

The role of personality and social connection for the freshmen adjustment

[Education](#), [University](#)



Being socially connected is essential in the stressful process of university adjustment as a first-year student. Social connectedness refers to one's belief of being cared for by people around. Students who are capable of establishing new relationships, adjust better. However, majority who lack a sense of social connectedness struggle to do so and consequently feel lonely, thus end up dropping out. Therefore, it is hypothesised that low social connectedness is negatively linked to student stress. Stress in this case, means how well a first-year student is able to cope in adjusting to the university environment.

It has also been hypothesised that personality traits like extroversion can be positively linked to first-year students' stress. According to Hans Eysenck's theory (1916-1997), extroverts tend to be more talkative, energetic and outgoing while introverts tend to be more reserved, quiet and shy. Studies have also shown that extroverts tend to be in good moods compared to introverts. As a result, extroverted students tend to socialise better and therefore experience lesser stress than introverts.

This study aims to determine how social connectedness and extroversion predict stress experienced by incoming first-year student's during adjustment in university. This social issue can lead students to question their self-esteem and thus, place them in a vulnerable position and possibly even jeopardise their studies. Adequate research has not been done on this issue. Therefore it is crucial for more study to be done in this area so that universities can take more measures in organising clubs and workshops to

encourage inclusiveness for all students. This can help them develop a sense of belonging and indirectly help them strive for their best academically.

In 2008, Duru attempted to find the significance of social connectedness in determining loneliness. 404 undergraduates were asked to participate in a demographic questionnaire pertaining to how they feel. Results revealed that socially connected students felt less lonely which was in line with the hypothesis. It was inferred that newcomers (first-year students) have an apparent need to feel included and valued by the rest. When these needs are not met, they feel unworthy and struggle to adapt. These findings show that low social connectedness is negatively related to student stress because it promotes loneliness.

Another study was conducted to see if personality correlated with intervention against cyberbullying among undergraduates. 37 undergraduate students were asked to participate in a scripted discussion with 2 confederates who were asked to pose as bully and homosexual man respectively. Researchers observed that extroverts are more likely to stand up for the victim. This study also showed that bullying is one of the reasons why students struggle to adjust in schools. Being an extrovert certainly helps in such hostile situations. This study shows that extroversion is positively associated with stress because it promotes pro-socialising behaviour among students thus making university adjustment easier.