

Predictive Influence of Personality Types on Truancy Behaviours among Undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

There has been an increased interest in the study of human personality approach of traits as it concerns education, learning, academic achievement, emotional intelligence, and decision making among others. This paper attempted a descriptive and inferential investigation on the existence of truancy behaviours, the predictive influence of personality traits on truancy behaviours, and examined the moderating impact of gender on truancy behaviours among undergraduates in Osun state, Nigeria. Three (3) universities were purposively selected in Osun state because most universities were

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shut down due to industrial action by the academic staff union. A total enumeration technique was adopted to gather two hundred (200) undergraduates from the selected universities. The composition showed that one hundred and seven (107) of these respondents were males while ninety-three (93) were females. Two research questions and one hypothesis were raised in the study. The study gathered data using the Truancy and Personality Traits scale (T&PTs) developed by the researcher alongside the Personality Traits Inventory, IPIP Big-Five factor Markers by Goldberg (1993) with reliability value of 0.71 and 0.84 respectively. The results showed that: truancy behaviours exist among undergraduates; personality traits are significant predictors of truancy behaviours with agreeableness personality traits as the most predictive personality traits; and gender was established as a critical factor in truancy behaviours among undergraduates. Study recommended that school counsellors, social workers, school management and psychologists should intensify their efforts in using social learning and other behaviour therapies to ameliorate truancy and other class attendance disruptive behaviours among undergraduates.

Keywords: *Truancy behaviours, personality traits, predictive influence, gender, undergraduates*

Introduction

School attendance stands out as a major factor in students' academic achievement, and sporadic attendance leads to transient knowledge retention, hence dismal academic result by poor receding test scores. For a student to expect good grades in schoolwork, attending classes and other extra-curricular activities are key, because through his attendance, attentiveness, and participation, one can predict the outcome of his performance. Study of Lust, Meskens & Ahues (2014), showed school attendance as an academic behaviour of significance to academic performance and mentioned character features and friendly ties as being of utmost importance to academic performance. These seem to point to the importance of the psychological aspect of student's personality on his school behaviour and attendance.

Truancy as a recurrent deliberate or non-deliberate negative behaviour is a disturbing situation in institutions of learning. It connotes indiscipline, and an anti-social act which affects acquisition

of knowledge as well as an anti-schooling behaviour which pre-empt failure, drops in grades, and eventual drop-out. It has a short-term disruptive effect on classroom management during teaching and learning processes, hinders employment potentiality, leads to poor self-esteem, hinders promotion to the next class, detrimental to student achievement, and results in drop out. It also has a long-term effect of instability, adult criminality, tardiness at work, violence, stagnancy at work due to no promotion, and a lack of job insecurity.

Truancy behaviours are identified as acts that are evident in situations when: a student does not go to school regularly (absenteeism); does not follow class lessons as scheduled; habitual truancy; escape from teaching and learning activities; or permanent and unexcused absence from school (chronic truancy). In tertiary institutions, truancy behaviours are mostly deliberate acts which undergraduates who are mostly adolescents engage in, as they already assume themselves to have evolved to independent and autonomous life, far from the eagle eyes of parents/guidance who impose activities on them. The freedom to make decisions without any external directive predisposes students to absent themselves unjustly from lectures.

According to Bandannas, Jeumer, Clanet, & Fournast (2004), issues associated with truancy seldom consider psychological criteria, as it tends to give rise to an immediate institutional reaction. Bandannas et. al. (2004), further confirmed that truancy may not be solely due to lack of motivation or oppositional deviant disorder but a refusal to attend school in relation to different types of anxiety. However, some non-deliberate circumstantial situations caused by the environment, ill-health, inability to pay school bills can also be responsible for undergraduate truancy although such situations tend not to have any alarming frequency, unlike intentional ones.

There have been various theories explaining the concept, structure and development of personality, but none disagreed that it helps determine behaviour. A scholarly description of human personality trait as given by the American Psychological Association (2022), conceived it as a stable internal characteristic presented through behaviours, habits, and attitudes which are enduring and consistent components of a person which also summarise and predict the individual's behaviour. It further described it as the enduring

characteristics and behaviour that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns. Personality as perceived by Feist (2017), is the product of normal and clinical high-functioning individual difference traits which change behavioral thresholds and thereby make certain behaviors more likely and others less likely in a person. This can therefore be expressed as distinct set of acts, attitudes, feelings and thought patterns that are presented in a person which impacts on their behaviours and helps him build his own identity.

Study of Khan, Nawaz & Khan, (2016), aligned with the nature-nurture controversies that human trait is being shaped by either life experiences (effectiveness traits) or heredity (emergent traits) which can change over time as traits develop as an individual acquires a stereotype picture of himself, his parent/guardian, significant figures around him, groups and institutions in his environment. However, while acquiring these pictures, the individual perceives some as attractive or threatening, thereby experiencing conflict while developing his own dimension of characteristics, which eventually distinct him from others.

The trait approach to perceptions, thoughts by psychologists and researchers have varied over time with broad dispositions including the contributions of Fajkowska & Kreitler (2018), which suggested that people have certain basic traits that account for personality differences and cause individuals to behave in certain consistent ways. The works of Worthy, Lavigne & Romero (2020, cited in Eshun, Dabone, Annan-Brew et al., 2023), hinged the trait theory on personality on the perception that individuals differ from one another based on the strength and intensity of basic trait dimensions under three criteria: (1) consistency, (2) stability, and (3) individual differences. Worthy, et. al. (2020), believed that before a behaviour is considered as a trait, there must be a habitual pattern of behaviour, thought, and emotion which is evident in reasonable degree of consistency across situations wherein the individual exhibits the behaviours related to the trait; the demonstrated behaviour must be relatively stable over time, and it must reveal differences in one individual to another.

Allport's trait theory

A renowned psychologist Allport, who studied the works of Freud and Jung on personality hypothesized that a person's personality was determined at birth through biological means but that his experiences and environment played a role in shaping his personality. Allport's significantly contributed his concept of personal dispositions to the development of personal traits. Further on Allport contribution, these personal dispositions are influenced by past childhood experiences, the current environment, and the interaction between the two contexts. Allport's concept aligned with the conviction that consistent characteristic contributing to a person's personality must fall into either a cardinal, central or secondary type of traits (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015).

Allport's analyses of the cardinal trait pronounced that rather than for an individual to have one dominant trait like others, an individual with cardinal trait is blessed to have multiple smaller ones which work together with the dominant one to shape and strongly influence his individual's thoughts, feelings, actions and personality as they are expressed across situations and various parts of the person's life (Allport, 1931). This concept asserted that cardinal traits are rare, dominating and develop later in life, but may overwhelm the other characteristics present in the individual as it will form most the individual's personality and may affect their relationships with others. On the other hand, central traits are interpreted as general characteristics form basic personality foundations even though they are not as dominating as cardinal traits. While central traits are not as dominating as cardinal traits, they describe the major characteristics that an individual might use to describe another person; and secondary traits are described as only present under certain conditions and specific circumstances and are not as visible as the other two.

Big Five-factor model (FFM) of personality

Cattell improved on Allport's initial large sample of 4,000 different traits and eventually streamed 16 key personality traits using related term as the factor analysis. An offshoot of Cattell's effort was reported by Hampson (2012), who pointed at Eysenck's limited three-dimension model of personality based on just three universal traits of

neuroticism/emotional stability, introversion/ extroversion and psychoticism. However, Eysenck's proposal of three-dimension model of personality became less acceptable in the field of psychology and The Big Five-factor model (FFM) of personality, became more practicable through editing and expansion wherein human personality was described in terms of extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. It was out of this model that Goldberg (1993 in Grover & Amit 2024) drew his 'Big Five' International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), psychometric test which is used to describe the broad traits that serve as building blocks of personality from.

Extraversion describes personality traits in a continuum between extreme extraversion and extreme introversion. represents a continuum between extreme extraversion and extreme introversion as most people in the real world lie somewhere in between. Extraversion is characterised by emotional expressiveness, excitability, energy for sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, with those high in extraversion as outgoing, a wide social circle of friends and acquaintances, loves and gets excited being around others while those who are introverted tend to be more reserved with less energy to expend in social events, prefer solitude and quietness.

Agreeableness describes attributes showing a reasonable attribute of kindness, trust, affection, care for others, and other prosocial behaviors (Power & Pluess, 2015). People who are high in agreeableness tend to be more cooperative while those low in this personality trait tend to be more competitive and sometimes even manipulative.

Openness to experiences emphasises personality traits that are strong in creativity, imagination, insightful and according to Power et al. (2015) is the most out of all five personality traits with a broad range of interests, exhibit curiosity about the world, display willingness to enjoy new experiences, eagerness to learn new things, focus on tackling new challenges, and happy to think about abstract concepts.

Neuroticism personality trait is characterised by traits which portray them as unwilling to assists others who are in need of help, taking little interest in others, moody, do not care about how other people feel, experiencing emotional instability, showing little interest in other

people's problems, manipulating others to get what they want, insulting and belittling others, getting upset easily, high in mood swings, anxiety, irritability, and sadness Power et al. (2015).

Conscientiousness describes personality traits evident in high levels of thoughtfulness, good impulse control, thinking about how their behaviour affects others, planning, mindful of details, organized, tend toward perfection, exhibit goal-directed behaviours, mindful of deadlines though sometimes missing deadlines completely (Power et al., 2015).

Statement of the problem

The uniqueness of the individual regarding why they are affected by the environment, why they behave in particular ways, why they exhibit moods and reactions are of great consideration when trying to understand the human mind and nature. Many studies on truancy have identified family size, parental socioeconomic status, poor parent/child relationship, peer influence, domineering parenting, lack of parental interest in child's welfare, school, over-population, shortage of teachers as major factors responsible for truancy (Bajon, 2022). However, all these factors constitute external influences on truancy behaviour, whereas internal influences though covert, are equally germane in every human behaviour. Thus, the relevance in studying personality traits cannot be over-emphasized.

Purpose of the study

The broad objective of the study is to determine the predictive influence of personality traits on truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled Universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i.determine if truancy behaviours exist among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria
- ii.assess which personality trait is most predictive of truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled Universities in Osun state, Nigeria
- iii.appraise the influence of gender on truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled Universities in Osun state, Nigeria

Research questions:

The following research questions were generated for the purpose of this study:

- i. Do truancy behaviours exist among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria?
- ii. Which personality trait is most predictive of truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant gender difference on truancy behaviours of undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria.

Scope of the study

This study was limited to undergraduates in three domiciled universities in Osun state, Nigeria. The predictive role of personality trait on truancy behaviours of undergraduates and moderation of gender on truancy behaviours in domiciled Universities in Osun State, Nigeria were investigated by administering adapted questionnaire to two hundred respondents.

Significance of the study

The study would be beneficial to school counsellors, social workers, parents, psychologists and researchers.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey method. The population of the study consisted of undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select three domiciled universities Osun state. The sampling technique was the most appropriate sampling method because universities were shut down due to industrial action by the academic staff union, and only a few universities were available for test administration. Convenience sampling technique was adopted by the researchers and research assistants to administer the questionnaires to every undergraduate who showed an interest to be a part of the exercise with no bias for age, gender, or the level of study of respondents. Out of the two hundred and twenty-eight questionnaires

distributed, two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires were retrieved, out of which only two hundred (200) were without errors and fit for analysis.

A three-sectioned questionnaire titled Truancy and Personality Traits (T&PTs) was put together by the researcher. Section A contained demographic information of the respondents, section B contained the researchers' self-composed items that measure truancy behaviours on a five-point response mode of: 'All the time' (=1), 'Most of the time' (=2), 'Rarely' (=3), 'Very rarely' (=4), 'Never' (=5) with reliability value of 0.71. Section C adapted the Personality Traits Inventory, Big-Five (IPIP) Personality Markers by Goldberg (1993) which measured personality traits as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to experience (Intellect), Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism (Emotional Stability) at reliability value of 0.84. The 31 items measuring personality traits was responded to on a four-point response scale of: 'Strongly Disagree' (SD=1), 'Disagree' (D=2), 'Agree' (A=3), 'Strongly Agree' (SA=4). Data collected were analysed using descriptive, regression and inferential statistics. The first research question was answered using descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and percentages. Research question two was answered using regression analysis while the hypothesis was answered using t-test.

Findings and Discussions

Research Question One: Do truancy behaviours exist among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and simple percentage showing the existence of truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria

ITEM	ALL THE TIME	MOS T OF THE TIME	RAR ELY	VERY RAR ELY	NEVE R	$\bar{x}$	SD
I get into trouble at school so I avoid school	24 12.0 %	13 6.5%	44 22.0 %	19 9.5%	100 50.0 %	3.79	1.42
I skip classes because I have feelings of rejections	25 12.5 %	21 10.5 %	37 18.5 %	31 15.5 %	86 43.0 %	3.66	1.43
I skip some classes because I have low esteem	20 10.0 %	25 12.5 %	41 20.5 %	34 17.0 %	80 40.0 %	3.64	1.37
I prefer to engage in other activities rather than go to classes	6 3.0%	39 19.5 %	54 27.0 %	28 14.0 %	73 36.5 %	3.61	1.24

Investigating items with the four highest means, it is obvious in table 1 that 100 respondents (50.0%) never get into trouble at school, so they do not avoid school, although. However, 24 (12.0%) of the respondents get into trouble at school all the time, with a mean score of ($\bar{x}$ =3.79). It showed that 86 (43.0%) of the respondents never skip classes because they have no feelings of rejections, although 114 (67%) of them skip classes at different rates with a mean score of ($\bar{x}$

=3.66). The third item portrayed those 80 respondents (40.0%) never skipped some classes because of low esteem, although 120 (60%) skipped some classes due to low esteem at varying degrees with the mean score ($\bar{x}$ =3.65). Consequently, 73 respondents (36.5%) of the total respondents never prefer to engage in other activities rather than go to classes, although 127 (63.5.0%) prefer to engage in other activities rather than go to classes all the time with the mean score of ($\bar{x}$ =3.62).

Research Question Two: Which personality type is most predictive of truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun state, Nigeria?

Table 2. *Regression analysis showing the most predictive personality traits of truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	40.990	6.750		6.073	.000
Extroversion	-.087	.219	-.031	-.398	.691
Neuroticism	.324	.211	.118	1.532	.127
Openness to experience	.400	.215	.102	1.622	.135
Agreeableness	.992	.171	.395	5.783	.00
Conscientiousness	.197	.185	.077	1.046	.297

Significant at 0.05 level

The table above showed how personality traits relate to the prediction of truancy behaviours of undergraduates. In terms of magnitude, agreeableness personality type is the only variable that gave a high and only potent contribution to the prediction using standardized coefficient beta with (Beta= .395; t= 5.783; p<0.05) to the prediction of truancy behaviours among undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun state. This was followed by other personality

traits which were not significant in this order: neuroticism personality trait with (Beta= .118; t= 1.532; p>0.05), followed by openness to experience personality trait with (Beta= .102; t= 1.622; p>0.05); conscientiousness (Beta= .077; t= 1.046; p>0.05); and extroversion personality trait (Beta= -.031; t= -.398; p>0.05).

Hypothesis One: There is no significant gender difference on truancy behaviours of undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics and Independent-Samples t-test showing gender difference on truancy behaviours of undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun State, Nigeria*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig.	Remark
Male	107	82.159	14.839				
Female	93	87.817	11.594	198	-2.972	.003	S

P<0.05

The result from the table 3 above showed significant gender difference on truancy behaviours of undergraduates as there was significant difference between the gender mean scores on truancy behaviours of undergraduates (t=-2.972; df=198; p<.003). This meant that gender influences truancy behaviours.

Discussion

Findings on research question one lent support to the work of Muir (2009), which confirmed the existence of truancy behaviours in tertiary institutions by suggesting that there is an increasing trend for higher education institutions to be expected to monitor student attendance, on the assumption that better attendance leads to higher retention rates, higher marks, and a more satisfying educational experience. Muir's study confirmed there is a tendency for students who attend classes more regularly to gain better marks, especially if they have the potential for a top mark. A study by Moore (2006) cited in Lowder, Khalid, Ferreira et al. (2015), also confirmed the prevalence of truancy behaviours in tertiary institutions by confirming that undergraduates' higher rates of attendance correlated positively with their beliefs that class attendance would improve their grades.

Therefore, truancy behaviour among undergraduates could be better reduced using effective class attendance by lecturers.

The result on research question two buttressed the study by Shadrina et al. (2019), which focused on the probability of skipping or dropping out of school based on a student's personal traits evident in perseverance and setting of priorities obviously have significant dependence. The study of Shadrina, et al. (2019) further showed that the more extroversion is expressed in a student, the higher his average grade is. However, with agreeable individuals whose dominant traits predispose them to go through life doing as little as possible, compromising quality, expending little energy and efforts because they are comfortable to stay uninvolved, procrastinate, difficult to be self-motivated, low resiliency, less goal-oriented, avoid taking responsibility, more of observers than participants, find it more convenient to ease out of circumstances, activities or situations are more likely to be prompted into truancy behaviours. The peace-loving, peace-making arbitrate nature of an agreeable individual also suggest why they would rather stay out of classes than get involved in activities that might stress them, place extra demand on them, embarrass or endanger their lives.

The null hypothesis was rejected as it showed significant gender differences in truancy behaviours of undergraduates. This was evident in the study of Livumbaze & Judith-Achoka (2017), which showed that girls' participation in schooling was lower compared to boys as they most times had to compromise their study time for domestic chores, hence having the tendency of absenteeism or habitual truancy more than boys. It is no gainsaying that male students are more exposed to daring activities that could make them less school-compliant or take their interest off schoolwork, which may culminate in truancy behaviours. Such distracting activities could be due to inappropriate career subject choice, peer pressure, social affiliations, formed relationships, parental stress, financial responsibility or societal expectations, perceived poor support from teachers and teachers' classroom management could also play a role in school refusal indirectly (Havik, Bru & Ertesvåg, 2015).

Conclusions

The study concluded that truancy behaviours exist among undergraduates due to varied reasons. It also affirmed that agreeableness is the most predictive personality traits of truancy behaviours in undergraduates. Furthermore, the study showed that there is a significant gender difference on truancy behaviours of undergraduates in domiciled universities in Osun state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Students need to make conscious efforts to improve on their self-evaluation as some respondents had self-esteem and rejection issues which are not only nurture based, but also nature based.

Lecturers should be more creative in their lectures as some respondents identified boring classes as one of the reasons for truancy behaviours especially for students with imaginative, curious, imaginative and unconventional interests.

School management should have a framework to guide against issues that may encourage absenteeism in universities since the environment has been identified to have a critical stake in personality traits developed by individuals.

Parents should ensure valuable guidance on appropriate communication in their children as these will greatly impact positively on the undergraduate's relationships such that withdrawal, evasive and impulsive dispositions already made dominant in them through the hereditary genes which may attract truancy behaviours will become less prominent, thereby allowing them to transit through the school system with less relational complications.

Teachers need to acknowledge that individual student has his peculiarities which need to be put into consideration while teaching in class and ensure that every student is carried along in his teaching.

The school management along with the counsellors should take personal interest in students who display truancy behaviours and seek to know how to assist such students since it has been identified that other extraneous variables can moderate such behaviours apart

from personality types.

Government should encourage students' commitment to their academic work by providing job outlets/opportunities as most respondents have low resilience traits and have lost hope on reasons why they should keep up with schooling when it is obvious that getting good jobs after graduation is becoming a tall dream and what they learn in school will not be useful for them in life, hence, their engagement in truancy behaviours.

It is advisable that university management should be conscious of creating a learner-friendly environment to encourage participatory lifestyles in undergraduates as this would in no little way encourage students who have seclusion traits to improve their self-confidence and get attracted to school.

School counsellors should intensify their efforts in the use of social learning and behaviour therapies to ameliorate school disruptive behaviours which may threaten the safety of students with mistrust and antagonism, thereby encouraging and exposing them to truancy tendencies.

There is a need to for the university authority to provide practical and effective strategies to improve students' attendance which include; constituting a reward system which applauds undergraduates with regular attendance, promoting zero tolerance to students' absenteeism, developing students' mentoring programmes, introducing rich outdoor and exploration programmes for undergraduates.

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