A PSYCHO-SOCIAL SURVEY OF CONVICTED CRIMINALS

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Abstract
Sample of the study consisted of 32 convicted male criminals. Most of them were convicted for severe crimes like murder, rape etc. 12.50 percent of subjects were of age 45 plus, and others were in their late adolescence. They were administered with anxiety, depression and stress scale (Hindi version) by Pallavi Bhatnagar, Megha Singh, Manoj Pandey, Sandhya and Amitabh. No relationship was found between criminality and anxiety, depression and stress. Age and criminality was strongly associated. Most severe type of crimes was committed by youngsters. Education and criminality was also associated. Educational standard of the criminals convicted for severe crimes was poor. Very few educated criminals were involved in severe type of crimes and the reason was rage, which they could not keep in control at that moment.

If we introspect sincerely, then we realize that at one time or another, most of us have broken the law. Maybe we all one time or the other commit some serious offences but don't get caught and punished. For example, parking illegally, drunken driving, not stating the truth while filing tax returns etc. There are innumerable people, who commit serious crimes but because they are not caught and prosecuted, they are not labeled as criminals.

Gottfredson and Hirschi(1990) noted, criminality is a style of strategic behavior characterized by self centeredness, indifference to the suffering and need of others, and low self control. Because of the criminals, those who are affected, suffer in various ways. The direct physical, material, mental and emotional injury suffered by victims of crime is deplorable. Though illegal parking seems to be minor crime the inconvenience caused by it is often irritating, often it is experienced by the commuters on varied city streets. This is the direct effect of crime. The indirect damages done to the society are more tragic.

The research literature on biological aging (Steffensmeier & Allan 2000; Shock 1984) suggests that peak functioning is typically reached between the ages of twenty-five and thirty for physical factors plausibly assumed to affect one's ability to commit crimes (strength, stamina, aerobic capacity, motor control, sensory perception, and speed of movement). Although decline sets in shortly after these peak years, it is very gradual until the early fifties, when the decline becomes more pronounced (Shock). Other commonly mentioned physical variables like testosterone levels peak in late adolescence but then remain at or near peak level until at least the mid-forties. In contrast, the age curves for crimes like robbery and burglary that presuppose the need for physical abilities peak in mid-adolescence and then decline very rapidly.

Farrington et.al.(2012)note that higher executive functioning relevant to impulse control, planning, emotional control and so on are not developed fully until age 25. Kanazawa & Still (2000) expanded the boundaries of the crime-prone young ages further by saying "The proportion of young men 15-34 in fact strongly predicts the incidence of murder, rape, assault and robbery across all societies of the world".

Criminologist, Sociologist and many other researchers made attempt to search the possible causes of crimes. In most cases, the experts stress the early life experiences, which are believed to have strong influence on the development to criminality, because individual acquire their traits sequentially. However, demographic stressors seem to be equally influential in developing criminality. For example poverty, lack of education, high crime neighborhood, unemployment etc. do influence the development of criminality. However, not all crimes are committed due to established antecedent factors. There are a good numbers of crimes that are committed in rage, where emotions overpower judgment. But a lay person could be labeled criminal, only because the evidences presented before the judiciary are against him / her.

Verma and Manish Kumar (2008) in a study found that consumerism and influence of criminal associates are some of the main reasons of criminality. Lochner and Moretti (2004); and Machin, Marie, and Vujić (2011) revealed increase in higher education helps in reducing crime. Hansen (2003) found criminality was more amongst males than females; likewise more among youngsters than old people. Environmental factors were held responsible for criminality.

Aim of Study: The study is designed to search the causes of crimes committed by the convicted prisoners, and measure anxiety, depression and stress among them.

Hypotheses

- Severe crimes are frequently committed by poorly educated criminals.

- Young criminals commonly commit severe crimes primarily due to impulsiveness.

Method

Participants
Total participants consisted of 32 convicted criminals undergoing imprisonment. Of them twenty one were sentenced for life imprisonment, and remaining eleven were sentenced from 3 to 10 years of imprisonment. Around 20 convicts were involved in murder. While, in one case entire family was accused in murder case. Age range of these convicts was 19 to 64, but only 6.25 % subjects were of age 45 and above. Most others were in their late adolescence. All the convicted criminals included in the study were males.

Tools used for Data Collection
Semi structured interview: An interview schedule was constructed to seek information regarding demographic details, family history and environmental factors of the criminals. There was scope to ask questions other than those given in the schedule.

For Anxiety, Depression and Stress ADSS Scale was used which was developed by Pallavi Bhatnagar , Megha Singh, Manoj Pandey, Sandhya and Amitabh. It measures, anxiety, depression and stress. The standardization of the scale was undertaken in a project by SWASTI Society for Mental Health and Counseling Center. The reliability of the total in terms of internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's Alpha and Spearman-Brown coefficient is 0.8, and 0.89 the obtained reliability for anxiety, depression and stress subscales as measured by Cronbach's Alpha is 0.76 and 0.61 and when measured by Spearman-Brown coefficient is 0.86 and 0.76 respectively. Similarly, the scale is validated for both rural and urban groups.

Procedure of Data Collection
Personal interview technique was used for collecting data. Data was collected from one of the central jails in Maharashtra, after seeking permission from the IG (Prison). A time was decided with the Superintendent of jail to interview the convicted inmates. Sample selection was done on the basis of random sampling. Each interview took around 30-40 minutes. Semi-structured interview method was used to collect the information. Depending on the literacy level of an inmate the scale for anxiety, depression and stress by Pallavi Bhatnagar and Megha Singh were administered.

Results and discussion
It was believed that criminality is associated with anxiety, depression and stress. However, results of study could not support this assumption. Mean anxiety score of the group was 4.50 and SD = 3.77 of the 32 subjects only 12.65 percent subjects exhibited extreme anxiety, 32 percent showed moderate anxiety 12.5percent were in mild and the rest 43.75percent subjects were free from anxiety. On depression scale mean value obtained by the group was 3.47 ± 4.02, 15.62 percent subjects fell in the category of severe depression and 25 percent in moderate while 3.12 percent had mild depression and rest 57.26 percent were found normal. Like anxiety, depression is also not associated with criminality. Under stress people are likely to commit crimes. Results of the present study indicate mean value obtained on stress measure was 3.37 ± 3.59. That of all the subjects 12.5 percent had severe stress and 15.62, 18.75 and 53.12 were in moderate, mild and normal category respectively.

In view of the results of study in most of the crimes situational factors might be responsible for criminal behaviors. Out of the present sample of 32 participants 28.12 percent had studied up to graduation, the remaining were poorly educated. If the data of educated (28 percent rounded), and poorly educated (72 percent) are treated by X^2 test then significant results are obtained ($X^2 = 18$, df =1, $p <.01$). Likewise, age of the criminal seems to be associated with the crime. It was observed that only 6.25 percent respondents were of age 45 and above, most others were youngster. If these data are treated by X^2 test, then the difference seen is significant ($X^2= 76.56$, df = 1, $p <.01$).

These results suggest, that age and educational standard are closely related to crime. Education helps in developing maturity, hence educated people generally do not involve in severe types of crimes, and such as murder rape etc. still a few cases of educated people committed severe crimes, this they had done when the things became unbearable. However these are rare cases.

Conclusions
No association was found between crime and anxiety, depression and stress.
Age of criminal was associated with crime.
Education and crime were closely related.

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