

## Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners

Chinmayee D.<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Maheshbabu<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Personality traits possessed by an individual is what completes that individual. Personality traits are both acquired and learnt. This gives rise to the question if criminals are born with certain traits or if they gradually learnt these traits. Self-concept is the knowledge one has about himself. So are criminals aware of themselves while committing a crime or is it an impulsive decision made during a stressful situation. The present study is aimed obtaining the differences and relationship between personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners. The sampling method used was purposive sampling with a sample size of 71 (30 prisoners and 41 non-prisoners). The tools used were NEO Five-Factor Inventory (McCrae R, Costa P T, 1985), to determine the personality traits and Robson Self-Concept Questionnaire (Robson, 1989), to determine the self-concept of the participants. The statistical methods used were Independent Samples t-test and Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation. The results indicated that prisoners did not differ significantly in personality traits such as neuroticism, openness and agreeableness and self-concept from non-prisoners. However, prisoners showed higher levels of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness and lower level of self-concept than non-prisoners. This research also showed that, there exists a significant relationship between personality traits neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and self-concept.

**Keywords:** *Size Adolescents, Socioeconomic Status, Factorial Design, Self-concept*

**I**s a criminal born or made? This question has given rise to numerous researches and has baffled criminologists, psychologists and sociologists for decades. This question is parallel with "Nature versus Nurture" phenomenon giving rise to the question: is criminality due to the genetic factors of the criminal, making it unavoidable or the result of external stimuli such as the upbringing of the criminal, the social, situational or environmental factors.

During the mid 1950s, studies have suggested that the lifestyle followed at home, how a person is brought up, lack of love and care, abuse (physical, emotional) and absence of ability to discipline oneself could have resulted in criminal behavior. However recent studies

<sup>1</sup>II MSc Psychology at SDM PG Centre, Ujire, Bangalore, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Research, SDM PG Centre, Ujire, Bangalore, India

\*Responding Author

Received: July 15, 2020; Revision Received: August 30, 2020; Accepted: September 08, 2020

during the 2000s have shown that personality could have a role to play in the criminality of an individual.

### ***Personality Traits***

Personality is basically a characteristic way of thinking, feeling and behaving (Encyclopedia Britannica). Personality can further be understood as ... “The dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought. (Allport, 1961, p.28)... According to Sigmund Freud, personality involves several factors such as instinctual drives like food, sex, aggression; unconscious processes, early childhood influences which he defined as psychosexual stages. Allport (1937) believes that personality is biologically determined at birth, and shaped by a person’s environmental experiences.

The trait concept in personality believes that traits of an individual are stable units of that particular individual’s personality. Traits make an individual to act or react in one particular way and that remains consistent throughout that individual’s lifetime. Eysenck (1952, 1967, 1982) introduced a theory of personality based on factors, mainly biological, stating that individuals possess a type of nervous systems which directly influences on their capacity to strive and learn the needs of their respective environments. He discovered factor analysis, in which behavior is condensed into a number of different factors which can be classified under headings called dimensions. Eysenck (1947) believes that an individual’s behavior could be put forth by two dimensions: Introversion / Extroversion (E); Neuroticism / Stability (N) otherwise named as the second-order personality traits.

The major psychological factors contributing to the criminality of an individual are personality traits, lower levels of self-control, behavior that includes mainly aggressive and cognitive distortions (Kamaluddin *et al* 2015). An individual might have learnt this early in their life to take what he or she wanted. Such individuals’ personality is so adjusted that they commit crimes repeatedly and compulsively goes against people, attack them and take away from people as a way of relating to the society. (Schuessler and Cressey 1950). Sudhinta Sinha (2016) concluded that there was a significant difference in the personality factors of criminals and normal control. Relatively extraversion and agreeableness is higher in criminals (Mosaku *et.al* 2013). Male prisoners show higher degrees of psychopathic personality traits such as over impulsivity, sensation seekers, distress and nervous tension, aggression, social anxiety and hostility and lower levels of social skills (Cauffman, 1999). Criminals show a lower level of self esteem as well as social esteem which indicates that they lack self regard, and are anxious, irritable, insecure, hostile, and maladjusted (Singh *et al.*, 2000).

### ***Self-Concept***

Self-concept or the knowledge of self can be described as what an individual thinks, evaluates, or perceives about himself. The awareness about oneself is self-concept in simple terms. Baumeister, (1999) defined self concept as ... “The individual’s belief about himself or herself, including the person’s attributes and who and what the self is.”... Further Lewis (1990) believes that self concept develops in two aspects: the existential self or the sense of being different and distinct (Bee, 1992) and the categorical self or how a person classifies his ‘self’ along dimensions like gender, age etc. Carl Rogers (1959) says that there are three different components to self concept: (1) self-image or what a person views himself as, (2) self-esteem or self-worth or how much a person values himself/herself and (3) ideal-self or what a person really wants to be.

## Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners

Adesuyi L et al (2018) concluded that there exists a strong perception of the criminals that they were seen as dejected, rejected, criminals, people with questionable character by the normal in the society whereas the normal perceived the criminals as someone with adulterated, questionable character that people should not interact with in society because of their status.

This study intends to learn about the link which lies among the personality traits of the criminals and their knowledge about their 'self', otherwise known as the self-concept of the criminals comparing it with that of the general population or the normals.

### **METHODOLOGY**

**Aim:** The aim of the research was to examine the Personality traits and Self-concept among Prisoners and Non-Prisoners.

The present study adopted purposive sampling method where 30 male prisoners from the Parappana Agrahara Jail (Bengaluru Central Jail) were interviewed personally and data was collected. The number of non-prisoners was 41 who were invited to take part in the present research with the help of Google forms. The participants hailed from different parts of Karnataka and their participation in the research was voluntary.

#### **Variables**

The independent variable chosen for the study was convicted criminals (prisoners) and normals (non-prisoners) with no history of criminal record.

The two dependent variables selected for the present study was personality traits and self-concept.

#### **Inclusion criteria**

1. Prisoners in jail from at least 1 year were included.
2. The minimum qualification for both prisoners and non-prisoners was 10<sup>th</sup> std.
3. The age group for both prisoners and non-prisoners was 20-40 years.

#### **Exclusion criteria**

1. Prisoners under trial, with death penalty and prisoners almost nearing their release date were excluded from the present research.
2. Participants, both prisoners and non-prisoners hailing from states other than Karnataka were excluded to maintain homogeneity.

#### **Research design**

The research design implemented was exploratory in nature as the present research was conducted to gain insight about the personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners and the relationship between the two dependent variables on the independent variables.

#### **Sampling method**

The present study adopted purposive sampling method where 30 male prisoners from the Bengaluru Central Jail were interviewed personally and data was collect. The number of non-prisoners was 41 who were invited to take part in the present research personally with the help of Google forms. The participants hailed from different parts of Karnataka and their participation in the research was voluntary.

**Table 1.1: Sample distribution based on imprisonment**

<b>Imprisonment</b>	
<b>Prisoners</b>	30
<b>Non-prisoners</b>	41
<b>Total</b>	71

### **Research tools**

#### **Demographic Questionnaire**

Information of the participants such as name, age, domicile, educational qualification, criminal record, crime committed, number of years in prison (for prisoners) was collected from the demographic questionnaire. A question – ‘are you guilty of the crime committed by you’ was asked to the prisoners to achieve the percentage of prisoners who are guilty.

#### **NEO Five-Factor Inventory**

This scale was developed by Robert R McCrae and Paul T Costa in the year 1985. The NEO Five-Factor Inventory or NEO FFI is a 60 items version which was formed to obtain the global information on the five domains. The five domains of personality measured by NEO FFI are Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). The responses could be given on a 5 point scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The scores given ranges from 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0. The items are starred and unstarred. The starred items are to be positively scored which means Strongly Agree is scored 4 and Strongly Disagree is scored 0. The total of each domain is added and converted to sten score which is then interpreted. The internal consistency of the scale ranges from .56-.81. In self reports, coefficient alpha ranges from .86-.95. The scale has adequate validity and reliability.

#### **Self-Concept Questionnaire by Robson**

The Robson Self-Concept Questionnaire (Robson, 1989) is a 30-item questionnaire with good reliability and validity. This scale was developed to determine the self-concept of an individual. The responses given range from completely disagree, disagree, agree and completely agree. The rating given is from 0 to 7. The items are further straight away scored and reversed scored. The 14 ‘normal’ items (Q 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 24, 26, 29, 30) have to be scored exactly as the rating indicated by the participant. ( i.e. 7 = 7, 6 = 6). The 16 ‘reversed’ items (Q 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28) have to be reversed while scoring (i.e. 0 = 7, 1 = 6 etc). The reliability and validity of this scale is high making it reliable for both clinical as well as non-clinical samples.

### **Procedure**

#### **For prisoners**

Permission was taken by the Karnataka State Prison Administration. The tools (NEO FFI and Robson Self Concept Questionnaire) were administered to the prisoners followed by collecting demographic details. The demographic details collected included the name of the participant (if preferred), age, qualification, domicile, marital status, crime committed by the participant and the number of years in prison. An additional question “*Do you feel guilty for the crime committed by you?*” was asked to gain more insight about the guilt factor in the participant. 34 participants were randomly chosen for this study from the convicted barracks of the Karnataka Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara, Bengaluru, out of which 30 were selected based on the fulfillment of the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The scoring was done manually referring the respective manuals.

## Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners

### For Non-prisoners

The tools used were entered into Google Forms as it is in the manual. The Google form was divided into 3 sections. The first section contained the demographic details containing the general instructions, name of the participant (if preferred), age, educational qualification, occupation, marital status and a declaration, “*I have never been imprisoned and I do not hold any criminal record as per my knowledge.*” For which the response given could either be ‘true’ or ‘false’. Data of the participants who responded with ‘false’ for the declaration was rejected for this study. 41 samples from a total number of 47 samples were selected for this study based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the response given in the declaration. The data was obtained in a spreadsheet which was then transformed into MS Excel as it is. The data was further scored referring the manual and the scores were calculated.

### Data analysis

*First, Independent Samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses which states that*

1. There exists no significant difference in the personality traits of prisoners and non-prisoners.
2. There exists no significant difference in the self-concept of prisoners and non-prisoners.

*Second, Pearson’s Co-efficient of Correlation was used to test the hypothesis which states that*

1. There is no significant relation between personality traits and self-concept of prisoners and non-prisoners.
2. The scores were analyzed with the help of SPSS (IBM) and discussed.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Personality traits of Prisoners and Non-Prisoners

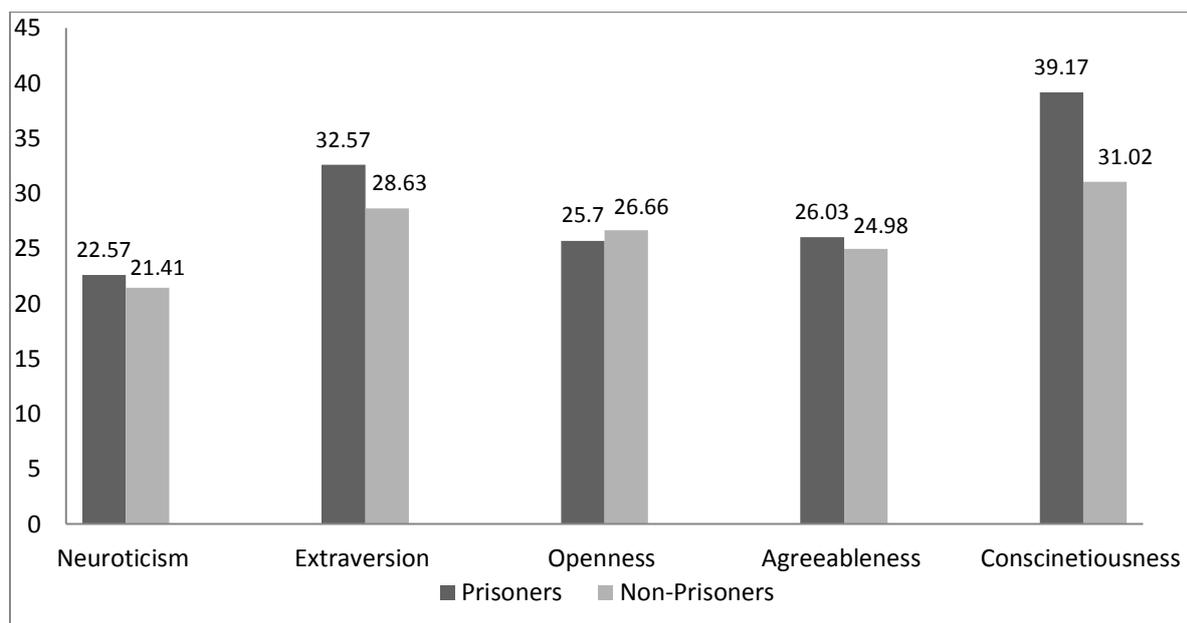
The Personality traits according to NEO FFI are categorized into Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientious.

**Table 1.2: Shows the scores of Prisoners and Non-Prisoners in NEO FFI.**

Domains		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Neuroticism	P	30	22.57	10.15	.582	69	.562
	NP	41	21.41	6.49			
Extraversion	P	30	32.57	7.07	2.647	69	.010*
	NP	41	28.63	5.44			
Openness	P	30	25.70	4.77	.783	69	.439
	NP	41	26.66	5.31			
Agreeableness	P	30	26.03	6.51	.711	69	.480
	NP	41	24.98	5.95			
Conscientiousness	P	30	39.17	5.68	5.411	69	.00*
	NP	41	31.02	6.65			

*Note: P- Prisoners NP- Non-Prisoners \*significant difference at .05 level.*

### Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners



**Figure 1.1:** Mean scores of Prisoners and Non-Prisoners in Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

Independent samples-t test was carried out to examine the differences among prisoners and non-prisoners in their levels of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

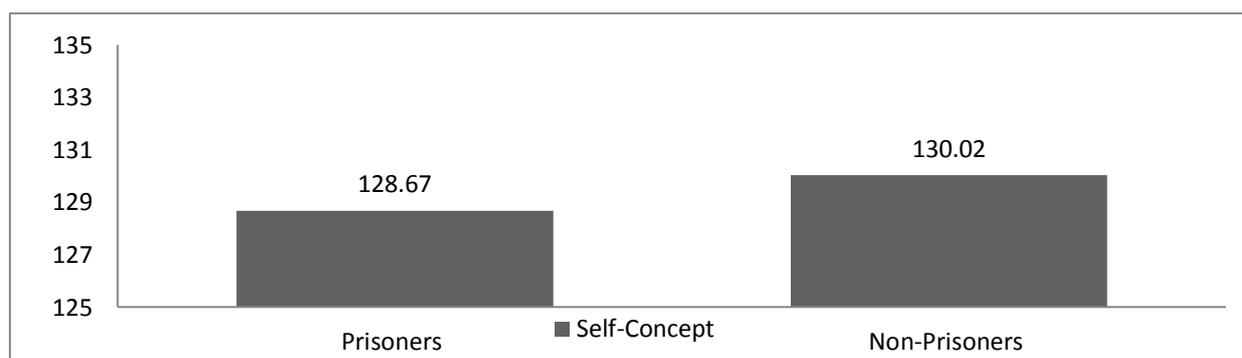
The results show that the mean scores of Prisoners in Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness is higher than Non-Prisoners whereas the Non-Prisoners have a higher mean score in Openness.

#### Self-Concept of Prisoners and Non-Prisoners

The scores obtained by prisoners and non-prisoners is discussed and interpreted in this part.

**Table 1.2:** Shows the scores obtained by Prisoners and Non-Prisoners in Robson Self-Concept Questionnaire.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Prisoners	30	128.67	34.089	.194	69	.846
Non-Prisoners	41	130.02	24.825			



**Figure 1.3:** Shows the mean scores of participants in Robson Self-Concept Questionnaire.

## Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners

Independent samples-t test was carried out to examine the difference in the level of self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners.

The obtained t value is .194 and the significance at 0.05 level is .846 indicating that there is no significant difference in self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners.

The mean score obtained by prisoners (128.67) is lower than the mean score obtained by non-prisoners (130.02) indicating that non-prisoners have a higher self-concept than prisoners, suggesting that non-prisoners are more self aware than prisoners.

### *Correlation between Personality Traits and Self-Concept*

**Table 1.4: Shows the results of the Pearson's Co-efficient of Correlation of the dependent variables Personality traits and Self-concept.**

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Self-Concept	-.494**	.424**	.160	.382**	.367**

Note: \* denotes that correlation is significant at 0.05 level.

\*\* denotes that correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Pearson's product moment co-efficient of correlation was carried out to determine if there existed a correlation between the five personality traits neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness and self-concept.

There exists a significant negative correlation between neuroticism and self-concept and a significant positive correlation between extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and self-concept respectively.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that prisoners have a higher level of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness than non-prisoners and that prisoners have lower level of self-concept than non-prisoners. The study also concluded that as the level of self-concept increases, the level of neuroticism decreases and as the levels of extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness increases, the level of self-concept also increases.

### *Implications*

1. The results can be used to plan interventions for prisoners to decrease their level of neuroticism and to help them cope better with their negative feelings, thoughts and emotions.
2. The results can also be used to incorporate interventions to increase the level of self-concept to help people be more aware of themselves in order to make rational decisions than impulsive decisions which may in turn lower the crime rates.

## REFERENCES

- Allport, G. W. (1937). *Personality: A psychological interpretation*. New York: H. Holt and. Company.
- Cattell, R. B. (1965). *The scientific analysis of personality*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Cauffman E, Steiner H, Duxbury E. (1999) Personality traits in juvenile delinquents: Relation to criminal behavior and recidivism: Violence and related psychopathology. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*; 38:256–62.

## Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners

- Costa Jr P. T. McCrae R R. (1985) Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO FF-I). Psychological Assessment Resources, Florida.
- Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. SE, 18: 1-64.
- Freud, S. (1923). *The ego and the id*. SE, 19: 1-66.
- Herson. M (2013) Comprehensive Handbook of Psychological assessment Vol 2: Personality Assessment. Hoboken, N J: John Wiley and Sons
- Johanna B. Folk, Debra J. Mashek, Jeffrey B. Stuewig, June P. Tangney, Kelly E. Moore, and Brandy L. Blasko. (2019) *Changes in Inmates' Community Connectedness across the period of Incarceration*. *Deviant Behav.*; 40(8): 897-911
- Kamaluddin MR, Shariff NS, Othman A, Ismail KH, Saat GA. (2015) *Linking psychological traits with criminal behaviour: A review*. *Asean J Psychiatry.*;16:135–47.
- Lewis, M. (1990). *Self-knowledge and social development in early life*. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality* (pp. 277-300). New York: Guilford.
- McLeod, S. A. (2008). Self-concept. Simply psychology. Retrieved on 15 February 2020. From: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-concept.html>
- McLeod, S. A. (2017). Theories of personality. Simply psychology. Retrieved on 15 February 2020. From: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/personality-theories.html>
- Moore KE, Milam KC, Folk JB, Tangney JP. (2017) Self-stigma among Criminal Offenders: Risk and Protective Factors. *Stigma Health*. 2018;3(3):241-252. doi:10.1037/sah0000092
- Mosaku, Kolawole & Akinsulore, Adesanmi & Onwuchekwa, IJ & Olanrewaju, Ibigbami & Fatoye, Femi. (2013). *Personality Traits among Inmates of Aba Prison in Nigeria: Influence of the Five Factor Model on Inmate Status and type of Offences*. *Nigerian Journal of Psychiatry*. 12. 9-15.
- Oluwasanmi. (2018) *A Comparative Study of the Self-Concept of Inmates and the Normals (NonInmates) In Nigeria*. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 23 no. 05, pp. 65-68.
- Rogers, C. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centered framework. In (ed.) S. Koch, *Psychology: A study of a science. Vol. 3: Formulations of the person and the social context*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Schuessler KF, Cressey DR (1950). Personality characteristics of criminals. *Am J Social*; 55:476–84.
- Sinha S (2015) Personality correlates of criminals: A comparative study between normal controls and criminals. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*. 2016 Jan-Jun; 25(1): 41–46. NIHMSID Published online 2015 Dec 23.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Chinmayee D & Dr Maheshbabu (2020). Personality traits and self-concept among prisoners and non-prisoners. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(3), 732-739. DIP:18.01.083/20200803, DOI:10.25215/0803.083