

## **Antisocial Behaviors in Incarcerated Children and Adolescents**

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The Present study was intended to investigate the antisocial behaviors in incarcerated juveniles in Peshawar KP. To compare the antisocial personality traits between juvenile delinquents up to 14 years of age with age ranging between 15- 18 years. A sample of sixty (N=60) detained children and adolescent boys with age range of 12-18 years was selected through non-random sampling. A questionnaire was constructed to measure the presence of antisocial behaviors in children and adolescents. The statistical analysis of the data revealed that the prevalence and frequency of antisocial personality traits is higher in juvenile delinquents whose age is more than 15 years as compared to those whose age is below 14 years.

**Keywords.** Juvenile delinquency, antisocial behavior, and incarcerated adolescents

Crime is one of the oldest and most intensively studied topic in the social sciences. Crimes are actions that breach the law. "When violation of the law are committed by persons defined by the legal system as juveniles, these violations are considered acts of delinquency. About three fourth of the states in the United States of America, define juveniles as persons under 18 years of age (Arnett, 2007)."

The extensive research on crime revealed some consistent findings that the great majority of crimes are committed by young

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people mostly males who are between the ages of 12 and 25 years (Eisner, 2002).

Juvenile delinquency is a broad term that takes into account many diverse forms of antisocial behavior by a minor. In general, most criminal codes describe juvenile delinquency as “Behavior that is in violation of the criminal code and committed by a youth who has not reached adult age” (Roberts, 2004).

Juvenile Delinquency refers to a special category of crimes committed by young offenders, usually those between 7 and 18 years of age. Delinquent behavior comprise such acts as destruction and damaging of property, violence against other people and various behaviors that are not in accordance to the needs and rights of others and violation of society’s laws (Henggeler, 1998).

From a social or legal point of view, the term juvenile delinquent refers to any adolescent who breaks the law” (Brandt, 2006). Adolescents, have a propensity to immerse in risk-taking behavior at a higher level than the older generation. “They are likely to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and sex in ways that cause great alarm among parents and teachers” (Brandt, 2006). Moore and Arthur (1989) described delinquent behavior as “neglect of duty or violation of the law, as well as by persistent antisocial, illegal, violent, or criminal acts.”

Delinquency includes criminal law violations, such as those listed in FBI’s *Uniform Crime Reports* that would be considered crimes if committed by an adult. As such, a delinquent is a juvenile offender who has been judged by an officer of a juvenile court (Inciardi, 2005).

The involvement in antisocial and delinquent behavior is common during adolescence but all juvenile delinquents do not turn into adult criminals. Eddy, Reid & Curry (2002) concluded that the age of first arrest has been one of the more clearly illustrated predictors for ongoing criminal behavior. Delinquency peaks at about age 15 and then declines (Peterson, 1993). Depending on the age of first arrest different labels are assigned to juvenile delinquents but researchers have generally approved two groups: early starters and late starters (Moffit, Caspi, Dickson, Silva, & Stanton 1996; Patterson & Yoerger, 2002).

Early starters arrested before or equal to age 14 years, and late starters are arrested after age 14 (Patterson & Yoerger, 2002). Longitudinal research indicated that adolescents who persistently and

habitually engage in delinquent behavior during middle adolescence are more likely to instigate antisocial and delinquent activities before entering the period of middle adolescence (Naginet *al.*, 1995; White *et al.*, 2001).

Loeber and Farrington (2001) also agreed to a developmental course that demonstrates a youth's gateway into juvenile delinquency is a series of gradual criminal acts that initiate with relatively trivial property crimes that may progress to more serious violent crimes. They also argued that early starters are more at risk to develop a multitude of secondary problems, including poor school achievement, relationship with deviant peers, substance use, and depressive symptoms (Capaldi, 1992; Patterson & Yoerger, 1993). These adaptational failures, repeated failure experiences (Capaldi, 1992), and snares (Moffitt et al., 1996) tends to limit environmental opportunities and thus may subsequently increase the risk for persistent delinquent activity.

Existing data show that delinquency and crime are strongly linked to gender. Police records indicate that the male juvenile delinquents has almost double crime rates than those of young females. Moreover the conviction rates are also six times higher. "The number of male juvenile suspects for every 100,000 members of the designated age group is more than six times the corresponding figure for females. For juveniles in the youth category the male-female suspect ratio is even higher, i.e. 12.5 to 1.6" (Burfeind & Bartusch, 2006).

As cited in Parker, Morton, Lingefelt and Johnson (2005), numerous studies have revealed that certain personality traits predict delinquency. Vitacco, Neumann, Robertson, and Durrant (2002) associated impulsivity, insensitivity and cruelty as predictors of delinquency focusing on impulsivity being a major predictor. Steiner, Cauffman, and Duxbury (1999) explored personality attributes predicting tendency towards imprisoned male adolescents. Some detained adolescents and young adults show personality features related with some type of conduct disorders, such as poor impulse control, unexpressed emotions, antisocial behavior, and little repentance, remorse or guilt. Such individuals are more vulnerable to committing violent crimes (Loper, Hoffschmidt, & Ash, 2001).

Luengo, Otero, Carrillo-De-La-Peña, and Mirón(1994) explored the relationship between certain personality variables with various types of delinquent activity in to samples of male adolescents. They concluded

that personality variables such as sensation seeking, impulsivity, lack of self esteem and lack of empathy are associated to delinquent behavior. The relationship between personality and criminal behavior in a birth cohort was assessed by Krueger, Robert, Schmutte, Pamela, Caspi, Moffitt, Campbell and Silva (1994), their findings suggested that certain personality features are associated to crime among men and women. The findings also suggested that youth engaging in widespread delinquency were particularly characterized by risk taking, lack of social closeness and feelings of alienation. Christian, Frick, Hill, Tyler, and Frazer (1997) asserted that detached, unemotional, coldhearted and cruel children are more susceptible to engage in more violence with high rate of criminal offenses.

The proportion of juvenile delinquency and juvenile delinquents are increasing in Pakistan but the law and law enforcing agencies and other significant stakeholders related to it, are not able to understand the persistent and serious threats to the social and moral development and mental health of the society. According to Saerfaraaz (2008) the most important aspect of delinquency that makes the condition more grave is that out of 165 million population of Pakistan about half of the total population or forty nine percent (49%) are under the age of 18 years whereas twenty-two percent (22 %) are adolescents with the age range of 10-18 years. Furthermore the bulk of these delinquents comprised of street children and their rapid increase in direct proportion with the fast growing population, rural urban migration and the alarming increase of poverty. As an outcome of all these factors, majority of these children find it difficult to follow the laws and get engaged in law breaking for some reason or another.

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate the age related occurrence of antisocial behavioral traits in juvenile delinquents.
2. To explore the underlying individual personality factors of juvenile delinquency.

## Hypothesis

1. Late starter juvenile delinquents (age 15 and above) will be involved in more antisocial behaviors than the early starters juvenile delinquents (age 14 and below).

## Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 60 incarcerated male juvenile delinquents with ages ranging from 12 to 18 years (n=60) with mean age of 13.7 for the group with age below 14 years (n=28) and 15.9 for the group with age above 15 years(n=32). Non –random sampling used for sample selection.

## Procedure

The aim of the study was to investigate the presence of antisocial behaviors in incarcerated juveniles. The required data was taken from Central Jail Peshawar. After taking permission from the concerned jail authorities to gather data for the study rapport was developed with the subjects. They were requested for their honest opinions and were assured of the confidentiality of their answers.

Before the data collection, the following instructions were given to the subject:

“From the following list, would you please state as honestly as possible how many of the things you have ever done. Almost everyone does a lot of the things listed below at some point in their life. Nobody else will know how you answered the questions. Please answer as many questions as you can.”

The administration of the complete scale took at least about 15-20 minutes per subject.

## Results

Table 1

Difference in scores of Juvenile Delinquents with Age <14 years and >15 years( N=60).

Variable	<14 Years		>15 Years		t(df)	Sig	95% CI		Cohand
	M	SD	M	SD			Lower	Upper	
Age	13.79	.56	15.94	.914	-10.76	.001	-2.552	-1.752	2.783
<b>Weapons</b>									
Carry Weapons	.71	.46	.88	.336	-1.55	.125	-.367	.046	.426
Weapons use in fight	.14	.52	.25	.440	-.86	.393	-.356	.142	0.228
<b>Damaging property</b>									
Damaging car	.14	.52	.13	.336	.159	.874	-.207	.243	.023
DP	.14	.35	.44	.525	-2.57	.012	-.523	-.066	.660
Public place Graffiti	.04	.18	.13	.336	-1.24	.219	-.233	.054	0.324
Damaging public gardens	.21	.41	.56	.801	-2.06	.043	-.685	-.011	0.537
Breaking windows	.57	.50	.25	.440	2.63	.011	.078	.565	0.679
Setting Fire	.14	.35	.19	.397	-.45	.650	-.241	.151	.132
<b>Involved in Drugs</b>									
Taking drugs	.04	.18	.44	.504	-3.97	.001	-.604	-.200	1.024
Buying drugs	.00	.00	.13	.336	-1.24	.219	-.233	.054	1.024
Getting drunk	.00	.001	.50	.622	-3.79	.001	-.736	-.264	1.099
<b>Physical Aggression</b>									
Street fights	1.14	.52	1.19	.644	-.29	.772	-.351	.262	0.084
Swearing loud in public	.64	.91	1.13	.793	-2.19	.032	-.923	-.042	.576
Hitting youngsters seriously	.07	.26	.31	.592	-1.98	.052	-.484	.002	0.512
<b>Miscellaneous</b>									
Littering purposely	.29	.46	.31	.471	-.222	.825	-.268	.215	.050
Under age driving	.43	.50	1.44	.619	-6.861	.001	-1.303	-.715	1.777
Ganging up	.07	.26	.38	.609	-2.445	.018	-.552	-.055	.646
Running from police	.29	.46	.50	.508	-1.703	.094	-.466	.038	.43

Table 1 shows the mean difference between juvenile delinquents with age <14 years and delinquents with age >15 years. It is evident from the table that older juvenile delinquents show higher mean on a great number of antisocial behaviors and personality traits as compared to the

younger delinquents. The result indicated that there is a significant difference in the presence of many antisocial behaviors and traits between older and young juvenile delinquents.

### **Discussion**

The present research was conducted to determine the presence of antisocial behaviors in incarcerated juvenile delinquents. To achieve this end two groups of detained adolescents were selected, one comprising of convicted juvenile delinquents with age <14 years and the other with age >15 years.

The results indicate the differences in responses of the two groups on items related to antisocial behaviors. It was seen that juvenile delinquents with age >15 years responded more frequently to items related to risk taking, damaging public property, use of weapons in fight getting away or running from police theft, drug abuse and vandalism.

The risk taking behavior as indicated by the results, was seen more in the older delinquent sample as compared to the younger delinquents. Krueger et al. (1994) also associated risk taking with extensive youth delinquency.

Destructive behaviors were also more common in the delinquent group with age >15 years. These include damaging public property, damaging public parks or gardens. These destructive behaviors were also present in the younger delinquent group but its frequency was less than the delinquent group.

Fighting with others and carrying weapons with oneself were the things observed more in older delinquents as compared to young delinquents. It is also evident that older delinquent sample was more engaged in using alcohol than young delinquents. Previous Studies also discovered high rates of drug and other substance abuse in numerous samples of incarcerated adolescents (Brook, et al., 2002). Access to drugs and weapons contributes to violence.

Juvenile delinquency is the foremost concern in the society today. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is essential to look at the factors that can cause an individual to become a delinquent. Various factors are focused on in many different theories and these theoretical models illustrate the link between various variables and delinquency.

As delinquency is a multidimensional phenomenon. It could result from various biological and psychosocial factors. Findings of the studies have also revealed the association of several risk factors, multiplicity of the vulnerability of offensive behavior and delinquency in the presence of several risk factors, and the significance of certain protective factors that may work to counterbalance risk factors Perveen, (2007).

The occurrence of delinquency among Western countries is comparatively low as compared to adolescents of Pakistan, but delinquency and young offenders among Pakistani adolescents remains a key social issue faced by Pakistan. In Pakistan, there have been some efforts to discover various forms of delinquent behavior and investigate its underlying causes. As cited in Naqvi, and Kamal (2008), some researchers believe that certain demographic characteristics and personality factors are the main determinants of delinquent behavior (Altaf, 1988; Rafai& Tariq, 1999; Tariq, 1991) and our result also support underlying antisocial personality traits as responsible for juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is no longer the concern of only the law enforcement agencies or juvenile authorities. It has now become a concern of the general public also. The increase in major juvenile crime created a need for protection of community and more corrective juvenile justice systems, which can only be effectively implemented if we carry out indigenous empirical researches on this issue.

With all of the individual, family and community factors of juvenile delinquency it is important to analyze that whether or not we are going in the right direction to facilitate its reduction. As indicated by the results of this study that juvenile delinquents do possess antisocial personality traits, further exploration of these personality traits in delinquents could bring about a better understanding of juvenile delinquency and hence effective indigenous preventive and therapeutic measures could be taken for prevention of delinquency in the first place and also to curb it more effectively. The authorities responsible for juvenile justice need to encourage local authorities and ensure their active involvement for prevention of juvenile crimes and reintegrating juveniles into society through support projects, with the ultimate objective of promoting and encouraging responsible citizenship among youth.



## **Conclusion**

Juvenile delinquency covers a range of different violations of law, ethics and social norms, ranging from minor violations to major crimes committed by young people. Characteristics of the juvenile and aspects of the social surroundings have both been identified as risk factors for the occurrence of juvenile delinquency. On the basis of our results it was concluded that antisocial behaviors are important causal factors in juvenile delinquency. More indigenous research needs to be done on youth violence. Early intervention can be the best approach to prevent juvenile delinquency. Prevention requires individual, group and organizational efforts aimed at keeping adolescents from breaking the law. Different methods should be used to discourage delinquent and criminal behavior. Either punitive prevention or taking action to prevent recurrent crime could be beneficial.

## **Limitations**

1. The study was limited to incarcerated juveniles in Peshawar jail only as it was not feasible to access more than one jail due to limited time period and security reasons. This limits the generalizability of the results. A representative large sample should be used in future studies.
2. Female delinquents were not included in the study because of their unavailability in the jail. Future researches should also include equal number of female delinquents in various jails in the province or countrywide.
3. The interrelationships between risk factors and delinquency should continue to remain the subject of future researches. The cumulative effect of various risk factors should be examined.
4. It is possible to identify the youth exhibiting antisocial and violent behaviors. Early identification of antisocial traits in young adolescents might trim down the delinquent behavior as different intervention can be more effective with youth, whose personality is not yet crystallized.
5. Intervention techniques should be brought into action early in the school and community settings to reduce and offset early risk.

6. In order to eliminate delinquency, the educational institutions can play an effective role by identifying and assisting in organizing of programs for potential and active delinquent students.

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