

Research Report

DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG INMATES OF JUVENILE HOMES IN KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Background: Delinquent behaviour represents a wide variety of law and norm violating behaviours by children. In India, statistics show that there is an increase in the rates of crimes committed by children. **Methods:** The sample of the study consisted of 100 adolescents from juvenile homes. Personal data sheet, Delinquent behaviour checklist, and Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory were the study tools. Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to find the association between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence among the inmates of juvenile homes. **Results:** Delinquent behaviour is found in 38% of children living in Juvenile homes. No significant difference is found between boys and girls in delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence. A negative association is found between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence in the inmates of juvenile homes. **Conclusion:** Delinquent behaviour is found to be high among inmates of juvenile homes. A significant association was found between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence. Both nature and nurture are important in the development of emotional intelligence. Opportunities and training for the development and improvement of psychological faculties like emotional intelligence may impact the prevention and management of delinquent behaviour among children.

Keywords: delinquent Behaviour, emotional Intelligence, juvenile Homes

INTRODUCTION

India has a significant child and adolescent population. 40% of India's population is in the age group of 0 to 18 years.¹ India has several legislation, policies, and welfare programs to protect and safeguard its children's interests. Many governmental and non-governmental agencies working in the field of child welfare provide an array of services to ensure the safety and security of children. Despite all the legislation, policies, and programmes, children and adolescents' condition remains a cause of great concern even today. Statistics reveal that there is an increase in the rate of crimes committed by children. In the year 2018, 31,591 cases of

juveniles in conflict with law were registered, which increased to 32,235 in 2019, an increase of 2%. Compared to girls, more boys were found to be apprehended. During the year 2019, a total of 38675 juveniles were apprehended.²

Delinquent behaviour can be considered as a term representing a wide variety of law and norm violating behaviours by children. Juvenile delinquency can be defined as "a behaviour against the criminal code committed by an individual who has not reached adulthood, as defined by state or federal law".³

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Juvenile Homes are operationally defined in the present study as Government Institutions established under the Juvenile Justice (care and protection of children) act 2015 by Govt. of Kerala. Children below the age of 18 who are alleged to conflict with the law and need care and protection are placed in these homes.

Many reasons explain delinquent behaviour in children. Biological, psychological, and social factors such as temperament, intelligence, emotional intelligence, psychiatric morbidity, family functioning, and peer group were implicated in delinquent behaviours.⁴⁻¹⁰

Studies demonstrated an association between emotional intelligence with delinquent behaviours, aggression, and callous-unemotional traits.¹¹⁻¹⁶ A clinic-based study among 114 boys reported that children with conduct problems performed poorly in emotion recognition tasks. The study demonstrated a negative correlation between conduct problems and recognising emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness.¹⁵ Delinquent behaviours were reported more in boys in a study among 176 high school students, and the study showed that children with delinquent behaviour had difficulty in identifying feelings in others.¹⁶

A study of emotional intelligence among detained children reported low emotional intelligence in them. The children had a reduced capacity to recognise and perceive emotions in themselves and others. They could not use emotions accurately in their thinking, and they also had difficulty regulating their emotions.¹⁴ People with reduced ability to understand and manage their own emotions and other people's emotions were more aggressive and were incapable of modifying their desires. They used aggression to obtain what they want.¹⁷

Studies reported high rates of problem behaviours among institutionalised children. The prevalence of problem behaviours was 47% in institutionalised children compared to 10.1% in the community. Labelling the institutionalised children as delinquent marginalise them and their psychological needs go unnoticed.¹⁸

Among children involved in the child welfare system, it was found that older children and boys were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours than younger children and girls.¹⁹ Delinquent behaviour, aggression,

and substance use were reported in studies among school children also.²⁰⁻²²

The importance of emotion regulatory strategies in the treatment of delinquent youth was also reported^[23]. The present study aims to determine whether a child's emotional intelligence has any bearing on his delinquent behaviour.

Objectives

1. To estimate the proportion of subjects having delinquent behaviour among inmates of juvenile homes.
2. To find out the Emotional Intelligence among the inmates of juvenile homes.
3. To study the relationship between Delinquent Behaviour and Emotional Intelligence among the inmates of juvenile homes.

Hypothesis

There will be an association between Delinquent Behaviour and Emotional Intelligence among inmates of juvenile homes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive research design was used for the study. The sample of the study consisted of 100 adolescents selected randomly from juvenile homes. The investigator obtained permission from the social welfare department of the Kerala state to collect data from institutions under the department. (SPSU 4/16463/14 dated 27/05/2014.) Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee of IQRAA International Hospital and Research Centre, Calicut. Personal data sheet, Delinquent behaviour checklist, adapted from the misbehaviour questionnaire²⁴ and Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory²⁵ were the tools used for the study. The adapted delinquent behaviour checklist and Mangal Emotional Intelligence Inventory were translated into the vernacular language and validated. Permission from concerned authorities of selected juvenile homes was obtained. Consent was obtained from adolescents who choose to participate in the study. The investigator explained the study in short to the children and requested their cooperation. Personal data of children were collected using a personal data sheet. The investigator interviewed each of the participants individually to assess delinquent behaviour with the help of the delinquent behaviour checklist. The participants completed the Mangal

Emotional Intelligence Inventory by themselves. Statistical analysis was done using the SPSS package. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test whether the data were normally distributed. The data was found non-normal. Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to find the association between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence among inmates of juvenile homes.

RESULTS

Delinquent behaviour is found in 38% of children living in Juvenile homes. No significant difference is found between boys and girls in delinquent behaviour. 28 of the 72 boys (38.9%) and 10 of the 28 girls (35.7%) show delinquent behaviour. The mean score of emotional intelligence is 54.22, and the median score is 55 in boys. The mean score of emotional intelligence is 58.57, and the median score is 57 in girls. There is no significant difference between boys and girls of juvenile homes in the total score of emotional intelligence. A significant

difference between boys and girls is found in the interpersonal management subscore of emotional intelligence. A negative association is found between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence in the inmates of juvenile homes. The subscores and the total score of emotional intelligence are found high among children without delinquent behaviour. A significant difference is found in the total score and all the subscores except that of interpersonal awareness score of emotional intelligence between children with and without delinquent behaviour.

DISCUSSION

Emotional intelligence is the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one's own and others' emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behaviour. Individuals high in emotional intelligence pay attention to, use, understand and manage emotions, and these skills serve as adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others.²⁶ Earlier studies reported an association between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence. Low emotional intelligence was found in adolescents and adult offenders.^{13, 27-28} The findings of the present study also demonstrated a negative association between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence.

Table 1. Comparison between boys and girls in the prevalence of delinquent behaviour among the inmates of juvenile homes

Delinquent Behaviour	Boys (%) (n=72)	Girls (%) (n=28)	Chi-Square	p-value
Present	28(38.9)	10(35.7)	0.086	0.769
Absent	44(61.1)	18(64.3)		

Table 2. Comparison of domain scores of emotional intelligence between boys and girls among the inmates of juvenile homes

Domains of emotional intelligence	Boys (n=72) Median (IQR)	Girls (n=28) Median (IQR)	Mann Whitney U value	Z	p-value
Intrapersonal awareness	14.00 (4.00)	14.50 (4.75)	904.5	-0.798	0.425
Interpersonal awareness	12.50 (5.75)	14.00 (5.50)	811.5	-1.517	0.130
Intrapersonal management	15.00 (4.00)	14.00 (5.75)	913.0	-0.733	0.463
Interpersonal management	14.00 (5.00)	17.00 (6.50)	673.0	-2.583	0.010*
Total Emotional Intelligence	55.00(12.00)	57.00(20.50)	807.0	-1.544	0.123

* significant at 0.05 level. IQR-interquartile range

Table 3. Association between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence among the inmates of juvenile homes

Domains of emotional intelligence	Delinquent Behaviour Median (IQR)	No delinquent behaviour Median (IQR)	Mann Whitney U value	Z	p-value
Intrapersonal awareness	13.00 (5.00)	14.00 (4.00)	780.0	-2.840	0.005**
Interpersonal awareness	13.00 (3.00)	13.00 (5.25)	1082.5	-0.682	0.495
Intrapersonal management	15.00 (6.00)	16.00 (5.00)	881.0	-2.120	0.034*
Interpersonal management	14.00 (4.25)	16.00 (5.00)	799.0	-2.703	0.007**
Total Emotional Intelligence	53.00 (13.25)	58.00 (14.25)	808.0	-2.630	0.009**

*Significant at 0.05 level, ** significant at 0.01 level, IQR-interquartile range

Delinquent behaviour is found to be high among inmates of Juvenile Homes. This finding is consistent with other studies,^{18,20} and is expected as children who conflict with the law and those who need care and protection due to neglect or maltreatment are placed in juvenile homes. Studies reported an association between maltreatment and the ability to regulate emotions.²⁹ The ability to understand other's thoughts and intentions is limited in maltreated children.³⁰ Maltreated children demonstrated increased emotional reactivity. They usually act impulsively in response to distress.³¹ Among delinquent boys, associations were demonstrated between maltreatment, emotional dysregulation, and psychopathic traits.⁹

The capacity to recognise emotions were found to be bad in adolescents with conduct problems.¹⁵ The reduced capacity of adolescents to identify feelings of others debilitates their ability to understand how the offending behaviour is likely to make others feel.¹⁴ Difficulty to identify feelings was reported as a significant predictor of interpersonal delinquency.¹⁶ The difficulty might hinder the person's ability to employ a sense of remorse for the delinquent behaviour in using emotions to facilitate thinking.¹⁴ People with low levels of emotional intelligence were unable to understand and manage one's own and others' emotions. They were aggressive and used aggression to obtain what they intend to achieve.¹⁷ A negative correlation was reported between emotional intelligence and anger^[32].

A reduced capacity to regulate emotions may have a role in maintaining the offending patterns of behaviour. Here the offending behaviour itself becomes a way to regulate the negative emotion.¹⁴ Studies demonstrated that emotion dysregulation increases aggressive behaviour.³³ The ability to manage emotions was found to correlate with impulsivity and hasty responses negatively.³⁴

No difference was seen between boys and girls in delinquent behaviour. Almost all the studies reviewed have reported that boys exhibit more delinquent behaviour than girls.^{7,9,19} Hence, the finding of the study is unique and interesting. It is against the general notion that boys exhibit more delinquent behaviour than girls. The finding may be due to the change in the socio-cultural environment in the present society. The impact of globalisation, the advancement of new technologies,

exposure to the wider world, the freedom enjoyed by the girls, and the changes in the value system, etc., may be the reasons for the girls to engage in delinquent behaviour like boys.

Other studies reported no significant association between emotional intelligence scores and gender, showing an agreement with the present study's findings.^{16,35} Several psychosocial factors contribute to the development of emotional intelligence. Stimulating a psychosocial environment, good quality caregiving, adequate educational opportunities, etc., are most common among them.

Kerala state is known for its gender equality and freedom of choice for girls. The educational facilities, exposure to the wider world, and other opportunities are provided to boys and girls almost in the same manner. This may be the reason why boys and girls do not differ in emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

Delinquent behaviour is found to be high among inmates of juvenile homes. A significant association was found between delinquent behaviour and emotional intelligence. Both nature and nurture are important in the development of emotional intelligence. Opportunities and pieces of training for the development and improvement of psychological faculties like emotional intelligence may impact the prevention and management of delinquent behaviour among children.

Limitations

- Result may not generalise to all children and adolescents showing delinquent behaviours.
- The sample of delinquent children was treated as a single unit irrespective of their delinquent behaviour's types and gravity.
- The study included children aged 15 to 18 years only, as the administration of all tools was not possible with other age groups of children.
- Sample was selected without considering the criminal history or psychiatric history of their parents.

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Conflict of interest:

None declared.

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