AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR TENDENCIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

Anake, P. M. (Ph.D)
Department of Guidance and Counseling
University of Calabar

Okoi, Margaret Innocent (Ph.D)
Department of Guidance and Counseling
University of Calabar

Anake Godwin Akepu
Department of Mental Health/Psychiatry
University of Calabar Teaching Hospital
&
Ubana, Ubana Michael (Ph.D)
Department of Adult and Continuing Education
University of Calabar
Corresponding author: ubanamichael4real@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between personality traits and deviant behaviour tendencies among senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. two research purposes were formulated to guide the study, which corresponding two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlation research design. The population comprised of 6199 senior secondary school one (SS1) students in public secondary schools across the state. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 617 students, ensuring representativeness from urban and rural schools across the three education zones. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Personality Traits and Deviant Behaviour Tendencies Scale (PTDBTS)," structured into subscales reflecting the Big Five personality traits; openness, conscientiousness, and five categories of deviant behaviours, including examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. The instrument was subjected to both face and content validation by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement. Reliability was confirmed using the Cronbach Alpha method with coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.88, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that openness to experience, and conscientiousness, have a significant relationship with deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students in

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Cross River State. It was concluded that personality traits have relationship with students' tendency to engage in deviant behaviours. Based on the findings, and conclusion, it was recommended among others that school counsellors and administrators incorporate personality assessments into student behavioural interventions and design tailored psycho-educational programmes to promote self-regulation, empathy, and positive social behaviours in schools.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Deviant Behaviours, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness

Introduction

In our society, today majority of secondary school students have shown unacceptable behavior, which is not in line with the norms and standards of the schools and ideals of the society. Deviant behaviour therefore constitutes those school offenses such as stealing, fighting, truancy, aggressive attacks on others, assault, insult, drug offenses, sex-related offences, disobedience, among others. The negative consequences of these activities affect not only the students but also the educational system. Hence, the phenomenon continues to perplex all and sundry; many factors, ranging from attitudinal variables, have been identified in the literature as factors influencing students' deviant behaviour, as such efforts have been set in that direction in the quest to curb this challenge. Several efforts have been made by the government and the school authorities in order to have the problem in the bud.

Similarly, education stakeholders such as school principals, teachers, policy makers and students have increased manifestations of deviant behaviour as observed among secondary school students in Nigeria. Deviant behaviour which could be described as behaviour that is different from the norm, has become a daunting global problem lately. More students are displaying abnormal behaviour and thus destabilizing the learning process within school settings. It is well-known that teenagers usually learn how to adapt to society and the school environment as well, as that deviant behaviour may lead to problems with conformity (Maureen & Mogbang, 2022).

It has become a common feature in our secondary schools to see students engage in street fighting, drug use disorder, snatching of cell phones, carrying out violent demonstrations, and in the process, engage in Wanton destruction of properties or in acts of arson on flimsy excuses in most cases. It has become a common feature in Nigeria today for one to hear or read in the dailies and other media platforms about secondary school students who engage in crimes such as sex offenses, smuggling, and even armed robbery. These, no doubt, are heights of deviant behaviour tendencies and the resultant effects has been downward performance of students in our secondary schools. Deviant behaviours tendencies among Nigeria citizens, in general and Cross River State. Students in particular, pose a big threat to the smooth running of educational and other related institutions.

Deviant behaviour tendencies could mean any behaviour recognized as violating expected rules and norms. Various authors

have defined deviant behavuour tendencies in different ways. For instance, Idris, Adullah and Zulkarnian (2017) defined deviance as any behaviour that does not follow expected rules, beliefs and norms according to Anake and Akomaye (2017) deviant behaviour is a pattern that is unacceptable by the people and does not conform to the social norms and values of the people in the given society. This behaviour makes it difficult for the individual to adjust or behave properly with the members of society, school, and home. Hastings and Thomas (2019) asserted that deviant behaviour is any behaviour that is recognized as violating expected rules and norms. It is a behaviour that is recognized as violating expected rules and norms. Some of such behaviours are: examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing.

Examination malpractice is a prevalent form of deviant behaviour that undermines the integrity of the educational system and the value of academic qualifications. It involves dishonest acts such as cheating, impersonation, leakage of examination questions, use of unauthorized materials, or collusion with invigilators to gain undue advantage during examinations. This behaviour deviates from established academic norms and ethical standards, reflecting a disregard for fairness, hard work, and personal responsibility. Examination malpractice not only compromises the validity and reliability of assessment results but also fosters a culture of dishonesty that can extend beyond the school environment into other aspects of life.

Examination malpractice has become a critical concern in education systems, undermining the credibility of assessment processes. Studies indicate that malpractice often arises from high academic expectations, inadequate preparation, and systemic weaknesses in supervision during examinations (Okoye & Ofole, 2020). The use of impersonation, smuggling of foreign materials, and collusion between students and invigilators are common practices. This trend compromises the fairness of academic evaluation and contributes to the production of unqualified graduates, thereby weakening the education system's integrity. Administrators' supervisory role and quality service secondary school delivery (Ubana et al, 2024). Harnessing security approach and artificial intelligence (AI) as tools to combat corrupt/unethical practices can significantly avert these misconducts (Ubana et al, 2025). Recent research highlights that examination malpractice not only reflects individual misconduct but also structural failures within institutions (Olatunji & Ogunlade, 2021). Weak enforcement of rules, overcrowded classrooms, and societal pressure for certificates exacerbate the problem. Scholars argue that unless stronger monitoring frameworks. Digitalized assessment tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) a tool for combating unethical practices (Ubana et al, 2024) and moral education are integrated into schools, the issue will persist. This underscores the need for holistic reforms targeting both students and institutional practices.

Fighting among students is a prevalent form of school violence that

negatively affects the learning environment. It is often triggered by peer rivalry, bullying, or social tensions that escalate into physical confrontations. Studies show that such behavior disrupts teaching, reduces academic engagement, and fosters fear among students (Mishra & Shukla, 2020). Moreover, fighting can have long-term psychological impacts, including aggression normalization and poor conflict resolution skills. In recent years, research has stressed that the persistence of fighting in schools is linked to weak disciplinary structures and insufficient psychosocial support systems (Ogunyemi & Akinade, 2021). Schools that lack structured conflict mediation programs often witness recurrent incidents of violence. Interventions such as peer mentoring, teacher mediation, and counseling services have proven effective in reducing such conflicts. Addressing fighting therefore requires a balanced strategy of discipline enforcement and emotional intelligence training.

Truancy, defined as the habitual absence from school without valid reasons, remains a widespread challenge in education. Scholars have linked truancy to socio-economic hardship, lack of parental involvement, and disinterest in school activities (Adeyemi & Adeoye, 2020). Its consequences are significant, often leading to poor academic performance, increased dropout rates, and vulnerability to juvenile delinquency. Truancy is also considered a predictor of long-term social maladjustment. Recent studies reveal that truancy is not only an individual behavioral issue but also a systemic challenge tied to school climate and teacher-student relationships (Idris & Adebayo, 2021). Environments characterized by poor teacher support, inadequate facilities, and weak student engagement increase absenteeism. Innovative strategies such as mentorship, student-centered pedagogy, and technology-driven attendance monitoring have been recommended. Therefore, addressing truancy requires collaborative efforts between schools, parents, and policymakers.

Bullying continues to pose a threat to student well-being, manifesting in physical, verbal, and cyber forms. Research emphasizes that bullying undermines victims' self-esteem, triggers anxiety, and reduces academic achievement (Olweus & Limber, 2020). Bullies, on the other hand, are more likely to develop antisocial behavior and face disciplinary measures. Schools that tolerate bullying indirectly create hostile environments that affect overall learning outcomes. Recent literature highlights the rise of cyberbullying as digital technologies expand among young people (Nocentini et al., 2019). The anonymity and reach of online platforms intensify the psychological harm compared to traditional bullying. Preventive approaches such as anti-bullying policies, digital literacy programs, and restorative justice practices have shown promise. Effective anti-bullying frameworks must therefore address both in-person and online contexts while fostering empathy and inclusivity in school cultures.

Stealing among students has been identified as both a disciplinary and developmental concern. It is often associated with peer pressure, poor parental supervision, and economic deprivation. Studies suggest

that stealing in school environments not only disrupts trust among peers but also exposes students to punitive disciplinary actions that may affect their academic engagement (Ogunwale & Akinbode, 2019). Persistent stealing may escalate into more severe forms of delinquency if not addressed early. Recent research shows that the normalization of minor thefts in schools indicates deeper psychosocial issues such as unmet needs, lack of moral education, and weak institutional values (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021). Preventive measures include moral instruction, school-wide value orientation programs, and counseling interventions. Schools that foster character education and peer accountability mechanisms are more effective in reducing incidences of stealing. Hence, curbing this behavior requires combining preventive strategies with responsive disciplinary measures.

The problem of deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students has been a major recurrent issue of great concern among researchers, counsellors, psychologies, teacher's parent's government and the society at large. Recently, in our society, majority of secondary school students have shown unacceptable behaviour which are not in line with the norms and standards of the schools and ideals of the society. The researcher had observed through personal interaction over the years that the progressive teaching and learning environment of the child in the public secondary schools has shown that students exhibit certain behaviour tendencies that are not acceptable. Interaction with many guidance counsellors and teachers reveals that school children deviate significantly from the norms and standards of society. Many secondary schools in Cross River State have been faced with cases of student unrest as a result of deviant behaviour tendencies act. The question that is occupying the minds of many stakeholders is, what could be the cause of this deviant behaviour? The researcher assumes that students' personality traits may be a likely cause of deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students.

The term personality has many definitions, but no single definition enjoys universal acceptance. According to Furnham and Zucheri (2015), personality includes one's outward appearance, one's role in life, the totality of one's qualities or attributes, the way one really is, one's general habitual behaviour, politeness, submissiveness, talkativeness, etc. Personality is one's most important assets, which usually contribute in shaping one's life. All one has achieved or expected to achieve in a career, whether one wants to be a good spouse, parent, or friend, can be influenced by one's personality and the personality of the people with whom one interacts. Personality refers to that part of the individual that is most representative of the person, not only it differentiating the individual from others, more also because it is what he or she actually is. Njoku (2014) defines personality as "a stable characteristic of a person including abilities, talents, habits, pretense, weakness, moral attributes, and several other important qualities that vary from one person to another". Eriega (2016) defines personality as "those distinct and unique organization of traits in an individual

as reflected in how he reacts to himself and others, and how he handles frustrations and conflicts.

Interestingly, each individual has his or her characteristic style of reacting in the social or physical environment. Human personality as existing within a strong harmony has been classified as traits based on the "Big Five" personality dimensions. The measurements were developed from the study of the natural terms people use in their native language to communicate with each other and to measure personality traits. The classification of personality traits or factors is usually denoted as OCEAN. The word "OCEAN" is a shortening for the name of five factors known as the "Big 5" of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (McCullough, in Ofem, 2019).

Openness to experience refers to the tendency of individuals to be imaginative, curious, and receptive to new ideas. While this trait is often associated with creativity and innovation, low levels of openness may increase susceptibility to deviant behaviors such as examination malpractice, where students resist constructive learning and instead seek shortcuts to success. Conversely, individuals with higher openness may channel their curiosity into positive engagement, reducing tendencies toward truancy and disengagement from school activities (Barrick & Mount, 2016). A study by Abdullahi and Johnson (2022) investigated openness to experience in relation to deviant behaviour among students in Makurdi, Benue State. The study involved 950 SS2 students, of which 260 were sampled through cluster random sampling. Data were collected using the Students' Openness Behaviour Inventory (SOBI), which was validated by three experts with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. The research employed a correlational survey design and used Pearson correlation for data analysis. Findings revealed that higher levels of openness were inversely related to students' tendencies to engage in school fights, absenteeism, and disobedience. The researchers concluded that openness contributes positively to behavioural self-regulation among adolescents and recommended including personality profiling in school assessments.

In a similar study by Fatima and Ojo (2021) assessed the relationship between openness to experience and deviant behaviour tendencies in secondary schools in Akure, Ondo State. From a population of 1,100 students, 290 were selected using stratified random sampling. The Openness-Deviance Behaviour Checklist (ODBC) was used, and its reliability was 0.81 using the Guttman split-half method. The study followed a descriptive correlational research design, with regression analysis used to test the hypothesis. The results showed that students with high openness to experience were significantly less involved in negative behaviours such as cheating, aggression, and vandalism. The study concluded that openness is a protective trait against deviance and should be nurtured through interactive learning experiences.

Conscientiousness, which emphasizes diligence, self-discipline, punctuality, and responsibility, has been

found to correlate strongly with academic achievement (McCrae & Costa, as cited in Ukar, 2023). Low conscientiousness is often associated with irresponsible behaviors such as skipping classes, stealing, or neglecting school rules. Students with high conscientiousness are less likely to engage in acts of examination malpractice or fighting, since they demonstrate perseverance, self-regulation, and adherence to rules. Williams and Clark (2022) conducted a study in Manchester, United Kingdom, to investigate the relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students. A population of 1,000 students from seven schools was targeted, and 280 were selected using cluster sampling. The researchers developed the British Student Personality and Behaviour Inventory (BSPBI), validated by educational psychologists, with a reliability coefficient of 0.86 using Cronbach's alpha. A correlational survey design was employed, and data were analyzed using linear regression. Results revealed a significant inverse correlation between conscientiousness and behaviours such as truancy, theft, and defiance. The study concluded that conscientiousness plays a preventive role in adolescent deviance and recommended incorporating personality assessments into student support frameworks.

Nguyen and Tran (2023) carried out a study in Hanoi, Vietnam, to assess the relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour tendencies among senior secondary students. From a population of 1,200 students, 300 were selected using stratified random sampling. The researchers employed the Vietnamese Adolescent Personality Checklist (VAPC), which was validated by professionals in psychological assessment and had a reliability coefficient of 0.80 using split-half method. The study adopted a descriptive correlational design and applied Pearson correlation for data analysis. Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviours like class skipping and peer aggression. The researchers concluded that conscientious students exhibit higher responsibility and goal orientation, thereby reducing the risk of deviant actions.

Extraversion reflects sociability, assertiveness, and activeness, which can have both positive and negative outcomes. While extraverted individuals may develop leadership qualities, poor regulation of this trait can manifest in deviant behaviors such as fighting or bullying, where assertiveness crosses into aggression. On the other hand, healthy expressions of extraversion may help students resist peer pressure, thereby reducing the likelihood of involvement in stealing or truancy (Vandawoff, Koypar, & Hendriks, as cited in Ukar, 2023). Adekunle and Gimba (2023) conducted a study on the relationship between personality traits in terms of extraversion and deviant behaviour tendencies among senior secondary school students in Ilorin East, Kwara State. The population consisted of 1,100 students from five public secondary schools, and a sample of 280 was selected using stratified random sampling. The instrument for data collection was the Extraversion and Student Behaviour Inventory (ESBI), which was validated by

experts in educational psychology. The reliability coefficient was 0.81 using Cronbach's alpha. The study adopted a correlational research design, and data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings indicated a moderate positive relationship between extraversion and deviant behaviour tendencies. Extraverted students were more likely to engage in social defiance, rule-breaking, and classroom disruptions. The study concluded that although extraversion has many positive aspects, it can also increase susceptibility to deviant behaviours in peer-driven environments.

Similarly, Onoh and Waziri (2022) explored the relationship between extraversion and deviant behaviour among students in Maiduguri, Borno State. The study targeted 950 students from six senior secondary schools, from which 260 were selected through systematic random sampling. The researchers used a validated instrument, the Adolescent Extraversion and Deviance Scale (AEDS), with a reliability coefficient of 0.79 using the test-retest method. A descriptive correlational design guided the study, and regression analysis was used for data interpretation. The results revealed that students with higher levels of extraversion exhibited more peer-related deviant behaviours, including bullying and truancy. The study concluded that extraversion can act as both a social asset and a behavioural risk factor depending on context and peer influence.

Agreeableness, characterized by cooperation, sympathy, and helpfulness, plays a critical role in curbing deviant behaviors. Students with high agreeableness are less likely to bully peers, cheat during examinations, or engage in disruptive behaviors, as they value harmony and empathy. In contrast, low agreeableness often correlates with selfishness, hostility, and disregard for rules, which may encourage tendencies toward truancy, stealing, or fighting. In a study by Okonkwo and Hassan (2023) investigated the relationship between personality traits in terms of agreeableness and deviant behaviour tendencies among senior secondary school students in Nsukka, Enugu State. The study population comprised 1,100 students in five public schools. Using stratified random sampling, 300 students were selected. Data were collected using the Agreeableness and Deviant Behaviour Questionnaire (ADBQ), validated by three experts in educational psychology. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.82 determined using Cronbach's alpha. The study adopted a correlational research design, and data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings revealed a significant negative relationship between agreeableness and deviant behaviours such as bullying, gossiping, and disrespect for school rules. The researchers concluded that students high in agreeableness were less likely to display deviant behaviours and recommended integrating empathy-building and cooperative activities into school programs.

Similarly, Ifeoma and Ganiyu (2022) examined the influence of agreeableness on deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study population consisted

of 950 students from six schools, from which 250 were selected through systematic random sampling. The instrument used was the Student Personality Trait Inventory (SPTI), validated by guidance and counselling experts and with a reliability coefficient of 0.80 using the split-half method. The study employed a correlational design, and data were analyzed using regression analysis. Results indicated that agreeableness was inversely related to deviant behaviours such as classroom defiance and peer intimidation. The study concluded that students who were more cooperative, trusting, and compassionate exhibited fewer behavioural issues in school settings.

Finally, neuroticism reflects the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and insecurity (Kolb & Jussim, 2014). High levels of neuroticism may predispose students to deviant behaviors as coping mechanisms, such as engaging in examination malpractice out of fear of failure, or resorting to bullying and fighting as outlets for emotional instability. Conversely, students with emotional stability are better able to manage stress without resorting to maladaptive behaviors, thus reducing the likelihood of truancy or delinquency. A study by Ogunleye and Ezeugo (2023) explored the relationship between neuroticism and deviant behaviour among students in Lagos Mainland, Lagos State. The target population was 1,200 students, and 300 were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Personality Behaviour Inventory (PBI), which was validated by three university lecturers and had a reliability coefficient of 0.82 via Cronbach's alpha. The study adopted a correlational survey design, and data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Results indicated that neuroticism had a significant positive correlation with behaviours such as mood swings, class disturbances, and peer conflicts. The study concluded that high neuroticism in students can lead to emotional instability and behavioural issues.

Similarly, Abubakar and Ndidi (2022) conducted a study in Yola, Adamawa State, to investigate the relationship between neuroticism and deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students. The population comprised 1,000 SS2 students, with 250 selected through multistage sampling. The researchers used the Emotional Traits and Deviance Questionnaire (ETDQ), which was validated by professionals in educational psychology and had a reliability coefficient of 0.80. The study used a correlational design and analyzed data with regression analysis. Findings revealed that neuroticism was positively related to deviant tendencies such as aggression, anxiety, and escape behaviours. The study concluded that mental health education is essential to help students manage emotional instability.

Recognizing the role of personality traits is critical to understanding variations in students' deviant behaviours and why interventions may not yield uniform results. A one-size-fits-all approach to behavioural control overlooks the diversity of students' personality characteristics, thereby reducing effectiveness. Thus, examining personality traits offers an opportunity to develop more

targeted and sustainable interventions against deviant behaviours such as examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. This study, therefore, investigates the relationship between personality traits on deviant behaviour among secondary school students in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

The aim and objectives of the study

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between personality traits and deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the relationship between personality traits:

1. openness to experience and deviant behaviour tendencies in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State.
2. conscientiousness and deviant behaviour tendencies in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State.

Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study

1. How does openness to experience relate to deviant behaviour tendencies in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students?
2. To what extent does conscientiousness relate to deviant behaviour tendencies in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated to guide this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between openness and deviant behaviour tendencies in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State.
2. There is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour tendencies in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State.

Methodology

The study used a correlational research design. The population for this study comprised all the 6,199 senior secondary school students (SS1) in 264 public secondary schools in Cross River State during the 2024/2025 academic session. (Resource Center of the State Ministry of Education, 2025). A multi-stage sampling technique was used to choose a sample of 10% (619) of senior secondary schools (SSII). The questionnaires utilized for data collection were termed "Personality Traits and Deviant Behaviour Tendencies

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Questionnaire (PTDBTQ)". The questionnaire was structured using the modified Likert 4-point rating scales ranging from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). Experts in measurement and evaluation and Guidance and Counselling, validated the instruments for content and face validity. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the reliability, which yielded coefficients ranging from .74 to .88. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product moment correlation Statistics.

Presentation of the result

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between openness to experience and deviant behaviour in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to examine the relationship between openness to experience as the independent variable and students' deviant behaviour tendencies as the dependent variable, measured in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 5. As shown in Table 4, the calculated r-values for the relationship between openness to experience and the dimensions of deviant behaviour are as follows: examination malpractice (r = .284), fighting (r = .318), truancy (r = .265), bullying (r = .351), and stealing (r = .378). Each of these correlation coefficients is statistically significant at the 0.05 level with a p-value of .000 and degrees of freedom equal to 615. The positive values of the correlation coefficients further imply that students who are higher in openness to experience tend to be more involved in deviant behaviours. Conversely, students with lower openness to experience are less likely to engage in such behaviours. Since all the p-values are less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between openness to experience and deviant behaviour tendencies is rejected. This outcome indicates that openness to experience is significantly associated with students' involvement in deviant behaviours across the five measured dimensions.

TABLE 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between agreeableness and Students' Involvement in Deviant Behaviour (N = 617)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-value	Sig.
Agreeableness personality	12.18	2.79		
Examination malpractice	13.40	2.15	.357*	.000
Fighting	12.40	2.48	.292*	.000
Truancy	13.48	2.29	.509*	.000
Bullying	13.26	2.01	.341*	.000
Stealing	13.74	2.30	.399*	.000

* Significant at .05, P ≤ .05, df = 615

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State. In this hypothesis, the independent variable is conscientiousness, while the dependent variable is deviant behaviour tendencies, specifically measured through examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was employed to determine the relationship between conscientiousness and students' deviant behaviour tendencies. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 6. As presented in Table 5, the calculated correlation coefficients for the relationship between conscientiousness and the various dimensions of deviant behaviour are as follows: examination malpractice (r = -.242), fighting (r = -.351), truancy (r = -.301), bullying (r = -.285), and stealing (r = -.334). Each of these correlation coefficients is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with a p-value of .000 and degrees of freedom equal to 615. The negative values of the correlation coefficients suggest that students who score higher in conscientiousness are less likely to engage in deviant behaviours. In contrast, students with lower levels of conscientiousness are more likely to be involved in behaviours such as examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. Based on these results, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour tendencies is rejected. This indicates that conscientiousness is significantly related to students' involvement in deviant behaviour across the five measured categories.

TABLE 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between openness to Experience and Students' Involvement in Deviant Behaviour (N = 617)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-value	Sig.
Openness to experience personality	13.59	2.92		
Examination malpractice	13.40	2.15	.284*	.000
Fighting	12.40	2.48	.318*	.000
Truancy	13.48	2.29	.265*	.000
Bullying	13.26	2.01	.351*	.000
Stealing	13.74	2.30	.378*	.000

* Significant at .05, P ≤ .05, df = 615

Discussion of findings

Hypothesis one indicated that openness to experience is significantly relate with students' involvement in deviant behaviours across the five measured dimensions in terms of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State This finding reveals that students who exhibit high levels of openness to experience are more likely to engage in deviant behaviours such as examination

malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. This suggests that openness to new experiences, ideas, and unconventional thinking may also correlate with a willingness to explore non-conforming or rule-breaking behaviours. The result indicates a positive association between the trait and behavioural tendencies that contradict school norms. Several factors may explain this result. Openness to experience is typically associated with curiosity, risk-taking, creativity, and non-conformity. While these traits are generally adaptive in academic or artistic contexts, they can also manifest in risk-laden behaviours if not moderated by other traits like conscientiousness or agreeableness. According to the Five-Factor Theory of Personality by McCrae and Costa, personality traits like openness may predispose individuals to novelty-seeking, which, when unchecked, can lead to experimentation with behaviours perceived as deviant in structured environments like schools.

This finding is supported by the work of Graziano and Tobin (2017), who found that adolescents high in openness were more prone to behavioural experimentation, including misconduct. Similarly, a study by Miller, Lynam, and Jones (2018) indicated that openness was a predictor of both creative expression and rule-breaking among high school students. Nnamani and Onyechi (2020) reported a significant association between openness and aggressive tendencies in secondary school learners. In a related Nigerian context, Udeh and Okorie (2021) also confirmed that students with high openness to experience were significantly more likely to engage in examination malpractice and truancy.

Hypothesis two revealed that conscientiousness is significantly related to students' involvement in deviant behaviour across the five measured categories of examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing among secondary school students in Cross River State. This finding shows a significant negative relationship between conscientiousness and deviant behaviour among students. That is, students with higher levels of conscientiousness are less likely to engage in examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing. This result aligns with the understanding that conscientious individuals are generally rule-abiding, responsible, and self-disciplined. A possible explanation is that conscientious students tend to be goal-oriented, organized, and careful about the consequences of their actions. These students are likely to adhere to rules and show better impulse control, making them less prone to behaviours considered deviant. According to the General Theory of Crime by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), self-control is a key determinant of deviant behaviour, and conscientiousness is strongly related to self-regulation and delayed gratification. Therefore, high conscientiousness acts as a buffer against engaging in antisocial conduct.

Supporting this finding, Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer (2019) found that high conscientiousness significantly predicted low involvement in risky and deviant behaviours among adolescents.

Okafor and Chukwuemeka (2019) observed that Nigerian students with high conscientiousness scores demonstrated lower tendencies toward school rule violations. Babalola and Ayodele (2020) also reported that more conscientious students were significantly less involved in bullying and examination malpractice. Similarly, Ibeh and Onu (2022) found a consistent inverse relationship between conscientiousness and deviance in a sample of secondary school students in Enugu State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students. Specifically, openness to experience was found to significantly influence students' involvement in examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing, indicating that higher levels of openness may predispose students to engage in various forms of deviant behaviour. Conscientiousness showed a significant relationship with all dimensions of deviant behaviours, suggesting that students with low levels of conscientiousness are more likely to participate in examination malpractice, fighting, truancy, bullying, and stealing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools should incorporate personality assessments during admission or early in secondary education to identify students who may be prone to deviant behaviours.
2. School counselors should be trained to understand the personality profiles of students and apply appropriate counseling interventions based on their psychological dispositions.
3. Teachers should receive training on behavioural indicators linked to personality traits to help them identify and manage deviant behaviours proactively in the classroom.
4. Parents should be enlightened about personality traits and their impact on behaviour, so they can contribute positively to their children's character development.

REFERENCES

Abdullahi, A., & Johnson, P. (2022). Openness to experience and deviant behaviour among secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. *Journal of Educational Psychology and Behavioural Studies*, *14*(2), 112–124.

Abubakar, M., & Ndidi, F. (2022). Neuroticism and deviant behaviour tendencies among secondary school students in Yola, Adamawa State. *Nigerian Journal of Adolescent Development*, *8*(1), 55–68.

Adebayo, T., & Ojo, F. (2021). Stealing behaviour among secondary school students: Causes and prevention strategies. *Journal of Moral Education in Africa*, *11*(2), 98–110.

Adekunle, R., & Gimba, T. (2023). Extraversion and deviant behaviour tendencies among senior secondary school students in Ilorin East, Kwara State. *Ilorin Journal of Educational Studies*, *15*(1), 44–57.

Adeyemi, K., & Adeoye, J. (2020). Truancy and its impact on students' academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools. *African Journal of Education and Management*, *12*(3), 65–79.

Anake, U., & Akomaye, J. (2017). Understanding deviant behaviour among adolescents: A sociological perspective. *Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, *9*(2), 33–47.

Babalola, O., & Ayodele, M. (2020). Conscientiousness and bullying behaviour among Nigerian adolescents. *Journal of School Counselling*, *7*(4), 201–213.

Barrick, M., & Mount, M. (2016). The Big Five personality dimensions and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *49*(1), 1–26.

Eriega, P. (2016). Personality traits and adolescent behavioural adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Studies*, *6*(1), 77–89.

Fatima, H., & Ojo, A. (2021). Openness to experience and deviant behaviour tendencies in secondary schools in Akure, Ondo State. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychology*, *10*(2), 145–158.

Furnham, A., & Zucheri, S. (2015). Personality and social behaviour among adolescents. *International Journal of Psychology and Education*, *4*(3), 201–214.

Gottfredson, M., & Hirschi, T. (1990). *A general theory of crime.* Stanford University Press.

Graziano, W., & Tobin, R. (2017). Openness to experience, curiosity, and adolescent behaviour. *Developmental Psychology*, *53*(3), 450–461.

Hastings, T., & Thomas, J. (2019). Defining deviance in modern education. *Journal of Behavioural Studies*, *8*(2), 90–103.

Ibeh, J., & Onu, V. (2022). Conscientiousness and deviant behaviours among secondary school students in Enugu State. *Nigerian Journal of Personality Studies, 5*(2), 101–115.

Idris, A., & Adebayo, S. (2021). School climate and truancy among Nigerian secondary school students. *Journal of Education and Social Research, 11*(4), 77–89.

Idris, F., Abdullah, R., & Zulkarnian, A. (2017). Defining deviance in the context of social norms. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 20*(2), 134–142.

Kolb, D., & Jussim, L. (2014). Emotional instability and deviant behaviour in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 29*(3), 310–325.

Maureen, I., & Mogbang, B. (2022). Deviant behaviour and school adjustment among secondary school students in Nigeria. *Journal of African Educational Research, 13*(2), 55–69.

Miller, J., Lynam, D., & Jones, S. (2018). Personality correlates of deviant behaviour in adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 47*(5), 1010–1022.

Mishra, R., & Shukla, P. (2020). Fighting in schools: Causes and consequences on student learning. *Journal of School Violence Studies, 9*(1), 20–33.

Njoku, O. (2014). Personality and adolescent behaviour in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 6*(1), 39–52.

Nnamani, C., & Onyechi, K. (2020). Personality traits and aggressive tendencies among secondary school students in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology, 11*(1), 76–87.

Nocentini, A., Fiorentini, G., Di Paola, L., & Menesini, E. (2019). Cyberbullying among adolescents: Risk factors and prevention strategies. *Journal of Adolescence, 72*(1), 10–19.

Ogunleye, R., & Ezeugo, C. (2023). Neuroticism and behavioural instability among Lagos Mainland students. *Journal of Nigerian Educational Psychology, 12*(2), 141–155.

Ogunwale, K., & Akinbode, T. (2019). Stealing behaviour among adolescents in Nigerian schools. *West African Journal of Behavioural Studies, 5*(2), 66–79.

Ogunyemi, O., & Akinade, B. (2021). Fighting behaviour and school violence prevention. *Journal of Educational Conflict Studies, 8*(3), 188–202.

Okafor, U., & Chukwuemeka, L. (2019). Conscientiousness and school rule violations in Nigerian adolescents. *International Journal of Child Development, 7*(1), 58–70.

Okonkwo, D., & Hassan, M. (2023). Agreeableness and deviant behaviour tendencies among students in Nsukka, Enugu State. *Journal of Personality and Educational Development, 14*(2), 120–135.

Okoye, P., & Ofole, M. (2020). Examination malpractice in Nigerian schools: Causes and effects. *African Journal of Educational Assessment, 9*(2), 80–95.

Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (2020). Bullying in schools: Lessons from a global perspective. *Child Development, 91*(1), 12–23.

Olatunji, T., & Ogunlade, A. (2021). Examination malpractice and educational credibility in Nigeria. *Journal of Assessment and Evaluation, 15*(1), 44–59.

Onoh, A., & Waziri, B. (2022). Extraversion and deviant behaviours among students in Maiduguri, Borno State. *Borno Journal of Educational Studies, 10*(2), 88–101.

Roberts, B., Walton, K., & Viechtbauer, W. (2019). Conscientiousness and adolescent risk behaviours: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 145*(2), 169–188.

Ubana M. U., Glory E. E., Arikpo, S. O. & Oku B. U. (2024). Administrators supervisory role on quality service secondary school delivery in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Journal of Association of Educational Management and Policy Practitioners (JAEMPP) Vol. 4. Issue 1. Pp. 219 - 225

Ubana, M. U., Glory E. E., Undie, R. A. & Elizabeth O. P. (2024). Artificial Intelligence (AI) A tool for combating unethical practices in Social Works Education. Journal of Environmental and Tourism Education, Vol. 7. (3) 12 -28. ISSN: 2659-0794

Ubana M. U., Obeten, O. O., Musa, Z. & Eloma, A. S. (2025). Harnessing security approach and artificial intelligence (AI) as tools to combat corrupt/unethical practices in Social Work Education: A Paradigm Shift. African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies, Vol. 15 (2), 318 – 334. https://ajemates.org

Udeh, J., & Okorie, P. (2021). Personality traits and deviant behaviour tendencies among Nigerian adolescents. *Journal of Nigerian Psychology, 9*(2), 55–70.

Ukar, M. (2023). Personality traits and adolescent deviant behaviour in Nigeria: An overview. *Nigerian Educational Review, 19*(1), 33–48.

Williams, R., & Clark, T. (2022). Conscientiousness and deviant behaviour tendencies in secondary school students in Manchester. *British Journal of School Psychology, 16*(3), 220–234.