

INFLUENCE OF NEO-PERSONALITY TYPES ON ADOLESCENT AT-RISK BEHAVIOURS

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated influence of personality and family types on adolescent at-risk behaviours. The study's design is Ex-post-facto design. The study's population is 200 adolescents who showed traits of developing at-risk behaviours. Adolescents Risk-Taking Behaviour Index and Neo-Personality inventory was used to collect data for the study. One hypothesis was formulated for the study. The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression statistics. The analysis showed that, neuroticism personality influences at-risk behavior, while extraversion and openness to experience do not. From the findings , it was recommended that, schools should initiate prevention programmes that are designed to enhance factors that are protective in nature and move towards reversing or reducing known risk factors.*

KEYWORDS: Personality (Neuroticism, Openness to Experience and Extraversion) At-Risk Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent involvement with drugs like alcohol, tobacco and sexual intercourse that are not protected , gang violence are behaviours that put the adolescent at-risk. These behaviours continue to make the adolescent to be predisposed to at-risk behaviours. These at-risk behaviours and the related outcomes have a grievous rate of consequence on medical resources, the social welfare system, courts, and the quality of life for society in general (Wagner, 2007). At-risk behaviours is defined as the participation in behaviours that are characterized by potential negative consequences (or loss) and in one way or the other perceived to have positive consequences (or gain). It could be described as acting without the fear of the consequences on health, emotion, life or the future (Gullone & Moore, 2000). Also, it involves behaviours associated with criminality and the use of violence, stealing, self-mutilation, unsafe sex, and eating disorders to mention but a few (Psychology Today, 2013).

Though a high population of teenage children are attracted by these activities because they are fun-seeking behaviours, they forget that they also constitute very grievous consequences. Teens who participate in negative risky deviant behaviours may be doing so just for experimentation purpose, but oblivious of the fact that they are also learning devastating and deadly attitudes and behaviours that can ultimately impact the remaining part of their lives (Dryfoos, 1990). At-risk behaviours are part of an adolescent life; experience and that experimentation predispose them to at-risk behaviours found in the midst of secondary school adolescents. Whether attempting mastery or testing limits, taking risks appears to be a way of gaining self-

understanding towards the main developmental tasks of adolescence, developing autonomy craving for identity. Although adolescents make up a number that is disproportionate of risks in comparison to any other group of people, no indication is clear that most of them are willfully trying to harm themselves or others. What often looks like an irrational behavior to others, risk taking by adolescents is often perceived as a rational process (Furby & Beyth-Marom, 1992). Consequently, concern rises about why adolescents should be involved in at-risk behaviours. Personality traits are conceptualized as dimensions of individual differences to show consistent forms of thinking, feelings, as well as actions across occurrences, periods of development and contexts (McCrea & Costa, 2003). Advances in the aspect of personality and how it influences adolescent behaviour have the potential to facilitate identification of an adolescent most at-risk behaviours. Preliminary research strengthen the fact that personality traits are major predictors of behavioural health outcomes including behavioural problems, like delinquency, and risky behaviours (e.g the use and abuse of substance) (Caspi, 1997; Moffitt, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1994). Middle childhood personality traits also predict at-risk behaviours in adolescence and adulthood (Caspi, 1997; Pulkkinen, 1983). Relatively, few studies have particularly investigated the relationship between broad personality traits and the sexual outcomes of youth. Several personality psychologists currently approve the use of NEO traits, of personality: extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience (McCrae & Costa, 1995). The NEO has been proven to be prudent and a valid means of discussing personality (Costa & McCrae, 1985; Digman, 1990; McCrae & John, 1992; Parker & Stumpf, 1998).

Neuroticism denotes emotional instability in addition to a tendency towards anxiety, sadness and irritability. Extraversion denotes level of activity, sociability and dominance, and has been associated with externalizing behaviours and delinquency among adolescent boys (John, 1994). In previous research cases, neither neuroticism nor experience openness has shown consistent relationship with youth's risky behaviours (Gullone & Moore, 2000; John, 1994; Markey, 2001). Experience openness describes a person's intelligence, originality, creativity and imagination. Culture & Moore (2000) explained that, the at-risk behaviour of the adolescents is not entirely on the negative side, it also have the positive sides of it. They therefore maintained that, some positive or healthy risk-taking behaviours have strong physical activities like sports, mountain climbing, making new friends, and beginning a business. Unhealthy behaviours according to them include being involved in sexual activities that are unprotected, which is capable of leading to teenage pregnancy and infectious diseases that can be hazardous to health and even death. From the foregoing, the hub of this research lies in examining the influence of NEO- personality factors on adolescents' at-risk behaviours.

Objectives of the Study

This study's objective is to find out NEO-personality influence factors on adolescent's at-risk behaviours. Specifically, the study intends to;

- i. Examine the joint influence of the NEO-personality traits on at-risk behaviours among adolescents in secondary schools.

Hypotheses

1. Personality factors (neuroticism, openness to experience and extraversion) do not jointly and independently influence at-risk behaviours among adolescents in secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

200 secondary school adolescents from Obio/Akpor LGA, Rivers state were used for the study. They were independently and randomly sampled using the purposive sampling technique. This technique is appropriate for this study because the researcher's sole interest was in the adolescents who showed tendency to be involved in at-risk behaviours. The Index of Adolescent Behaviour of Risk-Taking and the NEO-personality inventory were the instruments for data collection for this study. The test re-test method was used to determine their reliability and the scores obtained were 0.77 for the NEO-personality inventory and 0.82 for the adolescent risk taking behaviour index respectively.

Data Analysis

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) in line with multiple regressions was used to explain the joint influence of NEO personality on At-risk behaviours

H₀1: Personality factors (openness to experience, neuroticism and extraversion) ,do not jointly and independently influence at-risk behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools.

Summary of Analysis of variance in line with multiple regressions on the joint influence of NEO personality type on At-risk behaviour

Model	Source of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value
	Regression	8821.08	3	2940.36	60.55	0.000
	Residual	9517.28	196	48.56		
	Total	18338.36	199			

The table showed the calculated F-value 60.55, was significant at 0.000 level which is lower than 0.05 the chosen level of significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected indicating that the NEO personality factors can jointly influence At-risk behaviours among the adolescents significantly.

Showing the independent influence of At-risk behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Std error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	12.73	4.49		2.84	0.005
Neuroticism	-0.68	0.051	0.69	13.36	0.000
Extraversion	-0.43	0.091	0.027	0.45	0.651
Openness to Experience	0.57	0.077	0.045	0.75	0.46

The table above reveals that the Beta values for Neuroticism, Extraversion and openness to experience are 0.69, 0.027 and 0.045 respectively. based on their Beta values, it could be deduced that Neuroticism had the highest influence, while the next is openness to experience and then extraversion. To determine if their independent contribution is significant, their t-values were used. This shows that, only neuroticism had a significant influence while openness

to experience and extraversion did not. This is because the t-value of 13.26 for neuroticism was significant at 0.000 level which is lower than 0.05 level of significance, while the t-value of extraversion and openness to experience are 0.453 and 0.746 were significant at level 0.65 and 0.457. Hence, it could be deduced that neuroticism had significant influence on At-risk behavior, while openness to experience and extraversion did not.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of personality on at-risk behaviour showed that personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism influence at-risk behaviours among adolescents in secondary schools. The result of this study is in agreement with the earlier works carried out by Coger & Miller (2008) who traced the relationship among personality, social class and adolescents at-risk behaviours; they found that adolescents who exhibit risk behaviours encountered difficulties with school works early and that their problem becomes more extreme with age. They also showed negligible respect for others' rights and as they progress through school grades manifest increasing antagonism towards authority, they were rated low in self respect and self confidence and find it difficult to get along with peers. That neuroticism had a significant influence is not amazing because one factor that may moderate the relationship between depressive symptoms and risky behaviour is neuroticism. This agrees with the previous work of Carrasco & Dell (2007), who reported that higher levels of neuroticism may be more susceptible to engage in risky behaviours in response to symptoms of depression in order to make available temporary relief from painful affective states.

CONCLUSION

At-risk behaviours is defined by Gullone & Moore (2000) as the participation in behaviours which signal consequences which are potentially negative (or loss) and in one way or the other, are perceived to have positive consequences (or gain). At-risk behaviours could be described as acting without the fear of the consequences on health, emotion, life or the future. The most common examples include engagement in unhealthy sex, smoking, drug addiction and drinking. It is also characterized by behaviours associated with criminality and violence (Dryfoos, 1990). At-risk behaviours is part of an adolescent life, experience and that experimentation form the basis of at-risk behaviours among adolescents in secondary schools. This study's findings show that neuroticism personality type influences at-risk behaviours among adolescents, while openness to experience and extraversion do not.

RECOMMENDATION

- i. It was recommended therefore, sequel to the findings of the study, that senior students and prefects should be made to attend meetings with teachers and school heads and these students should also be allowed to meaningfully contribute in matters that affect their welfare. This idea will go a long way in helping to bridge the communication gap between the school administrators/authorities, teachers, and students, thereby inculcating into these students a sense of belonging.

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