

## Evaluating the Relationship between Personality Traits of Educated Individuals and Crime among Students and Prisoners in Shiraz City, Iran

### Abstract

Crime is an act against social order or common rules and values. Such rules and values are derived from the cultural and social thoughts, beliefs, and conditions of that society. Researchers have always been thinking about how they can reduce such anti-community acts. Therefore, the extant study aimed to evaluate the relationship between personality traits of educated individuals and crime among students and prisoners in Shiraz City, Tehran. This was applied research that was conducted by using the descriptive-correlational method. The data were collected through a researcher-made questionnaire. The statistical population of the study comprised all prisoners in the prisons of Shiraz and students of Shiraz University. The statistical sample size was measured based on the Cochran formula ( $n=243$ ; 161 students and 82 prisoners). In inferential statistics, data analysis was done using the Pearson correlation test and regression through SPSS16 software. The obtained results indicated that educated individuals believe that good personality traits could effectively decrease the crime rate and help people minimize committing a crime.

**Keywords:** *Educations, Crimes, Social Harms, Students, Prisoners, Shiraz*

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### Introduction

Crime and aberration in the formal norms go back to the early days of human life and received great attention from social scholars in the past (Melkorian & Sharifian, 2009; 144). Regarding the importance of crime prevention, responsible organizations have strived to review other countries' experiences and use them to take social and cultural measures for crime prevention. The reason is that crime prevention actions have led to better outcomes rather than penal and corrective measures for criminals in different countries over recent decades. Such measures have mitigated the material and moral costs. A social and cultural attitude towards the crime phenomenon contributes to a broader definition of preventive measures beyond just criminal and penal levels, which provides the field for structure correction (Abdi & Sherafatipour, 2007: 183).

Despite the recent attempts of judicial power, including incarceration, the number of prisoners in Shiraz increased to 237 members in 2008 from 208 prisoners per 100,000 people in 2006. These statistics and information published by Prisons Organization indicate around a 14% rise in the number of prisoners in Shiraz city within two years. It means that restrictive measures have not affected the crime rates and could not reduce the number of crimes. Therefore, some solutions must be found for pre-occurrence prevention to decrease the crime rate in the society and country. Education is a measure that can mitigate the crime rate or prevent committing a crime. An increase in education degree leads to the willingness to commit a crime and vice versa (Nooraie & Seyyedi, 2010: 114).

Shahivandi et al. (2010) carried out a study on female criminals in Isfahan, Iran. They found that almost 96% of them had a diploma and below-diploma degrees (24.2% elementary

degree, 25.8% secondary school, 11.7% high school, 20% diploma, and 4% associate degree). Nooraie and Seyyedi (2010) conducted a study on 106 young prisoners (18-30 years old) imprisoned in the central prison of Ilam. They found a correlation coefficient of -0.513 between the education level of youth and their willingness to commit a crime. Halvi (2009) conducted a study entitled "factors affecting crime and ways to prevent it" and concluded that scientific and educational weaknesses cause aberrations. In this regard, the higher the education level of individuals in society, the lower the crime commitment. However, it can also be considered that when a person who may commit a crime gets higher education degrees, then committing a crime is more probably. In the current world, hackers are individuals with high intelligence and education levels who commit online crimes. Therefore, a higher education level does not necessarily decrease the crime rate. Therefore, the overlapping academic and cultural education levels can reduce committing a crime by increasing cultural teachings through individual ethics and practical training. Moreover, an increased educational level financially leads to a higher income level.

Economic deprivations, discrimination, inequity, war, population congestion, family, school, social media, TV, newspapers, and satellite all play a vital role in crime. Family type (broken or cohesive), education level, and job position of parents are determinants of crime commitment. In terms of school role, teaching materials, curriculum techniques, teacher-student relationship, training, educational methods, personality and mental traits of students, and leisure programs are preventive and facilitating variables for crime occurrence. According to the mentioned points, the extant study aimed to evaluate the relationship between personality traits of educated

individuals and committing crimes among students and prisoners of Shiraz City, Iran.

## **Literature Review**

### **Individual Factors Affecting Crime Occurrence**

The main purpose of criminologists and criminal law experts in testing a delinquent's personality is to consider the person as a right owner, not just a case for punishment. Therefore, personality traits, including age, education level, skin color, and even the appearance of some organs and limbs, affect their interest or reluctance to commit the offense. In summary, it is highly important to identify the nature and temperament to detect delinquency' moods and temperament in people influenced by significant factors, such as inheritance, education, training, affections, etc. Personal or biological factors, such as gender, age, ugliness and beauty, genetic factors, etc., may cause crime (Keynia, 1997: 62). Some personal factors have been addressed herein:

#### **1. Role of Gender in Delinquency**

According to criminology history, crime was seen only as a masculine action before the 1960s, so criminal statistics did not indicate crimes committed by women. There are, in particular, two theories about the role of women in delinquency: the first theory stipulates women can more easily adjust themselves to the atmosphere and environmental conditions due to their biological, mental, and social characteristics. Another theory believes that women commit crimes less than men do. However, the patriarchal and gender-oriented system has neglected women's delinquency and has not considered it in criminal analyses (Rostami Tabrizi, 2009).

In some legal systems, women do not play a significant role in community arenas, so they cannot commit crimes. The minor the social role of women, the lower their delinquency and the offensive role will be. Men go to frons during wars when women find job opportunities. In this case, women come out of houses and go to factories; therefore, women may constitute a higher delinquency rate during wars. The delinquency rate among women is reduced when the war is finished.

The economic factor is a means men control women, so many believe that women must be deprived of income-generating social opportunities. In a social labor division case, men get income-generating jobs while women have to do low-income occupations. As a result, low-income jobs, such as housekeeping and children's upbringing, were assigned to women. According to this approach, women do not find any time for delinquency but become victims rather than delinquents.

Some theorists introduce the sociability quality among women as another factor reducing the offense or delinquency rate among them compared to men. Many cultures consider women

sociable and calm individuals who obey their parents and husbands. The mentioned traits lead to higher sociability in women rather than men. Even a British popular proverb states, "an obedient woman is the ruler of her husband's heart."

In many communities, women have to obey social values and norms and more control mechanisms, such as a father or older brother who monitors their behaviors, so boys can be out of the home up to midnight while girls cannot have such freedom. John Hagen assessed sociability flow among men and women and found that women less welcomed risky behaviors than men, and crime is less negative in women than men. Finally, he found women show less perverted behaviors than men (Gholami, 2008: 184).

The sociability quality of the prisoner's family is a factor affecting the crime repetition. When a prisoner is released from prison feels like a guest in the family. Still, several days later, they must look for a job and might face various problems, such as a lack of income-generating jobs and a lack of a criminal record certificate. If prisoner women have a good family that supports them, they are not expected to commit a crime again (Momtaz, 2008: 216).

#### **2. Role of Age in Delinquency**

It has been proved that criminal acts are highly severe at ages 18-25, and this severity is more and less seen until the age of 30, and then they do fewer antisocial activities. Such actions are stopped at the age of 40, and committing an offense as an exception in age older than 40.

This general principle about crime recommitting always works. The risk of recommitting crime is high at the young ages of 20-30 and maybe 35. Those offenders who commit a crime at this age with a higher probability repeat such antisocial behaviors after being released from prison. As delinquents gradually become older, however, the risk of recommitting crime gets lower.

In France, 282 professional delinquents were studied, and the following results were obtained regarding their age: 30 (36 members), 30-40 (127 members), 40-50 (88), 50-60 (28), older than 60 (3). i.e., around three fourth of these professional delinquents were younger than 40. Accordingly, the results obtained from statistical research in Canada, Belgium, and France are matched with what we said about the high risk of recommitting crime in 20-30 and 35 ages. This risk, however, becomes lower gradually as the age gets older (Pinatel, 1969: 249).

#### **3. Genetic**

Belief in genetics and heredity is as old as human life. Since early times, many have believed that human heirs are all physical and ethical traits of their ancestors. However, the ancestors could not highlight the effect of heredity due to their

lack of academic information. The development of sciences, such as medical sciences, made it possible to study this relationship academically (Najafi Tavana, 2010: 149).

Modern genetics has proved that some parents' shortcomings and corruptions will be passed on to children based on an almost mathematical order and rule. In this case, the development of such shortcomings and corruption must be prevented (Keynia, 1997: 98). "The scholars have expressed different ideas about the effect of heredity and criminal behavior; some believe that heredity directly affects the person so that they are born with such physical, mental, and ethical characteristics that cannot adapt and comply with community life. Another group believes that heredity indirectly impacts the crime commitment by providing different conditions, such as physical-mental imbalance." (Najafi Tavana, 2010: 149).

A researcher conducted a study on a family of criminals whose criminal behaviors have been detected over four generations; they separated six children below seven. All of them became honored men who had beneficial services to society. Moreover, two members older than seven were also separated from the family, while they became criminals (Keynia, 1997: 104). Lombroso and Ferri confirmed that delinquent tendencies could be criticized from generation to generation and believed that congenital delinquents or "instinctive criminals" cannot be corrected, and punishment cannot influence their characters. Hence, Lombroso suggests exiling them from the society to a place outside the community (Najafi Tavana, 2010: 150).

Although eugenics is relatively new knowledge, the human mind has always been occupied with improving race and generation over history. Ancient Greek Spartans used to kill those infants and children who did not have normal bodies and organs. The student of Socrates, Plato, actualized the Eugenics marriage plan on the advice of the master (Keynia, 1997: 97). If the delinquency is acquisitive social-mental factors affect its occurrence and transfer, and crime prevention will be a probable cause. In this case, it is hoped to have an accurate plan and help individuals born into criminal families and mitigate the possible risks threatening them. Delinquency is the corrupt consequence of biological heritage and is not subject to Mendel's laws; therefore, we cannot find the secret of a family based on its attributes. The reason is that this method does not help distinguish the effect of genetic factors' reaction from the impact of social factors and incidents (Keynia, 1997: 105).

### **Importance and Necessity of Education and Pedagogy**

Education and pedagogy organizations have become inclusive global institutes due to expanded human sciences and experiences and developed industrial technologies and progress. Therefore, important indicators of a society's growth and development include the scope of tasks done by such organizations (Alagheband, 2002: 7). The political system can

be rationalized, and modernization can be achieved in developed countries by teaching citizens how to live in the new society. Hence, all people must acquire literacy and skill because of the direct and positive relationship between modernization and education (Boshriyeh, 1990: 29 quoted from Mardi, 2007: 48).

Different communities have highly accepted the education and pedagogy; hence, federal, provincial, or local states try to adopt logical policies under the frame of legal approvals to fulfill the ideals of their societies, including public and higher education, to actualize their national dream.

To cope with individual and social issues, education and training must develop accurate judgment power, responsibility, self-awareness, and critical and creative morale. Most importantly, education must actualize individual and social development within various dimensions.

Illiteracy or low education is not now the single determinant for delinquency or offense phenomena. The popular sentence cited by French writer Victor Hugo, "He who opens a school, closes a prison," can no longer be a particular phrase; it is a general meaning (Najafi Tavana, 2010: 209). In this regard, Dr. Najafi Tavana (2010) does not introduce illiteracy as a determinant in crime occurrence but considers this case due to conducted studies and obtained statistics, which only cover a criminal population with illiteracy or low-educated people that exceed the subjects with higher education degrees. Although this author points to the increased rate of crimes in industrial countries to prove the idea, the writer of extant study of this idea must be accepted with caution. According to Iranian and foreign studies, science and knowledge indirectly impact delinquency. However, the case here is about the parent's education level and association with children's delinquency. "According to the study conducted on 100 delinquents, more than 74% of them were from families with illiterate fathers. This case equaled 90% in families with illiterate mothers." (Najafi Tavana, 2010: 211). It can even be assumed that parents' higher academic levels can influence their attitudes towards and approaches to parenting styles and relationship with each other and their children. This also mitigates the misconduct and inattention of children (Moazami & Mahdavi, 2009: 99).

### **The Relationship between Education and Personality Formation**

Personality is considered the composition and unification of the structure and type of behaviors and interests, as well as the mental and emotional status of persons' talents and abilities, particularly in terms of adaptation to the social conditions (Saeedian quoted from Asaadi, 2011: 36). Personality is the real human with the same situation in the street, at work, or in leisure time (Rahimi, 2010: 254). Historical reviews prove the claim that personality development is effective even in adults

and is unchangeable (Sarookhani, 2003: 23). However, Henre Moory believes humans have a longitudinal personality and argues that this personality always changes over time, and each person has a specific character (Karimi, 2009).

From Taylor's perspective, under the light of culture, the "biological man" becomes a "social man," finds harmony and orientation with the people, and behaves differently from other societies' people. In traditions, culture was rooted in works, but now culture originates from the theory, i.e., brains overtake the hands, and knowledge is superior to work. William Ogburn argues that cultural elements are transferred forever from one generation to another. Culture means how to live and think. It also stems from all teachings, examinations, and beliefs of a nation, society, or tribe (Ashofteh Tehrani, 2001). American anthropologists believe that personality is the foundation linking the cultural infrastructure and superstructure and consists of early childhood upbringing, socio-economic conditions, ecology and population (infrastructure), ideology, myths, and social institutes (superstructure) (Sotoodeh, 2002).

### **Role of Personality in Committing Crime**

The crime phenomenon is a judicial, social, and human reality. Various social, human, and biological factors affect the crime occurrence. Moreover, mental and biological illnesses are factors causing crime commitment. A judge must pay attention to the delinquent's character in a criminal hearing to detect the reasons that have made the delinquent commit such a crime. The judge can then decide on the case by considering the delinquent's dangerous mood and the importance of committing a crime (Goldoozian, 2007: 38). In the sixth century, the holy sharia of Islam recognized the guilty person's liability based on their intellect, maturity, and authority (Parsa, 1993). Such humanitarian beliefs decreased the penalties' severity, provided the field for a powerful belief, and changed the form and meaning of delinquency.

This continued until the development of psychology and psychiatry led to a diagnosis of various mental and personality disorders. Therefore, such researchers define the crime as the result of a criminal's personality imbalance or disorder caused by the interaction between mental and biological factors. In the opinion of psychologists, the mental imbalance leads to personality disorders and make individual commit actions against the law.

### **Psychological Theories about the Role of Personality in Committing Crime**

Fundamental Anthropology Theory: the onset of scientific development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the emergence of different theories about criminal anthropology, each rooted in new sciences' explorations. The theories of Lombroso's Born

Criminal, Magnan's Psychological Destruction, and Laurent's Corruption rely on the physical and mental traits of criminals and consider the criminal a person affected by harms and disorders in their bodies or minds. The founder of Born Criminal Theory, Cesare Lombroso, revealed another aspect of delinquency as congenital delinquency in the ear when criminals' illness was taken into account. His theory confirmed the absolute crime astonishment, generalized Darwin's evolution theory to criminals, and concluded that primitive animal characteristics are rebelled in our time. This theory assumes that delinquents have delinquency symptoms that are inherited symptoms. These are symptoms of a series of anatomopathological, biological, and physiological diseases, which help diagnose delinquents and distinguish criminals from civilized people (Najafi Tavana, 1998).

Lombroso's beliefs were then seriously criticized by scientists, and then these criticisms were highly criticized by scholars. These criticisms made Lombroso give up his stubbornness about his thesis in the last years of his life, and only relied on essential factors and paid attention to social factors (Nourbaha, 2003).

Fundamental Biological Theory: heredity has always been a considerable topic, which has been at the center of attention among Greek philosophers and religious intellectuals. However, the scientific aspect of this subject was revealed when a creation science scholar discovered the heredity rules in the small garden of a church. His research led to the revelation of the position of the hereditary traits in the genes of nuclear chromosomes and the role of heredity in social and personal behaviors. Moreover, statistical studies of twins and the role of chromosome abnormalities are clear indications of the effects of heredity on crime. Chromosome abnormalities can cause delinquency.

Fundamental Psychology Theory: many psychologists explain criminal behavior based on the criminal's personality disorder. They believe that some personality types are willing to commit crimes rather than other characters. They attribute criminal behavior to childhood abnormal experienced caused by unhealthy relationships between the person and their surrounding environment rather than abnormal genes. They assume that a confused and disturbed psyche causes deviant behavior. A scientist writes, "scientific studies on criminals' psych indicate that many delinquents suffer from lack of intelligence and developed mental structure. Although there might be intelligent criminals, most delinquents suffer from intellectual disorders. Therefore, psychological disorders may lead to criminal personality."

Fundamental Sociology Theory: Enrico Ferri, a student of Lombroso, was the founder of criminal sociology. Criminal saturation and supersaturation law is one achievement of Ferri. The saturation law introduced by Belgian Quetelet states that

there is a certain volume of crime in all environments, and these crimes can be seen in the statistics of a country. For instance, many diseases can be seen in a society within a certain time, and every unnatural incident, such as revolution, war, or famine, may increase criminality. The saturation law exists when crime exceeds a threshold in the society, and the case will be supersaturation if the crime statistics and experiences exceed the saturation level (Hashemian, 1998).

### Method

This was applied research conducted by using the descriptive-survey method. The statistical population comprised all students of Shiraz University and prisoners in Shiraz City. Convenient sampling was used to select the sample. The required data for answering the questions were collected through a researcher-made questionnaire and interview based on the field method. The items and questions, background, and theoretical foundations were designed by studying books, papers, journals, and online databases.

The researcher-based questionnaire was used to collect data. Theoretical foundations were used to design this questionnaire. A primary questionnaire was designed to assess the validity of the questionnaires, and then these instruments were distributed among advisors and consultant professors. The questionnaire was also distributed among students and prisoners comprised of the statistical population for more certainty. Their ideas about items were examined to find whether there was any ambiguity. The final version was designed and used after the questionnaire was revised based on the professors' opinions. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed among thirty population members to fill out. In the next step, Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was measured through SPSS16 software from the whole questionnaire and all items individually. The overall alpha of the questionnaire equaled 0.88.

The statistical sample size was estimated using Cochran sampling (n=243; 161 students and 82 prisoners). Because some questionnaires were left incomplete, the author distributed 170 questionnaires to the statistical population of students and 110 questionnaires to the statistical population of prisoners. Finally, 166 students' questionnaires and 90 prisoners' questionnaires were collected, of which 5 and 8 questionnaires of students and prisoners, respectively, were not usable, so they were deleted. Ultimately, 161 students' questionnaires and 82 prisoners' students were analyzed.

Data analysis was done using the Pearson correlation test and regression and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). Data analysis was done through SPSS16 software.

### Findings

The results indicated that 60.24% and 39.76% of respondents were men and women. The highest frequency of students was seen in the age category 20-24 (40.37%), while the lowest frequency (9.33%) was seen in age 31. The highest frequency of prisoners was seen in the age category 26-35 (39.02%), while the lowest frequency (4.9%) was seen in the age older than 45. The highest frequency of prisoners' education was seen in secondary school education (32.92%), while the lowest frequency was seen in the education level above BA (0%).

**Table 1. Results of Pearson correlation test between personality traits of educated individuals and willingness to commit crime from students' point of view**

$\alpha$	N	Sig	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	Determination coefficient ( $r^2$ )
0.05	161	0.000	-0.018	0.03

According to the results of table 1, the significance level (p-value) equaled 0.000, which is less than 0.05; hence, there is a significant correlation between these two variables. In other words, there is a significant and negative relationship between personality traits and willingness to commit crime from the Shiraz University students' points of view. Although this value equaled -0.018 for 161 data, this indicates an indirect correlation. Regression analysis was used to find the amount of this relationship and to what extent the personality traits have predicted willingness to commit crime from the students' point of view. The table reports a summary of the model used to solve the problem.

**Table 2. Results of regression analysis for personality traits of educated individuals and willingness to commit crime from students' point of view**

Statistical indicators Variable	B	Std.Error	Beta	T
Constant	16.41	1.006	-0.018	16.31
Personality traits (x)	-0.083	0.310		-0.269

As reported in Table 2, the independent variable (personality traits) has a negative coefficient (-0.083). It means one unit change in the independent variable (personality traits) leads to a 0.083 decline in the predicted value of the dependent variable (willingness to commit a crime). In other words, one unit change in personality traits leads to a 0.083 unit decrease in

willingness to commit a crime. The linear regression model fit will be as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$$

Willingness to commit crime =  $16.41 + (-0.083) \times (\text{personality traits})$

Where determination coefficient equals 0.03, which indicates 0.03% of changes in willingness to commit crime from the viewpoint of Shiraz university students, is explained by individuals' personality traits based on a linear equation.

### Conclusion

The extant study aimed to evaluate the relationship between personality traits of educated individuals and committing crimes among students and prisoners in Shiraz City, Iran. The results indicated a significant negative relationship between personality traits and willingness to commit crime from the viewpoint of Shiraz university students. The value of this relationship equaled -0.018 for 161 data, which depicts the indirect correlation. Regression analysis was used to find the amount of this relationship and to what extent the personality traits have predicted willingness to commit crime from the students' point of view. The independent variable (personality traits) has a negative coefficient (-0.083). It means one unit change in the independent variable (personality traits) leads to a 0.083 decline in the predicted value of the dependent variable (willingness to commit a crime). In other words, one unit change in personality traits leads to a 0.083 unit decrease in willingness to commit a crime. The determination coefficient equals 0.03, which indicates 0.03% of changes in willingness to commit crime from the viewpoint of Shiraz university students are explained by individuals' personality traits based on a linear equation.

### Acknowledgments

None.

### Conflict of interest

None.

### Financial Support

None.

### Ethics Statement

All Permissions to conducting this research has been approved.

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