Predictive Role of Personality Traits, Alcohol Use and Emotion Regulation on Dangerous Driving Behaviour among Commercial Drivers in Yenagoa, Nigeria

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Abstract

Dangerous driving among commercial drivers has become more pronounced in contemporary times, as there tends to be an increase in road traffic accidents in Nigeria, according to available reports. The reasons for this increase are yet to be fully explored. Some psychosocial factors may be implicated in this recent occurrence. There is a gap in knowledge, as these psychosocial factors have not been studied enough. The study investigated the predictive role of

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personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation on dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers in Yenagoa. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey. The sample size for the study was 300. Eysenck questionnaire, Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test, Emotion Regulation questionnaire and Dula Dangerous Driving Index were used to assess personality traits, alcohol use, emotion regulation and dangerous driving, respectively, in this study. Multiple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis. Results showed that personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation independently and jointly ($R^2 = .314$, $F = [3, 296] = 45.08$; $p<.01$) predicted dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers. It was concluded that personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation significantly influence hazardous driving behaviour.

Keywords: Personality traits, alcohol use, emotion regulation and dangerous driving behaviour

Introduction

Road traffic accidents (RTAs) have emerged as a significant global public health concern, accounting for an estimated 1.19 million deaths and 20 to 50 million non-fatal injuries each year (World Health Organisation, 2025). These incidents account for the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 5 to 29 years, with about 92% of all fatalities occurring in low and middle-income countries, despite these regions owning only about 60% of the world's vehicles (World Health Organisation, 2023). In Nigeria, a yearly average of 5,400 deaths and 31,154 injuries occurs annually, resulting from road crashes. This is one of the highest national road-traffic fatality rates in Africa (Federal Road Safety Corps, 2025).

The majority of road traffic crashes across the world, including Nigeria, have been consistently attributed to human error and dangerous driving behaviours, especially among commercial drivers who make up a large proportion of the transport workforce (Taiwo et al., 2024; World Health Organisation, 2025). Human factors, such as speeding, aggressive driving,

fatigue, poor emotional control, drunk driving, overestimation of drivers' ability, use of cell phone behind the wheel, driving anger and violation of traffic regulations, are among the most frequently reported causes of these crashes (Akande et al., 2023; Federal Road Safety Corps, 2025). Commercial drivers, in particular, are often under pressure to meet financial targets or strict schedules, especially due to the present national economic situation that requires people to go the extra mile before they can meet their daily needs; all these demands may lead to risk-taking and fatigue-related errors (Wang et al., 2024). Dangerous driving behaviour contributes not only to the number and severity of road traffic accidents but also represents a major cause of socio-economic losses to the government and the general public (Afolabi et al., 2023; Nwankwo et al., 2024; World Health Organisation, 2023).

Psychosocial factors may play a key role in influencing dangerous driving behaviour, especially among commercial drivers who operate under high levels of occupational stress and face challenging road conditions. These factors may affect how drivers assess risk, make decisions, and respond to pressures encountered while driving (Odufuwa et al., 2022). Investigating personality traits such as psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism provides important insight into how these traits shape emotional responses, impulse control, and adherence to social norms, which collectively can influence driving behaviours. Personality traits are dimensions of individual differences that enhance the tendency of the person to maintain consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. In a driving context, a driver's personality traits may influence the level of caution such a driver might exercise while driving on the road, and it might equally determine the level of involvement of such driver to drive safely or to indulge in dangerous driving behaviour, which might in turn increase the risk of road traffic accidents occurrence (Lucidi et al., 2019). Drivers high in psychoticism may be more likely to display anger while driving, disregard traffic rules, engage in unsafe overtaking, thrill-seeking, and exhibit low empathy toward other road users; all these traits may increase the likelihood of a road crash under stressful or competitive conditions (Dula et al., 2020). Drivers' high extraversion may pursue excitement and competitive interactions with other road users, which might increase the likelihood of engaging in traffic violations and

collisions (Akinlabi et al., 2021). Similarly, individuals high in neuroticism tend to be emotionally unstable, anxious, and easily frustrated, which may cause them to have distracted driving, aggressive responses in challenging situations, such as congestion or provocation from other drivers (Labbo et al., 2024).

Alcohol is a psychoactive substance that exerts complex effects on the central nervous system. Although it may initially produce a sense of euphoria and stimulation, its pharmacological action ultimately functions as a depressant, slowing neural activity and impairing several cognitive and psychomotor functions. Once ingested, alcohol is rapidly absorbed through the gastrointestinal tract into the bloodstream, where it is distributed throughout the body, affecting areas of the brain responsible for mood regulation, coordination, attention, and decision-making (Nwakobi, 2022). Among commercial drivers, alcohol consumption represents a critical psychosocial risk factor that can substantially influence driving performance and road safety outcomes. Alcohol use might impair cognitive and psychomotor abilities such as hand-eye coordination, judgment, concentration, and reaction time, all of which are essential for safe driving practices. These impairments may increase the likelihood of drivers engaging in over-speeding, abrupt lane changes, poor risk assessment, overestimation of their ability, and risky driving behaviours which may subsequently increase the probability of road traffic crashes and injuries (Awolaran et al., 2021). Driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI) among commercial drivers is particularly problematic given that commercial drivers are mostly required to operate long hours, and often exposed to occupational stress, and challenging road conditions. The combination of alcohol impairment and professional driving demands may amplify dangerous driving behaviours, potentially leading not only to accidents but also to severe socio-economic consequences such as property damage, loss of productivity, and public health burdens. Thus, alcohol use among this population may extend beyond an individual behavioural issue to a societal problem with far-reaching implications for road safety management and policy implementation.

Another psychosocial factor that influences how individuals react to stressors is emotion regulation. It is the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional experiences in accordance with situational demands.

Emotion regulation determines how a person maintains composure or succumbs to impulsive and aggressive tendencies when confronted with frustrating traffic situations, provocation from other road users, or time pressure. Commercial drivers who possess strong emotion regulation skills may be better equipped to remain calm and make rational driving decisions, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in dangerous driving behaviours. On the other hand, drivers with poor emotion regulation capacities may experience heightened anger, irritation, or anxiety, which may translate into dangerous driving behaviours such as speeding, tailgating, unsafe overtaking, and disregard for traffic rules (Sani, et al, 2023). Therefore, examining emotion regulation as a predictor of dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers provides valuable insight into the psychological underpinnings of traffic safety. Strengthening emotional competence among commercial drivers could contribute significantly to reducing road crashes and enhancing overall public safety.

After a critical literature search by the authors, it was obvious that there is a critical gap in knowledge: while prior research established links between psychosocial and socio-demographic factors and driving behaviour, there is limited understanding of how personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation jointly influence dangerous driving among commercial drivers, particularly in a setting like Yenagoa, Nigeria. By examining both the independent and combined effects of these psychosocial variables, a study of this nature will contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the specific mechanisms through which these factors affect drivers' emotional regulation, impulse control, and decision-making under stress. Hence, this study aims to investigate the psychosocial predictors of dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers in Yenagoa.

Statement of Hypothesis

This hypothesis was tested in the study:

(i) Personality traits, alcohol use and emotion regulation will jointly and independently predict dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers.

Method

Research design: A cross-sectional survey was conducted to obtain information on all variables under study among commercial drivers in Yenagoa metropolis as a population at a single point in time.

Participants: A total of 300 commercial car drivers in Yenagoa were recruited into the study.

Research instrument

The Eysenck personality questionnaire revised-abbreviated was used to assess personality traits. Eysenck (1991) first developed the scale, and later a brief 24-item version of 24-items was revised by Francis et al. (1992). The items were designed to assess three dimensions of personality traits (psychoticism, extraversion and neuroticism). Response format: (Yes = 1) to (No = 0). Scores within each subscale range from 0-6, and a higher score indicates high presence of that trait. Previous studies have demonstrated the reliability and validity of the Brief EPQ-RA. A study by Veysel et al. (2019) conducted a validation study of the Brief EPQ-RA in athletes. They reported good internal consistency for the questionnaire, indicating that neuroticism and psychoticism personality traits are moderately correlated with positive perception or mental-toughness of athletes; supporting the construct validity of the measure.

Alcohol use was measured with alcohol use disorder identification test (AUDIT). The World Health Organisation developed the 10-item scale to screen people with hazardous drinking behaviours, alcohol consumption and alcohol related problems. Items (1-3) assessed alcohol intake amount and frequency, items (4-6) assessed alcohol dependence and items (7-10) assessed problems related to alcohol consumption. Items 1–8 are scored from 0 to 4, while items 9 and 10 are scored 0, 2 or 4; scores range from 0 to 40. Scores 0-3 indicate "Low Risk" scores; 4-9 indicate "Risky"; scores 10-13 indicate "Harmful"; 14 and above indicate "Severity." (Noorbakhsh et al., 2018); Garcia-Perales et al. (2023) have previously validated and reported good internal consistency, as well as sensitivity and specificity in the detection of AUDITs.

Emotion regulation was assessed using the 10-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) originally developed by Gross (2002) and later refined by Gross and John (2007). The instrument evaluates the ways individuals manage and express their emotions in everyday situations. Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 measure cognitive reappraisal, while items 2, 4, 6, and 9 measure expressive suppression. Responses are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *1 (Strongly Disagree)* to *7 (Strongly Agree)*. Subscale scores are obtained by summing the relevant items, yielding possible score ranges of 6-42 for cognitive reappraisal and 4-28 for expressive suppression. Previous research has documented satisfactory psychometric properties and reliability of the ERQ in related studies (Sani et al., 2022; Okocha et al., 2023).

Dangerous driving was assessed with Dula Dangerous Driving Index (DDDI). It contains 28 items scored with five-point Likert-type scale, where 1=Never, 2=hardly ever, 3=occasionally, 4=quite often, and 5=always. The instrument consists of three subscales: AD = aggressive driving, RD = risky driving and NCE = negative cognitive/emotion while driving. Items: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 16 (7-items) assessed aggressive driving behaviour. Items: 9,10, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27 and 28 (12 items) assessed risky driving behaviour and items: 1, 2, 3, 12, 17, 18, 19, 22, and 26 (9 items) assessed negative cognitive emotion while driving.

Ethical Consideration: The study was done in accordance with the institutional and national research committee's procedures and guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee at the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa.

Procedure for Data Collection

Statistical Method: Data obtained in this study were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 25.0. Inferential statistics were applied at a 0.05 level of significance to test the study's hypothesis. Specifically, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the predictor variables personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation jointly and independently predicted dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers.

Results

Table 1: Summary of the Response from Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, AUDIT Questionnaire, Emotion Regulation Questionnaire and Dula Dangerous Driving Index

Instrument/ Subscales	Scoring	Frequency N=300	Mean	Standard Deviation
Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Subscales			13.83	3.37
Extraversion	High	162	4.00	1.48
	Low	138		
Neuroticism	High	165	3.00	1.31
	Low	135		
Psychoticism	High	161	3.00	1.34
	Low	139		
AUDIT Questionnaire			**9.99**	**9.75**
	Low Risk	121		
	Risky	42		
	Harmful	15		
	Severe	122		
Emotion Regulation Questionnaire			**41.11**	**11.35**
Subscales				
Cognitive Reappraisal	High	147	20.56	2.19
	Low	153		
Expressive Suppression	High	147	16.51	5.30
	Low	153		
Dula Dangerous Driving Index			**69.20**	**19.40**
Subscales				
Aggressive Driving	High	161	16.34	5.93
	Low	139		
Risky Driving	High	155	29.72	9.09
	Low	145		
Negative Cognitive Emotion	High	160	23.19	6.38
	Low	140		

Source: *Author's Field Survey (2024)*

The hypothesis stated that personality traits, alcohol use and emotion regulation will jointly and independently predict dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers.

Table 2a: Summary of Multiple Regression of Psychosocial Factors Predicting dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers in Yenagoa

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	R	R^2	F	P
Regression	35375.087	3	11791.696	.560	.314	45.083	.00
Residual	77420.660	296	261.556				
Total	112795.747	299					

DV: dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers in Yenagoa

Table 2b: Coefficient of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	B	β	Std error	T	P
(Constant)	42.84		10.603	4.041	.000
Personality traits	.916	.159	.281	3.259	.001
Alcohol Use	.828	.416	.103	8.035	.000
Emotion Regulation	-.321	-.187	.088	-3.639	.000

The result of the analysis indicated that personality traits, alcohol use and emotion regulation significantly jointly predicted dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers in Yenagoa with $R = .560$, ($R^2 = .314$, $F = [3, 296] = 45.08$; $p<.01$). This indicates that the three predictor variables collectively accounted for 31.4% of the variance in dangerous driving behaviour among the sampled drivers, signifying a substantial combined influence on the outcome variable. As presented in Table 2.b, each predictor variable also made a significant independent contribution to dangerous driving behaviour: personality traits ($\beta = .159$, $t = 3.259$, $p <$

.01), alcohol use ($\beta = .416, t = 8.035, p < .01$), and emotion regulation ($\beta = -.187, t = -3.639, p < .05$). The results suggest that higher levels of certain personality traits are associated with an increase in dangerous driving behaviour. Similarly, greater alcohol consumption was linked to higher incidences of dangerous driving. Furthermore, lower levels of emotion regulation corresponded with a greater propensity toward risky and aggressive driving practices. Therefore, the hypothesis proposing that personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation would jointly and independently predict dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers in Yenagoa was supported by the results.

Discussion

This study found that the majority of the drivers scored high in the extraversion subscale of the Eysenck Personality questionnaire, as shown in Table 1, and this shows that the drivers in this study are prone to risk-taking and have an aggressive nature. This will likely make them violate traffic rules, overspeed and consequently be prone to road traffic accidents. The drivers also scored high in the neuroticism subscale. It means that they had low tolerance for frustration or stress, and are easily irritable with mood swings. This may explain the behaviour of some commercial drivers who often shout at other road users, especially when there is traffic congestion. Lastly, the drivers in this study were noticed to score high in the psychoticism subscale. This suggests that the drivers had a tendency to have a lack of empathy, be hostile and impulsive. These attitudes are sometimes observed among commercial drivers on the road. Table 1 also showed that 179 drivers had risky, harmful and severe alcohol use disorder from the AUDIT questionnaire. This could have serious implications in driving, especially for commercial drivers who spend a long time on the road, carrying passengers in their vehicles. Drivers in this study scored low in the subscales of the emotion regulation instrument. This suggests a higher risk of aggression, rage, and being easily overwhelmed by negative emotion.

This study highlights the multifaceted influence of personality characteristics, alcohol consumption, and emotion regulation on the tendency of commercial drivers to engage in dangerous driving behaviours. The study revealed that the three variables had both joint and independent significant

effects on the dangerous driving behaviour of commercial drivers. This suggests that although each personality factor, psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism, plays a distinct role in determining driving patterns, their interaction produces a more distinct behavioural outcome. For instance, a driver who scores high in both psychoticism and extraversion may display a mixture of impulsive decision-making and assertive or domineering behaviour, increasing the likelihood of over-speeding and violation of traffic rules. Equally, drivers with high neuroticism but low extraversion are more prone to errors rooted in anxiety or emotional instability rather than intentional risk-taking. This finding was supported by Li et al. (2023), who reported that personality traits and emotion regulation strategies jointly predicted dangerous driving behaviour. This suggests that drivers high in sensation-seeking and low in emotion regulation tend to engage in dangerous driving behaviour. This current study aligns with the study by Shao et al. (2022), who reported a significant positive correlation between personality trait, emotion regulation and risky driving behaviour. The results showed that drivers high in sensation-seeking who also exhibited poor emotion regulation engaged more frequently in dangerous driving acts. Akande et al. (2023) revealed that alcohol consumption was positively associated with dangerous driving behaviours, suggesting that commercial drivers who drank more frequently tended to engage in more traffic violations and unsafe driving practices. This is consistent with the findings in this current study. Eze et al. (2025) reported a significant interaction between alcohol use and poor emotion regulation, both of which jointly predicted dangerous driving behaviour. Results revealed that drivers who drank alcohol to cope with emotional stress exhibited more speeding, aggressive driving, and crash involvement, which is also supported by this study.

Conclusion

This study explored the predictive role of personality traits, alcohol use, and emotion regulation on dangerous driving behaviour among commercial drivers. The findings demonstrated that these variables significantly and uniquely accounted for variations in drivers' propensity to engage in hazardous driving practices. The findings indicate that personality dispositions, patterns of alcohol consumption, and emotional regulation capacities are integral

determinants of dangerous driving behaviour. This interplay suggests that dangerous driving is not merely a consequence of situational factors but reflects deeper psychological and behavioural predispositions that shape drivers' responses behind the wheel**.**

Implication of Findings

The outcomes of this study hold both theoretical and practical value for promoting road safety and minimising crash risks among commercial drivers in Yenagoa and similar regions across Nigeria. By linking biological predispositions (such as personality traits) with psychological factors (including emotion regulation and alcohol consumption), the research contributes to a more comprehensive biopsychosocial understanding of driving behaviour. The results indicate that incorporating assessments of personality characteristics, problematic alcohol use, and emotion-regulation difficulties during driver licensing or employment screening could help identify individuals prone to risky driving. Consequently, the study advocates for the inclusion of basic psychological evaluations targeting traits like impulsivity, emotional stability, and potential alcohol dependence alongside the traditional medical and visual fitness tests in licensing, renewal, and retraining procedures. Implementing such measures could inform the design of targeted intervention programmes and awareness campaigns, particularly for drivers with elevated levels of psychoticism or neuroticism, thereby improving impulse control, emotional regulation, and work schedule management.

Recommendations

Drawing from the findings of this study, it is recommended that stakeholders within the transportation sector integrate concise and validated psychological screening tools into the processes of commercial driver licensing and vehicle renewal. These tools should assess high-risk personality traits, hazardous alcohol use through the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test and difficulties in emotion regulation. Embedding such assessments within the existing transport regulatory framework in Nigeria would help identify drivers at greater risk for unsafe driving behaviours. In addition, transport companies should implement these screening measures to determine drivers who may require further training, counselling, or support, rather than focusing solely

on driver turnover. Collaboration between the Ministry of Transport, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) is also essential to ensure the establishment of safe, shaded rest areas along major highways to help long-distance drivers reduce fatigue and stress. Lastly, policymakers should prioritise legislation that enforces structured and regulated work-shift schedules across motor parks to lessen pressure on drivers and promote safer driving practices.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, the findings were limited to commercial drivers in Yenagoa metropolis, thereby making the generalisability of the findings to other regions of Nigeria more difficult. Therefore, future researchers should include private vehicle drivers, tricycle operators, or drivers in rural areas of the state to have a better population coverage and to also improve the credibility of the current findings, which may be affected by social desirability bias or response distortion. A driver may underreport alcohol use or risky behaviours due to fear of being penalised by law. Second, cross-sectional survey sampling was employed in the data collection process, which means that only a single point in time association is captured, making it difficult to establish causality between psychosocial factors and dangerous driving behaviour. Future researchers should consider longitudinal studies to better reveal causal relationships between variables. Finally, future researchers should focus on other possible factors that could influence dangerous driving behaviour, such as fatigue, traffic conditions, socioeconomic stress, road quality and vehicle maintenance that might also account for hazardous driving behaviours among commercial drivers.

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