

*Full Length Research*

# Neuroticism and Information Seeking Behaviour of Lecturers in Library and Information Science Schools in South-East and South-South, Nigeria

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Accepted 31 May 2024

This study investigated neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools that is not adequately documented especially in South-east and South-south, Nigeria. It adopted the survey research design and census method of sampling techniques to ensuring that every lecturer studied was captured. Self-constructed and validated questionnaire were used to collect data for the study. The findings showed that neuroticism has significant relationship with information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria. This study recommended that there should be a separate section for the lecturers in the library. This will show a good sign of academic support on the part of the library and provision of relevant resources requires that the lecturers be allowed to participate actively in their selection. Information is not a luxury but a necessary tool upon which all sound decisions are based. Therefore, current information materials should be made available and accessible to lecturers in order to enhance their academic activities.

**Key Words:** Information, Neuroticism, Challenges, Information, Seeking Behaviour and Lecturers

**Cite This Article As:** UNEGBU, M.C., OPARA, I., OPARANOZIE, G., ODOH, A., AKIM, R. (2024). Neuroticism and Information Seeking Behaviour of Lecturers in Library and Information Science Schools in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 12(3):84-91

## INTRODUCTION

Information is news or knowledge communicated through the spoken or written word, facts or data. It can also mean knowledge gathered through reading or through instructions. Information exists as an idea in people, data in computer files or in various other forms. These ideas are conveyed and used for the achievement of specific purposes. Information is messages transmitted orally or written or as data presented in a document (Ebbighausen, 2011). Information can be used to mean man's accumulated knowledge in all subjects, in all forms and from all sources that could help users to make rational decisions. Information is central to all activities and very essential to human survival. It is crucial in every

research work and it is vital to the development of any society (Oziri, Unegbuand Ndulaka, 2023). According to Unegbu, Oparaand Emuchay (2023), information is viewed as answers to questions that begin with such words as who, what, where, when and how many. This indicates that it could be knowledge one gets about someone or something as well as factors or details about a subject.

Lecturers Information Seeking Behaviour has been positively affected by the use of Networked Information Sources and Services, such as emails, electronic journals, databases, directories and search engines. Lecturers in Library and Information Science utilize the Web browsers increases due to the Web's convenience and access to vast information sources. Statistics show that everyday sees the launch of over 10,000 new Web sites, and over 3.5 billion e-mail messages shoot across the net daily (Klobas, 2016). Directories and search engines enable lecturers to obtain information in any subject. Discussion groups and e-mails enable lecturers to communicate instantly and continuously. Electronic journals, databases and on-line services have transformed access to information making information readily available (Baruchson, 2015). According to Uhegbu (2007), information seeking behavior is the way an information user conducts himself or acts when looking for, receiving or acquiring information. The author further states that utterances, gesture, anger, anxiety, eagerness, reluctance, zeal or any other attribute displayed by an information user in his efforts to purchase, acquire or receive news, data, stories or anything that may inform or misinform his knowledge or understanding of something are constitute seeking behavior. Wilson (1981) describes information seeking behaviour as the totality of human behavior in relation to source and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use. The author further states, that users actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries such as journals and more currently, electronic media. According to Singh and Satija (2016), information seeking is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular way of behavior. It is an aspect of scholarly work most interesting to academic libraries who strive to develop collections services and organizational structures that facilitate seeking of information. Ukepor (2011), information seeking behavior is an area of dynamic interest among librarians, information scientist, communication scientists, sociologist and psychologists. Information users make active and intentional attempts to seek up to date information from the library resources.

Suriya, Sangeetha and Nambi (2004) carried out a research work on information seeking behavior of faculty members in university, Cuddalore District. The purpose of their study was to investigate how faculty members seek information from the library. It was mentioned that most of the respondents 61(38.12%) visited the library several times a week to meet their information needs. Shokean and Kushik (2002) studied about information seeking behaviour of social scientists working in the university located in Haryana. They reported that most of the social scientists visit the library daily. Reneker (1992) investigated the information seeking activities of lecturers of the Stanford University over a two-week period. The author adopted the naturalistic approach and employed qualitative techniques for the data collection using mainly personnel interviews. Informant's perception of their information environment is expressed in positive terms and there is a close relationship between knowledge of the information environment and the sources used. Information seeking is embedded in the day-to day activities and relationships of the participants and is triggered both by the articulation of needs and availability of information. The findings of the study indicated that the action of information seeking originated from a wide variety of needs like personal, professional and entertainment. The relationship between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools is not adequately documented especially in South-east and South-south, Nigeria and this has created a gap in knowledge which prompted this study. In the light of the above background, this study therefore, seeks to investigate the relationship between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria.

## Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the challenges of information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria?

## Literature Review

Neuroticism is a dimension of personality trait that reflects individual differences among people in their perspective of negative emotions. Neuroticism is the tendency to easily experience unpleasant emotion such as anger, anxiety, fear, guilt, depression, impulsive, and vulnerable. Lecturers who are high on this trait tend to be worried, unsecured, self-

conscious, and generally distressed. On the other hand, lecturers who are low on this trait dimension tend to be relaxed, calm, self-satisfied and rather unemotional. Neuroticism encompasses various negative dispositions namely sadness, nervousness and horridness (Lofti, Muktar, Ologbo and Chiemeké, 2016). It also involves negative emotions like anger, anxiety, depression and they all have negative influence on information seeking behaviour. Probably lecturers who are high on neuroticism would not achieve success when seeking information due to these negative emotions. Negative emotions act as barrier to lecturers' successful information seeking. This is because a lecturer who is in control of his/her emotions is usually calm, relaxed, and easy or less neurotic, can satisfy information retrieval urge and can resolve most of the obstacles coming his/her information seeking process.

According to Heinström (2003), negative emotions consume energy and distract concentration due to the fact that a high level neurotic lecturer does not critically evaluate the information before actually using it. The characteristics of neurotic trait can also apply to lecturers. Lecturers' high in neuroticism trait display anxiety, depression, anger, fearfulness and insecurity mood in public. They may not have enough time to critically analyze and evaluate document before retrieving and using it due to their neurotic tendencies or negative emotions. Lecturers with negative emotions are also often distracted and lack concentration. Hydegard (2009) carried out a research on personality traits and group-based information behaviour: an exploratory study on three (3) voluntary groups of ten (10) Royal School of Library and Information Science lecturers in Denmark. The study made use of the big-five personality dimensions to measure how personality traits can influence information seeking behaviour in a group situation. Ten (10) Library and Information Science lecturers made up the sample size. The study was guided by three (3) research questions. Three instruments were used for data collection which was questionnaire, diaries and interview. Data collected was analyzed using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

The findings revealed that in a group work situation, neuroticism does not have much influence but tended to be more present in individual work situation or responsibility. The reviewed study is relevant to this present study because it measured the neuroticism dimensions on group-based information behaviour. The reviewed study and the present study differ in the area of study. The reviewed study has investigated three groups of Library and Information Science lecturers in Denmark while the presents study investigated lecturers in library schools in South-East and South-South, Nigeria. The reviewed study used correlation research design while the present study used survey research design. The reviewed study has raised three research questions while the presents study has raised five to be answered using mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (SD). The reviewed study has used three instruments to collect data while the present study used one instrument which is the questionnaire to collect data from respondents. The reviewed study tested hypotheses using t-test while the present study has tested hypotheses using Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

According to Dinét (2016), several variables affect information seeking behavior of an individual. Some of them include contextual variables, resources variables, and individual's variables. Emotions form a part of the individual variables that play a key role in the determination of information seeking behaviour of an individual. In the mid- 90s, Dinét (2016) highlights the role of effective elements in information-seeking behavior, physical and/or cognitive actions and strategies used in dealing with unique feature of the problem associated with the search for information. These highlight role of emotions such as frustration, anxiety, and uncertainty in the information seeking process. Recent studies have tried to investigate the relationship between emotions and the performance of the searcher. Wang (2007) investigated the correlation between anxiety and performance of learners in information search tasks, the role emotional factors on information retrieval and literacy. The author observed that the psychodynamics of individual's information behaviour depend on their personality and social competence. Consequently, the emotional status of the individuals can contribute towards several outcomes such as search process problems, information adjustment problems, and personal information (Matteson, 2017). The process of identifying information need, locating the relevant information, making sense of the information, and using the information is associated to a plethora of emotions.

An empirical study conducted on lecturers, identified a set of micro and micro level events that resulted in either negative or positive emotions. The events causing emotions such as sadness, fear, alienation, joy, and surprise affected the lecturer's ability of searching for information and completing their assignments. A parallel study evaluated the socio-emotional development of lecturers and their information literacy competence. The study found that emotional resilience and socio-emotional maturity affected the information literacy competence of the lecturers (Lisa 2017). According to Matteson (2017), emotional intelligence entails the ability of an individual to monitor their emotions and feelings while discriminating them and using the information to guide one's actions. The author further states that emotional intelligence involves the perception of emotions, use of the emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding the emotions, and managing the emotions.

According to the author, individuals portray varying capability of processing information based on their emotional nature. Kuhlthau (2017) highlights the specific emotions associated with the process of search for information. According to the author, uncertainty is the principle emotions for information seeking. The author defines uncertainty as the cognitive state that causes effective symptoms such as lack of confidence and anxiety. Anxiety and uncertainty characterize the initial phases of the process of searching for information. The effective indications of uncertainty,

confusion lead to vague and imprecise thoughts regarding a problem or topic. However, a shift to focused knowledge leads to a decline in uncertainty and increase in confidence. Kuhlthau (2017) asserts that the uncertainty associated with a gap in meaning, limited construct or lack of understanding initiates the information seeking process. Complex situations associated with information search were linked to uncertainty.

However, Kalbach (2014) observes that the perceptions of complexity rather than the objective complexity of the situation cause the feeling of uncertainty rather; Wilson (2015) confirmed the observation through his Uncertainty Principle. The author relates the effect of emotions on information seeking behavior to personality traits. He uses the five factors model to explain the five main emotional factors that affect high levels of neuroticism indicate a high probability of experiencing negative emotions while low levels of neuroticism indicate a high probability of experiencing negative emotions while low levels of neuroticism indicate emotional stability. Neuroticism heightens the probability of developing emotions such as anxiety. Highly neurotic individuals have a high likelihood of becoming sad, temperamental, unstable and worried. The vagueness of information frustrates a highly neurotic person during the initial search. Essentially, neuroticism leads to nervousness and negative affectivity during the search for information. While focusing on online search for information, Lopatovska (2017) highlights the relationship between emotional experiences and the information seeking behaviour and process. The state of the user before engaging in an active information search affects his or her emotional experiences. The state depends on individual characteristics, cultural background, as well attitudes and moods towards the search. Emotions affect behaviours such as the strategies used in the search, the search performance acquired. A successful or unsuccessful completion of the search influences the emotional experiences, which, in turn determine whether the user continues or terminates the search. Onwuegbuzie and Jiao (2004) also found the library anxiety among students affected information search and performance negatively. Many studies have been conducted to evaluate the effect of emotion on users' information seeking behaviour.

According to the author, emotional factors affect search strategies and performance, search results, motivation, and satisfaction. Nahl (2017) analyzed information behavior from the literature on affective and cognitive components of searching. The author found a positive relationship between affective variables and satisfaction, performance, and motivation. The author studied the influence of affective variables on information seeking behavior and found that emotions such as optimism and self-efficacy countered negative emotions such as frustration and irritation, which are associated with uncertainty.

However, Wang (2007) found a reciprocal relationship between affective variables and search performance. The findings indicated that positive feelings instigated further search while negative feelings hindered it. The author also investigated the cognitive and affective aspects of information seeking behavior among novice users. The study found that need for confirmation, hesitation, surprise, and fear affected the strategies that the users applied in the search process. For instance, the study found that the need for confirmation provided users with incessant motivation to continue their search while surprise initiated the process of reconciliation of the search expectations and reality. Butler and Cartier (2015) investigated the effects of emotions on processes such as reading, writing, researching and presenting. The study found that low interest in the process, low self-esteem, and high stress levels led to avoidance, which affected the processes negatively. According to Hughes (2005) a common challenge facing the information seeking behaviour among university lecturers is the ability to access and select the relevant information when needed. Various challenges increase the complexity of searching relevant information. Consequently, the information seeking behaviour may be affected by self-confidence, emotions, and understanding of the problem. Liu and Redfarn (2015) investigated the behavior of multicultural lecturers at Sa Jose State University. Using a questionnaire, the researchers sought to understand the effect of length of stay on the confidence of the lecturers in seeking help from the reference desk. The study found that lecturers who had used the library for over fifteen years had high levels of confidence and often sought help from the reference desk.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire is titled "neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers' questionnaire" (NISBLQ). The South-east, Nigeria has a total number of ten (10) library and information Science schools in the institution of higher learning. They include: Abia State University Uturu (ABSU), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUST), Chukwuemeka Odomegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam (CEOJU), Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri (FPNO) Imo State, Federal Polytechnic Oko (FPO), Anambra State, Akanulbiam Federal Polytechnic (AIFP) Unwana, Ebonyi State, Imo State University (IMSU) Owerri, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUAAU) Abia State, Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU) Awka, Anambra State and University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) Enugu State and South-south, Nigeria has a total number of nine (9) library and information Science schools in the institutions of higher learning. They include; Ambrose Ali University (AAU) Ekpoma Edo State, Delta State University

(DELSU) Abraka, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, University of Calabar (UNICAL) Cross River State, Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, (EAPOLY) Port Harcourt Rivers State, University of Uyo (UNIUYO) Akwalbom State, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Port Harcourt Rivers State, Rivers State University (RSU) Port Harcourt and University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) Rivers State. The population of the study is 222 respondents (Two-Hundred and Twenty-Two). This comprises 122 (one Hundred and Twenty-two) lecturers in library and information science schools in the South-east and 100 (one Hundred and Twenty-two) lecturers in library and information science schools in the South-south, Nigeria.

A total of two hundred and twenty-two (222) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria. Out of these, one hundred and eighty-seven (187) copies of the questionnaire were duly completed and returned for analysis giving a response rate of (84.2%). Thirty-five (35) copies of the questionnaire were not returned giving a response rate of (15.8%). No sample size was drawn from the population. This is because the population of the study is accessible. The census method was used to ensuring that opinions of all the lecturers in library and information science schools in the South-east and South-south, Nigeria were captured for the study.

## Analysis

### Research Question 1

What is the relationship between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Mean Responses on Neuroticism and Information Seeking Behaviour of Lecturers

S/N	Neuroticism and Information Seeking Behaviour of Lecturers	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Value	Decision
a.	I am forceful when seeking information	31	21	68	64	187	2.07	Not Significant
b.	I can be tense in information seeking	76	62	27	22	187	3.02	Significant
c.	I argue a lot while seeking information	56	58	41	32	187	2.74	Significant
d.	I do not feel sad in information seeking	88	52	36	11	187	3.16	Significant
e.	I am always rude to others in information seeking	23	22	82	60	187	2.04	Not Significant
	<b>Significant Mean Value =2.61</b>							

Table 1 shows the mean responses on neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria is greater than the significant mean value ( $X=2.61$ ) in three main aspects. These are; I can be tense in information seeking ( $X=3.02$ ), I argue a lot while seeking information ( $X=2.74$ ), I do not feel sad in information seeking ( $X=3.16$ ). The other two reasons namely; I am forceful when seeking information ( $X=2.07$ ) and I am always rude to others in information seeking ( $X=2.04$ ) have less than the significant mean value ( $X=2.61$ ). The significant mean value ( $X=2.61$ ) shows that neuroticism has positive relationship with information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south Nigeria.

### Research Question 2

What are the challenges of information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria?

**Table 2:** Mean Values of the challenges of information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria

	Challenges of information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria?	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean Value	Decision
a	My age affects my information needs	103	60	16	8	187	3.78	Significant
b	My gender does not give me the opportunity to search information I need	26	13	79	69	187	1.98	Significant
c	The curriculum of my academic discipline affects my information needs	73	86	17	11	187	3.18	Significant
d	My rank does not affect my information needs	102	61	17	7	187	3.75	Significant
e	My research areas affect my information needs	83	64	35	5	187	3.20	Significant
	<b>Significant mean value = 3.18</b>							

Based on the significant mean value of 3.18 as shown on Table 2, my age affects my information needs ( $X=3.78$ ), the curriculum of my academic discipline affects my information needs ( $X=3.18$ ), my rank does not affect my information needs ( $X=3.75$ ) while my research areas affect my information needs has mean value of ( $X=3.20$ ). However, my gender does not give me the opportunity to search information I need ( $X=1.98$ ). It can be seen from the analysis that age, gender, academic discipline and rank significantly affects information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria.

## FINDINGS

Findings of the study on Table 1, research question 1 revealed that neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria was significant. This implies that neuroticism significantly affect information seeking behaviour lecturers. This is because neuroticism comprises of negative dispositions which could have negative effect on lecturer's information seeking behaviour. These negative emotions act as barrier to lecturers' successful information search as lecturers high on neuroticism would achieve little or no success when seeking information.

The result agrees with Lotfi, Muktar, Ologbo, and Chiemeke (2016) and Hienstrom (2003) who found out that neuroticism encompasses negative emotions like anger, anxiety, depression and could have negative influence on information seeking behaviour of lecturers. They also argued that negative emotions consume energy and distracts concentration due to the fact that high leveled neurotic students do not critically evaluate information before actually using it. Findings of the study also imply that individuals with high neuroticism would probably be less involved in information seeking. This result is in line with Gul, Shah, Mahajan, and Tun-Nisa (2014) who noted neuroticism to negatively influence information seeking behaviour of lecturers. In their findings, it was noted that neuroticism students are often influenced by negative emotions such as anger, fear, embarrassment, guilt, depression and sadness and these hinders successful information search and retrieval. Lecturers with negative emotion are often hostile, self-conscious, anxious, insecure and moody.

The findings also agree with Halder, Roy and Chakraborty (2010) who found negative correlation between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour as neurotic tendencies may act as an obstacle to successful information seeking. The result also concurs with Heinstrom (2014) who found individuals high on neuroticism to be worriers and anxious in information seeking. In his studies, Gupta (2008) had noted that the reason why information seeking would be interfered by neuroticism is due to the negative attributes associated with it. Individuals who have high neuroticism are characterized as insecure, moody and self-conscious. They possess the common inclination to express undesirable attributes such as embarrassment, fear, sadness, anger, and guiltiness. The findings of this study disagree with Wang and Yang (2007) who in their findings showed no significant correlation between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour. The result of this research may be because neurotic lecturers are prone to negative emotions like anger, stress, moody, fear, depression and so on. These negative emotions often act as barrier to successful information

search and retrieval. The result of this study conforms with the result of the study by Gul, Shah, Mahajan, and Tun-Nisa (2014) who noted that if one wants to know the variability and pattern of information seeking, one has to understand users' psychological characteristics as search behaviour evolves from the interaction of the two.

Findings as shown on Table 2 revealed that there are several factors militating against information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria. These factors are but not limited to age, curriculum of academic discipline, research area of interest and rank. The findings are in line with (Matteson, 2017) who investigated the correlation between anxiety and performance of learners in information search tasks, the role emotional factors on information retrieval and literacy. The author observed that the psychodynamics of individual's information behaviour depends on their personality and social competence. Consequently, the emotional status of the individuals can contribute towards several outcomes such as search process problems, information adjustment problems, and personal information.

## CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings above, conclusions was drawn. The study has successfully investigated the relationship between neuroticism and information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria. The study revealed that the neuroticism has significant relationship with information seeking behaviour of lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria. It could be seen that librarians and information scientists need to know these information seeking behaviour and how they are affected by the different dimensions of personality traits as it will enable them in successful information service delivery to lecturers in library and information science schools in South-east and South-south, Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In with the findings, the study recommended as follows:

- There should be a separate department/section for the lecturers. This will show a good sign of academic support on the part of the library and provision of relevant resources requires that the lecturers be allowed to participate actively in their selection.
- Information is not a luxury but a necessary tool upon which all sound decisions are based. Therefore, current information materials should be made available and accessible to lecturers in order to enhance their academic activities.

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