

Personality Traits of Juvenile Delinquents

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Abstract

The relationship between juvenile delinquency and personality has been observed by many researchers. The main objective of this paper is to assess the personality traits among juvenile delinquents. Sample of the study comprises of 153 juvenile delinquents staying in a juvenile home at Chennai. Normative survey method was employed for data collection. The Big Five Personality Inventory by John, Benet-Martinez and Benet-Martinez (1998) was used for data collection. 't' test is used to analyse the collected data. Results revealed that there is no significant difference found based on gender in the dimensions of personality and in overall personality. Personality traits have to be improved so as to reduce the crimes performed by adolescents and their basic needs have to be fulfilled in order to bring a change in their lives.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquents

1. INTRODUCTION

Research over the past few decades on normal child development and on development of delinquent behavior has shown that individual, social, and community conditions as well as their interactions influence behavior. There is general agreement that behavior, including antisocial and delinquent behavior, is the result of a complex interplay of individual biological and genetic factors and environmental factors, starting during fetal development and continuing throughout life (Bock and Goode, 1996). Clearly, genes affect biological development, but there is no biological development without environmental input. Thus, both biology and environment influence behavior of juvenile delinquents.

Some studies focus on behavior that meets diagnostic criteria for conduct disorder or other antisocial behavior disorders; others look at aggressive behavior, or lying, or shoplifting; still others rely on juvenile court referral or arrest as the outcome of interest. Furthermore, different risk factors and different outcomes may be more salient at some stages of child and adolescent development than at others.

2. Review of Related Literature

Waghmare and Shinde (2021) analyzed the review of literature on personality of juvenile delinquents. He concluded that in a study of juveniles from the Pittsburgh Youth Study, John et al. (1994) discovered that delinquent boys were more likely to have low scores on conscientiousness. Low conscientiousness scores were also shown to be significantly related to vandalism/theft for males and females (Heaven, 1996) and the number of times an individual is arrested (Clower & Bothwell, 2001). According to Laak et al. (2003), incarcerated girls with lower conscientiousness scores were more likely to cause harm, battle, or steal. With their research, Hornsveld and de Kruyk (2005) confirmed these results by revealing that aggressive outpatients had lower conscientiousness scores than the control group.

Low conscientiousness in children is linked to externalizing activities (Prinz et al., 2003), and longitudinal studies have linked childhood impulsivity to increased antisocial behaviours later in childhood and adolescence. (e.g., Lynam et al., 2000; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001). Using the Self-Report Delinquency scale (Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985) and the Self-Reported

Antisocial Behavior Scale (Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, Van Kammen, & Farrington, 1989), delinquents scored significantly lower on conscientiousness than non-delinquents in a high-risk study of boys (12 to 13 years of age) (John et al., 1994). According to John and Srivastava (1999), The Big Five personality model was developed as an etymological method to capture how people describe themselves others and it has since been found in adults from 50 different cultures (Livesley, 2001). Low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism were found to be closely correlated with violence by Lynam et al. (2005). Furthermore, adolescent psychopathy is characterised by low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high neuroticism, which has been shown to be a Good predictor of violence and antisocial conduct (Lynam et al., 2005). Neuroticism in toddlers predicted higher anxiety and psychosomatic issues in puberty, as well as greater mother records of proximity seeking towards mothers at 5 years of age (Abe, 2005). Neuroticism has also been linked to delinquency (Laak et al., 2003) and diagnosis of behavior disorder and drug use disorders in adolescents. (Anderson et al., 2007).

3. Need for the Study

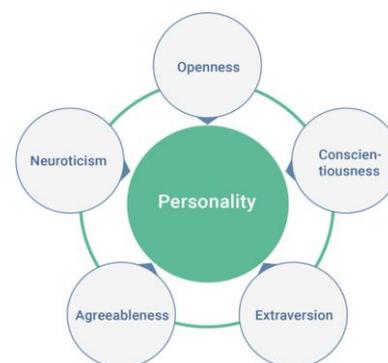
Larsen and Buss (2002) defined personality as “the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the environment (p. 4).” Traits are usually classified in one of two forms. The criminal’s behaviour is affected by a variety of personal characteristics. Personality characteristics have been identified as significant determinants of criminal and delinquent behaviour in children over the last three decades. Single personality traits or a group of personality traits may influence criminal behaviour. There is a connection between personality and delinquency and criminal behaviour. Eysenck was the first to investigate the utility of personality characteristics in understanding criminal behaviour (1947).

Many researchers already agree that there are five basic personality characteristics. Because of the increase in juvenile crimes, the investigator has made an attempt to study the personality traits of juvenile delinquents so as to produce a better society tomorrow.

4. Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this research study personality traits have been described under the umbrella of “Five-Personality-Factor Model”. Though, Big Five have been defined from different dimensions (Goldberg, 1993). The Big Five characterized by openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1989; Goldberg, 1993). According to John & Srivastava (1999), Openness to experience trait is characterized as intellectually curious, imaginative, hold unconventional beliefs. People with high score on this trait are likely to be more adventurous, creative and have the ability to think outside the box. People with low score on this trait are likely to be more conventional and may struggle with abstract thinking. Conscientiousness is a personality trait that can be characterized as thoughtfulness, tendency to control impulse, behave in socially acceptable ways and facilitate goal directed behavior.

Big Five Personality Traits



Extraversion is a trait that can be described as friendly, sociable, assertive, talkative, emotionally expressive and cheerful. Individuals high on this trait have a tendency to gain energy in social settings and are usually outgoing.

Agreeableness dimension of personality consists of characteristics such as trustworthy, helpful, altruism, kind, considerate, generous and don't hesitate to sacrifice their interest (John & Srivastava, 1999). Neuroticism dimension of personality refers to those who have tendency to experience anger, sadness, emotional instability and variety of negative emotions are frequently observed in people who scored high on neuroticism.

Therefore, personality trait theory is considered as an imperative source of understanding of individual characteristics of juvenile delinquents. This study would also help to explore which prominent traits are predominant among juvenile delinquents. This research study would also provide the abundant knowledge for society to gather the main reasons for the children to become juvenile delinquents. Hence, the current study will be viable for reducing the number of juveniles and to show them a better way of life to live a harmonious life in the society.

5. Objectives

1. To find difference between boys and girls in the dimensions of personality namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness of juvenile delinquents.
2. To find difference between boys and girls in the overall personality of juvenile delinquents.

6. Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in the dimensions of personality namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness of juvenile delinquents.
2. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in the overall personality of juvenile delinquents.

7. Methodology

Normative survey method is used for the study. The subjects for the study were 153 juvenile delinquents drawn from juvenile homes in Chennai District. Random sampling method was used for data collection.

The Big Five inventory by John, Benet-Martinez and Benet Martinez (1998), was used to assess the personality of juvenile delinquents consists of 44 items which are combined into five dimensions namely, extraversion, pleasantness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness.

The subjects were encouraged to respond spontaneously to each of the forty four items on a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. For a positive statement, the scores assigned were 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and for negative statements, the scores assigned were 5,4,3,2 and 1 for response of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The reliability of Big Five Inventory Scale is calculated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient method. The reliability and the validity of the attitude scale is 0.768 and 0.862 respectively which shows that the scale is highly reliable.

8. The Analysis & Interpretation of the Data

Data collected from the respondents were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis to draw up inferences from it. 't' test was used for data analyses.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between boys and girls in the dimensions of personality namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness of juvenile delinquents.

Table 1 *Significance of mean difference between boys and girls in the dimensions of Personality*

Variables	Gender				t value	P-value
	Boys (N=101)		Girls (N=52)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Extraversion	28.02	3.922	27.46	4.604	0.785	0.433NS
Agreeableness	26.42	3.922	25.50	4.646	1.283	0.201NS
Conscientiousness	28.10	4.997	26.65	5.877	1.594	0.113NS
Neuroticism	26.40	6.800	24.92	7.276	1.239	0.217NS
Openness	36.35	6.173	35.04	6.068	1.249	0.214NS

Note: NS- The mean difference is not significant at the 5% level.

It could be inferred from the table values that in the dimensions of personality namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness, there exists no significant difference between boys and girls which infers that both boys and girls are similar in the dimensions of personality namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. This may be due to the fact that juvenile delinquents do not know how to deal with the people in the society and

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between boys and girls in the overall personality of juvenile delinquents.

subsequently their openness is also less which ultimately leads them to indulge in criminal activities.

Hence, the formulated hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between boys and girls in dimensions of personality namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness of juvenile delinquents is accepted.

Table 2 *Significance of mean difference between boys and girls in Personality*

Variables	Gender				t value	P-value
	Boys (N=101)		Girls (N=52)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Extraversion	28.02	3.922	27.46	4.604	0.785	0.433NS

Note: NS- The mean difference is not significant at the 5% level.

It could be inferred from the table value that there exists no significant difference between boys and girls in overall personality. It is evident that both boys and girls are having similar personality traits. This may be due to the fact that both boys and girls are at juvenile homes and they don't know how to balance their emotions equally due to some background factors. Hence, the formulated hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between boys and girls in overall personality of juvenile delinquents is accepted.

6. Conclusions

From the review of literature, there are more important predictors of delinquent behavior among adolescents. Based on the findings, some of the reasons for delinquent behavior were unpleasantness, unconscientiousness, no openness among the people in the society. Juvenile delinquents are risky adolescents who are hard, cruel, suspicious, robust, competitive, uncooperative, prone to extremes, dominating, unfriendly and rude. Many times they are hesitant; they postpone their duties and subside to the impulses. They are considered to be casual, lazy and have no self-confidence. They are able to predict the behavior of other people and they know how their behavior will affect the well-being of others. They do not get enough understanding and support from the society and indulge in crimes. If their personality traits are improved, they may be able to mingle with the society and they could be able to understand how their activities affect others in the society.

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