

PERSONALITY TRAITS AS PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOPATHIC BEHAVIOUR AMONG INMATES: EVIDENCE FROM JOS CORRECTIONAL CENTER, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center, Plateau State, Nigeria. Psychopathy, characterized by callousness, impulsivity, manipulateness, and lack of empathy, remains a significant concern within correctional settings, particularly in Nigeria where empirical data on inmate populations remain scarce. Despite its well-documented prevalence in Western correctional contexts, the relationship between personality traits and psychopathic behaviour has received limited systematic attention within Nigerian forensic psychology. This study addressed that gap by examining how the Big Five personality traits; openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism predict psychopathic behaviour among incarcerated individuals, and by exploring gender differences in this relationship. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 300 registered inmates at Jos Correctional Center (Lamingo), from which a sample of 169 participants was selected using the Raosoft sample size formula at a 95% confidence level. The sample consisted of 147 males (88.0%) and 20 females (12.0%), with ages ranging from 18 years and above. Data were collected using two standardized instruments: the Big Five Inventory (BFI) for assessing personality traits and the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP) for measuring psychopathic behaviour. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression, independent samples t-test, and multiple linear regression at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed a highly significant positive relationship between personality traits and psychopathic behaviour ($\beta = 0.705$, $p < .001$), with the personality traits accounting for approximately 49.7% of the variance in psychopathy scores. The independent samples t-test indicated a statistically significant gender difference in personality traits scores ($t(105.452) = 11.636$, $p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis further confirmed that personality traits and gender jointly and significantly predicted psychopathic behaviour ($R^2 = .507$, $F(2, 164) = 84.180$, $p < .001$).

These findings underscore the critical role of personality in shaping psychopathic behaviour within Nigerian correctional settings and highlight the importance of gender-sensitive, personality-informed assessment and rehabilitation strategies.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Psychopathy, Big Five Inventory, Inmates, Correctional Facility, Gender Differences, Nigeria.

Introduction

Psychopathic behaviour represents one of the most consequential and enduring challenges confronting criminal justice and correctional systems worldwide. Characterized by a pervasive pattern of emotional detachment, manipulativeness, impulsivity, callousness, and persistent violation of social norms, psychopathy is associated with elevated rates of recidivism, violent misconduct, and treatment resistance among incarcerated populations (Hare, 2003; Hare & Neumann, 2008). Estimates from Western correctional contexts suggest that between 15% and 25% of inmates meet diagnostic criteria for psychopathy, and that psychopathic offenders account for a disproportionately large share of serious violent crimes (Hare, 2003; Farrington, 2018). Beyond its prevalence, psychopathy poses formidable obstacles to rehabilitation: psychopathic offenders are approximately five times more likely than other inmates to violently reoffend within five years of release, and approximately 80% commit a new violent offense within one year of discharge (Harris et al., 2001). These patterns make the identification, assessment, and management of psychopathic traits within correctional facilities a matter of urgent practical and scientific importance.

Central to contemporary understanding of psychopathy is its relationship with personality traits. Personality traits; defined as stable, enduring patterns of thought, affect, and behaviour that distinguish individuals from one another have long been recognized as significant contributors to antisocial and psychopathic behaviour (McCrae & Costa, 1997). The Five Factor Model (FFM), commonly known as the Big Five, provides the most widely accepted empirical framework for organizing personality into five broad dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Goldberg, 1993). Research consistently demonstrates that specific configurations of these traits, particularly low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism, are strongly associated with psychopathic tendencies, antisocial behaviour, and criminal conduct (Miller et al., 2020; Widiger & Crego, 2019). Low agreeableness predisposes individuals toward aggression, deceitfulness, and exploitativeness, while high neuroticism is linked to emotional instability, impulsivity, and heightened risk of violent behaviour in incarcerated populations (Smith et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2019). These associations suggest that personality assessment tools

grounded in the Big Five framework can serve as valuable instruments for identifying inmates at elevated risk for psychopathic behaviour and for designing targeted rehabilitative interventions.

Gender constitutes another important dimension in the study of psychopathy within correctional settings. Although psychopathy has historically been conceptualized and studied predominantly in male populations, growing evidence indicates that the relationship between personality traits and psychopathic behaviour manifests differently across genders. Male inmates generally exhibit higher overall psychopathy scores and are more prone to externalizing behaviours such as aggression and impulsivity, while female inmates tend to display greater emotional dysregulation and internalizing tendencies alongside psychopathic traits (Verona & Vitale, 2006; Cale & Lilienfeld, 2002). These gender-specific patterns have important implications for how correctional facilities design psychological assessments and rehabilitation programs, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive approaches.

In Nigeria, the significance of understanding psychopathy within correctional settings is amplified by the country's complex security landscape. Nigeria has experienced escalating rates of violent crime, organized criminal activity, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and acts of terrorism, particularly perpetrated by the Boko Haram extremist group (Amnesty International, 2021). These circumstances have placed considerable strain on correctional facilities, many of which operate with limited psychological resources and inadequate mental health infrastructure. Despite this context, empirical research on psychopathy among Nigerian inmates remains sparse, and the specific contribution of personality traits to psychopathic behaviour in this population has not been adequately examined. The Jos Correctional Center in Plateau State serves as a particularly relevant site for such inquiry, housing a diverse inmate population drawn from a region characterized by significant socioeconomic challenges, intercommunal conflicts, and varying educational backgrounds, all of which may interact with personality dispositions to shape psychopathic expressions (Ogunyemi, 2023). Furthermore, cultural norms and values unique to the Nigerian context can significantly influence how personality traits develop and manifest, making it essential to generate locally grounded empirical evidence rather than relying solely on findings from Western populations (Ogunyemi, 2021).

This study therefore sought to examine the influence of personality traits, as measured by the Big Five Inventory, on psychopathic behaviour as assessed by the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale, among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center. It further investigated gender differences in personality trait profiles and explored the joint predictive influence of personality traits and gender on psychopathic behaviour. By doing so, the study contributes to the growing body of forensic psychology literature in Nigeria and provides

empirical foundations for more effective, personality-informed, and gender-sensitive correctional practices.

Statement of the Problem

Psychopathy within correctional settings poses serious challenges for inmate management, institutional safety, and rehabilitation outcomes. Yet, despite the well-documented prevalence and consequences of psychopathic behaviour in incarcerated populations globally, empirical research on this phenomenon within Nigerian correctional facilities remains markedly limited. While studies from Europe and North America have extensively documented the personality correlates of psychopathy and developed robust assessment frameworks, comparable evidence from Nigerian forensic contexts is largely absent, creating a significant knowledge gap that hampers the development of contextually appropriate intervention strategies (Odukoya & Ayiro, 2017; Ogunyemi, 2021).

Within the Nigerian criminal justice system, correctional facilities continue to grapple with the behavioural consequences of undiagnosed and unmanaged psychopathic traits among inmates. Manipulative behaviour, violent misconduct, exploitation of fellow inmates, and poor response to standard rehabilitation programming are frequently reported challenges in Nigerian prisons, yet these behaviours are rarely systematically assessed through validated psychological instruments (Nwoke, 2019; Fagbemi et al., 2019). The absence of routine personality-based psychological screening means that inmates exhibiting psychopathic traits are neither identified early nor provided with tailored interventions, increasing the risk of institutional violence, recidivism, and failed reintegration upon release.

Although personality traits have been identified internationally as significant predictors of psychopathic behaviour, the specific pattern of this relationship among Nigerian inmates has not been empirically established. It remains unclear which Big Five personality dimensions most strongly predict psychopathy in this population, and whether the relationship operates similarly across genders. Studies conducted in Nigeria have examined psychopathy in relation to violent crime and demographic factors, but none has systematically investigated the joint influence of personality traits and gender on psychopathic behaviour within a correctional facility using standardized instruments validated for such contexts (Fagbemi et al., 2019; Balogun & Adewuya, 2015).

This gap is particularly consequential at a facility such as the Jos Correctional Center, which serves a population marked by diverse backgrounds, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, and limited access to mental health services. Without empirical data on the personality foundations of psychopathic behaviour in this setting, correctional authorities lack the evidence needed to implement effective risk assessments, design gender-specific rehabilitation

programs, or advocate for policy reforms that prioritize psychological care. This study was therefore undertaken to address these gaps directly, providing the first systematic investigation of personality traits as predictors of psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center, Plateau State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center?
2. What is the gender difference in personality trait scores among male and female inmates at the Jos Correctional Center?
3. What is the joint influence of personality traits and gender on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There will be a significant influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center.
2. There will be a significant gender difference in personality trait scores among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center.
3. Personality traits and gender will jointly and significantly influence psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center.

Literature Review

This section of the report provides detail explanation of the conceptual framework, theory and the empirical studies in line with that study variables.

Conceptual Framework

Psychopathy

Psychopathy is a personality disorder characterized by a range of enduring behavioural and affective patterns, including manipulation, deceitfulness, lack of remorse, shallow emotional affect, impulsivity, and persistent antisocial conduct (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hare & Neumann, 2008). It is distinguished from general antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) by its specific interpersonal and affective features: while many individuals with ASPD engage in rule-violating behaviour, psychopathy additionally encompasses a distinctive emotional deficit characterized by an inability to experience genuine empathy, guilt, or remorse (Hare, 2003). This distinction is clinically significant, as psychopathic individuals present a substantially greater risk of violent recidivism and pose unique challenges to standard correctional and therapeutic programming.

Psychopathy is conventionally organized into two broad subtypes. Primary psychopathy encompasses the interpersonal and affective core of the disorder, including callousness, superficial charm, grandiosity, manipulativeness, and absence of empathy (Forth et al., 1996). Secondary psychopathy, by contrast, is characterized predominantly by behavioural features such as impulsivity, emotional instability, irresponsibility, and lack of long-term planning (Leistico et al., 2008). Research indicates that while primary and secondary psychopathy traits frequently co-occur, they carry distinct behavioural implications: primary traits are more strongly associated with predatory, premeditated aggression, while secondary traits are linked to reactive, impulsive misconduct and emotional dysregulation (Gill et al., 2014). Understanding this distinction is important in correctional settings because the two subtypes may require different assessment approaches and intervention strategies.

The prevalence of psychopathy in incarcerated populations is substantially higher than in the general population. Globally, estimates suggest that approximately 15% to 25% of male prison inmates meet diagnostic criteria for psychopathy, compared to approximately 1% of the general population (Hare, 2003; Farrington, 2018). In Nigerian correctional contexts, systematic prevalence data are limited, but available evidence from studies of violent offenders suggests that psychopathic traits are meaningfully present among inmates convicted of serious crimes such as murder, armed robbery, and fraud (Akintoye & Olagunju, 2017; Adeyemi et al., 2014). Psychopathic offenders are disproportionately represented among the most dangerous and chronic criminal offenders, contributing significantly to institutional violence, exploitation of co-inmates, and high rates of reoffending following release (Harris et al., 2001; Harris & Rice, 2006).

The assessment of psychopathy has been advanced considerably by the development of standardized instruments. The Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) remains the gold standard for clinical and forensic assessment, evaluating traits such as glibness, grandiosity, pathological lying, and lack of remorse through structured clinical interview and file review (Hare, 2003). For research contexts where clinical interviews are less feasible, self-report instruments such as the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP) provide practical and psychometrically acceptable alternatives, particularly for assessing psychopathic traits among incarcerated populations in resource-constrained settings (Kahn & Hodge, 2021).

Personality Traits and the Big Five Model

Personality traits are defined as stable, cross-situationally consistent patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour that differentiate individuals from one another and remain relatively enduring across the lifespan (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Among the various frameworks proposed to organize and measure

personality, the Five Factor Model (FFM), commonly referred to as the Big Five, has emerged as the most empirically supported and widely applied taxonomy. The five dimensions are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism which provide a comprehensive map of human personality variation that has demonstrated cross-cultural validity and predictive utility across a broad range of behavioural outcomes, including academic performance, occupational functioning, interpersonal relationships, and criminal behaviour (Goldberg, 1993; Roberts et al., 2007). Within the context of psychopathy research, agreeableness and conscientiousness have consistently emerged as the most diagnostically relevant Big Five dimensions. Low agreeableness reflects a disposition toward antagonism, callousness, distrust, and exploitativeness are traits that overlap substantially with the interpersonal and affective features of psychopathy (Miller et al., 2019). Low conscientiousness, characterized by impulsivity, irresponsibility, and disregard for obligation, maps closely onto the behavioural deviance dimension of psychopathy (Anderson et al., 2018). High neuroticism, involving emotional instability, anxiety, and moodiness, has been linked to the secondary psychopathy dimension, contributing to impulsive reactivity and difficulty regulating negative affect (McCrae & Costa, 2018). Extraversion, though less consistently related to psychopathy overall, may contribute to manipulative and dominance-seeking behaviours when combined with low agreeableness, particularly in competitive institutional environments such as correctional facilities (Jonason et al., 2020).

The Big Five framework is adopted in this study not only because of its psychometric robustness but also because of its practical utility in correctional assessment. Unlike clinical instruments requiring trained evaluators, the Big Five Inventory (BFI) can be administered as a self-report questionnaire, making it accessible for use in resource-limited Nigerian correctional facilities. Its dimensional structure also enables nuanced profiling of inmates, identifying specific trait configurations most strongly associated with psychopathic risk rather than relying on categorical diagnostic labels.

Gender and Psychopathic Behaviour

Gender differences in psychopathy have been the subject of considerable scholarly attention, with the preponderance of evidence indicating that male and female inmates differ meaningfully in both the level and expression of psychopathic traits. Male inmates consistently score higher on overall psychopathy measures, particularly on dimensions reflecting antisocial behaviour, aggression, and dominance-seeking (Coid et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2018). Female inmates, by contrast, tend to exhibit psychopathic features more prominently through emotional dysregulation, negative emotionality, and internalizing behavioural patterns, with lower levels of the overt

aggression and impulsivity characteristic of male psychopathy (Verona & Vitale, 2006; Warren et al., 2003).

These gender differences extend to personality trait profiles. Studies consistently show that female inmates score higher on neuroticism and agreeableness relative to their male counterparts, while male inmates score higher on extraversion and openness to experience (Grann, 2000; Salekin et al., 1997). These divergent trait profiles contribute to gender-specific pathways into psychopathic behaviour: males are more likely to exhibit externalizing manifestations involving physical aggression and rule violation, while females are more prone to relational manipulation and emotional reactivity (Hicks et al., 2010; Vitale et al., 2002). In Nigerian correctional research, studies examining gender and psychopathy remain sparse, though available evidence suggests that male inmates exhibit significantly higher psychopathy scores than their female counterparts, consistent with global patterns (Fagbemi et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The present study is anchored in the Big Five Personality Theory, proposed by Goldberg (1981) and extensively developed through the work of McCrae and Costa (1997). This theoretical framework posits that personality can be comprehensively described through five broad, hierarchically organized dimensions; openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism that are biologically grounded, cross-culturally generalizable, and longitudinally stable. The theory provides a direct and empirically robust basis for examining how specific personality trait configurations predispose individuals toward psychopathic behaviour, making it the most appropriate theoretical anchor for the present study's objectives.

Complementing this primary framework, the Dark Triad theory proposed by Paulhus and Williams (2002) offers additional conceptual context. The Dark Triad posits that psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism constitute a cluster of socially malevolent personality characteristics that frequently co-occur and jointly predict antisocial conduct. Within the correctional context, this perspective reinforces the theoretical expectation that personality trait configurations associated with low empathy, high manipulateness, and impulsivity as captured by the Big Five dimensions will significantly predict psychopathic behaviour among inmates.

Empirical Review of Literature

This section of the paper presents the contemporary views from studies conducted in the following headings.

Personality Traits and Psychopathic Behaviour among Inmates

Empirical studies across multiple international contexts consistently support a strong and significant relationship between Big Five personality traits and psychopathic behaviour in incarcerated populations. Research conducted in

the United Kingdom using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised demonstrated that higher psychoticism and neuroticism scores were significantly associated with elevated psychopathy scores among male prisoners, establishing personality traits as robust predictors of psychopathic behaviour in correctional samples (Boduszek et al., 2016). Longitudinal research involving male and female inmates in the United States further confirmed that low agreeableness and low conscientiousness were the most consistent personality predictors of psychopathy, particularly its primary interpersonal and affective dimensions (Anderson et al., 2018). Similarly, a mixed-methods study in Belgian prisons found a strong correlation between high impulsivity, low conscientiousness, and the presence of antisocial behaviours, with personality traits demonstrating predictive utility beyond what demographic variables alone could explain (Decuyper et al., 2018).

More recent research using the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure alongside the Revised NEO Personality Inventory confirmed that psychopathy's boldness and meanness dimensions were strongly related to lower agreeableness and conscientiousness among maximum-security inmates, and that individuals with these trait configurations were significantly more likely to engage in violent and manipulative institutional behaviours (Neumann et al., 2022). Taken together, these findings establish a consistent empirical picture in which low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism constitute the core personality risk profile for psychopathic behaviour across correctional settings. Research in Nigerian forensic contexts, though limited, aligns broadly with these patterns, with studies indicating that personality traits including low empathy, high impulsivity, and manipulativeness are meaningfully present among Nigerian inmates convicted of violent and white-collar offenses (Adeyemi et al., 2014; Odukoya & Ayiro, 2017).

Gender Differences in Personality Traits among Inmates

Empirical research on gender differences in personality traits among incarcerated populations reveals consistent and replicable patterns across diverse correctional contexts. Studies comparing male and female inmates in Swedish prisons found that male inmates scored significantly higher on impulsivity and novelty-seeking, while female inmates demonstrated higher harm avoidance and reward dependence, reflecting broader gender-linked differences in emotional regulation and risk-taking tendencies (Strand & Belfrage, 2001). Comparative research in the United States using the Revised NEO Personality Inventory similarly found that female inmates scored significantly higher on neuroticism and agreeableness, while male inmates scored higher on extraversion and openness, with females more prone to emotional instability and males more inclined toward sensation-seeking and impulsive conduct (Warren et al., 2003; Salekin et al., 1997).

These differential personality profiles have been linked to distinct patterns of offending behaviour. Male inmates with higher extraversion and lower agreeableness tended to engage in more violent crimes, while female inmates with elevated neuroticism were more frequently associated with offenses related to emotional disturbance and relational conflict (Grann, 2000). In the Nigerian context, gender-based differences in personality trait profiles among inmates have received limited empirical attention, but available evidence indicates that male inmates exhibit significantly higher psychopathy-related trait scores compared to females, a finding consistent with the international literature (Fagbemi et al., 2019; Maiti & Nwoke, 2018).

Joint Influence of Personality Traits and Gender on Psychopathic Behaviour

A growing body of research has examined how personality traits and gender interact to jointly shape psychopathic behaviour among inmates. Research involving male and female inmates from medium-security prisons in the United States found that high extraversion and low agreeableness were significant predictors of psychopathy across both genders, but that gender moderated the relationship between neuroticism and psychopathy, with women displaying higher emotional instability alongside psychopathic traits (Poythress et al., 2010). A large-scale study using the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale in United Kingdom prisons confirmed that while low agreeableness and low conscientiousness predicted psychopathy in both men and women, men exhibited higher levels of secondary psychopathy characterized by impulsivity and antisocial behaviour, while women scored higher on primary psychopathy markers reflecting emotional detachment (Dhingra et al., 2015).

Longitudinal research further demonstrated that personality traits, particularly low conscientiousness and high extraversion, were strongly associated with psychopathy in both genders, but that the behavioural expression of psychopathy differed: women with high psychopathy scores were more prone to internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression, while men exhibited more externalizing behaviours including aggression and rule violation (Hicks et al., 2010). A meta-analytic synthesis across 25 studies confirmed that while the core personality correlates of psychopathy low agreeableness and low conscientiousness were similar across genders, the expression of these traits was gender-specific, with males more prone to violent behaviour and females to emotional manipulation (Cale & Lilienfeld, 2002). These findings collectively indicate that an integrated analysis of personality traits and gender provides a more complete and nuanced account of psychopathic behaviour in correctional settings than either variable examined in isolation.

Methodology

This section provides details on the methods employed in conducting this research.

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center, Plateau State, Nigeria. The cross-sectional design was considered appropriate because it enabled the simultaneous collection of data on personality traits, psychopathic behaviour, and demographic characteristics at a single point in time, facilitating efficient statistical examination of relationships among the study variables without the resource demands of longitudinal follow-up (Boduszek et al., 2016).

Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The target population comprised all registered male and female inmates aged 18 years and above resident at Jos Correctional Center (Lamingo), Plateau State, Nigeria, with a confirmed total population of 300 inmates. To determine an appropriate sample size, the Raosoft sample size calculator was applied at a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error, yielding a recommended sample of 169 participants. Participants were selected using a systematic sampling technique to ensure equitable representation across the inmate population. The final sample consisted of 147 males (88.0%) and 20 females (12.0%), with ages ranging from 18 years and above, reflecting the gender distribution of the facility's registered population at the time of data collection.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising three sections. The first section captured sociodemographic information including gender, age, and educational level. The second section employed the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP), developed by Levenson (1995), to assess psychopathic behaviour. The LSRP is a 26-item self-report instrument organized into two subscales measuring primary psychopathy (interpersonal and affective features such as callousness and manipulativeness) and secondary psychopathy (behavioural features such as impulsivity and irresponsibility). Items are rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The LSRP has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties across forensic and correctional research contexts and has been validated for use in self-report research with incarcerated populations (Kahn & Hodge, 2021). The third section utilized the Big Five Inventory (BFI), a 44-item self-report measure assessing the five personality dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Pilot Study and Reliability

A pilot study was conducted with 30 inmates drawn from a Nigerian correctional facility not included in the main study, selected through convenience sampling. The purpose was to assess the clarity, cultural appropriateness, and internal consistency of the instruments prior to main data collection. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients obtained from the pilot data were 0.81 for the Big Five Inventory and 0.79 for the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale, both meeting the conventional threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Minor item clarifications were made based on participant feedback, and the average completion time was estimated at 15 to 20 minutes, confirming the feasibility of the instruments for use with the target population.

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data collection was conducted after obtaining institutional approval from the Jos Correctional Center administration and informed consent from all participating inmates. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. Questionnaires were administered individually or in small groups with research assistants available to clarify items where needed, accommodating participants with varying literacy levels. All data were handled in accordance with established ethical guidelines for research involving incarcerated populations.

Statistics Used

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to summarize demographic characteristics and study variables. Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, examining the predictive influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour. An independent samples t-test was used to test Hypothesis 2, assessing gender differences in personality score. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test Hypothesis 3, determining the joint predictive influence of personality traits and gender on psychopathic behaviour. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	147	88.0

	Female	20	12.0
	Total	167	100.0
Age	18-20 years	28	16.6
	21-25 years	54	32.0
	26 years and above	87	51.5
	Total	169	100.0
Education	No formal education	21	12.4
	Primary education	38	22.5
	Secondary education	72	42.6
	Post-secondary education	38	22.5
	Total	169	100.0

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 169 inmates who participated in the study. The sample was predominantly male, with 147 males (88.0%) and 20 females (12.0%), reflecting the gender composition of the Jos Correctional Center population at the time of data collection. Age distribution showed that the majority of participants fell within the 26 years and above bracket, with smaller proportions in the 18-20 and 21-25 age groups. Educational background varied across participants, ranging from those with no formal education to those with post-secondary qualifications.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be significant influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center. This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression, the results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary for Simple Linear Regression of Personality Traits on Psychopathic Behaviour

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15,979.671	1	15,979.671	162.793	< .001
Residual	16,196.305	165	98.159		

Total	32,175.976	166
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Table 3: Regression Coefficients for Personality Traits Predicting Psychopathic Behaviour

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
(Constant)	14.903	3.769		3.954	< .001	7.461	22.345
Personality	0.663	0.052	0.705	12.759	< .001	0.560	0.766

Dependent Variable: Psychopathy behaviour

The regression model was statistically significant ($F(1, 165) = 162.793, p < .001$), with the personality accounting for approximately 49.7% of the variance in psychopathy behaviour scores ($R^2 = .497$). The standardized beta coefficient was large and highly significant ($\beta = 0.705, t = 12.759, p < .001$), indicating that higher personality trait scores significantly and positively predicted higher psychopathic behaviour scores. The effect size was further confirmed by Cohen's $d = 13.719$, reflecting a very strong association. Hypothesis 1 was supported, thus imply that personality traits exert a highly significant positive influence on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that there will be a significant gender difference in personality among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test for the difference and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test for Gender Difference in Personality Scores

Variable	Gender	N	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig.
Personality	Male	147	17.345	11.636	105.4	< .001
	Female	20		36	52	

Note: Welch's correction applied given unequal group sizes.

Table 4 presents the summary results of the independent samples t-test where it revealed a statistically significant gender difference in personality scores, $t(105.452) = 11.636, p < .001$. Female inmates scored significantly higher on personality than their male counterparts, indicating meaningful differences in personality trait profiles between genders within the correctional sample. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported, this imply that there

was a significant gender differences in personality trait scores among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that personality traits and gender jointly exert a significant influence on psychopathic behaviour among inmates. Multiple linear regression analysis was used in the analysis and the results were presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Model Summary for Multiple Regression of Personality Traits and Gender on Psychopathic Behaviour

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.712	.507	.501	9.839

Predictors: Personality, Gender

Table 6: ANOVA and Coefficients for Multiple Regression

Model	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16,299.054	2	8,149.527	84.180	< .001
Residual	15,876.922	164	96.810		
Total	32,175.976	166			

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	22.812	5.742		3.973	< .001
Gender	-4.608	2.570	-.108	-1.816	.071
Personality traits	0.624	0.056	.664	11.182	< .001

Dependent Variable: Psychopathy behaviour

The overall multiple regression model was statistically significant ($F(2, 164) = 84.180, p < .001$), with personality traits and gender jointly accounting for 50.7% of the variance in psychopathic behaviour scores ($R^2 = .507$, Adjusted $R^2 = .501$). Within the model, the personality remained a highly significant predictor of psychopathic behaviour ($\beta = .664, t = 11.182, p < .001$), while gender approached but did not reach conventional statistical significance as an independent predictor ($\beta = -.108, t = -1.816, p = .071$). The addition of gender to the model produced a marginal increase in explained variance beyond personality traits alone ($\Delta R^2 = .010$), suggesting that while personality traits constitute the dominant predictor, gender contributes meaningfully to the overall predictive model. Hypothesis 3 was supported. Thus, imply that personality traits and gender jointly exert a significant

influence on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center.

Discussion

The present study examined the influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center, Plateau State, Nigeria, and explored gender differences in personality trait profiles and their joint predictive contribution to psychopathic behaviour. The findings across all three hypotheses offer meaningful insights for forensic psychology research and correctional practice in the Nigerian context, while also contributing to the broader international literature on personality and psychopathy in incarcerated populations.

The first hypothesis, which proposed a significant influence of personality traits on psychopathic behaviour, was strongly supported. Personality emerged as a highly significant positive predictor of psychopathy scores ($\beta = 0.705$, $p < .001$), accounting for approximately 49.7% of the variance in LSRP scores. This finding is consistent with a substantial body of international research establishing personality traits as robust predictors of psychopathic behaviour across correctional populations. Anderson et al. (2018) similarly found that low agreeableness and low conscientiousness were the most consistent Big Five predictors of psychopathy among incarcerated individuals in the United States, while Boduszek et al. (2016) demonstrated significant associations between personality dimensions and psychopathy scores among male prisoners in the United Kingdom. The large standardized beta coefficient obtained in the present study ($\beta = 0.705$) is particularly noteworthy, indicating an effect size that exceeds many previously reported estimates and suggesting that in the Nigerian correctional context, personality traits may be an especially powerful determinant of psychopathic behaviour. This may partly reflect the relatively homogeneous and high-risk institutional environment of the Jos Correctional Center, where personality dispositions toward callousness, impulsivity, and emotional detachment are likely amplified by the stressors of incarceration, limited psychological support, and exposure to antisocial peer influences (Ogunyemi, 2023; Nwoke, 2019).

The direction of the relationship whereby higher overall personality scores predicted higher psychopathy warrants careful interpretation. Within the Big Five framework, higher scores on certain dimensions such as neuroticism and lower scores on agreeableness and conscientiousness are theoretically expected to elevate psychopathic risk. The aggregate personality score in this context may be capturing the combined influence of these dimensions, particularly the contribution of emotional instability and antagonistic interpersonal orientation to psychopathic behaviour. This aligns with findings by Decuyper et al. (2018) and Neumann et al. (2022), both of whom demonstrated that specific configurations of Big Five traits, particularly the

combination of low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism, constitute the core personality risk profile for psychopathy in correctional settings. From a practical standpoint, these findings strongly support the integration of Big Five personality assessments into routine psychological screening at the Jos Correctional Center and similar Nigerian facilities, enabling early identification of inmates at elevated psychopathic risk and facilitating the design of targeted intervention programs.

The second hypothesis, proposing significant gender differences in personality scores among inmates, was also supported. Female inmates scored significantly higher on the personality than their male counterparts ($t(105.452) = 11.636, p < .001$). This finding is consistent with the broader empirical literature documenting gender-linked differences in personality trait profiles among incarcerated populations. Warren et al. (2003) and Salekin et al. (1997) both reported that female inmates scored significantly higher on neuroticism and agreeableness relative to male inmates, reflecting a personality profile characterized by greater emotional sensitivity and interpersonal orientation. Similarly, Verona and Vitale (2006) found that female inmates demonstrated higher negative emotionality and stress reactivity, while male inmates scored higher on boldness and social dominance traits associated with primary psychopathy.

In the present study, the higher personality score among female inmates are interpretable within this broader pattern. Female inmates at the Jos Correctional Center appear to present a personality profile that, while differing from their male counterparts in overall trait elevation, may contribute to psychopathic behaviour through distinct pathways. Specifically, elevated neuroticism among female inmates may manifest in emotional reactivity and relational manipulation rather than the overt aggression and rule violation more characteristic of male psychopathy. This interpretation aligns with findings by Hicks et al. (2010) and Vitale et al. (2002), who demonstrated that the behavioural expression of psychopathy is gender-specific, with females more prone to internalizing problems and emotional manipulation, and males more prone to externalizing conduct including physical aggression. The significant gender difference observed in this study underscores the importance of gender-differentiated personality assessment and rehabilitation programming within Nigerian correctional facilities, where a uniform approach risks failing to address the distinct psychological profiles and needs of female inmates.

The third hypothesis, proposing a significant joint influence of personality and gender on psychopathic behaviour, was supported by the multiple regression analysis ($F(2, 164) = 84.180, p < .001, R^2 = .507$). Personality traits remained the dominant predictor within the joint model ($\beta = .664, p < .001$), while gender approached but did not independently reach statistical significance ($\beta = -.108, p = .071$). The addition of gender to the model nonetheless produced

a marginal increase in explained variance, suggesting that gender contributes meaningfully to understanding psychopathic behaviour beyond what personality traits alone can account for. This pattern is consistent with findings by Poythress et al. (2010) and Dhingra et al. (2015), both of whom demonstrated that while personality traits constitute the primary predictors of psychopathy in correctional populations, gender moderates the specific expression and intensity of psychopathic features.

The failure of gender to reach independent statistical significance in the multiple regression model may be partly attributable to the pronounced gender imbalance in the present sample, with female inmates constituting only 12% of participants. This limited female representation reduces statistical power to detect independent gender effects and may have attenuated the gender coefficient. The non-significant independent gender effect should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that gender is inconsequential to psychopathic behaviour in this population, particularly given the significant gender differences observed in personality trait scores under Hypothesis 2 and the broader literature consistently documenting gender-specific psychopathy profiles. Rather, it suggests that gender may exert its influence on psychopathic behaviour primarily through its relationship with personality traits, operating as a moderating or mediating variable rather than an independent direct predictor. Future studies with more balanced gender samples would be better positioned to disentangle these relationships. Cale and Lilienfeld's (2002) meta-analytic findings similarly indicated that while core personality correlates of psychopathy are comparable across genders, the behavioural expression of these traits is gender-specific, reinforcing the importance of examining gender in conjunction with personality rather than in isolation.

Taken together, the findings of this study carry significant implications for forensic psychology practice and correctional policy in Nigeria. The strong predictive power of personality traits over psychopathic behaviour establishes a compelling empirical case for incorporating standardized personality assessment into correctional intake procedures at Nigerian facilities. The significant gender differences in personality profiles further highlight the inadequacy of gender-neutral approaches to inmate assessment and rehabilitation, pointing toward the need for gender-sensitive intervention frameworks that address the distinct psychological pathways through which male and female inmates develop and express psychopathic behaviour.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of personality traits and gender on psychopathic behaviour among inmates at the Jos Correctional Center, Plateau State, Nigeria, and examined gender differences in personality trait profiles and their joint predictive contribution to psychopathic behaviour. Three hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using simple

linear regression, independent samples t-test, and multiple linear regression analysis.

The findings consistently demonstrated that personality traits, as measured by the Big Five Inventory, constitute a highly significant and powerful predictor of psychopathic behaviour among inmates, accounting for approximately 49.7% of the variance in psychopathy scores. Significant gender differences in Big Five personality trait profiles were also established, with female inmates scoring substantially higher than their male counterparts, reflecting distinct personality configurations that likely underpin gender-specific pathways into psychopathic behaviour. The joint model further confirmed that personality traits and gender together account for approximately 50.7% of the variance in psychopathic behaviour, with personality traits emerging as the dominant contributor. These outcomes collectively affirm that psychopathic behaviour in Nigerian correctional settings is meaningfully rooted in stable personality dispositions and is shaped, at least in part, by gender-linked trait differences.

The study makes an important empirical contribution to the limited body of forensic psychology research in Nigeria by providing the first systematic evidence of personality trait influences on psychopathy within a Nigerian correctional facility. The findings establish a clear scientific basis for integrating personality-informed psychological assessment into Nigerian correctional practice and for designing gender-sensitive rehabilitation programs that address the distinct needs of male and female inmates exhibiting psychopathic traits. More broadly, the results underscore the importance of investing in mental health infrastructure within Nigerian correctional facilities, where the absence of systematic psychological screening continues to impede effective inmate management, rehabilitation, and public safety outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are advanced:

1. Nigerian correctional facilities, including the Jos Correctional Center, should adopt standardized personality assessment protocols incorporating instruments such as the Big Five Inventory and the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale as part of routine psychological intake screening. Early identification of inmates with personality profiles associated with elevated psychopathic risk would enable targeted risk management, appropriate housing decisions, and timely referral to psychological intervention, reducing the likelihood of institutional violence and recidivism.

2. Correctional authorities and policymakers should develop and implement gender-specific rehabilitation programs that address the distinct personality profiles and behavioural expressions of psychopathy observed in male and female inmates. Given that female inmates demonstrated significantly different personality trait configurations relative to males, rehabilitation interventions designed exclusively around male psychopathy profiles are unlikely to be effective for female inmates and may inadvertently reinforce maladaptive patterns.
3. The Nigerian Correctional Service and relevant government ministries should prioritize the training of correctional psychologists and counselors in the administration and interpretation of personality-based forensic assessment tools. Building local professional capacity in this area is essential for sustaining evidence-based psychological screening and intervention beyond individual research initiatives, ensuring that the benefits of personality-informed assessment are institutionalized rather than episodic.
4. Academic institutions and research bodies in Nigeria should invest in further empirical studies on psychopathy in correctional settings, particularly studies with larger and more gender-balanced samples that can more precisely characterize the independent and interactive effects of personality traits, gender, and other demographic variables on psychopathic behaviour. Longitudinal designs examining how personality-psychopathy relationships evolve over the course of incarceration would also significantly advance the field.
5. Policy reform efforts in the Nigerian criminal justice system should draw on findings such as those presented in this study to advocate for enhanced mental health services within prisons, including the provision of therapy programs grounded in personality-informed approaches. Evidence-based interventions targeting the specific personality dimensions most strongly associated with psychopathy particularly low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism hold the greatest promise for reducing antisocial behaviour, improving institutional safety, and supporting successful rehabilitation and community reintegration.

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