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Criminal Behaviour as a Function of Personality Factors and Mental Health

*¹Sujeet Kumar¹Researcher, Department of Psychology, Patna College, Patna University, Patna, Bihar, India.

Abstract

The present empirical study was conducted on 200 adult criminals imprisoned for bailable offence and 200 adult criminals imprisoned for non-bailable offence i.e. the sample comprised of criminals (N=400) imprisoned for cognizable and non-cognizable offences. They were selected from the different jails of Patna district using purposive sampling technique. The criminal respondents were selected in such a way they must be equal in respect of moderate crime or non-cognizable offences committed by them (group-I, N=200) and severe or heinous crime or cognizable offences committed by them. (Group-II, N=200). So, study is based on ex-post-facto research design. The purpose was to investigate into the personality traits (impulsivity and aggressiveness) and mental health amongst two groups of criminals. It was hypothesized that there will be significant difference between the two groups of adult criminals in terms of

- i). Impulsivity
- ii). Aggressiveness and
- iii). Mental health. For the purpose Hindi Adaptation of 16PF Questionnaire by S.D. Kapoor.

MHCL by Kumar along with PDS were used for the measurement of variables under investigation and to seek the necessary information about the adult criminals. The obtained data were analysed and treated using chi-square. The hypotheses were retained. It was concluded that higher degree of impulsivity, aggressiveness and poor mental health are responsible for bailable and non-bailable criminal offence amongst criminal adults.

Keywords: Criminal behaviour, personality, mental health, impulsiveness, aggressiveness

Introduction

The present study embodies several concepts like crimes and criminal behavior, impulsivity, aggressiveness and mental behavior. Crimes are defined as acts or omissions forbidden by law that can be punished by imprisonment due to offences like murder, robbery, rape etc. criminal behaviors are the manifested actions in terms of crime in the term of bailable and non bailable offence. Criminality refers to personality profile that causes the most alarming sorts of crime. The personality traits under references are impulsivity and aggressiveness. Impulsivity is a tendency to act on a whim, displaying behaviour characterized by little or no forethought, reflection, or consideration of the consequences (Wikipedia. https.). Aggressiveness refers to behaviour characterized by or tendency towards unprovoked offensives, attacks, invasions, or the like, militantly forward or menacing, aggressiveness acts against other. It also refers to making on all-out efforts to win or succeed.

Review of literature reflect the fact that several studies have been conducted in abroad in relation to the various factors underlying criminal behaviour. Violence and crime which is often addressed as the product of aggression (Feshbach, 1964 and Anderson, Bushman, 2002) [8, 1]. However, Anderson and Bushman (2002) [1] claimed that although violence is

described as aggression, in many instances it is not considered to be violent. Aggression is described as an overt behaviour carried out intentionally to harm another person who is motivated to avoid the harm (Bushman, Huesmann, (2010) [4]. A variety of mechanisms linking aggression and violent behaviour have been proposed. The available evidence indicates that aggression has been of long-standing interest among social scientists especially in violence related studies (Piquero, MacDonald, Dobrin, Daigle, Cullen, 2005) [15]. Aggression is often assessed in relation to behavioural and conducts problems (Goodman New, 2000) [11]. A study by Warren *et al.* established a significant relationship between aggression and antisocial behaviour, which may lead a person's involvement in violent activities, including murder. Early research on aggression highlighted aggression as the basic ingredient of violent crime (Feshbach, 1964) [8]. Since then, many theories have been created to determine how it contributes to violent behaviour. According to Buss (1961) [6], aggression is characterized as the outcome of the links between emotions (anger), thoughts (hostility), and aggressive behaviour. One of the models that have been used in criminological studies is the Four Structure Aggression Model (AM) by Buss and Perry (1992) [5].

Buss and Perry's (1992) [5] AM describes four dispositional sub-traits of aggression. The types of aggression are: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility (Buss, Perry, 1992) [5]. The strong theoretical foundation of these four types of aggression as a global conceptualization of aggression is well evidenced in many violence related literature's (Buss, 1961 and Harris, 1995). [6].

According to the Buss, Perry (1992) [5], both physical and verbal aggression reflects the instrumental or motor component of aggression, usually conceived as premeditated means of obtaining some goals and to harm the victim. The facet of physical aggression consists of kicking, beating, and hurting (Trninic, Barancic, Nazor 2008). Examples of verbal aggression include shouting, threatening, and insulting others (Trninic, Barancic, Nazor 2008). The second component of AM is cognitive (Buss, Perry, 1992) [5]. Hostility reflects the cognitive component of aggression which involves negative feelings such as feelings of ill will, opposition and injustice directed towards others. Hostility is a cognitive reaction of perceived threat or insult which differentiates it from instrumental aggression. The third component of aggression is emotional (Buss, Perry, 1992) [5]. This emotional component reflects anger. According to Buss, Perry, (1992) [5], this emotional component of aggression is usually conceived as impulsive, thoughtless and driven by anger. This emotional component of aggression said to be the result of perceived provocation which motivates to harm the target. In AM, anger often acts as a psychological bridge which connects both instrumental and cognitive components (Buss, Perry, 1992) [5]. Aggressive behaviour seems to be the outcome of the frustration due to hindrances in goal attainment (Berkowitz, 1990). In the neurobiological perspective, aggression has been linked with high levels of testosterone and low levels of certain neurotransmitters such as serotonin (Dabbs Jr. Riad, Chance, 2001) [7]. Aggression has also been linked to genetics (Bock, Goode, 1996 and Ferguson, Beaver, 2009) [3, 9] and social learning (Hale, 1998 and Landsford, 2012).

Other predisposing factors for aggression include genetic factors, the fetal environment, obstetric complications, the rearing environment, biologic factors, and psychiatric disorders such as substance abuse, psychosis, depression, and ^personality disorders (Feshbach, 1964) [8]. Ferguson *et al.* (2008) [10] evidenced that personality factors are more critical than environmental factors in developing aggressive traits in an individual. However, it was argued that there is no single factor credible enough to determine the root of aggression (Rappaport, Thomas, 2004). The current consensus is that aggression is multi determined (Sarchiaopone, Carli, Cuomo, Marchetti, Roy, 2009). Earlier research had highlighted aggression as the basic ingredient of violent crime (Feshbach, 1964) [8]. The findings from the accumulated literatures. Huesmann, Miller, (1994), Anderson, Bushman, (2002) [1], Berkowitz, (1993) [2] and Delva-Taui'ili, (1995) indicate that aggression leads to violence. Anderson and Bushman (2002) [1] claimed violence as aggression; has the goal of extreme harm, including death,

The fore going references are indicative of the fact that almost negligible studies have been conducted in Indian context relating to the offences of criminal behaviour. This justifies under taking of the present study.

Objectives

The study intends

- i). To make a comparison between groups of criminals committing bailable and non-bailable offences in terms of their impulsivity.
- ii). To make a comparison between groups of criminals committing bailable and non-bailable offences in terms of their aggressiveness.
- iii). To make a comparison between groups of criminals committing bailable and non-bailable offences in terms of their mental health.

Hypotheses

- i). There will be significant difference between groups of criminals committing bailable and non-bailable criminal offence in terms of their impulsivity trait of personality.
- ii). There will be significant difference between groups of criminals committing bailable and non-bailable criminal offence in terms of their aggressiveness trait of personality
- iii). (There will be significant difference between groups of criminals committing bailable and non-bailable criminal offence in terms of their mental health.

Design: Expost facto Research design was used

Method of Study

Sample of the Study: The sample comprised of criminals (N=400) imprisoned for cognizable and non-cognizable offences. They were selected from the different jails of Patna district using purposive sampling technique. The criminal respondents were selected in such a way they must be equal in respect of moderate crime or non-cognizable offences committed by them (group-I, N=200) and severe or heinous crime or cognizable offences committed by them. (Group-II. N=200).

Tools Used

- i). PIB was used to seek the necessary information about criminals such as their personal background, their family background like type of the family, size of the family, birth order (ordinal position), urban rural inhabitation, socio-economic condition etc.
- ii). 16 P.F. Questionnaire (Hindi) developed by Kapoor S.D. was used to measure personality trait like impulsivity and aggressiveness of the criminals. The scale is suitable for Indian population. The scale is reliable and valid.
- iii). Mental Health Check-List by Kumar, P. was used to measure the mental health of the respondents. Components of the mental health were covered in the 11 test items (six items in Part-A and five items in Part-B) provides four alternatives response graded to a four point scale i.e. always (4), often (3), sometimes (2), rarely (1). The reliability of inventory was determined by split half method using odd-even procedure. Overall reliability and validity was found quite satisfactory.

Results

Table 1: Chi-square showing a comparison between group-I and group-II in terms of impulsivity personality trait of factor F at 16 PFQ

Respondents	N	Impulsivity		X ²	df	p
		High (N=258)	Low (N=142)			
Group-I	200	44% (N=114)	61% (N=86)			
				5.84	1	<.01
Group-II	200	56% (N=144)	39% (N=56)			

It is clear from the results of table 4.01 that more than 56% (N=144) of criminals of high impulsivity group belong to group-II and only 44% (N=114) of this group belong to group-I. On the other hand more than 61% (N=86) of low impulsivity group of criminals belong to group-I and only 39% (N=56) of this group belong to group II. The chi-square showing association of impulsivity with criminal behaviour was found significant ($X^2 = 5.84$; $df = 1$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis number-01 is retained. It was hypothesized that impulsivity will be positively and significantly correlated to criminal behaviour, which was retained. The findings might be interpreted on the ground that impulsivity is the instant trait of human being characterized by negative traits accompanied by stress, depression, aggression, anxiety etc. leading to the action without examining its severe consequence as reactions.

Table 2: Chi-square showing association of aggressiveness with criminal behaviour committed by criminals of group-I and group-II

Respondents	N	Aggressiveness		X ²	df	p
		High (N=270)	Low (N=130)			
Group-I	200	44% (N=119)	62% (N=81)			
				6.54	1	<.01
Group-II	200	56% (N=151)	38% (N=49)			

It is clear from the results of table-4.04 that more than 56% (N=151) of criminals of high aggressive group belong to group-II and only 44% (N=119) of this group belong to group. On the other hand more than 62% (N=81) of low aggressive group of criminals belong to group-I and only 38% (N=49) of this group belong to group II. The chi-square showing association of aggressiveness with criminal behaviour was found significant ($X^2 = 6.54$; $df = 1$; $p < .01$). Thus, sub-hypothesis number 1.02 is retained. It was hypothesized that aggressiveness will be positively and significantly correlated to criminal behaviour, which was retained. The findings might be interpreted on the ground that impulsivity is the instant trait of human being characterized by negative traits accompanied by stress, depression, aggression, anxiety etc. leading to the action without examining its severe consequence reactions. Further, the findings might be interpreted on the ground that the degree and duration of aggressiveness is a function of criminal offence. The longer is the duration and higher is the degree of aggression severe is the criminal behaviour committed by the offender. The findings of the present study is very much similar to the finding relating to the trait impulsivity.

Table 3: Chi-square showing a comparison between criminals of group-I and group-II in terms of their mental health

Respondents	N	Mental Health		X ²	df	p
		Sound (N=90)	Poor (N=310)			
Group-I	200	65% (N=59)	40% (N=124)			
				13.54	1	<.01
Group-II	200	35% (N=31)	60% (N=186)			

It is clear from the results of table-4.08 that more than 65% (N=59) of criminals of sound mental health group belong to group-I and only 65% (N=31) of this group belong to group-II. On the other hand only 40% (N=124) of poor mental health group of criminals belong to group-I and more than 60% (N=186) of this group belong to group-II. The chi-square showing association of mental health with criminal behaviour was found significant ($X^2 = 13.54$; $df = 1$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis number-02 is retained. It was hypothesized that mental health will be positively and significantly correlated to criminal behaviour which was retained. The findings might be interpreted on the ground that criminal who are committing cognizable or non-bailable criminal offences (group-II) are more characterized by cognitive disorientation or dysfunction than the criminals committing non-cognizable offences which are bailable (group-I). In other sense that it can be concluded that mental health of group-II criminals are poorer than the criminals of group-I due higher degree of cognitive disorientation or dysfunction on the part of criminals of group-I them group-II leading to manifest poor mental health accompanied by distorted thought and action and there by commitment of cognizable and non-cognizable offences.

Conclusion

- Impulsivity as a personality trait is conducive to criminal behaviour amongst criminals. Person belonging to high impulsivity group are more prone to cognizable as well as non-cognizable criminal offence.
- Aggressiveness as a personality trait is conducive to criminal behaviour amongst criminals. Person belonging to high aggressiveness group are more prone to cognizable as well as non-cognizable criminal offence.
- Mental health as a psychological trait is a significant contributor to criminal behaviour. Person possessing sound mental health are less likely to prone to criminal behaviour.

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