic career decisions.

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