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A Psychological Study of Law Offenders (NDPS Act) in Mizoram Prisons

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Abstract

The research aims to study law offenders/inmates of prisons in Mizoram convicted under the "Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985". The psychological variables constituted personality, family environment and perceived social support of the inmates. The study also drew comparisons between the offenders and normal population. The study was conducted in three districts of Mizoram (Aizawl, Lunglei and Champhai). The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R; Costa & McCrea, 1992) was used as a measure of personality. The test measures 5 dimensions of personality – neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. 2 dimensions – cohesion and conflict, of the Family Environment Scale (FES-BC; Bhatia & Chada, 1993) was used for studying family environment. The Multi-dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, et al., 1988) was used as a measure of perceived social support. The sample size of the convicts under NDPS Act was 141. The normal population comparison sample size was 78.Quantitative analysis was done using SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to highlight the mean and standard deviation of all the subscales of the three psychological measures in both the two samples (Offenders and normal). T-test was used to compare the means of the two samples in all the subscales of the 3 psychological variables.

Key words: Personality, perceived-social support, Illicit drugs, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, behavior, cohesion, conflict.

Introduction

Illegal drug trade is among the most egregious international issues, having a commanding impact on public health, economic progress, and social stability among nations. As hard as security authorities try through diligent policing, publicity campaigns, and increasing collaboration at the global level, trafficking in narcotics and their consumption keep undermining societal health and destabilizing communities (Nikolic, 2020).
In India, the issue is less severe in that the nation's proximity to the world's largest narcotics-producing areas, the "Golden Crescent" and the "Golden Triangle," allows trade to extend into the subcontinent (Jha, 2021). Mizoram is a small state in northeast India with a lengthy porous international border with Myanmar, one of the world's most transhipment and production sources of illegal opium and man-made drugs. Due to this, Mizoram has emerged as a vital transit point for drug trafficking and has seen rising rates of drug-related crimes and imprisonment in recent years (Chaudhury & Banerjee, 2019).

Economic and Social Predictors for Illegal Drugs Trafficking

For those communities most affected by drug trafficking, financial incentive is invariably the main force driving the illegal drug market. Some of the main factors that highly predict the choice to engage in illegal drug dealing is an economic hardship restricted access to legal employment, and denial of educational and vocational opportunities contribute. Moreover, in many of these settings, legitimate employment opportunities are scarce, intermittent, with the wages offered for legitimate works being insufficient to support a stable livelihood. Because of such reasons, drug dealing presents itself as a seemingly rational economic alternative, especially because it offers not just survival, but also access to a more comfortable lifestyle (Semple et al., 2011; Little & Steinberg, 2006; Johnson, 2013).
Aside from financial incentives, social influences is also another predictor of illegal drug trade. Peer pressure, family involvement in illegal activities, and the desire for social status and respect in communities where conventional success markers are difficult to achieve all increase the likelihood of involvement in the drug trade. Asdrugs are illegal, their prices are much higher, giving people a chance to make huge profits, often big enough that they ignore the law, moral concerns, or long-term consequences (Van Duyne & Levi, 2005).

Psychological Factors and Environmental Risks Associated with Illegal Drugs Trafficking

In particular, thrill and sensation-seeking behaviour is evident among drug dealers. They actively pursue and seek out high-risk situations involving violence, competition, and the legal consequences thereof, all the while feeling a thrill or sense of achievement upon navigating through some of these dangers (Highland & Dabney, 2009; MohammadpanahArdakan et al., 2020). This commitment to illegal activities is substantiated by feelings of alienation and sustained perceptions of blocked material access.

Personality Traits of Illegal Drug Dealers

Observations of certain personality traits among individuals involved in illicit drug dealing have remained fairly constant. In the literature on drug traffickers, narcissism, manipulation, impulsivity, grandiosity, and disregard for social norms are usually cited. Many prosecuting authorities have described a case profile marked by a strong need for independence along with opposition to authority figures (NeuroLaunch Editorial Team, 2024; Highland & Dabney, 2009)

Drug dealers also display entrepreneurial traits. They are often assertive, persuasive, competitive, and adept at manoeuvring through complicated social environments. Although such traits have the potential to serve legitimate and constructive purposes, they are often redirected toward the organization, maintenance, and expansion of illegal enterprises. In contexts of social and economic hardship, these characteristics may enable drug dealers to rationalize their actions, viewing themselves not simply as criminals, but as entrepreneurs operating beyond the boundaries of the formal economy.

The Big Five personality model has been researched extensively in relation to criminal behaviour. Research repeatedly has found that individuals characterized as highly neurotic or as low in agreeableness and conscientiousness are more probable to be involved in illicit actions such as drug and substance abuse. With respect to neuroticism, this aspect of the big five consists of emotional instability, experiencing frequent anxiety, and having a heightened reaction to stress. People high in neuroticism may consume drugs as a means by which to regulate their emotional suffering. Research indicates that in excess of 60% of drug offenders have exhibited high or very high levels of neuroticism (Dash et al., 2023; Upadhyay, 2023).

The association of low agreeableness (which consists of attributes such as manipulativeness, hostility, and lack of empathy) is also related to the degree of involvement in illicit drug behaviours. This personality style is often characterized by distrustful and openly defiant opposition to authority. Low levels of conscientiousness (denoted via a relative lack of impulse control, handling oneself crudely, and failure to recognize rules) tend to be strongly to criminal acts. This pattern of impulsive and disordered behaviours is commonly stimulated in drug smugglers; they tend to struggle with being able to for long-term planning, discipline, and in adherence to rule behaviours, which in turn, solicits engagement in risky, short-term behaviours (Tharshini et al., 2021; Saladino, 2021).

Family Environment and Risk Factors

The role of the family environment cannot be overlooked in the pathway to drug-related behaviour. Drug-related crimes often arise from homes characterized by neglect of supervision, marital disruptions, domestic violence, substance abuse, and general instability. Very early in childhood, individuals exposed to such dysfunctional backdrops might regard unlawful behaviour as normal and develop a disregard for pro-social values (Dawe et al., 2008; Lea & Abrams, 2017).

Socioeconomic hardship makes these challenges even worse. Families that struggle to provide basic needs usually lack sufficient emotional or psychological support. Therefore, adolescents raised under such conditions are at a higher risk of early drug experimentation, which can quickly escalate into substance dependency. After addiction has become established, illicit behaviour, such as drug peddling, both to sustain the habit and a feeling of power and financial stability lacking elsewhere in their lives, is sought after by many (Nawi et al., 2021; Gazimbe& Khosa, 2021).

The dynamic between family structure and functioning is a fundamental component of behaviour development. Research has established that non-intact families, including families affected by divorce, parental incarceration, or chronic conflict, are more likely to yield individuals engaged in criminal behaviour like drug trafficking. If a child cannot establish an attachment with a caregiver, their sense of morality will likely not be developed and they will be more accepting of deviance which will result in them bypassing the normal transition into adulthood. Furthermore, most of the non-intact families were also economically disadvantaged and this could pressure them into committing illegal activities for survival purposes (Saladino et al., 2020; Saladino et al., 2021).

Communication in family structures is also an important piece of the puzzle. Families of drug smugglers typically portray lower expressiveness, low cohesion, and poor conflict resolution skills. As a result, youth raised in these families are more inclined to use drugs and other substances as coping strategies, especially in the absence of familial support. The average family unit is more apt to provide supportive relationships due to healthy emotional expression, regular communication of family values, and reinforcing prosocial goals/emotions and resilience (Johnson &Pandina, 1991).

Although the literature has prenatally researched and written about family structure which have provided a glimpse into interpersonal relationships (i.e., sibling and spousal relationships), their impact on criminal behaviour has been explored as a buffer for adolescent shame. The oldest sibling and also spouse typically act as the connector into drug networks, thereby reinforcing the veiled identities and cyclical behaviours of coming from families that would never consider engaging in crime. Contrarily, the general population benefits from sibling and spousal relationships that are usually catering towards emotional support, antisocial motivation, and prosocial goals (Kendler, 2012).

Patterns of Perceived Social Support

Perceived social support among NDPS offenders differs markedly from that of the general population. Many offenders report feelings of disconnection from conventional support systems, including family, educational institutions, and community organizations. Instead, their sense of belonging and validation is often derived from peer groups involved in similar illicit activities.These alternative peer-based networks serve important emotional and practical functions. They offer support, validation, protection, and, in some instances, economic collaborations that help sustain drug-related activities (Highland & Dabney, 2009; NeuroLaunch Editorial Team, 2024). However, they also reinforce illegal behaviours, creating significant challenges for individuals seeking to distance themselves from criminal lifestyles once they have become deeply involved in these networks.

Perceived social support is another factor that differs between drug smugglers and non-offenders, with perceived social support often being thought of as a cause for better psychological functioning. In non-criminal environments, social support networks, whether family, friendships, or community engagement, are generally used as protective factors against psychological distress and substance use. High levels of perceived support are linked to a reduction in depression, boosting self-esteem, and reduced chances of engaging in self-destructive or risky behaviour (Haugan & Eriksson, 2021; Cao & Liang, 2020).

On the other hand, drug smugglers often perceive social support as contingent and transactional, which is usually part of a criminal network. The criminals in these drug networks were more concerned with mutual self-interest versus emotional attachment. Often the relationships the drug smugglers develop are often terminated after any conflict or unsuccessful collaboration (Sandoy, 2014). This contributes to environments facilitating anti-social behaviour and is often devoid of access to rehabilitative supports. Drug smugglers also deal with stigmas and perpetually excluded from opportunities. Many drug smugglers have reported being rejected by family members and denied opportunities in institutions, such as health programs, job training programs (Khalid, 2020).

Need for Region-Specific Research

Despite growing recognition of the role played by individual and environmental factors in drug-related criminal behaviour at the national and international levels, research specific to individual regions remains limited. In particular, little is known about how personality traits, family environments, and social support systems interact in shaping drug-related criminal behaviour within the sociocultural and political context of Mizoram.

This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how these variables differ between NDPS offenders and the normal population in Mizoram, which will contribute towards a more culturally sensitive intervention and rehabilitation strategies that are suited to the realities of Mizoram's unique social setting.

Rationale of the study

Psychoactive substance abuse and dependance has become an overwhelming concern within the Mizo society. The suppliers of these substances are violators of the laws laid down by the Government of India. The statutory control over these psychoactive substances is exercised in India by the "Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS). The above research focuses in highlighting the psychological profile of these psychoactive substance suppliers convicted with the NDPS Act.

Aims of the Study

The research intends to explore the personality characteristics, family atmosphere (particularly cohesion and conflict), and perceived social support of those convicted under the NDPS Act. It also seeks to compare the same with the findings of a sample from the normal population of Mizoram. Also, it aims to investigate how these psychosocial factors could contribute to the risk of drug offense involvement, providing information that can be helpful for prevention as well as rehabilitation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) between NDPS offenders and the normal population.

2. To compare levels of family cohesion and family conflict between the two groups.
3. To compare perceived social support between NDPS offenders and the normal population.
4. To explore gender differences across the same psychological variables.

Hypotheses
Based on the literature and direction of analysis, the following hypotheses were tested:
1. There will be significant differences in personality traits between NDPS offenders and the normal population.
2. NDPS offenders will differ significantly from the normal population in terms of family cohesion and family conflict.
3. There will be a significant difference in perceived social support between the two groups.
4. There will be significant differences between males and females across the psychological variables measured.

Methodology

Research Design
This was a **comparative cross-sectional study**, comparing two distinct groups: individuals convicted under the NDPS Act, and individuals from the general population. All data were collected at a single point in time using self-report measures.

Participants
There were two main groups:
- **NDPS Group**: 141 individuals with convictions under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act in Mizoram.
- **Normal Population (NP) Group**: 78 individuals with no criminal record or known drug-related behaviour.

All participants were between the ages of 18 and 45. Both males and females were included, though the sample leaned more toward male participants.

Sampling Method
Purposive sampling was used for the NDPS group, in coordination with correctional and rehabilitation centres. The NP group was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure some variation across age and locality.

Instruments
1. The***Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Form-S)*****(88 items)** was used to measure five broad domains of personality: neuroticism (32 items), extraversion (16 items), openness to experience (8 items), agreeableness (16 items), and conscientiousness (16 items). This version was adapted from standard Big Five inventories and structured to reflect the personality profile relevant to the cultural context. In this study, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .55 for extraversion to .80 for agreeableness. While the alpha for extraversion was slightly below the commonly accepted threshold, the remaining traits showed acceptable reliability. This is consistent with past studies, where Cronbach's alpha for the Big Five dimensions generally ranged from .60 to .83 depending on cultural context and item adaptations (John & Srivastava, 1999; Gosling et al., 2003).
2. To explore family dynamics, the **Family Environment Scale (FES)** was used, focusing on two subscales: cohesion (14 items) and conflict (12 items). These two subdomains capture how emotionally bonded or strained family relationships are, which is particularly relevant in understanding social background in both general and high-risk populations. In the present sample, the cohesion scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = .82$), while conflict showed moderate reliability ($\alpha = .63$). This aligns with typical reliability estimates found in previous research, where cohesion often reports alphas above .75, and conflict tends to vary between .60 and .70 depending on the population studied (Moos & Moos, 2002).
3. Perceived social support was measured using the **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)**. This 12-item scale assesses the level of emotional and practical support individuals feel they receive from three sources: family, friends, and significant others. In this study, the overall scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$), which is consistent with prior research, where alpha values typically range from .85 to .95 across diverse populations (Zimet et al., 1988; Dahlem et al., 1991).
4. All tools were available in English and were translated into Mizo using back-translation procedures to ensure conceptual clarity and cultural relevance. Minor language adjustments were made with the help of bilingual experts to preserve the original meaning while maintaining local intelligibility.

All tools were used in English and Mizo. The translations followed a back-translation procedure to ensure clarity and consistency.

Procedure

Ethical clearance was obtained from the university's ethics committee. NDPS participants were approached through institutional permissions. NP participants were contacted through local communities and educational settings.
Participants were given a brief explanation of the study and gave written consent. Questionnaires were administered individually, and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using **SPSS**. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis) were calculated for each variable.Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated for each scale within the current sample.Independent samples t-tests were used to compare NDPS and NP groups across all variables.Levene's Test was run to check assumptions of equal variances.Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were calculated for group differences.
An additional set of t-tests by gender was conducted to explore differences across psychological variables.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on statistical analysis conducted using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and group comparisons were performed to address the objectives of the study.

Psychometric Properties of the Scales
Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha values for each of the scales used in the study. Reliability was calculated based on the current sample. All scales showed acceptable to good internal consistency, with values ranging from .55 to .91.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Each Scale

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's α
Neuroticism	32	.76
Extraversion	16	.55
Openness	8	.59
Agreeableness	16	.80
Conscientiousness	16	.76
Cohesion	14	.82
Conflict	12	.63
Perceived Social Support	12	.91

Descriptive Statistics for NDPS and Normal Population Groups
Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for personality traits, family environment (cohesion and conflict), and perceived social support, separately for the NDPS group and the normal population. This provides a general overview of how the two groups scored across the different psychological variables.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Personality Traits, Family Environment, and Perceived Social Support among NDPS Offenders and NP

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Neuroticism	NDPS	141	101.26	11.57	-0.22	0.6
	NP	78	108.81	12.31	0.29	-0.75
Extraversion	NDPS	141	49.08	6.47	-0.17	-0.46
	NP	78	53.23	5.54	0.24	-0.53
Openness	NDPS	141	79.45	7.79	-0.18	-0.14
	NP	78	88.86	8.42	0.12	-0.26
Agreeableness	NDPS	141	51.53	7.55	0.1	0.23
	NP	78	61.97	5.98	0.19	0.73
Conscientiousness	NDPS	141	51.35	7.08	-0.26	1.37
	NP	78	59.09	5.93	0.14	0.37
Family Cohesion (COH)	NDPS	141	32.35	8.8	0.72	0.76
	NP	78	32.77	5.88	0.13	-0.43

Family Conflict (CONF)	NDPS	141	28.94	6.01	0.34	0.17
	NP	78	32.08	3.98	-0.04	-0.09
Perceived Social Support	NDPS	141	56.86	13.31	-0.72	0.42
	NP	78	62.26	14.84	-1.01	0.64

Note. NDPS = Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances offenders; NP = Normal Population; Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 3: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Levene's Test was used to assess whether the assumption of equal variances held between the two groups before conducting independent samples t-tests. None of the p-values in Table 3 were below .05, indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met for all variables.

Table 3: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Variable	F	p
Neuroticism	1.0	0.318
Extraversion	0.42	0.518
Openness	0.761	0.384
Agreeableness	2.293	0.131
Conscientiousness	2.244	0.136
Cohesion (COH)	0.052	0.82
Confidence (CONF)	1.754	0.187
Perceived Stress (PSS)	2.852	0.093

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Males and Females

Table 4 displays the results of the independent samples t-test used to compare male and female participants across all measured variables. Significant differences were found only in neuroticism, where females scored higher than males. No significant gender differences were observed in other variables.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Males and Females

Variable	Gender	M	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Neuroticism	M (123)	101.47	11.36	-3.44	188.0	0.001	
	F (95)	107.24	12.93				0.48
Extraversion	M (123)	51.15	6.31	1.53	197.34	0.128	
	F (95)	49.8	6.62				0.21
Openness	M (123)	82.89	8.89	0.17	193.63	0.863	
	F (95)	82.67	9.65				0.02
Agreeableness	M (123)	54.61	7.84	-1.21	179.66	0.228	
	F (95)	56.07	9.56				0.17
Conscientiousness	M (123)	54.33	7.14	0.48	185.25	0.632	
	F (95)	53.82	8.32				0.07
Cohesion (COH)	M (123)	32.54	7.95	0.01	203.88	0.992	
	F (95)	32.53	7.82				0.0
Confidence (CONF)	M (123)	29.68	5.24	-1.02	187.91	0.308	
	F (95)	30.47	5.97				0.14
Perceived Stress (PSS)	M (123)	59.74	13.25	1.23	188.78	0.219	
	F (95)	57.34	14.99				0.17

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Cohen's d = effect size. Significant p-values (p < .05) indicate statistically meaningful differences between male and female groups.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing NDPS and Normal Population Groups

Table 5 presents the results of independent samples t-tests conducted to compare NDPS offenders and the normal population across all psychological variables. Significant group differences were found in all personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), family conflict, and perceived social support. However, no significant difference was observed in family cohesion between the two groups.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test Comparing NDPS and NP on Psychological Variables

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Neuroticism	NDPS	141	101.26	11.57	217	-4.52	.000
	NP	78	108.81	12.31			
Extraversion	NDPS	141	49.08	6.47	217	-4.78	.000
	NP	78	53.23	5.54			
Openness	NDPS	141	79.45	7.79	217	-8.32	.000
	NP	78	88.86	8.42			
Agreeableness	NDPS	141	51.53	7.55	217	-10.52	.000
	NP	78	61.97	5.98			
Conscientiousness	NDPS	141	51.35	7.08	217	-8.19	.000
	NP	78	59.09	5.93			
Family Cohesion (COH)	NDPS	141	32.35	8.80	217	-0.37	.710
	NP	78	32.77	5.88			
Family Conflict (CONF)	NDPS	141	28.94	6.01	217	-4.14	.000
	NP	78	32.08	3.98			
Perceived Social Support	NDPS	141	56.86	13.31	217	-2.76	.006
	NP	78	62.26	14.84			

Note. *NDPS = Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances offenders; NP = Normal Population; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; df = degrees of freedom; t = t-statistic; p = significance. p-value < .05*

Interpretation of Results

Personality Traits

- **Neuroticism**: The normal population had a higher mean score (M = 108.81) compared to the NDPS group (M = 101.26). This suggests that, in this sample, individuals from the general population reported experiencing more emotional instability or sensitivity than those convicted under the NDPS Act.
- **Extraversion**: NDPS offenders scored lower (M = 49.08) than the normal group (M = 53.23), indicating that they may be less outgoing, expressive, or socially engaged.
- **Openness**: A notable difference was observed in openness, where the NDPS group scored considerably lower (M = 79.45) than the normal group (M = 88.86). This may point to a reduced willingness to explore new ideas, experiences, or perspectives among NDPS offenders.
- **Agreeableness**: The NDPS group had a much lower mean (M = 51.53) than the normal population (M = 61.97), suggesting that NDPS offenders may display more antagonistic or less cooperative interpersonal tendencies.
- **Conscientiousness**: NDPS offenders scored lower (M = 51.35) than the normal group (M = 59.09), indicating weaker impulse control, organization, or rule-following tendencies.

Overall, the NDPS group consistently showed lower scores across four of the five personality dimensions. The exception was neuroticism, where the normal population scored unexpectedly higher.

Family Environment

- **Family Cohesion**: There was no significant difference in family cohesion between the two groups. The NDPS group had a mean of 32.35, while the normal group scored slightly higher at 32.77. The closeness and emotional bonding within the family appeared relatively similar across both groups.
- **Family Conflict**: A clearer difference was seen in family conflict, with the NDPS group scoring lower (M = 28.94) than the normal group (M = 32.08). Since lower scores indicate higher perceived conflict on this scale, this suggests that NDPS offenders experienced more conflict within the family environment compared to the general population.

Perceived Social Support

- **Perceived Social Support**: The NDPS group reported lower levels of perceived support (M = 56.86) compared to the normal group (M = 62.26). This suggests that NDPS offenders, on average, feel less supported by family, friends, or significant others.

Gender Differences

The gender comparisons showed only one significant difference: females scored higher than males on neuroticism (F = 107.24 vs. M = 101.47). There were no significant gender-based differences in extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, family environment, or perceived social support.

Discussion

This study compared individuals convicted under the NDPS Act with members of the general population in Mizoram on personality traits, family environment, and perceived social support. The results showed consistent differences between the two groups across most variables, with some findings closely matching earlier research, and a few showing patterns that might reflect the local context.

Personality Traits

NDPS offenders scored lower on extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These traits—especially agreeableness and conscientiousness—are often linked with how well someone gets along with others and how likely they are to follow rules or think ahead. Past studies (like those by Saladino and others) also found similar traits among individuals involved in illegal drug activities.

Openness and extraversion were also lower, which could mean that NDPS offenders may not be as curious or socially open, which in turn may limit their exposure to healthier or alternative ways of coping.

Interestingly, neuroticism was higher in the general population. This goes against what some previous studies have found, where higher neuroticism was often linked with drug use or criminal involvement. Individuals in the general population may be more comfortable admitting emotional struggles, while those in the NDPS group either downplay it or don't recognize it as strongly. Another possibility is that high neuroticism may not always lead to deviance; sometimes it leads to internal stress but not outward action.

Family Environment

Family cohesion—the sense of emotional closeness—didn't show much differ between the two groups. That challenges the assumption that drug offenders always come from disconnected or emotionally distant families. Regarding conflict, the NDPS group had lower scores, which was based on how the scale was designed, which actually reflects *higher* levels of family conflict. This supports previous research suggesting that individuals involved in drug-related offenses often come from environments where tension, arguments, or instability are more common. In some cases, this level of conflict may be so normalized that individuals no longer register it as unusual. While family closeness was similar across groups, the higher conflict levels among NDPS offenders hint at homes that may be emotionally connected but also strained, with unresolved tension running in the background.

Earlier studies (like Dawe et al., 2008) suggest that a chaotic or unstable home environment in childhood often plays a role later in life. While this study didn't directly ask about early life experience, the family environment still offers some clues about what participants are used to.

Perceived Social Support

As expected, NDPS offenders reported feeling less support from family, friends, or others. This supports earlier research (e.g., Highland & Dabney; Haugan & Eriksson) showing that lack of emotional and social support is a common issue among those involved in substance use or trafficking. For many, once they enter criminal networks, support tends to be more conditional—based on usefulness rather than genuine care—and those relationships often break down quickly when problems arise.

Gender Differences

There were almost no gender differences across variables except for neuroticism, where females scored higher than males. This finding is fairly common in personality research and could reflect social norms around emotional expression rather than actual psychological difference. On the whole, gender didn't seem to play a big role in shaping the patterns found in this study.

Implications and Contextual Relevance:

While the results match much of the literature, they also reflect the specific setting. Mizoram's proximity to drug routes, limited job opportunities, and shifting social support structures likely play a role in how these traits and patterns come together. It's not that a low score in agreeableness, poor impulse control, or lack of support directly causes crime, but these things may push certain individuals closer to it, especially when the environment already makes it easy or tempting. The finding that NDPS offenders also experienced more conflict within their families adds another layer, suggesting that some pathways into drug-related behavior may be shaped as much by tension at home as by influences outside it.

This study doesn't claim to explain everything, but it does show that drug offenders in this context tend to differ in ways that are psychological, social, and emotional, not just economic. These differences might not be visible at first glance, but they matter when trying to understand why people get pulled into this kind of behavior.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, there are a few areas that deserve attention. Rehabilitation programmes should focus on helping individuals develop better emotional control, planning skills, and interpersonal trust, especially since lower levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness were seen among NDPS offenders. These traits are often overlooked in traditional correctional approaches, but they're essential for long-term adjustment. It's also important to look at the role of social support. Many of the individuals in the NDPS group reported feeling less supported by others, which suggests that reintegration efforts need to go beyond formal services. People need spaces where they feel heard and connected, whether that means repairing family ties or building new, stable relationships.

Although family cohesion was similar across groups, the way conflict was reported suggests that some families may be emotionally close but still struggle with unresolved tension. Family-based interventions should therefore focus more on communication and conflict resolution rather than simply encouraging closeness. The lower scores in openness and extraversion also suggest that some individuals may not have had exposure to different perspectives or healthy alternatives. Youth engagement efforts might benefit from creating opportunities for emotional expression, creativity, and new experiences. Finally, future research could explore early life experiences more directly to understand how these psychological patterns develop over time, especially in contexts where structural and social pressures are also at play.

Limitations

Like most studies, this one had its limitations as well. The design was cross-sectional, so no cause-and-effect conclusions can be made. The data relied on self-report, which can be influenced by memory, mood, or social desirability. Also, since the sample was drawn from a specific region and context, the findings may not generalize to other areas or populations. Despite these limitations, the study still offers meaningful insights into the psychological and social profiles of individuals convicted under the NDPS Act in Mizoram.

Conclusion

This study found that NDPS offenders in Mizoram differ from the general population in several key areas, particularly in personality traits, perceived support, and how they relate to family conflict. These differences suggest that addressing drug-related offenses requires more than legal solutions. Psychological and relational factors also play a role—and they need to be understood in the context of the environment people come from. While not everything can be explained by personality or support systems, this study adds to the growing evidence that crime, especially in complex settings like Mizoram, is rarely just about the law. It's also about people, relationships, and the paths they've had to walk.

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