

PERSONALITY PREDICTORS OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The survey data measure the tendencies of cognitive self-control and deviant act behavior as a component to identify the personality factors as predictors of criminal behavior. It studies the impact of personality against the extended psychological factors which help in the predisposition of youth towards such behavior. Participants in the study were 130 Indian college-going students in the age group of 18-27 yrs. The correlation analysis has revealed that four out of five personality domains have shown a clear negative correlation towards the dimensions of deviant acts and cognitive abilities. But the dimensions measured against the factors risk-seeking, impulsivity, and physical activity have shown a clear positive relation. The regression analysis has confirmed that the domains Neuroticism and Agreeableness have accounted for 25.4% of the variance in predicting the cognition controls to criminal behavior and 3.6% of the variance in predicting the deviant act behaviors. These findings then extend to understand the concepts associating between personality and self-control and behavioral measures as indicators of criminal behavior.

Keywords: Personality, Criminal Behavior, Cognitive self-control, Deviants acts behavior, Neuroticism, Agreeableness

INTRODUCTION

Criminal behavior generally is described as the behavior that breaks a set of rules that govern society. Criminal behavior has become popular in the recent discipline of research. It is playing a crucial role in discussions of crime in every scenario and suggests ways to deal with the underlying factors of crime causation. Personality is one such component contributing to criminal behavior (Eysenck, 1985). It is necessary to study criminal behavior as the combination of complex factors of an individual towards criminality. Bandura explained behavior as a host of interrelated factors which cannot be set apart by a single element (Bandura, Reese, & Adams, 1982). Factors such as age, coping skills, personality, level of social and financial support, and the ability to hold on to their own cognitive and behavioral controls can be related to the context of criminal behavior of an individual. Thus, calling for the necessity to study and identify behavior patterns to predict future behavior for predispositions into such deviances. As Pavlov emphasized, mere information is not beneficial for the scientific and social community; going into depth verifying the reason for a behavior change can help formulate preventive measures. The focus hence shifts to extracting individual contributing factors and then to view their contributions. The perspectives drawn from several paradigms for this study have enlightened the views described by Eysenck linking crime and personality (Burgess, 1972). Believing that the late adolescent/College going age of an individual to register effective developmental changes, this group was critically focused in this study. The personality factors have been majorly studied under various conditions upon offenders, non-offenders, students, juveniles, and other subpopulations by many psychologists (Bartol & Bartol, 2005) (Singh, Singh, Sinha, & Kumari, 1985) (Sinha, 2016) (Warren, 1960).

This study defines personality as a set of characteristics by using Allports description of personality as "the dynamic organization of the psychophysical systems within an individual determining his/her unique adjustments to their environments" (Allport, 1937). It has answered the questions like how the construct of personality has been developed over time in the field of psychology to study criminal behavior for the developmental basis as indicators of predisposition. Many psychologists have used a variety of indicators such as cognitive self-control, life courses, and developmental criminology to understand criminogenic needs and behaviors (Tittle, Ward, & Grasmick, 2003). The criminal behavior is thus measured by the help of cognitive self-control and deviant acts behavior of a person supporting the General crime theory/or the Self-control theory by Gottfredson and Hirschi studying the conditional influences of opportunity (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Although it is unrealistic to assume that personality is the only cause of the behavior, the exclusion of multiple psychological components leaves the theory of criminal behavior incomplete. This study will determine if personality and behavioral patterns document the relationship between the increasing frequencies of serious acts towards criminality and crime.

RATIONALE BEHIND THE STUDY

The progress of a nation is majorly dependent upon the youth. According to the 2016 WHO review, youth violence is considered a global public health problem (Sagar, 2018). Youth involvement in behaviors that violate social and legal norms has become the subject of interest to researchers with many theoretical approaches to handle such situations. A non-criminal (youth), for instance, gains respect through achievement and fulfilling the opportunities they get. When this opportunity turns into a relationship between propensity, exposure, and crime involvement, the individual develops an attitude towards such behavior and attaches to it by defining its favoring outcomes. Exposure to Criminal behavior among youth (college-going students) is on an immense rise. We should not ignore the fact that such behavior can be easily learned and starts to overtake. These challenges, problems should have a solution.

Hence this current study is built on to see the extent of the psychological factors that help in predisposing the inclination of the youth towards such behavior. Personality is related to various types of criminal behavior with a range of measures, in a variety of situations, with a variety of individuals. Identifying and relating the contributing factors of such is very much needed in all possible approaches.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives thus framed for the current study are

- To understand the relationship between big five personalities, cognitive self- control and deviant behavior among college students.
- To explore the personality predictors of criminal behavior among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A simple random sampling technique was used in this study to select the participants of the study. A maximum of 130 college students consisting of 62 male and 68 female population ranging from 18-27 years of age as subjects for the study (N=130). The study includes research participants from various colleges who have consented to take part in the study by taking the paper-pencil tests that are administered.

Instruments

The study participants are given a set of three questionnaires relating to personality, cognitive self-control, and deviant acts behavior along with demographic details and the instructions to follow.

NEO Personality Inventory: The NEO-PI test developed by Costa, McCrae, 1978, was used to examine a person's Big Five personality traits (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). The scale used for the study is the shorter version of the original NEO-PI, which is NEO-FFI, which only consists of 60 out of the 240 questions/ statements. They all examine the five major domains and also enable us to study the six facets under each dimension. Items in the scale are answered based on Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (McCrae & Costa, Jr., 1999).

Deviant Acts Behavior Test: The deviant acts behavior test is a Self-reported deviant act/ behavior scale developed by David P. Farrington in 1973. This test investigates seven factors that are known to predict delinquency- family income, family size, separations, parental criminality, parental supervision, educational attainment, and non-verbal intelligence. The scale consists of a total of 38 items, each categorizing its acts into four types- Active Theft (T), Aggressive Acts (A), Under Age Acts (U), and Minor Acts (M). Each item in the questionnaire identifies whether the participant has committed the act during a certain time in a Yes/No format. It also estimates the number of times the participant committed the act within a specific range or exact number. (Farrington, 1993).

Cognitive Self-Control Test: Cognitive self-control is a test measuring the preferences of impulsivity, risk-seeking, temperament, self-centeredness, simple tasks, and physical activities, developed by Grasmick in 1993. This test provides psychometric validity to the dimensions distributed within the scale. It consists of six elements that are known to dispose at an early age of an individual. The scale consists of 24 items, and the response under each item is measured upon a Likert scale. Interestingly they are found to be most similar in individuals (Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik Jr, & Arnekiev, 1993).

PROCEDURE

Firstly, a review of the available research work provided with the aim to with structured body of knowledge by identifying factors, causes, enablers, and consequences underlying the phenomenon of criminal behavior. The formulation of objectives has led to targeting the specific areas of focus and gave a structure to the research design. After selecting the standardized questionnaires, the administering of tests was done both by online and

offline platforms. Participants online were shared Google forms via e-mail Ids and phone numbers with a link to the respective demographic details, three scales, and the instructions to fill the form are attached. Also, the research participants from various colleges who have given their consent to the study have taken the same paper-pencil tests. All the queries were answered patiently, either personally or via phone, and expressed gratitude for their cooperation. The information collected from the participants was kept confidential. A quantitative method of examination was adapting to signify the data collected. The data collected from the psychological assessments were further analyzed using SPSS software for descriptives, Correlation, and Stepwise Linear Regression to develop the predictor models.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study considered a total of 130 samples, among which 62 were male participants, and the remaining 68 were female participants. Data analysis included the comparison of mean, standard deviation, bivariate correlation, and regression analysis of the demographic, dependent, and independent variables.

Table 1: Showing mean and standard deviation of the demographic variables

Demographic Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	22.08	1.981
Education	1.49	.502
University Type	1.88	.618
Size of Family	4.29	1.158
Order of Birth	1.65	.869
Monthly Income	239638.46	509621.291
Living with	3.16	.766
Place Currently Staying	2.98	1.042

N= 130

Table 1 of the analysis shows the descriptive analysis of the demographic variables used in the study. The mean and standard deviations of the demographic characteristics identified are concerning the student involvement in the research. Life conditions of the students who participated are categorized as age, education & university, size of family, birth order, monthly income, with whom & where they live. The mean age of the participants observed was \bar{x} = 22.08 years. The data analyzed has not shown much difference to any regular household with a small family of four people (\bar{x} = 4.29, SD= 1.158) and living with both their parents (\bar{x} = 3.16, SD= 0.766). A majority of the participants do fit the urban lifestyles (\bar{x} = 2.98, SD= 1.042) with a steady socio-economic background. The individual characteristics such as education (\bar{x} = 1.49, SD= 0.502), Type of university (\bar{x} = 1.88, SD= 0.618) of the participant remained unchanged as most of them have fit the criteria (UG/PG) of the selection set for the study. The applicability of the results gathered from demographic variables is emphasized to form a relationship between the population to the sample collected.

Table 2: Showing bi-variate correlation of the combined scores of personality and cognitive self-control.

V	I	S	R	P	Sc	T
N	.097	.417**	.019	-.186*	.020	.339**
E	.111	-.152	.015	.220*	-.011	-.221*
O	.034	-.054	.193*	-.143	-.047	-.033
A	-.139	-.172	-.227**	.029	.462**	-.432**
C	-.047	-.443**	-.039	.325**	-.178*	-.170

N= 130

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

(N=Neuroticism, E=Extroversion, O=Openness, A=Agreeableness and C=Conscientiousness, I=Impulsivity, S=Simple Tasks, R=Risk Seeking, P=Physical Activities, Sc=Self Centered, T= Temper, V= variables)

Table 3: Showing bi-variate correlation of combined scores of personality and deviant acts behavior.

V	M	U	Ag	AT	M
N	-.088	-.051	-.143	-.145	.065
E	.072	.011	.038	.091	.029
O	-.088	-.121	-.243**	-.184*	-.029
A	-.114	-.261**	-.184*	-.088	-.126
C	-.120	-.125	-.026	-.008	-.176*

N= 130

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(N=Neuroticism, E=Extroversion, O=Openness, A=Agreeableness and C=Conscientiousness, M=Minor Acts, U=Underage Acts, Ag=Aggressive Acts, AT=Active Thefts, M=Miscellaneous, V= variables)

The next step for this study was to investigate the correlation between personality and cognitive self-control and between personality and deviant acts behavior. Table 2 of the correlation analysis shows the dimension-wise relationship between Personality and Cognitive self-control. The results of the analysis show a negative correlation with the domains extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and positive correlation with neuroticism. Though a majority of the domains of cognitive self-control direct positive relation with personality, the dimensions simple tasks, risk-seeking, self-centeredness, temper, and physical activities direct a negative relationship. (See table 2). Table 3 of the correlation analysis shows the dimension-wise relationship between Personality and Deviant acts behavior. The results indicated a strong negative correlation for all the domains of personality. Also, it highlights the highly significant negative relation of Openness and Agreeableness towards under-age acts, Aggressive acts, and active theft. Extroversion is one such personality domain that remained positively correlated to all the categorized dimensions determining that an individual's tendency in accepting and taking an opportunity to perform at any time is what matters to involve oneself in criminal and other activities (see table 3). The low Cognitive self-control and high neuroticism correlation analysis confirm the individual's inability to control his/her thought process. The measure of high neuroticism in previous researches has established low emotional tendencies. Similarly, they may persuade an individual into criminal behavior. These findings also show some significance over deviant acts behavior but are not specific to determine one's potential to the point of acceptance to commit an offense. The results of correlations are mostly in concordance to many previous studies.

Table 4: Showing Regression of stepwise multiple linear regression in predicting cognitive self-controls by Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

Variables	Beta(β)	R	R ²	Δ R ²	F
(Constant) Agreeableness	18.427	.475	.226	.220	37.389
	-1.986				
(Constant) Agreeableness	17.057	.504	.254	.242	21.579
Neuroticism	-1.875				
	0.560				
N=130					

Table 5: Showing Regression of stepwise multiple linear regression in predicting deviant acts behavior by Agreeableness

Variables	Beta(β)	R	R ²	Δ R ²	F
(Constant) Agreeableness	1.496	0.190	0.036	0.029	4.812
	-0.349				

The further step was to explore the association between personality traits and cognitive self-control and deviant act behavior using regression analysis. Predictor models are generated from the coefficient and the model summary from the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis. The analysis has confirmed that Neuroticism and Agreeableness accounted for a 25.4% variance over Cognitive self-control. The total variability was directed positively with neuroticism and negatively with Agreeableness. A regression equation was found significant at F= 21.579 at p < .001 level of significance with an R² of 0.254 (See table 4). Regression has also confirmed that Agreeableness accounted for a 3.6% variance with deviant acts behavior. A regression equation was found significant at F=4.812 at a p < .001 level of significance with an R² of 0.036 (see table 5). An individual's vulnerability towards criminal behavior may explain the relation of the predictor (neuroticism and Agreeableness) and outcome (cognitive self-control & deviant acts behavior) variables. For instance, the negative sign of Agreeableness in the model may correlate to the choices that an individual makes. Also, the positive sign of neuroticism may correlate to the neurotic personality concerning criminal behaviors.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to reveal the relationship between personality, cognitive self-control, and deviant acts behavior by generating personality models that could identify the factors that lead to adapting criminal tendencies. The personality traits relating to the low cognitive self-controls towards risk-seeking, impulsivity, aggressive act from the results of this study have shown high negative deviations. The high neurotic and low-emotionality of the person may help us identify the predisposing behaviors of an individual. The results shown

by these measures in predicting the personality traits in the student population are highly significant to cognitive-based (thought & idea) than deviant acts (action) predictions in determining the criminal behaviors/tendencies. We know that the lack of self-control produces a significant impact on the ability to determine social and cognitive controls. This study was developed on the conceptual framework that criminal behavior is multifactorial, similar to that of an individual's personality. It is the reason why the significant personality factors affected by the cognitive and behavioral patterns are considered vital predictors to identify the vulnerabilities and susceptibilities of an individual. Above all, to prevent youth from adopting criminal behaviors, identifying individual behavior and defining their psychological characteristics is essential. Interdisciplinary studies of personality with cognitive, behavioral, and functional approaches may help develop targeted interventions and dispose of the propensities.

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