

# Sensation seeking and risky behaviors

Psychology, Personality



## **Introduction**

Sensation seeking is defined as a tendency to pursue sensory pleasure and excitement. This personality trait is defined by a degree to which a person seeks novel and highly stimulating activities. Most of the time individuals who have high sensation seeking are usually attracted to the unknown people and they usually seek new, varied and unpredictable events. These kinds of behaviours are usually unpredictable. However, attention seekers tend to be involved in sports, music, travel, diverse foods, challenging and existing viewpoints, and new sexual partners amongst others. Due to their high sensation these kind of individuals tend to engage in impulsive behaviours which are regarded as too risky. Such risky behaviours would be something like sky diving, unusual dressing, gambling, or vandalism. Such people can easily get bored and hence they usually avoid predictable and repetitive situations.

## **Sensation Seeking Theory**

The sensation seeking theory was developed by Zuckerman in 1964. Zuckerman developed a scale which measures the individuals overall susceptibility to excitement and boredom using the sensory deprivation experiments. The self-report measurement scale comprised of four subscales like thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition and boredom susceptibility. This impressive amount of research has elicited and contributes widely to modern behavioural psychology. In addition, it also influences behavioural genetics and neuroscience psychology. High sensation seekers seem to have strong orientation response to new stimuli

and because of this they have a physiological response is usually sensation seeking rather than avoidance. According to Zuckerman such people have decreased heart rate and very intensive brain activity in their visual cortex. Researchers reveal that sensation seeking is related to the following important brain neurotransmitters like the monoamine, oxidase, norepinephrine, and dopamine. It must also be noted that these specific areas have a wide range of genetic influence. Further studies on identical and fraternal twins concludes that sensation seeking as a personality trait is genetically influence with a 60% degree of heritability. Moreover, men have also been found to be scoring highly on sensation seeking compared to women. The main reason for this is because sensation seeking is directly correlated with hormone testosterone which is only found in males. Researchers also argue that sensation seeking mainly appears at the optimum point during the adolescent stage then slowly depreciates with age. A wide range of overt social behaviours are related to the sensation seeking which are usually perceived as risky and dangerous. As noted earlier sensation seekers engage in risky sports like scuba diving. In terms of occupation sensation seekers tend to go for jobs like fire fighting. As for their love of music such high intensity music like rock music becomes their thing. In addition, the type and colour of their clothing are usually humorous and warm. Recent research has proved that sensation seeking can be predictive of certain behaviours like alcohol abuse, reckless driving, sexual activity, adolescent delinquency, hostility, aggression, personality disorders, criminal behaviour, and anger amongst others. Psychologists also argue that

sensation seeking may not be fully used to predict behaviour since the environment also plays a huge role in influencing certain behaviours.

## **Sensation Seeking Scale Type of assessment**

Most of the research reveal that adolescent stage is usually the peak of attention seeking. For this reason the target population will be the adolescent aged between 16-19 years which will include 14 boys and 11 girls. This will include both males and females. The population will be chosen randomly in a local town. The aim will be to find out the optimum age of high sensation seeking. It will also be important to find out if sensation seeking is much more inclined in males than in females. The target group becomes also a good point of predicting behaviour such as drug addiction, adolescent delinquency, anger, hostility, criminal behaviours amongst others.

## **Method**

For this reason the target population will be the adolescent aged between 16-19 years which will include 14 boys and 11 girls. The composition of the target population will be mixed races. The gender will include both males and females who will be chosen randomly. It must be noted that this group of people are literate enough and are able to read coherently and understand the questions on the survey questionnaire.

## **Procedure**

Recruitment was done randomly in a school set up which targeted a population of teenagers of 16-19 years. A total of 25 participants were included in the survey. The research was a pen and pencil questionnaire. The anchors of my scale was aimed at the teenagers since the 16-19 years is the

peak of adolescent stage which is highly associated with sensation seeking. The inclusiveness of both males was also to find out whether sensation seeking is highly associated with males compared to the females. ResultsThe following results is an indication of the males and females included in the research process. The table below indicates that 14 males took part in the survey while 11 females with the age bracket of 16-19 years also participated.

The results also indicate that all participants were within the selected age bracket.

### **Item Analysis**

The statistical tool that was used for analysis was the SPSS analytical software. The tool was used to analyse the mean and standard deviation. In addition, the tool was used to identify the skewedness of the research process and validity and reliability of the variable used.

A correlation done on one of the items used in the questionnaire reveals that the item was not biased and expressed over 99% significance. The following table is an illustration of one of those used for the survey. The correlation was done using Spearman's correlation scale. It must also be understood that gender is a dichotomous and hence the significant correlation means that it is a significant difference.

The research process was also skewed to the right. The fact that the males were more than the females is an indication that the graph would be skewed towards the males. The following is a representation of the same. In this case

the  $p < 0.01$ . It is also evident that no item was correlated more than 3 with gender. The reliability test using the Cronbach's alpha for the 20 selected items indicate that the test was not reliable. This is an indication of some form of bias. That must have been maybe due to item discrimination or bias in locating the target population. It can also be expected that if total correlation is included the figure will be inflated. It is better to have a single item correlated compared to the total correlation as already shown above. Any item that is not strongly correlated indicates that the item is highly discriminative. For example question 1 in our study is lowly correlated and hence less discriminative. However, question 15 shows a high correlation meaning that it was highly discriminating. We can also confidently say that the validity of the entire research process was  $> .20$  which is a good evidence of validity. However, with proper and reliable research conducted in the process then the figure can show a strong association.

### **Criterion Validity**

It is also important to check on the criterion validity based on how the sample population was chosen. The sample population chosen was small which already questions the validity of the research process. Secondly, there was gender bias in the whole process as the number of males were higher than that of the females. In addition, criterion validity is questionable by the fact that the research process included a very narrow range of adolescent age which was 16-19 years. Better results can be obtained if the target population age can be widened enough.

## **Face Validity and Content Validity**

Face validity is an indication that the obtained results should be applicable and true to what the respondents gave. According to the results obtained from this research method face validity is proven since the results obtained clearly indicates what the respondents included in their research process. The same applies for content validity.

## **Construct Validity and Discussion**

Internal validity pertains to how well a study has been designed, particularly the research design, operational definitions, measurement of variables, determination of what should be and should not be measured, and other important design decisions and details. The internal validity of the systematic review can be enhanced through providing relevant details on how the research was conducted and the criteria used for the selection of studies. Systematic reviews are transparent with their research process, particularly how they selected and removed journal articles for their study. External validity stands for the range to which a study's results can be generalized or become applicable for other people and conditions. Construct validity pertains to the extent to which inferences can justifiably be made from the operationalization in the study to the theoretical constructs, on which those operationalization were formed from. Construct validity is also about generalizing, as compared to external validity. While external validity is concerned of generalizing the study in other contexts, settings, or timeframes, construct validity concerns generalizing from the study's measures to the concept of the study. Convergent and discriminant validity are seen as subcategories or subtypes of construct validity. Convergent

validity means that the measures of constructs that theoretically should be connected to each other are, in fact, perceived to be related to one another. Similar constructs can be corresponded or converged. Discriminant validity refers to the condition that that the measure does not strongly correspond to measures of diverse constructs. If they are not theoretically related, then they should be observed as related to one another. For the convergent validity of this study, the construct of child abuse must be closely measured in relation to the sexual offending behaviours of adults. Without this connection, convergent validity will be low. The threats to the external validity of this study are an interaction between how the subjects were chosen and the research methodology can occur. For instance, if the articles are not randomly selected from an extensive source of empirical studies, then their particular features can affect the quality of the research. In addition, there is concern that not all empirical studies will be included because of limited time and resources, which when not added to the research, can affect the external validity of the research outcomes. As a result, the findings cannot be applied to the population or another group that more precisely stands for the populations' defining characteristics that are relevant to the study.

The studies chosen should also be careful assessed for their research methods. Pretesting can affect their reaction to the study. For instance, if the subjects experienced similar studies already, their reaction to another study might be stronger or weaker, which can affect the data they provide to the researchers. At the same time, those who did not experience pretesting are not always free from other biases to research studies. These considerations



must be observed in the empirical studies used for this study. Pretesting or the lack of it can have different effects on how respondents measure and report their experiences.

The setting conducted during the study may impact the research process too. For example, for the studies being reviewed, if subjects know that they are participants in a study, or who are conscious of being observed, they may react in a different way to the study than a subject who experienced the study, but is not overly conscious of it at all. The studies on the abused-to-abuser hypothesis may have setting effects, also called Hawthorne effect. The role of the Hawthorne effect must be discussed for these studies.

One of the threats to construct validity of this study is the insufficient preoperational clarification of constructs. Preoperational refers to the translation of the constructs into measures. The explanation should be enough to capture the construct being measured. To address this, some of the potential solutions are thinking about the concepts, using methods that clearly define the concepts, and asking experts to criticize the operationalization. Biases for the operation and the variable may also happen, which can impact construct validity. The bias can happen when it is assumed that the review design is already valid, while other factors are not yet considered. McLeroy et al. (2012) offered reporting guidelines used in peer-refereed journals, which will help improve the validity of this paper. Mono-variable bias can be prevented by considering other factors that lead to abused-to-abuser hypothesis. The e Restricted generalizability is also a concern. Generalizations should be made, where other potential

consequences are considered. At the same time, other factors must be considered when making the findings and conclusions. Existence of other mediating and control variables can be explored in the limitations part of the study.