

Research Paper

Personality Traits, Age and Order of Birth: Predictive Factors of Deviant Behavior among Juvenile Delinquents

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescent engagement in morbid delinquency has grown exponentially not just in India but throughout the world, and this poses a serious issue for social and criminal justice. **Objective:** This study explores the relationship between personality traits—specifically neuroticism and extraversion—and demographic factors such as age and birth order to assess their predictive role in deviant behaviour among juvenile delinquents in India. **Materials and Methods:** This research study included 150 male juvenile delinquents from Delhi observation home and 150 Juvenile non-delinquents as controls aged 13–18 were assessed using the Indian adaptation of Eysenck's Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI) using purposive sampling. Demographic data on age and birth order were collected using a semi-structured interview schedule. Data were analysed using t-tests and ANOVA. **Results:** Juvenile delinquents exhibited significantly higher neuroticism and extraversion scores compared to non-delinquents ($p < .01$). Birth order showed a significant association with extraversion but not with neuroticism. Adolescents aged 16–18 demonstrated greater neurotic tendencies compared to younger participants. **Conclusion:** The findings suggest that personality traits and demographic factors like age and birth order can contribute to understanding juvenile deviance. These insights may help develop preventive strategies and inform juvenile justice policy reforms.

Keywords: *Delinquent, Deviant Behaviour, Personality trait, Age, Birth Order*

Is juvenile made or born? This question has baffled criminologists, sociologists, and psychologists for a long time and efforts have been made to determine the essence of criminality. The "nature versus nurture" controversy, sometimes referred to as the "born or made" argument, raises the question of whether criminal behaviour stems from genetic traits and is therefore irreversible or from social, situational, environmental, or other external variables. Sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) defined deviation as a transgression of established context-specific, cultural, or societal norms, such as codified law, mores, or folkways (Sumner, 2019). The time frame of adolescence is when teenagers have formed their identities, exercised their independence, and started to distance themselves from their

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major teachers. Suddenly, almost without warning, adolescents who were formerly concrete, black-and-white thinkers may suddenly think in shades of grey. They are now able to analyse circumstances using cause and effect, create hypothetical scenarios, and employ metaphors and other abstract symbols (Berlyne et al., 2003). Criminologists say when a child is exposed to an umbrella number of risk factors or variables, he/she may have a "high" risk of a negative outcome in the form of deviant behavior in their growing personality and an increased likelihood of antisocial behavior in their adulthood (Jung et al., 2018); (Farrington et al., 2015); (Fraser, 2004). Similarly, Statistical data also revealed that individual delinquent behavior is not the manifestation of one pre-reason and can never be predicted with complete certainty rather, it's predominantly affected by multiple interrelated factors such as dysfunctional families, cultures, social media, poorly maintained schools, peer scrutiny, law enforcement agencies, and juvenile justice status or other variables worldwide resulting from multiple interrelated factors rather than being affected by only one (Mbiri et al., 2017); (Ojo, 2012); (Dullas et al., 2021). As a result, the behavioural causes of all juvenile crimes include specific personality characteristics like indecision or lack of self-control (Bolger et al., 2018); socially apathetic behaviour (Antunes & Ahlin, 2017); dependency on drugs and alcohol (Brown & Shillington, 2017); (Chassin et al., 2016) and so forth.

Delinquent Behaviour & Personality Traits

Criminal or Antisocial behaviour is a manifestation of their criminally predisposed personality rather than continuing to believe that criminals slip up, make mistakes, cave into desires, or steal only to get by (Sinha, 2016). Gestalt psychologists contend that the sum of the parts must be considered in order to comprehend the whole. "Personality traits are defined as the fundamental attributions of enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts (Dullas et al., 2021); (Farrington et al., 2015). Eysenck was the first to examine the significance of personality traits in understanding criminal behavior. He argued that because people differ from one another in some dimensions, their differences and similarities may be measured and categorized (Eysenck et al., 1985). Eysenck posed the vital question, "Why do most people live seemingly innocent lives rather than choose a livelihood in crime"? He further said that people who lack conditioned moral and social responses—or a conscience, which results from having a poor ability to be conditioned and being extraverted—are more likely to engage in a criminal or deviant activity. The common assumption seems to be that psychoticism has a strong positive link with criminal and socially inappropriate behaviour in children, adolescents, and adults that leads to incarceration and admitted semi-criminal and antisocial behaviour. Although neuroticism is more strongly linked with criminal behaviour and violent tendencies in adults, extraversion appears to be much more closely related in juvenile populations than incarcerated adults (Eysenck et al., 1985).

Deviant behavior & Demographic factors

Age

Crime rates increase and peak during adolescence and decrease as an individual ages. The term "juvenile" refers to a child or a youngster who hasn't even reached the ages of maturity. (Rosmalinda & Suhaidi, 2019). The horrific violent crimes committed by six male defendants in the "Nirbhaya case" against a 23-year-old woman in New Delhi in 2013 sparked a public outcry in India that was intended to improve the country's outdated criminal justice system and raise awareness of juvenile antisocial behaviour and its remorseless nature (Sreeja V. N., 2013). In this case, the public was angered and intrigued about the

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relationship between the accused's mental maturity and the age at which the crime was committed.

1. When a criminal act is conducted with a criminal intention from that moment, it doesn't make any difference between the age and the criminal act, so why should age be a considerable fact?
2. Why cannot these remorseless juveniles be treated as adult criminals?

These questions have dominated modern criminology, psychology, and the criminal justice system and emphasized the need for more empirical research to realize just how limited our real advances in understanding the mental maturity of criminality have been.

Birth Order

Adler, A. (1928) was one of the first theorists to argue that birth order (first, second, or third child) can influence the personality of an individual. Adler suggested either the "road of the solitary child" or the "route to dethronement" exists for the first child. When a sibling joins, the first child suddenly loses all of the attention he had been receiving. A person's personality significantly influences the familial order in which they were born. Galton (2018) introduced the idea of birth order when he mentioned that nearly all well-known scientists were first-born children. As a result of this dethronement of sorts, the firstborn is purported to develop into a disciplined, prosperous, and high-achieving adult (Cundiff, 2013).

The Middle Child (Mc) is born into a world of ambiguous expectations and competing priorities. The youngest or oldest child typically receives the eldest child's attention. The phrase "middle child syndrome" seems to have been developed by middle children themselves as a result. The middle child experiences the "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia" syndrome because the child is forced to compete with an older sibling while attempting to detract from the younger child, who is the focus of their parent's affection. This childhood "syndrome" nurtures a highly autonomous and self-reliant adult personality (Cullen, 2015). Several pieces of research support the fact that birth order and delinquency have a curvilinear connection, and middle-born children are more likely to act out and commit violent crimes than first- and last-born children (Cullen, 2015); (Cundiff, 2013); (Argys et al., 2006); (Rahav, 1980).

Present Study

This research seeks to investigate the personality traits that cause the substantial negative cognitive change in their behaviour and demographic factors that endure over time as a root cause of antisocial behaviour. The following hypotheses were developed as part of the present study's objectives:

- **H1:** "Significant Difference in the Personality and its sub scale neuroticism and extraversion between Juvenile Delinquents and Juvenile Non-Delinquents".
- **H2:** "Significant Difference in the Personality traits within the male Juvenile Delinquents due to demographic factors such as Age & order of birth".

Sampling & Data Tools

In this study, 150 male delinquents, aged 13 to 18, from both rural and urban areas, had been chosen through purposive random sampling. They were referred to juvenile correctional institutions in India's National Capital Region (NCR) by a court order because they had committed delinquent acts like stealing, murder, drug abuse, or sexual offenses. For the

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study's control group, 150 male non-delinquents were chosen at random from various rural, urban, and semi-urban locations in the NCR region.

The personality traits (neuroticism, stability, and introversion-extroversion characteristics) were examined using the Indian adaptation of Eysenck's Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI), which was standardized by Jalota and Kapoor. There are 48 items in the inventory, with 24 items measuring each personality attribute dimension. Age and order of birth were used as demographic indicators to predict delinquent behaviour. Two scales were used in this study to assess age: 1 for the 13–15 age group and 2 for the 16–18 age group. A four-item scale was used to analyse birth order (1 = Single, 2 = Elder, 3 = Middle, and 4 = Younger). Both demographic characteristics were gathered for the current study using the Semi-Structured Interview Schedule. It was a self-reporting interview schedule. To compare and analyze the data using SPSS, preset scales and classifications were used. Various techniques, including the Independent T-test and one-way ANOVA were used to evaluate the two Hypothesis.

RESULTS

H1: “Significant Difference in the Personality and its sub scale neuroticism and extraversion between Juvenile Delinquents and Juvenile Non-Delinquents”.

Table 1 showed the descriptive measures of both juvenile delinquents and juvenile non-delinquents on personality and its subscales. The mean and standard deviation of personality scores of juvenile delinquents and juvenile non-delinquents are (M = 58.22, SD = 9.94) and (M = 50.95, SD = 11.35), respectively. The statistical analysis reveals that the t-value for the overall personality construct is (t=5.89*), which is significant at the 0.01 level. Table 1 also showed the mean scores, standard deviation, and t values of juvenile delinquents and juvenile non-delinquents on neuroticism are (M= 30.72, SD=8.86) and (M= 26.24, SD=8.98). The t value obtained was (t=4.34*), indicating a highly significant difference between the two groups at a significance level of 0.01. Similarly, the mean scores, standard deviation, and t values of juvenile delinquents and juvenile non-delinquents on extraversion are (M= 27.50, SD=3.77) and (M= 24.71, SD=6.74). The t value obtained was (t=4.41*), indicating a highly significant difference between the two groups at a significance level of 0.01. Therefore, the hypothesis (H1), which posited that there would be significant differences in personality and its subscales between juvenile delinquents and juvenile non-delinquents, has been accepted. The aforementioned findings indicate that the cohorts of individuals involved in delinquent behavior displayed elevated levels of neuroticism and extraversion traits when compared to those who did not engage in delinquency. This finding aligns with the scholarly investigations carried out by Samhitha and Sreedevi (2019) and Adesanya and Osinowo (2019). Specifically, the subscales of personality, such as neuroticism and extraversion, are robust predictors of delinquent behavior among juveniles.

H2: “Significant Difference in the personality trait within the delinquent’s group due demographic factors such as Age & order of birth”.

Discriminant analysis and one-way ANOVA were used for analysis, and the findings are displayed in Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Table 2 shows the results of the discriminant analysis in terms of mean score and standard deviation. Delinquents Age was divided into two groups: the 13–15 age group was categorized as 1, while ages 16–18 years were designated as group 2. The result shows that the mean difference and standard deviation between age groups between 16 and 18 for extraversion was (Mean=46.30, SD=8.356), while the mean for the 13–15 age group was (Mean=46.42, SD=9.851). Similarly, in the age

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group of 16–18 years, the mean score and standard deviation for neuroticism were 54.60 and 9.299, respectively, while for 13–15 years, the mean score was 53.30 and the standard deviation was 9.299. The result shows that there is a significant difference in their extraversion and neuroticism personality traits in both age groups, and adolescents of both ages are more inclined towards neuroticism. Similarly, the order of birth was divided into four categories: single, elderly, middle, and younger. Results of the neuroticism personality trait for a single child (mean = 58.83, SD = 10.59), the elderly (mean = 54.96, SD = 9.664), middle-aged (mean = 53.52, SD = 9.848), and younger children (mean = 50.15, SD = 9.762). On the other hand, in the extraversion personality trait, the mean score and SD of a single child were (Mean=46.08, SD=11.67); for the elder child (Mean=45.92, SD=7.110); for the middle order of birth (Mean=45.43, SD=9.048); and for the younger order of birth (Mean=48.62, SD=8.906). The results indicate that juvenile delinquents with younger birth orders exhibit the highest levels of extraversion, suggesting a greater tendency toward outward, social, or risk-taking behaviors. Meanwhile, those with an elder birth order display the highest levels of neuroticism, indicating a greater tendency toward emotional instability or anxiety-related traits. Therefore, the hypothesis (H2), which posited that there would be significant differences in the personality traits within the delinquent's group due to demographic factors such as age & order of birth, has been accepted. Table 3 divides delinquents aged 13-15 years into two groups; those aged 16-18 years are designated as group 2. The results indicated that the level of neuroticism varies significantly across the different ages ($F(1&73) = 4.146, p = .045$) as displayed in Table 5 and shows that there is a statistically significant difference between age and levels of neuroticism among delinquents. On the other hand, the level of the extroversion significance level is (.540), which is not significant at ($P > 0.01$), indicating that there is no significant difference between ages and extraversion. Similarly, Table 4 is used to determine if there would be no significant differences between a child's birth order and the personality traits of the delinquents. The result shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between birth order and the extraversion personality traits of delinquents because significance is at (.016), while the significance value for neuroticism is (.931), which is not significant at ($P > 0.01$); this explains why there is no significant difference between birth order and neuroticism.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated a significant difference in personality traits between delinquents and non-delinquents. Eysenck asserts that the idea of personality traits consists of two interrelated parts: the causal component, which encompasses environment and genetics, and the taxonomy or descriptive component. Together, these two elements help to understand the dynamics behind personality (Eysenck et al., 1985). According to Eysenck's (1976) hypothesis, persons who score below average on both the E and N traits are more prone to building a functional system of cognitive inhibitions. On the other side, those who have high levels of these traits will be less inclined to acquire conditioned inhibitions over their conduct, thereby increasing their likelihood of engaging in antisocial actions. Previous research by Samhitha, K., & Sreedevi, P. (2019) confirmed the findings, indicating that most juvenile delinquent boys were extroverts and antagonists. The study found that teenagers had the personality attribute of neuroticism, had no sense of purpose in life, and showed no desire to try new things. Similarly, Adesanya & Osinowo, 2019 revealed in their study that psychoticism and extraversion were more significantly predictive of delinquency in male delinquents in females. Further According to Eysenck's theory, the extroverted (E) is impulsive and seek adventure, while the introverted (I) are characterized by a quiet, reserved personality since they are cortically over-aroused and try to avoid stimuli in order to keep

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arousal levels at a comfortable, ideal level. Results found a low level of extraversion in delinquents; therefore, there is no significant difference in extraversion related to deviant behavior. This is consistent with the studies of (Dullas et al., 2021); (Aleksic & Vukovic, 2018), who stated the non-significance of the relationship between extroversion and deviant behavior on the contrary (Abdullah & Marican, 2016) revealed extraversion as a valid predictor of deviant behavior, which associates it with the probability to participate in deviant acts. On the contrary, the delinquent group's neuroticism score was lower than that of the non-delinquent group, which goes against Eysenck's original research. The fact that theft accounts for the majority of the crimes perpetrated by the delinquent group, with murder and sexual assault ranking second and third, could be one explanation. Consequently, the delinquent features have led to the determination that the N score is low. Studies by Dullas et al. (2021) and Aleksic & Vukovic (2018), which found no or little correlation with adolescents' aberrant behaviour, confirm this conclusion. The findings of studies by Abdullah and Marican (2016) however, indicate that individuals with high levels of this personality trait are more prone to feel unpleasant emotions that can be connected to conflict and may result in deviant behaviour.

Age

Both age groups (13–15 years and 16–18 years) of delinquents show a significant difference in their extraversion and neuroticism personality traits and are more inclined towards neuroticism. Anger, melancholy, anxiety, concern, and hostility have personal tendencies toward distress, high expectations, a low threshold for frustration, and inadequate and maladaptive coping mechanisms. These are only a few of the many aspects of neuroticism that are highly correlated with delinquent behaviour in adolescence (Weiss & Costa Jr, 2005). This result is supported by the research (Gungea et al. 2017); (Ter Laak et al.,2003), which showed a positive relationship between neuroticism traits and delinquency behaviour in adolescents. The degree of delinquent behaviour demonstrated by a person increases with their neuroticism feature.

Birth order

According to Alfred Adler, the most significant component in a child's personality development is not their birth order but rather how they interpret their environment (Adler, 1932). Researchers have used perceived or psychological birth order in their studies rather than actual birth order to operationalize the construct of birth order in a way that is most comparable to Adler's conceptualization. The meaning of psychological birth order is how a person perceives and interprets his or her place in the family (Ashby et al.,2003) It is possible for a child's psychological birth order to coincide with their actual birth order, although this is not usually the case. This argument may have shaped the child's family circumstances and socialization. For example, the firstborn may have been spoiled and treated like a younger child. Since there are many additional factors to take into account, it is crucial to remember that actual birth order is not the only factor that influences personality traits.

Since there are many additional factors to take into account, it is crucial to remember that actual birth order is not the only factor that influences personality traits. In some cases, this relationship cannot be deemed to be causative.

CONCLUSION

Adolescent delinquency is a grave problem that society and parents must confront head-on and manage delicately. Extreme circumstances are among the main causes of criminal behaviour, along with other elements like parental illiteracy, inadequate education, a poor neighbourhood, migration, peer pressure, cultural conflict, excessive internet use, frustration from a lack of opportunities, and so forth (Ferdousi, 2011). Since Adolescence delinquency is a kind of deviant behavior that is absurd, wrongful, and contrary to society's normative expectations and a direct outcome of specific conditioning experiences. It is important to study the relationship between one's psychological condition, a criminal act, and the following punishment to rebuild the antiquated, retribution-based juvenile justice system with a modern one that is based on deterrence and reformation. Despite the fact that it has conclusively proven in several instances that juveniles not only committed unlawful acts but did so with the explicit understanding that they were unlawful and prohibited by the law. In cases involving children, the simple fact that they have not reached adulthood serves as a mitigating factor. Therefore, Forensic Psychologists who work with the juvenile justice system try to understand why a child or adolescent must violate a taboo, a social condone, or a law rather than just investigating a crime as a law enforcement officer.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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TABLES

Table 1: Mean, SD and 't' values on the variables of Personality and its sub scale between Juvenile Delinquents and Juvenile Non -Delinquents

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Level of significance
Personality	Juvenile Delinquents	150	58.22	9.94	298	5.89*	Significant
	Juvenile Non-Delinquents	150	50.95	11.35			
Neuroticism	Juvenile Delinquents	150	30.72	8.86	298	4.34*	Significant
	Juvenile Non-Delinquents	150	26.24	8.98			
Extraversion	Juvenile Delinquents	150	27.50	3.77	298	4.41*	Significant
	Juvenile Non-delinquents	150	24.71	6.74			

Table 2: Mean and SD of (Extroversion and Neuroticism) show observe the difference in demographic factors such as (Age & Order of Birth) within the delinquent's group.

Demographic		Extroversion	Neuroticism
Age	N	90	90
	Mean	46.30	54.60
	SD	8.356	9.299
16-18	N	60	60
	Mean	46.42	53.30
	SD	9.8519	9.299
Total	N	150	150
	Mean	46.50	52.43
	SD	8.9527	10.038
Birth Order			
Single	N	12	12
	Mean	46.08	58.83
	SD	11.67	10.59
Elder	N	26	26
	Mean	45.92	54.96
	SD	7.11	9.664
Middle	N	72	72
	Mean	45.43	53.52
	SD	9.04	9.848
Younger	N	40	40
	Mean	48.62	50.15
	SD	8.90	9.762
Total	N	150	150
	Mean	46.42	53.30
	SD	8.952	10.03

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Table 3: One-way ANOVA to show the difference in personality traits (extraversion and neuroticism) due to demographic factor Age.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Neuroticism	Between Groups	288.747	1	288.7	4.146	.045
	Within Groups	5084.640	73	69.65		
	Total	5373.387	74			
Extroversion	Between Groups	40.910	1	40.91	.380	.540
	Within Groups	7866.877	73	107.7		
	Total	7907.787	74			

Table 4: One-way ANOVA to show observe the differences in personality traits due to delinquents Birth order.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Neuroticism	Between Groups	33.096	3	11.032	.147	.931
	Within Groups	5340.291	71	75.215		
	Total	5373.387	74			
Extroversion	Between Groups	1060.429	3	353.476	3.665	.016
	Within Groups	6847.358	71	96.442		
	Total	7907.787	74			