

Credentials of Juvenile Delinquents and Non-Delinquent in Anxiety Level, Home & Health Adjustment

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ABSTRACT:

Despite the attention it is currently receiving, delinquency is not a new phenomenon. Three hundred years ago John Locke, the great English educator, deplored delinquency is much the same vein as we do today. Six thousand years ago, an Egyptian priest carved on a stone, "Our earth is degenerate... children no longer obey their parents". Nevertheless current rates of delinquency are reason for serious concern, not only in the India, but in most other countries as well. From the beginning, in every civilized society, a definite punishment system was prevailing to check the criminal behaviours. According to sociologists the ancient punishment system did not discriminate between the criminal according to their age, sex or situations. After a long period, a liberal and reformatory view was developed regarding the punishment of children. In this connection, initiative was taken by Chancery Court of London in 1975, who has given some special facilities to the criminals of certain age groups. It was the beginning and on this account special courts and reformatory centres are established in different parts of the world.

KEY WORDS: Criminal behaviour, delinquency

INTRODUCTION:

Young children do not have a complex and realistic a view of themselves and their world as they will have at a later age. They have less self-understanding and have not yet developed a stable sense of identity and an adequate frame of reference regarding reality, possibility and value. Immediately perceived threats are tempered less by considerations of the past or future and thus tend to be seen as disproportionately important. As a result, children often have more difficulty in coping with stressful events than do adults (Compas & Epping, 1993; Kepel Benson & Ollendick, 1993).

Children also are more dependent on other people than are adults. Though in some ways this dependency serves as a buffer against other dangers, it also makes them highly vulnerable to experiences of rejection, disappointment, and failure. On the other hand, although their in experience and lack of self-sufficiency make them easily upset by problems that seem minor to the average adult, children typically recover more quickly from their hurts (Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 1998). Moreover, many problematic behaviours and threats to adjustment emerge over the course of normal development (Kazdin, 1992). Indeed, several behaviours that characterize maladjustment or emotional disturbance are relative common in childhood. Despite the some what distinctive characteristics of childhood disturbances at different ages, there is no sharp line of demarcation between the maladaptive behaviour patterns of childhood and those of adolescence, nor between those of adolescence and those of adulthood.

So far criminal behaviour is concerned, there is also a difference of age and punishment system between a child criminal and an adult criminal. The child criminal is called juvenile delinquent whereas an adult criminal is called basically a criminal.

DELINQUENT:

It has been observed that the delinquents differ more or less from the normal population in their range of intelligence, educational achievement, personality, their adjustment to the problems of life and both the nature and the rate of their emotional development.

The I.Q. of several delinquent groups have been found out to distributed themselves in a normal scatter, but with the centre at some point between 82 and 88 instead of at normal 100. The extreme usually vary from below 50 to above 150. The majority of these delinquents (60%) could be classed as normal or low normal, 4 per cent were bright and 2 per cent brilliant, 11 per cent border line and 21 per cent definitely defective (Quay, 1965).

There seems to be little, if any thing the matter with the native social capacities of the delinquents, although many of them become maladjusted because they express their social talents in anti-social ways. In general, they make friends readily. Some delinquents have distinct qualities of leadership. Williams (1934) has observed the participation in social activities of 100 delinquents and 100 non-delinquents boys of the same age and intelligence. The delinquent boys showed greater increase in participation from the lower to high ages than the non-delinquent and a consistently higher average participation at all ages. In his study, delinquents were unpopular, enough with their teachers and other school officials. But once they are on playground, they participate freely and naturally in whatever is going on.

Those who have studied delinquents, regard them as emotionally unstable individuals. They are bored with ordinary ways of living and thus they want excitement and change. They have unusual reactions to the stresses of everyday life. They will not submit to normal social restrictions but set about making their own rules. All observations and tests show that delinquents differ from normal children mainly in their emotional reactions. In the study of Williams (1934), it was found that of 1343 delinquents 97 per cent showed emotional disturbances in their home relationship. In another study, Bowlby (1934) found that while normal children tend to blame themselves for their own shortcomings and to criticize delinquents for being antisocial behaviour in others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

ANXIETY LEVEL:

Anxiety is one of the basic personality variables which affects adversely the behaviour of an individual. Undoubtedly, it has played a key role in theories of psychological stress and adjustment for many decades. As a matter of fact, no condition has been as widely deemed to be at the root of human misery and adjustive failure as anxiety. Needless to mention, this variable has a link with almost all social and pathological problems including delinquent behaviour.

Exploring psychiatric aspects of Juvenile Delinquency, Bovet (1951) has reported that insecurity leads to tension and anxiety which are manifested in the form of aggressive behaviour directed to society. As a result, the individual may suffer from the feeling of guilt. This feeling further causes anxiety and thus the vicious circle is repeated again and again. In the India, a few attempts have also been made to examine the effect of anxiety on delinquent behaviour. Rao and Sen (1979), for example, have found that delinquents have more feelings of anxiety than non-delinquents. Using a free-floating anxiety scale, it has been reported that truants are significantly more anxious as compared with non-truants (Krishna, 1980). Similarly, Singh (1981) has observed that delinquents score significantly higher on anxiety than non-delinquents. But, Kaliappan and Senthilathiban (1984) have found almost the same level of anxiety among delinquents and non-delinquents. In a study Prasad and Reddy (1980) have also observed delinquents and normal groups as identical in respect of their scores on anxiety and insecurity dimensions.

Motivated from the above contradictory findings the present paper was undertaken. In this connection, it was hypothesized that the "two groups, identified as delinquents and non-delinquents do not differ significantly

from each other on anxiety level". To verify this hypothesis the two groups were compared in terms of their anxiety scores with the help of t-test and findings were presented in table 1.

Table-1
COMPARISON OF DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT SUBJECTS IN RESPECT OF THEIR ANXIETY

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Delinquent	120	87.45	12.42	9.63*
Non-delinquent	120	73.88	10.97	

* Significant at .01 level.

The findings as presented in table 1 would reveal that delinquent group has scored significantly higher (Mean = 87.45) on anxiety scale than the non-delinquent group (Mean = 73.88). The comparison of the two means has yielded a t-value of 9.63 which is significant beyond .01 level of confidence. The significant t-value indicates that delinquents have more anxiety in comparison to the non-delinquents. Therefore, the null hypothesis formulated in the present context does not gains support from the present findings.

The findings of the present paper are in line with our day to day observations and many empirical studied conducted in this area. Delinquents after and before their antisocial acts are more anxious due to social pressure and legal boundaries. They often feel threats from their parents and family members. Delinquents have generally been found to be socially assertive, defiant, ambivalent to authority, lacking in self control. Many of these traits appear defensive in nature, reflecting impaired self-concepts and feeling of inadequacy, emotional rejection and frustration of needs for self-expression (Gold and Mann, 1970). Conger and Miller (1966) have reported that delinquents are significantly more likely than non-delinquents to perceive themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as 'lazy', 'bad', 'sad', and ignorant. After studying in Indian Cross-cultural settings, Rao and Sen (1979), Krishna (1980) and Singh (1980) have faced that delinquents are more anxious than nondelinquents. However, Kaliappan and Senithilathiban (1984) and Reddy (1980) have found reverse trend of findings for the two groups. In this regard it can be concluded that some more and more studies are needed in this direction before reaching any conclusive remark.

HOME ADJUSTMENT:

Adjustment is a psychological process by means of which the individual manages or copes with various demands or pressures in the environment. This process plays an active role in shaping and moulding his behaviour as well as in need reduction. Individual developed certain psychological needs which are satisfied through interaction with the environment. However, he/she does not satisfy these needs smoothly, and some times faces obstacles in the process. This generates frustrations, stresses, conflicts and anxiety. Needles to mention, the adherence psychological situations do not disturb the mental make-up of all individuals to the some extent. In this connection it can be questioned that, what is the role of adjustment in crime or delinquency. Keeping this question in mind the present paper was undertaken and consequently it was hypothesized that "the two group of subjects, identified as delinquents and non-delinquents do not differ significantly from each other in terms of their home adjustment. To test this hypothesis the two groups were compared in respect of their scores on home adjustment dimension with the help of t-test. The findings were presented in table 2.

Table-2
COMPARISON OF DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT SUBJECTS IN RESPECT OF THEIR HOME ADJUSTMENT

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Delinquent	120	13.02	6.87	4.35*
Non-delinquent	120	9.64	6.89	

* Significant at .01 level.

It is evident from table 4.02 that delinquents have scored significantly higher (Mean = 13.02) on Bell Adjustment Inventory in comparison to the non-delinquents (Mean = 9.64). Needless to say that high score on the inventory is indicative of poor adjustment and vice versa. Therefore, we can say that delinquents have poor home adjustment than nondelinquents. Since the comparison between the two means has yielded a t-value of 4.35 which is significant at .01 level of confidence, the hypothesis formulated in the present context is being rejected. To conclude, it can be say that home adjustment is a substantial variable is differentiating delinquents and non-delinquents. It is also a fact that non-delinquents are better is their home adjustment than their delinquent counterparts.

HEALTH ADJUSTMENT:

Health adjustment was defined in terms of mental and physical illness. Physically as well as mentally unhealthy person are sad, depressed, short tempered, anxious and showing maladjusted behaviours. Is any connection exists between health adjustment and delinquency among the adolescents? To answer this question, in the present paper, it was hypothesized that "the two groups, identified as delinquents and non-delinquents do not differ significantly from each other in terms of their health adjustment". To verify this hypothesis the two groups were compared in respect of their scores on health adjustment dimensions. The findings were summarized in table 2.

Table-3
COMPARISON OF DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT SUBJECTS IN RESPECT OF THEIR HEALTH ADJUSTMENT

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Delinquent	120	13.11	7.52	3.11*
Non-delinquent	120	10.24	6.90	

* Significant at .01 level.

From table-3, it is evident that the delinquent subjects have scored (Mean = 13.11) significantly higher (indicative of poor adjustment in health dimension) on Bell Adjustment Inventory in respect of their nondelinquent counterparts (Mean = 10.24). The comparison of two means ($t=3.11$) was also found to be significant beyond .01 level of confidence. It indicates that the two groups, the delinquent and non-delinquent differ significantly in terms of there health adjustment. It is also obvious from the findings as presented in table, that delinquents have more health problem than non-delinquents or normal adolescents. Therefore, the null hypothesis formulated in the present context is being rejected by the present findings.

The findings of the present paper are in expected direction and matched with our day-to-day observations. Delinquents due to their criminal environment face more restrictions and apathy from their family members as well as from the society. In particular, they appeared to feel less capable of establishing close personal relationships with either peers or adults, especially the letters. They described themselves as having fearless interests in life, and emerged as generally lacking in enthusiasm. Not expectedly, they appeared significantly less impressed by the dominant ethical values and goals of own culture than their non-delinquent matches. These all conditions produce more tension, anxiety and stresses among them and ultimately they suffer from certain health problems.

CONCLUSION:

It may be pointed out that psychological variables as covered in the present paper are not exhaustive. Some attempts should also be made to highlight the role of motivational structure, parental behaviour, insecurity and value system of the male as well as female adolescents in the development of delinquent behaviours. In spite of certain limitations of the present study, it may prove to be a guideline for further researches conducted in this area.

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