
Relationship Between Sensation Seeking And Irritability Among College Students

Jotsna Shaji¹, Akhil.S.², Jini Elizabeth Iype³, Fathima Shajahan⁴,
Prinsha Rajan⁵

¹UG- Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Chenganasseri, Kottayam, Kerala

²UG- Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Chenganasseri, Kottayam, Kerala

³UG- Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Chenganasseri, Kottayam, Kerala

⁴UG- Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Chenganasseri, Kottayam, Kerala

⁵Assistant Professor, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Chenganasseri, Kottayam, Kerala

Abstract

Over the past few years, surveys assert that young adults are prone to road accidents at an increased rate. There are numerous reasons that could play a role in this significant increase in road accidents among young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. The present study examines the relationship between sensation seeking and irritability among college students. Sensation seeking is the tendency to search out and engage in thrilling activities as a method of increasing stimulation and arousal. Irritability is a state of excessive, easily provoked anger, annoyance, or impatience. The study was conducted on the population of college students in Kerala. The sample size consists of 40 undergraduate students in India. The process of data collection was done by means of questionnaires and personal information that was gathered via Google Forms. The two questionnaires used for this process are the Sensation Seeking Scale (ZKA-PQ) and the Brief Irritability Test (Holtzman et al., 2015). The study came to the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, boredom susceptibility, and irritability.

Keywords– Sensation Seeking, Irritability, Undergraduate Students.

1. Introduction

Sensation seeking is a personality trait defined as the looking for diverse, new, complex, and extreme levels of sensations and the motivation to take physical, social, authorised, and economic risks. Both adults and adolescents engage in sensation-seeking behaviors, such as driving recklessly or using illegal or legal drugs recreationally. Adolescents like to go for unique, complicated, and extreme sensations and like experience for its own sake and engage in risk-taking behaviour in the pursuit of such experiences. Adolescents are more engaged in risky activities like reckless driving etc.

Marvin Zuckerman proposed the idea of the sensation-seeking personality trait at the start of the 1960s, and since then, this author and other authors have developed a number of measures. Unsocialized and socialized sensation seeking were the two types of sensation seeking identified by Zuckerman. The three subcategories of unsocialized sensation seeking are disinhibition, experience seeking, and boredom susceptibility. Unsocialized sensation seeking is impulsive. Socialised sensation seeking is non-impulsive and it has one subcategory which was described as the thrill and adventure seeking. The concept of sensation seeking starts with

Zuckerman's idea that every individual has a most promising level of motivation. Stimulation is considered any action or situation that provokes a response. Arousal is a state of heightened physical activity that is the result of stimulus.

Theory of optimal level of stimulation describes the individual as having a range of strength of motivation and sensation. Theory of optimal level of arousal was grounded on the notion that the reticular activating system in the body keeps the degree of stimulation in humans constant. Any level exceeding this optimal level of arousal produces a requirement to decline stimulation which leads to sensation avoidance. Any level of arousal below this optimum threshold causes a need to increase stimulation, which encourages sensation seeking.

The perception of risk-taking behavior, such as in the areas of health, social, economics, and law, is tied to sensation seeking, which often satisfies an adolescent's high sensational need for intense and unique experiences. Teenagers may be more prone to take risks because of a combination of comparatively larger excitement-seeking propensities and relatively immature self-control abilities typical in this age of development. However, dissenting views and recent research term sensation-seeking is a personality trait found to be correlated with positive and negative risk-taking behaviour. However, different researches in the previous literature showed that peer interactions grow increasingly significant during adolescence. Due to their socialization and the need to fit in with their peers, adolescents are more likely to be influenced and engaged in risk-taking behavior. Compared to their parents and the adult social influence group, young adolescents were more strongly impacted by the teenager social influence group. Adolescents have a great likelihood to be influenced and involved in different types of socially proscribed Zuckerman's Sensation Seeking Scales (SSS) evolved from Form II to Form VI Zuckerman-Kuhlman-Aluja Personality Questionnaire (ZKA-PQ) provides 20 facets organised in five factors and 200-items. The ZKA-PQ (Aluja, Kuhlman, & Zuckerman, 2010b) includes the five basic factors of Zuckerman's personality model (Aggressiveness, Neuroticism, Activity, Extraversion and Sensation Seeking). Each factor has four facets and the Sensation Seeking factor was composed of the following: SS1 (Thrill and Adventure Seeking), SS2 (Experience Seeking), SS3 (Disinhibition) and SS4 (Boredom Susceptibility/Impulsivity).

Irritability is a mood characterised by a proneness to experience negative affective states, such as anger, annoyance, and frustration upon little provocation, and may be outwardly expressed in the form of aggressive behaviour (Born & Steiner, 1999; Craig, Hietanen, Markova, & Berrios, 2008; Snaith & Taylor, 1985; Stringaris, 2011). Elevated levels of irritability have been reported across a wide array of medical and psychiatric conditions, ranging from chronic pain and nicotine withdrawal, to mood, anxiety, and neuropsychiatric disorders (Mangelli et al., 2006; Perlis et al., 2009; Sofaer & Walker, 1994; Youn et al., 2011). Scientific interest in the construct of irritability has increased dramatically over the past several years, due in part to a number of recent findings in the literature. For example, at least 40% to 50% of depressed adults suffer from irritability and irritability has been linked with a greater lifetime persistence of depression, risk of suicide, and reduced quality of life (Fava et al., 2010; Perlis et al., 2009; Pickles et al., 2010).r According to a recent 20-year prospective study, adolescent irritability can predict the development of mood and anxiety disorders during adulthood, as well as lower income and worse educational achievement (Stringaris, Cohen, Pine, & Leibenluft, 2009).

The Brief Irritability Test, a five-item scale with a robust internal structure, was created using item response theory. All five items showed just a slight conceptual overlap with related concepts (such as depression and rage), and there was very little gender bias in test results. The Brief Irritability Test has the potential to contribute to the development of the nascent discipline of irritability research.

In general, multi-item irritability scales have demonstrated strong reliability and assess a range of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours associated with irritability. Despite these strengths, there are a number of reasons to be cautious in adopting these measures. A primary concern is that current measures tap into constructs other than irritability, such as overt aggression.

2. Objectives of the study

1. To find that there is a significant relationship between Sensation seeking and irritability among college students.
2. To find that there is a significant relationship between thrill and adventure seeking and irritability among college students.
3. To find that there is a significant relationship between experience seeking and irritability among college students.
4. To find that there is a significant relationship between disinhibition and irritability among college students.
5. To find that there is a significant relationship between boredom susceptibility and irritability among college students.

3. Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between Sensation seeking and irritability among college students.
2. There is a significant relationship between thrill and adventure seeking and irritability among college students.
3. There is a significant relationship between experience seeking and irritability among college students.
4. There is a significant relationship between disinhibition and irritability among college students.
5. There is a significant relationship between boredom susceptibility and irritability among college students.

4. Review of literature

In recent years, a number of studies were conducted on relation to sensation seeking and traffic accidents. Various studies indicated the presence of factors such as aggression, sensation seeking and irritability which acts as a causal factor for traffic accidents among youngsters.

Broughton, Fuller, Stradling, Gormley, Kinnear, O'Dolan and Hannigan (2009) in their A comparative study between car drivers and powered two-wheeled riders found a small sub group of older motorcyclists who were discovered to be speeders and to be addicted to feeling. (Horswill and Helman, 2003). This study however did not study the difference in sensation-seeking among these two different types of vehicle drivers.

Whereas, Harris, Houston (2014). In one of the recent studies, the prevalence of pro-social aggressive driving among undergraduate students was assessed. According to the findings, sensation-seeking was strongly linked to aggressive driving, but pro-social driving was linked to fewer traffic offences and accidents. Araújo, Malloy – Diniz and Rocha (2009) published a biographical review of archived online database from 1966-2006, and researchers discovered link between impulsiveness and risky driving behaviour, viz, "run for thrill", and "traffic violations", though review on impulsiveness and accident proneness was not conclusive.

When it comes to irritability, there has been an extensive concentration in studying irritability among children and adolescents. This is understandable given the developmental significance of irritability in these populations; however, high-risk behaviours (Copeland et al., 2013; Copeland et al., 2014) that are associated or comorbid with irritability tend to occur later during adulthood (Brotman, Kircanski, and Leibenluft, 2017a) or in the period between adolescence and adulthood, called young adulthood.

Interestingly In a longitudinal study, Copeland et al. (2014) found that children with DMDD diagnosis tend to show more severe symptoms, with irritation as the main symptom. impairments when they become young adults in various domains, such risky/illegal behaviours.

These limitations may significantly influence affected individuals' daily lives and quality of life, necessitating more focus on irritable screening and the development of timely interventions.

Overall, only a small number of these research—such as those that included solely female participants (Deveney, 2019; Deveney et al., 2020) or studies that included groups other than young adults (Holtzman et al., 2015)—have evaluated irritability in a representative sample of young adults. In addition, the existing irritability models have not yet been fully tested in young adults (Deveney et al., 2020). These are significant gaps that need to be addressed in future studies in this population.

5. Research methodology

This particular study was carried out on a sample of 40 undergraduate students in India. Of the collected sample, 24 are males and 16 are females. The data was collected from these participants via questionnaires that were distributed through digital platforms.

Sensation seeking trait was assessed using Sensation seeking scale taken from Zuckerman-Kuhlman-Aluja Personality Questionnaire. It is a 200 item instrument out of which 40 items assessed sensation seeking. Sensation seeking scale consists of 4 subscales- Thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), Experience seeking (ES), Disinhibition (Dis), Boredom susceptibility or impulsivity (BS). The four subscales are administered together in one questionnaire but are scored separately.

Brief irritability test (Holtzman et al., 2015) a five item scale was used to assess irritability. In addition to this the participants personal data were collected through an online Google Form that was circulated.

The dependent variable in the study is irritability and the independent variable is sensation seeking. If sensation seeking traits interfere with an individual's irritability they may get annoyed and frustrated easily in the absence of intense stimulating events.

The data collected from this study was statistically analysed using the SPSS version 25. The statistical procedures used in this study were the Bivariate correlation and Spearman's rho.

6. Result and discussion

Sensation seeking is defined as the tendency to search out and engage in thrilling activities as a method of increasing stimulation and arousal. Sensation seeking and irritability have been associated with a plethora of important behaviours and outcomes in daily life. For instance, sensation seeking has been found to be an important correlate of a range of high-risk behaviours, such as drinking, smoking, drug use, and risky sexual behaviours (Zuckerman, 2008). As compared to people low on sensation seeking, people high on sensation seeking seem to be characterised by a higher level of Openness to Experience and Extraversion and a somewhat lower level of Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. Sensation seeking is related to perception of risk-taking behaviour such as health, social, economic, and legal which typically gratifies the high sensation in adolescent's desire for new and extreme experiences.

Sensation seeking has been found to be related to a wide range of overt social behaviours, some of which are likely caused by the tendency for sensation seekers to perceive less risk in a given situation than do low sensation seekers. Sensation seeking also aligns closely with novelty seeking in Cloninger's personality scheme. In fact, Zuckerman and Cloninger (1996) found that the correlation between sensation seeking and novelty seeking is nearly perfect after correcting for attenuation due to unreliability in both measures, which provides evidence that the scales measure the same construct. The Sensation Seeking Scale has been revised a number of times. A comparison of males and girls as well as American and English pupils was incorporated in the fifth version, which was created in partnership with Hans and Sybil Eysenck (see Zuckerman, 1979, 1994). Four subscales of the sensation seeking characteristic have been established by Zuckerman and his colleagues using factor analysis: Thrill and Adventure Seeking, Experience Seeking, Disinhibition, and Boredom Susceptibility. In the course of his investigation, Zuckerman discovered a strong connection between impulsivity and experience seeking.

Broadly defined, subjective experience of irritability refers to an excessive sensitivity to sensory stimuli, with a lowered threshold for responding to the stimuli with anger or aggressive behaviour. In contrast to the related emotion anger, feelings of irritability can occur with seemingly no clearly identified trigger or antecedent and are instead often associated with physiological /biological deficiencies, such as experience of stress, inadequate sleep, physical pain, or low blood sugar. Feeling angry is usually defined as an emotional state that involves displeasure of varied intensity, from mild annoyance to intense fury. Anger is a construct that has been studied more extensively than irritability. Examining these relationships throughout adolescence is important because it is a critical developmental stage. Irritability during adolescence is common and associated with negative life outcomes, such as academic difficulty and poverty (Brotman et al., 2017a). For instance, 287 college students with high irritability showed more severe depression symptoms than individuals with mild irritability, according to Pedrelli et al. (2013).

7. Correlation

Table 1: The Spearman’s rho and P value of sensation seeking and irritability.

Main scale		SSS	BITe
SSS	Spearman’s rho Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.239
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.142
	N	39	39
BITe	Spearman’s rho Correlation coefficient	-0.239	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.142	
	N	39	39

Table 2: The Spearman's rho and P value of irritability and thrill and adventure seeking.

Scale		BITe	TAS
BITe	Spearman’s rho Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.119
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.470
	N	39	39
TAS	Spearman’s rho Correlation coefficient	-0.119	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.470	
	N	39	39

Table 3: The Spearman's rho and P value of irritability experience seeking.

Scale		BITe	ES
BITe	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.109
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.508
	N	39	39
ES	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	-0.109	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.508	
	N	39	39

Table 4: The Spearman's rho and P value of irritability and disinhibition.

Scale		BITe	Dis
BITe	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.105
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.525
	N	39	39
Dis	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	-0.105	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.525	
	N	39	39

Table 5: The Spearman's rho and P value of irritability and boredom susceptibility or impulsivity.

Scale		BITe	BS
BITe	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	1.000	-0.138
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.402
	N	39	39
BS	Spearman's rho	-0.138	1.000

	Correlation coefficient		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.402	
	N	39	39

The result of the study was obtained through correlation of statistical analysis, which indicated that there is no significant relationship between the two variables of sample population. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

8. Conclusion

The hypotheses of the study focused on the significant relationship of sensation seeking , thrill and adventure seeking,experience seeking, boredom susceptibility or impulsivity with irritability among college students. The sample of the study was 40 students pursuing undergraduate degrees. The two tests used to conduct the study were the Sensation seeking scale(ZKA-PQ) which consists of 40 questions with 4 subscales - Thrill and Adventure Seeking (TAS) ,Experience seeking (ES) ,Disinhibition(Dis),Boredom susceptibility or impulsivity(BS). The test used to measure irritability was the Brief Irritability Test (Holtzman et al., 2015)containing 5 questions.The analysis for the study was done using Bivariate correlation and Spearman's rho method. From the scores obtained it was observed that there is no significant correlation between sensation seeking and irritability.

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