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Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Health Risk Behaviors

Major: Psychology

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Research

- We studied the correlations between personality and specific health risk behaviors (e.g., violence, drug use, and risky sexual behavior) to answer the question ‘what personality dimensions contribute to specific types of health risk behavior?’
- We designed a survey using the Big Five Personality Inventory and an inventory of health risk behaviors.

Findings

Correlations between personality and various health risk behaviors.

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Openness
Violence	-.06	-.23**	-.08	.04	-.05
Suicide	-.01	-.02	-.00	-.27**	.09
Tobacco	-.10	-.24**	-.19**	-.08	.04
Alcohol	.13*	-.06	-.05	.11	.06
Marijuana	-.03	-.13*	-.07	.09	.13*
Other Drugs	-.11	-.18**	-.09	-.06	.10
Body weight Dissatisfaction	.10	.13*	-.02	-.24**	.02

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Findings

Means and standard deviations in gender differences displayed between personality dimensions and various health risk behaviors.

		Mean	SD	t
Extraversion	Female	23.27	6.86	3.01**
	Male	20.73	6.19	
Agreeableness	Female	25.11	5.81	3.00**
	Male	22.99	5.00	
Emotional Stability	Female	15.86	5.57	-5.32***
	Male	19.85	6.49	
Violence	Female	1.74	2.52	-4.60***
	Male	4.08	5.84	
Tobacco	Female	5.24	6.59	-2.33*
	Male	7.41	8.53	
Alcohol	Female	8.72	4.98	-2.72**
	Male	10.66	6.69	
Marijuana	Female	3.14	3.70	-4.66***
	Male	5.74	5.45	
Other Drugs	Female	1.11	2.60	-3.46***
	Male	2.59	4.46	
Body Weight Dissatisfaction	Female	6.07	2.33	5.04***
	Male	4.62	2.14	

Note: *p< .05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Conclusions

- It is evident that there are indeed relationships between personality and risky health behaviors. In this study, agreeableness seems to be the best predictor for delinquent behavior, but only in males.
- The predictive power of agreeableness should be investigated in future research specifically examining gender differences. It could be that agreeableness is considered to be different in the minds of males and females or how we define agreeableness.