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Association of personality traits and emotional intelligence with risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Some psychological constructs including personality traits and emotional intelligence could be vital in explaining a person's thoughts, actions, interpretations, judgements and behaviours. This study adopted correlational research design to establish the association of personality traits and emotional intelligence with risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. Four research questions guided the study. A total of 325 students in 300 and 400 levels from three selected higher institutions in Enugu state who accepted indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours formed the sample of the study. Three sets of instruments namely: Costa & McCrae (1985) personality questionnaire (CMPQ), Emotional Intelligence Self Assessment instrument (EISAI) adapted from the work of Sterreth (2000) and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999) Youth risky sexual behaviour test (YRSBT) were used for the study. Reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach alpha and an internal coefficient of 0.76 was obtained for CMPQ, 0.78 for EISAI and finally 0.80 for YRSBT. The data were analyzed using correlation and regression statistical analysis. The results showed that both psychological constructs wheel tremendous influence on the adolescents, indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that intervention programs aimed at building positive emotional skills in adolescents should be embarked upon and also control of drug intake and alcoholic drink consumption among adolescents' should be regulated by the university administration and government.

Keywords: Personality traits, emotional intelligence, risky sexual and health behaviours, adolescents and tertiary institutions.

Introduction

One of the developmental tasks of the adolescence is to achieve emotional independence of their parents, caregivers and older siblings as well as to achieve new and more mature relations with peers. In trying to achieve this, a lot of behaviours contrary to family and societal values, norms and aspirations are exhibited by the young adult. Put in another way, adolescents' adventure into life exposes him/her to risk taking. The young adult is willing to take risks including indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviors, trying new ideas and information gotten from social media and peers as

well as enjoying being in new relations and exciting situations which often poses a lot of risk to their psychological well being.

Some psychological constructs including personality traits and emotional intelligence could be vital in explaining a person's thoughts, actions and behaviours including indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours. Close observation of people around us reveals how different one individual is from another. Two individuals may likely have different reactions to the same event or situation. For example some people are very calm in the midst of challenge/problem while some are worried and tensed up, some get annoyed at the slightest provocation while others are able to regulate their emotions and some individuals are slow to talk while others are talkative. The above example simply refers to a person's personality which simply implies the characteristic ways that an individual differ from another individual.

Personality theorists assert that although there are many ways to think about the personalities that people have, we can best understand the differences between individuals by understanding their personality traits. Gordon Allport was an early pioneer in the study of personality traits or what he called dispositions. He categorized traits into three levels namely: Cardinal, central and secondary traits. Allport (1931) noted that cardinal traits dominate an individual's personality and are quite rare. Central traits are common traits that make up our personalities while secondary traits are only present under certain conditions and circumstances. Some researchers and authors including Torres and Pritchard (2005); Zahra, Mahboobeh, Hamidalavi and Mahdi (2016) and Webb, Don-Chaney and Sanders (2015) noted that personality traits simply depict people's characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Okeke, Anene and Agu (2022) explained personality traits as natural or biological/in-born qualities which a person often or consistently exhibits such as sadness, joy, tolerance, anger and kindness among others. Many contemporary personality psychologists believe there are five dimensions of personality namely: Extroversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism. Huiling and Zhiyuan (2022) enumerated factors influencing an individual's personality trait to include social, family, community, school and personal factors.

In trying to explain the above mentioned five dimensions of personality, some authors including Clark, Dubin, Iacono, Mc-Gue and Hicks (2019) as well as Kendra (2019) noted that the personality trait of openness features characteristics such as imagination and insight. Individuals with this trait are adventurous, creative and curious about people, things and the world at large. Quietness, good control and actions aimed at achieving good results characterize conscientiousness dimension of personality traits. Extroversion describes persons' with traits of excitement, sociable, talkative, assertiveness and high level of emotional expression. Agreeableness personality dimension is marked by such traits like trust, altruism, kindness, affection and other pro social behaviours and finally the features of neuroticism include sadness, moodiness and emotional instability. Wilmot and Ones (2022) also noted that agreeableness dimension of personality trait has its features as helping people, building positive relationship and having desirable effect that impacts on general life success.

The researchers explain personality trait in the context of this research work as a person's stable, constant or habitual patterns of thought, feeling and behaviours. Our traits influence our behaviours thus compelling us take or engage in actions/activities in line with those traits and because our traits are description of our actions it can influence adolescents association with risky sexual and health behaviours. One's feeling will always predict his actions and thus the ability of an individual to understand and control his/her emotions and others will determine indulgence in some acts including risky sexual and health behaviours.

Supporting the above statement, Dong, Peng and Jiang (2022) minute base that influences human behaviours even in technological era, fundamental to human experiences and wheels influence on individual's daily activities such as thought, relationship and judgement/decision making. Abdelbamid, Mohsen-Ibrahim, Hashem, Marzouk and Abd-Elmoneam (2021) observed that emotional difficulties ranging from inability to control and manage emotions which invariably dispose the individual to poor impulse control are often at the root of risky behaviours. Emotional intelligence is a psychological construct derived from two words: Emotion and intelligence. Emotion describes the

affective aspect of mental functioning while intelligence explains the cognitive aspect of mental functioning. Navin (2019) describe emotional intelligence as a critical part of social intelligence which borders on the ability, capacity, skill to identify, asses and manage one's emotions, that of others as well as groups. Jeanne, Melinda-Smith, Lawrence and Jennifer (2021) assert that emotional intelligence describes one's ability to understand, use and manage his emotions for positive relationships as well as for overcoming challenges. They noted that four characteristics namely: Self management, self awareness, relationship management and social awareness are used in explaining the concept of emotional intelligence. Abdelbamid et al (2021) explained emotional intelligence as ability of an individual to monitor his emotions and feelings and that of others, differentiate between them and use them as a guide to thoughts and actions.

Emotional intelligence in the context of this research work is explained by the researchers as the ability of an individual to control his emotions and also accurately interpret others emotions. There is no doubt that one's thoughts, feelings, decisions and communications to some extent is influenced by his level of emotional intelligence.

The above explains why two different adolescents' will view/interpret sexual relationship in different ways. Some will approach it with caution, high sense of responsibility and maturity others give it a reckless and rascal approach. However, it is the second approach that is injurious, harmful and detrimental to the adolescents' psychological and health being. The first institution established by God at creation is marriage ordained solely for companionship, procreation and meant for only matured people. No wonder the topic of sex is not for open discussion in Igbo traditional society in Nigeria as noted by Okeke, Anierobi and Oparaugo (2021). Unfortunately today, some adolescents engage actively in the act and often see it as the easiest way to survive and accomplish their desires like getting admission into tertiary institutions, getting good grades in examinations and getting good jobs in well paid companies/establishments among others. This is quite unfortunate.

Adolescence no doubt is a critical period of development which is sometimes characterized by confusion. Knoop (2021) observed that adolescence is a special developmental period in human life marked by transition from infancy to adulthood with the young adult seeking for place in life, shaping his value system and trying to form his place in the social environment. Knoop further opined that adolescence is a time of intense learning, experimenting and making important decisions. The researchers wish to point out here that most adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state seem to be confused in virtually all areas of their life ranging from career, academics and social to marital life. This may be the reason for their indulgence in certain social acts as "hard boys/girls". No wonder today in Igbo traditional society where this research is carried out, some adolescents without consideration of the grave implication indulge in what they termed "Runs" which implies "Using one's body to make money" OR "Using what you have to get what you want". To buttress this point, adolescence stage is a period that involves integrating personal choices with the expectations of society, accepting some alternatives and rejecting others. For example most adolescents in Igbo land are seen today replacing acceptable mode of dressing with "Nudity and Dreadlock hairs", legal marriage with what they nicknamed "Abuja/City marriage" which means a situation where a young boy meet an opposite sex (a young girl) in big cities in Nigeria like Abuja, Lagos, Portharcourt and Uyo among others and without any introduction, enquiry into the family background and payment of bride price leaves together rearing children till death parts them or otherwise.

Tertiary institution is the third tier of education in Nigerian education system provided in colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and universities. It is the optional final stage of formal learning that takes place after completion of secondary school. Admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria is regulated by Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). However students can gain admission through other avenues like direct entry or any other internal programme in the university. Close observation of students' and their activities in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria including Enugu state reveals that most of the students are still in their adolescence stage. A stage of life characterized by fun making, adventure taking, experimentation and exploration of ideas probably because they are yet to have a proper understanding of life and all that life demands, thus living in

their own world. This however exposes the adolescent into indulgence in all manner of risky behaviours.

Supporting this point, Ugoji (2014) observed that youths' indulgence in sexual risks could be attributed to social factors such as emotional intelligence and inconsiderate behaviours. Omanyo (2016) noted that globally, adolescents are victim of sexual risks behaviours. Keto, Tilahun and Mamo (2020) assert that adolescents' are vulnerable to sexual risk and health behaviours. Doubova, Martinez-Vega, Infante-Castaneda and Perez-Cuevas (2017) observed that early pregnancy and unprotected sex pose a risk worldwide to adolescents' health and well-being. Risky sexual and health behaviours is explained by Getachew, Genet, Meseret, Worku, Mikiyas, Tiguaded, Meless and Melat (2016) as sexuality related behaviour which increases the chances of an individual to sexuality and health related problems like sexually transmitted diseases, human immune deficiency virus, unwanted pregnancy, abortion and psychological distress. Keto et al (2020) also opined that sexual risk behaviours are sexual activities that may expose an individual to being infected with sexually transmitted infections/diseases.

Risky sexual and health behaviour in the context of this research include engaging multiple sex partners, early intercourse, commercial sex hawking, homosexual, masturbation, lesbian and anal sex (sucking of sex organs) while risky health behaviours include smoking, tobacco intake, intake of dangerous drugs like heroine, marijuana, cocaine and methamphetamine or crystal meth known as "mkpulummiri" in Igbo language. The state of an adolescent trait and emotion influence his actions, decision (personal and social behaviours) interpretation and judgement. It is against this background that the researchers want to establish empirically the association of personality traits and emotional intelligence with risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state.

Statement of Problem

Personality trait and emotional intelligence are keys for social interaction. These psychological constructs are dictators of our thoughts, decisions, actions, judgement as well as close relationships and other social interactions. The personality of an individual can be used to predict how the individual will behave in various situations. Our personalities interact with our environment so at any moment in time we are a product of our personalities and our perceptions. Emotional intelligence on the other hand in practical terms drives our actions/behaviours and impact people positively and negatively. The ability to control one's own emotions and accurately understand other people's emotions could influence thoughts, communications and decisions towards engaging in risky sexual and health behaviours. The researchers intend to investigate the association of personality trait and emotional intelligence with risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. The study is guided by four research questions which include:

1. What is the relationship between personality trait and risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state?
2. What is the relative contribution of each of the five dimensions of personality traits (openness, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism) to risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state?
3. What is the association between emotional intelligence and risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state?
4. What is the relative contribution of each of the four attributes of emotional intelligence (self management, self awareness, social awareness and relationship management) to risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state?

Method

This study adopted correlation research design. Nworgu (2015) described this research design as one which seeks to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables. The variables in the study were: Personality trait and emotional intelligence (independent variables) and risky

sexual and health behaviours (dependent variable). Using purposive random sampling technique, three private owned institutions namely Godfrey Okoye University, Caritas University and Renaissance University were chosen for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 8020 (year 3 and 4 undergraduate students in 2020/2021 academic session) in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Applied sciences from the chosen institutions. After administration of the “Youth Risky Behaviour Questionnaire” 325 students who agreed to have indulged in risky sexual and health behaviours constitute the sample for the study. Three different instruments were used for data collection. These include:

Costa and McCrae personality test (NEO-FFI, 1985) was used in measuring the personality traits of the students. The instrument has 60 items structured to measure the five dimensions of personality trait namely extroversion, openness, neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness. There are 12 items for each dimension and each question is graded between 0-4 according to the respective answer.

Emotional intelligence of the adolescents’ was measured using Sterreth (2000) emotional intelligence instrument. The instrument consists of 20 items structured in a 5-point rating scale of never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), usually (4) and always (5) measuring the four aspects of emotional intelligence namely: Self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. In adapting the instrument for the present study, the items scattered in the original instrument was re-arranged to follow a definite pattern to enhance easy analysis thus:

1. Items 1, 5, 9, 12 and 13 becomes items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for self awareness.
2. Items 3, 6, 10, 13 and 18 was numbered as items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 for self management.
3. Items 4, 7, 14, 17 and 19 becomes items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 for social awareness and finally
4. Items 2, 8, 11, 16 and 20 was re-written as items 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

The minimum score for the scale is 25 while the maximum score is 100. Thus scores of 50 and above will be considered as high emotional intelligence while scores of below 50 (49 downwards) will be considered as low emotional intelligence.

To determine the students indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours, the risky sexual behaviour test adapted from the youth risky behaviour questionnaire was used. The instrument was developed by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999) to monitor health risk behaviours that contributes to the leading causes of mortality, morbidity and social problems among youths and adults in United States. The youth risk behaviour surveillance system has 87 items which monitors six categories of behaviours which include: Behaviours that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence, tobacco use, alcohol and other drugs, sexual behaviours that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, dietary behaviours and physical activities. In adapting the instrument for this study, 37 items selected from the sections on risky sexual and health behaviours were re-numbered and used. They include:

1. Questions 19-22 were re-numbered as questions 1-4.
2. Questions 30-33 as questions 5-8.
3. Questions 37-39 as questions 9-11.
4. Questions 40-44 as questions 12-16.
5. Questions 45-48 as questions 17-20.
6. Questions 49 as item 21
7. Questions 50-56 as questions 22-28 and finally
8. Questions 57-65 were re-assigned as items 29-37.

The instruments were validated by specialists in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach alpha with overall reliability coefficient of 0.76, 0.78 and 0.80 respectively. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression statistical analysis.

Results

Table1: Pearson Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis on Relationship Between Personality traits and Risky Sexual and Health Behaviours.

S/N	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Extroversion	18.52	3.85	1					
2	Openness	20.35	6.11	.157	1				
3	Neuroticism	28.14	7.51	.225	.243	1			
4	Agreeableness	36.24	7.21	.238	.339	.308	1		
5	Conscientiousness	39.05	3.73	.231	.311	.325	.383	1	
6	Risky sexual and Health behaviours	39.65	6.27	.531	.458	.503	.490	.331	1

Table 1 reveal the relationship between personality traits (Extroversion, openness, neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness) and risky sexual and health behaviours among students' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. It reveals that personality traits have a positive relationship (extroversion: $r = .531$; Openness $r = .458$; Neuroticism $r = .503$; Agreeableness $r = .490$ and Conscientiousness $r = .331$) with risky sexual and health behaviours among students in tertiary institutions in Enugu state.

Table 2: Regression Table Showing the Relative Contribution of Personality Traits Components (Openness, Extroversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) on Risky Sexual and Health Behaviours Among Adolescents.

Variables	B	Std.Error	Beta (B)	T	Sig.	P=
Extroversion	4.90	1.63	0.51	7.90	.000	$P < 0.05$
Openness	0.42	0.06	0.41	5.46	.000	$P < 0.05$
Neuroticism	0.46	0.10	0.45	5.50	.000	$P < 0.05$
Agreeableness	0.55	0.04	0.33	6.92	.000	$P < 0.05$
Conscientiousness	0.13	0.08	0.12	1.58	.113	$P > 0.05$

Table 2 shows the five components of personality traits and their relative contribution to risky sexual and health behaviours among students in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. It revealed that Extroversion made the highest contribution ($b = 0.51$, $t = 7.90$, $p < 0.05$) followed by Neuroticism ($b = 0.45$, $t = 5.50$, $p < 0.05$), Openness ($b = 0.41$, $t = 5.46$, $p < 0.05$), Agreeableness ($b = 0.33$, $t = 6.92$, $p < 0.05$) and finally Conscientiousness has no relative contribution because result of the findings shows that $b = 0.12$, $t = 1.58$ and $p > 0.05$.

Table 3: Pearson Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Risky Sexual and Health Behaviours.

SN	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Self awareness	14.71	2.14	1				
2	Self management	14.81	2.02	.191	1			
3	Social awareness	15.25	2.14	.257	.317	1		
4	Relationship management	15.62	2.08	.218	.247	.374	1	
5	Risky sexual and Health behaviours	16.23	1.94	.417	.402	.507	.616	1

The result in table 3 above is the findings on the association between emotional intelligence and risky sexual and health behaviours among students' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. Emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with risky sexual and health behaviours thus Self awareness: $r = .417$, Self management: $r = .402$, Social awareness: $r = .507$ and relationship management: $r = .616$.

4: Regression Table Showing the Relative Contribution of Emotional Intelligence Components (Self awareness, Self management, Social awareness and Relations management) on Risky Sexual and Health Behaviours Among Adolescents.

Variables	B	Std.Error	Beta (B)	T	Sig.	P=
Self awareness	0.40	0.08	0.39	5.27	.000	$P < 0.05$
Self manage- Ment	0.37	0.05	0.36	5.24	.000	$P < 0.05$
Social awareness	0.30	0.06	0.33	4.55	.000	$P < 0.05$
Relationship management	0.21	0.06	0.29	3.26	.001	$P < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the four components of emotional intelligence and their predictive influence/power on risky sexual and health behaviours among students' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. It revealed their contribution in this order: Self awareness ($b = 0.39$, $t = 5.27$, $p < 0.05$), Self management ($b = 0.36$, $t = 5.24$, $p < 0.05$), Social awareness ($b = 0.33$, $t = 4.55$, $p < 0.05$) and Relationship management ($b = 0.29$, $t = 3.26$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between extroversion, openness, neuroticism and agreeableness dimensions of personality traits and risky sexual and health behaviours. The reason for the positive association between these four aspects of personality trait and risky sexual behaviours could be linked to their inherent attributes/characteristics because one's personality trait is manifest in more than just behaviours but displayed in one's thoughts, feelings and social relationships. Also, the findings of the study revealed no positive relationship between conscientious dimension of personality trait and risky sexual behaviours. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that highly conscientious individuals are usually organized and concerned about the outcome of their actions and therefore there is the possibility of their weighing their actions and implications of such actions to determine their indulgence or not. Put in a simple term "They look before they lick". Supporting the above statement, Kendra (2021) noted that conscientiousness as a dimension of personality trait is characterized by high level of thoughtfulness, good impulse control and goal-directed behaviours.

The above findings agrees with the findings of Webb et al (2015) who assert that individuals who exhibit extroversion, openness and neuroticism dimension of personality traits would more likely engage in risky sexual behaviours and thus they established a positive relationship between the two variables. The findings of Torres et al (2005) disagrees with the findings of this study as they noted no positive relationship between personality trait and risky sexual and health behaviours but they pointed out that their result may be as a result of the fact that most of their participants are freshmen in the institution and it could be that many of them are now just starting to explore their sexuality. On this the researchers wish to state that any research not carried out with the correct population will not yield a reliable result.

The findings of the study showed a positive association between low emotional intelligence and risky sexual and health behaviours among adolescents' in tertiary institutions in Enugu state while the reverse is the case for individuals with high level of emotional intelligence. This result may be attributed to the fact that high emotional person's use their thinking to manage their emotions rather

than being managed by their emotions. Supporting this finding is the research work of Knoop (2021) that emotional intelligence is generally associated with the use of psychoactive substance, addictions, violations of rules and norms and criminality tendencies and risky behaviours. Knoop observed that adolescents with low emotional intelligence characterized by inability to express and regulate emotions have a stronger tendency to engage in risky behaviours in an attempt to suppress their emotions. Abdelbamid (2021) noted that an individual's inability to manage and control their emotions predispose them to poor impulse control and thus tendency to engage in risky behaviours. Again the findings of the study aligned with Zahra et al (2016) that the ability to control one's emotions and correctly interpret other people's emotions could influence communication and decisions around safer sex practices. They observed that high emotional intelligence may be related to indulgence in less risky sexual behaviours. Ugoji (2014) aligning with the findings of this study assert that adolescents' who are poor in controlling their emotions may have difficulty establishing meaningful relationships and therefore prone to indulgence in sexual risks.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that personality traits components (Extroversion, Openness, Neuroticism, Agreeableness) have a joint and separate positive influence on adolescents' indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours while no correlation was found between conscientious dimension of personality trait and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. It also concluded that the four dimensions of emotional intelligence (Social awareness, self management, self awareness and relationship management) have a joint and separate positive impact on students' engagement in risky sexual behaviours.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend as follows:

1. There should be awareness creation for the adolescents' regarding the deadly/grave consequences of indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours. Most adolescents' are yet to develop proper self identity and many draw their identity from peer group perceived "tough guys" criterion, therefore one cannot rule out the fact that many engaging in risky sexual behaviour does not understand the implications to their psychological well being, therefore the need for awareness creation. To achieve this, the university administration in collaboration with stake holders in education (parents, government), church, non-governmental organizations among others should organize regular seminars and workshops on sex education and drug consumption/addiction.
2. The university administration through the guidance and counseling center/unit, academic advisers as well as students' staff advisers should organize intervention programs aimed at building emotional skills in adolescents' which may be an effective strategy for preventing their indulgence in risky sexual and health behaviours.
3. The university should include as a compulsory General Studies (GS) course entrepreneurial studies where students should be kept busy with practical skills like bakery, fashion and design (tailoring) and furniture making among others. Igbo adage says "An idle man is a devil's workman". This will reduce their having time to engage in unprofitable acts including sexual risks.
4. Control of alcoholic drinks/ drugs among adolescents' should be enhanced through proper regulation by the university authority, government and food and drug control agencies. To this end government should make and implement laws against alcohol/drug use by adolescents and minors. Also the university authority through their task force team should monitor and control the nature of drinks/drug sold in the university environment.

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