



## **Personality and social factors as correlates of shyness among secondary school students in Rivers State of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined personality and social factors as correlate of shyness among secondary school students in Rivers State. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A correlational design was adopted. The population consisted of 24 public secondary schools in Rivers State. 150,000 students in Emohua Local Government Area. The sample size comprised of 300 students in public secondary schools. Two instruments were used to collect data for this study. They include; student's shyness scale (SSS) designed by Akinboye and Self-designed new personality inventory (PIA). Frequencies and percentages were used in answering research questions while Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between personality factors with shyness, gender and shyness among students in Rivers State. The study concluded that the more students develop confidence and possess the ability to adapt to any environment, the more shyness is minimized among students. Furthermore, women tend to assume more of a shy role in same-sex interactions compared to men who likely feel more societal pressure with initial hetero-social interactions. The researcher, therefore, recommended that students should always be given the avenue to socialize and interact with their peer group early in life, so as to enable them increase confidence in themselves, parents with low social economic status; secondary schools administrators should from time to time organize both indoors and outdoors competition for students. This will enable them build confidence in themselves.

**Keywords:** outdoors, students, indoors, confidence

### **Introduction**

Shyness as a layman can mean everything from being timid or shying away from meeting new people, to showing physical signs of shyness such as blushing. The complexity of everyday term is partly due to the fact that most of us can admit being shy at one point or another in our lives. In psychology, the concept of shyness has received a lot of attention from the early 60's and what is meant by the lay term does not necessarily correspond to the empirical view of shyness, which can potentially be challenging for our understanding of it. Simply put, shyness refers to intra individual differences (Asendorff, 2000). This type of shyness is often seen as trait shyness and focuses on inter-individual differences. Thus, there seems to be some confusion regarding how shyness is empirically defined.

### **Shyness is not identical to Embarrassment**

People often use the word embarrassed when they describe a shy person in everyday language, being shy can mean being easily embarrassed in a layman's term (Crozier, 1999) [5]. Embarrassment refers to feeling uncomfortable by a loss of self-esteem and physical reaction such as blushing, mental confusion and so forth. Shyness may be related to shame, but should not be equated with it. Shame can also be thought of as a multifaceted pattern of thoughts, behaviours and bodily reactions similar to that of shyness. Feeling shame, however, include thinking about the self in somewhat different ways than typical "shy" feelings (Crozier, 2017) [4]. People can feel ashamed whether they are with others or

alone whereas shyness typically arises in social situations (Tananey, 1996).

Personality is defined as the unique relatively enduring internal and external aspect of a person's character that influences behaviour in different situations (Schultz and Schultz, 2005) [12]. Personality is used to explain the stability in a person's behaviour over time and across situations (consistency) and the behavioural differences among people reacting to the same situations (distinctiveness). Personality traits are attributed that define distinction in a person's predominating desires and feelings and the typical modes of expressing these characteristics of different persons (Genton, Fridlund & Reisbreg, 2004) [8]. The first aim of the trait approach is to find an appropriate taxonomy for personality attributes. Many investigators have tried to develop such taxonomy by the method of factor analysis. This method has led to the identification of five major dimensions, often called "Big Five" these are extroversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience.

A summary of the big five and constituent trait are presented below:

### **Openness to experience (inventive/curious)**

It is an appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual idea, curiosity and variety of experience. It is an extent to which a person is imaginative or independent and depicts a personal preference for a variety of activities over a strict routine.

**Conscientiousness (Efficient/organized)**

This is a tendency to be organized, dependable, show self-discipline, and act dutifully, aim for achievement and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behaviour.

**Extraversion (Outgoing/Energetic)**

The extraversion personality traits display energy, positive emotion, urgency, assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others and talkativeness.

**Agreeableness (Friendly/compassionate)**

This is the tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic trusting and helpful nature, and whether a person is generally well-tempered or not (Costa & McCrae, 1991)<sup>[3]</sup>.

**Neuroticism (Sensitive/Nervous)**

The tendency to experience emotions easily; such as anger, anxiety, depression and vulnerability. It also refers to the degree of emotional stability and impulse control and it's sometimes referred to by its low pole emotional.

Personality can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his/her cognitions, motivations, and behaviours in various situations (Ryckman, 2016)<sup>[11]</sup>. A number of reviews show different form of socially anxious behaviours, such as shyness, behavioural inhibition, social anxiety, social withdrawal, and reticence are association in young children with two forms of parental training; overcontrol and emotional coldness (Dadds and Barrett, 2001; Masia and Muris, 2016)<sup>[6, 10]</sup>. Theoretically, one idea about over-control is that parents who shield their children from demanding experiences or take control in stressful circumstance might teach them that the world is a dangerous place from which they need protection and over which they have little control.

The problem of the study is that the issue of shyness syndrome has been noticed to be a source of the problem among secondary school age in Nigeria especially in Rivers State. It has been a major concern of psychologists, sociologist, teachers, parents, administrators, students and government. This can be perceived in such a way that the dreams, potentials and further success of these secondary school students depend on this syndrome. Naturally, students grow their relationship with self and other increase. This relationship, not only to provide foundation for later adult relationship, they also buffer students from stress and behavioural problem. Shyness may lead to low grades, anxiety, depression and neurotic performance in physical education students, lowered self-esteem and decreased self-concept.

The experiences and exposure determine how a child can relate to the environment he/she find themselves. Thereby, it becomes a challenge when a student cannot relate with others freely, as well as always dodging from public functions. It is against this backdrop that the researcher looks at the extent social factors and personality relates to shyness among secondary school student in Rivers State.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent do personality factors relate with shyness among students in Rivers State?
2. Is there a relationship between gender and shyness among students in Rivers State?

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. Personality factors do not relate with shyness among students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and shyness among studies in Rivers State.

**Methodology**

**The Design of the Study**

The design for this study is correlational which the researcher used to measure two variables and assess the statistical relationship.

**The Population**

The population for the study comprised all secondary school students in Rivers State. Data gathered from Rivers State Post Primary Schools Board showed that there are 24 government-owned secondary schools in Emohua Local Government with over 150,000 students as at the time of the study.

**Sample and sampling technique**

The sample of this study consisted of 300 students in public secondary schools in Emohua Local Government Area. The sample size was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique. This method gave all the students equal opportunities to be selected for the study.

**Instruments for data collection**

Three instruments were used to collect data for this study. They include; student's shyness scale (SSS) by Akinboye, an adopted new personality inventory (PIA) and student's socioeconomic status.

It was responded to on a four-point Likert scale such as strongly agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. This instrument contains items designed to elicit information on respondent socio-economic status.

**Reliability of the instrument**

The test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to randomly selected 20 respondents, after one week, it was re-administered to the same group of people. The reliability coefficient index obtained 0.81.

**Result**

**Research question one**

To what extent do personality factors relate with shyness among students in Rivers State?

**Table 1:** Shows responses on personality factors & shyness

<b>I</b>	<b>Personality Factors</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	
A	Extraversion	70 (23.3%)	118 (39.3%)	61 (20.3)	51 (17%)	2.69
B	Neuroticism	145 (48.3%)	101 (33.7%)	36 (12%)	18 (6%)	3.24

C	Openness to experience	150 (50%)	85 (28.1%)	50 (16%)	15 (5%)	2.23
D	Conscientiousness	138 (46%)	92 (30.7%)	52 (17%)	18 (6%)	3.17
2	Shyness	118 (39.3%)	70 (23.3%)	51 (17%)	61 (20.3%)	3.11

From the table above, personality factors, neuroticism shows that 145(48.3%) of the respondents shows strongly agreed, 101(33.7%) of them show agreed, 36(12%) shows disagreed while 18(6%) of them shows strongly disagreed. For extraversion, 70(23%) of them strongly agreed, 118(39.3%) of them agreed, 61(20.3%) of them disagreed, while 51(17%) of them strongly disagreed. Openness to experience showed that 150(50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 85(28.1%) of them agreed, 50(16.7%) of them disagreed while 15(5%) of them strongly disagreed. In conscientiousness, 138(46%) of the respondents strongly agree, 92(30.7) of them agreed, 52(17.3%) of them disagreed while 18(6%) of them strongly disagreed. in turns, shyness revealed that 118(39.3) of the respondents strongly agreed, 70(23.3%) of them agreed, 51(17%) of them disagreed while 61(20.3%) of them strongly disagreed.

**Research Question 2**

Is there a relationship between gender and shyness among students in Rivers State?

**Table 2:** The relationship between gender and shyness

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	Sig. (2 Tailed)	R	r <sup>2</sup>	Level of Sig.	Decision
Gender	300	3.13	0.021	0.955	0.91	0.05	Significant
Shyness	300	3.21					

The table above revealed the mean and correlation coefficient on the relationship between gender and shyness. The correlation coefficient of r=0.955 showed a very strong and positive correlation between gender and shyness. The coefficient of determination r<sup>2</sup>=0.91 showed that 91% change in shyness among students can be explained by gender.

**Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** Personality factors does not relate with shyness among students in Rivers States.

Relationship between personality and shyness among students in Rivers State.

	Personality Factors	Shyness
Correlation coefficient	1.000	.851**
Personality factors Sig. (2-tailed) N	300	.000 300
Spearman' rho	.851**	1.000
Correlation coefficient	.000	300
Shyness Sig. (2-tailed) N	300	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result above, the correlation coefficient (r=0.851) between personality factors and shyness is strong and positive. The coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>=0.72) indicates that 72% of shyness could be explained by personality factors. The significant value of 0.000 (p<0.05) reveals a significant relationship.

**Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected.**

**Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between gender and shyness among students in Rivers State.

Relationship between gender and shyness among students in

Rivers State.

	Gender	Shyness
Correlation coefficient	1.000	.955**
Gender Sig. (2-tailed) N	300	.000 300
Spearman' rho	.955**	1.000
Correlation coefficient	.000	300
Shyness Sig. (2-tailed) N	300	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of the table above, the correlation coefficient (r=0.955) between gender and shyness is strong and positive. The coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>=0.91) shows that 91% of shyness could be explained by gender. The significant value of 0.000 (p<0.05) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between gender and shyness among students in Rivers State.

**Discussion**

**Relationship between personality factors and shyness among students**

Personality factors relate to shyness to a very high extent. Neuroticism was most related to shyness among students in Rivers State. Eysenk (1990) examined shyness, introversion or invention. They explained that in a hierarchical model of personality trait, shyness is primary factor. Whereas introversion and neuroticism are higher-order factor. The findings revealed that shyness items correlated with equal measures of introversion and neuroticism. Buss (2002) [2] carried out a study to explore the relationship between personality factor of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness with shyness. It makes use of sample size which consisted of 336 high school students from three Croatians towns, 124 male (37%) and 212 female (63%) participants. Age varied from 16 to 18 years. It was revealed that the male samples, using different genders that shyness is significantly correlated with neuroticism and extraversion. Female samples shyness is significantly correlated with neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness. This study is related to the present research as well as its findings, only that the present study considered all the personality factors with shyness at once. The implication of the findings in that the more students develops confidence and possesses the ability to adapt to any environments the more shyness is minimized among students.

**Relationship between gender and shyness among students**

From this study, the respondents agreed that the correlation coefficient between gender and shyness was very strong and positive. The coefficient of determination showed that over 90% changes in shyness among student can be explained by gender.

Leitenberg (2016) [9] showed that participants engage in an unstructured conversation, recorded on videotape, and then complete a self-report questionnaire. Participants viewed their own videotape and completed thought-feeling measure about the conversation and the extent to which each

participant enjoyed the interaction.

Another study by Crozier (2017) [5] examined gender differences in shyness with 82 male and 82 female college students. Each student was required to complete several measures on shyness and desire for social ability. To control temperament, emotions, and interpersonal stressors. Gender displayed a greater degree of psychological reactions, negative cognitions, and level of anxiety and personal distress. A negative correlation was found between the degree of shyness and acceptance coping, which was defined as the ability to accept present reality and trusting in a higher power.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings, the more students develop confidence and possess the ability to adapt to any environment the more shyness is minimized when there is stability in the personal character of an individual which can influence their behaviour positively, shyness will be minimized. Also, women tend to assume more of a shy role in same-sex interactions compared to men, who likely feel more societal pressure with initial hetero-social interactions. The higher a male student is, the less frequently he speaks and the less amount of time he spent speaking. Shy men tend not to initiate and tended to discourage eye contact with their partners.

### Recommendations

#### Based on the findings, recommendations were made thus

- Students should always be given the avenue to socialize and interact with their peer group early in life, so as to enable them increase confidence in themselves.
- Secondary school administrators should from time to time organize both indoors and outdoors competitions for students. This will enable them to build confidence in themselves.

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