

# The Relationship between Personality and Substance Abuse Attitudes

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## Introduction

Much research has been carried out to see whether any relationships exist between drug use and personality. Such research, by Holroyd & Kahn (1974), found significant relationships amongst heavy, moderate, and casual users, in relation to personality. There is however, no research that investigates whether such relationships exist between drug use attitudes and personality. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore whether similar personality traits, often seen for drug users (extraversion, neuroticism & openness to experience), were present in those who do not necessarily use drugs, but are more open to their use.

## Hypotheses

- There will be a relationship between higher scores of neuroticism and positive attitudes to drug use
- There will be a relationship between higher scores of extraversion and positive attitudes to drug use
- There will be a relationship between higher scores of openness to experience and positive attitudes to drug use

## Methodology

### Participants

133 participants (62 males & 71 females) were collected using convenience sampling

### Materials

- Substance Abuse Attitudes Survey
- Big Five Personality Questionnaire
- Demographic information

### Procedure

Participants were all given the questionnaires in the same order, with an explanation of how to complete them.

### Analysis

Mann Whitney U tests were used to investigate any difference for gender. Spearman's Correlation Co-Efficients were used to find any relationships that may exist.

## Results

Gender was looked at separately for all the personality domains, apart from extraversion.

### Agreeableness

Significant relationships were seen for

Treatment Intervention:

[rs(133) = 0.289, p = 0.001]

Treatment Optimism:

[rs(133) = 0.223, p = 0.01]

### Conscientiousness

This was the only subgroup that saw a significant relationship with overall attitudes to drug use (see figure 1).

### Openness to Experience

Permissiveness: [rs(133) = 0.212, p = 0.01]

### Neuroticism & Extraversion

No significant relationships were found between substance use attitudes, with neuroticism and extraversion.

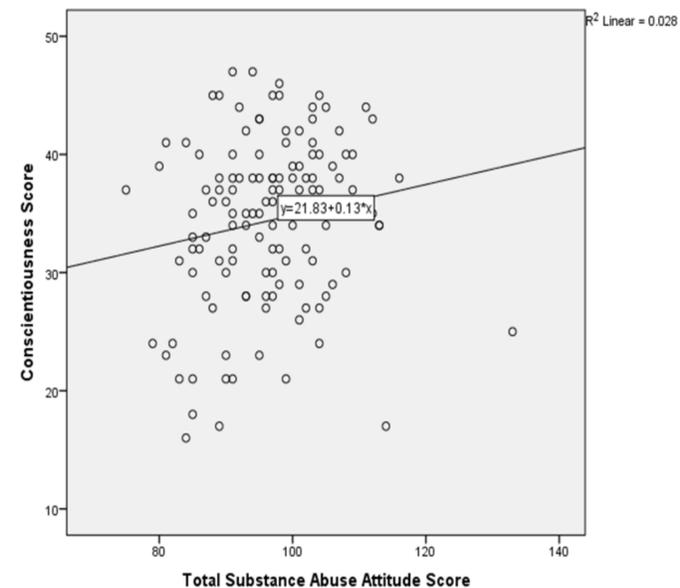


Figure 1: Scatterplot showing a positive relationship between conscientiousness scores and overall attitudes to drug use

## Discussion

The results show that a relationship exists between conscientiousness and overall drug use attitudes. Meaning that relationships between personality and drug users, are not similar to those with more open attitudes towards drug use. This suggests that those who are more open to drug use, do not necessarily have similar relationships to those who misuse drugs. Reasons for this may be due to those who are more conscientious, tend to have more empathy towards others (Jensen-Campbell & Malcolm (2007). This research may help treat drug abuse.

## References

- Holroyd, K., & Kahn, M. (1974). Personality factors in students drug use. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 42* (2), 236-243.
- Jensen-Campbell, L.A., & Malcolm, K.T. (2007). The importance of conscientiousness in adolescent interpersonal relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33* (3), 368-383..