

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND SENSATION SEEKING WITH POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD DELINQUENCY IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF CITY OF LAHIJAN (IRAN)

Batoul Jahani Fard, *Mohammadreza Zarbakhsh and Morteza Tarkhan

Departments of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

In nowadays societies misdemeanor is an issue that has adverse effects on the individual's and families' lives and results in several social uncertainties. It seems necessary to conduct applied researches about delinquent behaviors and adolescent's attitude toward it in order to recognize the factors related to delinquency and preventing it. Thus the current research aim is to determine the correlation between the differentiation of self and sensation seeking with positive attitude toward delinquency in high school students of city of Lahijan. The research method is correlative and the population includes all the high school students of city of Lahijan during academic year 2012-2013. The sample includes 240 male and female high school students of city of Lahijan, chosen through stratified random sampling. Data collection tools are Fazli's questionnaire of Attitude toward Delinquency (2009), Skowron and Dandy Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI) (1998) and Zuckerman Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) (1997). The multiple regression analysis is used for analyzing the data. Results show that there is a positive and significant correlation between emotional cutoff, emotional reactivity, fusion with others (components of differentiation of self) and disinhibition, boredom, adventure seeking, and experience seeking (components of sensation seeking) with positive attitude toward delinquency in students (adolescents) ($P < 0.01$). Also the sensation seeking and differentiation of self are capable of predicting the positive attitude toward delinquency and they also managed to explain 29% of variance related to delinquency. Regarding the findings, helping adolescents and their families to recognize the effective factors of their attitude toward delinquent behaviors could be an important step in preventing such behaviors.

Keywords: *Differentiation of Self, Sensation Seeking, Attitude toward Delinquency*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent's delinquency is one of the main issues of the nowadays societies including the developed and developing societies. Statistics show that despite the high standards of living and development of centers for psychological services still the statistics about libertine adolescent's delinquency are high (Rezaei *et al.*, 2007). Development of certain types of delinquency such as drug abuse, vandalism, and escape from school among adolescents cause the researchers to focus on determining delinquency and detecting its effective factors, and to conduct several empirical researches in this field (Ali *et al.*, 2008).

During the recent decades the issue of relationship between some of the features of personality and delinquency has caught the eye of many researchers. One of these personality traits for which the biological basics are recognized for is sensation seeking, and its four basic components include: Thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom (Schultz and Schultz, 1994, translated by Seyyed, 2002). Sensation seeking is a personality trait describing the tendency toward seeking new and complicated feelings and experiences and tendency toward physical and social danger especially for experiencing. According to Zuckerman, sensation seeking has a correlation with some behaviors such as motorcycling and driving with high speed, smoking cigarettes and criminality (Barani *et al.*, 2012). The effect of sensation seeking on drug abuse justifies the correlation between sensation seeking and adolescent's deviance, in a way that the sensation seeking predicts drug abuse, overall deviation, and committing petty crimes (Carver *et al.*, 1996, translated by Rezvani, 2008). Researches of Khanjani *et al.*,

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(2011), Hosseyni (2010), Arji (2008), Fathi *et al.*, (2008), Peach and Gaultney (2013), Harden *et al.*, (2012) and Al Anazi and Al-Shamli (2011) confirmed the role of sensation seeking in delinquency.

The other effective psychological variable on delinquency is differentiation of self. Differentiation shows the individual's ability in separating the other's intellectual and emotional processes of self. Bowen claims that people have two main performance system, emotional performance and intellectual performance. Differentiation indicates the individual's ability in separating the other's intellectual and emotional processes from each other and that which of these two determine the individual's behaviors (Holman and Virginia, 2011). Differentiation points out the multi-dimensional and complex functions of differentiation of self in emotional and intellectual performance stages in family system (Maser, 2011).

Skowron and Dandy (2004) counted 4 components for differentiation: emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, fusion with others. People having fusion with others are severely in need of emphasis and support of others, and their behavior is under the influence of emotional system of environment and other's reactions. In people with low levels of differentiation, the emotions and the influence of environment on them are dominant. Comparing these two groups, the non-differentiated people have more stress under stressful conditions than the differentiated people (Skowron and Dandy, 2004).

The research by Knauth *et al.*, (2006) named "the effect of differentiation of self on adolescent risk behavior: test of the theoretical model" was conducted with the aim of testing the validity of a theoretical modal based on the Bowen's theory of family systems for explaining the risky behavior of adolescents, and especially studying the correlation between the predictor factors of differentiation of self, chronic anxiety, and solving the social problem, and variables depended to the risky sexual behaviors. Findings indicated the correlation between the higher levels of differentiation of self and lower levels of chronic anxiety and higher levels of solving social problems. Mediation test showed that high levels of solving social problems have a correlation with less drug abuse, sexual behaviors exposed to less risk, and increase in interaction. The current research findings are from the theoretical model based on the fact that differentiation is an important cognitive factor enabling adolescents to manage anxiety, increase motivation and use the problem solving method to avoid risky behaviors. Also the research results of Kazemian and Delavar (2011) showed that differentiation and its subscales (emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, I-position and fusion with others) predict the tendency in males toward addiction.

Based on the fact that adolescents are the intellectual capital of the society and also their mental and physical health guarantee the society in the future, thus their issues need special attention. Delinquency is one of the antisocial and not adapted manifestations and it is considered as one of the important issues in the field of adolescent's and adult's problems. In today's societies the delinquent behavior is a problem that has adverse effects on the individual's and families' lives and results in several social uncertainties. It seems necessary to conduct applied researches about delinquent behaviors and adolescent's attitude toward it in order to recognize the factors related to delinquency and preventing it. Based on the theoretical basics, the differentiation and sensation seeking are two variables predicting some of the social disorders and damages, but unfortunately, in this field and especially in the field of these two variables with the attitude toward delinquency there are few researches available. Thus the current research is designed and conducted to help resolve this research absence and its aim is to determine the correlation between differentiation of self and sensation seeking with positive attitude toward delinquency in high school students of city of Lahijan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research method is correlative and the population includes all the high school students of city of Lahijan during academic year 2012-2013. The sample includes 240 male and female high school students of city of Lahijan chosen through stratified random sampling. Firstly from all the boys and girls high schools and art schools of city of Lahijan two boys and two girls high schools were randomly chosen, from each high school three class and totally 12 classes were chosen including 290 students. The research questionnaires were distributed among them. After completing the questionnaires they were

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studies, 50 questionnaires were incomplete so they were eliminated. Thus the final sample consisted of 240 high school students of city of Lahijan, including 126 boys and 114 girls.

Tools being used in this research include:

Questionnaire of Attitude toward Delinquency: This questionnaire consists of 28 questions with the aim of measuring the attitude toward delinquent behaviors in 2009 in adolescents from 15 to 18 years old. This questionnaire includes 4 answers of totally agree, agree, disagree and totally disagree. The questionnaire validity was determined by the use of Cronbach’s alpha and it was 0.79. The validity of 28 items were determined with consensus of a group of professors (psychology, sociology and criminology) and the irrelevant items were eliminated (Fazli, 2009).

Skowron and Friedlander Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI) (1998): This self-assessment questionnaire was created by Skowron and Friedlander (1998) and then revised by Skowron and Schmitt (2003). This questionnaire includes 45 questions. Answers are graded in a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree), and it also includes 4 subscales: Emotional reactivity (ER), I-position (IP), Emotional cutoff (EC) and Fusion with others (FO) (Mohsenian *et al.*, 2007). The inventory reliability was reported by Skowron and Friedlander (1998) through the use of Cronbach’s alpha (Soleymannezhad, 2010). In Skowron and Schmitt research (2003) the reliability of the test through Cronbach’s alpha was 0.92, and the reliability of subscales of ER, IP, EC, and FO were respectively 0.89, 0.86, 0.81, and 0.84 (Mohsenian *et al.*, 2007).

Zuckerman Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS): This questionnaire is Zuckerman’s short form (1997) including a series of questions for evaluating the individual’s tendency toward risky activities. This test includes 40 questions with two wrong and right options and the grading is based on 0 and 1. The reliability coefficients of this scale were calculated by Ghorbani (1991) through the use of Spearman-Brown formula, bisection method and Cronbach’s alpha and they were respectively 0.70, 0.75, and 0.80, which indicate a desirable reliability (Ghorbani, 1991). Ghorbani calculated the validity coefficient of the test with the use of psychological hardiness scale which was reported to be 0.71 and at level $P < 0.0001$ it was significant (Ghafouri *et al.*, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the research aim which was determining the correlation between the differentiation of self and sensation seeking with positive attitude toward delinquency in high school students of city of Lahijan, for analyzing data the multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient were used. Results of this analysis are provided in the below table:

Table 1: Correlation coefficient of positive attitude toward delinquency with components of predictor variables of differentiation and sensation seeking

Variable	r	p
I-Position	-.022	.370
Emotional Cutoff	** .233	.000
Emotional Reactivity	** .216	.000
Fusion with Others	** .275	.000
Disinhibition	** .416	.000
Boredom	** .153	.009
Adventure Seeking	** .190	.002
Experience Seeking	** .396	.000

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$

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According to the above table data, there is a positive and significant correlation ($P < 0.01$) between all of the predictor variables and positive attitude toward delinquency except for the I-Position which is one of the components of differentiation. In order to determine the best predictor variable of positive attitude toward delinquency among the predictor variables, the multivariate regression model of two regular collections with simultaneous and with partial correlation were used.

Table 2: Multiple correlation coefficient, Squared multiple correlation, Standard and non-standard coefficients of regression analysis for predicting the positive attitude toward delinquency

Step		B	SEB	Beta	R	R ²
1	Constant	14.98	2.65	-		
	I-Position	0.017	0.021	0.053		
	EC	0.093	0.060	0.119	0.305	0.093
	ER	0.043	0.073	0.049		
	FO	0.174	0.066	0.204		
2	Constant	9.379	2.700	-		
	I-Position	-0.005	0.019	-0.014		
	EC	0.102	0.055	0.131		
	ER	0.006	0.067	0.007		
	FO	0.137	0.062	0.160		
	Disinhibition	0.949	0.238	0.275	0.537	0.289
	Boredom	0.016	0.243	0.004		
	Adventure seeking	0.370	0.192	0.112		
Experience seeking	0.628	0.231	0.192			

Based on table 3 data FO, IP, EC, and ER significantly affect the change of attitude toward delinquency ($R^2 = 0.093$, $F = (4,235) = 6.036$, $P = 0.000$). These data show that high school students who have more FO, IP, EC, and ER (differentiation of self) have a more positive attitude toward delinquency. The second analysis for evaluating is that the amount of sensation seeking predicts the attitude toward delinquency beyond the FO, IP, EC, and ER, which shows that each of four components of sensation seeking predicted a significant ratio of variance of attitude after controlling FO, IP, EC, and ER ($R^2 = 0.289$, $F = (4,231) = 15.859$, $P = 0.000$). These results show that high school students with similar sensation seeking in case of having differentiation have more possibility of having positive attitude toward delinquency. Thus it could be concluded that independent variables have more power of predicting the criterion variable, thus the regression equation can be generalized to the whole statistical population.

Regarding the above table results and significance of F in variance analysis table 4 and t in the above table, the regression equation for model is as followed:

$$Y = a + b_1x_1$$

$$\text{Predicting the positive attitude toward delinquency} = 14.984 (\text{Constant}) + 0.017 (\text{IP}) + 0.093 (\text{EC}) + 0.043 (\text{ER}) + 0.174 (\text{FO})$$

Based on the slope amount, the more the fusion with others, the I-position, emotional cutoff, and emotional reactivity the more positive attitude toward delinquency for high school students will be predicted.

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Table 3: Bivariate and partial correlations of predictors with motivation of attitude toward delinquency

Variable	Bivariate Correlation	Partial Correlation
IP	-.022	-.016
EC	** .233	.121
ER	** .216	.006
FO	** .275	*.144
Disinhibition	** .416	** .254
Boredom	** .153	.004
Adventure Seeking	** .190	.126
Experience Seeking	** .396	** .176

* $P < 0.5$

** $P < .01$

Bivariate Correlation: Correlation of each predictor and attitude toward delinquency

Partial Correlation: Correlation of each predictor and attitude toward delinquency with controlling other predictors

As it is observable, except for the component of IP, in the rest of the bivariate correlations there is a significant correlation between the amount of differentiation and sensation seeking with positive attitude toward delinquency ($P < 0.05$). For partial correlation also the components of FO, disinhibition and experience seeking have significant correlation with attitude toward delinquency. Based on this correlation analysis it could be concluded that among the components of sensation the effective predictor is disinhibition with 17%, while other variables are only 12%.

Discussion

Data analysis results showed that the correlation between differentiation and sensation seeking with positive attitude toward delinquency was statistically significant, and except for the component of IP, in the rest of the bivariate correlations there was a significant correlation between the amounts of differentiation and sensation seeking with attitude toward delinquency. For partial correlation also the components of FO, disinhibition and experience seeking had significant correlation with attitude toward delinquency. Based on this correlation analysis it could be concluded that among the components of sensation the effective predictor is disinhibition with 17%, while the share of other variables was only 9%.

Based on the Zuckerman's theory (1994) people with high sensation seeking need intense and varied stimulations. People with sensation seeking do every kind of activity to reach an optimal level of stimulation. People with high levels of sensation seeking feature search for an environment that provides the opportunities for innovation, illegal stimulations and joining their deviant peers, thus the sensation seeking people find an appropriate place which is consistent with their features (Ghafouri *et al.*, 2008). Schultz (1995) and Zuckerman (1994) believe that people with high levels of sensation seeking smoke more cigarettes, drink more alcohol, drive faster, and have more car accidents and convictions because of driving while drunk, have more sexual activities, and they are more exposed to HIV disease (Fasihzadeh, 2002). People with sensation seeking prefer constant stimulation, they get tired of monotonous tasks, and they always search for exciting experiences to increase their motivation. Also these types of people tend to do physical exercises that need speed, risk and novelty. Illegal actions have many risks and they are new, and because of the high risk of these actions these people consider them as exciting actions and they tend to experience them. Also the disinhibition dimension in sensation seeking people results in a tendency toward being impulsive, rebellion against social norms, and preferring the unpredictable situations, and it also increases the tendency toward abnormal and illegal behaviors, and it could also justify the positive attitude of sensation seeking people toward delinquency. Researchers have shown the significant correlation between sensation seeking and delinquency such as addiction (Khanjani *et al.*, 2011), Kiamarsi and Abolghasemi (2011), Mehrabizadeh *et al.*, (2008), risky behavior effective in catching HIV (Ghaemian *et al.*, 2011), and multiple relationships with the opposite sex (Arji, 2008).

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However some of the researches have shown different results such as the research by Jamali *et al.*, (2012) showing that some components of sensation seeking (adventure seeking and sensitivity to monotony) have no correlation with addiction, but components of disinhibition and experience seeking have a negative correlation with addiction, in a way that the higher the disinhibition and experience seeking the less the addiction will be. This finding is inconsistent with the previous and current research results.

The positive correlation between differentiation of self and positive attitude toward delinquency was one of the other results contradicting the previous research results. In human society a type of life force which has an instinctive root turns a growing child to a person full of discrete emotions that help the child to think, feel or act. In fact, this force is a force encouraging people toward differentiation. At the same time another force with the same instinctive root encourages both the child and the family to keep the emotional ties or being together. As a result of these equilibrium forces no one can reach the complete emotional cutoff from the family, but there is a considerable difference in the amount each person achieves. Also there are some differences in terms of emotional independence each child in a family achieves (Quoted by Beyrami, 2012). Differentiation indicates the individual's ability in separating the intellectual and emotional processes from each other and that which of these two processes determine the individual's behaviors. On one hand, the developing force of differentiation and the features of adolescence, on the other hand affect the adolescent's attitudes, thoughts and emotions.

Adolescence is a period during which the adolescents taste the joy of autonomy, intimacy and planning for the future and reach the peak of physical, emotional and mental evolution (Khodayarifard and Abedini, 2007). During this period the relationship between the peers is deepened. The autonomy in decision-making is developed and the individual searches for intellectual and social concerns. Adolescence is mainly a period of searching, making decisions and a gradual process of moving toward the coherent self-concept, also the best description for this period is a process of progress with the feature of increased ability to dominate the challenging and complicated academic tasks, interpersonal and emotional challenges while looking for talents, social identities and new interests (Sadock and Sadock, 2007; translated by Rezaei, 2010).

During this period the adolescents seek for a determined I and an identity and if they find their specific self they try to show this independent self and try to demonstrate the independence they have looked for and they act independently in decision makings. If this effort to demonstrate the differentiation of self and independence intensifies it causes the adolescent to evaluate and make a decision about everything happening to him/her and to have a firm belief that what he/she has decided is completely correct. For demonstrating the separation from the family and being independent, he/she may consider the abnormal behaviors to be normal and tend toward them.

Based on the research results indicating the positive correlation between sensation seeking and positive attitude toward delinquency, some programs can be designed to change the adolescent's attitude toward delinquency and to meet the needs of these people with an appropriate method. Also their spare time should be full of appropriate entertaining and sports programs to meet their needs in the right way. Also it is suggested to change the attitude of adolescents in Rehabilitation and Training Centers toward delinquency in order to modify their behavior and to help them improve their identity and to form an appropriate type of differentiation.

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