OFFICIAL ABSTRACT and CERTIFICATION

The Predictability of US Drug Deaths through State Level Income Inequality and Neuroticism

Priya Chainani
Paul D. Schreiber High School, Port Washington NY, US

Over the past few decades, drug deaths have consistently increased in the United States. Past research has focused on either situational or dispositional factors relating to drug use. The current research specifically examined income inequality and neuroticism in relation to drug deaths, and in relation to each other.

The possible models to explain the relationship between these variables include independent correlations and moderation. Pre-existing data from the U.S. Census Bureau was assessed and each variable was analyzed at the state-level. Income inequality and neuroticism were the predictor variables and drug deaths were the criterion variable. The neuroticism correlates for each state were acquired from a prior study.

Pearson correlations, linear regressions, and a two-tailed probability test were conducted through SPSS. The most interesting results were that the interaction between income inequality and neuroticism was only significant for African American drug deaths. Also, income inequality was negatively correlated with Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native drug deaths.

The significance of this research includes acknowledgement of a multifaceted approach to treating addiction. To help individuals afflicted by drug addiction, government subsidized programs can be implemented, more healthcare professionals can be trained to identify symptoms of a drug overdose, and preventative action such as higher education programs for the economically disadvantaged, and support for mental health wellness can be funded. Future research should analyze multiple variables in relation to each other in addition to drug deaths to more accurately predict drug use.

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