

Personality Traits of Selected Drug Abusers in Delta and Bayelsa States of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to identify the personality traits of selected drug abusers in Delta and Bayelsa States of Nigeria. Five research questions and five null hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey method of ex-post facto research design was adopted and a personality test was administered on the participants. The instrument was adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI), developed by Golberg (1993) and domesticated for use in the study areas. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions at a criterion mean of 2.50 while independent samples t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that drug abusers are high on openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism but low on agreeableness and conscientiousness. The study recommended that individuals high on openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism should be given drug-free training prior to their entry into secondary schools.

Keywords: 1.Openness to Experience; 2.Extraversion;3. Neuroticism; 4.Agreeableness; 5.Conscientiousness; 6.Drug Abuse.

Introduction

The rate at which young people indulge in drug abuse is becoming alarming. Statistical record and empirical evidence show that the rate at which young people between the age of 12 to 30 years is high. For instance, according to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crimes (UNODC, 2021) about 14.4% of Nigerians abuse drugs for diverse reasons. Of the 14.4%, 27.7% are reportedly young people.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2021), about 4 out of 5 college students drink alcohol. A study carried out by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC, 2019), shows that the prevalence of drug abuse by geopolitical zones includes South-West (22.4%), South-South (16.6%), South-East (13.8%), North-East (13.6%), North-West (12.0%) and North-Central (10.0%). The result implies that drug abuse is more prevalent in South-West and South-South geopolitical zones. The data also revealed that the prevalence of drug abuse by states in the South-South geopolitical zone includes Delta (18.0%), Rivers (15.0%), Edo (15.0%), Bayelsa (14.0%), Akwa Ibom (12.5%) and Cross River (11.8%). The result implies that drug abuse is more prevalent in Delta, Rivers and Edo states.

In a review of epidemiological studies and drug laws in Nigeria, Jatau, Sha'aban, Gulma, Shitu, Khalid, Isa, Wada and Mustapha (2021) found that the most commonly abused drugs by Nigerian youths include

cannabis, cocaine, amphetamine, heroin, diazepam, codeine, cough syrup and tramadol. These drugs are mostly found in pharmacies or medicine shops, open drug markets, drug peddlers, friends, and drug pushers. Lawal and Aliyu (2020) established in their study on the assessment of causes and effects of drugs and drug abuse among youths in Katsina, found out that the most commonly abused drugs by the respondents include Tobacco, Codeine, Marijuana, and cola nut. Furthermore, Alhassan, et al. (2019) in their study found out that there was a significant prevalence rate of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana consumption among students.

Onofa, et al. (2016) found out that alcohol was the most prevalent drug abused with 34 per cent. This was followed by Tobacco with 14.4 per cent, Hypnosedatives with 8.8 per cent, cannabis with 6.2 per cent, inhalants with 2.5 per cent and opiates with 2.0 per cent. Others are cocaine with 1.9 per cent, heroin 0.5 per cent and amphetamine 0.1 per cent. Figure 1 shows the data obtained from the website of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) on the most abused drugs.

According to the UNODC (2019), the age group more likely to indulge in drug abuse include individuals between the age of 15 to 64. Jatau, et al. (2021), in their study, found that undergraduates, secondary school students, youths and commercial bus drivers are most likely to indulge in drug abuse. According to Vincent, et al. (2019), over 815,000 students have been observed to abuse drugs out of which 367,050 (representing 45%) were girls. A baseline survey on drug and drug abuse in the years 2009 and 2010 revealed that more than a fifth of school students in Nigeria have taken alcohol and the figure is still rising (Sampou, as cited in Odili & Jessa, 2021).

As the above statistical data and empirical evidence have shown, the rate at which drug is being abused in Nigeria is alarming and requires a concerted efforts to salvage the situation. Guidance and Counselling as a remedial profession, aimed at helping clients understand and deals with the challenges confronting them, have a role to play in the fight against drug abuse. However, in order to provide effective services, there is a need to explore the factors that may contribute to drug abuse. Who are those more likely to indulge in drug abuse? This question has been answered on various platforms and studies. However, one area that seems to have been neglected is the personality traits of drug abusers. What personality traits are more likely to abuse drugs. In view of this, the aim of this study is to survey the personality traits of selected drug abusers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of openness to experience?
2. To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of conscientiousness?
3. To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of extraversion?
4. To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of agreeableness?
5. To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of neuroticism?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference between level of openness to experience among male and female drug abusers
2. There is no significant difference between level of conscientiousness among male and female drug abusers
3. There is no significant difference between level of extraversion among male and female drug abusers
4. There is no significant difference between level of agreeableness among male and female drug abusers
5. There is no significant difference between level of neuroticism among male and female drug abusers

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey method of ex-post facto research design. This design was chosen because the researchers did not manipulate the independent variable as they were already in existence prior to the commencement of the study. A total of 100 undergraduate students were selected from volunteer who were undergoing drug-free programme at the counselling centre of selected tertiary institutions in Delta

State. The students were between the ages of 16 and 22 years of age. They comprised 49 female and 51 males. They were from various faculties. A personality test was administered on the participants. The personality test was adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI), developed by Golberg (1993). It contains 66 items, measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. As at the time of obtaining the instrument, the psychometric properties of the instrument could not be ascertained. The researcher adapted the instrument by limiting the scaling to 4-point. In other words, she removed “neither nor disagree” because of the criticisms surrounding the use of the 5-point scale over the years. The instrument was domesticated for use on the students by pilot-testing it on other students who did not take part the study. The scale had 73.09% content validity and a range of 0.40-0.83 indicating a high construct validity. A Cronbach alpha reliability index of 0.88 was obtained, which showed that the instrument is reliable and fit for use.

The researchers personally administered the test to the students with the assistance of some counsellors at the counselling centres. The data obtained were coded and entered into a computer system through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The research questions were answered with the aid of mean and standard deviation, using 2.50 as criterion mean. The independent samples t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Question 1: To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of openness to experience?

Table 1: Mean score of the level of openness to experience of drug abusers

| S/N | Statement | Mean | SD | Remark |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | I am full of ideas. | 3.35 | 0.67 | High |
| 2 | I have a vivid imagination. | 3.29 | 0.56 | High |
| 3 | I have a rich vocabulary | 3.25 | 0.63 | High |
| 4 | I have excellent ideas. | 3.36 | 0.63 | High |
| 5 | I am quick in understanding things. | 3.21 | 0.76 | High |
| 6 | I use difficult words. | 2.60 | 0.91 | High |
| 7 | I spend time reflecting on things. | 3.14 | 0.85 | High |
| 8 | I have difficulty understanding things. | 2.78 | 0.97 | High |
| 9 | I am always adventurous in classroom activities | 2.68 | 0.97 | High |
| 10 | I have variety of experience as a student. | 3.15 | 0.77 | High |
| 11 | I am always open to other students. | 3.14 | 0.78 | High |
| 12 | I am always forced to think in ways that I was not naturally born to. | 2.72 | 1.04 | High |
| 13 | I am sociable. | 2.95 | 0.90 | High |
| 14 | I am always motivated to learn. | 3.25 | 0.80 | High |
| 15 | I am always open to teaching and learning. | 3.34 | 0.66 | High |
| 16 | I am always trusted by other students. | 3.15 | 0.73 | High |
| 17 | I am always adapting to any situation I find myself. | 3.34 | 0.69 | High |
| Average Mean | | 3.10 | 0.78 | High |
| Criterion Mean = 2.50 | | | | |

Table 1 shows the mean rating of the level of openness to experience of drug abusers. The result shows that the mean score ranged from 2.60 to 3.36, with an average mean of 3.10. The mean scores and the average mean are above the criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that participants scored high on openness to experience.

Research Question 2: To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of conscientiousness?

Table 2: Mean score of the level of conscientiousness of drug abusers

| S/N | Statement | Mean | SD | Remark |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | I am always prepared. | 1.96 | 0.79 | Low |
| 2 | I pay attention to details. | 1.79 | 0.73 | Low |
| 3 | I like order. | 1.99 | 0.93 | Low |
| 4 | I make a mess of things. | 2.22 | 0.97 | Low |
| 5 | I always follow schedule. | 2.25 | 0.94 | Low |
| 6 | I get chores done the right time. | 2.21 | 0.84 | Low |
| 7 | I am always self-disciplined. | 1.83 | 0.71 | Low |
| 8 | I am always pessimistic about things. | 2.08 | 0.86 | Low |
| 9 | I am always prone to success. | 1.78 | 0.76 | Low |
| 10 | I am always confident in whatever I do. | 1.65 | 0.61 | Low |
| 11 | I am always a thoughtful person. | 1.70 | 0.64 | Low |
| 12 | I am able to solve any problem confronting me. | 1.98 | 0.72 | Low |
| Average Mean | | 1.95 | 0.79 | Low |
| Criterion Mean = 2.50 | | | | |

Table 2 shows the mean rating of the level of conscientiousness of drug abusers. The result shows that the mean score ranged from 1.65 to 2.25, with an average mean of 1.95. The mean scores and the average mean are below the criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that participants scored low on conscientiousness.

Research Question 3: To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of extraversion?

Table 3: Mean score of the level of extraversion of drug abusers

| S/N | Statement | Mean | SD | Remark |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | I do not mind being the centre of attention. | 2.86 | 1.01 | High |
| 2 | I feel comfortable around people. | 2.83 | 0.89 | High |
| 3 | I always start conversations. | 2.54 | 0.96 | High |
| 4 | I talk a lot about different people at parties. | 2.65 | 1.03 | High |
| 5 | I do not talk a lot | 2.61 | 1.03 | High |
| 6 | I have little to say. | 2.62 | 0.97 | High |
| 7 | I do not like to draw attention to myself. | 2.86 | 0.95 | High |
| 8 | I am quiet around strangers. | 2.91 | 0.99 | High |
| 9 | I am always angry. | 2.85 | 1.10 | High |
| 10 | I have self-control. | 3.11 | 0.90 | High |
| 11 | I am always shy. | 2.76 | 0.96 | High |
| 12 | I am always sensitive. | 3.41 | 0.70 | High |
| Average Mean | | 2.83 | 0.96 | High |
| Criterion Mean = 2.50 | | | | |

Table 3 shows the mean rating of the level of extraversion of drug abusers. The result shows that the mean score ranged from 2.54 to 3.41, with an average mean of 2.83. The mean scores and the average mean are above the criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that participants scored high on extraversion.

Research Question 4: To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of agreeableness?

Table 4: Mean score of the level of agreeableness of drug abusers

| S/N | Statement | Mean | SD | Remark |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | I am interested in people. | 1.76 | 0.75 | Low |
| 2 | I sympathize with others. | 1.59 | 0.64 | Low |
| 3 | I have a soft heart. | 1.58 | 0.73 | Low |
| 4 | I take time out for others. | 1.70 | 0.73 | Low |
| 5 | I feel others' emotions. | 1.66 | 0.76 | Low |
| 6 | I make people feel at ease. | 1.81 | 0.76 | Low |
| 7 | I am not really interested in people. | 2.32 | 0.96 | Low |
| 8 | I insult people. | 2.03 | 1.10 | Low |
| 9 | I am not interested in other people's problem. | 2.13 | 0.96 | Low |
| 10 | I feel little concern for others. | 2.48 | 1.11 | Low |
| 11 | I feel loyal to school authorities. | 2.09 | 0.93 | Low |
| 12 | I am always compassionate. | 1.78 | 0.81 | Low |
| Average Mean | | 1.91 | 0.85 | Low |
| Criterion Mean = 2.50 | | | | |

Table 4 shows the mean rating of the level of agreeableness of drug abusers. The result shows that the mean score ranged from 1.58 to 2.48, with an average mean of 1.91. The mean scores and the average mean are below the criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that participants scored low on agreeableness.

Research Question 5: To what extent does drug abusers rate their level of neuroticism?

Table 5: Mean score of the level of neuroticism of drug abusers

| S/N | Statement | Mean | SD | Remark |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | I am easily disturbed. | 2.94 | 1.00 | High |
| 2 | I change my mood a lot. | 2.76 | 0.93 | High |
| 3 | I get irritated easily. | 2.87 | 0.90 | High |
| 4 | I get stressed out easily. | 2.90 | 0.94 | High |
| 5 | I get upset easily. | 2.63 | 0.98 | High |
| 6 | I worry about things. | 2.89 | 0.93 | High |
| 7 | I am relaxed most of the time. | 2.78 | 0.84 | High |
| 8 | I am always experiencing anxiety. | 2.52 | 0.84 | High |
| 9 | I am always patient. | 2.88 | 0.83 | High |
| 10 | I am always experiencing depression. | 2.66 | 1.05 | High |
| 11 | I have the capacity to recognize the feelings of other students. | 2.91 | 0.87 | High |
| 12 | I have the capacity to recognize my own feelings. | 3.30 | 0.66 | High |
| 13 | I have frequent mood swings. | 2.54 | 0.96 | High |
| Average Mean | | 2.81 | 0.90 | High |
| Criterion Mean = 2.50 | | | | |

Table 5 shows the mean rating of the level of neuroticism of drug abusers. The result shows that the mean score ranged from 2.52 to 3.30, with an average mean of 2.81. The mean scores and the average mean are above the criterion mean of 2.50, which implies that participants scored high on neuroticism.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between level of openness to experience among male and female drug abusers

Table 6: t-test analysis of the difference between level of openness to experience among male and female drug abusers

| Gender | <i>n</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>t-value</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----------------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Male | 51 | 3.09 | 0.32 | 98 | 0.25 | 0.80 | Not significant |
| Female | 49 | 3.11 | 0.30 | | | | |
| $\alpha = 0.05$ | | | | | | | |

Table 6 shows an independent samples t-test analysis, which was carried out to compare the level of openness to experience of male and female drug abusers. The result shows that $t = 0.25$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that male and female drug abusers do not differ in their level of openness to experience.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between level of conscientiousness among male and female drug abusers

Table 7: t-test analysis of the difference between level of conscientiousness among male and female drug abusers

| Gender | <i>n</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>t-value</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----------------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Male | 51 | 1.98 | 0.36 | 98 | 0.73 | 0.47 | Not significant |
| Female | 49 | 1.93 | 0.39 | | | | |
| $\alpha = 0.05$ | | | | | | | |

Table 7 shows an independent samples t-test analysis, which was carried out to compare the level of conscientiousness of male and female drug abusers. The result shows that $t = 0.73$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that male and female drug abusers do not differ in their level of conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between level of extraversion among male and female drug abusers

Table 8: t-test analysis of the difference between level of extraversion among male and female drug abusers

| Gender | <i>n</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>t-value</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----------------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Male | 51 | 2.82 | 0.35 | 98 | 0.33 | 0.74 | Not significant |
| Female | 49 | 2.85 | 0.30 | | | | |
| $\alpha = 0.05$ | | | | | | | |

Table 8 shows an independent samples t-test analysis, which was carried out to compare the level of extraversion of male and female drug abusers. The result shows that $t = 0.33$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that male and female drug abusers do not differ in their level of extraversion.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between level of agreeableness among male and female drug abusers

Table 9: t-test analysis of the difference between level of agreeableness among male and female drug abusers

| Gender | <i>n</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>t-value</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----------------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Male | 51 | 1.94 | 0.38 | 98 | 0.87 | 0.39 | Not significant |
| Female | 49 | 1.88 | 0.41 | | | | |
| $\alpha = 0.05$ | | | | | | | |

Table 9 shows an independent samples t-test analysis, which was carried out to compare the level of agreeableness of male and female drug abusers. The result shows that $t = 0.87$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that male and female drug abusers do not differ in their level of agreeableness.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference between level of neuroticism among male and female drug abusers

Table 10: t-test analysis of the difference between level of neuroticism among male and female drug abusers

| Gender | <i>n</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>t-value</i> | <i>p-value</i> | Remark |
|-----------------|----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Male | 51 | 2.75 | 0.36 | 98 | 1.75 | 0.08 | Not significant |
| Female | 49 | 2.88 | 0.34 | | | | |
| $\alpha = 0.05$ | | | | | | | |

Table 10 shows an independent samples t-test analysis, which was carried out to compare the level of neuroticism of male and female drug abusers. The result shows that $t = 1.75$, $p > 0.05$ level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that male and female drug abusers do not differ in their level of neuroticism.

Discussion

The aim of the study is to identify the personality traits of drug abusers. From the analysis of data obtained from the participants, the result shows that drug abusers are high on openness to experience. This finding suggests that individuals who are high on openness to experience are more likely to indulge in drug abuse than those that are low on openness to experience. Those who are high on openness to experience are adventurous, susceptible to peer pressure, can be easily influenced to do things against their wish and can easily adapt to environmental conditions. These characteristics could push them into indulging in drug abuse especially when people around them are doing the same thing. The finding agrees with Benotsch et al. (2013), whose finding suggests that willingness to engage in new experiences as characterised individuals that are high on openness to experience, is a risk factor for indulgence in drug abuse. The finding is also in line with Middendorff et al. (2012), who found that openness to experiences can predict the level at which individuals abuse drugs. A corresponding hypothesis revealed that no difference was found between male and female drug abusers when it comes to their level of openness to experience. This means that male and female drug abusers exhibit the same level of openness to experience.

The result also revealed that drug abusers are low on conscientiousness. This finding implies that individuals are low on conscientiousness are more likely to indulge in drug abuse than those high on conscientiousness, and that no difference was found between male and female drug abusers when it comes to their level of conscientiousness. This is because of the fact that majority of the drug abusers have been found to be low on conscientiousness. These individuals have been known to have the ability to control behavioural and cognitive impulses that facilitates task- and goal-directed behaviour, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks. This finding is consistent with Turiano et al. (2012), who found that people who are high on conscientiousness are generally against the detrimental use of other substances. The finding also agrees with Middendorff et al. (2012); and Benotsch et al. (2013), whose findings revealed that a high level of conscientiousness is assumed to play an important self-regulatory role and is associated with discipline and persistence and thus with disregarding the immediate gratification of health-damaging behaviours in order to obtain future, long-term outcomes.

The result further shows that drug abusers are high on extraversion. A corresponding hypothesis revealed that no difference was found between male and female drug abusers when it comes to their level of extraversion. This finding implies that individuals who are high on extraversion are more likely to indulge in drug abuse than those who are low on extraversion. This personality is known to reflect an energetic approach toward the world and can be understood as a person's tendency to be outgoing, expressive, active, energetic, assertive, cheerful, sociable, and in search of stimulation. This finding agrees with Atherton et al. (2014), who found that higher extraversion correlates with a more tolerant attitudes toward drug abuse, and more frequent use of substances including cigarettes, alcohol, and recreational drugs. The finding however, is at variance with Turiano et al. (2012), who found no relationship between extraversion and drug abuse.

The result also revealed that drug abusers are low on agreeableness. A corresponding hypothesis revealed that no difference between male and female drug abusers when it comes to their level of agreeableness. This result implies that individuals who abuse drugs are low on agreeableness, meaning that those who are high on agreeableness are not likely to indulge in drug abuse. Individuals that are high on agreeableness are known to be trustworthy, cooperative, considerate, empathic, polite, and modest. These personality structure may not likely be found with tendency to abuse drugs. This finding agrees with Lackner et al. (2013); and Kornør and Nordvik (2007), who found that more agreeable persons report lower marijuana use, alcohol consumption, nonmedical use of prescription drugs, polydrug abuse and alcohol dependency (Kornør & Nordvik, 2007).

The result further showed that drug abusers are high on neuroticism. No difference was found between male and female drug abusers when it comes to their level of neuroticism. This finding implies that neurotic individuals are more likely to indulge in drug abuse than those who are low on neuroticism. Neurotic individuals are more likely to experience anxiety, nervousness, sadness, and depression and thus reflects a tendency to experience negative emotions, which will make them to resort to drug abuse as gratification. This finding agrees with Piedmont (2011), who found a connection between neuroticism and drug abuse. The finding is also in line with Hampson et al. (2006), who found that individuals rated lower in emotional stability (high neuroticism) predicted greater alcohol use.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that drug abusers are high on openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism but low in agreeableness and conscientiousness. In view of this conclusion, the following recommendations have been provided:

1. Individuals high on openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism should be given drug-free training prior to their entry into secondary schools
2. Group guidance should be frequently organised for individuals that are high on openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism to dissuade them from abusing drugs

3. Individuals that are high on openness to experience, extraversion and neuroticism should be closely monitored by parents, school guidance personnel and other stakeholders to prevent them from getting close to drugs.

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