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## EXTRAVERSION, NEUROTICISM AND BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE

By

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### Abstract

The study investigated extraversion, neuroticism and bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Delta State. The aim is to examine the nature of the relationship among personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and bullying behaviour among secondary school student in Delta State. The study adopted a correlational research design. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The population of this study is 32,422 Senior Secondary 3 students in 474 government-owned secondary schools in Delta State (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2023). A multistage sampling procedure was used to select a sample size of 1,023. The simple random and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. The Personality Traits Rating Scale was adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by Golberg (1993) and Bullying Behaviour Rating Scale as adapted from the Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire, developed by Uyanne, et al. (2013) were used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated through experts' judgement and factor analysis. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability statistics and Personality Traits Rating Scale yielded a coefficient of 0.704, and Bullying Behaviour Rating Scale = 0.873. The descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), Simple Correlation, correlation statistics were used to answer and test all hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that there was significant relationship between extraversion and bullying behaviour, while there was no relationship between neuroticism and bullying behaviour among secondary school students. Based on these findings it was recommended that School Counsellors/Psychologists should implement targeted interventions focused on reducing extraversion traits among secondary school students to mitigate bullying behaviour. School Counsellors/Psychologists should implement targeted interventions focused on reducing neuroticism traits among secondary school students to mitigate bullying behaviour and being victims, finally, school administrators and counsellors should develop programmes that foster healthy learning environment among students.

### Keywords:

**Bullying Behaviour, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Secondary school, Students**



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## Introduction

Bullying is increasingly being recognized as a major issue of concern among secondary school students in both developed and developing countries. While education tries to bring about a change in behaviour through learning and molding of behaviour of young learners, it is important to stress that certain behaviours create unsafe learning environment and have the potentials to impair learning. Students who feel threatened at school have a harder time academically and have a high probability of dropping out of school (Egbule&Egbule, 2008). Every child and youth have the right to be respected and safe. Bullying is a violation of this basic human right. Bullying is considered a form of physical and psychological violence, it is an intentional conduct meant to cause injury to some people including oneself. However, bullying is said to be encouraged by several factors which might include personality context of extraversion and neuroticism. This implies that there is to examine that relationship between these two personality traits and bullying among secondary school students.

## Statement of the Problem

There is a rapid increase in the rate and number of bullying and violent cases involving bullying in Nigeria and in the world at large which is constantly having negative impacts on students' academic performance, emotional development and personality development. Up to now, not much is known about the magnitude of this phenomena and predictors of bullying behaviour. According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) statistical data of 2019, 40% of all students were bullied at least once a time in their school career.

The impact of bullying on victims can be severe and can have long-term negative consequences on their overall well-being. Victims might often do not disclose their experiences due to feelings of embarrassment, fear, or doubt about whether the school authorities will intervene and provide assistance. Victims may worry about potential negative consequences or retaliation from the bullies if they speak up. Additionally, they might internalize the belief that they somehow deserve the mistreatment, leading to a sense of shame and reluctance to seek help. Victims of bullying often experience long-lasting behavioural and psychological problems. They might suffer from depression, high levels of anxiety, withdrawal and low self-esteem. Victims of bullying are often described as more anxious, cautious, and insecure compared to their peers who have not experienced bullying. They tend to have a negative self-image and may struggle with feelings of low self-esteem. These are serious complications that might lead to poor development and adjustment in life.

It is believed that the attitude of bullying is not just orchestrated, it is motivated by certain personality traits and composition which might make them prone to the environmental reinforcement. If these traits are identified, their impact might be curtailed through various approaches. Therefore 'is there a relationship between extraversion, neuroticism and bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Delta State'.

## Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between Neuroticism (NEU), and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

## Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State

2. There is no significant relationship between Neuroticism (NEU) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State

### Literature Review

Bullying, recognized as one of the most prevalent form of youth violence, has garnered significant attention as a global public health issue and a concern for students (National Centre for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2016). The American Psychological Association [APA] (2020) defines bullying as a type of aggressive behaviour characterized by intentional and repeated actions that cause injury or discomfort to another individual. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2018) sees bullying as the act of frightening or hurting a weaker person; to use power or strength to make somebody to do something. It is a repeated emotional, verbal, or physical attack against other persons or peers who are vulnerable because of size, limited strength, being outnumbered or other forms of imbalance of power. Bullying in the view of Lawrence and Egbule (2021), takes the forms of derogatory comments (verbal), physical assault (physical) and social exclusion (psychological or relational) where the key factor is existence of imbalance of power between the victim and the bully. According to Smith (2014), bullying encompasses various forms of aggressive behaviour, including verbal attacks, physical actions, and relational or social aggression. Verbal attacks involve using derogatory language, name-calling, or making threats towards the victim. Physical behaviours encompass physical assault, such as hitting or kicking, as well as acts of vandalism or damaging the victim's property (Obaro, 2017). Relational or social aggression focuses on harming the victim's social connections and reputation, including social exclusion and spreading rumours about them. Bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviours like verbal harassment, physical assault, or coercion and bullies can target individuals repeatedly based on factors such as race, social economic factors, religion, gender, sexuality, or ability. The "imbalance of power" in bullying situations can stem from social dynamics, where the bully may possess social influence or popularity, as well as from physical dominance or strength.

The reports of the United Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) published in daily post of December 1, 2016 noted that over 50% Nigerian children suffered physical violence in schools; 35.5% girls and 34.1% boys suffer physical violence within the family and immediate environment. Wokoma and Udochukwu (2020) also noted that 78% school children have been victims of bullying on at least one occasion and 71% have lashed out at others at least once. Adeosun et al (2015) reported that more than half (56.8%) of their sample had been victims of bullying in the past month. Bullying is a serious problem that can affect a child's academic or school experience. Rapid increase in the level of bullying has had negative consequences on student's education and on their quality of life, examples include decrease in school attendance, decrease in contact with peers, decrease in academic achievement, increase in physical injury (Obaro, 2013) and increase depression and so on. Bullying can affect everyone - those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying (Wokoma & Udochukwu, 2020). Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, suicidal ideation and suicide. Bullying behaviour have been attributed to several factors, and some of such factors which include extraversion and neuroticism which are components of personality traits.

A valuable theoretical model that has focused mainly on individual predictors of bullying, particularly by investigating the link between personality traits and aggressive behaviour, including bullying, is the Five Factor Model (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015). Personality encompasses the unique and consistent ways in which individuals think, feel, and behave, exhibiting patterns that remain relatively stable across various situations and over time. Traits are distinguishing personal

characteristics that make up an individual's unique personality. It is a complex combination of ingrained behaviours, cognitive processes, and emotional tendencies that have developed as a result of both biological and environmental influences (Corr & Matthews, 2019). Personality is the set of characteristics that underlie a relatively stable pattern of behaviour in response to ideas, people, and objects (Osea, 2023). Personality traits can affect various aspects of a person's life, such as their relationships, career choices, and mental health. For the purpose of this study, the personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism were investigated.

Extraversion is one of the Big Five personality traits and is characterized by traits such as sociability, assertiveness, and a tendency to seek out social interactions (Yao, 2017). According to the FFM, extraversion being one of the five traits of personality, reflects the tendency to be energetic, active, ambitious, and assertive. Extraversion (or extroversion) is a personality trait characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness (Power & Pluess, 2015). Individuals high in extraversion tend to be outgoing, assertive, and sociable and in contrast, individuals low in extraversion tends to be reserved and introverted (Andrei, 2014). The relationship between extraversion and bullying is complex and multifaceted, as the extraverted personality trait can manifest in various ways that influence social dynamics, both positively and negatively. In the context of bullying, extraversion can have different implications. Individuals with high extraversion may possess assertiveness and social dominance. In some cases, this assertiveness may be channeled into positive leadership qualities. However, in negative contexts, individuals high in extraversion might misuse their social influence to engage in bullying behaviours, seeking attention or power in social situations (Miao, 2019). Individuals with lower extraversion may be less likely to actively engage in bullying behaviours, as they might prefer to avoid confrontation or lack the assertiveness associated with bullying. However, they could still be involved in bullying indirectly or as passive participants. While extraversion might provide social benefits, such as a larger social network, it could also make individuals more visible and potentially susceptible to bullying, particularly if they are perceived as different or if their assertiveness is perceived as a threat by others. Individuals with lower extraversion may be less visible targets for bullying, as they may keep a lower profile and avoid situations that draw attention. Secondary school students who score high in extraversion might be more prone to bullying behaviour since they are more likely to seek out social interactions and might use their assertiveness to intimidate others.

According to the FFM, neuroticism, being one of the five traits of personality, involves a generalized predisposition to emotional instability, being people characterized by anxiety, insecurity and fearfulness, and by failure avoidance (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015). Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability and susceptibility to negative emotions, can have a detrimental effect on work-related outcomes (Ross et al., 2013). Neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative emotions like anger, anxiety, or depression in a person. Neuroticism is a personality trait characterized by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability (Power & Pluess, 2015). In an educational context, certain personality traits have been found to impact students' motivation to learn.

In relation to secondary school, the personality trait of neuroticism, a key component of the Big Five taxonomy, might play a significant role in understanding the dynamics of bullying. Neuroticism is often synonymous with emotional instability and is closely associated with heightened negative emotions (Penley & Tomaka, 2012). Individuals with high levels of neuroticism tend to exhibit self-pitying tendencies, anxiety, reduced trust in others, depression, nervousness, and feelings of helplessness and vulnerability (McCrae & John, 1992). The connection between neuroticism and bullying becomes apparent when considering the social expression of this trait. High neuroticism is

linked to poor social skills and a lack of trust in others, making individuals more susceptible to negative social interactions (Judge et al., 2007). Bullying often thrives on exploiting perceived weaknesses, and individuals with high neuroticism may be targeted due to their emotional vulnerabilities and reduced social adeptness. The self-pitying tendencies and anxiety associated with neuroticism can make these individuals more visible targets for bullies seeking to exert power and control. Individuals with high neuroticism may already struggle with self-worth, and bullying can further erode their confidence and exacerbate feelings of helplessness (Erez& Judge, 2011). Secondary school students who score high in neuroticism might be more prone to bullying behaviour since they may be more easily provoked and might respond with aggression when they feel threatened or insecure.

Igundunasse and Anozie (2018) investigated the relationship between attachment style and personality traits to understand how it can be implicated in the act of bullying among teenagers in some secondary schools within Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. The research was an explanatory survey with a correlational research design. The sample comprised of 288 adolescents (155 males and 133 females) using purposive and convenience sampling methods. Participants responded to Adolescence Peer Relations Instrument which was used to measure bullying behaviour, a modified and adapted version of The Big five Personality Inventory (BFI) was used to assess personality traits, and an adapted version of The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was used to assess attachment style. The Pearson product moment correlation and regression statistics were used for data analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that there was no significant relationship among personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and bullying.

Tilindiene et al. (2021) examined the relationship between personality traits (extraversion and neuroticism) and being involved in school bullying (as bully, victim, or bullyvictim) among Lithuanian adolescents. The descriptive survey design adopting the cross sectional approach was used. A sample of 766 adolescents (418 girls and 348 boys; ages between 13- and 15 years old) completed measures of extraversion and neuroticism, as well as measures of bullying in school. Using logistic regression analyses, it was found that higher extraversion was positive predictor of being bullies, but not related with victimization. Higher neuroticism was positive predictor of victimization. The results reveal that both higher extraversion and neuroticism are positive predictors of being bully and victim.

Bayat, et al. (2021) investigated the role of personality traits in predicting cyber-bullying among second year high school students in Zanjan. This was a descriptive correlational study. The statistical population of 15500 high school students in Zanjan. The sample size turned out to be 384 based on Krejcie and Morgan formula. The sample was selected through convenience sampling method using virtual social networks. To collect data, NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (McCrae& Costa, 2004) and CyberBullying/ Victimization Experiences Questionnaire (CBVEQ) (Antoniadou, Kokkinos, &Markos, 2016) were used. Data analysis was performed through Pearson correlation and stepwise multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that the relationship of neuroticism and openness to experience with cyber-bullying and cybervictimization was significant and positive ( $\beta=0.110$ ); and neuroticism could also predict cyber victimization ( $\beta=0.117$ ). In general, the results indicated that when neuroticism and agreeableness increased, cyber-bullying and cyber-victimization also increased.

Pabón-Carrasco, et al. (2020) analysed the relationship between the personality of teenagers aged 14 to 16 years from three education centres located in the province of Seville (Spain) and



bullying in any of its victim or aggressor roles. A multi-centre cross-sectional observational descriptive study was conducted. The sample consisted of 93 students. In order to measure the two main variables, the Bull-S test was used for bullying, and the EPQ-J questionnaire was used for personality traits. A descriptive and correlation analysis was performed between variables. The results showed that statistically significant differences were found between neuroticism ( $p = 0.044$ ;  $\Phi = 0.615$ ) and bullying.

Understanding the motivations behind bullying is crucial in addressing and preventing such behaviours. This understanding allows for more comprehensive strategies and interventions to address bullying in schools and other settings. It underscores the need to address the underlying factors that drive individuals to engage in bullying behaviour, such as issues of self-esteem, social status, and emotional well-being.

### Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The aim is to examine the nature of the relationship among personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism and bullying behaviour among secondary school student in Delta State. The population of this study is 32,422 Senior Secondary 3 students in 474 government-owned secondary schools in Delta State (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2023). A multistage sampling procedure was used to select a sample size of 1,023. The simple random and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. The Personality Traits Rating Scale was adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by Golberg (1993) and Bullying Behaviour Rating Scale as adapted from the Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire, developed by Uyanne, et al. (2013) were used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated through experts' judgement and factor analysis. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient and coefficients were obtained: The Personality Traits Rating Scale yielded an alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.704, and Bullying Behaviour Rating Scale an alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.873. These values indicate that the various scales are highly reliable and could be used for the purpose of the study. The descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), Simple Correlation, correlation statistics were used to answer and test all hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

**Table 1: Correlation and Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard deviation) of Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB).**

Variable	Mean	SD	N	R
Extraversion	5.86	1.84	1,023	.16
Bully behaviour	4.26	12.77		

From the data presented in table 1, it shows the mean, standard deviation and Pearson ( $r$ ) values of the relationship between extraversion and bully behaviour. Extraversion and bully behaviour have mean and standard deviation values of 5.86, 1.84 and 4.26, 12.77, with an  $r$ -value=0.16. This reveals that there is a relationship among extraversion and bully behaviour among secondary school students.

**Research Question 2:**What is the relationship between Neuroticism (NEU), and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State?

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard deviation) of Neuroticism (NEU) and Bullying Behaviour (BB).**

Variable	Mean	SD	N	R
Neuroticism	5.86	1.84	1,023	.01
Bully Behaviour	4.26	12.77		

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation and Pearson (r) values of the relationship between neuroticism and bully behaviour. Neuroticism has a mean and standard deviation values of 5.86, 1.84, bully behaviour with mean and standard deviation values of 4.26, 12.77, with an r-value=0.01. This reveals that there is no relationship among neuroticism and bully behaviour among secondary school students.

### Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:**There is no significant relationship between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State

**Table 3: Regression Analyses of the Relationship Between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB)**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T Sig.
1	(Constant)	32.19	2.26		14.24 .000
	Extraversion	.64	.29	.16	2.19 .03

*N=1,023, p<0.05*

*a. Dependent Variable: Bullying Behaviour*

The result in table 3, shows the beta=.09, t=2.19, p=.03 at alpha level of 0.05. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level 0.05 ( $p<0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State, is rejected. This means that there is significant relationship between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between Neuroticism (NEU) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State

**Table 4: Regression Analyses of the Relationship Between Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB).**

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T
1	(Constant)	32.19	2.26		14.24
	Neuroticism	-.15	.10	-.05	-1.43

*N=1,023, p>0.05*

*b. Dependent Variable: Bullying Behaviour*

The data in table 4, shows the beta=.05, t=-1.43, p=.15 at alpha level of 0.05. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.15 is greater than the alpha level 0.05 ( $p>0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Neuroticism (NEU) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State, is retained. This means that there is no significant relationship between Neuroticism (NEU) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school students in Delta State.

## Discussion of Results

The result in the hypothesis 1 indicated that there was significant relationship between personality traits (PT) of Extraversion (EXTR) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school student in Delta State. This implies that extraversion have significant influence in bully behaviour among secondary school students. This finding sheds light on the complicated dynamics influencing interpersonal behaviours in the educational setting, particularly highlighting the potential impact of individual personality trait of extraversion on the manifestation of bullying behaviours. This finding agrees with the findings of Tilindiene et al. (2021) that both higher extraversion and neuroticism are positive predictors of being bully. But at variance with the result of the study of Igundunasse and Anozie (2018) that there was no significant relationship among personality traits of extraversion and bullying.

Testing hypothesis 2 result revealed that there was no significant relationship between personality traits (PT) of Neuroticism (NEU) and Bullying Behaviour (BB) among secondary school student in Delta State. This implies that neuroticism have significant influence in bully behaviour among secondary school students. The possible reason for this finding is that those high in neuroticism tend to exhibit self-pitying tendencies, anxiety, reduced trust in others, depression, nervousness, and feelings of helplessness and vulnerability and bullying often thrives on exploiting perceived weaknesses, and individuals with high neuroticism, which might make them to be victims of bullying due to their emotional vulnerabilities and reduced social adeptness. This finding agrees with the findings of Pabón-Carrasco, et al. (2020) that neuroticism do not statistically revealed a significant relationship with bullying. But at variance with the result of the study of Tilindiene et al. (2021) that both higher extraversion and neuroticism are positive predictors of bully behaviours.



## **Conclusion**

Personality encompasses the unique and consistent ways in which individuals think, feel, and behave, exhibiting patterns that remain relatively stable across various situations and over time. Traits are distinguishing personal characteristics that make up an individual's unique personality. Therefore investigating the influence of these traits in bully behaviour is a necessary. This study concluded that the personality trait of extraversion is significantly related to bully behaviour among secondary school students in Delta State, while neuroticism does not significantly influence bully behaviour among secondary school students in Delta State. This means that the general assumption of the impact of personality trait on bully behaviour might place certain students in a bad pedestal as not all can receive same intervention approaches.

## **Recommendations**

Arising from the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. School Counsellors/Psychologists should implement targeted interventions focused on reducing extraversion traits among secondary school students to mitigate bullying behaviour.
2. School Counsellors/Psychologists should implement targeted interventions focused on reducing neuroticism traits among secondary school students to mitigate bullying behaviour and being victims.
3. The school administrators and counsellors should develop programmes that foster healthy learning environment among students.

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