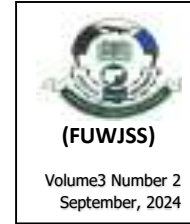


**INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY ON CRIMINAL
BEHAVIOUR AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN JOS
NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA**



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Abstract

The study examined the influence of personality on criminal behaviour among adolescents in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State, Nigeria. One hundred and fifty (150) adolescents made up of 78 (54.2%) males and 66 (45.8%) females within the age range of 13-18 years volunteered for the study. Two scales: The Big Five Inventory (BFI) and the Likelihood of Violence and Delinquency Scale were used to generate data to test research hypotheses. Test results revealed that personality had significant effect on crime, $R^2=0.916$, $p=0.000$ ($p<0.05$). The study concludes that the interaction between personality and age significantly influence criminal behaviors in adolescents. Hence, the study recommends that there is need for the establishment of psychological service centers in schools which will engage the services of psychologists to counsel and modify the negative traits of deviant adolescents that will help in reducing the occurrences of deviant activities among adolescents, and the need for religious bodies and organizations to continuously psycho educate adolescents on the dangers associated with crime.

Keywords: Age, personality, crime, adolescents, Jos North, psychologists

Introduction

For many decades, crime has remained a global challenge in human race and constitutes one of the biggest problems in our society. According to the advanced learner's dictionary, crime is an action or omission that constitutes an offence and is punishable by law. It is a behavior that is intentional deemed harmful and prohibited. Paul Tappan (1962) a criminologist defines crime as an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law committed and sanctioned by the state as felony.

Crime is a universal problem defined by the criminal law of a given jurisdiction. The international law recognizes that some crimes are so serious that the need to persecute them transcends all borders African center for Justice and Peace studies (2022). There are different types of crime in existence commonly grouped into major categories as violent crime, property crime, organized crime, white collar crime etc Crossman (2021). However, certain societies have recorded higher percentages of criminal activities than others Agboola, (2009).

In Nigeria, criminal activities are multidimensional which are assuming dangerous proportion as they threaten lives and property, national sense of well-being, peace and social order. Agboola, (2009), Ahmed (2010). Over the years, the rate of crime in Nigeria has been on the increase with different types of crimes been carried out with some form of digital sophistication Ahmed, (2010). This increase in crime has led to the formation of various vigilante groups, to combat crimes in some parts of the country Fajemirokun, Adewale, Idowu, Oyewusi, & Maiyegun, (2006).

Adolescent according to the Wikipedia is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that occurs during puberty to adulthood (ages 10-19). According to world youth report, the rate of criminal activities among the adolescents group is on the increase. Crimes committed by these categories are tagged juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency refers to a behavior which under the law subjects those children to juvenile court Obindah, (2023). The Nigerian constitution defines juvenile delinquency as a crime committed by a person under the age of 18 years. The world youth report, (2007) asserts that young people who are at risk of becoming delinquent usually live in difficult circumstances. For instances, children who live in poverty, abusive conditions, broken families, death of parents etc are at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents. According to Abubakar, (2018), the number of children in difficult circumstances is estimated to have

increased from 80 million to 160 million. Common crimes associated with juvenile delinquent includes stealing, rape, drug use, homicide, prostitution, cultism, robbery, truancy etc Abubakar, (2018)

The American Psychological Association (APA), (2014) describes personality as trait patterns in individuals that are distinct and unique such as thinking, feeling, and the way one behaves. Personality according to Engler, (2009), is the pattern of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments, and behaviors consistently exhibited over time that strongly influences one's expectations, self-perceptions, values, and attitudes. It also predicts human reactions to other people, problems, and stress Hannah, & Akmal, (2016) postulate that personality encompasses all of the thoughts, behavior patterns, and social attitudes that impact how humans view themselves and what they believe about others and the world around them.

In a bit to understand how personality determine behavior, amongst the very many conceptualizations of personality are: Eysenck's (1916-1997) three dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion, and psychoticism. Eysenck believed biological factors, hormonal levels and environmental factors influence a person's score on the dimension. The theory suggests that people have basic traits and the strength of those trait accounts for personality differences.

One of the major construct of personality is age. Age refers to the length of time that a person has lived. Sociologist asserts that age is entirely about perspective seen in three forms namely chronological age, defined as the number of years a person has lived. Biological age defined as a description of individual development based on milestone markers. Psychological age defined as a subjective description of one's experiences using non physical features. The legal and political magazine (2011) considers age as a significant aspect of crime. Several Researchers have established that demographic patterns are associated with criminality and juvenile delinquency. One of the findings in literatures is that adolescents are significantly more likely to commit crime than youth and other groups Zimring. (1999).

The relationship between crime and age has been the subject of concern in Nigeria. Quite a number of Nigerian adolescent females are often involved in the use of drugs in their sex industries. Francis, Soothill, and Fligelstine, (2004) found in their study that a significant number of all crimes are made by young people. The international organization for Peace Building and social Justice Report reveals that 70% of Nigerian youth embrace crime due to poverty and lack of economic opportunities.

The report revealed that about 70% of the population under 35 years of age are poor and lack economic opportunities which turn them towards criminality and terrorism to earn a living

Recently, juvenile delinquency in Jos plateau state began to receive research attention and has become a matter of great concern in the society and to parents as well. Juvenile delinquency and its manifestation in Jos cuts across many social level Smah (2005) Jos was laid out in the 1915 under the Jos Township and Jos native town Smah (1995) and seen as the home of peace and tourism. Katu (2019) in an exploratory study on youth conflict and peace building in Jos found that political marginalization and social exclusion was a trigger factor for crime and violence's among young people In a study conducted by Smah (1996) where he assessed the effect of social media advertisement on the use of alcohol and tobacco by secondary school students in Jos found that mass media advertisement such as billboards, magazine, television etc influenced their criminal tendency. Two minors were in April 2022 remanded by a senior magistrate court in Jos north plateau state to the children juvenile home at jos north for a four count charge of house breaking, stealing, theft and conspiracy. THISAGE (2022) this has made juvenile delinquency in Jos to be examined.

Junger- Tas & Ineke Haen. (2009) in their study found that more than half of adolescent's self-report that they have committed some kind of theft, mostly low-level theft. Statistically, rates of criminal involvement generally peak at about age18 for males and about 15 for females. However, there are differences in the peak age of offending across offence types.

In a study conducted by Ibigbami, Adewuya, Akinsulore, Aloba, Mapayi, Ibigbami, & Olowookere, (2019) on Personality traits, related factors and crime among an undergraduate student population in Southwestern Nigeria university. The findings showed that personality traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness had a significant negative correlation with criminal behavior, while the Extraversion personality trait had a significant positive correlation with risky sexual behavior.

Abimbola and Ugbede (2018) conducted a survey on gender differences in risky behavior, learned helplessness, and school connectedness among undergraduates in Osun State. The result indicated that there was a significant difference between males and females on risky behavior. There was no significant difference between males and females on learned helplessness. Besides, no significant difference was found between males and females on school connectedness.

Tenibiaje, D.J. (2011) investigated the interactive effect of personality traits, sex and age among prison inmates in some Nigerian prisons. A total of five hundred and four (504) prison inmate participated. Result showed that there was a significant interaction between personality traits, sex and age on criminal behavior of inmates.

Several theories can be used to explain why adolescents engage in crime. The social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura 1960 postulates that people can learn by and modeling and these learned behaviors can become central in ones personality. The theory places serious concerns on social influence. It emphasizes how cognitions, behavioral, personal and environmental factors interact to determine motivation and behavior (Posner, 2008).

This theory opines that people learn by observing others with their cognitions, behaviors and environment as primary factors that interact to determine the development of a certain line of action or behaviors. The theory explores the emotional and cognitive aspect for understanding crime and behavioral changes. This theory seeks to explain how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral pattern. (Bandura, 1997).

The social cognitive theory however suggests that adolescents can observe and witness criminal behaviors carried out by others and tends to reproduce those behaviors through modeling. Wayne (2016) asserts that if individuals see successful demonstration of a behavior, they feel they can also complete the behavior successfully.

Another psychological theory developed by an American psychiatrist Aaron T Beck in 1976 is the cognitive theory. The theory maintains that how an individual thinks determines to a large extent how he/she feels and behaves. The adolescent who has a maladaptive interpretation and conclusion about event, may likely yield to criminal tendencies. According to Aaron Beck, the processing of information is crucial for the survival of people throughout their life span. Individuals who have a faulty cognition and misconception about happenings, themselves, the future and the world at large are likely going to make decisions that will deviate from what will be normally expected. The basic assumption of this theory is that an individual need to have a functional apparatus for taking in relevant information from the environment, synthesizing it and formulating plans of action (Raymond & Danny 1980). In the case where by this apparatus is distorted, the individual may exhibit negative judgments and interpretations. In essence, this theory supports the fact that criminal behaviors are caused by dysfunctional thinking.

This study aims to access the influence of personality on criminal behavior among adolescent in Jos North. It also examines the influence of the Big 5 personality dimension on criminal behaviors of adolescent. The research hypothesis was to determine if personality had an effect on criminal behavior, if age being a construct of personality had an effect on criminal behavior and if the interaction of personality and age will have an effect on criminal behaviors of adolescent in Jos North Local Government Area.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the cognitive theory of Aaron T Beck 1976. This theory is chosen because it considers cognitive factors as the bases for explaining behaviors. The theory opines that negative thoughts generated by dysfunctional beliefs and interpretation are the primary cause of negative behaviors. To Aaron Beck, people who have a misplaced representation about things happening to them think differently from those who do not and it is this difference in thinking that makes them to act the way they do. In relation to the influence of personality and adolescent crime, cognitive theory will see it as failures of information processing and content of dysfunction thoughts and faulty cognitions.

Research Methodology

This study was a survey design that utilized the questionnaire method. There was (1) independent variables, namely, personality which had five (5) levels-conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and neuroticism. The dependent variable was criminal behavior. Therefore, the study was a 5 x 2 factorial design.

One hundred and fifty (150) adolescents drawn from two secondary schools in Jos North LGA of Plateau State comprising of 78 (54.2%) males and 66 (45.8%) females with the age range of 13-18 years, mean age of 16.01 and standard deviation of 3.42 participated in the study.

Two instruments were used to measure the research variables- the Big Five Personality Inventory and the Likelihood of Violence and Delinquency Scale.

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by Goldberg (1993), and validated in Nigeria by Umeh (2004) is a 44-item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five Factors (dimensions) of personality- conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience, agreeableness and neuroticism. It is a Likert scale with responses

measured on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree). Items scores are added to obtain the individual's score in each of the five sub scales. John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) reported a Cronbach alpha ranging from 80 to 85 and convergent validity of .75.

The Likelihood of Violence and Delinquency Scale developed by Flewelling, Paschall and Ringwalt (1993) measures perceived likelihood of engaging in violence and other high risk criminal/delinquent behaviors. It consists of nine (9) items, each targeting likelihood of engaging in violence and other high risk behaviors. Responses are measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = Very Likely, 4 = Not at all likely). Higher total score reflects more likelihood of engaging in violence and other high risk behaviors. The scale has a reliability of .91 and is said to have good validity.

Verbal permission was sought and obtained from the two principals of the schools and consent for participation from participants obtained after explaining the aim of the study, likely benefits and risks were explained. School Guidance and Counseling tutors gave consent on behalf of participants who were under the age of 18 years after explanations were given to them by the lead investigator and two members of the team. Only willing participants who volunteered were included in the study and they were told they could withdraw participation at any stage and were assured of confidentiality of the information they give. Questionnaires were administered, during break time, by two members of the research team in each school, and participants were given the opportunity to ask the researchers questions regarding any item that needs clarification. It took only a day to collect the data.

Both inferential and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, especially the mean, frequency table, range and standard deviation were used because they are easy to understand. However, Pearson's product moment correlation was employed for hypothesis one, t-test related for hypothesis two while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for hypothesis three. Whereas the ANOVA yields the within groups and between groups difference simultaneously, the t test yields the between groups difference while the Pearson's coefficient of correlation gives the relationship between two variables.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristic of Participants

	Frequency	Percent %
Age Mean±SD	16.01±3.42	
Gender		
Male	78	54.2
Female	66	45.8
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	123	87.9
Islam	27	12.1

Table 1 show that the mean age of the participants was 16.01 years with a standard deviation of 3.42. 74 (54.2%) of the participants were males, while 66 (45.8%). 123 (87.9%) were Christians while 27 (12.1%) Islam.

Inferential results

Hypothesis one

There will be a significant effect of personality on criminal behavior among adolescents.

Table 2: Model Evaluation Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.957 ^a	.916	.915	3.044

1. Predictors: (Constant): Personality

2. Dependent Variable: criminal behavior.

The relationship value which is given as $R = 0.957$ implies that there is a significant impact of personality on criminal behavior among adolescents in Jos North LGA. It was found that $R^2 = 0.916$ or 91.6%; signifies that personality for 91.6% of change or variation in criminal behaviour. Furthermore, the p value of the analysis is given 0.000 less than 0.05; this suggests that personality has a significant impact on criminal behaviour. This is in agreement with the assertion of Ibigbami, & Adewuya, et al. (2019) who found that personality traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness had a significant negative correlation with criminal behavior, while the Extraversion personality trait had a significant positive correlation with risky sexual behavior. The findings of this hypothesis however reveal that personality traits significantly influence criminal behaviors of adolescent.

Hypothesis 2

Age will have significant effect on criminal behaviors among adolescent of Jos north LGA of Plateau State.

Table 2: ANOVA table for the significant impact of age on crime among adolescents Jos North LGA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.273	1	2.384	.239	.629
Intercept	23756.143	1	22645.143	2269.481	.000
Age	2.273	1	2.384	.239	.629
Error	269.409	27	9.978		
Total	24199.000	29			
Corrected Total	261.783	28			

The results of hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant effect of age on likelihood of crime among adolescents in Jos North LGA. This is because younger aged participants with likelihood of crime do not significantly differ with older aged participants with attitudes towards crime; with the Means, 27.40, 27.07, $F(1, 27) = 0.239$, $p = 0.629$ ($p > 0.05$). Thus rejecting the hypothesis

This aligns with the study of Junger- Tas E. (2013) who found that more than half of adolescent's self-report that they have committed some kind of theft, mostly low-level theft. Statistically, rates of criminal involvement generally peak at about age 18 for males and about 15 for females.

David (1999) asserts that age needs to be separated from the period effects. He found in his study that peer influence, increasing family and community control influences criminal behaviors.

Hypothesis Three

Personality and age will have significant effect on crime among adolescents in Jos North LGA

Table 4: Coefficients of the regression table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.819	.668		2.724	.000
Personality	2.211	.055	.957	40.153	.000
Age	32.01	.051	.947	30.342	.000

Dependent Variable – Likelihood towards crime

The regression equation extracted from the analysis is thus given as:

$$ATC = 1.819 + 0.957CC + \mu.$$

Since the p value = 0.000 less than 0.05 which suggests that the interaction of personality and age had a significant impact on likelihood to crime among adolescents Jos North LGA.

This is in harmony with the findings of Tenibiaje, D.J. (2010) who found that the inmates scored significantly high than the non-inmates in extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism dimensions. Khan (2014) also confirmed that suspects had higher scores of psychoticism, neuroticism, extraversion, and lie as compared to non-suspects. Similarly, Tenibiaje, D.J. (2011) also found that there was a significant interaction between personality traits, sex and age on criminal behavior of inmates

Conclusion and Recommendations

Personality was primarily investigated to determine the link with criminal behavior of adolescent in Jos north. This current study found that personality and the interaction between personality and age significantly influence criminal behaviors in adolescents. In line with the findings from this study, it is therefore recommended that the government should establish psychological service centers in schools and engage the services of psychologists to counsel and modify the negative traits of deviant adolescents. School administrators are advised to take the personality traits of prospective candidates seriously during school admission to minimize deviant behavior in schools and Governments should build more Juvenile training institutions where psychologists are employed to carry out psychological diagnosis, assessment, counseling and psychotherapy aimed at modifying personality of adolescents.

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