

# An Analysis On Emotional Intelligence And Mental Health Of Juvenile Delinquents

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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to examine the relationship of emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents. Sample of the study comprises of 153 juvenile delinquents residing in a juvenile home at Chennai. Normative survey method was employed for data collection. Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Schutte et al. (1998) was used to assess the emotional intelligence of juvenile delinquents. To assess the mental health of juvenile delinquents, the investigator constructed and standardized the tool, Mental Health Battery (MHB) with 30 items. Differential analysis like 't' test and Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyse the collected data. Results revealed that there is no significant difference based on gender in the dimensions of emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents. Recommendations were given in order to improve their mental health and emotional intelligence to reduce the juvenile delinquency so that their basic needs have been satisfied in order to bring a change in their lives.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health, Juvenile delinquents.

## Introduction

Juvenile delinquency has become an important challenge in terms of social, economic and individual aspects in our country. Juveniles in the justice system suffer an excessive rate of mental health problems. Accordingly, awareness of mental, physical, and social difficulties of delinquent juveniles by health care providers can make a significant contribution to prevention and rehabilitation efforts (Galzari, Hunt & Anoshiravani, 2006). The most common reasons for arrests are assault, theft, rape, selling and purchasing of substances, respectively.

The juvenile justice system underlines rehabilitation and prevention measures for juveniles rather than punishing them. Hawkins and colleagues (2000) found evidence that

psychological factors such as aggression, restlessness, hyperactivity, concentration problems, and risk taking were consistently correlated with youth violence. However, they also found that internalizing disorders such as worrying, nervousness, and anxiety were either unrelated to later violence or reduced the likelihood of engaging in later violence. Multiple studies confirmed that a large proportion of youths in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Studies have suggested that about two thirds of youth in detention or correctional settings have at least one diagnosable mental health problem, compared with an estimated 9 to 22 percent of the general youth population (Schubert and Mulvey 2014; Schubert, Mulvey, and Glasheen, 2011).

## Need for the Study

Review of literature showed that at some juvenile justice contact points, as many as 70% of the youth have diagnosable mental health problems. The common ones include externalizing disorders like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), substance abuse disorders, or internalizing disorders like anxiety disorders and mood disorders. Externalizing disorders increase the chances of youth delinquency, violence and recidivism, while early identification and treatment result in decreased rate of delinquency and better social integration. [https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2021/06/05/juvenile-justice-system/-\\_ftn9](https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2021/06/05/juvenile-justice-system/-_ftn9)

Juvenile justice system (JJS) and the mental health of juveniles involved are inherently related. Children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection are more likely to be prone to mental health and substance related problems. On the corollary, children having mental health or substance related problems are more likely to come in contact with the Juvenile justice system. Persons with high emotional intelligence levels are more able to moderate their emotions and are less impulsive. On the other hand, individuals with low emotional intelligence are more prone to risky behavior. They also have a hard time understanding situations from the perspective of others and, therefore, tend to be less empathetic. The relationship between emotions and juvenile delinquency, although scarce, has been debated and indicate that as some branch of emotional control decreases, delinquency increases.

This paper attempts to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents which can help to reduce the juvenile crimes in the society as well as to bring a change in their lives. Since the younger generation is the future of our nation, it becomes imperative to analyse the emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents.

### **Factors responsible for juvenile delinquency**

The intensity and severity of juvenile offences are generally determined by the social, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in the country. The causes of such behaviour, like all other crimes,

find their roots in complex psychological, social and economic factors. Clinical studies have found emotional and mental maladjustments arising out of disorganised family problems to be a common cause behind such behaviour. The causes for delinquent behaviour among juveniles are found at all stages of society, including society itself, social institutions, social groups and organisations and interpersonal relations.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Social learning theory paved the way for the development of a new theory – social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory was introduced by Shaw and McKay (1969). This theory proposed that crime and delinquency could be attributed to the rapid growth, urbanization, immigration, and breakdown in community supports in addition to the replacement of traditional values with criminal values. The application of social structural theories requires practitioners to look beyond the individual when attempting to make sense of criminal behavior among youths. Shaw and McKay applied this theory to a study in Chicago and found significant patterns that gave weight to their social disorganization theory. This theory has repeatedly helped to explain the higher crime rates, both juvenile and adult, in inner cities (Hartering Saunders & Rine, 2011). When applying social disorganization theory to possible prevention techniques and diversionary programs, it is important to understand that the underlying foundation of this theory is community responsibility. When neighborhoods are disorganized, urbanized and lack community supports, social disorganization arises, increasing juvenile delinquency and overall crime rates. Steenbeek and Hipp (2011) conducted an evaluation of 74 neighborhoods over the course of ten years, to determine whether it was the disorganization that resulted in criminal behavior or whether the disorganization caused criminal behavior. The conclusion was that neighborhoods with greater feelings of responsibility where the residents actually participate in improving the neighborhood will have lower rates of delinquency and criminal behavior. This research is significant because it demonstrates the need for

communities to be involved in addressing juvenile delinquency.

Theoretical insights have thrown light into the fact that more than any biological factor, social and psychological factors are predominant in creating the deviant behavior as a child tries to imitate and inculcate what his/her environment shows them.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of the study can be stated as “**An Analysis on Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health of Juvenile Delinquents.**”

### **Operational Definition of variables**

The operational definitions of the terms are:

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2011), emotional intelligence is the ability to understand your emotions and those of other people and to behave appropriately in different situations.

Goleman (2001) believes that emotional intelligence includes the following constructs: self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy and social skills. According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2002) emotional intelligence refers to ability to perceive, recognize and express emotions, to assimilate emotions in thought, understand and try to help regulate emotions and feelings of self and others.

In this research, the investigator has adopted the definition of Schutte et al. (1998) that emotional intelligence refers to perception of one’s own emotions, managing own and other’s emotions and utilization of emotion in solving problems of juvenile delinquents.

#### **Mental Health**

The World Health Organization (2007) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities to cope with the normal stresses of life and working productively so that he or she will be able to make a contribution to his or her community."

In this research, mental health refers to emotional, psychological, and social well-being of juvenile delinquents and how it effects on how they think, feel, and act.

### **Juvenile Delinquents**

The term “juvenile delinquent” refers any person below the age of 18 who has come in contact with the justice system as a result of committing a crime or being suspected of committing a crime.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

1. There is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents.
2. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in emotional intelligence and its dimensions of juvenile delinquents.
3. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in mental health of juvenile delinquents.

### **Methodology**

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

### **Instrumentation**

Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Schutte et al. (1998) was used to assess the emotional intelligence of juvenile delinquents. This scale consists of 33 items whose responses are indicated on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 representing strongly disagree to 5 representing strong agree. The reliability of Emotional Intelligence Scale is calculated using Cronbach’s Alpha Co-efficient method which is 0.812 and 0.902 respectively which shows that the scale is highly reliable. To assess the mental health of juvenile delinquents, the investigator constructed and standardized the tool, Mental Health Battery (MHB) with 30 items. The

reliability and validity of the tool was 0.845 and 0.906 respectively.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

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

**Hypothesis 1:** There is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents.

**Table 1 showing the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health**

	Emotional Intelligence	Mental Health
Emotional Intelligence	1	.141
Mental Health	.141	1

From the above table values, it is observed that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents. It can be concluded that emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents are very low. Since they are not emotionally intelligent, mental health is very low and hence they indulge in criminal activities at a very young age.

Hence, the formulated hypothesis that there is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents is rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between boys and girls in in emotional intelligence and its dimensions of juvenile delinquents

**Table 2: Significance of mean difference between boys and girls in Emotional Intelligence and its dimensions**

Variables	Gender				t value	P value
	Boys (N=101)		Girls (N=52)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Perception of Emotion	32.17	4.521	31.38	6.212	0.891	0.374 <sup>NS</sup>
Managing own emotions	22.50	4.824	22.12	4.596	0.481	0.631 <sup>NS</sup>
Managing others' emotions	18.83	3.983	18.27	3.652	0.851	0.396 <sup>NS</sup>
Utilization of emotions	14.39	3.891	14.85	3.654	0.707	0.481 <sup>NS</sup>
Uncategorized	21.77	5.232	22.38	5.107	0.691	0.491 <sup>NS</sup>
Overall Emotional Intelligence	115.51	12.497	114.77	11.994	0.354	0.724 <sup>NS</sup>

Note: NS - Not Significant

It could be inferred from the values presented in the above table that in the dimensions of emotional intelligence namely

perception of emotion, managing own emotions, managing others' emotions, utilization of emotions, uncategorized and in overall emotional

intelligence, there exists no significant difference between boys and girls. It can be inferred that both boys and girls are similar in their emotional intelligence and its dimensions. This may be due to the fact that the students in juvenile homes have come from poor background of the family. This is the reason where they are forced to do some criminal activities and hence, they are not emotionally intelligent to handle the difficult situations.

Hence, the formulated hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between boys and girls in emotional intelligence and its dimensions of juvenile delinquents is accepted.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference between boys and girls in the mental health of juvenile delinquents.

**Table 3: Significance of mean difference between boys and girls in mental health**

Variable	Gender				t value	P value
	Boys (N=101)		Girls (N=52)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Mental Health	88.69	6.016	89.98	5.508	1.290	0.199 <sup>NS</sup>

NS – Not Significant

It could be inferred from the table value that there exists no significant difference between boys and girls in mental health of juvenile delinquents. It is evident that both boys and girls are having same level of mental health. This may be due to the fact that both boys and girls are at juvenile homes and they don't know how to keep and maintain their good mental health. As they are facing difficulties to fulfil their basic needs in their life, they indulge in crimes which they cannot be able to have good mental health even from their childhood.

Hence, the formulated hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between boys and girls in mental health of juvenile delinquents is accepted.

### Summary and Conclusion

From the findings, it is evident that both emotional intelligence and mental health of juvenile delinquents should be developed so as to reduce the crimes performed by them at an young age. The following recommendations have been given in order to make them emotionally intelligent and better mental health.

- A standardised curriculum should be developed for persons dealing with children encountering the juvenile justice system.

- Childcare institutions should be made better equipped by appointment of mental health professionals on a regular basis.
- Counselling of the juveniles at the time of their entry at the institutions should be made a norm.
- Vocational training should be imparted to the children, tailored to their skills and interests.
- Digital learning and technology driven courses should be preferred in order to make their reintegration in the society and make it easier for them to find an appropriate job upon their release.

Upon implementation of the above procedures, they can become self-confident among themselves so that they can earn their own livelihood and lead a peaceful life in the society.

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