

# Influence of Personality Traits and Age on Attitude towards Crime among Adolescents in Makurdi Metropolis

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study explored the influence of personality traits and age on attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. A total of 228 participants were randomly selected from the study area. The participants' age ranged from 10 years – 18 years and above. Out of the 228 participants, 134 (54.9%) were males, while 110 (45.1%) participants were females. The personality traits scale (PTS) and attitudes towards crime questionnaire (ACQ) were used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using dependent t-test, one-way ANOVA and linear regression analysis. Three (3) hypotheses were formulated. The result of the first hypothesis revealed significant influence of personality traits on attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The second hypothesis showed a significant age difference in attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Lastly, result revealed that, there is a joint influence of personality traits and age on attitude towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. All the hypotheses were confirmed. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended among others that parents must learn to study and control those personality characteristics that may predispose their children towards deviant behaviour, because a positive attitude towards a behaviour may likely lead to such a behaviour. Finally, individual and situational factors that will help improve the desired personality characteristics should be encouraged.

**Keywords:** Influence, personality, traits, age, attitude, crime, adolescents, Makurdi.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, crime has caused loss of lives and properties as well as overwhelming fear of insecurity. Crime is a challenge in human existence and has become a big problem in our society. Crime is universal, it is a common phenomenon in every society, but certain societies have recorded higher percentages of criminal activities than others. According to crime statistics by the Nigeria police, crime has shown an upward trend in the past years in Nigeria.

According to the police Headquarter report in Lagos from October 1995 to October 2005, the risk has continued to increase yearly in arithmetic progression (Crime Statistics, Nigeria Police Headquarters Lagos, 2205). The increase in the rate of crime in this country has created a lot of problem to the police force and the law courts.

Crime is a global problem but it varies in different societies or countries. For instance, in the Western world, same sex marriage is a normal behaviour but in Nigeria, it is seen as an abomination and prohibited as well as punishable by law. The House of Representatives had on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, passed the anti-same sex marriage bill that makes same sex unions in Nigeria, a criminal offence punishable by a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison. The bill also states that any person who registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies or organizations directly or indirectly, makes a public show at a same-sex amorous relationship commits an offence and shall be liable to a term of 10 years imprisonment.

Crime has become so menacing in our society that is now feared in some quarters that a great danger awaits the country in the nearest future. Crime is an act that violates the law of the society or serious offence against the law of the society, for which there is a severe punishment by law. (Eddie Floyd, 2006). Crime is any action or omission prohibited by law and punished by the state.

Crime is a deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms which may be cultural, social, political, psychological and economic conditions. Crime is an act defined by law. It is an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment (Okonkwo, 1980). Crime which is perceived as a social mirror constitutes one of the biggest social ills and possesses a great challenge to eradicate (Kawachi *et al.*, 1999). The fluctuating stream of crime rate worldwide seen as public perplexing problem as it fosters;

(a) public fear, distrust, anger and perceptual errors and (b) causes grief among family members and friends of crime victim.

Across the world, the horrific nature of crime has prompted in-depths studies concerning the causes and factors that underlie criminal behaviour. Along this line of thought, large numbers of criminogenic elements were identified as the casual and underlying factors of criminal behaviour in growing body of criminology and sociology. Examples of criminogenic factors include environmental, social, familiar aspect, genetics psychological traits of an individual has been receiving growing recognition as one of the most credible criminogenic factor among criminology and psychology scholars worldwide. The available literatures evidenced psychological traits such as personality traits as environmental factor in explaining criminal and anti-social behaviour in an individual (Larsason *et al.*, 2006)

Durkheim (1951) was of the opinion that crime is a normal phenomenon in the society, a natural and inevitable product of collective life and social evolution. He held that, the collective conscience of a people defines what crime is. Durkheim (1951) believes that crime plays a definite role in social life. There are many types of crime; it is a well known fact that when the word crime is mentioned most people will normally focus on certain specific kinds of crime, usually conventional crimes of the street corner variety.

But the truth is that, crime and criminals are found everywhere, and there are many kinds of crimes and criminals. Several criteria have been employed by criminologists (Clinnard, 1973) to classify crime. Some of the many classes of crime include, violent crime, which involves the use of violence. Property crime, which involves the deprivation of property, they are crimes against property.

Occupational crimes (White-collar crimes) are crimes which take place in business and government circles. Organized crimes, this is the criminal activities of an organized network of people who work together in close structured association to make large profits, by using graft and corruption to protect their activities from criminal prosecution. Person or personal crime involves harm or physical injury inflicted against a person. Victimless crimes are crimes without direct victim. Professional crimes are crimes by professional criminals who specialize in particular type of crime. It requires a long period of training, complex occupational skills, techniques and attitudes. Crime against public morality, these offend public standards of decency and right conduct.

Crime against lawful authority which violates the state, federal and local authority laws on public order and environment (Eddie floyd, 2006).

Notwithstanding all the causes mentioned above, another potent factor that is often neglected on issue of crime and criminal behaviour is attitude. An individual predisposition towards crime, knowing attitude to be an individual expression on how much like or dislike he/she has over a thing/event, behaviour or object. It cannot be neglected in criminal behaviour. Attitudes are evaluation of ideas (such as the insanity parties), objects (such as abstract art) or people (such as Sorority members).

Fishbein (1993) sees attitude as a person's evaluation of an act or behaviour towards a specific act and is proposed to be a function of acts perceived consequences and of their value to that person. The underlining factor here is that attitude towards a particular object or event is influenced by the personal experience of the individual. In summary, an attitude is a learned predisposition to respond consistently in a positive or negative way to some person or object or situation (Petty Ostrom and Bruck, 1981). Attitude has three basic components. These are the cognitive component which represents thoughts or beliefs (2) the affective and emotional component which reflects feelings or emotional reaction and (3) the behaviour component which describes tendencies or predisposition towards certain actions based on a particular attitude (Allport, 1973).

Another variable of interest in this study is personality. Personality is that dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person who uniquely influences his or her cognitions, emotions, motivations and behaviours in various situations. Personality is the unique and variable patterns of human behaviours, focusing on sensing, thinking and feelings. The personality of the individual is the settled framework of reference within which a person addresses the current situation and decides how to behave. Personality is a sum total of psychological characteristics of a person that are common as well as unique. The integrated and dynamic organization of the physical, mental, moral and social qualities of the individuals that manifest itself to other people, in the give and take of social life (Rama Lingam, 2006).

Eysenck (1972) argued that personality influences both behaviour. Conklin in a study showed that the personality traits of offenders did differ from the general population although, the difference were usually small, Zimbardo, 1972) said that there were some evidence that delinquents and

criminals might be more emotionally described than the general populations. Tenibiate (1995) observed that, the personality characteristics of juvenile delinquents and criminals were not similar, in terms of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism.

Understanding why crime occurs requires an appreciation of the complexity of human behaviour. Behaviour is not determined by one factor, but rather influenced by a host of interrelated factors (Bandura, Reese & Adams, 1982). For example an individual action to loosing his or her job may vary according to factors such as age, coping skills, personality level of social support or financial status. Thus both individual and structural level factors are essential to explaining current behaviour and to predicting future behaviour.

Although Gottfredson and Hirshi (1990) are sociologists by training, they argued that people differ in an underlying criminal propensity, low self-control, according to self control theory, the formation of the stable trait of self control occurs via the parent-child socialization or the reciprocal bonding process from birth to age eight. Self-control theory shares strong conceptual link to personality theory (Farrington, 2002, Miller & Lynam, 2001). However, other avenues of integration of personality with criminological theory could be useful. For example Agnew's (1992) General Strain theory (GST) focuses on personal pressures arising from the environment that align with individual conditioning factors to press a person towards crime; life strain by causing, influencing and interacting with negative emotions, aggressive personality traits and criminogenic social learning are predicted to result in dysfunctional coping such as delinquent behaviours.

Agnew (1992) predicted that crime is more likely when goal blockage is perceived as unjust and when the gap between goals and achievement is high in magnitude and the resultant anger and frustrations energize the individual for action and create a desire for revenge. Cohen and Felson (1979), in their routine activity theory, which is classified as a criminal opportunity theory with concepts that emphasize victim risk, specifically noted that risk is created by proximity to crime and target suitability. Some researchers have recently asserted that for some youths, victimization is a "condition" rather than an event (Finkelher, Ormad, Turner & Heide, 1999). These youths do not experience only one or several separate incidence of victimizations, but endure repeated and multiple victimization as if being repeated victims (Menard & Hulzinga, 2001, Pease & Laycock, 1996).

Moreover, it would also be suggested that age is another factor that influences attitude towards crime. The study also examines age as a factor influencing attitude towards crime. Age can be defined as the number of years that a person has lived or existed. Issues of age and crime are among the most important in psychology and criminology. This is due largely to Hirshi and Gottfredson, who contend that the familiar invented J-Curve association between age and crime is invariant and inexplicable with social science variable and involves no interaction between age and any variable that explains or correlates with crime. These three hypotheses bear on several trends and issues. First they challenge the criminal careers perspective that life cycle patterns of offending taking many forms, each requiring specific explanations and longitudinal research for testing (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

If all people, including frequent offenders, commit more crime in the late teen years than later, than career offending is different only in amount and the necessity with special theories is visited. Moreover, if the causes of crime are the same at all ages, the call for longitudinal research inherent in the career criminal perspective is irrelevant. Secondly, the Hirschi-gottfredson position cast doubt on developmental perspectives that portray the determinants of crime as age graded and variation over the life course. Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). If the causes of crime do not interact with age and age crime relationship is inherent, invariant and inexplicable then criminologists need only identify the general causes of crime and apply them. To explain constant differences among individual and categories in likelihood of criminal behaviour, without reference to patterned increases and decreases in the probability and volumes of criminal behaviour.

Erickson (1968), refers to adolescents age as period of identity crisis". Adolescence is the period which starts from age 12/13 to the beginning of adulthood. An adolescent spend more time with peers, particularly with small groups of friends than with parents, siblings or any other agent of socialization (Berndt, 1996; Larson & Richards, 1991). They tend to at this age have different groups that have developed dress codes dialectics and behaviour that distinguish them from the other. Identifying with such groups can be harmful, particularly if evolving group norms encourage alcohol or drug use, sexual misconduct or other kinds of antisocial or delinquent behaviours. Crime is a global problem, it has being a source of concern to every society.

Crime is always seen as a major challenge to every society. A crime-free society could be regarded as the best in the world. Owing to this, every society is using every instrument with its possession to ameliorate or eliminate crime to the barest minimum. In the same vein, researchers are not relenting in this effort. They work hard trying to contribute their quota towards this objective through research work. In as much as many researchers concentrated only on the political, sociological and Economic factors paying little or no attention to psychological such as personality, Attitudes, Age etc. Therefore, this study deemed it necessary to look at the influence these factors could have on crime.

Knowing fully well that an individual attitude towards a stimulus can be used to predict his actual behaviour towards such stimulus. The researchers believe that one of the best methods of preventing or controlling crime is to observe how those people perceive crime. We must not wait until an individual commits a crime before taking action. Through the person's attitude towards crime, one can predict what the individual will do when exposed to criminality.

## **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Personality Traits**

Contemporary researchers in psychology have unanimously converged on the opinions that are five underlying personality traits or characteristics possessed by individuals. The testimony as regard to this theory has been developing for more than five decades. This assertion begins with the work of D.W. Fiske (1949) which was subsequently extended upon by several other researchers (Norman, 1976); Smith; 1967. Golderg 1981; McCrae & Costa, 1987), all of which premised that the big five personality traits could be used to predict human behaviour.

However, researchers do not always agree on the exact characteristics for each dimension, even though there is a substantial body of literature buttressing, this model of personality. Notwithstanding, the five dimension categories are usually illustrated as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neurotism and openness, personality is defined as characteristic ways of thinking, feeling or behaviour in trying to define the concept, some suggest that personality traits are immiscible dispositions that are remarkably stable and consistent across time (McCrae & Costa, 1996; McCrae et al, 2000).

From this perspective traits are considered static biological dispositions, described by some as being “set like Plaster” (Costa & McCrae, 1994). In contrast, other theorists suggest personality as a dynamic organization that does just lie there, but is active with processes of some sort” (Carver & Scheier, 2004) within this framework, personality traits are multiply determined, multifaceted and transactional exhibiting significant change across the life span (Helson, Jones & Kwan, 2000; Srivastava, Oliver, Goshing & Potter, 2003).

It has been hypothesized that both sides of the argument are valid; personality can exhibit both change and stability across time (Roberts & Caspi, 2003), Caspi and Colleagues contend that individuals are active agents in choosing their environments, and environments in return affect personality traits (Caspi, Roberts & Moffitt, 1993). From this perspective “the plaster” theories compliment, rather than contradict each other as each provides key insights into the subtle ways personality changes and stabilizes over time.

Furthermore, Caspi *et al.*, (2005) argued that person-environment interactions may be greatest during the transition from adolescence to adulthood due to the unique developmental challenges young people face as they adapt to adult roles and responsibilities (Blonigen, Carlson, Hicks, Krueger, & Lacono, 2006; Roberts, Caspi & Moffitt, 2001; Unman & Newcom, 1999), suggesting that a more complete understanding of the stability of personality will come transitional period of life.

Previously, several noteworthy longitudinal studies have made rapid progress and interesting discoveries while attempting to settle the debate of personality stability vs instability (Roberts, Caspi, Moffitt, 2001; Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006; Robins, Fraley, Roberts & Tryesniewki, 2001). However, despite the comprehensive nature of these studies, several important questions remains specifically studies to date have been unable to: (1) determine whether “normal” developmental trends in personality can be generalized to certain subgroups within the population (2) examine the existence of non-linear developmental trends (3) examine if trends in personality are associated with theoretically relevant behavioural outcomes and (4) identify possible person environment interactions across development.

Exploration of each of these areas is necessary to expand understanding of personality fluctuation across time. In a previous meta-analysis of 92 longitudinal studies on trait development, Roberts, Walton and Viechtbauer (2006) found that people become more socially dominant (a facet of



extraversion), increase in consciousness and become more emotionally stable (decrease in Neuroticism) as they progress from adolescence to young adulthood.

Similarly, a recent qualitative review of normative changes in personality suggested that from adolescence to young adulthood, individuals become more agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable and open to new experiences (Robins, Fraley, Roberts, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Finally, in perhaps the largest sample to date (N = 132, 515), findings were replicated except within the domain of neuroticism which declined among women across time, but did not change among men (Srivastava Oliver, Goshine & Potter, 2003).

Drawing on other measures of personality functioning, similar findings emerge. For example, studies utilizing Tellegan's (1982) three-factor model of personality as assessed by the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), how a general decrease in the factor of negative Emotionality (hostility, antagonism and aggression), general increases in positive Emotionality, achievement, wellbeing, social closeness) and increases in levels of behavioural constraint (similar to conscientiousness or self-control) (McGue, Bacon, & Lykken, 1993), Roberts & Chapman, 2000; Roberts, Caspi & Moffitt, 2001).

Overall, longitudinal investigations on personality development seem to suggest that across time, people acquire a greater sense of self-discipline a more realistic outlook of life, greater emotional stability and increases in the capacity for meaningful interpersonal relationships. This apparent trend of mean-level increases in emotional stability, conscientiousness and behavioural control during the progression from adolescence to adulthood has been labeled the "maturity principle" Caspi *et al.*, 2005). People appear to increase in level of adaptation towards health psychological functioning across time. This overall mean level trend would suggest a growing up" of sorts for most adolescents as they engage in normative adult roles such as leaving the family home, investing in romantic relationships, starting career paths and decreasing their overall dependence in exchange for greater autonomy (Roberts et al, 2001; Robins et al 2001).

Despite compelling evidence for growth towards psychological maturity, several questions remain. First longitudinal finding tell us nothing about group differences in the observed trends towards greater maturity and psychological stability as it relates to personality functioning. For instance individual's who do not fall within the realm of "normal personality functions may exhibit

extreme variation on any given treatment yet the population mean can remain stable. If a small group of individuals score high on the MPQ domain of constraint, and another subgroup in the population scores bond the two sets of scores will mathematically cancel each other out and the result will be zero mean level changes. In such cases, any meaningful group's differences are masked (Roberts *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, despite research findings that people move in the direction of personality maturity across time, certain subgroup of general population may in fact be shifting towards opposite ends of trait spectrums, yet are overlooked by reliance on mean-level statistics for entire population samples.

From ancient times, people have tried to understand and explain behaviour by categorizing personalities into distinct traits. One of the oldest methods of categorizing personality that is known is called the "Enneagram" which categorises personalities by dividing them into numbered types. This method is believed to have originated from geometry, developed by Pythagoreans 400 years ago. It then came through the change of time and culture to the days of Plato, esoteric Judaism in the cabalist traditions of the tree life and finally into modern tunes (personality test, 2001-2005).

### Age

Age is the number of years that a person has lived. Age is one of the most salient social and cultural dimensions and expectations that govern behaviour (Settersten and Meyer, 1997). Previous research by Birren and Chrinugham (as listed in Settersten and Meyer, 1997); discussed three distinct kind of age, namely; biological age which is defined by an individual's present position with respect to his or her potential life span.

Social age; which is defined by an individual's roles and habits with respect to other members of the society of which he is a part. Psychological age, which is defined by the behavioural capacities of an individual to adopt to change demands. A significant number of all crimes are made by young people. During adolescent, the actual self reported rates of illegal behaviour are so high that participating in delinquency appears to be a normal part of teen life (Balvig Junger- Tas et al, 2003). In Sweden, more than half of adolescents self report that they have committed some kind of theft, mostly low level theft (Francis et al 2004). Statistically, rates of criminal involvement generally peak at about age

18 for males and about 15 for females (Hirsch; and Gottfredson, 1983; Newburn, 1997; Francis *et al.*, 2004).

Here, we will present some theories about age and criminality. The relationship between age and crime has been the subject of considerable criminological analysis (Newburn, 1997). Blumstein and Cohen (1979) argued that, the single-peaked combined age. Curve is characteristic of the Oriset and termination of criminal careers. This has been interpreted as indicating that a significant proportion of young people will eventually end this behaviour (Moffit, 1993).

However, there are differences in the peak age of offending across offence types (Graham and Bowling, 1995). Researchers classify offended into several typologies. Graham and Bowling (1995) showed that expressive offences (vandalism and arson) is most common in the mid-teens, violent offences usually increases during the teenage years, then drops off and the level of property offences (shoplifting and burglary) is relatively constant during the teens and then decreases in the early twenties. Yet another way is to classify offending career trajectories in terms of the varying frequency of total offending or behavioural problems over time.

Nagin and Land (1993) and Nagin *et al.*, (1995) identified four distinctive offending trajectories among male convicts, free, adolescence, limited, high-level chronics and low-level chronics. Moffitt's theory is probably the most adequate theory to use in our context, because of its longitudinal approach and focus on stability. Explaining the stability of behavioural problems, Moffitt (1993) identified two types: adolescent-limited (AL) and life-course persistent (LCP) antisocial behaviour.

### **Attitudes**

Social and criminal psychological research, when examining what influences criminal behaviour consistently, indicates that attitudes (thinking styles) are important. The significant link between criminal attitudes and criminal behaviour has been well established in previous studies (Nesdale, Maass, Kiesner, Purkheim, Griffiths and James, 2009; Mills, Kroner, and Forth, 2002; Stevenson, Hall and Innes, 2003; Simourd, 1991)

Indicating who are oriented towards criminal behaviour and have internalized criminal concept of behaviour are at greater risk of engaging in that particular behaviour, criminal thinking has been defined as thought

content and process conducive to the initiation and maintenance of habitual law-breaking behaviour (Walters, 2006). One of the first theoretical concepts that looked at criminal thinking was Sutherland's differential association theory which views criminal attitudes that result from associations with delinquents as the root cause of delinquent Sutherland Cressey and Luckenbill, 1992).

Akers (1985) in his differential reinforcement theory suggested that people are first initiated into delinquent conduct by differential associations with antisocial companions. Through differential reinforcement, they gain knowledge of how to reap rewards and avoid punishment as the actual or anticipated consequences of particular conduct.

This theory tends to fit well into criminology because it provides an explanation of the decision-making process involved in development of the cognitive (criminal attitudes), behavioural and motivational techniques essential to commit a criminal act (Akers, Krohn, Lanze-Kaduce and Radoosevich, 1979) as cited by Walters, (2006). Holsinger (1999) suggested that people who have been socialized in criminal settings and have acquired antisocial attitudes towards criminal behaviour are more likely to commit a crime. Further findings reported by Losel (2003) suggested that through interactions with group's influences, delinquent adolescents developed attitudes, values and self-related cognitions which encourage criminal behaviour.

A meta-analysis conducted by Gendreau, Little and Geggins (1996) examined a broad range of predictors related to adult recidivism (repeated or habitual behaviour; a measurement of the rate at which offenders commit other crimes either by arrest or conviction baselines after being released from incarceration) of which the four best predictors were criminal friends, criminal attitudes, antisocial personality and adult criminal history.

Andrew and Kandel (1979) and Mills et al (2002) reported that normative influence of criminal friends interact with criminal attitudes and furthermore, when these variables are strongly associated, the relationship to criminality is particularly strong. Additionally Rhodes (1979), in his research found that those offenders who enter prison with low level of criminal attitudes while serving their given persistent contact with other criminals, may have their criminal attitude high.

The ability of the individual's attitude to change distinguishes them from characteristics such as traits and personality (Mills, Kroner and Hemmati, 2004),

Mills, (2000), also suggested that antisocial personality, criminal attitudes and antisocial friends although related, are not identical constructs. Criminal friends are entirely external to the individual and may serve various purposes such as reinforcing existing attitudes.

Providing modeling for anti-social behaviour. Mills and colleagues (2004) hypothetically stated that, the presence of anti-social personality may be sufficient to indicate the presence of criminal attitudes but the absence of antisocial personality would not necessarily mean the absence of criminal attitudes. However, there is little research to suggest that personality traits are reflected in criminal attitudes and beliefs. In a Dutch prison study conducted by Bulten and Colleagues (2009). Criminal lifestyles were supported by criminal beliefs systems which incorporated criminal thinking styles and were supported by specific personality traits such as impulsivity. In the complex interaction among thinking styles (attitudes), personality traits and influence of anti-social friend, offenders develop and maintain their criminal lifestyle.

## **Crime**

The term crime in ordinary language denotes an unlawful act punishable by the state. The term crime does not in modern criminal law, have any simple and universally accepted definition though statutory definitions have been provided for certain purposes. One proposed definition is that crime is an act harmful not only to some individuals but also to a community, society or the state (a public wrong) such acts are forbidden and punishable by law.

Legally, crimes usually are defined as acts or omission prohibited by law that can be punished by imprisonment and/or fine. Murder, robbery, burglary, rape, drunken driving, child neglect and failure to pay your taxes all are common examples. However as several eminent criminologists have noted (Sampson and Laub 1993; Gottfredson and Hirshi, 1990), the key to understanding crime is to focus on fundamental attributes of all criminal behaviours rather than on specific criminal acts. Instead of trying to separately understand crimes such as homicide, robbery, rape, burglary, embezzlement and heroin use, we need to identify what it is, they all have in common.

Much past research on crime has been confounded by its focus on these politico-legal rather than behavioural definitions.

The behavioural definition of crime focuses on criminality, a certain personality profile that causes the most alarming sorts of crimes. All criminal

behaviours involve the use of force, fraud, or stealth to obtain material or symbolic resources. As Gottfredson and Hirshi (1990) noted, criminality is a style of strategic behaviour characterized by self centeredness, indifference to the suffering and needs of others and low self-control. The more impulsive individuals are the more likely to find criminality attractive style of behaviour because it can provide immediate gratification through relatively easy or simple strategies. These strategies are often risky and thrilling, usually requiring little skill or planning. Gottfredson and Hirsch assert that this means the within-person causes of truancy are the same as the within-person causes of truancy are the same as the within-person causes of drug use, aggravated assault and auto accidents (1990) "Criminality in this sense bears a problematic relationship with crimes. Some drug dealers, tax cheats, prostitutes and other criminals may simply be business people whose business activity happens to be illegal psychologically and they might not differ from ordinary citizens.

Almost all ordinary citizens commit at least small legal crimes during their lives. Nevertheless, Gottfredson's and Hirsch's hypothesis is that, the vast majority of legal crime is committed by individuals a general strategy of criminal activity. The notion that acts such as murder, rape and theft are to be prohibited exists worldwide. What precisely is a criminal offence is defined by law of each country (Kawachi et al, 1999). The state (government) has the power to severely restrict one's liberty for committing crime. In modern societies, there are procedures which investigations and traits must adhere, usually to be classified as a crime, "the act of doing something criminal" (actus reus) must with certain exceptions be accompanied by the intention to do something criminal" (mens rea) (Kawachi *et al.*, 1999).

While every crime violates the law, not every violation of the law counts as crime. Breaches of private law (torts and breaches of contract) are not automatically punishable by the state, but can be enforced through civil procedure. Criminal behaviour is usually measured by arrest and charges, self-reported by offences (which is believed by some to be more accurate) actual crime rates, which are usually obtained by governmental organizations. By using this kind of information crime reports are generated, which helps to generally categorize crime by type and offender characteristics such as gender, age, race, location etc.

## **Causes of criminal behaviour**

The reasons behind criminal behaviour can vary a lot in each particular case, but still they can be grouped into two main categories; genetic and environmental. When in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the question about the causes of criminal behaviour was raised; a lot of psychologists were insisting that the only reason is genetic. They even considered that a person's inclination to crime could be measured according to the parents mental condition, that is, if they had some even minor mental problems, their son/daughter was more likely to become a criminal.

The scientists had their versions of solving a problem, but it is fair if the people with higher risk of committing a crime would not be allowed by the state and society to live normally and have children. Nowadays, the psychologists and the criminologists agree that what drives a person to criminal behaviour is really complex and complicated mechanism, involving a lot of factors. You can imagine a child who was born in a criminal family (mother is a schizophrenia, father a rapist and murderer) but after he got an education and a job there is nothing antisocial in his behaviours.

It proves that genetic can't determine one's inclination to the criminal behaviour. So it is impossible to predict in person's criminality according to some specific factors, but we can still highlight some circumstances and apply a person to a relatively higher criminal group. Starvation: this is especially common problem with third world countries. When a person has to struggle every day just to get food to survive, the probability that they become thieves is high.

**Low social status:** With low social status, one is bullied because of it; they may become aggressors and fight back against the whole society.

**Genetic** – Some genetic mental disorders itself increased aggression, peer group. This is another factor that results to crime, peer group pressure has great influence on criminal behaviour as adolescents spend a lot of their time with their peers and they copy virtually everything among themselves.

**This study is anchored on the Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud**  
**Psychoanalytic theory**

This theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud in 1901 as cited by Mills (2012). Freud (1901) saw personality as expression of energy. He argued that personality traits have some certain instincts which the personality traits seeks gratification are not always socially acceptable. When unacceptable behaviours are exhibited by personality characteristics the result is often punishment, guilt and anxiety. Thus the approach tries to describe the conflict between a personality's traits instinctual needs and the demand of the society. The psychodynamic – psychoanalytic theory, developed from the writings of Sigmund Freud, posits that personality is developed early in life and is composed of three distinct parts. The id, ego and superego (Siegel et al, 2006)

The id presents the instinctual drives. The ego represents understood social norms that harness the id and the super ego is learned moral reasoning (Siegel et al). Criminal behaviour occurs as a result of imbalance between these parts of our personality and is thought to be a symbolic way of meeting our unconscious needs (Siegel et al). The internal conflict that lead to a delinquency usually resulting from a conflict between the id and social norms understood by the ego, are very painful to the individual so the individual pushes them into the unconscious (Shoemaker, 2005) then, the individual develops coping strategies called defense mechanisms to cope with the conflicts and these defense mechanisms can lead to problematic personality traits and problematic behaviours, such as delinquency (Shoemaker). In essence, criminal behaviour is seen as the external manifestation of an internal disease, (Shoemaker, 2005)

Erikson expanded on this theory and explains criminality as an identity crisis created by inner turmoil (Siegel et al, 2006). As has been noted by many critics of psychoanalytic theory, this identity crisis created by inner turmoil is difficult to test empirically, the utility of psychoanalytic theory to explain complex criminal behaviour is limited by the lack of evidence to support it (Shoemaker, 2005; Siegel et al) and by the “circular nature” of psychoanalytic thought (PFOW, 1994). In the 1905s, Shudon and Eleanor Glueck conducted studies on 500 boys and highlighted the personality and delinquency link in some of their findings (Glueck and Glueck, 1950, 1952). Their interpretation of the findings indicated that, when compared with no delinquents, delinquent boys were less cooperative, more suspicious, more destructive, more defensive and had conscious or unconscious, hostile impulses” (Glueck and Glueck, 1952).



In addition, they reported more severe “mental pathology in the delinquent boys (Glueck and Glueck, 1952). Their work although criticized for its inexact methods, inspired other researchers to examine personality and psychiatric disorder in connection with crime (Shoemaker, 2005). Others have attempted to link antisocial and aggressive behaviour and low self esteem to delinquency (Donnella, Trzesniwski, Robins, Moffitt, and Caspi, 2005). The psychodynamic – psychoanalytic theory and the various personality trait theories attempt to identify common characteristics and delinquents and provide frameworks to guide interventions that may dissuade an individual from demonstrating destructive behaviours.

The challenge to these theorists rests in the difficulty of testing such hypotheses and taking into account the vast variability in human behaviour. According to Maddi (1976) in support of Freud’s approach, stressed that, the basic tendency of each personality traits is to maximize instinctual gratification while maximizing punishment and guilt in the light of the above, Freud’s concept of personality structure helps us to understand how personality traits influence adolescents' criminal behaviour.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **Personality Traits and Crime**

It is theorized that certain personality traits are linked with criminality and violent behaviour. It is also worth nothing that personality profiles seem to be very useful in predicting the criminal behaviour and provide a better understanding of how an individual reacts to problems, make decisions and communicate with their surroundings (Caspi *et al.*, 1994).

In order to investigate personality traits of criminals, psychologists and criminologists use a large number of models and concepts to explain the association between personality. Specific personality inventories such as the Big-five personality taxonomy (Goldberg, 1992). Five factor model (FFM) coastal & McCrae, 1992) and Eysencks three factor model (PEN) Eyesenck 1967) were designed to capture the personality traits of normal individuals and criminals.

These inventories and psychometrics have been validated and replicated across different languages and cultured settings, John et al 1994, including the criminal and prison population (Caspi, Henry, McGree, Moffits and Silva, 1995). Nadih *et al.*, 2015) in t heir study “Linking Psychological Traits with

criminal behaviour. The objective of the study, apart from environmental and social factors, psychological traits is largely linked with criminal and delinquent behaviour.

The purpose of this article was to review four critical psychological traits of individuals that may lead to criminal behaviour in a nutshell, an archival research methodology was employed in this study where relevant search for literatures on these four psychological traits was made across search engines such as Google Scholars with relevant articles selected for this review. The literatures were microscopically reviewed in order to demonstrate the linkage between psychological traits and criminal behaviour.

The results showed that four psychological traits; personality traits, low self control, aggression behaviour and cognitive distortion were chosen to address such linkage. All these four traits were discussed in relation to crime and criminality context. They concluded that it is crucial to understand the role of these traits and in-depth understanding of each psychological traits with relation of criminal behaviour offers an opportunity to the public at large, to expand their knowledge on the importance of practicing and equipping oneself with health psychological traits to hinder form criminal and delinquent acts.

### **Age and Attitude towards Crime**

A significant number of all crimes are commended by young people. During adolescent, the actual self reported rates of illegal behaviour are so high that participating in delinquency appears to be a normal part of teen life (Balving 2000; Junger-Tas *et al.*, 2003). In Sweden, more than half of adolescents at age 15 self-report that they have committed some kind of theft, mostly low level theft (Blumstein & Cohen, 1976).

Statistical rates of criminal indolgent generally peak at about age 18 for males and about 15 for females (Newbum, 1997). The relationship between age and crime has been the subject of considerable criminological analysis (Hirschi, Gottfreson, 1986). Blumstein and Cohen (1979) argue that, the single-peaked combined age curve is characteristic of the onset and termination of criminal careers. This has been interpreted as indicating that a significant proportion of young people will eventually end, this behaviour (Moffitt 1993). However, there are differences in the peak age of offend across offence types (Graham & Bowleing, 1995, Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Researchers classify offender into several typologies. Graham and Bowligs (1995) showed that expressive offences (vandalism and arson) is most common in the mid-teens, violent offenders (assault) increases during the teenage years then drops off and the level of property offences (shoplifting and burglary) is relatively constant during the teens and then decreases in the early twenties.

Yet another way is to classify offending career trajectories in terms of the varying frequency of total offending or behavioural problems over time. Nagin and Land (1993) and Nagin *et al.*, (1995) identified four distinctive offending trajectories among males, conviction free, adolescence limited, high-level and low-level crimines. Moffitt's theory is probably the most adequate theory to use in our context because of its longitudinal approach and focus on stability, explaining the stability of behavioural problems.

Moffitt, (1993, 1994) identified two types; adolescent-limited (AL) and life-course persistent (LCP) antisocial behaviour. The study by Obi *et al.*, (2013) investigated the influence of personality and age on attitude towards crime among adolescents.

Using longitudinal data collected from the first-five seeps of the Edinburgh study of youth Transitions and Crime, McVie, (2013) explored patterns and trends in delinquent behaviour of single age cohorts from 12 to 16 years of age. Trends in delinquent behaviour of single age cohort from 12 to 16 years of age. Trends in both prevalence and incidence shall be explored in an attempt to explore the relationship between these two fundamental aspects of offending behaviour.

## **METHOD**

### **Design**

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. This was used to sample opinions of the public in terms of the influence of personality traits and age on attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. This would allow more samples to be drawn from the population of study.

### **Scope**

The study was carried out in Makurdi metropolis. Makurdi is the capital of Benue State it plays host to two universities (Benue State University and Federal university of Agriculture and serves as the administrative headquarter

of the state. It has major settlements namely: Wurukum High – Level, North-Bank, Modern Market, Kanshio, Nyiman, Wadata, Gyado-villa and Judges Quarters.

### **Participants**

A total of 228 participants were randomly selected for the study. Both male and females adolescents were selected with the age range between 12-18 years. Out of the 228 participants selected, 134 (54%) were males and 110 (45.1%) were females. Their age showed that the participants fall within the adolescent age of 13 years, having the highest frequency of 63 (25.8%) followed by 16 years with 40 (16.4%) and 14 years with 39 (16.0%).

### **Instrument**

The study employed standardized questionnaire as a main tool for data collection. The study used “The personality Traits Scale (PTS) developed by Jenkins and Colleagues (1971), to measure the personality traits also, a self-developed questionnaire on attitudes towards crime). The (PTS) is a questionnaire with 44 items. The 44 item inventory is one of the six psychological instruments which assess personality. It has a response format in which the frequency scale ranges from 1-5 (1) Disagree, Strongly (2) Disagree a little (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Agree a little (5) Agree strongly. The scale is used for the study because it assesses personality.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.78 cronbach alpha and was subjected to face validity making it reliable and effective for use in the study.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study;

1. There will be a significant relationship between personality traits and criminal behaviour among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
2. There will be a significant gender difference in criminal behaviour among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
3. There will be a significant age difference in criminal behaviour among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained was analysed using simple percentages and frequency tables. The person correlations, independent t-test and one way ANOVA were used in testing the hypotheses.

**Table 1: Presentation and Discussion of Result**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	134	54.9%
Female	110	45.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017.

**Table 2: Marital Status**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Married	32	13.1%
Single	189	77.5
Dating	23	9.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017.

**Table 3: Educational Status**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	95	38.9
Secondary school	94	38.5
College/University	55	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017.

**Table 4: Summary Table Showing Dependent T-test of the Influence of Personality Traits on Attitudes towards Crime among Adolescent.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P	Remark
Personality Traits	228	97.63	.847	72.273	226	000	Sig.
Attitudes Towards crime	228	42.64	.383				

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017.

Result in table 3 show a significant influence of personality traits on attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis [t(227 df) = 72.273; P<.01). The hypothesis which states that, personality traits will

significantly influence attitudes towards crimes among adolescent in Makurdi metropolis is therefore accepted. The result implies that adolescent's personality traits are associated with criminal behaviour. This finding support the previous work of Caspi *et al.*, (1994) who submitted that certain personality traits are linked with criminality and violent behaviour.

They said that it is also worthy of note that personality profiles seem to be very useful in predicting the criminal behaviour and provide a better understanding of how an individual reacts to problems, make decisions and communicate with their surroundings.

The findings also support the study by Nadiah et al (2015) in their study linking psychological traits with criminal Behaviour.

**Hypothesis 2:** This hypothesis states that, there will be a significant age difference in attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The hypothesis was tested using one-way ANOVA and the result is presented the in the summary table below:

**Table 4: One way ANOVA Summary Table Showing Age Difference in Attitudes towards Makurdi Metropolis**

Variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	f	P	Remark
Between Groups	4446.776	6	741.129	50.613	.000	Sig.
Within Groups	3470.384	237	14.643	226	000	Sig.
Total	7917.160	243				

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017.

Result in table 4 above shows a significant age difference in attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis [ $f(6, 237df) = 50.613$ ;  $p < .01$ ]. The hypothesis which states that there will be a significant age difference in attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis is therefore confirmed and accepted.

The findings is not consistent to the findings of Gottfredson and Hirsch (1990) who reported that age is not important in the explanation of crime. However, the present result corroborates with the findings of Stain and Magnusson (1989), Caspi, Hewrg, McGree, Moffits and Silla (1995), who reported that age is a significant factor in criminality. These researchers argued

that an individual's age will significantly influence the persons attitude towards aggression, violence and crime.

They believe that criminal behaviour is as the result of age related factors. Moreover, the present study has proved otherwise, showing that among adolescent age does significantly influence criminal behaviour. Findings also tallied with Balvig, (2000) and Junger-Tas *et al.*, (2003), which assert that a significant number of all crimes are made by young people. During adolescence, the actual self reported rates of illegal behaviour area so high that participating the delinquency appears to be normal part of teen life.

**Hypothesis 3:** This hypothesis states that, personality traits and age will jointly influence attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in the summary table below;

**Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis Summary Table Showing the joint influence of personality traits and age on attitudes towards crime among adolescents**

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	t	P	Remark
Constant	.598	.357	602.476		12.083	.000	Sig.
Personality Traits				.388	7.199		
Age				-.408	-7.568		

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017.

Result in table 5 above shows a significant score of joint influence of personality traits and age on attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis [ $f(2,225 \text{ df}) = 62.476$ ;  $P < .01$ ;  $R^2 = .357$ ]. Observation of beta weight shows that personality traits and age have significant influence on attitude towards crime in Makurdi metropolis ( $\beta = .388$ ,  $\beta = -.408$  respectively). The hypothesis which states that personality traits and age will jointly influence attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis is therefore accepted.

This shows that, there is a joint influence of personality traits and age on attitudes towards crime. This finding also support the findings of Balvig, (2000) and Junger- Tas *et al.*, (2003) who reported significant crime increase during adolescence, that the actual self-reported rates of illegal behaviour are so high

that participating in delinquency appears to be a normal part of teen life. This finding is also consistent with the findings by Obi et al (2013) who investigated the influence of personality and age on attitude towards crime among adolescents Students of command secondary school Jos, Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

The study investigated the influence of personality traits and age on attitudes towards crime among adolescents in Makurdi Metropolis. From the results obtained in the study, some personality traits were identified as significant factors in attitudes towards crime among adolescents.

The study revealed a significant age difference among adolescents in respect to criminal behaviour. Participants whose age falls between 13 years were more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. Really, it can clearly stated that, the importance of personality cannot be over emphasized.

Personality traits still remain a significant factor to consider while studying human behaviour, whether the behaviour is normal or abnormal with regards to cultural setting of the individual. The study of personality characteristics will help to reduce the reasons for such behaviour.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made parents must learn to study and control those personality characteristics that may predispose their children towards deviant behaviour, because a positive attitude towards a behaviour may likely lead to such a behaviour.

Finally, individual and situational factors that will help improve the desired personality characteristics should be encouraged.

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