
PERSONALITY TRAITS AS PREDICTORS OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated personality traits as predictors of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The study was guided by five research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses. The design for the study was correlational research design. The population of the study comprises all the 197,428 senior secondary school students enrolled in the 367 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 398 respondents as determined by Taro Yamane Formula. In the distribution of the sample size multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample size. Two instruments were used for the study. They are personality Traits Scale (PTS) and Imposter Syndrome Scale (ISS). Research instruments were validated by three experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation. The construct validity was also done using factor analysis. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, Cronbach alpha technique was used for all the instruments. The alpha coefficients of 0.78 and 0.87 for personality traits and imposter syndrome respectively. Research questions were answered using simple regression while hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression. Results revealed that personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. It was recommended among others that School counsellors should develop and implement personality-awareness and self-development programmes for secondary school students to help them understand their individual personality characteristics, develop healthy self-

perceptions, and manage personality-related tendencies that may contribute to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt and imposter syndrome.

KEYWORDS: Personality traits, extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and imposter syndrome.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary school education represents a critical developmental stage during which adolescents undergo significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this period, students begin to develop stronger perceptions of their identity, competence, and self-worth while simultaneously facing increasing academic expectations and social pressures. In Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State, secondary school students are expected to excel academically amidst intense competition, parental expectations, peer comparison, and preparation for external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO) examinations. These pressures may contribute to feelings of inadequacy and increase the likelihood of developing imposter syndrome.

The impostor syndrome, often called the impostor phenomenon, impostor experience, impostorism, or fraud syndrome, is a psychological state in which students doubt their ability to complete a task even when they have evidence to the contrary. Impostor syndrome can cause anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem in those who feel inauthentic and continually worry that they are inadequate (Ikbaal, 2018). Even though imposter syndrome is not a recognized mental health disorder, it severely affects students' well-being. Impostor syndrome can cause high achievers to mistrust their skills, fail to acknowledge their accomplishments, and worry about being exposed as fraudsters.

Imposter syndrome, marked by intense self-doubt and fear of being exposed as a fraud despite success, significantly impacts Nigerian students, including those in Rivers State. It is linked to high anxiety, perfectionism, and poor academic performance, as students often avoid seeking help. This psychological distress is frequently triggered by high-stakes testing, social pressures, and feelings of inadequacy. Imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State is driven by intense academic pressure, high familial expectations, and fear of failure. Some students may feel that they don't fit in or belong in their various schools because they believe that everyone else is the genuine deal and they are the fake because they believe that everyone else is more capable, responsible, or hardworking than

they are, based on that imposter syndrome may set in. Imposter syndrome often leads students to doubt their academic capabilities, even when performing well, which can further decrease self-esteem, creating a negative feedback loop.

Imposter syndrome (IS) is a behavioural psychological phenomenon described as self-doubt of intellect, skills, or accomplishments among high-achieving individuals (Martin, 2023). Besides, examining the connection between imposter syndrome and academic attainment in this field advances knowledge of imposter syndrome in learning environments. It offers awareness to mental health, education, and policy experts beyond. Successfully addressing imposter syndrome can result in more encouraging learning environments, eventually improving student performance and producing healthier, more self-assured future teachers. The academic world has given impostor syndrome, which is often called the impostor phenomenon, a great deal of attention, especially in light of its effect on students' academic performance.

Imposter syndrome is characterized by a person's persistent fear of being revealed as phoney, even in the face of apparent success and accomplishments (Bravata et al., 2020). These students frequently blame other variables, including good fortune or timing, for their successes rather than their abilities and efforts. However, this definition includes a wider range of students, including males and different ethnic groups, acknowledging that impostor syndrome does not target a certain group of students.

Similarly, impostor syndrome has been characterized by McElwee and Yurak, (2020) as a psychological pattern in which students feel self-doubt about their achievements and worry about being revealed as fakes. Impostor syndrome has several different origins, most of which are the result of a confluence of social forces, familial expectations, individual personality factors and finding oneself where he or she doesn't expect. Higher incidences of impostor syndrome have been highly correlated with personality characteristics such as neuroticism and perfectionism (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Moreover, impostor syndrome development can be strongly influenced by familial expectations, particularly when such expectations and pressures come from high parental expectations (Lane, 2015).

Holmes et al. (2019) described imposter syndrome as the inner experience of intellectual phoniness in high-achieving women who seemed to be unable to internalize their experiences of success. It is the experience of students who attribute their success to luck, while feeling that they are truly incompetent, with the consequent anxiety that others may discover their weaknesses despite their objectively outstanding accomplishments. Therefore, imposter

syndrome is a set of feelings of fear, doubt, apprehension and a defected cycle of post-success anxiety, which involves successful young students. This psychological deficit can be an obstacle to progress and use of their hidden talents.

The characteristic features of students who experience imposter syndrome include: ability to fulfill academic or work requirements despite their self-perceived fraudulence, they attribute their success to external sources such as luck, they experience passing satisfaction, display low level of confidence in their own competence, and cannot acknowledge the evidence of their high ability, they fear that they will not be able to fulfill the expectations of others at some future time and the demands they make on themselves are extra-ordinarily high, to the point where they sometimes expect perfection (Ferrari & Olivette, 2020). Imposter syndrome is a personality construct that affects both genders, it occur in students with different occupations such as college students, academics, medical students, marketing managers, physician assistants, and physicians, they exhibit failure avoidance behaviours such as lack of self-worth protection, self-handicapping, negligence, impostor fears and defensive pessimism (Want & Klietman, 2025).

Among secondary school students, this phenomenon has gained increasing attention, as it can significantly affect academic performance, motivation, and mental well-being. Students experiencing impostor syndrome often attribute their achievements to external factors such as luck, timing, or help from others, rather than recognizing their own abilities and hard work. This misattribution can lead to chronic self-doubt, anxiety, and decreased academic engagement. Several psychological factors contribute to the development of impostor syndrome in students.

Additionally, past experiences of criticism, failure, or lack of positive reinforcement can reinforce self-doubt, creating a cycle of internalized inadequacy. The significance of studying impostor syndrome among students lies in its widespread prevalence and profound impact on mental health. Research indicates that students with impostor tendencies are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017). These psychological challenges can limit academic potential, hinder personal development, and reduce overall life satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the psychological roots of impostor syndrome is crucial for educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals seeking to design interventions that foster self-efficacy, resilience, and healthy coping strategies.

In contemporary academic settings, secondary school students face a multitude of pressures stemming from high expectations, competitive environments, and constant evaluation. These pressures often exacerbate feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy, particularly among high-

achieving students who nonetheless feel they do not deserve their success. Impostor syndrome, also known as impostor phenomenon, manifests as a persistent belief that one's achievements are undeserved and that eventual failure or exposure is inevitable. Despite clear evidence of competence, students experiencing impostor syndrome struggle to internalize their accomplishments, attributing success to external factors such as luck, timing, or the assistance of others. Hutchins and Rainbolt (2017) indicates that impostor syndrome is not limited to underperforming students; it affects high-achievers across disciplines and educational levels. The phenomenon has been linked to negative emotional and cognitive outcomes, including chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Impostor feelings can influence academic behaviors such as procrastination, over-preparation, and avoidance of challenging tasks, ultimately affecting long-term educational outcomes and career development.

Several psychological mechanisms underlie the development of impostor syndrome. Perfectionism drives secondary school students to set excessively high standards and perceive even minor mistakes as evidence of incompetence. Social comparison, amplified by peer competition and the visibility of achievements through digital platforms and social media, intensifies feelings of inadequacy. Family expectations and culturally embedded values regarding success can further compound self-doubt, particularly when academic performance is closely tied to familial approval or future opportunities. Additionally, experiences of early criticism, lack of positive feedback, or under recognition of achievements can reinforce impostor beliefs, creating cycles of self-criticism and diminished self-efficacy. Addressing impostor syndrome in secondary school students is critical not only for psychological well-being but also for educational attainment and personal growth. This study, therefore, will seeks to explore the how personality traits predicts impostor syndrome among secondary school students in rivers state.

Personality traits are our persistent psychological attributes that sculpts how an individual comprehends and acknowledges his/her environments. The Big Five Factor model of personality includes Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. It is comprehensive enough to help inquire into different individual responses. Students who are high in neuroticism are usually volatile with their emotions, get easily frustrated and upset, always stay alert for any danger and they always doubt their actions – maybe more susceptible to feeling like an impostor which might contribute to silencing the self. According to Goldberg as cited by Ashton and Lee (2023) personality traits are organized into five dimensions, also referred to as the Big Five: openness to experience,

conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These traits hold significant predictive value for various important life outcomes such as job performance, health, morality, academic achievement, criminal behavior, and imposter syndrome (Buckley, 2017). Openness to experience reflects the extent to which an individual embraces change, intellectual stimulation, diversity, and novel cultural encounters. Individuals with higher levels of openness are often associated with an appreciation for aesthetics, imagination, and abstract ideas. Conscientiousness indicates the degree to which an individual adheres to standards, societal norms, and conventional rules. Individuals with higher conscientiousness tend to exhibit traits such as organization, striving for achievement, responsibility, self-discipline, and careful deliberation (Goldberg, 2019).

Extraversion indicates the degree to which individuals direct their attention and interests outward, particularly towards social interactions and stimuli. Those with higher levels of extraversion typically exhibit characteristics such as sociability, assertiveness, warmth, activity, enthusiasm for excitement, and generally maintain a positive mood. Agreeableness refers to the extent of an individual's inclination towards fostering harmonious and pleasant relationships with others. Individuals with higher agreeableness tend to demonstrate traits such as trustworthiness, honesty, altruism, cooperation, kindness, empathy, and humility. Neuroticism, also known as emotional instability, gauges an individual's perception of the world as threatening and beyond their control. Elevated levels of neuroticism are often linked with traits like anxiety, emotional distress, hostility, self-consciousness, vulnerability, and impulsiveness. It's essential to recognize that the Big Five personality traits are inherent characteristics that influence an individual's overall approach to and interaction with the social environment, encompassing imposter syndrome and other facets. These traits delineate an individual's capacity to navigate social challenges through communication, cooperation, interaction, trust, assertiveness, and emotional resilience (Goldberg, 2019).

Based on his three-factor model of personality, Eysenck as cited in Layton–thool (2023) has argued that extraversion is central to explaining individual differences in behaviour, including many facets of short-term mating. For example, extraverts are more likely than introverts to endorse favorable attitudes about imposter syndrome and develop imposter syndrome than introverts do. Some investigators have found that neuroticism correlates with facets of short-term mating (Layton–thool, 2023). The personality trait of neuroticism is rooted in negative emotionality, including anxiety, depression, and anger. Neuroticism has been associated with several features of problematic, including imposter syndrome.

Imposter syndrome has increasingly become a psychological concern among students, particularly adolescents who may experience persistent feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy despite evidence of their academic abilities and achievements. Students experiencing imposter syndrome may attribute their success to luck, external circumstances, or other factors rather than their personal abilities. Consequently, they may live with a persistent fear of failure or of being exposed as intellectually inadequate, even when they demonstrate satisfactory academic performance. Students in Rivers State face intense academic competition, leading to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and stress, which are hallmark symptoms of imposter syndrome. Authoritarian, neglectful, or overly demanding parenting styles, which are common, are known to negatively affect a child's self-esteem and contribute to the development of perfectionism. Certain personality traits, particularly high neuroticism (emotional instability) and low self-esteem, are believed to exacerbate feelings of being a fraud. There is a lack of empirical research examining the combination of these factors (personality traits) on imposter syndrome among secondary school adolescents in this specific region. The study aims to fill this gap by identifying how these factors predict the development of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate personality traits as predictors of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. Specifically, the study achieved the following objectives:

1. Examine the extent to which extraversion personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. Find out the extent to which neuroticism personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. Examine the extent to which openness to experience personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
4. Establish the extent to which agreeableness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
5. Establish the extent to which conscientiousness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does extraversion personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does neuroticism personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does openness to experience personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?
4. To what extent does agreeableness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?
5. To what extent does conscientiousness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Extraversion personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. Neuroticism personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. Openness to experience personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
4. Agreeableness personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.
5. Conscientiousness personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The design for this study was correlational research design. Kpolovie (2010) defined correlational design as an investigation of the degree and direction or nature of relationship that exist between a dependent variable (criterion variable) and one or more independent variables (predictor variables). The population of the study comprised all 197,428 senior secondary school students enrolled in the 367 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The population figure was obtained from the Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board (2026). The sample size for the study was 398

students. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for selecting participants for the study. Data for the study were collected using two instruments, namely: Big Five Personality Traits Scale (BFPTS)) and Impostor Syndrome Scale (ISS).

To establish the face validity of the instruments, two copies of each instrument were submitted to the researcher's supervisor and two academic staff in the field of Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The coefficients obtained were 0.78 and 0.87, respectively. These coefficients indicate that the instruments possessed acceptable internal consistency reliability for the study. The researcher administered the questionnaire personally with the assistance of five research assistants. Research questions were answered using simple regression while hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Research Question: 1: To what extent does extraversion personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple regression analysis of the extent to which extraversion personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Adj Error of the estimate
.080a	.006	.004	5.90379

Table 1 Shows that the extent to which extraversion personality trait predict imposter syndrome yielded an R value of 0.080 this is, alongside a coefficient of determination R² of 0.006 and an adjusted coefficient of determination an (adj R²) of 0.004, it is deduced that 0.6% of the changes in imposter syndrome are dependent on the changes of the effect of extraversion personality trait. On the other hand, the remaining, 99.4% of the changes in imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State are attributable to factors outside extraversion personality trait. This result suggest that extraversion personality trait alone is a weak predictor of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: Extraversion personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 2: T-test associated with simple regression on the extent to which extraversion personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	22.609	1.615		14.001	.000
Extraversion personality trait	-.145	.087	-.080	-1.667	.096

The result in table 2 showed that the beta of $-.080$ and a t-value of -1.667 was obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.096 which is higher than the alpha of 0.05 . This result therefore indicates that extraversion personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

Research Question 2: To what extent does neuroticism personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 3. Simple regression analysis of the extent to which neuroticism personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

R	R ²	Adj.R ²	Std error of the estimate
.169a	.028	.026	5.83803

In response to research question two, the result showed a simple regression coefficient obtained for the extent to which neuroticism personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State yielded an R value of 0.169 , while the coefficient of determination, R^2 was 0.028 , and the adjusted R^2 was 0.026 . Based on R^2 value, it therefore indicates that 2.8% of the variations in imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State can be attributed and explained by their neuroticism personality trait while the remaining 97.2% can be attributed to other factors. This result suggest that neuroticism personality trait alone is a weak predictor of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: Neuroticism personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 4: T-test associated with simple regression on the extent to which neuroticism personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	15.703	1.231		12.759	.000
Neuroticism personality trait	.253	.071	.169	3.551	.000

The result in table 4 showed that the beta of .169 and a t-value of 3.551 was obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that neuroticism personality trait significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Research Question 3: To what extent does openness to experience personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 5: Simple regression analysis of the extent to which openness to experience personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.138a	.019	.017	5.86647

From the result presented in Table 5 on the extent to which openness to experience personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. An R-value of 0.138 was obtained with an R² value of 0.019 and an adjusted R² value of 0.017. From the R² it can be deduced that openness to experience personality trait accounted for about 1.9% of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. This result suggests that openness to experience personality trait alone is a weak predictor of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: Openness to experience personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 6: T-test associated with simple regression on the extent to which openness to experience personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	21.719	1.085		20.009	.000
	Openness to experience personality trait	-.117	.069	-.081	-1.681	.094

The result in table 6 showed that the beta of -.081 and a t-value of -1.681 was obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of

0.094 which is higher than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that openness to experience personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

Research Question 4: To what extent does agreeableness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 7: Simple regression analysis showing extent to which agreeableness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Adj Error of the estimate
.100a	.010	.008	5.89332

Data presentation on the extent to which agreeableness personality trait predict imposter syndrome showed that an R value of 0.100 was gotten with an R² value of 0.010 and an adjusted R² of 0.008. On the basis of the R² value obtained, it can be seen that agreeableness personality trait accounted for 1.0% variation in the imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. This result suggest that agreeableness personality trait alone is a weak predictor of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 4: Agreeableness personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 8: T-test associated with simple regression on the extent to which agreeableness personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	17.434	1.247		13.985	.000
Agreeableness personality trait	.156	.075	.100	2.079	.038

The result in table 8 showed that the beta value of .100 and a t-value of 2.070 was obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.038 which is less than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that agreeableness personality trait significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Research Question 5: To what extent does conscientiousness personality trait predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 9: Simple regression analysis showing the extent to which conscientiousness personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Adj Error of the estimate
.149a	.022	.020	5.85704

Data presentation on the extent to which conscientiousness personality trait predict imposter syndrome showed that an R value of 0.149 was gotten with an R² value of 0.022 and an adjusted R² of 0.020. On the basis of the R² value obtained, it can be seen that on conscientiousness personality trait accounted for 2.2% variation in the imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. This result suggest that conscientiousness personality trait alone is a weak predictor of imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 5: Conscientiousness personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 10: T-test associated with simple regression on the extent to which conscientiousness personality trait predict imposter syndrome.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	23.981	1.320		18.169	.000
Conscientiousness personality trait	-.257	.082	-.149	-3.120	.002

The result in table 10 showed that the beta of -.149 and a t-value of -3.120 was obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance. Based on the sig-value of 0.002 which is less than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that conscientiousness personality trait significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Extraversion Personality Trait and Imposter Syndrome

The result of research question two and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 4.4, revealed that extraversion personality trait does not significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The prediction was not statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. This result implied that students who scored highly on the section of extraversion personality trait are prone to score high in their imposter

syndrome. However, the reported positive relationship indicates that all those who are high in extraversion personality trait also scored high in their imposter syndrome. This implies that being outgoing, sociable, energetic, and assertive does not necessarily determine whether a student experiences feelings of intellectual fraudulence, self-doubt, or fears of being exposed as incompetent. The result suggests that students who exhibit high levels of extraversion are not significantly different from their less extraverted counterparts in terms of experiencing imposter syndrome.

One possible explanation for this finding is that imposter syndrome is more strongly associated with internal cognitive and emotional processes such as self-esteem, perfectionism, self-efficacy, and anxiety rather than outward social characteristics. While extraverted students may be more comfortable interacting with peers and participating in social activities, these social tendencies may not directly influence their private beliefs about competence and achievement. Consequently, both extraverted and introverted students may experience similar levels of self-doubt regarding their academic abilities. This result is similar to that obtained by Tarundeep (2022) who examined the prediction between Impostor Phenomenon and personality traits and gender difference among undergraduate students. From the result of the study, it was found that there was a positive significant relationship between Impostor Phenomenon and neuroticism (0.344). Other personality traits openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness (0.091, -0.092, -0.029 and 0.086 respectively) did not have a significant relationship with Impostor Phenomenon.

Neuroticism Personality Trait and Imposter Syndrome

The result of research question three and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 4.6, revealed that neuroticism personality trait significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The prediction was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. The meaning of this result is that individual or students who are high in neuroticism personality trait will find it difficult in engaging to social activities. On the basis of the instrument administered, students who reported high values on the section neuroticism personality trait are most likely to score low on their imposter syndrome as tested using the instrument for the study. Conversely those who score high on the section of neuroticism personality trait are most likely to score low in their imposter syndrome. This indicates that students who exhibit higher levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience imposter syndrome. Neuroticism is characterized by emotional instability, excessive worry, anxiety,

fear of failure, self-consciousness, and vulnerability to stress. These characteristics predispose students to question their abilities, underestimate their achievements, and fear being exposed as incompetent despite evidence of success.

The finding can be explained by the fact that individuals high in neuroticism tend to interpret academic challenges and everyday experiences negatively. Such students are more likely to dwell on their mistakes, magnify their weaknesses, and discount their accomplishments. Consequently, even when they perform well academically, they may attribute their success to luck, external assistance, or chance rather than their own competence. These negative thinking patterns are central features of imposter syndrome.

The result also suggests that emotionally unstable students may be more sensitive to academic pressure, peer comparison, parental expectations, and fear of evaluation. In the competitive academic environment of secondary schools in Rivers State, students with high neurotic tendencies may constantly worry about not meeting expectations, leading to persistent feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. This emotional vulnerability increases the likelihood of developing imposter syndrome.

In the study conducted by John (2024) who investigated the prevalence of imposter syndrome and its correlation with personality traits among medical, dental and allied health undergraduate students in urban Bengaluru, India. Multivariate analyses further revealed a weak positive correlation between imposter syndrome and the personality trait of openness ($P = 0.252$). Certain personality traits may predispose individuals to experience Imposter Syndrome, underscoring the need for targeted interventions and systemic changes within medical, dental, and allied health education institutions to address this issue effectively. The findings of this result are a further confirmation of that obtained by Taylor (2025) who determined whether imposter syndrome is also present in social settings. Imposter syndrome has been linked to stable qualities such as an external locus of control, gender, and race. The results of the survey showed that feelings of imposter syndrome were significantly positively correlated among academic, professional, and social settings, and mean levels of imposter syndrome did not differ within participants. These findings suggest that people experience imposter syndrome in social settings along with academic and professional settings and that imposter syndrome should be treated as a stable personality trait rather than a situational experience.

Openness to Experience Personality Trait and Imposter Syndrome

The result of research question four and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 4.8, it was revealed that there was a significant extent to which openness to experience personality trait and imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The prediction was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. This result implied that students who scored highly on the section of openness to experience personality trait are prone to score moderately in their imposter syndrome. However, the reported positive high relationship indicates that all those who are motivation also scored high in their imposter syndrome. This result is not surprising to the researcher because low motivation can be a common symptom of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. You can practice self-help and self-care as much as you can, but you may find that seeking professional help is more helpful for your emotions. Online therapy is beneficial, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This result is dissimilar to that obtained by Taylor (2025) who determined whether imposter syndrome is also present in social settings. Imposter syndrome has been linked to stable qualities such as an external locus of control, gender, and race. The results of the survey showed that feelings of imposter syndrome were significantly positively correlated among academic, professional, and social settings, and mean levels of imposter syndrome did not differ within participants. These findings suggest that people experience imposter syndrome in social settings along with academic and professional settings and that imposter syndrome should be treated as a stable personality trait rather than a situational experience.

Agreeableness Personality Trait and Imposter Syndrome

The result of research question five and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 4.10, it was revealed that agreeableness personality trait significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The prediction was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. The meaning of this result is that individual or students who have high agreeableness personality trait will have high imposter syndrome. Conversely those who score low on the section of agreeableness personality trait are most likely to score high in their imposter syndrome. This indicates that the level of agreeableness exhibited by students has a significant influence on the likelihood of experiencing imposter syndrome. Agreeableness is characterized by traits such as kindness, cooperativeness, trust, empathy, modesty, and a willingness to maintain harmonious relationships with others. While these qualities are generally considered positive, they may also make students more susceptible to excessive self-evaluation, fear of disappointing others, and persistent self-doubt, which are

hallmarks of imposter syndrome.

This finding may be explained by the tendency of highly agreeable students to place great importance on the opinions and approval of others. Such students often strive to meet the expectations of parents, teachers, and peers and may become overly concerned about making mistakes or appearing incompetent. As a result, they may attribute their academic achievements to external factors such as luck or assistance from others rather than recognizing their own abilities. This pattern of thinking reinforces feelings of inadequacy and contributes to the development of imposter syndrome. The findings of this result are a further confirmation of that obtained by Eswari (2025) who investigated the prediction between personality traits and self-esteem among university students in Malaysia. Results show a significant positive correlation of self-esteem and personality. Simultaneous multiple regression of self-esteem on the personality traits sub scales, revealed that the extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness were significant positive predictor and neuroticism versus emotion stability was significant negative predictor of the self-esteem. The results of analysis t-test indicated gender difference in male and females in two personality traits which are conscientiousness and neuroticism while no significant gender difference extraversion, agreeableness and openness traits.

This result is also similar to that obtained by Akuse (2019) who investigated self-concept and personality traits as correlates of secondary school students' learned helplessness in mathematics. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. Findings revealed that the prediction between self-concept and students' learned helplessness in mathematics is statistically significant; the prediction between personality traits and students' learned helplessness in mathematics is statistically significant; and the prediction among self-concept personality traits, and students' learned helplessness in mathematics is statistically significant.

Conscientiousness Personality Trait and Imposter Syndrome

The result of research question six and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 4.12, it was revealed that conscientiousness personality trait significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. The prediction was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. The extent to which conscientiousness personality trait and career imposter syndrome means that as score on conscientiousness personality trait increases, there was corresponding increase in imposter syndrome scores. This implies that conscientiousness

has a significant influence on the development of imposter syndrome among secondary school students. Conscientiousness is characterized by traits such as diligence, organization, responsibility, self-discipline, achievement orientation, and carefulness. Although these qualities generally promote academic success, they may also contribute to imposter feelings when accompanied by perfectionistic tendencies and unrealistically high personal standards.

The finding may be explained by the fact that highly conscientious students often strive for excellence and place considerable importance on achieving outstanding academic performance. Such students may constantly evaluate their performance against exceptionally high standards and become overly concerned about making mistakes or failing to meet expectations. Consequently, even after achieving success, they may believe that they are not truly competent and may attribute their accomplishments to luck, hard work alone, or external support rather than to their own ability. These thought patterns are characteristic of imposter syndrome.

Furthermore, conscientious students tend to be highly responsible and committed to their academic tasks. While these qualities contribute positively to learning outcomes, they may also increase anxiety about maintaining consistent success. In the competitive educational environment of secondary schools in Rivers State, conscientious students may fear that any mistake or decline in performance will expose them as less capable than others perceive them to be. This fear of failure and excessive self-monitoring may strengthen imposter feelings despite objective evidence of competence. The findings of this result are a further confirmation of that obtained by Chun (2020) who examined the impact of five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and intellect/imagination) on the perception of students towards online learning. The results showed that two personality traits (conscientiousness and intellect/imagination) had a larger positive impact on students' perceptions towards online learning, whereas neuroticism had significantly negative effects on participants of online courses. These results provide evidence that students with different personality traits have different preferences for and experiences in online courses.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that personality traits, namely extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness, significantly predict imposter syndrome among secondary school students in Rivers State. This implies that individual differences in personality are important in understanding students' experiences of self-doubt, perceived

inadequacy and difficulty internalising their achievements. Therefore personality-sensitive counselling and psychological support should be incorporated into school programmes to help students develop healthy self-perceptions and coping strategies. It was recommended that school counsellors should develop and implement personality-awareness and self-development programmes for secondary school students to help them understand their individual personality characteristics, develop healthy self-perceptions, and manage personality-related tendencies that may contribute to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt and imposter syndrome.