

## Understanding psychology and crime: association between major domains of personality and crime

Aradhana Kumari<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Human behaviour arises from a dynamic interplay between biological, psychological, cultural and social processes. This study will be an attempt to find out the comparison between personality dimensions do delinquent and non delinquent and what are the social and familial factors that contribute to the development of criminal behaviour. Hundred delinquent boy's and Hundred non delinquent boys will be selected through purposive sampling. Independent sample t test, Mann Whitney U test will be employed for analysis. Eysenck personality questionnaire will be administered on them.

**Keywords:** *Personality, Criminal Behaviour, Delinquent and Nondelinquent.*

Why do individuals commit crimes? At the same time, why is crime present in our society? The criminal justice system is very concerned with these questions, and criminologists are attempting to answer them. In actuality, the question of why crime is committed is very difficult to answer. However, for centuries, people have been searching for answers (Jacoby, 2004). It is important to recognize that there are many different explanations as to why individuals commit crime (Conklin, 2007). One of the main explanations is based on psychological theories, which focus on the association among intelligence, personality, learning, and criminal behavior. Thus, in any discussion concerning crime causation, one must contemplate psychological theories.

When examining psychological theories of crime, one must be cognizant of the three major theories. The first is psychodynamic theory, which is centered on the notion that an individual's early childhood experience influences his or her likelihood for committing future crimes. The second is behavioral theory. Behavioral theorists have expanded the work of Gabriel Tarde through behavior modeling and social learning. The third is cognitive theory, the major premise of which suggests that an individual's perception and how it is manifested (Jacoby, 2004) affect his or her potential to commit crime. In other words, behavioral theory focuses on how an individual's perception of the world influences his or her behavior.

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Patna University, Patna, India

\*Responding Author

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## Understanding Psychology And Crime: Association Between Major Domains Of Personality and Crime

### *Psychodynamic Theory*

Freud (1933) believed that id represents the unconscious biological drives for food, sex and other necessities over the life span. Most important is the idea that I'd is concerned with instant pleasure or gratification while disregarding concern for others. This is known as pleasure principle and it is often paramount when discussing criminal behaviour. The second element of personality is the ego which is thought to develop early in person's life. For example, when children learnt that their wishes cannot be gratified instantaneously, they often throw a tantrum. Freud(1933) suggested that ego compensates for the demands of id by guiding an individual's action or behaviours to keep him or her within the boundaries of society.

### *Behavioural Theory*

The second major psychological theory is behaviorism. This theory maintains that human behavior is developed through learning experiences. The hallmark of behavioral theory is the notion that people alter or change their behavior according to the reactions this behavior elicits in other people (Bandura, 1978). In an ideal situation, behavior is supported by rewards and extinguished by negative reactions or punishments. Behaviorists view crimes as learned responses to life's situations. Social learning theory, which is a branch of behavior theory, is the most relevant to criminology.

The most prominent social learning theorist is Albert Bandura (1978). Bandura maintains that individuals are not born with an innate ability to act violently. He suggested that, in contrast, violence and aggression are learned through a process of behavior modeling (Bandura, 1977). In other words, children learn violence through the observation of others. Aggressive acts are modeled after three primary sources: (1) family interaction, (2) environmental experiences, and (3) the mass media. Research on family interaction demonstrates that children who are aggressive are more likely to have been brought up by parents or caretakers who are aggressive (Jacoby, 2004).

The second source of behavioral problems, environmental experiences, suggests that individuals who reside in areas that are crime prone are more likely to display aggressive behavior than those who reside in low-crime areas (Shelden, 2006). One could argue that high-crime areas are without norms, rules, and customs (Bohm, 2001). Furthermore, there is an absence of conventional behavior. Manifestations of unconventional behavior include the inability to gain employment; drug or alcohol abuse; and failure to obey the local, state, and federal laws. Most important, individuals who adhere to conventional behavior are invested in society and committed to a goal or belief system. They are involved in schools or extracurricular activities, such as football, baseball, or Girl Scouts, and often they have an attachment to family (Kraska, 2004).

### *Cognitive Theory*

A third major psychological theory is cognitive theory. In recent years, significant gains have been made in explaining criminal behavior within the cognitive theory framework. Here, psychologists focus on the mental processes of individuals. More important, cognitive theorists attempt to understand how criminal offenders perceive and mentally represent the world around them (Knepper, 2001). Germane to cognitive theory is how individuals solve problems. One theory within the cognitive framework focuses on moral and intellectual development. Jean Piaget (1896–1980) hypothesized that the individual reasoning process is

## Understanding Psychology And Crime: Association Between Major Domains Of Personality and Crime

developed in an orderly fashion. Thus, from birth onward an individual will continue to develop.

Another pioneer of cognitive theory is Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) (1927– 1987), who applied the concept of moral development to criminological theory. Kohlberg (1984) believed that individuals pass through stages of moral development. Most important to his theory is the notion that there are levels, stages, and social orientation. An important concept within this stage is the idea that individuals are interested in whether or not other people approve or disapprove of them (Kohlberg, 1984).

For example, if you are an attorney, what role does society expect you to play? Tangentially, what role does the clergy hold in society? It is important to note that perception is germane to this stage as well. Ultimately, the literature suggests this is where a “good” boy and girl attempts to ascertain his or her standing or role within society. With respect to stage four, the premise is based on law and order. In this stage, individuals recognize the importance of laws, rules, and customs. This is important because in order to properly function in society, one must obey and recognize the social pillars of society. Ultimately, individuals must recognize the significance of right and wrong. Obviously, a society without laws and punishments leads to chaos.

The next subdiscipline is the information-processing branch. This area is predicated on the notion that people use information to understand their environment. When an individual makes a decision, he or she engages in a sequence of cognitive thought processes.

To illustrate, individuals experience an event and encode or store the relevant information so it can be retrieved and interpreted at a later date (Conklin, 2007). Second, these individuals search for the appropriate response, and then they determine the appropriate action. Last, they must act on their decision. There are some vital findings regarding this process. First, individuals who use information properly are more likely to avoid delinquent or criminal behavior (Shelden, 2006). Second, those who are conditioned to make reasoned judgments when faced with emotional events are more likely to avoid antisocial behavioral decisions (Siegal, 2008). Interestingly, an explanation for flawed reasoning is that the individual may be relying on a faulty cognitive process; specifically, he or she may be following a mental script that was learned in childhood (Jacoby, 2004). A second reason that may account for flawed reasoning is prolonged exposure to violence.

A third possibility of faulty reasoning is oversensitivity or rejection by parents or peers. Contemplating the consequences of long-lasting rejection or dismissal is likely to produce damage to an individual’s self-esteem. Research has demonstrated that individuals who use violence as a coping mechanism are substantially more likely to exhibit other problems, such as alcohol and drug dependency (Piquero & Mazarolle, 2001).

Psychological factors encompass processes that take place at the individual-level as well as the meanings that one attributes to a particular situation which in turn affects our mental state (Upton, 2013).

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Eysenck, in his theory of criminality, proposed that personality factors like extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism are the prime causes of criminal behaviour and are the only

## Understanding Psychology And Crime: Association Between Major Domains Of Personality and Crime

“systematic method” available for the investigation of such behaviour. Personality traits contribute to one’s tendency to engage in criminal behaviour (Levine & Jackson, 2004; Egan, McMurrin, Richardson, & Blair, 2000; Listwan, 2001). He proposed that high neuroticism leads to higher persistence in people which makes crime a matter of routine that is continuously reinforced. The combined effect of high extraversion and high neuroticism interferes with learning social rules and conditioning, increasing the likelihood of criminal behaviour (Levine & Jackson, 2004).

Psychoticism is believed to increase the rigidity of thought in a person and reduce sensitivity to guilt. The traits that correlate to form this super-ordinate trait include aggressive, cold, egocentric, impersonal, impulsive, antisocial, unempathetic, creative and tough minded (Ruch, n.d.)

Additional evidence of the role of underlying personality factors in criminal behaviour is provided by the Five Factor Model proposed by McCrae and Costa (1988) which represents a continuum between two extremes of these traits. It was found that neuroticism has shown positive correlation with criminal acts which is consistent with the findings of Eysenck’s PEN Model.

McCrae and Costa found that Eysenck’s measure of P was related to the Big Five factors, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness (Zuckerman, Kuhlman, Joireman, Teta, & Kraft, 1993). In addition to personality factors, other individual variables like intelligence, emotional behaviour and academic achievements also determine the chances of an individual to indulge in criminal behaviour (Clarbour, Roger, Miles, & Monaghan, 2009; Koolhof, Loeber, Wei, Pardini, & D’Escriy, 2007). Personality and Criminal Behavior.

The first person to explore the utility of personality traits in explaining criminal behavior was Eysenck (1964). Eysenck asked the very important question: “Why do 19 most people lead relatively blameless lives, rather than indulging in a career of crime?” (p. 102). He suggested that within everyone is a conscience, or “inner guiding light” that keeps one from committing crime. The person who does not develop conditioned moral and social responses (or a conscience, which is a result of low ability to be conditioned and extraversion) will be more likely to engage in criminal or deviant activities (Eysenck, 1964). Conscience is related to functions of the autonomic nervous system, which is made up of glands and involuntary muscles (i.e., blinking). The body can be conditioned to exhibit certain autonomic responses to external stimuli, as well as internal cognitive processes such as anxiety and fear. Once an individual has been conditioned to know that certain unacceptable behaviors will be punished, predictable and involuntary physiological reactions will take place. That is why a deterrence explanation of criminal behavior is inaccurate, according to Eysenck (1964). Crime is not always detected, nor does it always merit punishment. Therefore, the deterrents that keep individuals from committing crime must be the autonomic reactions. This fear/anxiety reaction actually takes place even before crime is committed. At the time a criminal act is contemplated, there is an immediate and unpleasant reaction in an individual who has a conditioned conscience. The closer one gets to actually committing the act, the greater the unpleasant reaction becomes.

After a factor analysis of his own, he developed two categories of personality classification. His two categories were extraversion/introversion and neuroticism/stability. Extraverts were people who were poorly conditioned, but who were also outgoing and talkative due to their

## **Understanding Psychology And Crime: Association Between Major Domains Of Personality and Crime**

need for external stimulation to keep their arousal levels optimal and their performance maximized. On the other hand, introverts were quiet and reserved due to excessive arousal. A quiet environment would bring the introvert back to a level of optimal performance. Neurotic individuals were unable to control their emotions and were easily upset. This person was more likely to experience anxiety and depression. The opposite was the stable person who was able to maintain calm in stressful situations.

After more research, Eysenck's work was expanded to include a third category of personality that he termed psychoticism/socialization (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Psychoticism referred to individuals with higher levels of testosterone in the body who were seen not only as people who were emotionally unstable, but as people who were more likely to become violent or aggressive. Characteristic behavior of the psychotic individual included aggression, impulsiveness, non-conformity, and hostility.

To support his theory, Eysenck (1964) provided research showing that extraverted people were harder to condition than introverted individuals. Psychopaths also had a tendency to be harder to condition. In addition to that, he also presented research supporting the assertion that people who commit crimes are more introverted than non-criminal individuals, and those generally scoring higher on psychoticism extraversion and neuroticism (PEN) were more likely to engage in criminal activities (Eysenck, 1964).

Delinquency is an area which does not lie exclusively within the preview of the psychologist but overlaps with that of other professionals. Yet for a scientist interested in all facets of human behaviour delinquency, with the possibility of its pathogenesis in society is as baffling as any other social pathology which poses a challenge to mental health professionals. Children with delinquent behaviour constitute a section of the clientele of child guidance clinics. There is a large number of studies including theoretical papers on juvenile delinquency in literature which examine varied aspects like personality aggression, hostility, reactions to frustration, classification/typology, cognitive functions, needs, socio-demographic aspects, parent-child relationships.

Garrido and Rivas (1984) reported that the personality characteristic that most differentiated the convicted delinquents from the other youth was aggressiveness. Coie et al. (1991) also contend that aggressiveness is the single most important reason for a child to be rejected by peers and to be delinquent. Similarly Dodge and Pettit (2003) studied that even around age 5, aggressive, belligerent children are unpopular and are excluded from peer groups. Chabrol et al. (2009) found that psychopathic and sadistic traits were independent predictors of delinquent behaviours in boys only. Similar results were reported by Vaughn et al. (2008).

Caspi et al. (1994, by Donnellan, Ge and Wenk, 2002) used the Big Five model to determine the link between personality traits and delinquency and found that delinquents, compared to non-delinquents, achieve significantly lower results in dimensions of acceptability and conscientiousness. When examining Big Five in relation to the delinquency, Heaven (1996) also found that acceptability is strongly negatively related with delinquency, there are also slightly lower negative relations with the conscientiousness, while the correlation between neuroticism and delinquency is weak but positive.

## Understanding Psychology And Crime: Association Between Major Domains Of Personality and Crime

Gopal Krishna, (1956) studied the personality pattern of juvenile delinquent. Analysis of response on Rorschach test showed that the reformatory school inmates have Schizophrenic trends and border line mental deficiency. The school delinquents were found to be less intelligence and aggressive. Analysis further indicates that broken homes were the most important environmental cause of delinquency.

### *Objectives*

1. To compare the personality dimensions of delinquents and nondelinquents.
2. To identify the familial and role of social factors that are supposed to exert strong influence on delinquent and nondelinquent behaviour.

### *Variables*

#### **1. Independent Variables**

**Parental Affection** – Having or displaying warmth or affection toward their child.

**Home Environment** – The psychological atmosphere at home is characterized by acceptance – autonomy/ acceptance – control/ rejection – autonomy/ rejection – control.

**Nature of Parenting** – It is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

**Personality Traits** – A simple description of an individual's characteristics, modes of behaving, perceiving, thinking etc.

**Self Concept** – One's concept of oneself in as complete and thorough a description.

#### **2. Dependent Variable**

Juvenile Delinquency – Antisocial or criminal activity of the child below 18 years of age and which violates the law.

### *Hypothesis*

1. Delinquents will score high on psychoticism as compared to Non Delinquents.
2. Delinquents will score high on Neuroticism as compared to Non Delinquents.
3. Delinquents will score high on Extraversion as compared to Non Delinquents.
4. Delinquents will score high on Lie as compared to Non Delinquents.
5. The Delinquent will report differential amount of affection manifested through communication from Mother and Father.
6. The Home Environment of the Delinquents would exert differential influence as compared to Non Delinquents.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### *Design of The Study*

It will be an “ex post facto” design (Kerlinger, 1995). As the independent variables have already been present in the study group, they could not be manipulated. The researcher could only select their value. Hence, this could be labelled as a “correlational research” also (D'Amato, 1970).

### *Sample*

100 delinquent boys from different jails of Patna and 100 nondelinquent boys of different schools of Patna ranged in age from 11 to 18 years will be selected through purposive sampling technique.

## Understanding Psychology And Crime: Association Between Major Domains Of Personality and Crime

### *Tools to be used*

1. Background Information Schedule.
2. Familial Variables Perception of Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (PCS; Hecht, 1978).
  - Home Environment Inventory (HEI; Misra, 1989)
  - Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) by Parker et al., (1979)
3. Personality Variables Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), adapted version of the EPQ developed by Basu & Basu (1996).
  - Self concept questionnaire (SCQ) developed by Saraswat (1984)
4. Delinquency Behavior Deviance Scale (BDS -R; Chauhan & Aurora, 1989).

### *Statistics to be used*

Independent sample t test, Mann Whitney U test and thematic analysis will be employed for analysis.

### *Design of the study*

It will be an “ex post facto” design (Kerlinger, 1995). As the independent variables have already been present in the study group, they could not be manipulated. The researcher could only select their value. Hence, this could be labelled as a “correlational research” also (D’Amato, 1970).

## **RESULTS**

There will be significant difference among Delinquents and Non Delinquents on Eysenck scale and subscales of Psychoticism, Neuroticism, Extraversion and Lie Scale which shows that delinquents have more tendency of psychoticism, neuroticism, extraversion and Lie. Results also shows that delinquents have negative self concept and they receive different amount of affection and home environment which is not supportive at all for their self concept which will lead towards delinquency.

## **DISCUSSION**

The current study will be conducted to find out the difference between the personality dimensions of delinquents and nondelinquents and predictors of delinquent behaviour and also a comparative study conducted with a delinquent and nondelinquent group in terms of parent adolescent communication, home environment, parental bontraits and self concept. The study will examine whether the above mentioned variables can give any direction the development of delinquent behaviour and its prevention.

By including the family related variables, the study will be able to examine the independent contributions of family, structurally and functionally generating and maintaining variables of delinquency.

In terms of personality variables, delinquency in the present study will be high on psychoticism and extraversion moderate towards lie score and low in respect of neuroticism.

Therefore, overall, it stated that an important factor influencing delinquent behaviour is the family setting. It is within the family that they had internalized the basic beliefs, values attitudes and general patterns of behaviour that give direction to their subsequent delinquent behaviour, child rearing practices such as disciplinary method.

## CONCLUSION

The results support the view that delinquents differ from general population or non delinquents in terms of personality features, self concept and support system by familial and social factors and environment.

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### *Conflict of Interest*

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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