

## **Personality Factors Associated with Drug Addiction in Young and Adults (A Review of Literature)**

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### **Abstract**

The article "Personality Factors Associated with Drug Addiction in Young and Adults" reviews the connection between personality traits and drug addiction, emphasizing how certain psychological factors contribute to addictive behavior. The study explores traits like sensation-seeking, impulsivity, neuroticism, psychoticism, and low conscientiousness, which are closely linked to substance abuse. Sensation-seeking individuals are drawn to novel, intense experiences, making them more susceptible to addiction. Similarly, those with impulsive traits often engage in risky behavior without fully considering consequences, increasing their likelihood of drug misuse. The article also highlights the role of neuroticism, characterized by anxiety, moodiness, and emotional instability, which is often observed in

individuals suffering from addiction. Psychotic traits, including aggression, antisocial behavior, and emotional coldness, are also associated with higher tendencies for substance abuse. Furthermore, low conscientiousness, a trait marked by irresponsibility and a lack of self-discipline, is identified as a risk factor for engaging in addictive behaviors. The review synthesizes existing research and suggests that drug addiction is a multifaceted issue shaped by biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Understanding these personality traits can help in developing better intervention and prevention strategies for both young and adult populations. The study concludes that while not everyone with these personality traits will develop addiction, these factors significantly increase the risk and play a critical role in the onset, maintenance, and relapse of drug addiction.

**Keywords:** Drug addiction, Impulsivity, Low Conscientiousness, Neurotic traits, Personality attributes, Psychotic traits, Sensation-seeking

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## **Introduction**

The aim of this literature review is to investigate whether individual personality attributes are linked to drug addiction and, if so, what specific personality traits are associated with drug addiction. The concept of an 'addictive personality' has long been discussed and debated (Berglund et al., 2011). An extensive body of literature suggests a significant link between an individual's personality attributes and the development of drug addiction. However, some other studies argue that individual personality characteristics do not play a role in the development of drug misuse and dependence, as environmental factors, particularly the availability of supplies, are the major determinants (Mott, 1972). Studying the relationship between drug addiction and personality traits is considered one of the growing research areas in psychology. Psychologists have been long studying whether particular patterns of personality characteristics are associated with all types of drugs or specific groups of drugs are associated with specific patterns of personality traits. The research literature in this area supports both of the above views. Adulthood is the period of human development in which full physical growth and maturity have been achieved and certain biological, cognitive, social personality and other changes associated with the aging process occur (State Party Reports Sri Lanka, 1994). Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines

'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (Marcou et al., 2015).

## **Research Problem**

It is thought that several factors, such as biological, psychological and environmental, are associated with drug addiction. Among them, personality factors, one of the major psychological determinants, play a significant role in the drug addiction problems. Different studies focus on various personality factors associated with drug addiction. This study seeks to explore the personality factors that are most closely linked to drug addiction. Accordingly, to research problem of this study is: which types of personality factors are associated with drug addiction in the young and adult population.

## **Methodology**

This research is based on the previous literature that has been conducted on the drug addiction and personality attributes. Existing literature and scholarly articles are critically evaluated and synthesized

## **Objective of the study**

The present study aims to identify the personality factors associated with drug addiction in both young people and adults.

## **Significance of the Study**

Drug addictive behaviour is associated with several factors, including personality dispositions, environmental factors as well as biological and hereditary influences. Therefore, drug

addiction is thought to be developed by a combination of different factors rather than an isolated factor. Among these influences, each factor can contribute to the development of drug addiction to a greater or lesser degree. Though each of these is more significant in determining the aetiology, courses and cessation of addictive behaviours, personality dispositions play a critical role in the relapse of drug addictive behaviours according to some studies. Hence, understanding the role of personality disposition in the drug addiction will help health care providers and counsellors to build effective intervention programs for the drug addicts.

### **Sensation Seeking and Impulsivity**

“Sensation seeking is a personality trait defined as the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences and the willingness to take risks for the sake of such experience” (Kazdin, 2000, p.3253). People who possess sensation seeking personality trait are strongly interested in having new experiences (VandenBos, 2015). “The impulsivity is characterized a failure to evaluate a situation as risky or dangerous, acting without thinking, the inability to plan ahead, the tendency to respond quickly to stimuli rather than inhibiting responses, and the failure to withhold a response that will lead to punishment” (Kazdin, 2000, p.1748).

Many studies have demonstrated that personality traits such as sensation seeking, impulsivity, novelty seeking, and engaging in risky behaviors are frequently associated with drug addiction

problems. The high impulsivity is not just specific to substance addiction, is a marked personality trait in various types of addictive behaviors such as computer gaming and gambling (Walther et al., 2012). Adolescents with substance abuse have shown high sensation seeking (Comeau et al., 2001) and high impulsivity (Barnes et al., 2005). Mitchell and Potenza (2014) found that both impulsivity (trait impulsivity, impulsive action, and impulsive choice) and sensation seeking are related to substance use regardless of the types of drugs. It is difficult to determine whether trait impulsivity is a cause or an effect of drug use in humans (Mitchell & Potenza, 2014).

The specific drug may associate with specific personality attributes. For example, sensation-seeking and engagement in risk behaviors are common personality traits among opioid addicts (Zuckerman, 2005). One cross-sectional study of a five-factor model of personality traits in opioid dependents indicated that opioid addicts were more emotionally unstable, more introverted, and less structured than non-clinical controls (Kornør & Nordvik, 2007). McGue et al. (1999) proposed that alcohol use disorders (AUDs) correlated with elevated negative emotionality, while drug use disorders (DUDs) were linked to lower levels of constraint in a large community sample. In addition, in their study, Sher, Wood, Crews, and Vandiver (1995) highlighted that novelty seeking correlated strongly with alcohol, drug, and tobacco dependence in college students. While some other studies consistently show that

polysubstance (using many substances at once) abusers have particularly high levels of impulsivity and sensation seeking (Donovan et al., 1998)

Another study has shown that novelty-seeking and conduct disorders were associated with alcohol, drugs, and tobacco dependence symptoms. Moreover, this study argues that alcohol dependents maintain a more socially oriented dependable personality profile than drug or tobacco dependent individuals (Grekin et al., 2006). On the contrary, Ersche and his colleagues suggested that some individuals with high sensation seeking traits but no familial vulnerability for dependence were likely to use cocaine but may have relatively low risk for developing dependence (Ersche et al., 2013).

### **Neurotic and Psychotic Traits**

Neurotic trait is a state of anxious, depressed, tense, irrational and moody. Low self-esteem and a tendency to guilt feelings may be present in neurotic people (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). Moreover, neurotic people tend to be a worrier, and neuroticism is frequently associated with anxious and depressed features. They are having trouble sleeping and experiencing a wide array of psychosomatic symptoms. neuroticism tend to be especially prone to the disorders of depression and anxiety (Larsen & Buss, 2017). People who exhibit psychotic characteristics are often aggressive, antisocial, tough-minded, cold, and egocentric. Additionally, they tend to be cruel, hostile, and insensitive to the needs and

feelings of others. Besides, they have a low level of emotional well-being and greater problems with alcohol, drug abuse, and violent criminal behaviour, compared to those who score low in psychoticism (Schultz & Schultz, 2017).

One cross-sectional study of a five-factor model of personality traits in opioid dependents indicated that opioid addicts were more emotionally unstable, more introverted, and less structured than non-clinical controls (Kornør & Nordvik, 2007). Another study, which was conducted using Five Factor Model of Personality found that use of different drugs is associated with different personality factors. Compared to never smokers, current smokers have scored higher on Neuroticism. Similarly, cocaine and heroin users have scored higher on Neuroticism. However, marijuana users have scored higher on other personality traits rather than neuroticism (Terracciano et al., 2008). Joy Mott, who conducted a study on the intellectual and personality characteristics of opiate users, concluded that neurotic characteristics are higher among opiate users. In this study, Joy Mott measured neuroticism using the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), one of the most widely used personality inventories at that time (Mott, 1972).

Neurotic people are more likely to engage in high risk-taking behaviours ((Trobst et al., 2002)) and addictive behaviours such as internet use (Montag et al., 2010). Substance addictions such as opiates and sedatives are higher among the individuals with neuroticism (Hokm Abadi et al., 2018). Similarly, those

who are addicted to heroin have shown significantly higher level of neurotic and psychotic characteristics (Sanja et al., 2013). Eysenck's personality theory suggests that individuals with an addictive personality type exhibit higher levels of psychoticism and neuroticism. (Abu-Arab & Hashem, 1995) Eysenck also argues that neurotic characteristic is largely inherited, a product of genetics rather than learning or experience (Schultz & Schultz, 2017).

### **Low Conscientious Characteristics**

Low conscientious characteristic is the opposite side of the high conscientious personality characteristic. People with conscientious characteristics are described as industrious and tend to get ahead. They often exhibit hardworking, punctuality and reliable behaviors. Moreover, Conscientious characteristic consists of organized, neat, practical, prompt and meticulous attributes (Larsen & Buss, 2005). People with low conscientious are reckless, lazy, irresponsible and absent-minded (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). Sometimes, low conscientious characteristics may lead to addictive behaviour. In Germany, addiction to video gaming was highest among those high in low in conscientiousness (Muller et al., 2014)

However, according to available data, a strong relationship has not been found between drug addiction and low conscientious characteristics. Nevertheless, some studies argue that low conscientious characteristic is a possible predictor for the development of drug addiction problems. For example,

Terracciano and his colleagues (2008) highlighted the links between drug use and low Conscientiousness. Zuckerman (2005) demonstrated that sensation seeking and risk-taking behaviors are common personality traits in opioid addicts. Perhaps, people with low conscientious traits may engage in risk taking behaviors. Zuckerman has not comprehensively focused the role of low conscientiousness in opioid addiction. Similarly, one study confirmed that low conscientious people are more likely to engage in risk taking behaviours such as unsafe sex (Trobst et al., 2002). Another study on the relationship between personality traits and drug types among substance abuse suggested that low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness are consistently associated with the use of stimulants (cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine). Five factor of personality model was used to determine the personality traits of the people in this study. It may be stated that people with low scores in conscientiousness are lenient and negligent; that is, they lack any enthusiasm for making purposeful efforts (Hokm Abadi et al., 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this analysis, it was discussed that sensation seeking, neuroticism, psychoticism, and low conscientiousness are traits associated with various aspects of drug addictive behaviour, including causes, relapse, and cessation. A particular addictive behaviour, either behaviour or substance addiction, does not develop suddenly as a result of initial exposure. Any

types of addictive behaviour develop as a result of repeated exposure over time to a substance or behaviour. It should be noted that not everyone who uses drugs becomes addicted to them. Undoubtedly, individual characteristics play a significant role in this. It is assumed that particular thinking and behavioural pattern are associated with the development of drug addiction; this is where personality characteristics come into play. On the other hand, evidence supported that choice of different drugs depends on individual preferences according to unique personality characteristics. Taking all into consideration, it can be concluded that personality traits such as sensation seeking, neuroticism, psychoticism, and low conscientiousness are closely linked to various aspects of drug addiction.

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