

Personality Profile of the Young Substance Abusers of Tripura

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Abstract

The key objective of this study is to identify personality profile of the young substance abusers of Tripura. The study aims to provide light on the dynamics of substance abuse among young people in the area by evaluating their personality pattern. The study immersed 118 college and university students from various colleges and university in Tripura. The sample was drawn by using purposive sampling technique through NIDA - Modified ASSIST V2 Screening Test. After selecting the sample The NEO FFI (Paul T. Costa and Robert R. McCrae, 1992) was administered on them. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean, standard deviation, and t-value, were employed to provide a concise summary of the gathered data. Result showed significant differences between high and low substance abusers in the personality dimension of openness, extraversion and neuroticism. Furthermore, the regression analysis confirmed that openness and neuroticism make significant contribution in substance abuse behavior.

Keywords: Substance Abuse, Personality, Young Adults, College and University students.

Introduction

The world at large is getting more and more affected by substance usage, with young people being particularly vulnerable to the narcotic effects of stimulants and other drugs. The state of Tripura in northeastern India is not an exception to this tendency. Addicts' lives are utterly destroyed since they are separated from their family and reside in far-off places. Before searching for illegal ways to make money, they spend a lot of money on drugs. There are numerous negative pharmacological side effects, particularly when weighed against other health concerns. Addiction to substances is frequently accompanied by underlying personality characteristics, which can help initiate and sustain addictive behaviours. Substance abuse has detrimental effects on the user as well as on friends, family, and society at large (NIDA, 2017).

A person's personality is a complex construct that includes a variety of features, cognitive styles, and emotional dispositions that affect their feelings, ideas, and actions. To create focused treatments and preventative measures, it is crucial to investigate the personality tendencies of young Tripura substance abusers. Undertaking such an inquiry could clarify the distinct elements that contribute to some people's increased vulnerability to substance misuse and provide valuable insights for customized preventive and treatment plans. This study uses the well-researched Five-Factor Model of Personality, which encompasses the five major personality qualities that are common to all cultures: Openness to Experience (O) is the propensity to be imaginative, creative, unconventional, emotionally and artistically sensitive; Conscientiousness (C) is the tendency to be orderly, strong-willed, dependable, and a conformist ; ; Extraversion (E) is the propensity to be gregarious, warm, assertive, cheerful, and seeking stimulation; Agreeableness (A) is the aspect of interpersonal relationships that is marked by modesty, cooperativeness, altruism, and trust; Neuroticism (N) is the propensity to feel depressive and anxious. A more detailed description of the personalities of drug users may be obtained by looking at the hierarchically defined features of each of these elements. The self-derogation theory (Kaplan, 1975) and the problem behaviour theory (Jessor et al., 1968) are two theoretical frameworks that have been created to explain the relationships between personality traits and illegal substance use. To be more precise, the problem behaviour theory sees illegal drug use as one symptom of a problematic behaviour pattern that leads to personal troubles, whereas the self-derogation theory (Kaplan, 1975) sees substance use as a result of a personality defect or insufficiency (Jessor et al. 1963). Negative emotions like anxiety and depression are more common in people with high neuroticism. According to research, substance abuse is a coping method used by highly neurotic persons to deal with their emotional discomfort. (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Rooke, & Schutte, 2007). The traits of extraversion include friendliness, aggressiveness, and a love of thrills. According to some research, being very extraverted may increase the likelihood of using drugs, especially in social settings where substance abuse is common (Terracciano, Löckenhoff, Crum, Bienvu, & Costa Jr, 2008). Being open to new experiences indicates a desire for novelty and diversity. Although there may not be a clear correlation between this attribute and substance usage, some study indicates that those with high openness may experiment more with various

substances (Malouff et al., 2007). Traits like trustworthiness, collaboration, and selflessness are indicative of agreeableness. Substance misuse has been linked to low agreeableness, presumably because those who are less pleasant may take more risks in their behaviour (Malouff et al., 2007). Conscious people are often responsible, organized, and goal-oriented. There is a strong correlation between high conscientiousness and reduced rates of substance misuse. According to Malouff et al. (2007), conscientious people may be more driven to abstain from dangerous activities and give priority to long-term objectives above short-term satisfaction.

The psychological characteristics of young substance abusers in Tripura need to be looked into in order to give targeted interventions and preventative measures. Research of this kind could shed light on the specific traits that make some individuals more vulnerable to substance abuse and aid in the creation of tailored treatment and prevention programmes, particularly for the state of Tripura.

Methodology

Objectives:

1. To determine the personality traits of young substance abusers of Tripura.
2. To examine the personality traits exhibited by individuals with varying levels of substance abuse in Tripura.
3. To assess the relative contribution of different personality traits on substance abuse among young adults of Tripura.

Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to openness to experience.
2. There is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to Conscientiousness.
3. There is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to extraversion.
4. There is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to agreeableness.
5. There is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to neuroticism.
6. There is no significant effect of personality traits on substance abuse among young adults of Tripura.

Sample: The sample constitutes 118 young adult students (68 High Users and 50 low Users) abusing substances from different colleges and universities of Tripura, age ranging between 19-25 years.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling has been adopted to select sample for the present study.

Tools Used:

1. **NIDA - Modified ASSIST V2 Screening Test:** This test also known as the NIDA Quick Screen. This test, from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), contains questions about how often an individual use prescribed drugs, illegal drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. There is one multiple choice question for each substance. The answers range from “never” to “daily”. If an individual use any of the substances more often than never, it may mean the individual have a substance abuse problem.
2. **The NEO FFI (Paul T. Costa and Robert R. McCrae, 1992)** is a 60 item self report instrument used to measure the 5 personality domains according to the FFM: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (12 items per domain). The NEO FFI includes self descriptive statements that participants respond to using a 1(Strongly Disagree) to 5(Strongly Agree) Likert type scale. Scores for each domain are calculated by summing the 12 item responses. A total of 28 NEO FFI items are reverse-worded.

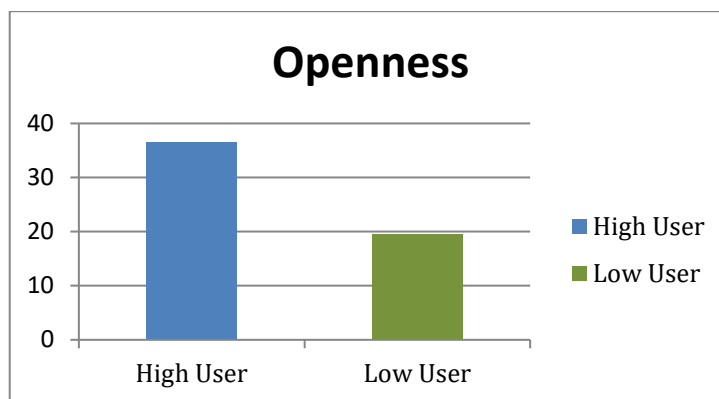
Procedure: Initially, authorization from the college/university administration was sought. The participants were asked for their consent and given the appropriate information about the purpose of the study. Data was collected randomly from students studying various colleges and universities in Tripura. For this study, 200 young adults were contacted. 82 students were eliminated after the screening test since they did not abuse drugs. Therefore, 118 young substance abusers from colleges and universities in Tripura participated in the final study.

Data and Result

Table -1 show the Mean, SD & t-value of high and low substance abusers with regard to openness to experience.

Variable	Levels of Substance Abuse	Mean	SD	t-value
Openness to experience	High	36.60	4.57	23.512**
	Low	19.48	2.76	

Fig 1: Graphical representations of the data showing mean differences between High Substance abusers and Low Substance abusers with regard to their Openness personality trait.

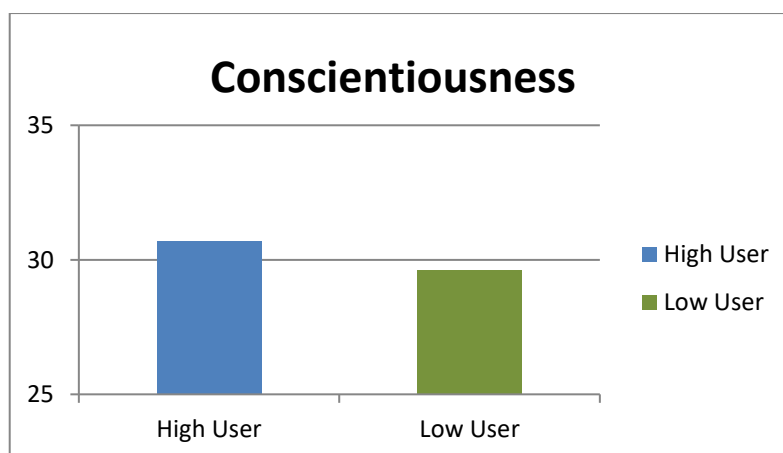


In the context of the study, Table 1 and Figure 1 represents statistical data that reveals a significant difference in the level of high substance abusers and low substance abusers when subjected to openness personality trait. This difference is considered statistically significant at the 0.01 level. So the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to openness to experience is rejected. The current finding is supported by previous research which suggests that individuals high in openness may be more experimental with different substances (Malouff et al., 2007).

Table -2 show the Mean, SD & t-value of high and low substance abusers with regard to conscientiousness.

Variable	Levels of Substance Abuse	Mean	SD	t-value
Conscientiousness	High	30.70	3.75	1.892
	Low	29.60	2.01	

Fig 2: Graphical representations of the data showing mean differences between High Substance abusers and Low Substance abusers with regard to their Conscientiousness personality trait.

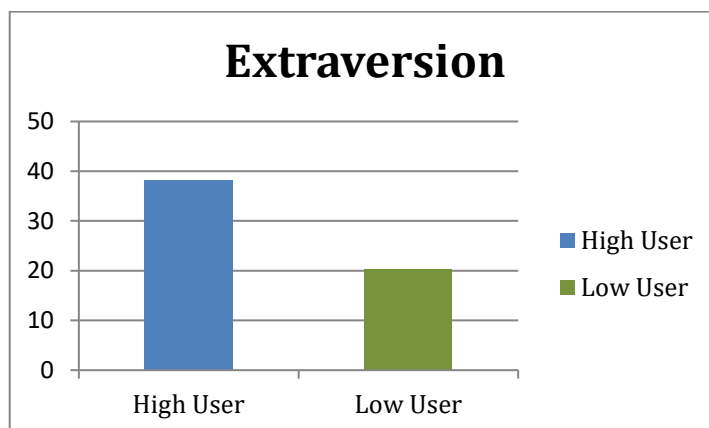


In the context of the study, Table 2 and Figure 2 represent statistical data that reveals no significant difference in the level of high substance abusers and low substance abusers when subjected to conscientiousness personality trait. So the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to conscientiousness is accepted. Various research studies revealed that Conscientious individuals may be more motivated to avoid risky behaviors and prioritize long-term goals over immediate gratification (Malouff et al., 2007).

Table -3 show the Mean, SD & t-value of high and low substance abusers with regard to extraversion.

Variable	Levels of Substance Abuse	Mean	SD	t-value
Extraversion	High	38.23	4.57	20.519**
	Low	20.20	2.76	

Fig 3: Graphical representations of the data showing mean differences between High Substance abusers and Low Substance abusers with regard to their Extraversion personality trait.

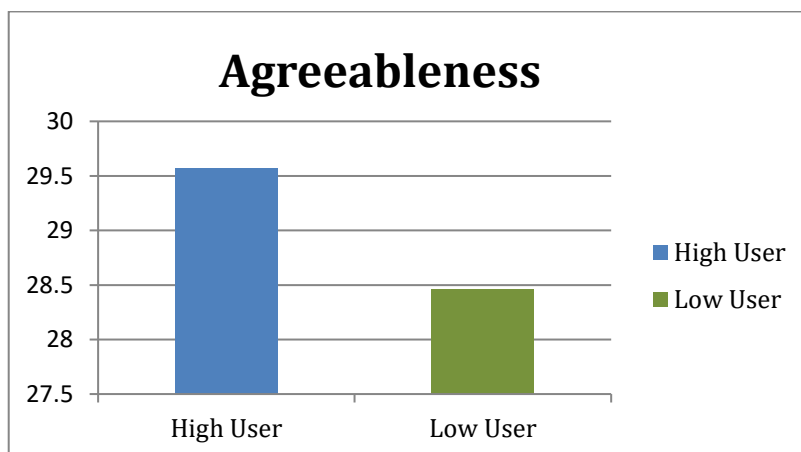


In the context of the study, Table 3 and Figure 3 represents statistical data that reveals a significant difference in the level of high substance abusers and low substance abusers when subjected to extraversion personality trait. This difference is considered statistically significant at the 0.01 level. So the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to extraversion is rejected. In 2008, Costa et al studied that high levels of extraversion may be linked to increased risk of substance use, particularly in social situations where substance use is prevalent.

Table -4 show the Mean, SD & t-value of high and low substance abusers with regard to agreeableness.

Variable	Levels of Substance Abuse	Mean	SD	t-value
Agreeableness	High	29.57	3.25	1.726
	Low	28.46	3.59	

Fig 4: Graphical representations of the data showing mean differences between High Substance abusers and Low Substance abusers with regard to their Agreeableness personality trait.



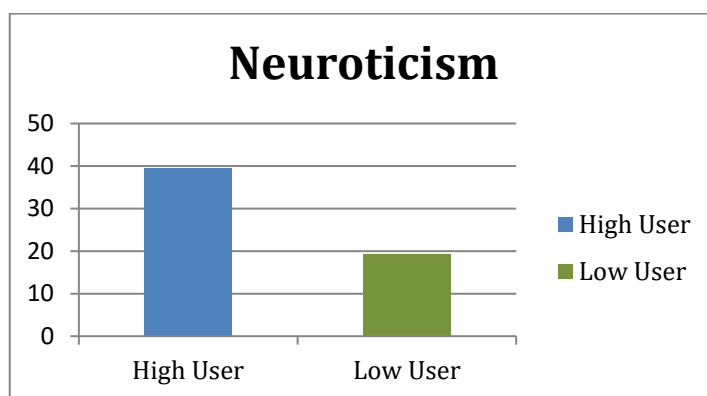
In the context of the study, Table 4 and Figure 4 represent statistical data that reveals no significant difference in the level of high substance abusers and low substance abusers when subjected to agreeableness personality trait. So the null

hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to agreeableness is accepted.

Table -5 show the Mean, SD & t-value of high and low substance abusers with regard to neuroticism.

Variable	Levels of Substance Abuse	Mean	SD	t-value
Neuroticism	High	39.50	2.95	31.532**
	Low	19.34	3.99	

Fig 5: Graphical representations of the data showing mean differences High Substance abusers and Low Substance abusers with regard to their Neuroticism personality trait.



In the context of the study, Table 5 and Figure 5 represents statistical data that reveals a significant difference in the level of high substance abusers and low substance abusers when subjected to neuroticism personality trait. This difference is considered statistically significant at the 0.01 level. So the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between high and low substance abusers with regard to neuroticism, is rejected. The present finding is also supported by the earlier research done by Malouff et al in 2007 suggested that high neuroticism is associated with an increased risk of substance abuse, as individuals may turn to substances to cope with emotional distress.

Table- 6 Regression analysis indicating the role of personality traits (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism) in predicting substance Abuse.

Predictor Variables	R ²	Adjusted R ²	R ² Change	B	F Change
Openness	.917	.914	.917	.302**	249.046**
Conscientiousness				-.014	
Extraversion				.024	
Agreeableness				.026	
Neuroticism				.663**	

Table 6 suggests that at the first step of regression analysis shows R² is .917 (adjusted R² is .914) and R² change is .917. That means 91.7% of the variance in substance abuse among young adults can be explained by different traits of personality such as p openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism and the F change is 249.046 which is significant at 0.01 levels. On the basis of Beta Coefficient, we can say that among five dimensions of personality – openness (Beta coefficient =.302) and neuroticism ((Beta coefficient =.663) significantly predict substance abuse behaviour at 0.01 level. The present study found that Openness was positively related to substance abuse behaviour, although previous studies have yielded mixed results regarding Openness as a predictor of illegal substance use (e.g., Allen & Laborde, 2020; Merenäkk et al., 2003; Sutin et al., 2013; Zilberman et al., 2018). People with higher Openness are open to new experiences, which may be the reason why they abuse substances. This finding is also supported by previous studies where individuals prone to abuse intoxicating substances have been found to be high on neuroticism (Sher, et al., 2000; John, et al., 2007)

Conclusion:

Finally, the results of this research shed light on the intricate relationship that exists between personality characteristics and substance abuse behavior. This study revealed that low and high substance abusers significantly differ from each other in the personality dimension of openness, extraversion and neuroticism, where high abusers are more open to experience new things, extroverted as well as they have neurotic traits as compared to low substance abusers. Additionally the finding clearly shows a connection between addiction to substances and the "Big Five" personality traits: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism. These connections demonstrate the important role that personality traits have in determining a person's overall drug-abusing behavior.

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