



# EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT ON IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Article history:	Abstract:
<b>Received:</b> January 11 <sup>th</sup> 2024 <b>Accepted:</b> March 8 <sup>th</sup> 2024	This study investigates the underlying causes of impulsive behavior among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria. 230 randomly selected individuals from diverse higher education institutions were surveyed using a cross-sectional method. To investigate the correlations between variables, the study used statistical techniques such as Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression. The study found a strong positive association ( $r = 0.559$ , $p < 0.01$ ) between neuroticism and impulsive behavior, suggesting that greater levels of neuroticism contribute to more impulsive behavior. Similarly, sociability exhibited a significant positive relationship with impulsive behavior ( $r = 0.569$ , $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as sociability increases, so does engagement in impulsive behaviors. Multiple regression analysis found that age, sex, level of study, income, and the place of residence all contributed to 17.7% of the variation in impulsive behavior. Income was the only significant predictor ( $\beta = -0.321$ , $p < 0.01$ ). These findings contribute to our understanding of impulsive behavior dynamics, highlighting the significance of individual personality traits and social interaction. To effectively fight impulsive behavior in students, solutions include implementing anti-covert association programs, strengthening protections, and undertaking thorough monitoring. This study is important for governments and organizations seeking to reduce impulsive behavior while promoting academic integrity and student well-being.

**Keywords:** Personality, Sociability, Impulsive Behavior, Students

## INTRODUCTION

Impulsive behavior remains a prevalent concern in various academic institutions in Nigeria, including universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and monotechnics. This particular concern is prevalent in various types of academic institutions nationwide. It is not restricted to higher education settings alone but rather is a prevailing occurrence within society, including secondary schools (Udoh & Ikezu, 2015). Despite the endeavors made to address this issue, impulsive behavior continues to escalate within the tertiary educational establishments of Nigeria, thereby overshadowing the realm of education. This pattern elicits apprehensions regarding the prospects of the younger generation, a considerable segment of which is impacted by such behavior. The mitigation of impulsive behavior in tertiary institutions is of utmost importance, as these establishments ought to prioritize rationality over sentiment.

The escalating concern of impulsive behavior leading to violence necessitates parental collaboration with authorities to devise enduring remedies (Udoh & Ikezu, 2015). Various factors, such as personality traits and sociability, have been identified as contributory factors to impulsive behavior in Nigeria and other global contexts. Personality denotes the characteristics exhibited by an individual or a collective group that furnish consistent behavioral patterns in response to circumstances. Typically, the concept of personality is invoked in prognostication or elucidation of individual conduct, signifying the attributes inherent to an individual in a given situation. Covert associations are delineated by Ogunbamila (2012) as any form of group activities conducted discreetly during unconventional hours, often conflicting with societal norms and values. Some salient features commonly linked with impulsivity include the exclusive adherence to similar beliefs.

Sociability, or the degree of an individual's social engagement, embodies the inclination and ability to initiate and uphold social connections and affiliations. Asendorph (1990) opined that social conduct may stem from a desire to evade social interactions or from inner conflicts related to approach-avoidance tendencies. In Western societies,

sociability, or the proclivity towards interpersonal engagement, is closely tied to an individual's social influence and standing within their peer cohort (Robin 1995). Sociability holds significance as it can foster the nurturing of intimate relationships that offer support and closeness. In the process of socialization, children may assimilate behaviors previously absent in them, including involvement in covert associations.

There are numerous rationales why students engage in Covert associations activities. Initially, the majority of individuals who participate fall within the 18-22 age bracket upon initial contact post-high school. Despite instances of individuals as young as 14 becoming involved, it is primarily due to certain factors; namely, some young students have encountered highly unstable or non-existent family dynamics, although this is not the prevailing norm. Several students have faced challenges in communicating with their parents to varying extents, while others have experienced the hardships of growing up in a single-parent household. Consequently, some have developed a strong connection with older students who serve as parental figures. Young individuals with problematic backgrounds, history of failure, or emotional issues stemming from broken homes or unresolved personal conflicts, are primarily driven by a quest for identity and spiritual fulfillment. The main focus of these groups are affluent children who might be grappling with identity crisis and seek association with well-known groups, making them susceptible to the activities of such groups. It is within this context that the current research endeavors to explore the impact of personality traits and sociability on the perception of Impulsive behavior among tertiary institution students in Taraba State.

Institutions of higher education, which should ideally serve as centers for intellectual development, have unfortunately transformed into battlegrounds where groups perpetrate terror within the community. Falana (2011) highlighted the various threats posed by Covert associations within our higher learning institutions. For instance, a disturbing incident occurred in 1997 at the University of Benin where the Secretary General of the Students' Union was murdered by cult members, at the behest of the school authorities, during a discussion on commercialization and rationalization of courses. Similarly, the Principal Assistant Registrar of Delta State University, Peter Otobo, fell victim to cultists who targeted him over administrative issues within the school. It is evident that the quality of higher education and the overall student experience on campus are influenced not just by the academic content but also by the prevailing campus environment. The manifestation of Impulsive Behavior as a form of student unrest has evolved over time, raising concerns among parents, university administrators, policymakers, researchers, and educational planners. Recognizing the gravity of the Covert associations phenomenon in higher education institutions, Iyorcha Ayu emphasized the detrimental impact on our collective consciousness as these groups, with scant regard for life or property, unleash terror on our campuses. According to his perspective, they possess sufficient wealth to procure firearms, finance extravagant late-night gatherings characterized by peculiar ceremonies, and abduct leaders of establishments compelling them to endorse agreements that contravene the norms and regulations of a respectable society (Ayu, 2021). The repercussions of such unconventional activities have extensive implications: numerous students have forfeited their educational opportunities; some have perished, while others have endured harassment, mutilation, and sexual assault. Consequently, numerous well-qualified Nigerian individuals and foreign professionals have exited the academia sector. Regrettably, despite endeavors to address the issue, impulsive behavior in Nigerian universities endures. The remedies devised thus far resemble extinguishing a fire without making any genuine effort to pinpoint its origins. It is within this context that this investigation appears to be well-timed.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The study specifically sought to achieve the following objectives:

- i. to explore whether there exists a notable correlation between neuroticism and impulsive conduct among students in Taraba state.
- ii. to determine the presence of a significant association between sociability and impulsive behavior among undergraduate students in Taraba state
- iii. to scrutinize whether age, sex, level of study, income status and place of residence independently and jointly influence Impulsive behavior among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are raised to guide the study:

- i. Is there any significant relationship between neuroticism and Impulsive behavior among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria?
- ii. Is there any significant relationship between sociability and Impulsive behavior among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria?
- iii. Does age, sex, level of study, income status and place of residence independently and jointly influence Impulsive behavior among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypothesis**

The study's hypotheses are as follows:

- i. There is a significant positive relationship between neuroticism and Impulsive behavior among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state
- ii. There is a significant relationship between sociability and Impulsive behavior among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state
- iii. Age, sex, level of study, income status and place of residence will independently and jointly influence Impulsive behavior among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state

## Theoretical Framework

The following review provides a background to understanding the relationship between personality, sociability and deviant behaviors.

### The Psychoanalytic Theory of Freud

To this day, the Freudian theory of personality has been extensively utilized for the thorough analysis of an individual's personality (Green, 2019). This theory is rooted in a comprehensive model of personality, outlining a tripartite structure consisting of id, ego, and superego. It posits that an individual's personality is shaped by their progression through various stages of psychosexual development in the initial five years of life (Green, 2019). According to Freud, the most fundamental personality system is the first to emerge in a child, encompassing inherited aspects of the mind and instincts, with a focus solely on pleasure. The ego can differentiate between subjective and objective realities. On the other hand, the superego embodies societal values and norms imparted to children by their parents (Green, 2019). The id is considered the biological aspect of personality, the ego as the psychological aspect, and the superego as the social aspect. Freud contends that these elements are in perpetual conflict, leading the ego to employ defense mechanisms when under pressure, shielding the conscious from the unconscious. These defense mechanisms include Regression, Rationalization, Reaction Formation, and Projection and introjection (Green, 2019). The central tenet of this theory is that violence is a defense mechanism when essential human needs are obstructed (Gbolahan, 2011).

### The Trait Theory of Allport

The trait theory aims to identify the fundamental personality traits and explore their relationship with behavior (Allport, 1961). In contrast to Freud, Allport emphasized that conscious factors are paramount in determining behavior. Therefore, an individual's traits offer the most comprehensive explanation for their responses to various situations (Allport, 1961).

### The Person-Centered or Humanistic Theory of Rogers

The humanistic theory asserts that every individual has the capacity for healthy, well-adjusted behavior, with mental unhealthiness attributed to inadequate personality development, social influences, or environmental factors (Rogers, 1980). It suggests that individuals should be viewed holistically, with an inherent drive towards self-actualization being the primary motivation in life (Rogers, 1980).

### The Cognitive Theory of Friedman

The cognitive theory concentrates on the relationship between mental processes and social interactions (Friedman, 2008). Unlike behaviorism, cognitive theories propose that individuals actively select stimuli, construct meanings, and interpret their surroundings, highlighting their agency in shaping behavior (Friedman, 2008).

### Personality Determinants

The discourse that ensues is rooted in the biological and social foundations of human behavior. The Biological Basis of Human Behavior. An initial debate in personality studies revolved around whether an individual's personality stemmed from heredity or environment (Roberts, & Wood, 2006). Specifically, was the personality predetermined at birth, or was it shaped by the individual's interactions with the environment? Hence, the fundamental query necessitating an answer is "what influences personality"? This query lacks a singular response as various factors contribute to personality (Roberts, & Wood, 2006). Nevertheless, four primary influences can impact personality development: heredity, group affiliation, roles, and situations.

### The Impact of Heredity

Advocates of heredity propose that individuals are inherently equipped with diverse capabilities, and human behavior is governed by the physiology and biology of the body (Roberts, & Wood, 2006). For example, individuals inherit specific traits that affect their performance in certain tasks, as well as numerous cognitive abilities (Roberts, & Wood, 2006). Although the concept of biologically inherited similarities is age-old, the understanding of the mechanisms of this inheritance and its susceptibility to environmental factors has evolved (Roberts, & Wood, 2006). Contemporary perspectives are rooted in genetic research, originating from Mendel's seminal investigations on pea cross-breeding (Abbott & Fairbanks, 2016). Genes serve as the fundamental units of biological inheritance, interacting intricately with a diverse range of environmental factors to shape individual outward characteristics (Abbott, & Fairbanks, 2016). Chromosomes, present in the cell nuclei of humans, carry genes, the elemental units of hereditary material in humans (Abbott & Fairbanks, 2016). Galton (1869), in studying the role of heredity in accounting for individual disparities in personality and intelligence, introduced the concept of eugenics in his discourse (Caspi, *et al.* 2022). Eugenics involves modifying evolutionary selection processes to enhance a specific genetic lineage (Caspi, *et al.* 2022). Heredity governs body composition, gender, and traits of the muscular and nervous systems. For instance, individuals may inherit varying potentials for reaction times and levels of frustration tolerance (Caspi, *et al.* 2022).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies reveal that women often exhibit greater apprehension towards crime compared to men, despite experiencing victimization less frequently (Crowell & Burgess, 2012). This fear is frequently influenced by societal norms and perceptions of susceptibility to sexual violence. Covert associations, also referred to as clandestine societies or esoteric groups, partake in concealed practices, rituals, and beliefs beyond conventional human understanding (Okezie, 2013; Salami, 2013). Such groups may engage in rituals involving supernatural elements and the manipulation of power (Salami, 2013). Certain clandestine organizations possess religious origins and entail the veneration of deities.

Illustrations encompass the Ogboni sect within the Yoruba community and various sects within other ethnic groups in Nigeria and adjacent areas (Idowu, 2006; Salami, 2013). These sects are distinguished by doctrines that conflict with conventional religious doctrines and include clandestine ceremonies and customs (Walter, 1985, as cited in Salami, 2013). These factions commonly uphold ideologies that could result in self-harm (Ekwunife, 2002).

Covert groups, like sects, have progressed gradually on university grounds and may partake in aggressive actions and disputes (Ololube, 2013). Undertakings vary from exclusive membership based on academic accomplishments to involvement in criminal activities (Kalu & Iffih, 2012). Covert associations present notable risks to campus security and the general peace climate in tertiary institutions. Their actions may lead to harm, fatalities, and disturbances to scholarly and communal settings (Ololube, 2013). Members of covert groups are incentivized by aspects such as proficiency and conviviality (Conway *et al.*, 2017). Prosperous groups have a tendency to prioritize high proficiency, whereas less successful groups might emphasize conviviality (Fiske *et al.*, 2002). Activities of covert associations, especially those linked to sects, have significantly hindered educational progress in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Ogunbameru, 2013). These hindrances encompass disruptions to academic schedules, damage to facilities, intimidation of students and faculty, and a prevailing climate of apprehension (Ogunbameru, 2013). Several factors contribute to the prevalence of impulsive conduct in Nigerian campuses, including authoritarian institutional leadership, insufficient parental engagement, inadequate fundamental amenities, and influence from the mass media (Ogidefa, Osakinle & Falana, 2014). Peer influence, materialism in society, and the prevalence of broken families also play crucial roles in fostering sect participation among students (Ogidefa, Osakinle & Falana, 2014).

**METHODOLOGY**

The research utilized a cross-sectional survey blueprint to explore the predictors of impulsive conduct among students in tertiary institutions in Taraba state. A randomization technique was employed to minimize variations among participants. Statistical analyses comprised multiple regression to pinpoint the autonomous and collective impacts of variables, as well as Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to examine associations between variables and determine the psychometric features of the scales. The study postulated associations between personality traits like neuroticism and conviviality with impulsive behavior. The study population consisted of 30,125 students from tertiary institutions in Taraba State, chosen randomly. These institutions encompass Taraba State University Jalingo, College of Agriculture Jalingo, College of Education Zing, Peacock College of Education Jalingo, School of Nursing Jalingo, and Federal University Wukari. The research tools included a questionnaire divided into segments, personality traits assessed using the Big Five Inventory, and a Sociability Inventory. The obtained reliability in the current study was 0.93, deemed satisfactory. A simple random sampling method was utilized to select 230 participants from diverse institutions. The data gathered were scrutinized using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were applied for data interpretation.

**RESULTS**

**Hypothesis one** posited a significant positive correlation between neuroticism and Impulsive behavior among undergraduate students in Taraba state. This hypothesis underwent examination through Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and the findings are delineated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between Neuroticism and Impulsive behavior activities**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p
Neuroticism	230	48.42	24.27	224	.559	.000
Impulsive behavior	230	43.24	23.84			

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The outcomes presented in Table 1 demonstrate a noteworthy positive correlation between neuroticism and impulsive behavior among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state. The sample size for both variables is 230. Neuroticism has a mean score of 48.42, while impulsive behavior has a mean score of 43.24. The standard deviation for neuroticism is 24.27 and for impulsive behavior is 23.84. The degrees of freedom reflect the independent observations in the sample, which in this instance is 224. The correlation coefficient (r) gauges the strength and direction of the association between two variables. In this context, the correlation coefficient between neuroticism and impulsive behavior is 0.559, signifying a moderately positive correlation. The p-value linked to the correlation coefficient denotes the likelihood of such a robust relationship between neuroticism and impulsive behavior occurring by random chance alone. Here, the p-value is below 0.01, indicating statistical significance at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Consequently, there is substantial evidence to refute the null hypothesis and affirm a significant positive correlation between neuroticism and impulsive behavior among undergraduate students in Taraba state. Therefore, drawing from these findings, it is plausible to deduce that heightened levels of neuroticism correspond to increased involvement in covert association activities among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state.

**Hypothesis Two** proposed a significant relationship between sociability and impulsive behavior. This hypothesis underwent testing using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and the findings are displayed in Table 2.



**Table 2: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between sociability and Impulsive Behavior activities**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p
Sociability	230	48.26	24.38	224	.569	.000
Impulsive Behavior	230	46.34	23.96			

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results presented in Table 2 reveal a significant positive correlation between sociability and impulsive behavior. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) stands at 0.569, denoting a moderate to strong positive correlation. With a p-value below 0.01, the statistical significance of this relationship is evident. Consequently, an escalation in sociability among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state seems to coincide with an increase in impulsive behavior. Thus, the data analysis affirms hypothesis two, which posited a significant association between sociability and impulsive behavior.

**Hypotheses** three posits that age, sex, level of study, income status, and place of residence will have both individual and collective impacts on impulsive behavior among undergraduate students of Taraba state. This hypothesis underwent testing using Multiple regression analysis, and the findings are displayed in Table 3:

**Table 3: Multiple regression analysis showing age, sex, level of study, income and place of residence as predictors of Impulsive behavior**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	t	P
Model	.421	.177	4.17			.005
Age				-.207	-1.451	.198
Sex				.189	1.731	.132
Level of study				.104	1.312	.245
Income				-.321	-2.891	.009
Residence				.112	.610	.621

Dependent variable: impulsive behavior

The analysis of Hypothesis 3, which posits that age, sex, level of study, income status, and place of residence will independently and jointly influence impulsive behavior among undergraduate students of Taraba state, was conducted through multiple regression analysis, as depicted in Table 7. The results reveal that the combined effect of age, sex, level of study, income, and place of residence significantly influences impulsive behavior among undergraduates ( $R^2 = .177$ ,  $F(5, 160) = 4.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that these variables collectively contribute to 17.7% of the variance in impulsive behavior. Notably, income level emerges as the sole significant predictor of impulsive behavior among undergraduates ( $\beta = -.321$ ,  $p < .010$ ), while the other variables did not exhibit significant predictive power. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is confirmed based on this outcome.

**DISCUSSION**

**Hypothesis one** of this research aimed to ascertain the presence of a substantial correlation between neuroticism and impulsive conduct among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state. The outcomes validated this hypothesis, in accordance with prior investigations by Shape and Desai (2001), and Ruiz *et al.* (2001), all of which highlighted a positive association between neuroticism and aggressive conduct. This indicates that individuals with elevated neuroticism levels tend to manifest more impulsive and aggressive inclinations. Furthermore, the results mirror the attributes of impulsive behavior, suggesting that many of these individuals possess a strong sense of self-assurance and superiority, prompting them to engage in questionable activities as a coping mechanism. This discovery is also in line with Branje, Lieshout, and Gerns (2007), who noted that individuals with heightened levels of neuroticism frequently engage in impulsive behavior. Additionally, Hasan and Atak (2009) emphasized neuroticism as a significant predictor of impulsive behavior among undergraduate students, a concept supported by Meddison's (2007) findings. The data implies a statistically significant correlation ( $r = 0.559$ ) between impulsive behavior and neuroticism, with neurotic students displaying increased involvement in impulsive behavior. Moreover, the results are consistent with Caspi *et al.*'s (2006) study, which illustrated a positive link between neuroticism and emerging impulsive behavior driven by a desire for engagement. Nevertheless, these findings contrast with Asendorf's (2022) research, which identified a negative association between neuroticism and impulsive behavior through social interactions.

**Hypothesis Two** postulated a significant connection between sociability and impulsive behavior among undergraduate students at tertiary institutions in Taraba State, a proposition substantiated by the study's findings. This result aligns with earlier studies by Fiske *et al.* (2002), and Judd *et al.* (2005), which proposed that more successful groups tend to attribute high competence, while less successful groups attribute moderate sociability. Consequently, sociability and competence factors emerge as pivotal attributes motivating covert association members to perpetuate their actions. The study revealed that students exhibiting greater sociability and competence are more engaged in

impulsive behavior compared to their less sociable counterparts. This result echoes the investigation conducted by Williams and Hazer (2006), which also emphasized sociability as a driving force behind impulsive behavior. The differential assignment of traits between successful and less successful groups serves to validate their respective levels of success, according to theories of social role, status expectation, interdependence, social dominance, and system justification. Essentially, sociability allows successful impulsive behavior to positively assess themselves based on their perceived competence and sociability, while less successful groups can also derive positive self-assessment from their sociability.

**Hypothesis Three** postulated that age, gender, academic level, income status, and place of residence would autonomously and collectively impact impulsive behavior among students in Taraba state. The findings suggested that these variables jointly accounted for merely 17.7% of the variability in impulsive behavior. However, individually, only income was predictive of involvement in impulsive behavior among students of Tertiary Institutions in Taraba state. This finding contradicts Allmon's (2000) discovery that increasing age was the best predictor of negative attitudes toward society. Moreover, it contradicts Chapple & Johnson (2007) finding that male students were more involved in impulsive behavior than females.

### Contribution to Knowledge

The study on examining the impact of individual personality and social engagement on impulsive behavior among students of tertiary institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria, contributes significantly to the existing knowledge in several ways:

- i. The study provides valuable insights into the intricacies of impulsive behavior within a specific context, enriching our comprehension of how cultural, social, and environmental elements impact impulsive behavior among students in this area.
- ii. The analysis elucidates the significance of individual personality characteristics, such as neuroticism and sociability, in influencing impulsive behavior by pinpointing these traits as predictors of impulsive behavior.
- iii. The exploration underscores the role of social elements in molding students' conduct. Understanding the contribution of social interactions and group dynamics to impulsive behavior offers valuable perspectives for crafting interventions and support mechanisms geared towards alleviating impulsive inclinations among students.
- iv. The outcomes from this study carry significant policy implications for tertiary institutions in Taraba State and beyond. By recognizing factors linked to impulsive behavior, policymakers can formulate evidence-based approaches to tackle this issue, encompassing focused educational initiatives to campus-wide endeavors aimed at enhancing mental health and well-being.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. **Organizing Anti-Covert Associations Campaigns:** The institutions should organize campaigns designed to raise awareness regarding the adverse outcomes of impulsive behavior. These campaigns should underscore the significance of academic integrity and foster a sense of academic merit and excellence among students in tertiary institutions in Taraba State. By promoting positive principles and instilling confidence in students' capacity to achieve their objectives without engaging in unethical behaviors, the university can discourage impulsive actions like covert associations activities.
- ii. **Implementation of Strict Measures:** The institutions administration should enforce stricter measures to address the prevalence of impulsive behavior on campus. Given the notable association between personality traits and sociability in predicting impulsive behavior, it is crucial for tertiary institutions to take resolute steps to tackle this issue. This might entail enhancing surveillance and enforcement endeavors to identify and take action against students involved in such behavior.
- iii. **Comprehensive Monitoring:** It is essential for the institutions to acknowledge that participation in impulsive behavior is not solely influenced by demographic variables like age, gender, or income level. Therefore, comprehensive monitoring measures should be put in place to monitor and address impulsive behavior among students from diverse backgrounds. By vigilantly tracking students across various demographic classifications, the institutions can effectively pinpoint and intervene with individuals at risk.

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