

Keili Kollamaa

Comparison of mental characteristics of sample detained persons based on the type of criminal offence

The aim of the paper is to give an answer to the question: Do the comparative samples of detained persons manifest the differences in personal qualities and values, as well as non-verbal intelligence depending on the type of an offence. Despite a long-standing mistrust by criminologists personality- characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving- recent theoretical and empirical work that explicitly employed personality to explain antisocial behavior. It is possible that relations between personality and crime are not casual. It may be that these relations are due to the presence of a third variable- such as early childhood experiences, parenting style or disciplinary practices.

Within the last ten years fundamental changes have taken place in the Estonian social economy and politics. The changes also concern the legal and correctional systems. In order to make the effectiveness of the penal system more optimal and to reduce the probability of the reoccurrence of criminal offence, the studies of crime as a phenomenon and an offender as the subject of corrective activities have long been under way. The issue has been dealt with by the lawyers, psychologists and sociologists.

In the first chapter of the paper a short overview on criminology and possible development phases of a detained person through the four stages have been provided. They include serving a sentence, the role of social work, adaptation and possible plans of action for rehabilitating a detained person. Criminal prevention includes the prevention, avoidance and obstruction of crimes. At the end of the chapter possible crime reduction measures have been presented.

The second chapter deals with the detained person as a personality who has to adapt to the subculture of a custodial institution. Possible pathological and hereditary relationships with criminal behavior have been presented.

In the third chapter empirical research has been conducted to study the personality of a detained person, their values and non-verbal intelligence.

I have set the study hypotheses as follows:

1. The personal characteristics of the persons punished for the offences against the person differ from the characteristics of those imprisoned for the criminal offences against property.
2. The non-verbal intelligence of the persons who have committed the offences against the person is
 - (a) lower than the norm
 - (b) lower than that of the persons who have committed the offences against property.
3. The persons detained for the offence against the person and the persons punished for the crime against property have the differences in their values.

The sample of the study consisted of 101 Estonian male prison inmates from Murru Prison, Estonia. 56 of them have been detained for an offence against a person and their sentence time lasts 5 years and more. 45 inmates have been detained for offences against property.

The testing period lasted for three weeks from August till September, 2002. Every day 6 inmates were tested. That period there was 1557 prisoners in Murru Prison.

The author of the study tried to:

1. measure the characteristics of the prison inmates' personality with a five-factors personality test VIF-R.

Five- factor model and definitions:

Neuroticism- emotional stability and adjustment versus instability and maladjustment.

Extraversion- Sociability and agency.

Openness to experience- interest and willingness to try consider new activities, ideas, beliefs, intellectual curiosity.

Agreeableness- interpersonal strategies, agreeableness versus antagonism.

Conscientiousness- ability to control impulses, carry out plans and tasks, organizational skills, follow one's internal moral code.

2. compare the structure of the offenders' values according to the universal structure of values elaborated by Schwartz – Bilsky.

Partition of values:

Security, conformity, tradition, spirituality, benevolence, universalism.

3. measure the offenders' general intellectual ability i.e. the nonverbal aspect of intelligence by Raven Standard Progressive Matrices.

Significant aspects of the comparison occurred to be the age, the educational level and time of imprisonment of the inmates.

About the results:

There are following statistically significant differences between the two groups of offenders (Table 1.).

Table 1. Statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Scale	Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	p
Age	1	56	31,29	9,93	2,32	99	0,023
	2	45	27,29	6,62			
Education	1	56	1,14	1,13	- 0,36	99	0,720
	2	45	1,22	1,19			
Time of imprisonment	1	56	7,70	4,56	5,96	99	0,000
	2	45	3,18	2,53			
Non-verbal intelligent	1	56	39,45	10,99	- 1,75	99	0,083
	2	45	42,87	7,94			
Neuroticism	1	56	95,73	25,63	2,71	99	0,008
	2	45	81,73	26,00			
Extraversion	1	56	106,27	26,97	- 1,44	99	0,153
	2	45	114,16	27,86			
Openness	1	56	97,18	17,98	- 0,66	99	0,510
	2	45	99,58	18,35			
Agreeableness	1	56	113,75	21,85	0,86	99	0,393
	2	45	109,96	22,43			
Conscientiousness	1	56	119,50	21,12	- 0,51	99	0,612
	2	45	121,87	25,59			

Notes: $P < 0, 05$

Group 1- detained for an offence against a person

Group 2- detained for offences against property

- **The average age of inmates who had committed a crime against a person was higher and the average length of their time of imprisonment was longer than among the offenders who had committed crimes against property.**
- **Neuroticism appeared to be higher among inmates who had committed a crime against a person than among inmates who had committed crimes against property.**

The author of the study did not find significant differences in other characteristics of personality measured among the sample group. But would the differences stay if the groups were equalized by age? To equalize the groups pairs were formed from members of different groups who were of the same or similar age and the others who did not fit were left out. The comparison was carried out among the 41- persons group of offenders who had committed a crime against a person and 42-persons group of offenders who had committed crimes against property (Table 2.).

Table 2. Groups by age.

Scale	Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	P
Time of imprisonment	1	41	6,95	4,24	4,82	81	0,000
	2	42	3,24	2,60			
Education	1	41	0,98	0,99	- 1,00	81	0,321
	2	42	1,21	1,18			
Age	1	41	27,59	6,46	0,19	81	0,848
	2	42	27,31	6,58			
Neuroticism	1	41	98,56	26,80	2,81	81	0,006
	2	42	82,02	26,81			
Non-verbal intelligent	1	41	39,49	10,37	- 1,52	81	0,132
	2	42	42,60	8,14			

Notes: $P < 0, 05$

Group 1- detained for an offence against a person

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- **The equalization by age method showed that the differences of the average results in neuroticism were the same as measured before.**

The average indicators on the subscales of neuroticism were also checked with the method of equalizing the average ages of the two groups (Table 3).

Table 3. Groups of neuroticism's subscales.

Scale	Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	p
Neuroticism	1	41	98,56	26,80	2,81	81	0,006
	2	42	82,02	26,80			
N1 Anxiety	1	41	19,00	6,31	2,14	81	0,035
	2	42	16,17	5,75			
N2 Animosity	1	41	16,46	6,13	2,07	81	0,042
	2	42	13,55	6,70			
N3 Depression	1	41	17,88	6,12	2,62	81	0,011
	2	42	14,19	6,70			
N4 Self- control	1	41	17,59	4,72	2,88	81	0,005
	2	42	14,45	5,18			
N5 Impulsivity	1	41	17,05	4,72	1,85	81	0,067
	2	42	15,14	4,64			
N6 Vulnerability	1	41	10,59	5,42	1,73	81	0,088
	2	42	8,52	5,45			

Notes: $P < 0, 05$

Group 1- detained for an offence against a person

Group 2- detained for offences against property

- **The offenders who had committed a crime against a person are more anxious, hostile, depressed and indicate more self-control than the offenders who have committed crimes against property.**

Finally the author tried find average indicators of the time of imprisonment and which were also checked with the method of equalizing the average age of the two groups (Table 4). The comparison was carried out among the 30- persons group of offenders who had committed a crime against a person and 30-persons group of offenders who had committed crimes against property. Would the differences stay if the groups were equalized by the time of imprisonment?

Table 4. Group equalized by the time of imprisonment.

Scale	Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	p
Age	1	30	30,17	9,30	0,85	58	0,401
	2	30	28,43	6,27			
Education	1	30	1,20	0,96	0,00	58	1,000
	2	30	1,20	1,13			
Time of imprisonment	1	30	4,40	2,51	0,36	58	0,723
	2	30	4,17	2,56			
Non-verbal intelligent	1	30	37,03	13,02	- 1,91	58	0,061
	2	30	42,47	8,57			
Neuroticism	1	30	96,77	19,21	1,89	58	0,064
	2	30	84,73	29,17			
N1 Anxiety	1	30	19,57	5,20	2,45	58	0,017
	2	30	16,00	6,05			
N2 Animosity	1	30	15,17	5,36	0,58	58	0,564
	2	30	14,23	7,00			
N3 Depression	1	30	17,87	5,06	1,84	58	0,071
	2	30	14,97	7,01			
N4 Self- control	1	30	18,57	4,54	3,32	58	0,002
	2	30	14,00	6,02			
N5 Impulsivity	1	30	15,90	3,78	- 0,14	58	0,888
	2	30	16,07	5,27			
N6 Vulnerability	1	30	9,70	4,23	0,18	58	0,858
	2	30	9,47	5,73			
Different values	1	30	14,87	6,69	1,64	58	0,106
	2	30	12,13	6,20			

Notes: $P < 0, 05$

Group 1- detained for an offence against a person

Group 2- detained for offences against property

- **It can be concluded that the level of neurosis of the persons detained for the offence against the person is higher compared to that of the persons punished for the crime against property.**
- **By studying the groups we also determined that the persons who have been punished for the offence against the person are more irritated, depressed and hostile compared to those who have been sentenced for the offences against property.**
- **The persons detained for the offence against the person have higher self-control than the persons punished for the crime against property. The higher self- control in prison's permanent doubted situation makes them more depressed and anxious.**

It can be caused by the fact they have a longer sentence time and more social pressure, and nightmare flash-backs of the crime. The persons having committed the offences against the person are uncompromising, do not trust other people, are more self- seeking and egoistic than the persons who have committed the offence against property. At the same time those who have been punished for the offences against the property may easily lose their self- control, which may be accompanied by violent actions as verbal communication is replaced by non-verbal communication. Such behavior may easily be an acquired pattern of conduct, because in the childhood or youth they formed an idea that it was so macho and lucrative to behave like that. Low

self- control reduces social control and increases association with delinquent peers. Self- control and social variables have independent effects and they are variables interact in their effects on crime.

The second hypothesis is a comparison of a general non-verbal intelligence test between the two groups where the result is compared. The norm of this test for the detained persons is 40. Thus, when the median (M= 37. 03) of the persons sentenced for the offences against the person was lower compared to the other group of the persons with criminal offence against property (M= 42. 87), we can conclude that the hypothesis was confirmed. It could even be seen during the administration of the tests that the persons sentenced for the offence against the person had difficulties in doing them - they cheated and sometimes even gave up.

The non-verbal intelligence of the persons imprisoned for the offences against property corresponds to the norm (M= 42. 87).

The detained persons may aim at organizing their lives so that they do not violate the rules. They wish to be approved by being socially active. In order to increase or maintain the well- being of their dear ones, the detained persons try to control their impulses and desires. The fact that they tend to create a secure environment and try to be extremely self-restrained in everyday communication with other people, they also have desires to have a control over their behavior and they may have communication difficulties. The confirmation of the third hypothesis may serve that the persons detained for the offence against the person and the persons punished for the crime against property do not have the differences in their values.

A detained person is well aware of the rules both in the custodial institution and outside; they do not have to be afraid. Here the author realizes a problem, as a custodial institution ought to have a different effect on a detained person - it should not be their home, but the depth of their miserable situation, i.e. that after the sentence the person can return to the real world and face real problems. We have to make them realize that not everything in life is achieved by writing applications and they should not get used to that. Is good reason to believe that strain will be especially likely to lead to crime among individuals high in negative emotionality and low in constraint. Individual's high negative emotionality and low constraint are not pleasant people. They tend to elicit negative reactions from others in particular situations. Transform their environments in ways that increase the likelihood of negative treatment, for example by alienating parent and teachers and select themselves into environments where negative treatment is more common, like delinquent peer groups and lower academic tracks at school. In particular, individuals must be taught how to exercise self- restraint and occurs as parents and others provide clear rules, monitor behavior and consistently sanction rule violations in a fair no abusive manner.

Therefore, each detained person in Estonia should have a contact person - a voluntary, a psychologist or a social worker working in the custodial institution. At the moment it is not the case, as a contact person in Estonia has 100 - 200 detained persons under their guidance.

It can be concluded that the persons detained for the offence against the person is:

- older;
- longer terms of sent;
- the level of neurosis is higher;
- more anxious;
- more adversed;
- more depressed;
- lower Raven test results

than the persons who have committed the offence against property.

Suggestions from author's conclusions the correction system could:

- *understand that criminal behavior can come from home environment*
- *take int consideration that sometimes the positive feedback has a bigger impact then negative*
- *understand that long- term convicts are a lot more nervous for the very different reasons*