

Unveiling The Personality Traits in Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

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Abstract

The current case study examines the personality traits of a specific patient in relation to substance use disorders. The individual in question is a 35-year-old male with a history of marijuana consumption spanning the past seven years, along with occasional alcohol consumption. Despite seeking treatment for addiction, he exhibited a complex presentation that involved potential co-occurring personality traits. The main focus of concern revolved around his addiction to marijuana and alcohol. This study delves into analysing the connection between specific personality traits and the development of substance use disorder (SUD) among individuals. The Five Factor Model (FFM) is the predominant framework for traits used in the field of personality psychology. This model, also known as the Big Five personality traits, has become immensely popular due to its comprehensive and evidence-based structure for grasping different aspects of personality. Studies have shown that individuals who consume substances such as marijuana and alcohol tend to exhibit higher levels of Neuroticism (N) and Extroversion (E). Additionally, they are often characterized as being more impulsive and less sociable compared to non-users. Those individuals who consistently refrain from substance use are typically known for their elevated levels of Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C), as per personality trait theory. Identifying the personal characteristics of patients early on, in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, within the context of specific treatment environments, could prove to be beneficial in mitigating the risk of relapse.

Keywords: Substance use disorder, prevention strategies, five fact model, addiction, personality traits, mental health, personality disorders, personality assessments, therapy, emotional intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Individuals with Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a multifaceted medical condition marked by an irresistible craving for substances, persistent use even in the face of adverse effects, and enduring alterations in brain function. People with SUD commonly display distinct personality characteristics that may influence

both their struggle with addiction and journey towards recovery [1, 2]. Profound understanding of these nuanced personality traits empowers healthcare professionals to customize treatment strategies that address the distinct requirements of every individual. Individuals with SUD often exhibit a prevalent personality trait known as impulsivity [3]. This impulsivity is characterized by a tendency to act without forethought, disregarding the potential consequences of one's actions. [3] Such lack of self-control can result in engaging in risky behaviours like seeking and consuming drugs, thereby perpetuating the progression of SUD [4],

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Impulsivity typically correlates with an absence of premeditation and an incapacity to postpone immediate gratification, significant elements within the addiction cycle.

Individuals diagnosed with SUD often exhibit a strong inclination towards seeking novelty. This tendency involves a constant search for new and thrilling experiences, driving them to turn to substances such as drugs and alcohol to fulfil their need for excitement [3, 4]. The persistent pursuit of novelty presents a notable obstacle for individuals with SUD in maintaining their sobriety in the long run [5]. They may quickly grow disinterested in traditional treatment approaches and may turn to unorthodox and hazardous methods to meet their cravings.

What Causes Substance Use Disorder?

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a complex condition that does not have a single underlying cause. Instead, it emerges from a convergence of genetic, environmental, and psychological elements. Genetic factors are known to exert a considerable influence, as specific genetic traits can heighten a person's susceptibility to addiction [6]. Moreover, environmental influences like a family background of substance use issues, past traumatic events, and social pressures from peers can all act as catalysts in the onset of SUD.

How Does Substance Use Disorder Impact Individuals?

Individuals with substance use disorder SUD may face a spectrum of consequences spanning physical, emotional, and interpersonal realms. Physically, SUD is associated with debilitating health issues like liver damage, heart disease, and the risk of overdose. Emotionally, those battling SUD often grapple with overwhelming sensations of guilt, shame, and a pervasive sense of isolation [7]. Socially, SUD can strain connections with loved ones, creating rifts in relationships and presenting obstacles to sustaining employment or meeting societal responsibilities.

Treatment Options for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder

Effective recovery for individuals diagnosed with substance use disorder (SUD) necessitates treatment options that often include a blend of therapy, medication, and support groups. Cognitive-behavioural therapy serves as a crucial tool in aiding individuals to recognize and modify detrimental thinking and behavioural patterns associated with their substance use [8]. Furthermore, medications such as methadone or buprenorphine play a significant role in minimizing cravings and alleviating withdrawal symptoms [9]. In addition, participation in support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous offers individuals a supportive community environment and fosters a sense of accountability throughout their recovery journey.

The Importance of Seeking Help

Individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) are strongly encouraged to seek assistance promptly, as SUD is a progressive condition that may deteriorate if not addressed early. Seeking help initiates the path toward recovery and empowers individuals to take charge of their lives once more. If you, or someone you care for, is grappling with SUD, it is essential to promptly connect with a healthcare provider or treatment facility for assistance. Substance use disorder should not be taken lightly, as it demands empathy, understanding, and effective interventions for proper management. By delving into the root causes of SUD and delivering holistic support, individuals can triumph over their dependency and resume leading purposeful and satisfying lives [10].

Personality Traits in SUD Individuals

Personality traits are influential factors in individuals affected by substance use disorder (SUD), and comprehending these traits can aid in both preventing and treating SUD. The study found that certain personality traits, such as impulsivity and sensation-seeking, are more commonly observed in individuals with SUD [11]. These results underscore the significance of considering fundamental personality traits when designing interventions for SUD. Understanding these traits can aid in crafting targeted interventions and treatment strategies tailored to the needs of individuals with SUD [12].

Unveiling The Connection Between Personality Characteristics and Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Understanding the interplay between personality characteristics and substance use disorder (SUD) is paramount in developing effective prevention and treatment strategies for individuals grappling with substance abuse.

Impulsivity

Impulsivity, defined as a tendency to act on sudden urges without thoughtful consideration of potential consequences, is frequently observed as a prominent personality trait in individuals diagnosed with substance use disorder (SUD) [3]. This inclination towards impulsive behaviour often results in engaging in risky behaviours and substance misuse.

Sensation-Seeking Behaviour

Individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) frequently exhibit a propensity for pursuing intense and novel experiences to activate their brains. This inclination towards seeking sensations can motivate them to partake in substance use as a means to attain a feeling of thrill or euphoria [11].

History of Trauma

Many individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) have a history of trauma, which includes experiences like substance abuse, neglect, or other adverse events [12]. This traumatic past can play a significant role in the development of addictive behaviours, often serving as a coping mechanism for unaddressed emotional distress.

Self-Medication

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a condition where individuals use substances to self-medicate symptoms of underlying mental health issues like anxiety, depression, or PTSD [12]. This ineffective coping strategy can result in a pattern of reliance on substances and the development of addiction [13].

Tailoring Treatment Approach

Recognizing and addressing abstract personality traits in individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) is essential for creating tailored treatment plans. Healthcare professionals should employ personalized interventions that focus on specific personality traits and underlying psychological concerns for optimal treatment outcomes. Healthcare professionals can assist people with substance use disorder (SUD) by incorporating proven therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, and trauma-focused interventions [2, 3, 8, 12]. These therapies aim to aid individuals in cultivating more effective coping mechanisms, thereby enhancing their general welfare.

It is crucial to recognize that abstract personality traits significantly influence the development and progression of SUD. By identifying and addressing these traits in individuals with SUD, healthcare providers can enhance the efficacy of treatment interventions and promote sustained recovery [2, 7, 8]. Understanding the intricate relationship between personality traits and addiction is fundamental for delivering inclusive and empathetic care to those battling with SUD.

Personality Traits Influence on Addiction Recovery

Personality traits play a significant role in addiction recovery as they can impact an individual's actions, drive, and reaction to therapies. Customizing interventions to target particular personality traits has proven to enhance results for those striving to overcome substance use disorder [3, 4].

CASE STUDY

Case Study Presentation

This case study is centered around examining a single individual with substance use disorder (SUD) who underwent an evaluation to assess a range of personality traits. The evaluation employed well-

established instruments like the Big Five personality traits model, encompassing openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism [13]. These dimensions are crucial for comprehending the unique qualities that differentiate individuals. The study carefully documented and structured its findings on personality traits and characteristics.

The Patient's History

In a comprehensive examination, delved into a detailed case study showcasing the experiences of a 35-year-old male of Indian descent.

Over a seven-year period, he engaged in regular use of marijuana and occasional consumption of alcohol with friends, prompting him to seek treatment for his substance abuse issues. He has previously sought treatment at a rehabilitation center for a duration of 7 months. Following his release, a relapse occurred, prompting his mother to enroll him in another rehabilitation center. His addiction appears to have a genetic component in his case. He has transitioned between two different rehabilitation centers in his journey towards recovery.

Family Members

Family members include a mother, a wife who works as a housewife, and a 10-year-old son. The individual is facing family issues primarily because of his addiction. There are frequent conflicts with his mother, while his relationship with his wife remains stable. Following the loss of his editing shop, his mother has become the primary breadwinner, leading to tensions in their household dynamic. In response to his struggles, his mother took the step of sending him to a rehabilitation centre for treatment. His evaluation revealed a multifaceted situation characterized by the manifestation of potential co-occurring personality traits. The crux of the matter pertained to his struggles with addiction to marijuana and alcohol.

The Patient's Response

The patient reported that he initiated marijuana use due to peer influence, as his friends consumed it regularly. He mentioned a familial predisposition to addiction, attributing it to genetic factors. Additionally, he occasionally drank alcohol with family members. Symptoms associated with his alcohol and marijuana use include bloodshot and/or glassy eyes, delayed reaction time, impaired motor skills, poor coordination, and fatigue.

FINDINGS – MANAGEMENT AND OUTCOME

Personality Trait - Observations and Characteristics

Analysis 1

Pathological lying

The individual displayed a consistent tendency to be untruthful regarding various aspects of his life, including his family, friends, personal experiences, and relationships. This habitual pattern of dishonesty hindered the development of a reliable and trusting relationship, posing challenges in confirming the truthfulness and accuracy of the information provided. Pathological lying is characterized by a persistent pattern of dishonesty in various aspects of the individual's life, such as relationships with family and friends. Lying is a behavior that serves a purpose in the development of the self during normal growth and maturation [14]. This behavior often hinders the establishment of trust and validation of the information provided. A report published in the National Geographic revealed that a significant majority of individuals within the demographic bracket of 18 to 44 years old engage in untruthful behavior daily. Specifically, 59% of respondents admitted to fabricating the truth between one to five times per day, while an additional 15% confessed to telling more than five lies within the same timeframe [14].

Analysis 2

Narcissistic tendencies

The patient displayed signs of narcissism, including an inflated sense of self-importance, lack of empathy, need for admiration. These traits potentially contributed to the patient's resistance towards

taking responsibility for their addiction. Grandiose narcissism, a personality trait characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance and a constant need for admiration, has been found to be linked with increased substance use, particularly alcohol consumption, among nonclinical populations [15]. Furthermore, research indicates that individuals with substance use disorders tend to exhibit higher levels of grandiose narcissism compared to those without such disorders.

Analysis 3

Egotism

The patient exhibited a self-centered focus, as seen through their frequent discussions about themselves while downplaying the needs of others. This tendency towards egocentric behavior may have impeded their motivation to prioritize efforts towards recovery. Research has shown that individuals with egotistic personalities may be more prone to developing substance use disorder (SUD). This is because egotism can fuel a need for instant gratification and a desire to escape reality [16].

Analysis 4

Resistance to change

During the counseling sessions, the individual consistently demonstrated a reluctance to embrace change. This was evident through his tendency to downplay the seriousness of his issues, shift responsibility to external factors, and display a lack of active participation in therapy tasks [9]. Resistance to change is a prevalent challenge in the treatment of addiction and necessitates targeted therapeutic interventions to address effectively.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) Assessment

Psychologist Daniel Goleman is credited with developing one of the most widely recognized models of Emotional Intelligence (EI). His model categorizes EI into five key components, as outlined in a comprehensive research review conducted in 2018.

Self-awareness

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is vital for an individual's self-awareness and understanding of their own emotions. High EI individuals possess the ability to not only recognize and label their feelings but also comprehend the impact and evolution of these emotions. Self-Awareness is the understanding and recognition of all aspects of oneself, such as strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motives, and feelings [17]. This self-awareness enables them to navigate their emotional responses effectively and adapt to changing circumstances.

Self-management

Once an individual has attained the first component of emotional awareness, they can progress to the phase of self-management. A person who possesses a strong understanding of their emotions is more equipped to effectively control their emotions and actions that arise from them. Self-management often entails recognizing challenging emotions and taking the time to pause or avoid acting impulsively in response to them. The more knowledge you gain in handling your emotions, the better equipped you will be to express them in a constructive manner when the situation calls for it [17].

Motivation

Motivation, defined as the internal process that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-oriented behaviors, plays a vital role in shaping an individual's path towards accomplishment [17]. With motivation as the driving force, an individual is propelled towards their aspirations with unwavering determination, especially when faced with adversities. In times of trials, motivated individuals stand firm in their commitment to their objectives, refusing to falter in the face of challenges. Conversely, individuals lacking in motivation may find themselves easily disheartened by obstacles, leading to a premature surrender [18]. Therefore, it is evident that high levels of motivation serve as a beacon of resilience, illuminating the path towards personal success. This unwavering dedication to the pursuit of one's goals serves as a reminder of the intrinsic value and fulfillment awaiting those who persist, even amidst adversity.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. It involves being attuned to the emotions of those around us and accurately perceiving the different emotions they may be experiencing. Individuals with high emotional intelligence can effectively discern between genuine and fake emotions displayed by others. This capacity may be demonstrated through observations of facial expressions, variations in vocal tone, or shifts in body language exhibited by individuals in different situations. With empathy, we understand others' feelings and thoughts from their perspective and play an active role in their concerns [19].

Social skills

Social skills in emotional intelligence involve effectively understanding and managing other people's emotions to navigate interactions successfully. This includes being empathetic towards others, collaborating well in teams, and being skilled at recognizing and negotiating emotions. These skills are essential for building strong relationships and influencing others positively. It's about getting the best out of others, inspiring and influencing them, building bonds, and helping them change, grow, develop, and resolve conflict [20].

Five Factor Model (FFM) – Personality Test

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) is extensively studied and confirmed as a framework for comprehending personality, providing a systematic method to assess and characterize an individual's personality using five essential dimensions. [13].

Systematic research on the five-factor model (FFM)

Systematic research conducted on the Five Factor Model (FFM) indicates that each of the five factors – Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism – demonstrate a robust genetic foundation [13]. Studies by Terracciano in 2006 have further confirmed that these factors persist as enduring traits over extended periods, highlighting the influence of our genetic composition in defining our personalities and guiding our behavior within society [6, 10]. It is essential to recognize that while genetics play a substantial role in shaping our personalities, there is also evidence to suggest that personality traits undergo subtle maturation as individuals progress through various stages of life.

Openness to experience

This factor, known as openness to experience, indicates an individual's readiness to engage in novel activities, exhibit imaginative thinking, and recognize and value aesthetics and creativity.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is a personality trait marked by organization, responsibility, and goal-directed behavior. Individuals demonstrating high conscientiousness typically emphasize structure and effectiveness in their actions and decisions, renowned for their diligent work ethic and dedication to meeting obligations.

Extraversion

Extraversion is a personality trait characterized by individuals who are outgoing, sociable, and derive enjoyment from social interactions.

Agreeableness

Agreeableness describes how inclined an individual is to be considerate, empathetic, and collaborative in their interactions with others. It indicates a willingness to consider and accommodate the needs and feelings of those around them.

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is a personality trait that relates to an individual's emotional stability and their inclination towards experiencing negative emotions like anxiety and depression.

Changes in personality traits

According to a study conducted by McCrae in 2003, the research findings indicate a noticeable pattern in the changes of personality traits as individuals age. Specifically, there is a common trend towards a decrease in Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness, along with an increase in Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. These results suggest that although genetics contribute significantly to shaping our inherent personality characteristics, external influences such as environmental factors and life events also play a crucial role in the evolution of these traits throughout our lifespan.

Assessment of personality traits

Personality traits, according to McCrae (2003), can be evaluated through self-reports or assessments from individuals familiar with the person being evaluated. Self-awareness is pivotal for comprehending our personalities, while external viewpoints offer insightful perspectives on how we are viewed by others. By incorporating feedback from various sources, we can enhance our insight into our traits and actions.

Direct influence on behaviour

Traits directly influence behavior according to Matthews (2009). Personality traits play a significant role in shaping how individuals engage with and react to different circumstances, thus impacting their choices and actions. By comprehending our own traits, we can enhance our ability to effectively handle obstacles and cultivate more constructive relationships with others.

DISCUSSION

Substance use, encompassing various forms of drug and alcohol consumption, stands as a significant socioeconomic challenge on a global scale [8, 9]. Consequently, it is imperative to focus on understanding the root causes and influencers that contribute to the prevalence of this issue.

The aim of the current case study was to build an association between substance use disorder and personality traits. Findings from the present study indicate that the personality dimension of neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness have a significant relationship with substance use disorder.

Findings in this case study under emotional intelligence (EI) assessment indicates that the patient is cognizant of his emotional awareness deficiencies, including a lack of empathy, social skills, self-motivation, and challenges in emotional management [18, 19, 20]. A low emotional intelligence score can result in impulsivity, ineffective communication, limited career growth, and strained interpersonal relationships [3]. To enhance his emotional intelligence, the patient must seek guidance, cultivate empathy, practice emotion regulation, and recognize the significance of emotional management. It is crucial to understand that progress and growth in emotional intelligence require dedicated time and consistent effort [19, 20].

Findings in this case study under five factor model (FFM) – personality test specifies that the patient demonstrated high levels of openness to experience and neuroticism, while showing low levels of agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness. Findings from the present study indicate that the personality dimension of neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness have a significant relationship with SUD. These findings suggest that certain personality traits may predispose individuals to developing SUD or influence the course of the disorder [13]. Research in the field of psychology has found that individuals who struggle with SUD commonly display distinct patterns of personality traits, as outlined in the five-factor model.

Recommendation and Implications for Treatment

Understanding the relationship between an individual's personality traits and substance use disorder (SUD) is crucial for effective treatment and interventions. By analyzing the distinct personality profile

of each person, healthcare providers can personalize therapeutic strategies to meet their specific requirements and hurdles [5, 7]. This tailored approach enhances the chances of successful outcomes and long-term recovery. In light of the observed characteristics, the following factors must be taken into account for any future interventions:

Mindfulness-based interventions

People who exhibit high levels of neuroticism, defined by a propensity to feel negative emotions like anxiety, stress, and emotional volatility, may benefit from mindfulness techniques in managing these difficulties. [21]. Mindfulness practices can assist in promoting emotional regulation, reducing stress levels, and enhancing overall well-being for individuals with high neuroticism traits.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy

CBT serves as a valuable tool in identifying and challenging distorted thought patterns and negative self-beliefs that might be fuelling the Patient's addiction and reluctance to change. By targeting these cognitive distortions, therapists can assist the Patient in cultivating healthier and more adaptive ways of thinking, ultimately facilitating progress in their recovery journey [2]. Individuals with low conscientiousness, characterized by a tendency to be disorganized, impulsive, and lack goal-directed behaviors, may experience significant improvements through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) [8]. This form of therapy focuses on enhancing impulse control, refining decision-making skills, and cultivating effective goal-setting behaviors. By participating in CBT, such individuals can learn strategies to better manage their impulses, make more informed decisions, and set specific, achievable goals to enhance their overall well-being and success [21].

Social support

Leveraging the extraverted tendencies of individuals with substance use disorder (SUD), interventions that emphasize creating social connections and peer support networks have shown to be especially impactful [22].

Establishing trust

Establishing a solid foundation of trust between the therapist and the Patient is essential for effectively addressing issues related to pathological lying and resistance to treatment [23]. Therapists may utilize various techniques to foster transparency and validate the Patient's experiences, ultimately building a relationship built on trust and understanding.

Motivational interviewing

Motivational interviewing techniques can be utilized to delve into the Patient's feelings of ambivalence towards change and to uncover their personal motivations for seeking recovery [2, 18]. By employing this approach, therapists can help Patients explore their inner desires for positive change and enhance their commitment to the recovery process [2, 18].

Addressing underlying personality traits

Although a formal diagnosis may not be feasible in the current context, it is crucial to examine potential co-occurring personality traits such as narcissism to create a comprehensive treatment plan. Understanding the Patient's underlying personality dynamics can provide valuable insights into their behavior and guide the development of a holistic approach to treatment [24].

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the Five Factor Model (FFM) of Personality is a comprehensive framework that offers valuable insights into the distinct characteristics and behaviors of individuals grappling with substance use disorder (SUD). By integrating an understanding of these personality traits into the development of treatment plans and intervention strategies, healthcare professionals can enhance the support provided to individuals as they navigate their path to recovery. By categorizing personality traits into five overarching dimensions, the FFM offers a systematic approach to evaluating, defining, and exploring

personality. Whether you are a professional psychologist, academic researcher, or just intrigued by human behavior, FFM presents significant perspectives on the distinctive characteristics that shape each individual.

It is crucial to recognize and reinforce any positive developments the patient has achieved, no matter how small they may seem. Even small steps forward signal progress in the right direction, and acknowledging these accomplishments can inspire the patient to persist in their efforts. Personal growth is an ongoing journey, not a final destination. It requires time, consistent dedication, and occasional adjustments along the way.

Various factors contribute to the pace of progress, including the timing of assessments, intervention strategies, and external influences. Sometimes, the time between evaluations may be too brief for significant change to occur. It may also be necessary to refine intervention techniques to better meet the patient's needs or address potential obstacles to progress. External circumstances, such as life events, can also impact the patient's development. Exploring any external stressors may be essential in understanding the patient's current situation.

Continued research in this area of addiction will be crucial for refining our understanding and enhancing outcomes for individuals grappling with addiction issues. Such ongoing research efforts are pivotal for advancing knowledge and fostering better solutions in the field of addiction treatment.

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