

A COMPARISON BETWEEN RECIDIVISTS AND NON-RECIDIVISTS ON AGGRESSION AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

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The aim of this study was to examine the differences in aggression between recidivists and non-recidivists. Aggression was measured by Buss and Perry's Aggression Questionnaire on a sample of 83 recidivists and 175 non-recidivists of both sexes, while they were serving their sentences. The differences were analyzed in two ways; first, by using all items of the Aggression Questionnaire, and second, by using the 4 sub-scales of this instrument. The findings showed significant differences in physical aggression, anger, and hostility. Recidivists were more aggressive and the difference was particularly evident in physical aggression. There was no difference in verbal aggression.

The verbal aggression component (sub-scale) was excluded from discriminant analysis, having a very low coefficient of internal consistency.

In a one-way analysis of variance of all 5 items related to verbal aggression, there were no significant differences between recidivists and non-recidivists.

Recidivists lived in more unfavorable family of origin environments, which were dominated by physical violence. This could to some extent explain their higher level of aggression.

Introduction

Aggressiveness is a very important personality characteristic for understanding criminality. Every criminal act is a kind of aggression, especially in violent crimes.

Aggressiveness is a stable personality trait (Huesmann et al., 1984; Pulkkinen and Pitkänen, 1993; Viemerö, 1996). Aggression develops early in childhood and the genetic and environmental influences are considered to be approximately equal (Rushton et al., 1986).

The family of origin is very important factor in determining the development of aggression in children. Children living in families with low socio-economic status, burdened by parental conflicts, deviant behavior, exposed to erratic and harsh discipline, abused, rejected and neglected by parents, tend to be more aggressive (McCord et al., 1961, 1963; Farrington, 1978, 1989, 1991; Loeber and Dishion, 1984; Dodge et al., 1990; Mejovšek et al., 1997). Aggressive children tend to have "permissive" mothers who are inconsistent in their behavior toward children, and fail

to impose restraints on them when they exhibit extreme negative behaviors (Dumas et al., 1995). Dumas et al. (1999) proposed a developmentally sensitive coping-competence model designed to promote competence and reduce risk of an early-onset conduct disorder, substance abuse and/or school failure.

Aggression at an early age is a good predictor of recidivism and/or the seriousness of committed crime (Farrington, 1978, 1989, 1991; Magnusson et al., 1983; Stouthamer-Loeber and Loeber, 1988). Magnusson et al. (1983) found that at the greatest risk for future offending were highly aggressive boys living with parents who had a low level of education.

Pulkkinen (1983) found a significant relationship between aggression at the age of 8 years

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