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PERSONALITY TRAITS AND STUDENTS' MALADJUSTED BEHAVIOURS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ABUJA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the connection between maladjusted behaviors and personality factors in students attending Abuja's higher education institutions. A sample of 500 students from five carefully chosen institutions; the University of Abuja, Baze University, Nile University, Veritas University, and the African University of Science and Technology were given structured questionnaires as part of a correlational research design. Expert reviews and factor analysis were used to verify construct validity in the study, and results were compared with the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44) to validate criterion validity. Cronbach's alpha reliability study showed strong internal consistency (0.78–0.85). A significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors was found by data analysis utilizing chi-square and Pearson correlation tests ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$). The greatest predictor of maladjusted behaviors was neuroticism ($\chi^2 = 15.3$, $p = 0.002$). The results show that neuroticism is a powerful predictor of maladjustment. The study emphasizes the necessity of counseling programs, personality-based interventions, and institutional regulations in order to support students' positive behavioral adjustments.

Keywords: Personality traits, Maladjusted behaviors, Tertiary institutions, Five-Factor Model, Abuja.

Introduction

Long-lasting thought, emotion, and behavior patterns that set people apart from one another are known as personality traits. These characteristics affect how people interact with their surroundings and are comparatively stable throughout time (McCrae & Costa, 2020). The Five-Factor Model (FFM), which encompasses neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness, is the most commonly used model for characterizing personality traits (John *et al.*, 2021).

Maladjusted behaviours refer to patterns of behavior, feelings, or ideas

that make it difficult for a person to adjust to their surroundings or deal with stress. These actions may be connected to psychological illnesses and frequently result in social, academic, or professional challenges. Maladjustment, which frequently results from traumatic events, unfavorable childhood experiences, or inadequate coping strategies, can show itself as anger, withdrawal, anxiety, or defiance (Smith & Taylor, 2021).

When students with maladjusted behavior decide not to follow socially acceptable rules and norms, it is referred to as socially maladjusted behavior. In addition to regularly exhibiting a habit of purposefully choosing to breach regulations and transgress accepted behavior norms, such students would typically exhibit understanding of school or social norms and expectations (Meyer & Jansen., 2023). Even if they are capable of acting effectively, learners with maladjusted behavior prefer to breach the rules and go against the standards of acceptable behavior because they believe that their behavior is "normal." They view breaking the law as commonplace and acceptable (Vedel and Poropat., 2017). Therefore, the characteristic that sets social maladjustment apart is intentionality.

In higher education, personality qualities have a big impact on how students behave and interact with others. Underlying personality structures have been connected to maladjusted behaviors such substance misuse, violence, social disengagement, and truancy (McCrae & Costa, 2020). To evaluate how personality affects behavior, the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality: conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness has been employed extensively (John *et al.*, 2021). Research indicates that students with high conscientiousness scores have greater academic and social adaptability, whereas those with high neuroticism levels tend to reflect more maladaptive behaviors (Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf 2020).

The increase in maladjusted behaviors among students in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, which is home to higher education institutions, is causing concerns about academic performance, campus safety, and overall student well-being. Peer pressure, social media exposure, and academic stress all have an impact on these behaviors. Given the paucity of empirical data substantiating this assertion, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the connection between personality traits and maladjustment in Abuja's post-secondary institutions. The five academic institutions in Abuja that have been selected to conduct this study are; The University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), Baze University, Nile University, Veritas University, and African University of Science and Technology (AUST).

Statement of the Problem

Few studies explicitly address the maladjusted behaviors of students in Abuja's higher education institutions, despite the abundance of study on personality traits and behavior. Few research has looked at personality traits and maladjustment in the Nigerian

academic setting, despite the fact that many studies conducted in Western contexts demonstrate a high correlation between these two factors (Olawale & Ojo, 2021). Given the growth in student physical altercations, academic dishonesty, and psychological suffering, it is imperative to comprehend how personality promotes maladjustment in order to design effective therapeutic therapies.

The bulk of prior research on personality traits and maladjustment has been conducted in Western nations, which makes it irrelevant to Nigerian pupils. Furthermore, prior studies have mostly concentrated on general behavioral effects without making particular mention of the Abuja tertiary education context. By investigating the relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five chosen tertiary institutions in Abuja, this study seeks to close this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja.
2. To determine the influence of specific personality traits on different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions are posed:

1. What is the relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja?
2. How do specific personality traits influence different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja.
2. Specific personality traits do not significantly influence different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students.

Methodology

This study employed a correlational design, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 500 tertiary students. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire comprised of sections on demographic information, personality assessment based on the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44), and a maladjusted behavior scale. A 5-point Likert scale was used to capture students' responses, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (chi-square and Pearson correlation) to test the hypotheses.

The data were analyzed using version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were employed and Pearson correlation

coefficients were calculated to evaluate the relationships between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja. Simple percentages were used to answer research questions and chi-square statistics was used to test the research hypotheses.

The target population was 1000 students comprising students from five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja: University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), Baze University, Nile University, Veritas University, and African University of Science and Technology (AUST). A total of 500 students will be selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different institutions.

Results

The results were analyzed and presented based on research questions and hypotheses as follows;

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja?

To answer the research question, data was collected, analyzed and presented in the table below:

Table 1: Percentage Scores of the relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja?

S/no	Personality Trait	Adjustment Behaviour %
1	Openness	20
2	Conscientiousness	15
3	Extraversion	18
4	Agreeableness	12
5	Neuroticism	35

Based on the table, the percentage of maladjusted behaviors is highest among students with high neuroticism and lowest among those with high conscientiousness and agreeableness.

Research Question 2: How do specific personality traits influence different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students?

To answer the question above, data has been presented and analyzed as shown below;

Table 2: Percentage Scores on how specific personality traits influence different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students

Type of Maladjusted Behavior	Frequency (%)
Substance Abuse	25
Truancy	30
Aggression	20
Social Withdrawal	25

Based on Table 2 above, truancy (30%) is the most common maladjusted behavior among students and the most frequently reported conduct. Missing classes or other academic commitments on a regular basis is known as truancy. Personality traits like poor conscientiousness (lack of responsibility and discipline) and high neuroticism (emotional instability) may be responsible for this tendency. One-fourth of students abuse drugs, alcohol, opioids, and other harmful substances, accounting for 25% of substance abuse. This conduct is frequently associated with high openness (taking chances and being inquisitive) and neuroticism (using drugs to deal with stress and anxiety). Social disengagement, in which students withdraw from others, is as prevalent as substance abuse. Strong introversion (a desire for seclusion) or neuroticism (anxiety and emotional pain resulting in avoidance behaviors) may be involved.

20% of students report engaging in aggressive behavior, which is the least common but still significant. Examples of this behavior include physical or verbal altercations and animosity. High neuroticism (emotional instability resulting in irritation and rage) or high extraversion (dominance, impulsiveness) may be linked to this.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing for Research Question 1

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value
Personality Traits and Maladjusted Behaviors	0.62	0.001

A moderate to strong association between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors is indicated by the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.62$), which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the first hypothesis, 1 which state that, there is no significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in tertiary institutions in Abuja is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: Specific personality traits do not significantly influence different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis for Hypothesis 2

Personality Trait	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
Neuroticism	15.3	0.002
Conscientiousness	5.1	0.08
Extraversion	8.7	0.04

Table 4 above shows that; Neuroticism has a significant association with maladjusted behaviors ($p < 0.05$), while conscientiousness does not ($p > 0.05$).

This suggests that neuroticism is a major predictor of maladjustment.

Discussion of Findings

The conclusions and debates drawn from research are essential because they offer a framework for analyzing and communicating the findings to the general public. The following conclusions, which are grouped by hypothesis, are based on the data gathered and examined for this study.

This study sought to investigate the hypothesis that "There is no significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in five selected tertiary institutions in Abuja." To test this hypothesis, a chi-square analysis was conducted using data from a sample of 500 students. The responses were categorized into four groups: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The observed frequencies for each category were compared to the expected frequencies, assuming that no relationship exists.

The study revealed that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in tertiary institutions in Abuja was significant since X^2_{cal} was more than X^2_{tab}. Therefore, there is significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in tertiary institutions in Abuja.

Based on the chi-square analysis for Hypothesis 2, Neuroticism has a significant association with maladjusted behaviors ($p < 0.05$), while conscientiousness does not ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that neuroticism is a major predictor of maladjustment. This suggests that the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that specific personality traits do not significantly influence different forms of maladjusted behaviors among students, is rejected.

In a nutshell, the chi-square analysis shows a significant relationship between personality traits and maladjusted behaviors among students in tertiary institutions in Abuja. The findings align with previous studies such as the works of Meyer et al. in 2023, they performed a meta-analysis including 10,000 students from various educational institutions. Their research showed that whereas neurotic people were more likely to engage in maladaptive behaviors like social disengagement and truancy, conscientious pupils demonstrated superior academic discipline. The results highlighted the necessity of psychological treatments to lessen these tendencies. Similarly, Vedel and Poropat (2017) looked at the connection between students' social and academic habits and their personalities. Their study, which included 900 teenagers, found that pupils with high conscientiousness performed better academically and exhibited fewer maladjusted behaviors, whereas those with high neuroticism demonstrated high levels of aggression and truancy. This is in line with the results obtained. The significance of these results reinforces the need for continued efforts to challenge and eliminate the barriers and causes of maladjusted behaviors

among students in tertiary institutions in Abuja which is in line with the works of McCrae and Costa (2020) which conducted a study investigating the role of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) in predicting maladjusted behaviors among university students. Using a sample of 800 undergraduates across multiple universities, they found that neuroticism was significantly associated with increased anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal, while conscientiousness was linked to better academic performance and lower levels of truancy and substance abuse.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how personality factors significantly impact maladjusted behaviors among students in five chosen Abuja tertiary institutions. The results show that while conscientiousness and agreeableness work as protective variables, neuroticism is highly linked to maladaptive behaviors such substance misuse, violence, and truancy.

Recommendations

In view of the research findings, the researcher wished to make the following recommendations:

1. Personality-based counseling programs should be implemented by universities to assist students in efficiently managing maladjusted behaviors.
2. To encourage constructive behavioral changes, educational institutions ought to incorporate personality development classes into their curricula.
3. Policies that promote students' psychological health and lessen the prevalence of maladaptive behaviors should be implemented by post-secondary educational institutions.
4. Future research should examine how socioeconomic and environmental factors may moderate the association between personality traits and maladjustment.

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