

Research Paper

Intelligence of Juvenile Delinquents: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted on the sample of 200 male adolescents drawn equally from delinquent and non-delinquent group. Delinquents (100) consisted of those who had violated the law and were lodged in the observation homes. The non-delinquents counterparts (N=100) consisted of those who had not committed any crimes. The subjects selected for the two samples were compared with each other in terms of their intelligence score. General Intelligence Test (GIT) developed by S.M. Mohsin (1990) was used to assess the level of verbal intelligence of subjects under study. The statistical comparison of different groups of delinquents and non-delinquents with each other in terms of their level of intelligence revealed that all the groups of delinquents were not found to differ significantly between themselves in terms of their intelligence scores but they differed significantly with their non-delinquent counterparts. Although, it was found that delinquents and non-delinquents differed significantly in terms of their intelligence indicating that delinquents had lower intellectual abilities than those of the non-delinquents group.

Keywords: *Juvenile delinquents, non-delinquents, Intelligence and Bihar*

Constant exposure to violence, no fear of law and lack of understanding about the consequences of committing a crime have made children prone to violence (Times of India, Jan 18, 2015). A major area of psychological inquiry involves the possible relationship between intelligence and crime. Criminologists working in the early 20th century often argued that intelligence is strongly associated that criminal behaviour. People with low intelligence, they argued, were much more likely to engage in crime and violence than people with high intelligence were.

Intelligence or intellectual ability has long been recognised as a major factor influencing human behaviour. Superior intelligence undoubtedly serves as a basis for a better performance in whatever area the man is placed. Low intelligence, on the other hand, is a definite handicap to the efforts of the individual in his attempts towards better adjustment.

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The delinquent behaviour is also affected by intellectual factors. It is commonly observed that intelligent persons in teenagers perform delinquent act in rather refined manner. Early studies by Goring and Goddard found low intelligence as the single factor influencing juvenile delinquency. In India, Kundu (1969) found delinquents to be inferior intelligence. In contrast, some researchers have found delinquents to be more intelligent than normal (Muthayya & Bhaskaran, 1964).

Over the last few decades, much attention has been paid to a comparison of the intelligence levels of juvenile delinquents as compared to the general juvenile population. Samples of juvenile delinquents, drawn for the most part from court-arraigned cases, have been found to be lower in tested general intelligence than the child population series upon which the major intelligence tests were standardized. Terman, in standardizing the revised Binet, found that approximately 50 per cent of his one thousand selected American school children fell between an IQ of 93 and 108 and that the remainder fell above and below in equal proportion. Only .33 per cent had IQ's below 65 and only 2.6 per cent had IQ's below 75. In comparison, Healy and Bronner, in their 1926 court sample, reported 13.5 per cent of their cases as mentally deficient, and Merrill reported 23 per cent of 1731 Los Angeles court delinquents as mentally deficient with IQ's below 70. Merrill, however, pointed out that her sample contained an unknown proportion of Mexican-born and Mexican ethnic stock children of presumed bi-lingual backgrounds. In a second California court sample of 500 cases from a territory having a more homogenous ethnic stock, she reported 11.6 per cent as mentally deficient. Relatively, similar findings have been reported for other delinquency samplings, some more selective and others less selective than total court intake.

A number of studies have found a negative relationship between IQ and delinquent involvement. Historically, it has been thought that children of low intelligence were unable to distinguish right from wrong (Godard, 1914; Goring, 1913). However, Woodworth (1963) showed that delinquents know as well as non-delinquents what acts are socially acceptable. At any rate, the average difference of eight IQ points typically found between delinquents and non-delinquents is hardly enough to suggest moral retardation (Hirschi and Hindelang, 1977). Another possibility is that delinquents with low IQs are more easily apprehended than other delinquents and are therefore disproportionately represented in samples studied (Haskell and Yablonsky, 1974). The relationship between low IQ and delinquency remains, however, even when delinquency is determined by self-report (Hirschi and Hindelang, 1977; Weis, 1973; West and Farrington, 1973). It is possible that low IQ children self-report more readily than high IQ children, but it seems unlikely that greater likelihood of detection fully explains the relationship between low IQ and self-reported delinquency.

In contrast, Hirschi & Hindeland (1977) and others propose that intelligence influences directly the amount of reward available to a child for performance in school. Youths with lower IQs experience frustration in school, obtain fewer generalized rewards for conforming behaviour and go on to engage in antisocial acts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study had focused on institutionalized male delinquents. By institutionalized delinquent is meant here only those delinquents who have violated the law and lodged in some institutions, such as observation homes. Non-delinquents having not any criminal antecedents have also been included in order to examine whether delinquents and non-delinquents differ in of their intelligence scores.

HYPOTHESIS

1. Different groups of juvenile offenders will not differ significantly between themselves in terms of intelligence score.
2. There will be significant difference between the juvenile offenders and non-offenders in terms of their scores on intelligence

METHOD

Sample

Sample of the present study was consists of 100 juvenile offenders divided into petty (40), serious (44) and heinous (16) offenders and an equal number of non-juvenile offenders (100). Juvenile offenders were chosen for the study by the method of purposive sampling whereas Simple random sampling method was used for selection of non-juvenile offenders. Sample of Juvenile offenders were selected from different observation home and non-offenders were belongs from different district in Bihar. All the respondents were between 13-16 years of age and belonged to lower class families. All of them were boys and had an elementary knowledge of reading and writing in Hindi.

Instruments

Intelligence Test:

General Intelligence Test (GIT) by S.M. Mohsin (1990) was used to assess the level of verbal intelligence of subjects. It consists of 156 items under six sub-tests namely, logical reasoning, analogies, similarities, odd-one out and language ability. Its test-retest reliability and split-half reliability as reported in the manual are 0.89 and 0.95 respectively. Validity co-efficient of the general intelligence test is 0.54.

Procedure: As some of the respondents were simply literate the scale was first transformed into as interview schedule so that the task of data collection could be easily accomplished. But before starting the procedure of interview an attempt was made to establish a rapport with them mainly with an aim to ensure the collection of their genuine and honest responses. The process of rapport building continued at least for 15 minutes for each of the subject. Convinced of the intention of the investigation, the subjects extended their sincere participation and full cooperation. This was quite evident from their willingness to participate in the study, as well as their often searching enquiries about the findings there of.

RESULTS

Statistical analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Table 1 consists of the findings of statistical comparison between different groups of delinquents and non-delinquents in terms of their level of intelligence.

Table1: Comparison of different delinquent and non-delinquent groups and their relative standing in terms of their level of intelligence

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio				
				A	B	C	D	
A	40	91.05	7.9	x	1.14 (NS)	1.48(NS)	-6.12*	
B	44	88.93	9.03	x	x	.53(NS)	-7.47*	
C	16	87.56	8.2	x	x	x	-5.83*	
D	100	100.19	8.01	x	x	x	x	

Note: A= Petty criminals, B= Serious criminals, C= Heinous criminals and D= Non-delinquents; NS= Not significant, * significant at .01 level

An inspection of table 1 reveals that different group of delinquents, as compared to non-delinquents, were found to have significantly lower levels of intelligence. The results further revealed that petty, serious and heinous group of delinquents did not differ significantly between themselves. Moreover, it was found that the non-delinquents had relatively a higher level of intelligence followed by petty, serious and heinous delinquents. Thus, while the delinquents, on the whole, had the lower intelligence levels, the non-delinquents were relatively the higher levels. The present findings are quite in line with the results of the earlier studies (Bano, et al. 2009; Katsiyannis, & Ryan, 2008; Shulman, 1951) in which delinquents were low achievers, deficient, empty headed, pointless and simple minded has been reported. A minor whose intelligence level is low and is devoid of proper education is more prone to become involved in delinquent conduct (Middha & Tomar, 2017).

All the groups of delinquents, especially heinous criminals were found to be more messed up to intelligence and its various manifestations as compared to their non-delinquent counterparts. Further, there existed no significant differences between petty and serious delinquents, petty and heinous delinquents and between serious and heinous delinquents in terms of intelligence score. Moreover, the statistical comparison made at intra-group level also exhibit similar trend. However, all the groups of delinquents, such as petty, serious and heinous delinquents differed significantly from the group of non-delinquents counterparts on the intelligence score.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results showing all the groups of delinquents, as compared to their non-delinquents counterparts are lower in intelligence scores and fairly agree with the earlier findings. A recent study have shown that delinquents in general have lower intelligence level, low learning achievement, poor school attendance and having difficulty coping with cognitive abilities as compared to their non-delinquents counterparts. Poor cognitive development and lower IQs during early childhood could explain the association between low academic achievement and delinquency (Washerman, et al, 2003). Numerous studies have shown that delinquents verbal IQ tend to be lower than their non-verbal IQs (Moffit, 1993). Delinquents also have lower mean global IQs and lower school achievement rates compared with non-delinquents (Fergusson & Horwood, 1995; Maguin & Loeber, 1996).

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The findings of this study may prove that delinquents and non-delinquents differed significantly in terms of their intelligence score indicating that delinquents had lower IQs than the non-delinquents. Needless to say, delinquent behaviour is one of the burning social issues of the day affecting adversely cross-sections of the population. Thus, the problem needs to be analyzed comprehensively. However, the present study is a modest approach in this direction.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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