

# Comparing personality traits between normal and delinquent juveniles in Tehran, Iran

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## Abstract

The present study is an attempt to compare personality traits between normal and delinquent juveniles in Tehran city. To this end, a causality-comparative design was adopted as research design. Study population consisted of all high school boy students in 19 districts of Tehran city and delinquent juveniles in Tehran Correction Center in 2013. A sample group of 120 members (60 normal and 60 delinquent) was selected and provided with Neo (form) questionnaire. Frequency percentage distribution showed there was difference between personality traits of normal and delinquent juveniles. Personality traits were surveyed and compared using Chi Square test and as the results showed, there was significant difference between the two groups in this regard.

**Keywords:** personality, personality traits, delinquency, adolescence

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## Introduction

The issue of delinquency among children and juveniles is a serious problem in all societies in the world. Once it was an issue only in industrial countries, however, it is now a global problem following industrial development and urbanism (Najafi Tavana, 2006). Juvenile delinquents are subject to several factors, which can be classified under two main psychology and social-cultural theories. There is a third theory that deals with biological factors that seeks root of delinquent behaviors in biochemical effects caused by cerebral trauma, chromosome disorders, or poor nutrition (Mednik, 1989, 1985 cited from Afrasiani, Akbarzade, 2007). Doubtlessly, due to specific biological, emotional, mental, and spiritual situations, the juvenile and the youth undergo a critical period of their life, which has profound effect on health and growth of a society. Therefore, further study on this period of human growth is essential (Saqhzade Arani, 2012). To have better perception and

understanding of mental world of juveniles, two key points should be taken into account:

1. Juveniles' way of thinking about themselves, classmates, peers, adults, children, siblings, and parents.
2. Juveniles' way of thinking about tasks, future goals, wishes, desires, and their plans for future. (Ahmadvand, 2007)

Nobody has doubt about importance and role of personality on life. Personality is a container that contains all psychological processes. It actually is a gradual and evolutionary phenomenon that is influenced by many internal and external factors including hereditary, physical specifications, and social conditions (Shamlu, 2005). Personality and its specifications is an old debate and have drawn attention of many theoreticians. Studies on personality can be tracked back to ancient Greece (Sharifi, 2001). Researchers in personality fields have examined relationships between personality traits and other psychological aspects of individuals and there

is great volume of literature in this regard (Shoultz, 2005). Studies based on five-factor model of personality by Kasta Mckery have shown that there is relationship between personality traits and crime commitment (Blonigen, 2009). A study by John Caspi, Robing, Moffitt and Stouthmrmer (1995) based on five-factor model showed that delinquent boys at age range 14-16 who had used illegal drugs and psychedelic drugs had less points, comparing with normal group, regarding personality factors such as responsiveness, openness, and agreeability toward experience and higher extroversion point. (Walton and Roberts, 2009)

Personality is a stable set of specifications and tendencies that highlights similarities and differences of psychological behaviors of individuals (thoughts, emotions, and actions), which are observable over time and might be or not easily detectable by social and biological pressures. (Maddy, 1972, cited from Karimi, 2010)

Studying and recognizing personality is helpful both to satisfy curiosity and to understand social mutual relationship. Having required knowledge and information about personality is not only useful to understand specific behaviors at different stages, but it rather is useful to prevent personality disorders and problems. (Karimi, 2010)

Mccrae (1985) and Costa (1987) conducted a wide study in Baltimore National Health Center and determined the five key factors of personality including extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Shoultz, 2009). Some personality traits make people to show adaptive and balanced behaviors in different life situations. Thereby, studying delinquency among children and juveniles is important when we take into account dynamic nature of adolescence and usual pressures caused by the society such as drugs, social conflicts, family breakdown, poverty, war, and so on, which lead juvenile toward criminal life (Moazami, 2009). Taking into account that adolescence is a critical period, through which individuals are faced with serious challenges in growth and development, it is essential to study and uncover personality traits of juvenile. Results of such study can be helpful for parents, trainers, and education officials to deal better with juveniles.

### **Hypotheses:**

- 1- There is significant difference between normal and delinquent juvenile regarding personality traits.

### **Literature review**

Khanekeshi and Tasahmadi (2007) conducted a study titled “comparing personality traits of normal and delinquent juveniles in Ahvaz, Iran” and found that there was significant differences between the two groups of participants regarding excitability, obsession, isolation, depression, paranoid thoughts, aggression, anxiety, and anti-social desires. Variance analyses also showed that there was significant difference between the two groups of study regarding the eight variables under study.

Bahrami (2008) carried out a study titled “surveying outbreak of mental disorders among inmates and normal people.” The results showed that inmates had significantly higher point regarding anxiety, developing phobias, physical problems, neurotics, depression, paranoid thoughts, aggression, inter-personal sensitivity, and obsession.

In a study “surveying roots of behavioral disorders among juveniles with emphasis on burglary, and paraphilia” Ahadi (1985) achieved following results:

1. There was significant correlation between histrionic personality and behavioral disorders.
2. There was significant relationship between anti-social personality and behavioral disorders.
3. There was significant relationship between the way of spending leisure time and behavioral disorders.

A study by Mashhadi Farahani (1991) titled “the effect of mental disorders on delinquency among boy and girl juveniles in Tehran” showed that there were several mental factors (e.g. depression, inferiority complex, OSD) which are effective in outbreak of crime. (Cited from Ebrahimnasab, 1999)

Nozari (1996) performed a study titled “surveying the relationship between personality type and ranking crimes” and concluded that there was a relationship between disease symptoms, physical problems, and obsession on one hand and crimes ranking on the other hand. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between aggression, phobia, paranoid thoughts, anxiety, and neurotics among the subjects. (Cited from Molaies 89, 1996)

Amouzegar (2008) surveyed personality traits of criminal and normal juveniles and showed that the former had high neuroticism points and lower points regarding three traits of flexibility, acceptability, and consciousness. In addition, no significant difference was observed between the two groups regarding extrovert trait.

A study titled "personality traits of juveniles who use marijuana" examined the relationship between using marijuana and personality traits of 146 junior and senior high school students. Study used California personality inventory and a version of alcoholic juveniles' problems scale. The results from the first questionnaire showed that points of the marijuana users were considerably less than those of others. (cited from Molaie, 2010)

Shaqai and Qorieshi (2000) conducted a study on the field of determining personality traits of criminal and normal individuals (100 criminals and 90 normal individuals) in Qazvin. The study used a 16 factors Ketel test. Data analyses showed that criminal and normal people were different regarding personality traits of neurotics, extroversion, and flexibility. The results meant that:

1. Criminal individuals had higher points of domination and aggression comparing with normal individuals.
2. Criminal individuals were less reliable, لاقيد, and less resilient comparing with normal individuals.
3. Criminals were more dependent, day dreamers, inexperienced,
4. Criminals had lower expectations, more worries, anxiety, and sense of guild.

Kashani (2001) studied 107 criminals to survey their personality and personality traits. T-value obtained for this group showed that the criminals group were significantly different from the control group regarding, anxiety, feeling lonely, desire to depression, and emotional sensitivity. In addition, the criminal group had higher points regarding aggressive behaviors comparing with the results of neurotics scales. (Cited from Molaie, 2010)

Heidari Pahlevan et al. (2003) showed in their study "comparing personality traits of drug addicts and healthy individuals in Hamedan" using MMPI test that the addicts had significantly higher points of clinical scales. (Cited from Molaies, 2010)

Hosseiniabadi (2008) carried out a study titled "personality traits of criminal and normal juveniles in West of Tehran" and showed that there was significant difference between the two groups regarding seclusion and depression. However, difference regarding, excitability, aggressiveness, anxiety, paranoid thoughts, anti-social desires was not significant. (Cited from Khanekeshi and Tasahmadi, 2007)

Berzinal (2000) concluded that criminal behaviors are effective short-term coping response by criminals. Egnew, Berzina, Wright, and Cullen (2002) showed that criminal behavior is featured with different psychological traits and some of them included less intelligent, high levels of aggressiveness, impatience, longing for excitement, lack of solidarity with others, and low levels of moral reasoning. In addition, the criminals have lower sense of self-respect and experience emotional problem since adolescence.

There are also several studies on families of delinquent juveniles and general results of these works are as follows:

1. There is a significant relationship between broken down families and delinquency;
2. Families of delinquent juveniles lack discipline, and order;
3. There are emotional gap between delinquent juveniles and their parents;
4. Marital maladaptation is common in families of delinquent juveniles;
5. Absence or violence by the father increases criminal behaviors among juveniles;
6. Along with decrease of parental support, criminal behavior increases among juveniles;
7. Emotional negligence and physical violence are common in families of delinquent juveniles. (Adams et al., 1994, p. 466)

Glueck and and Glueck (1950) surveyed 500 normal and 500 delinquent juveniles and through a comparative study showed that there were considerable differences between two groups regarding quality of family environment. In addition, quality of interactions among the family members was different considerably regarding the following matters:

Small percent of normal boys and 54% of delinquent boys were from families featured with poor

interaction among their members. Delinquent juveniles reported crime, immoral behaviors, sexual abuse, aggression, lack of personal health, and alcohol addiction in their families. As the results showed, these experiences had considerable effect in growth of criminal behaviors among boy juveniles. Comparing with normal boys of whom 81% had good relationship with their fathers, only 40% of the delinquent juveniles had such relationship. These figures regarding good relationship with mother were 81% and 48% respectively. (Ahmadi, 1985)

**Methodology**

The study was carried out based on a comparative-causality design (ex post facto). Study population was comprised of high school boys in 19 districts of Tehran city and delinquent juveniles in Tehran Correction Center. A study group with 120 members (60 normal and 60 delinquent boys) in 2013 was selected through simple random sampling. So that, one district was selected randomly out of the 19 districts, afterward, one high school was selected randomly in that district, and then, three classes were selected and 60 students were selected randomly based on random numbers table. To select the delinquent participants, 60 literate juveniles who had been kept in the center were selected randomly.

**Research tools**

Short form of personality five-factor scale: the scale consisted of 60 questions designed to measure five main factors of personality briefly. The scale was designed by Mccury and Casta (19992) who showed that correlation of the subscales of the short form and long form ranges from 0.77 to 0.92. In addition, internal consistency of the subscales ranged from 0.68 to 0.86. The questions are scored based on Likert’s five-point scale (completely disagree =1,..., completely agree = 5). Cronbach’s alpha for extroversion was 0.75, 0.79 for openness, 0.79 for conscientiousness, 0.80 for agreeableness, and 0.83 for neuroticism. Rezaei et al. (2013) obtained alpha coefficients for extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism equal with 0.73, 0.68, 0.87, 0.68, and 0.86 respectively.

Reliability and validity of the scale have been obtained and confirmed for Iranian humanities students; so that factor structure of the scale was the same as the version used for American European societies (Kiamehr, 2002). Reliability of the subscales based on internal consistency was obtained for extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism equal with 0.76, 0.61, 0.78, 0.54, and 0.79 respectively. Zarei and Asadi (2011) reported reliability of extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism equal with 0.75, 0.79, 0.79, 0.79, and 0.83 respectively.

**Findings**

**Table 1- Distribution of personality traits**

Groups	Neuroticism	Extroversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Normal	%7.6	%25	%5	%7.16	%7.46
Delinquent	%20	%7.16	%3.13	%7.16	%3.33

As listed in the table above, 6.7% of the normal juveniles were characterized with neuroticism and this figure for the delinquent juveniles was 20%. Moreover, 25% and 16.7% of normal and delinquent juveniles were characterized as extrovert respectively. Regarding openness, 5 and 13.3% of the

normal and delinquent juveniles were characterized with this trait respectively. In addition, 16.7% of normal juvenile and the same percentage of delinquent juveniles were characterized with agreeableness. Finally, 46.7% of normal juveniles

had conscientiousness personality trait and this figure for the delinquent group was 33.3%.

**Hypothesis:** There is a significant difference between normal and delinquent juveniles regarding personality traits.

To test the hypothesis, Chi square test was used.

**Table 2- Personality traits of normal and criminal juveniles**

	Value	DF	Sig.
Pearson Chi square	606.8	4	072.0

Chi square showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups. That is, there was no significant difference between the normal and delinquent juveniles regarding personality traits.

**Discussion and conclusion**

Personality traits of normal and delinquent juveniles living in Tehran were compared. The study was carried out based on causality –comparative design with study population comprising high school boys in 19 districts of Tehran and delinquent juveniles kept in Tehran Correction Center in 2013. A sample group with 120 participants was selected randomly and the participants were asked to fill in Neo (form) questionnaire. Frequency percentage distribution showed that there was difference between the normal and delinquent juvenile regarding personality traits. The traits were compared and surveyed using Chi square test. The results showed no significant difference between the two groups in this regard. The results are inconsistent with Khanekeshi and Tas Ahmadi (2007), Bahrami (2008), Mashhadi Farahani (1991), Nozari (1996), and Amouzegar (2008). Khanekeshi and Tasahmadi (2007) conducted a study titled “comparing personality traits of normal and delinquent juveniles in Ahvaz, Iran” and concluded that there was significant differences between the two groups of juveniles regarding excitability, obsession, isolation, depression, paranoid thoughts, aggression, anxiety, and anti-social desires. In addition, variance analyses also showed that there was significant difference between the two groups of study regarding the eight variables under study. Bahrami (2008) showed in a study titled “surveying outbreak of mental disorders among inmates and normal people” that prisoners had significantly higher points regarding anxiety, developing phobias, physical

problems, neurotics, depression, paranoid thoughts, aggression, inter-personal sensitivity, and obsession. In addition, paranoid thoughts, compulsive obsession, and inter-personal sensitivity were the main areas of disorders. A study by Mashhadi Farahani (1991) titled “the effect of mental disorders on delinquency among boy and girl juvenile in Tehran” indicated that there were several mental factors (e.g. depression, inferiority complex, OSD) which were effective in outbreak of crimes (cited from Rbrahimnasab, 1999). Amouzegar (2008) surveyed personality traits of criminal and normal juveniles and concluded that the former had high neuroticism points and lower points regarding three traits of flexibility, acceptability, consciousness. Furthermore, no significant difference was observed between the two groups regarding extrovert trait.

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