



Personality as a factor in deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Kaduna state

Ibrahim Ignatius Felix Ruwan^{1*}, Faith Monday Ajodo², & Ayuba A. Kwasau³

¹Department of Psychology, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria.

²Department of Psychology, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria.

³Department of General Studies, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined personality as a factor in deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Kaduna State. The study was a cross sectional survey of 300 students who were drawn using simple random sampling techniques from six public schools in Kaduna state. By gender, 180 (60%) were male and 120 (40%) were females and their age ranged from 13-25 years. The Big Five Factor Markers from International Personality Item Pool-IPIP, and the Self- Report Deviant Scale were used to for data collection. Data was analysed using multiple regression to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism significantly predicted deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna state, while openness to experience and conscientiousness did not significantly predict deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna State. The study recommended the consideration of personality factors in assessment and interventions to curtail deviance. The researchers also emphasise the need for establishment of psychological services centres and counselling units in government schools to provide psychological diagnoses, assessment and treatment of deviant students.

Introduction

Deviant behaviour is considered abnormal or antisocial if it is uncommon, different from the norm and does not conform to what society expects. This idea is also closely related to the statistical approach to definite abnormality which rests on the idea that, differences in human behaviour tend to fall into a normal distribution curve (Nwankwo, 2006). According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (VanDen-Bos, 2007), deviance is defined as "any behaviour that deviates significantly from what is considered appropriate or typical for a social group" (pp. 276). Youth deviant behaviour is an escalating problem in most parts of the world today. Many tragic school shootings have taken place within the last decades that have gained the attention of the public. Nigeria has been no exception to rising youth violence perhaps because of the increasing economic hardship and recession experienced in many parts of the region. Many cases of deviant behaviour have been reported and witnessed across secondary schools in Kaduna state. From the researchers' observation, more common ones involving secondary school students include drug and substance abuse, breaking and stealing, burglary, arson, truancy and prostitution. It was the intention of the investigators to carry out a study to establish the perceived personality factors influencing deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna state. This is because these students are the future leaders of the country hence deviant behaviour among them may plunge the Nigerian society into deep crisis at present and in the future.

Most victims of youth offending, whether property crime or violence, are likely to be from young people living in the same neighbourhoods, or attending the same schools, rather than adults. Youth in Nigeria have been involved in urban violence (Oruweri, 2006). In Dares-Salaam, 27% of young people of 15-25 surveyed in 2000 had been victims of

assault, compared with 9% of those over 40 years of age, and 33% of those who were unemployed. It was found that 44% of the same age group had been victims of simple theft, compared with 25% of those over 40 years (Edwin, 2006). Edwin (2006) stated that cities such as Dakar and Senegal have seen increases in petty theft, breaking and entering, the use of violence, threats and intimidation by young people through the 1990s. One of such social vices among other cancerous problems confronting Nigeria educational institutions today is cultism as there is hardly any academic session without reported cases of cultism in most Nigerian institutions.

According to Ogidefa (2008), there is hardly any single Nigerian institution of higher learning that has not experienced this menace of cultism. Young offenders have often been victimized in childhood and begin to victimize others as they grow older, or their offending behaviour places them in much riskier situations which invite victimization. Studies in developing countries have demonstrated that young people who have been victimized in childhood or adolescence are at greater risk of themselves using violence, having mental health problems, offending or using illicit drugs (Billitteri, 2007). Thus, the kind of behaviours and circumstances which lead to law-breaking are often like those leading to victimization. Given that young people tend to victimize other people in their age group, those who are isolated or excluded may themselves turn to bullying others, or in some cases to offending in order to survive on the street (McGraw, 2006).

Risky behaviour is characteristic of adolescence include taking part in vandalism, stealing, getting involved in gangs, illicit activities, drug abuse, engaging in unsafe sex, joining „tags“ in dangerous situations, climbing on the roof tops of public buses, engaging in individual or group fights among others. All these risky behaviours affect public order and

Corresponding author

Ibrahim Ignatius Felix Ruwan, Department of Psychology, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna.

Email: ruwanfelix@gmail.com

a sense of safety. For young people, however, they may have positive benefits in terms of providing a sense of belonging and controlling one's life in a personal or collective manner (McGraw, 2006). Ronald (2011) in his work on characteristics of youths who have caused school-associated violent deaths, identified the following as indicators of deviant behaviour: History of tantrums and uncontrollable anger, outburst, characteristically resorting to name calling, cursing, and abusive language and habitually making violent threats when angry. They also brought weapons to school which caused serious disciplinary problems at school and in the community on the fringe of his/her peer group with few or no close friends and displaying cruelty to animals. Studies on deviant behaviours among the youth in Nigeria have also revealed fewer users, as well as less heavy use, of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs among Nigerian youths (McClean & Jelinqueohnson, 2008).

Deviant behaviour among young people can be attributed to a combination of several generalized factors (McClean, & Johnson, 2008). Ogidefa (2008) argues that leading contributing factors of youth deviant behaviours include the personality traits, media, the influence of family life, widespread abuse of drugs and alcohol, the ease of access to weapons and a lack of strong punishment that exists for juvenile offenders. He further stated that if this rise in aggressive acts is to be stemmed, the causes of youth violence must be determined and analysed to determine which ones, if any can be affected by change. Personality psychologists have developed a sophisticated model of personality known as trait theory. Authors (Michel, 1978 in Daminabo, 2008) defines trait as a continuous dimension on which individual differences may be arranged quantitatively in terms of the amount of the characteristics the individual has. Trait is a property within the individual that accounts for his unique but relatively stable reactions to the environment (Chauham, 1978, in Chowdhury, 2006).

According to Hockenbush and Hockenbush (1997), trait theory of personality is one that focuses on identifying, describing and measuring individual differences. Feldman (1994) said that trait theories do not assume that some people have a trait and others do not; rather they propose that all people have certain trait, but that the degree to which the trait applies to a specific person varies and can be quantified. For instance, a person might be extremely shy, somewhat shy, or not shy at all. Hence a trait is typically described in terms of a range from one extreme to its opposite. The first attempt to identify and describe these characteristics was to develop a system to discover how many types of individuals there are and identify each person's type. Osinowo and Folarin (1989), in a study conducted in a secondary school in Ibadan found that, delinquent students from Osogbo girls approved secondary school and the two boys approved secondary school scored higher than non-delinquents on extraversion. Offenders will score highly on psychoticism and majority of studies revealed that offender's samples scored highly on Neuroticism.

Youth violence is a phenomenon in all countries and increases in youth deviant behaviour have been of considerable concern over the past twenty years all over the world. Some of the increases in crime have resulted from changes in the way violent youth behaviours have been responded to (Levine, 2007). In various government secondary schools in Nigeria, detailed information on student's deviant behaviour is lacking, with the absence of reliable databases in most of the schools. Nevertheless, there is evidence of increasing law-breaking among young people. Victimization surveys in several countries, as well as qualitative observations, suggest delinquency among young people (12-25 years) is increasing at a much higher rate. This includes, violent behaviour, drug-related offences, and gang activity (Ogidefa, 2008). The aim of this study is to find out if personality will be significantly associated with deviant behaviour among secondary school students of Kaduna state.

Hypotheses

The researchers hypothesised as follows:

1. There will be a significant relationship between openness to experience and deviant behaviour among secondary school students of Kaduna state.
2. There will be a significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour among secondary school students of Kaduna state.
3. There will be a significant relationship between extraversion and deviant behaviour among secondary school students of Kaduna state.
4. There will be a significant relationship between agreeableness and deviant behaviour among secondary school students of Kaduna state.
5. There will be a significant relationship between neuroticism and deviant behaviour among secondary school students of Kaduna state.

Method

Participants

Three hundred (300) students participated in the study. The sample was drawn from six (6) Government Secondary Schools in Kaduna State. The six (6) government secondary schools used for this study were drawn through convenient sampling techniques. To have a sizeable number for the study, Simple random sampling method was used in order to allow each student an equal chance of participation in the study. The schools were as follows: Government Secondary School, Rimau; Government Secondary School, Sabon Tasha; Government Junior Secondary School, Narayi; Government Secondary School, Bagado; and Government Secondary School, Unguwar Boro. Age of participants ranged from 13-25 years while a mean age is 16.84 ($SD = 4.28$ years). Out of the participants, 180(60%) were males while 120(40%) were females. They were in the following classes JSS3 (20%), SSS1 (26.6%), SSS2 (26.6%) and SSS3 (26.6%).

Instruments

The Big Five Factor Makers (BFFM)

The Big Five Factor Makers from International Personality Item Pool-IPIP, a scientific collaboration for the development of advanced measures of personality traits and other individual differences (Goldberg, 1992). For each personality factor, ten (10) statements were listed and respondents were asked to indicate how accurate they were for items on that scale ranged from 1 = very inaccurate, 2 = inaccurate, 3 = neither inaccurate nor accurate, 4 = accurate, 5 = very. Sample items from the scale are as follows: Extraversion ("I am the life of the party", negative worded: "I don't talk a lot"); Agreeableness ("Am interested in people" "I am not really interested in others"); Conscientiousness ("Am always prepared", "leave my belongings around"); Emotional stability/neuroticism ("Am relaxed most of the time", "get stressed out easily"); Intellect/ Openness to experience ("Have a rich vocabulary", "Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas"). Negatively worded items are reverse scored for most of the statements. Cronbach's α for each personality traits were as follows: Openness to experience = .79, conscientiousness = .74, extraversion = .87, agreeableness = .75, and emotional stability/neuroticism = .60. In the present study the Cronbach's α for each personality traits were as follows: Openness to experience = .77, conscientiousness = .75, extraversion = .67, agreeableness = .69, neuroticism = .60. The test retest reliability coefficient was .72.

The Self Report Deviant Scale (SRDS)

The Self Report Deviant Scale consists of a multiple-choice question were scored by adolescents by listing the number of times they were engaged in an activity for the last six (6) months (never, once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week, 2-3 times a week, once a day, 2-3 times a day). The overall scores are obtained by adding up the number of responses listed up by each participant. Cronbach's alpha for this study reported .83 and the total variance using factor analysis was 0.75, indicating 75%.

Procedure

The two instruments were combined as one questionnaire and administered individually to the participants who were recruited based on their willingness and availability by the researchers with the help of six research assistants (one member of staff from each of the six schools selected). The six research assistants were trained on the procedures for administration of the questionnaire. The researchers obtained official permission from the Educational inspectorate division of the Kaduna State Ministry of Education before going to the schools. At the six various school principals of these schools gave their approval before the researchers accessed to the students. Only those

who voluntarily agreed to partake in the research were allowed and were selected through simple randomisation technique. After adequate rapport with participants, questionnaire was administered to participants, 60 for each school within a time frame of 1 hour for each of the schools visited.

Design/ Statistics

The study is a cross sectional survey. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the demographic variables of participants. Multiple Regression was used to analyse the data and to test the significance of the hypotheses postulated in the study.

Results

Table 1 showed that there was no significant relationship between openness and Deviant behaviour among students of government secondary school students in Kaduna state. There was no significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna state. Extraversion had a positive relationship with deviant behaviour. There was a positive relationship between agreeableness and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna state. Neuroticism had a significantly positive relationship with deviant behaviour.

Table 1: Multiple regression testing the relationship between personality (openness to experience, conscientiousness extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) and deviant behaviour

Predictors	<i>B</i>	Std error	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig
Openness	-.041	.038	-.051	-1.057	.291
Conscientiousness	-.031	.055	-.039	-.559	.576
Extraversion	.122	.040	.137	3.061	.002
Agreeableness	.82	.40	.088	2.027	.044
Neuroticism	.564	.056	.684	10.054	.000

Significant level = $p < .05$

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between personality and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria. Hypothesis one stated that there would be a significant relationship between openness to experience and deviant behaviour among students of government secondary school in Kaduna State. Results did not confirm the hypotheses, indicating that openness to experience had no relationship with deviant behaviour. This finding is inconsistent with some previous studies. Laak et al (2003) reported that those adolescents who scored low on openness were less likely to commit delinquent acts in their high school. They seem to be actively involved in imaginative work and creative performance and pay more attention to intellectual work than getting involved in deviant activities (Fuller, 2012). Such students indicate quest in cognitive and psychomotive activities like academics, and capable of enhancing their self-esteem and self-efficacy rather than indulging in deviant activities (Clower & Bothwell, 2001).

Hypothesis two stated that there will be a significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna State. Results showed that conscientiousness had no significant relationship with deviant behaviour. Therefore, we retained the null-hypothesis and concluded that there was no statistically significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour among secondary school students. This study indicates that conscientiousness as a personality factor had no

link with deviant behaviour. This finding is inconsistent with previous work. (Hornveld & DeKruyk, 2005) which assessed the relationship between personality factors and deviant behaviour among Australian High school students and found that students with low scores on conscientiousness scale and indicated deviant behaviour of vandalism, theft, damage to property and violence have not been significantly linked with conscientiousness.

Hypothesis three stated that there would be a significant relationship between extraversion and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna State. From table 1 above, the results showed that extraversion had a positive relationship with deviant behaviour. The results confirmed the hypothesis; therefore, we rejected the null-hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant relationship between extraversion and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna State. The result of this study is consistent with other previous studies. Researchers (e.g., John et al., 2012) argued that extraversion is positively related to antisocial and deviant behaviour.

Hypothesis four stated that there would be a significant relationship between agreeableness and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna State. There was a positive relationship between agreeableness and deviant behaviour, which confirmed the hypothesis in the study. The results of this study are consistent with other previous studies. For example, Maak (2005) investigated their personality

and deviant behaviour of students from Pittsburgh and found that low score on agreeableness was associated with high deviant behaviour. Yunus (2012) in his findings also obtained a negative relationship between personality trait of agreeableness and workplace deviant behaviour. Fuller (2012) posited that agreeable persons are trusting, compassionate, and cooperative. They show warm friendliness, honesty, humility and self-control. In this case, they are not involved to committing deviant behaviour like dishonesty, mistrust, truancy or violence. Students with agreeable personality traits exhibit obedience to school rules, respect for constituted authority, leadership quality and do not involve in deviant activities.

Hypothesis five stated that there would be a significant relationship between neuroticism and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna state. Neuroticism had a significantly positive relationship with deviant behaviour in this study. The results confirmed the hypothesis that public secondary school students in Kaduna State who had neurotic personality traits may often engage in deviant activities. The finding of this study is consistent with other previous studies. For example, Heaven (2006) conducted a study on the role of personality on deviant behaviour in a secondary school in Australia and obtained evidence that neuroticism was positively related to student's physical aggression, bullying behaviour, and damage to school property. Neuroticism is a determinant of getting involved in deviant activities (Burgess, 2012; Farhadi, 2012; Laak et al, 2003). Osinowo and Folarin (1989) also reported that offenders will score high on neuroticism, as observed among students in western Nigeria. Fuller (2012) explained that neuroticism as a personality trait is characterised by anxiety, worry, envy, insecurity, impulsiveness, and psychological distress. Therefore, secondary school students who indicated high score on the Neurotic scale have high tendency of been involved in deviant activities.

This study has some weaknesses. One is the use of self-report measures which is associated with several biases. Two is that the number of participants was limited, and they were from only one state in Nigeria. Three is the cross-sectional nature of this study. The adoption of longitudinal studies, inclusion of more participants and use of other methods to complement the self-report measures is important.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between personality factors and deviant behaviour among government secondary school students in Kaduna State. The findings of this study revealed that personality factor of extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism increases their potentiality to deviant behaviour. It is recommended that government should establish psychological service centres in schools and engage the services of psychologists to counsel and modify the negative traits of deviant students. This will help in reducing the occurrences of deviant activities among secondary school students. School administrators should take the personality traits of prospective candidates seriously during school admission to minimise deviant behaviour in schools. Governments should build more Juvenile training institutions like Borstal training institution in Kaduna where psychologists are employed to carry out psychological diagnosis, assessment, counselling and psychotherapy aimed at modifying personality of students thereby exposing them to social skills, rehabilitation, and reformation. Psychologists working with the criminal justice administration should embark on reorientation and counselling of mentally ill inmates in order to enhance their social competence.

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