

**PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS
OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ABUJA, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: This paper examined the influence of personality traits and self-esteem on antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. The study was anchored on Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes the interaction between personal dispositions and environmental reinforcement in shaping behaviour. The paper adopted a survey research design, with a total population of 4,270 students drawn from four selected secondary schools within the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). Using Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula, a sample of 366 respondents was selected through a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using standardized instruments: the Big Five Inventory (John et al., 1991), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and Deviant Behaviour Scale (Sanchez et al., 2012). Data analysis was performed using simple and multiple regression analyses via SPSS. The results revealed that personality traits jointly accounted for 82.4% ($R^2 = .824$) of the variance in antisocial behaviour, with openness to experience ($\beta = .659$, $p < .001$) and neuroticism ($\beta = .568$, $p < .001$) emerging as the strongest predictors. Conversely, self-esteem had no significant influence on antisocial behaviour ($\beta = -.061$, $p = .257$, $R^2 = .004$). The findings highlight that emotional instability and impulsivity are major drivers of antisocial conduct, while self-perception plays a minimal role. The study concludes that antisocial behaviour arises from the interplay between personality predispositions and social learning processes. It recommends that school-based interventions should focus on emotional regulation, personality development, and peer influence management to curb antisocial tendencies among adolescents in Nigeria.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Self-Esteem, Antisocial Behaviour, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transformative phase characterized by rapid cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development. During this period, individuals are particularly susceptible to engaging in risky or maladaptive behaviours, including antisocial behaviour, which encompasses actions that violate societal norms and the rights of others (American Psychological Association [APA], 2022). In urban areas like Abuja, Nigeria, secondary school adolescents are increasingly exposed to social pressures, economic instability, and digital influences, which may exacerbate antisocial tendencies.

Carroll et al. (2023) observed that continuity and change characterize the trajectories of adolescents' antisocial behavior. In both rural and urban areas, the streets and residences are no longer safe, regardless of how well fortified they may be. Street-smart boys, popularly known as "area boys",

are found everywhere roaming the streets, harassing and extorting money from innocent people. Bank robbery, money laundering, involvement in theft popularly known as "419; kidnapping, car snatching, armed robbery, cultism, assaults, rape, violence, substance abuse, alcoholism, certificate racketing, vandalism, examination malpractices, to mention but a few, are challenges created and faced by youths Carroll et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, it has been argued that as a less developed society begins to modernize, the rate and the nature of its anti-social behavior are influenced by its rate of development (Chukumati & Akpan, 2013). Anti-social behaviour among young people has remained an issue of great concern worldwide. The alarming increase has posed a greater challenge to both developed and non-developed countries due to the availability of modern technologies in the 21st century. Anti-social behavior refers to repeatedly violating the rights of others through intimidation and dishonesty. Antisocial individuals may show impaired functioning in their executive functioning on tasks (Jansen & Franse, 2024), which could potentially lead to obstruction of peaceful task performance. Therefore, anti-social behavior causes harm to the individual perpetrating it and others in a given society, and such people make life miserable for those who live around them (Nwankwo et al., 2010). Antisocial behaviors are the destructive or negative actions characterized by overt and covert hostility and deliberate aggression towards other individuals, places, or things (Khaliq & Rasool, 2016). Anti-social behavior has serious negative impacts on young people, their learning and teaching process, the school, and society in general (Khaliq et al., 2016).

One of the key psychological factors implicated in antisocial behaviour is personality. Contemporary models, such as the Big Five Personality Traits, have been widely used to explain behavioural patterns. Research shows that traits such as high neuroticism and low agreeableness, and low conscientiousness are significantly linked to externalizing behaviours, including aggression, defiance, and rule-breaking among adolescents (Zhou et al., 2021; Van den Akker et al., 2019). Personality traits not only shape how adolescents perceive and respond to social situations but also influence their ability to regulate emotions and engage in prosocial behaviour.

Further, Personality has been linked to both antisocial and hyperactive behaviours among adolescents, with extraversion being the most linked measure with antisocial behaviours (O'Connell, 2023). Meanwhile, Eysenck (1991a; 1997) pointed out that nearly all large-scale studies of personality find the equivalent of the three traits, such as Extraversion (E), Neuroticism (N), and Psychoticism (P). These traits are found across cultures worldwide (Barrett & Eysenck, 1984). Assessments of an individual on these traits are also relatively stable across time (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Antisocial behaviour is assumed to occur from antisocial personality disorder (van Dam et al., 2022), and it is believed that it stems from a pervasive pattern of total disregard for the feelings of others, leading to violation of people's rights either by negligence or overt behaviour. Youths who display this maladaptive behaviour do so by evoking strong aversive emotions toward others without recourse to their fundamental human rights (Van Dam et al., 2022).

Another important construct is self-esteem, which refers to an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. Low self-esteem has been identified as a risk factor for a variety of maladaptive outcomes, including depression, substance use, and antisocial behaviour (Orth & Robins, 2022). Adolescents with low self-esteem may resort to aggressive or deviant behaviour as

a way to gain recognition or cope with feelings of inadequacy, especially in environments where peer validation is highly valued. This pattern is observable among Nigerian youth, where societal expectations and peer influence can intensify feelings of low self-worth (Okafor & Anozie, 2020).

Furthermore, low self-esteem can influence antisocial behaviour in two distinct ways: both directly and indirectly. Individuals with low self-esteem may engage in antisocial behaviour as a means to cope with their negative self-image, a connection that has been linked to an increased risk of such actions (Amad et al., 2021). A healthy level of self-confidence can lead individuals to be less concerned about the consequences of their actions, potentially resulting in more antisocial behaviour. Additionally, how individuals develop self-esteem could affect their antisocial behaviour. For example, a strong sense of power and control over others is associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in antisocial behaviour. Individuals who lack confidence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour stemming from feelings of resentment and anger (Kapetanovic et al., 2019). This paper aims to clarify the apparent ambiguity regarding which aspect of self-esteem influences antisocial behaviour, as noted by Schoenmacker et al. (2020).

Statement of the Problem

Antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents has become a growing concern in Nigeria's educational system, particularly in urban areas like Abuja. Incidents such as classroom defiance, bullying, cultism, vandalism, and online aggression are on the rise, disrupting the academic environment and posing serious risks to both student well-being and institutional order (Nwachukwu et al., 2018). Despite increased awareness, efforts by educators, parents, and policy stakeholders have largely focused on external factors such as poverty, parental neglect, or peer influence, often neglecting the psychological dimensions that underlie antisocial tendencies.

Emerging evidence suggests that internal psychological constructs, specifically personality traits and self-esteem, play a significant role in shaping adolescent behaviour (Orth & Robins, 2022; Zhou et al., 2021). Adolescents characterized by high neuroticism and low agreeableness and conscientiousness may be more susceptible to engaging in antisocial conduct due to poor emotion regulation and impulsivity (Van den Akker et al., 2019). Similarly, adolescents with low self-esteem often struggle with self-worth and identity, making them more vulnerable to engaging in deviant behaviour as a form of social compensation or resistance (Okafor & Anozie, 2020).

However, within the Nigerian context and Abuja in particular, there is a limited body of empirical research that systematically examines how these two variables (personality traits and low self-esteem) interact to influence antisocial behaviour among adolescents. Most existing studies in Nigeria tend to treat these factors in isolation or rely on outdated psychological frameworks, leaving a gap in contemporary, culturally relevant understanding of the issue. Given the alarming rate at which antisocial behaviours are manifesting in schools and the insufficient integration of psychological factors in intervention frameworks, it becomes imperative to explore the underlying influence of personality traits and low self-esteem. The paper, therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of personality traits and low self-esteem on antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria.

Objectives

The paper presents the following objectives.

- i. Examine the influence of personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the influence of self-esteem on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study.

- i. There will be a significant influence of personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria.
- ii. Self-esteem will significantly influence antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Personality Traits

The concept of personality is defined as individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving (American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), while personality traits are enduring dimensions of personality that differentiate people from one another (Eyong et al., 2014). Goldberg (2018) identified five primary factors of personality. These five broad categories of personality attributes have become known as the Big Five personality dimensions or the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. They are Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. The concept is further elaborated by Cherry (2018), who listed common traits embedded in the five primary factors to include: being imaginative, insightful, original, daring, clever and creative for Openness to experience, being thorough, consistent, reliable, persistent, ambitious, persevering, and planning for Conscientiousness, being sociable, assertive, talkative and outgoing for extraversion. Furthermore, traits under agreeableness include trustworthiness, loyalty, modesty, and tact.

Personality, according to Abdul (2016), is the total of ways in which an individual reacts to and interacts with others. Thus, personality explains why some people are quiet and passive, whereas others are loud and aggressive. Moreover, Weiten et al. (2009) posit that an individual's personality is a unique constellation of consistent behavioural traits. This means that one's personality trait is their durable disposition to behave in a particular way in a variety of situations, such as honesty, dependability, moodiness, and impulsivity. It is most often described in terms of measurable traits that a person exhibits. Oksana and Rita (2009) defined personality as an enduring system of characteristics that individuals carry from one situation to another, which affects their behaviour.

An individual's personality is the totality of their behaviour, encompassing their thoughts, feelings, and observable behaviours (Obimba & Iwuama, 2003). Nirmala (2011) viewed personality as a unique integration of traits that differentiate one person from another in quality. Personality 21 determines an individual's unique adjustment to his environment. In addition to this, Kendra (2013) maintained that personality arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout the person's lifetime. Moreover, Mischel, Shoda, and Smith (2004) defined personality as individual differences among people, including characteristic patterns of behaviour, thinking, feeling, cognition, and emotion.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a fundamental psychological construct that reflects an individual's overall evaluation of their worth, value, and self-acceptance. It encompasses the beliefs and emotions individuals hold about themselves, influencing their thoughts, motivations, and behaviors. According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem refers to a positive or negative attitude toward the self, involving a sense of self-respect and self-worth. It is the degree to which individuals feel confident, capable, and satisfied with who they are. This evaluation develops over time through interactions with family, peers, and society, making it a central factor in shaping one's personality and psychological well-being.

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self (Hewitt, 2009). Self-esteem is one of the components of self-concept that Rosenberg (1965) defined as the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings concerning him as an object. He noted that self-esteem can be an attitudinal consequence of voluntary action. Cherry (2019) explains that in psychology, the term self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. In other words, how much you appreciate and like yourself. Self-esteem is often seen as a personality trait, which means that it tends to be stable and enduring. Self-esteem can involve a variety of beliefs about oneself, such as the appraisal of one's own appearance, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. He further reveals that, as a dependent variable, self-esteem brings about successful actions that benefit others.

Anti-social Behaviour

Antisocial behaviors are those that go against social norms in a community (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). These behaviors can be categorized into two broad spectrums, namely, overt and covert behaviors (Burt & Donnellan, 2009; Willoughby et al., 2001). According to Willoughby et al. (2001), overt antisocial behavior is offensive behavior that is not concealed, while covert antisocial behavior is unseen and non-confrontational. Hallahan (2006) opines that antisocial behavior may be overt, involving aggressive actions against parents, siblings, teachers, peers, or other adults (e.g., bullying and hitting, verbal abuse) or covert, involving aggressive actions against property (e.g., theft, vandalism, fire-setting, disobedience, temper tantrums, stealing, and violence).

Antisocial behaviour refers to actions that violate societal norms, rules, and the rights of others (Calkins et al., 2009). These behaviours are typically disruptive, aggressive, and harmful, either to individuals or the larger social environment. Among adolescents, antisocial behaviours may include

bullying, truancy, vandalism, defiance of authority, fighting, theft, and involvement in cult-related activities (American Psychological Association [APA], 2022). Adolescence, a period marked by identity exploration and emotional instability, and antisocial behaviour often emerges as a response to internal conflicts or external social pressures. Such behaviours not only disrupt academic and social functioning but also pose long-term risks such as criminal involvement and academic failure if left unaddressed (Miller et al., 2019). Antisocial behaviour can be categorized into two types: reactive (triggered by perceived threats or frustrations) and proactive (intentional and goal-oriented). Both types are associated with difficulties in emotional regulation and are often linked to specific personality traits and self-perceptions (Frick & Ray, 2015).

Empirical Review

Personality Traits and Anti-Social Behaviour

In Al-Damour's (2011) research, the objective was to identify the personality types and aggressive behavior of elementary-level kids in Jordan. The study sample comprised 500 male and female students from the sixth and tenth grades in the education directorates of Irbid Governorate. The study found that pupils at the elementary level exhibit a propensity for emotional responses. Self-directed hostility was the most prevalent behavior seen among the students, followed by aggressiveness towards individuals, and finally anger against things. Additionally, the research demonstrated a strong and statistically significant association between aggressive conduct and specific personality traits. The findings also indicated that there are no statistically significant variations in personality types that can be ascribed to the factors of gender and grade. Regarding the correlation between personality types and displays of violent behavior, the findings indicated that there were no statistically significant variations associated with the factors of gender and academic level.

Also, Al-Mahamid (2011) conducted a study to establish the relationship between personality traits such as aggression, psychopathic deviance, neuroticism, and control among a sample of juvenile delinquents in correctional institutes in the governorates of Damascus and rural Damascus. The study aimed to examine how these traits relate to criminal behavior and to identify any differences in criminal behavior across the variables studied. The sample comprised 426 adolescents who were selected from juvenile rehabilitation centers located in the governorates of Damascus and rural Damascus. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between the scores of the Criminal Behavior Scale and the scores of the Aggressive Behavior Scale within the research population. The research sample showed a statistically significant relationship between the scores of the Criminal Behavior Scale and the scores of the Neuroticism Scale. Similarly, there was a statistically significant relationship between the scores of the Criminal Behavior Scale and the scores of the Psychopathic Deviation Scale. Additionally, a statistically significant relationship was observed between the scores of the Criminal Behavior Scale and the scores of the Control Scale in the research sample. The findings also indicated that aggressive conduct has an impact on criminal behavior, and the attribute of self-control also influences criminal behavior. Moreover, the characteristic of psychopathic deviance has an impact on criminal conduct. Neuroticism has an impact on criminal behavior. Significant variations in average scores of criminal conduct based on age have been seen at a statistically significant level.

Again, Al-Dhafiri (2006) conducted a study in the State of Kuwait to investigate the correlation between extroverted and introverted personality types and aggressive behavior. The study focused on five areas of aggression: towards oneself, towards colleagues, towards teachers, within the classroom, and within the school. The participants were male and female ninth-grade students. The study sample comprised 600 male and female students. The study findings indicated a correlation between introversion style and aggressive conduct, specifically among men. Regarding ladies, the findings indicated a link between extroversion and violent conduct across all five categories in females. The findings also indicated that the whole sample had a greater prevalence of extroversion style. Additionally, girls exhibited higher levels of aggressiveness compared to men, whereas males had higher levels of aggressive behaviors across all five domains in comparison to females. Furthermore, there were statistically significant disparities between males and females in terms of aggressive behaviors across the five domains. Additionally, there were statistically significant distinctions between males and females in terms of extroversion style and interaction with aggressive behavior directed towards oneself, colleagues, and teachers.

Self-Esteem and Anti-Social Behaviour

In a study by Kumar and Kumar (2002), no significant difference in aggression was found among students at different levels of self-esteem. Students studying in private institutions exhibit higher aggression scores as compared to students studying in government schools. The level of self-esteem and institution type did not interact significantly with regard to their combined influence on aggression among senior secondary school students. Results revealed that students studying in the science stream had significantly higher mean aggression scores than students of the arts stream. They also found that the level of self-esteem and stream did not interact significantly with their combined influence on aggression among senior secondary school students.

Also, Wang and Yen (2013) conducted a study in Taiwan on self-esteem among adolescent animosity culprits, casualties, and culprits-casualties, and the moderating effects of sorrow and family support. The scientists proposed analyzing contrasts in the degree of confidence among teenagers with various jobs in hostility contribution (animosity culprits, casualties, culprit casualties, and neutrals) by sex. The scientists additionally inspected the directing impacts of misery and family support on the relationship between hostility contribution and confidence. A sum of 8,000 and 85 teenagers in Taiwan finished surveys as respondents in this review. Confidence was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), in which higher scores indicate greater confidence. The relationship between confidence and animosity inclusion was analyzed using multiple regression analysis (Wang & Yen, 2013). The findings demonstrated that female animosity casualties had lower self-esteem than the other three groups. In any case, there were no huge contrasts in self-esteem between male casualties and culprit casualties (Wang & Yen, 2013). The discoveries support the possibility that degrees of confidence are not equivalent in youths with various examples of association in hostility and those without contribution of animosity (Wang & Yen, 2013). This review has not examined the relationship between high self-esteem, hostility, and different types of delinquent practices. These perspectives informed the ebb and flow review. The specialist sought to determine the relationship between confidence levels (low and high) and misconduct among teenagers in selected public recovery schools in Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding, analyzing, and interpreting the variables and concepts in this paper.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977) and further expanded by Ronald Akers (1985, 1998), offers a powerful framework for understanding the development of antisocial behaviour in adolescents. The theory posits that antisocial behaviour is learned through social interaction, particularly through observation, imitation, reinforcement, and association with deviant models. It emphasizes that behaviour is not merely a result of internal traits or biological predispositions but is largely shaped by environmental influences and social context.

According to Bandura (2004), behaviour, personal factors (such as cognition and emotions), and environmental influences operate through triadic reciprocal determinism, where each element influences and is influenced by the others. This dynamic interplay explains how adolescents exposed to violent, neglectful, or deviant environments may internalize and reproduce antisocial behaviour patterns. Akers (1998) extended Bandura's theory by identifying key mechanisms, differential reinforcement, definitions (discriminative stimuli), differential association, and imitation through which antisocial behaviours are acquired and maintained.

Differential Reinforcement

Akers' concept of differential reinforcement explains that behaviours are strengthened when followed by rewards (positive reinforcement) or the removal of unpleasant stimuli (negative reinforcement). For instance, an adolescent who exhibits aggression and is praised by peers or avoids punishment from adults may be more likely to repeat such behaviour. In environments where antisocial acts such as bullying or defiance are reinforced either directly or indirectly, these behaviours become habitual and normalized. Conversely, when prosocial behaviours are ignored or punished, adolescents may learn that antisocial actions are more effective for gaining attention, control, or peer approval, thus increasing their occurrence (Akers, 1998; Winfree et al., 1998).

Definitions (Discriminative Stimuli)

In Social Learning Theory, definitions refer to the personal beliefs, attitudes, and rationalizations that justify certain behaviours. One's environment shapes these, as does prior reinforcement history. Adolescents who grow up in environments where antisocial behaviour is modelled and accepted may come to view aggression, dishonesty, or defiance as normal or even necessary for survival. For example, a student may come to believe that cheating is acceptable if it helps avoid punishment or gain approval. These internalized definitions act as discriminative stimuli, signalling when a particular behaviour is likely to result in reinforcement, thus increasing the likelihood of future antisocial actions (Akers, 1998).

Differential Association

Differential association refers to the extent to which individuals are exposed to others who engage in or support deviant behaviours. According to Akers, adolescents learn antisocial behaviour through interactions with peers, family members, or others who model and reinforce such behaviours. For instance, if a teenager regularly associates with peers who engage in truancy, fighting, or substance abuse, they are more likely to adopt similar behaviours, especially if those behaviours are rewarded within the peer group. The more frequent and intense these associations are, the stronger the influence on the individual's behaviour (Akers, 1998; Sutherland & Cressey, 1974).

Imitation

Imitation, or observational learning, occurs when an individual replicates behaviour they have observed in others. Adolescents are particularly impressionable and often model the behaviours of peers, parents, celebrities, or social media influencers. When antisocial behaviours such as aggression, disrespect for authority, or manipulation are seen to yield desirable outcomes, adolescents are more likely to imitate them. This process is not simply mimicry; it involves understanding the social consequences of the behaviour and deciding to reproduce it under similar conditions. In environments where antisocial behaviour is frequently observed and reinforced, imitation becomes a major pathway through which these behaviours are learned and perpetuated (Bandura, 1977; Arbib, 2000).

Implications for Antisocial Behaviour in Adolescents

Social Learning Theory provides a comprehensive explanation for how antisocial behaviour is acquired and maintained in adolescents. It emphasizes that exposure to deviant models, reinforcement of antisocial actions, and lack of corrective influences contribute significantly to the development of such behaviours. In particular, adolescents with certain personality traits (e.g., high neuroticism, low agreeableness) or low self-esteem may be more susceptible to these social learning processes. Understanding the role of social learning mechanisms offers important insights for intervention. By modifying reinforcement patterns, reshaping definitions, and altering peer associations, educators, parents, and policymakers can help reduce antisocial behaviour among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a survey research design to examine the influence of personality traits and self-esteem on antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate as it facilitated the systematic collection of standardized data from a large population without manipulation of variables, allowing for the identification of existing psychological patterns and behavioural tendencies. The population comprised 4,270 senior secondary school students (SS1–SS3) drawn from both public and private schools within the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). A representative sample of 366 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations. The paper adopted a multistage sampling

procedure: schools were first stratified into public and private categories, after which proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select respondents across class levels (SS1–SS3). This procedure ensured representativeness and minimized sampling bias in data collection.

Data were obtained through a structured questionnaire comprising standardized scales: the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44) by John et al. (1991) to measure personality traits ($\alpha = 0.88$), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) to assess self-esteem ($\alpha = 0.84$), and the Deviant Behaviour Scale developed by Sanches et al. (2012) to measure antisocial behaviour ($\alpha = 0.83$). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, while permission to conduct fieldwork was granted by the FCT Secondary Education Board and participating school principals. Two trained research assistants facilitated data administration to ensure accuracy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Data analysis was carried out using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive tools such as mean, frequency, and percentage summarized demographic information, while inferential analyses, including simple regression analysis, were conducted using SPSS to test the hypotheses. The methods adopted were justified by their ability to ensure objectivity, reliability, and generalizability of findings, making them suitable for a paper investigating psychological constructs within adolescent populations.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Demographic information

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Cross-Tabulation of the Demography of Respondents

| Demography | GSS Garki | GSS Jikwoyi | Loyola Jesuit | Lead British |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Age | | | | |
| 12 – 14 years | 25 (30.1%) | 41 (29.7%) | 15 (31.3%) | 23 (29.5%) |
| 15 – 17 years | 42 (50.6%) | 69 (50.0%) | 24 (50.0%) | 38 (48.7%) |
| 18 years and above | 16 (19.3%) | 28 (20.3%) | 9 (18.7%) | 17 (21.8%) |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 46 (55.4%) | 76 (55.1%) | 26 (54.2%) | 40 (51.3%) |
| Female | 37 (44.6%) | 62 (44.9%) | 22 (45.8%) | 38 (48.7%) |
| Type of School | Public | Public | Private | Private |
| Public | 83 (100%) | 138 (100%) | — | — |
| Private | — | — | 48 (100%) | 78 (100%) |
| Class Level | | | | |
| SS1 | 27 (32.5%) | 47 (34.1%) | 16 (33.3%) | 26 (33.3%) |
| SS2 | 29 (34.9%) | 47 (34.1%) | 16 (33.3%) | 26 (33.3%) |
| SS3 | 27 (32.5%) | 44 (31.9%) | 16 (33.3%) | 26 (33.3%) |

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of 347 respondents drawn from four selected schools in Abuja: Government Secondary School (GSS) Garki, GSS Jikwoyi, Loyola Jesuit College, and Lead British International School. The age distribution shows that the majority (approximately

50%) of the respondents across all schools were mid-adolescents aged 15–17 years, while 30% were early adolescents aged 12–14 years, and about 20% were late adolescents aged 18 years and above. This indicates that most participants were within the developmental phase where personality and behavioural tendencies are actively formed. The gender distribution revealed a near balance, with male students slightly outnumbering females (about 54%) across the schools. In terms of school type, public school students (GSS Garki and GSS Jikwoyi) accounted for 74.6% of the total sample, while private school students (Loyola Jesuit College and Lead British International School) made up 25.4%. This suggests greater accessibility and participation from public institutions. The distribution across class levels was fairly even, with SS2 students representing 34%, SS1 33.4%, and SS3 32.6% of the respondents. The balanced representation across age, gender, and class levels enhances the reliability and generalizability of the paper's findings.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

There will be a significant influence of personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis showing the influence of personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria

| DV | Predator | R | R ² | F | df | 95%CI | β | t | p |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------|----------------|---------|-------|---------------|-------|--------|------|
| Antisocial Behaviours | Constant | .907 | .824 | 318.279 | 5,341 | | | | .000 |
| | Extraversion | | | | | [.253, .424] | .195 | 7.771 | .000 |
| | Agreeableness | | | | | [-.059, .055] | -.002 | -.075 | .940 |
| | Conscientiousness | | | | | [.017, .138] | .070 | 2.527 | .012 |
| | Neuroticism | | | | | [.651, .776] | .568 | 22.440 | .000 |
| | Openness | | | | | [.801, .948] | .659 | 23.529 | .000 |

Table 2 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the influence of personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 341) = 318.28, p < .001$, with a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .907 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .824, indicating that approximately 82.4% of the variance in antisocial behaviours was explained by the combined personality traits. This demonstrates that the model has a strong explanatory power for predicting antisocial behaviours among the adolescents sampled. When examining the individual predictors, openness to experience and neuroticism emerged as the strongest predictors of antisocial behaviours. Openness to experience had a positive and significant effect, $\beta = .659, t(341) = 23.53, p < .001, 95\% CI [.801, .948]$, suggesting that adolescents with higher levels of openness were more likely to engage in antisocial behaviours. Similarly, neuroticism was a strong positive predictor, β

$\beta = .568$, $t(341) = 22.44$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.651, .776], indicating that higher emotional instability was strongly associated with increased antisocial behaviours. Extraversion also demonstrated a significant positive relationship, $\beta = .195$, $t(341) = 7.77$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.253, .424], suggesting that adolescents who are more outgoing and energetic are also more likely to display antisocial tendencies, though to a lesser degree compared to openness and neuroticism. Conscientiousness had a smaller but statistically significant effect, $\beta = .070$, $t(341) = 2.53$, $p = .012$, 95% CI [.017, .138], implying that adolescents with lower self-discipline and responsibility were slightly more prone to antisocial behaviours. In contrast, agreeableness did not significantly predict antisocial behaviours, $\beta = -.002$, $t(341) = -0.075$, $p = .940$, 95% CI [-.059, .055], suggesting that whether an adolescent is cooperative or antagonistic has little to no effect on antisocial tendencies in this sample. Among the five personality traits, openness to experience and neuroticism were the most influential factors, indicating that adolescents who are highly open to new experiences and who display greater emotional instability are most at risk for engaging in antisocial behaviours. Extraversion and conscientiousness also contributed significantly, though to a lesser extent, while agreeableness had no meaningful impact.

Hypothesis Two

Self-esteem will significantly influence antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis in Table 3

Table 3: Simple regression analysis showing the influence of Self-esteem on antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria

| DV | Predator | R | R ² | F | df | 95%CI | β | t | p |
|-----------------------|-------------|------|----------------|-------|-------|---------------|---------|--------|------|
| antisocial behaviours | Constant | .061 | .004 | 1.291 | 1,345 | | | | |
| | Self-esteem | | | | | [-.224, .060] | -.061 | -1.136 | .257 |

Table 3 presents the results of a simple regression analysis examining whether self-esteem significantly influences antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. The overall regression model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 345) = 1.29$, $p = .257$, with a very low multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .061 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .004. This indicates that self-esteem explained only 0.4% of the variance in antisocial behaviours, suggesting a negligible predictive relationship between the two variables. The results show that self-esteem did not significantly predict antisocial behaviours, $\beta = -.061$, $t(345) = -1.14$, $p = .257$, 95% CI [-.224, .060]. Although the negative beta coefficient suggests that lower self-esteem is associated with slightly higher antisocial behaviours, this relationship was not statistically significant. The confidence interval includes zero, which further indicates that the effect of self-esteem on antisocial behaviours may be due to chance rather than a reliable influence. The results suggest that self-esteem alone does not play a meaningful role in predicting antisocial behaviours among secondary school adolescents in Abuja. This implies that other psychological, social, or environmental factors may be more important determinants of antisocial tendencies in this population.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis stated that personality traits would significantly influence antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents. Findings from the regression analysis confirmed this assumption, indicating that personality dimensions collectively accounted for a substantial 82.4% of the variance ($R^2 = .824$) in antisocial behaviour. Among the traits, openness to experience ($\beta = .659$, $p < .001$) and neuroticism ($\beta = .568$, $p < .001$) exerted the strongest influence, while extraversion ($\beta = .195$, $p < .001$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .070$, $p = .012$) had moderate effects, and agreeableness showed no significant contribution ($p = .940$). This suggests that adolescents characterized by emotional instability, impulsivity, and curiosity are more prone to engage in behaviours that violate social norms and expectations. These findings correspond with empirical evidence from Le et al. (2023), who found that extroverted and neurotic adolescents display heightened aggression, and Eysenck (1991), who emphasized neuroticism as a stable predictor of deviant conduct. Similarly, Al-Mahamid (2011) reported that adolescents high in psychopathic deviance and low in agreeableness are more inclined toward antisocial tendencies. Theoretically, this aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Akers' (1998) extension, which posit that behaviour develops through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within the social environment. Adolescents high in openness and neuroticism may be more susceptible to modeling antisocial behaviour due to their emotional reactivity and cognitive curiosity. Thus, the findings underscore that personality traits interact with social learning mechanisms to shape antisocial conduct among adolescents in Abuja.

The second hypothesis also stated that self-esteem would significantly influence antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents. The regression results did not support this assumption, revealing that self-esteem had no significant predictive effect on antisocial behaviour ($\beta = -.061$, $p = .257$, $R^2 = .004$). Although the relationship was negative, indicating that lower self-esteem might correspond with slightly higher antisocial tendencies, the effect was weak and statistically insignificant. This outcome diverges from the findings of Rosenberg et al. (1989) and Grantham and Ford (2003), who established that low self-esteem is associated with increased deviance and aggression, but aligns with Kumar and Kumar (2002), who found no significant link between the two variables among adolescents. The weak relationship observed in this paper may stem from contextual factors in Nigerian adolescent settings, where social influences, peer-group reinforcement, and environmental pressures often outweigh individual psychological factors. Within the framework of Social Learning Theory, this result suggests that behavioural outcomes are shaped more by social modeling and reinforcement than by internal self-concept. Adolescents may engage in antisocial acts regardless of their self-esteem levels when such behaviours are normalized or rewarded within their peer networks. Hence, while self-esteem remains an important psychological construct, its influence on antisocial behaviour appears secondary to the powerful role of learned environmental and social dynamics.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that personality traits play a significant role in shaping antisocial behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Abuja, Nigeria. The findings reveal that openness to experience and neuroticism are the most influential traits, underscoring that adolescents who are

emotionally unstable, impulsive, and highly curious are more likely to display antisocial tendencies. Conversely, self-esteem exhibited no significant relationship with antisocial behaviour, suggesting that environmental and social learning factors may override internal self-concept in determining behavioural outcomes. Grounded in Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the paper emphasizes that antisocial behaviour results from the interaction between individual dispositions and social reinforcement processes. The integration of theoretical assumptions and empirical evidence suggests that effective behavioural interventions should focus not only on personality development but also on environmental restructuring, particularly through peer influence management, value reorientation, and school-based social learning programs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the paper, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Given that personality traits, particularly openness to experience and neuroticism, significantly predict antisocial behaviour, secondary schools should implement structured personality development and emotional regulation programs. School psychologists and counsellors should design targeted interventions to help adolescents manage impulsivity, emotional instability, and curiosity-driven risk behaviours. These programs should emphasize moral reasoning, empathy, and impulse control to reduce vulnerability to antisocial conduct.
- ii. Since the results revealed that self-esteem did not significantly influence antisocial behaviour, suggesting that social reinforcement outweighs self-perception, schools should strengthen peer modelling and behavioural reinforcement systems. Teachers and administrators should promote prosocial behaviour through mentorship, moral instruction, and recognition of positive conduct. By shaping the social learning environment, schools can discourage the imitation of antisocial patterns and reinforce desirable behavioural standards among adolescents.

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