

A Comparative Study of the Interest Patterns of the Inmates of the House of Detention, Normal School Children and Children living in a Slum Area

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Introduction

Delinquency is the product of libidinal organisation (1) in the sense that it depends on how the individual has faced the various frustrations during the period of libido development. It may be described as a dynamic expression of the actions and reaction between repressed wish and obstacles to its free expression. Delinquency is not an isolated phenomenon but an expression of the resulting field of forces on account of these interactions. Personality pattern, attitudes, and abilities influence the way in which it manifests.

Personality pattern, interests, level of intelligence, socio-economic level, parent-child relationship etc., are some of the factors important with respect to the incidence of delinquency. In this study, the interest pattern of this type of children was studied and for proper understanding of the implications it was compared with those of the normal school-going children, and the children living in the slums. The idea was to investigate whether the inmates of the detention home formed a different group in terms of interests or they were similar to the children living in slums with comparable socio-economic background.

While selecting the instrument for measuring interest, the following two points were considered in view of the low academic level and heterogeneity of the group in question. (a) The instrument should be equally applicable to different cultural and linguistic groups. (b) No academic background on the part of the candidates should be required in recording his answers.

Considering the above two points the "Chatterji's Non-Language Preference Record-Form 962" (CNPR) was selected as it was found to be most suitable for the present investigation. This non-language inventory has been developed in India and is capable of yielding scores on ten broad fields of interest viz., Scientific,

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Fine Arts, Literary Work, Technical, Outdoor, Crafts, Sports, Medicine, Agricultural, Household Work. The inmates of the detention home Sunderbai Mulchand Mehta Home at Lilloah near Calcutta were considered as the sample of delinquent children to be studied.

Collection of the Data

The CNPR—962 was administered individually upon 75 boys and 50 girls living in the "home". The age range for this group was 12 to 16 years. Data from five individuals could be collected on a single day, and hence collection of data took several days time.

Prior to the administration of the inventory on the inmates of the detention home, biographical information pertaining to their socio-economic status, family background, educational qualifications, family occupations etc., was collected during an informal talk with them for establishing rapport. In addition to this further information regarding the nature of the offence which brought them to the "home" was also obtained from the authorities of the detention homes. After collection of this information the CNPR was administered on them.

Data from the normal school-going children were not separately collected for this study as the raw score ranges for stanine grades, means and standard deviations based on data collected from 355 boys and 456 girls reading in class VIII were supplied by one of the authors. The age range for this group also was 12 to 16 years.

CNPR was also administered on children living in slum areas and care was taken to see that this group and the group of children living in the detention home were as similar as possible with respect of education, age, socio-economic status etc.

RESULTS

Biographical information and scores obtained on the CNPR were analysed separately and the results are discussed below :

Biographical Information

It was observed that about 50% of the inmates of the "home" had no school education and the position of the girl inmates were worse than that of the boys as many of the girls had no idea regarding education. Sixty-six per cent of the families from which they came, had a monthly per capita income of Rs. 25/- (i.e. \$3.33) and less ten per cent of these children had no connection at all with their parents. The family occupations of these children were mainly domestic servant barber, restaurant waiter, hawkers, dockyard and factory labourer etc. It is interesting to note that as high as 12% of them came from families engaged in illegal means of earning, such as stealing wire, carrying and selling rice in prohibited areas, etc. For 70% of them, both the parents were not living together and the reason being either one of them was dead, or mentally ill, or imprisoned, or divorced,

or had deserted. Seventy-five per cent of this group did not want to go back to stay with their parents. It may also be mentioned that these children had no fixed goal of life and except for a very few cases majority expressed their preference for occupations at the same level as that of the families from which they came. 30% of the boys and 20% of the girls expressed their desire to spend their earned money to meet the needs of the family. From the figures presented above it is apparent that poverty, neglect at home, or broken home are common for majority of this group of children. Hence the blame for their becoming delinquent rests entirely on the society.

CNPR—962 Scores

The mean values and the standard deviations for the ten different fields of interest were separately calculated for the two groups viz., the inmates of the detention home and the children from the slum areas. These values were compared among themselves and with those of the normal school-going children. Tables 1 and 2 show these mean values and the standard deviations along with the tests of significance for the difference between the corresponding mean values separately for the boys' and girls' groups.

TABLE 1

The means, standard deviations and critical ratios indicating the significance of the difference between the means of the three boys' groups

Fields	Maximum Possible Score	H. O. D.		Normal		SLUM		Slum ×HOD	Normal ×HOD
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Fine Arts	88	28.70	13.40	20.30	7.10	30.90	7.00	1.20	5.00**
Literary Work	73	27.10	1.00	26.20	7.20	26.60	6.30	0.80	0.42
Scientific	90	28.10	8.90	35.50	16.20	25.10	9.60	1.90	5.60**
Medical	91	29.80	8.50	32.20	14.90	31.00	8.10	0.89	1.90
Agricultural	80	25.70	10.01	23.60	7.60	30.40	5.80	3.50**	1.70
Technical	78	27.60	4.90	27.10	12.40	22.80	4.80	6.10**	0.58
Crafts	76	27.50	7.40	21.80	8.40	22.00	6.50	4.90**	6.20**
Outdoor	90	28.40	10.70	24.10	13.70	28.00	14.20	0.19	3.20**
Sports	94	32.20	10.60	17.00	7.80	35.40	10.00	0.19	11.80**
House-hold Work	84	26.50	8.10	27.10	13.10	30.60	8.50	3.00**	0.57

** Indicates significant at the 1% level.

From the figures presented in Table 1, it can be observed that in the case of four scales, viz., Agricultural, Technical, Crafts and Household Work, the differences between the means for the HOD inmates and the children from the slum areas were statistically significant at the 1% level. There were no significant differences in the mean values for the five scales, viz., Literary Work, Medical, Agricul-

tural, Technical and Household Work with respect to the normal school-going children and the inmates of the HOD. The maximum observed difference between the mean values for the normal group and the inmates of the HOD was for the scale of Sports. In addition it may be further observed that the normal group of boys was less interested in Outdoor and Agricultural activities and in the field of Fine Arts when compared with the other two groups. Another interesting feature is that the HOD boys were more interested in Technical and Crafts than the normal school-going children and the group of children living in the slums. The type of training given in Crafts and in Technical type of work in the HOD might be responsible for this observed trend.

It may be noted that the interest pattern of the girl inmates of the HOD and the one for the girls living in the slum areas were more or less similar except for the two fields, viz., Sports and Outdoor. But there were considerable difference between the interest patterns of the former group and the one for the normal school-going girls. Only for three scales, viz., Literary Work, Technical and Sports these two groups did not differ significantly from each other. The latter group was highly interested in Science and Medicine in comparison to the other two groups. This may be due to the fact that the activities shown in these two scales were not very familiar to the girls who live in the slum areas and in the HOD. These two groups were more interested in Agricultural and the Household Work.

TABLE 2

The means, standard deviations and critical ratios indicating the significance of the difference between the means of the three girls' groups

Fields	Maximum Possible Score	H. O. D.		NORMAL		SLUM		CRITICAL RATIO	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Slum HOD	Normal HOD
Fine Arts	88	34.10	7.00	26.20	9.70	32.90	7.30	0.75	7.10**
Literary Work	73	25.80	10.30	31.70	6.50	24.60	4.40	0.77	0.28
Scientific	90	22.90	15.30	42.80	12.80	21.60	11.10	0.48	9.00**
Medical	91	27.40	12.50	40.70	11.50	23.60	11.50	1.50	7.20**
Agricultural	80	30.40	9.70	23.30	6.50	30.10	6.60	0.18	4.10**
Technical	78	23.70	7.20	25.30	10.20	21.40	6.50	1.70	1.40
Crafts	76	25.94	7.70	18.90	7.20	27.00	7.00	0.63	6.20**
Outdoor	90	32.80	11.00	19.30	11.80	35.60	11.50	1.30	8.80**
Sports	94	24.36	9.40	22.80	11.90	40.10	6.60	9.70**	1.10
Household Work...	84	32.56	5.60	20.20	8.80	32.10	8.90	0.31	13.80**

** Indicates significant at the 1% level.

Comparison of the Interest Patterns of the Boys and the Girls for the three Groups in Question

Examination of the mean values on different scales for the three pairs of groups indicated that there were some differences in the scores for the two sex groups. The mean values for the three pairs were compared to find out whether these observed differences were statistically significant and also to see whether this trend was similar for the three groups or not. The critical ratios obtained for this comparison are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

The critical ratios obtained in testing the significance of the differences between the mean values of the boys' and the girls' groups

Fields	CRITICAL RATIOS		
	H. O. D. Boys × Girls	Normal Boys × Girls	Slum Boys × Girls
Fine Arts	3.00**	10.00**	1.50
Literary Work	9.20**	11.25**	2.10*
Scientific	2.20*	6.96**	1.80
Medical	1.10	8.94**	3.90**
Agricultural	2.70**	0.59	0.26
Technical	3.50**	2.21*	1.30
Crafts	1.20	5.19**	4.30**
Outdoor	2.30*	5.25**	3.30**
Sports	4.30**	8.36**	3.10**
Household Work	5.00**	8.53**	0.95

* indicates significant at the 5% level.

** indicates significant at the 1% level.

It can be observed from the figures presented in Table 3 that the averages of the interest scores of the normal school-going boys differed significantly from those of the normal school-going girls for all the fields of interest except for the field of Agricultural. The average scores of the HOD boys and HOD girls also differ significantly in eight fields out of ten. But this difference between the boys

and the girls groups are not observed among the children living in the slum areas. The differences were significant only for the five fields out of ten.

Development of an interest scale for Spotting prospective delinquents

It was felt that the data collected from the inmates of the HOD and those living in the slum areas could be utilized for developing a new scoring scale for the CNPR for spotting out prospective delinquents on the basis of their interests. The objective of developing such a scale is that the potential delinquent would score high on this scale and hence can be spotted out before he has actually committed an offence. Proper care at this stage can be of great help in creating a healthy society.

The procedure followed for developing this scale is being described briefly here. This inventory consists of 150 items of the triadic form. Three pictures showing someone (stick figures) doing something are presented in each item. These pictures are marked as A, B and C. The candidate has to make two choices in each item. He has to indicate which one among the three activities shown in the three pictures he would personally "most like" to perform himself. He has also to indicate the activity between the remaining two he would "least like" to perform himself. Hence, for the three possible "most like" responses and three "least like" responses the frequency distributions were obtained separately for the respondents from the HOD, slum area, and normal group. The normal group consisted of 125 cases—75 boys and 50 girls selected at random from the total pool of cases referred to earlier. Item analysis was done twice by considering (a) the HOD inmates as belonging to the High group and the children from the slum areas as belonging to the Low group, and (b) the HOD inmates as belonging to the High group and the normal school-going children belonging to the Low group. In these item analyses each possible response to an item was considered as the correct response in turn and in each case the discrimination value (Davis's) was obtained by using the abac prepared by Harper (4). Only those responses for which the discrimination value was higher than 15 in relation to the children in slum areas, and/or was higher than 20 in relation to the normal school-going children were retained in the first tentative scoring scale. All the papers for the HOD group were next re-scored on the basis of this tentative scoring scale, and another item analysis was conducted on the basis of the total scores obtained by the inmates on this new scale. Purpose of this second item analysis was to make the tentative scoring key as homogeneous as possible by rejecting those responses which showed a drop in discrimination value and by including responses outside the scoring scale which showed a rise in the discrimination value. This procedure was repeated till the scale stabilized. After each item analysis the papers were re-scored and the new set of score was correlated with the just previous set. When this correlation became greater than .90 it was felt that the scale had stabilized as further item analysis was not expected to change the scale any further. *

* Further details about the scale can be had from Dr. S. Chatterji, Indian Statistical Institute, 203, B. T. Road, Calcutta on request.

DISCUSSION

It was apparent from the information gleaned from this study that there was nothing inherent in the children which made them delinquent. Interest pattern of the intimates of H. O. D. and children living in the slum areas were more or less similar, and for both the groups utter poverty, lack of education, neglect at home or broken home were the common things. Interests depend to a great extent on the environment in which the child is born and brought up and naturally the interest pattern of both these two groups differ from that of the normal school-going children.

The new scoring scale can be utilized to spot out prospective delinquents at the school level also and if remedial measures are taken accordingly in the schools and by social work organisations in the slums then that would help to build up a healthier society.

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