

## Relationship among the Personality Traits of Inmates in Nigeria Prisons

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the relationship of extroversion neuroticism and psychoticism of inmates in Nigeria Prisons. The research design was a correlational study in finding relationship of personality dimensions. Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) was used to elicit information from the inmates. The instrument was validated by Eysenck and found to be reliable while the reliability coefficient was quite favourable and of equal standard with other similar tests. The samples were made up of 504 inmates, randomly selected in seven prisons in Nigeria. The result of the finding showed that there was a significant relationship between the pairs of extroversion and neuroticism extroversion and psychoticism neuroticism and psychoticism. There was highest coefficient of 0.7622 on psychoticism among the personality traits: Psychoticism, neuroticism and extroversion with neuroticism and extroversion having coefficients 0.6634 and 0.5630, respectively.

**Key words:** Personality traits, inmates, prisons, EPQ, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Personality was described by Witting (1977) as those enduring attributes of human being that are representations of his or her behaviour. These attributes may be acquired because of experiences shared with others. The attributes may also be as a result of the influence of heredity or the interaction of heredity and environment. Personality is defined by Peterson (1997) as the psychological characteristics of an individual that are general, enduring distinctive, integrated and functional. Personality has a significant influence with a person's thoughts, actions, motivations, emotions and interpersonal relations. It is a generalized term used to describe the many different characteristics or traits people have personality.

Personality is viewed by Eysenck (1977) as a more or less stable and enduring organisation of a person's character. Eysenck believed that the basis of personality involves genetics physiology and environment. In psychology, personality describes the character of emotion, thought, and behaviour patterns unique to a person. In other words, personality is the enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to and thinking about the environment and oneself.

The importance of studies into an individuals traits, which make him or her a unique individual cannot be over-emphasized. Pervin (1975) defined traits as the observed statistical relationships among pieces of behaviour. Personality traits are prominent aspect of personality that are exhibited in a wide range of important social and

personal contexts. There are various number of traits to personality but Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) categorized traits into three basic dimensions. Introversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. According to Eysenck, introverts are individuals who are shy quiet or unsociable in their behaviour while the extroverts are seen as optimistic, dominant, surgent venturesome, assertive, impulsive and dynamic individuals. The traits that compose the neuroticism type according to Eysenck included, anxiety, depression, feelings guilty, low self-esteem irrationality, shyness, being moody and emotionality while the psychoticism type consists of antisocial behaviour, unempathetic behaviour, impulsiveness, impersonal, aggressiveness, tough mindedness, being cold and egocentricity.

The PEN model is comprised of three personality dimensions based on psychophysiology: psychoticism, extroversion and neuroticism. The PEN model proposed and advocated by Eysenck (1990) who highlighted two main aspects of biological dimensions of personality, the descriptive and causal aspects based on factor analysis. The causal aspects are biologically based. According to Eysenck (1990) extroversion is based on cortical arousal in which the extroverts are chronically under aroused and bored, also there is an optimal level of arousal, that performance deteriorates as one becomes more or less aroused than this optimal level. The neuroticism is based on activation thresholds in the sympathetic nervous system or visceral brain. The neurotic people who have a low activation threshold experience negative affect in the face of very minor stressors that is they are easily upset.

Emotionally stable people who have a high activation threshold experience negative affect only in the face of very major stressors that is they are calm under pressure. It shows that low E and low N would lead to effective control and socialization and would therefore not be represented in offender population. The high E individual is considered to be cortically under aroused and is therefore constantly seeking stimulation to maintain cortical arousal. It can be seen from this that the extroverts need to be impulsive and need to seek extra excitement so as to keep a balance within the cortex. According to pen model psychoticism is associated not only with the liability to have a psychotic episode (or break with reality) but also with aggression which is associated with increased testosterone levels.

The purpose of this study was to determine if extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism were present in inmates in some Nigerian Prisons. Also, to determine if there were relationship between extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism.

**Research question:** Based on the background to the study, this question was raised.

Would there be any relationship between extroversion and neuroticism; extroversion and psychoticism, neuroticism and psychoticism of inmates.

**Research hypothesis:** There will be no significant relationship between the pairs of extroversion and neuroticism; extroversion and psychoticism; neuroticism and psychoticism.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Design:** The research design was primarily a correlational study. Correlational studies are more popular with finding degrees of relationship. The data collected were analysed using Pearson correlation technique to find the relation of pairs of extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. The dependent variables were the personality dimension: extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism while the independent variables were the male and female inmates in Nigeria Prisons.

**Population:** The population of the study was the total number of inmates in all the 147 Prisons in Nigeria.

**Sample and sampling techniques:** He samples for the study were 504 inmates (who during the study were) serving various sentences for certain offences in Nigerian Prisons across the country. A total of 7 Prisons were

covered in Nigeria. The samples were randomly selected from the population. In Nigerian Medium Prison Kirikiri Lagos, 101 male inmates took part in the study. A total of 93 inmates were sampled in Agodi Prison Ibadan Oyo State while 86 inmates were selected in Ile-Ife and Ilesa Osun State, 84 inmates took part in Akure, in Ondo State and 57 inmates took part in Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State.

**Research instrument:** The study adopted the instrument constructed by Eysenck and Eysenck (1975). It was known as Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire measures three major personality dimensions namely: Extroversion (E), Neuroticism (N), Psychoticism (P) dimensions. The questionnaire consisted of ninety while the response was either circled or underlined the Yes or the No following the questions. There were no tricky questions and also no wrong answers. The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Validity was demonstrated by two methods. The construct validity of the instrument was got by using inmates and non-inmates subjects.

The questionnaire was administered to two groups (inmates and non-inmates) the scores were correlated to determine their relationship and extent to which the test measure human attributes. A negative high correlation coefficient was got. The second method was the criterion validity, the validity was found to have high correlations.

The reliability of the Eysenck personality questionnaire was determined by the use of 2 methods of reliability. The first method (as recorded by the manual) was the test-retest reliability in which the correlation between the first and the second testing was carried out with a time interval of one month. The results were quite favourable with reliability mostly lying between 0.78 and 0.90. The second method of reliability used was the internal consistency reliability which is known as alpha coefficient. Two groups of subjects were used, the normal people and the inmates.

The coefficient observed were satisfactory and the internal consistency reliability was between 0.71 and 0.84. These reliability coefficient were of equal standard of those observed for other similar tests.

**Administration of the instruments:** The researcher collected letter of permission from the Controller General of Prison to conduct research work on the Nigerian prisoners. The letter of permission was written to the Deputy Controllers of those states and dispatched while another letter was given to the researcher to permit him to enter the prisons. The instruments were administered personally with the assistance of a research assistant

while the Prison warders rendered assistance in calling them into the hall. The warders made them to seat down. The instruments, Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) was administered on the inmates inside the hall. The questionnaires and pencils were given to the inmates. Since, some of the inmates could not read and understand, the questionnaires were interpreted into 2 ethnic groups language and in addition to Pidgin English for those that could not read English language. Enough time was given to the subjects so that all the items could be answered. Scoring of the instrument was done by using the appropriate scoring sheets for extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. The points were counted for each answer which was endorsed on the questionnaire. The total score was the sum of those points counted.

## RESULTS

The data collected were analysed using Pearson correlation method to test hypothesis raised that there will be no significant relationship between the pairs of extroversion and neuroticism: extroversion and psychoticism and psychoticism and neuroticism.

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation method. The data used for this hypothesis were generated from responses made on (EPQ) Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. The scores were subjected to the Pearson Correlation analyse. The results was presented in Table 1.

The result revealed that a positive relationship existed between extroversion dimension and neuroticism dimension the calculated r-value was 0.3199 while the r-critical value was 0.164. This result was significant at 0.05 level of significance as the calculated r-value was greater than the r-critical value. The null hypothesis was not accepted. The null hypothesis that the correlation between neuroticism and extroversion is not significant and it was rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between neuroticism and extroversion.

Also, the result showed that a positive relationship existed between extroversion and psychoticism. The calculated r-value was 0.2095 while the r-critical value was 0.164. This was significant at 0.05 level of significance, since the calculated value of 0.2095 was greater than the r-critical value of 0.164. The hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between extroversion and psychoticism.

The result in Table 1, showed that there was a positive relationship between neuroticism and psychoticism. The calculated r-value was 0.2980 while the

Table 1: Correlation matrix on personality trait of inmates

Variable	Personality traits	Extroversion	Neuroticism	Psychoticism
Personality trait	1.0000			
Extroversion	0.05830**	1.0000		
Neuroticism	0.6634**	0.3199**	1.0000	
Psychoticism	0.7622**	0.2095**	0.2980**	1.0000

Table value 0.164 1-tailed significant \*\*0.001

r-critical value was 0.164. The result showed a significant relationship at an alpha level of significance. This hypothesis was therefore rejected indicating that there was a significant relationship between neuroticism and psychoticism.

However, the result in Table 1 showed that the zero order correlation coefficients range 0.2095 being the coefficient of variables (extroversion and psychoticism) through the coefficient of 0.2980 being the coefficient of variables (neuroticism and psychoticism) and to 0.3199 being coefficient of variables (extroversion and neuroticism). Furthermore, results revealed that psychoticism had coefficients of 0.2095 and 0.2980 with extroversion and psychoticism, respectively while neuroticism and extroversion had the heighest coefficient of 0.3199 it showed that high positive relationship was between neuroticism and extroversion.

The result showed that psychoticism had the highest coefficient of 0.7622 among the personality traits while neuroticism and extroversion had 0.6634 and 0.5630 respectively. There was a high and positive relationship on the personality dimensions of inmates.

## DISCUSSION

The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between extroversion and neuroticism. Both extroversion and neuroticism of inmates were significantly related to the personality. They were also found that extroversion and neuroticism was significant predictor of personality traits of inmates. Nevertheless, neuroticism was found to be a better predictor of personality of the inmates than extroversion. This indicated significantly that neuroticism of the inmates correlated significantly and positively too, with personality traits. It implies that individuals with marked scores or high scores on neuroticism may be predisposed to criminality.

Moreover, the finding showed that extroversion and psychoticism were related significantly and positively. They were found to be significant predictors of personality traits of inmates. However, psychoticism was found to be a better predictor of personality traits of inmates than extroversion. The indication was that psychoticism of inmates correlated significantly and high positive correlation with the personality traits of inmates.

It implies that individuals with marked scores on psychoticism have a significant predisposition to criminality.

The Table 1 revealed that neuroticism and psychoticism were significantly related. The 2 dimensions were found to be significant predictors of personality traits of inmates. Nevertheless psychoticism was found to be a single better predictor of personality traits of inmates than neuroticism. This indicated that psychoticism of inmates correlated significantly and positively with personality traits. It indicates that individuals having a high score or marked scores on psychoticism may be predisposed to criminality.

The result agreed with the finding of Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) that person's indulging in criminal behaviour would be emotionally unstable rather than stable and high on psychoticism rather than on super ego functioning. Similarly the result supported the conclusion of Caspi and Silva (1995) that individuals with a personality marked or high in negative emotionality, neuroticism and anxiety may act as a drive or motivation for criminal behaviour. This finding was in agreement with Franks (1960) that recidivists would be found to be high on psychoticism, neuroticism and extroversion. Eysenck and Eysenck (1973) found that prisoners are characterized by high psychoticism and neuroticism scores. Some studies (Passingham, 1967; Eysenck, 1970, 1975) supported that criminals scored significantly higher in psychoticism and neuroticism scale than non-criminals. Tenibiaje (2005) also affirmed that psychoticism was the best predictor of criminality among the personality traits (extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism) of inmates in Nigeria.

### CONCLUSION

As stated in the introductory part of the study that the personality traits are categories into three basic dimensions: introversion-extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism (Eysenck, 1975). The objectives of this study are to identify the personality traits of inmates in some Nigerian Prisons and to determine if there are relationships between the personality traits. The study found that extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism existed among the inmates in Nigerian Prisons. There was a positive relationship between extroversion and neuroticism, extroversion and psychoticism, neuroticism and psychoticism. Based on the findings the following recommendations are made to schools, policy makers who

are connected with penal institutions. Personality traits may be considered when grouping offenders into treatment groups and also grouping the inmates into different cells or workgroups in the prisons. Counselling is an important factor or tool for modifying deviant behaviour and the use of inventories or questionnaire in determining the personality characteristics of students is of paramount importance.

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