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## Social Maturity of Juvenile delinquents: Differential Analysis

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*Abstract: Delinquent children belong to that category of exceptional children who show considerable digression in terms of their social adjustment and are consequently labelled as socially deviant. To find the difference in social maturity; a sample of 100 adolescents was drawn from Juvenile Observation Homes of Ludhiana and Faridkot for Delinquents (N=50) and from Government Senior Secondary School Amritsar for non-delinquents (N=50) for the present study. Again to find the difference in age two groups of delinquents (12-14 years) and late years (17-19 years) were formed. Rao's social maturity scale was used to find out the social maturity of the respondents. A significant difference was found between delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents on all the three dimensions viz. Personal Adequacy (except the ability to take stress), Interpersonal Adequacy and social Adequacy of social maturity. Again a significant difference was found between two age groups of delinquents; the age group of 17 to 19 years (N=27) were found with more social maturity than the 11 to 14 years (N=23); on all the three dimensions viz. Personal Adequacy (except Ability to Take Stress), Interpersonal Adequacy (except Enlightened Trust) and Social Adequacy.*

Adolescence is a period where the individual has not yet attained sufficient maturity both physically and mentally, to understand the nature and consequences of his or her own activities. The term juvenile delinquency is composed of the words juvenile and delinquency. Juvenile means being childish or immature; Delinquency means antisocial activities; and Juvenile Delinquency refers to those behaviours of children and adolescents which are not approved by the law of the country and for which there is a provision of punishment for public interest. It also covers antagonistic and disobedient behaviours of adolescents and their malignant attitude towards society. It refers to the involvement of the adolescent, usually under the age of eighteen; who violate social norms and values which are threat for the maintenance of peace in the society; indulge in an unlawful behaviour by committing an act which would be considered as a crime. An age specific offender, referred to as the adolescence-limited offender, for whom juvenile offending or delinquency begins and ends during their period of adolescence (Mottif, 2006). Delinquent children belong to that category of exceptional children who show considerable digression in terms of their social adjustment and are consequently labelled as socially deviant. The social group expects an individual to be socially matured when he becomes an adolescent by establishing more mature relationship with age mates to achieve socially responsible behaviour, develop intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civil competence and achieves a more autonomous state. The New York Times (December 19, 2011) revealed that an increase in arrests for youth and have concluded that this may reflect more aggressive criminal justice and zero-tolerance policies rather than changes in youth behaviour (Erica, 2011).

The social maturation allows detailed perception of social environment that help adolescent to influence the social circumstances and develop social patterns of social behaviour. Maturation has recently been revived as a relevant, and complex, integrated theoretical concept with empirical support, particularly among offender populations. Maturation growth not only involves distinct domains influencing each other, as individuals' age, but is also impacted by positive familial bonds among

individuals with significant offense histories, in both adolescence and early adulthood (Abeling-Judge, 2020). Moffitt's theory of 'adolescence-limited offending', suggests that most antisocial behaviour in adolescence is the product of transient immaturity (Moffitt, 1993, 2003, 2006; Moffitt et al., 2002). The socially immature adolescent creates problems with his family, peer group and society.

Social Maturity is a personal commitment every individual must make as the attitude that will influence one's daily life and is used to measure how well a person fits into the actions and expectations of the society. A person is said to be socially mature if he is skilled, self-directed and has ability to take stress, communicate, cooperate, tolerate and open for change. Socially mature individual has the capability to make adjustments with himself and with his environments and circumstances (Singh & Singh; 2015). The social maturity has various aspects of social abilities as self-sufficiency, occupational activities, communication, self-direction and social participation. Raj (1996) defines social maturity as the level of social skills and awareness that an individual has achieved relative to particular norms related to an age group. It is a measure of the development competence of an individual with regard to interpersonal relations, behaviour appropriateness, social problem solving and judgment. Social responsibility, also a sub-trait of social maturity, is defined by Wentzel (1991) as 'adherence to social rules and role expectations, and instrumental in the acquisition of appropriate social behaviour'. Thus, Social maturity is acquiring the social skills that enable the child to deal with people tactfully and with mutual understanding'. It is defined as 'the possession of appropriate attitude for personal and interpersonal relationships which are essential for effective functioning in the society'. Attaining social maturity enables an individual to relate to family members, friends, neighbours and acquaintances in an appropriate and socially desirable manner. It also involves understanding how to honour and respect the people in authority. Psychological and social factors are responsible for making an adolescent more mature. Psychosocial maturity is a predictor of anti-social behaviours. More psychosocially mature a person is the less likely to engage in anti-social and risky decisions (Caufman & Steinberg; 2000). Piquero (2007) considers adolescence as a critical period because antisocial behaviours peak during this stage; however, antisocial behaviour eventually decline as adulthood begins to approach. The normal trajectory of antisocial behaviours is that the behaviour ceases as the adolescent begin to enter adulthood. These patterns have been empirically supported (Blonigen, 2010). The decline in antisocial and criminal behaviours towards the start of adulthood can be explained by various factors such as social roles, fatigue, and psychosocial maturity (Caufman & Steinberg, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001). Psychosocial maturity provides an explanation as to why delinquent behaviours during adolescence are at their peak (Cruise et al., 2008). The latter part of the adolescence period is critical as during this time an adolescent develops the psychosocial maturity needed to make the appropriate life decisions. There is an indication that psychosocial maturity completes its development towards the latter part of the adolescence (Caufman & Steinberg, 2000). Another explanation for the trajectory of anti-social behaviours from adolescence until early adulthood is changes in disinhibiting and negative emotionality, specifically the decreases in these qualities over time (Blonigen, 2010).

When delinquency is plotted against age, for both prevalence and incidence of offending appear highest during adolescence; they peak sharply at about age 17 and drop precipitously in young adulthood (Blumstein & Cohen, 1987; Farrington, 1986). With slight variations, this general relationship between age and crime is obtained among males and females, for most types of crimes, during recent historical periods and in numerous Western nations (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983). Actual rates of illegal behaviour so far so high during adolescence that participation in delinquency appears to be a normal part of teen life (Elliott, Ageton, Huizinga, Knowles, & Canter; 1983). Anti-social behaviour that emerges in toddlerhood and is persistent thereafter, the majority of boys who become anti-social first do so during adolescence (Elliott, Knowles, & Canter, 1981). This tidal wave of adolescent onset has been studied in afore mentioned representative sample of New Zealand boys (Moffitt, 1991). Between ages 11 and 15, about one third of the sample joined the delinquent lifestyles of the 5% of boys who had shown stable and

pervasive anti-social behaviour since preschool. As a group, these adolescent newcomers to antisocial ways had not formerly exceeded the normative levels of antisocial behavior for boys at ages 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11. Despite their lack of prior experience, by age 15, the newcomers equalled their preschool-onset antisocial peers in the variety of laws they had broken, the frequency with which they broke them, and the number of times they appeared in juvenile court (Moffitt, 1991). The research shows no differences among the youngest four age groups (10-11, 12-13, 14-15 and 16-17) on the measures of psychosocial maturity (Steinberg, Cauffman, Woolard, Graham, & Banich; 2020).

Lakshmi and Anuradha (2017) revealed that the delinquent children had low social maturity in comparison to non-delinquents. Sharma, Sharma and Kang (2017) suggested that juvenile delinquents showed low levels of social and emotional maturity. Moreover, the juvenile delinquents also exhibited average level of work orientation, followed by social commitment. Liu (2020) while examining the influence of sense of self, self-concept, and work orientation - subcomponents of psychosocial maturity on offending from adolescence to emerging adulthood revealed that youths who scored higher in work orientation during adolescence had lower odds of self-reported re-offending. Moreover, Identity and self-reliance were not significant predictors of recidivism. Frigeria et al. (2002) reported that the differences in social maturity of children were significantly associated with culture of the children. However, if children are not able to attain the skills necessary at each stage, they will fail to progress. Children who have difficulty or are unable to appropriately socialize with peers often experience peer rejection, which places them at further risk for problems in the future. Children and adolescents with social problem are at risk of developing negative outcomes later in life.

Moreover, difference in the age also plays a crucial role in development of problem behaviours such as delinquency during adolescence. Adolescents get social maturity with age; Kegan in 'The Evolving Self' summarized social maturity does evolve or develop in successive layers just as does cognitive maturity, progressing from the most simple understanding to more and more complex understandings of the social world. Adolescence can be divided into three sub-stages, i.e. early, middle and late adolescence (Blum et al., 2014; Perkins, 2001). During early adolescence (12-14 years), identity starts to develop; they begin to strive for independence and start showing greater preference for peers over parents (Ozretich & Bowman; 2001). Wilson and Howell (1993) explored that youth who are referred to juvenile court for their first delinquency offense before age 13 are far more likely to become chronic offenders than youth first referred to court at a later age. There are rapid changes in the physiology of the adolescents (like the development of secondary sex characteristics) that become more noticeable during this stage (Morgan & Huebner; 2009). During this stage, adolescents often start experimenting with their bodies and sexuality (Ozretich et.al, 2001; Perkins, 2001). This stage is also marked with an increase in problem behaviours like experimentation with drugs and alcohol, with an increase in risk-taking behaviour (Spano, 2004). Snyder (2001) also revealed that very young offenders have a greater percentage of serious, violent, and chronic careers than older onset delinquents. During late adolescence (17-19 years), most adolescents' identities have been stabilized and they are developed physically. During this stage, relationships become more serious than before, and adolescents develop the capacity for tender and sensual love, most likely because their sexual identities have been formed (Spano, 2004). In case of successful mastery of psychosocial tasks associated with early years of adolescence, a tendency to indulge in problem behaviours declines as the individuals can assess the consequences of such behaviour more competently (Bhandarkan, 2006; Perkins, 2001). Early and late stages of adolescence, particularly, are hence very crucial while studying problem behaviours such as delinquency. During the period of early adolescence an individual's level of social maturity can be thought of as developing resulting in higher chances of engagement in delinquent behaviours. Whereas, during the late adolescent years, that is before entering adulthood an individual is expected to be aware about himself, his relationships with others and his role and conduct in society, thus making him less susceptible to engaging in delinquent activities. The

psychosocial maturity predicts offending behaviour should diminish with age, as increase in maturity is associated with decline in the variety of offending behaviours (Nixon, 2014).

### Objectives:

1. To find out the difference in the social maturity of Juvenile delinquents and non-delinquents.
2. To find out the age difference in social maturity of Juvenile delinquents.

### Hypotheses

- 1) There will be significant difference in Social maturity of Juvenile delinquents and Non-delinquents.
  - (a) There will be significant difference in Personal Adequacy of Juvenile delinquents and Non-delinquents.
  - (b) There will be significant difference in Interpersonal Adequacy of Juvenile delinquents and Non-delinquents.
  - (c) There will be significant difference in Social Adequacy of Juvenile delinquents and Non-delinquents.
- 2) There will be significant difference in Social maturity of Juvenile delinquents with age group of 11-14 & above and 16-18.

### METHODOLOGY

**Sample:** A total sample of 100 adolescents was drawn from Juvenile Observation Homes of Ludhiana and Faridkot (Delinquents= 50) and from Government Senior Secondary School Amritsar (Non-delinquents= 50) for the present study. To maintain homogeneity of the sample, the non-delinquents students were selected after considering the cultural background, socio-economic and academic setting. The sample further classified the delinquents into early years (11-14 years & above) and late years (16-18 years). In the sample of delinquents in early years, the mean age and SD was 13.21 years and 35.34 respectively, while the mean age and SD of delinquents in late adolescent years was 17.77 years and 49.90 respectively.

### Psychological Measure:

**Rao's Social Maturity Scale (RSMS- Rao; 2002):** Rao's social maturity scale developed by Nalini Rao was used to find out the social maturity of the respondents. The scale consists of 90 items. This scale measures three dimensions of Social Maturity namely personal adequacy (work orientation, self-direction and ability to take stress), interpersonal adequacy (communication, enlightened trust and cooperation) and social adequacy (social commitment, social tolerance and openness to change).

The response options available for the items are: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for positive items and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for negative items respectively. The scores of a respondent on 3 sub-scales of the social maturity scale collectively give the Composite Social Maturity Score.

**Procedure:** Before administering the scale, a rapport was built with the subjects. The subjects were assured that the information they provide would be kept confidential and used for research purpose only. After obtaining consent from the juvenile observation home and school authorities, the scale was administered. All the subjects filled in the test on their own and it was made sure that participants' doubts, if any, were clarified by the researcher. Instructions were given precisely. They were given the provision of not disclosing their names, if they weren't comfortable with it as it could help to elicit true responses. The participants were encouraged to complete the questionnaire honestly as there was no right or wrong response.

**Statistical Analysis:** t-test was applied to study social maturity differences between delinquents and non-delinquents; and social maturity differences with age groups (11-14 years and 14-18 years) of delinquents.

**Results and Discussion:** The objective of the present paper was to study the difference in social maturity of juvenile delinquents and non-delinquents. Another objective of the current study was to study the age differences in the social maturity of delinquents themselves. For this purpose, scores on Social Maturity Scale of delinquents (N=50) were compared with the scores of non-delinquents (N=50). To study the age differences, scores on Social Maturity Scale of younger delinquents (N=23) were compared with that of older delinquents (N=27). The t-test was applied to find any significant difference in delinquents and non-delinquents and to study age differences in social maturity of delinquents. A comparison of means and S.D. was done and is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

### Difference in Social Maturity of Delinquents and Non-delinquents

Table 1 shows the means, S.D., and t-ratio for Social Maturity of delinquents and non-delinquents. As seen, non-delinquent boys differ significantly from delinquent boys on all the dimensions of social maturity as well as on Overall Social Maturity scores ( $t = 8.812$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The comparison between the mean scores of delinquents and non-delinquents indicate that the delinquents are less mature in personal, interpersonal and social adequacies, which are essential for functioning effectively in the society.

**Table1: Showing Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratio of the scores of Social Maturity Scale on the sample of juvenile delinquents and non-delinquents**

S. No	Components of Social Maturity	Delinquents		Non-delinquents		t- ratio
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Personal Adequacy</b>						
1.	Work Orientation	21.92	5.986	29.28	3.753	7.37**
2.	Self-Direction	20.06	4.053	23.94	3.093	5.38**
3.	Ability to take Stress	18.28	3.575	19.32	2.334	1.72
	Total	60.26	10.258	72.54	6.218	7.24**
<b>Interpersonal Adequacy</b>						
4.	Communication	26.44	4.695	31.66	3.826	6.09**
5.	Enlightened Trust	20.78	3.587	25.22	2.613	7.07**
6.	Cooperation	17.58	3.726	21.52	2.943	5.87**
	Total	64.80	8.459	78.40	7.117	8.70**
<b>Social Adequacy</b>						
7.	Social Commitment	26.38	5.893	32.76	4.783	5.94**
8.	Social Tolerance	23.70	3.570	26.86	2.611	5.05**
9.	Openness to Change	18.06	4.269	22.24	3.414	5.41**
	Total	68.14	11.114	81.86	8.521	6.93**
<b>Overall Social Maturity</b>		193.20	25.52	232.80	18.930	8.812**

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level.

In the present study, the results obtained indicate that juvenile delinquents significantly differ from non-delinquents on the dimensions of personal adequacy. As seen from the table the obtained t-values for work orientation (7.37,  $p < 0.01$ ), self-direction (5.38,  $p < 0.01$ ) and total personal adequacy (7.239,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicate that juvenile delinquents exhibit differences in levels of self-sufficiency in work and working skills, self-control and overall aspects of self-concept and self-reliance; meaning thereby that non-delinquents more personal adequacy delinquents. But no significant differences were observed in ability to take stress in both the groups.

The results, further revealed that there are significant mean differences in both the groups on the dimensions of communication skills (6.09,  $p < 0.01$ ), enlightened trust (7.07,  $p < 0.01$ ), and cooperation (5.87,  $p < 0.01$ ), thus indicating that juvenile delinquents and non-delinquents differ on their knowledge of major social roles. Delinquents and non-delinquents vary on their ability to effectively communicate, reasonably gauge trust in others, interpret informative exchanges and appropriately fulfil various roles required of the individual.

Lastly, the results also indicate that there are significant mean differences between delinquents and non-delinquents on the aspects of social commitment (5.94,  $p < 0.01$ ), social tolerance (5.05,  $p < 0.01$ ) and openness to socio-political change (5.41,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that delinquents and non-delinquents vary in their approach towards integration in the community, tolerance of interpersonal and cultural differences and their awareness of socio-political objectives. Sharma, Sharma and Kang (2017) suggested that the juvenile delinquents exhibited average level of work orientation, followed by social commitment. McCuish and colleagues (2019) reported negative relationships between the work orientation and self-reported offending in their Pathways study. Liu (2020) reported that juveniles who value their ability and perseverance to complete tasks may be less likely to be distracted by shorter, more antisocial means of achieving their goals. Many studies reveal that the Juvenile Delinquent children are less socially mature than their Non-Delinquent counter parts (Lakshmi & Anuradha, 2015; Sharma, Sharma & Kang, 2017).

### Age differences in Social Maturity of juvenile delinquents

One of the objectives of the present study was also to examine the age differences in social maturity among delinquents. The t-test was applied to find any significant difference in social maturity across the two age groups. Table 2 shows the means, S.D., and t-ratio analysis for age differences. The results obtained show that there was significant difference between delinquents in early and late teen years, on Social Maturity Scale ( $t = 5.24$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). On comparing the mean scores of delinquents in early and late teen years on Social Maturity, it becomes prominent that the means for younger delinquents were less than the means of older delinquents indicating that older delinquents exhibit higher social maturity.

**Table2: Showing Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratio of age differences in the social maturity scores in the juvenile delinquents**

S. No	Components of Social Maturity	12-14 years (Early Adolescents)		17-19 years (Late Adolescents)		t- ratio
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Personal Adequacy</b>						
1.	Work Orientation	18.87	4.310	24.52	6.047	3.74**
2.	Self-Direction	18.78	3.777	21.15	4.026	2.13*
3.	Ability to take Stress	18.09	3.260	18.44	3.876	0.35
	Total	55.74	8.269	64.11	10.342	3.12**
<b>Interpersonal Adequacy</b>						
4.	Communication	24.87	5.164	27.78	3.866	2.27*
5.	Enlightened Trust	19.78	2.575	21.63	4.124	1.86
6.	Cooperation	15.96	3.548	18.96	3.345	3.08**
	Total	60.61	7.686	68.37	7.489	3.61**
<b>Social Adequacy</b>						
7.	Social Commitment	22.22	3.529	29.93	5.151	6.06**
8.	Social Tolerance	22.17	2.640	25.00	3.783	3.01**
9.	Openness to Change	15.96	3.483	19.85	4.102	3.58**
	Total	60.35	6.220	74.78	10.028	5.99**
<b>Overall Social Maturity</b>		176.70	17.595	207.26	22.791	5.24**

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level. \* Significant at 0.05 level.

As shown in table 2 the results indicate that older juvenile delinquents differ significantly on many dimensions of social maturity scale. The results reveal that older juvenile delinquents exhibit differences on work orientation ( $t=3.74$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), self-direction ( $t=2.13$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), and total personal adequacy ( $t=3.12$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Further the older delinquents also differ significantly on dimension of communication ( $t=2.27$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), cooperation ( $t=3.080$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), and total interpersonal adequacy ( $t=3.61$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Lastly the results also indicate that older delinquents differ from younger delinquents on social commitment ( $t=6.06$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), social tolerance ( $t=3.01$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), openness to change ( $t=3.58$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) and total social adequacy ( $t=5.99$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Thus the results clearly indicate that older delinquents are socially mature, responsible towards themselves, others and societal norms; while no difference was found in the ability to take stress between older and younger delinquents. Recently, there has been a growing body of research analysing longitudinal data to investigate the unique behavioural and social factors associated with developmental patterns of offending among adolescent offenders. Thus, the results of present study are in congruence with previous studies where the researchers noted that individuals who are less psychosocially mature are more likely to report higher levels of self-reported offending, and are more likely to be persistent offenders (Monahan, Steinberg, Cauffman, and Mulvey, 2009; 2013; Steinberg, Cauffman, and Monahan 2015). Similar results have been reported by others (Allen, Porter, & McFarland, 2006; Cazzell, 2009; Chen & Dornbusch, 1998; Clinkinbeard, 2014; Dielman, Butchart, Shope, & Miller, 1991; Knight et al., 2012; Little & Steinberg, 2006; Sim & Koh, 2003).

**Implications:** The social maturity provides an index regarding the growth of the person, socially which gets reflected in his/her interaction with the persons and situations in the society. So in the period of adolescence to take extra care and protection of the younger generation is needed.

- A guide with strategies to develop social maturity should be published to help the authorities working in Observation Centres to enhance it among juvenile delinquents.
- Mentors should be provided to each delinquent, who may involve them in the activities in the awareness about the development of impulse control and future orientation.
- Explore risk factors that contribute to delinquency (relationships among discipline and control practices, behavior problems, victimization, and school location) and crime.
- There should be some training seminars depicting social maturity programs to meet the specific needs of juveniles to help administrators and other interested parties to understand the concept of social maturity and its usefulness in preventing violence and teaching positive life skills.
- NGOs should take initiatives to support juvenile delinquents and seek to use their energies toward constructive activities designed to reduce crime and violence.
- interventions with young children can reduce later delinquency

It is a fact that interventions with young children can reduce later delinquency, so there is need to start some intervening programs in observation centres like:

- Education of fixed hours in observation centres.
- Social competence promotion curriculums in observation centres by adding co-curricular activities such as role play, conducting drama and group participation activities to make younger juveniles more socially mature.
- Arranging special recreation programs, to keep their mind occupied.
- Mentoring programs by the older peers, who have achieved some position/ name and said good bye to crime world.
- Comprehensive community interventions like treatment of juvenile delinquents like their friends in mainstream, collaboration with existing education, vocation, rehabilitation, health, mental health, employment and training, and other social service agencies arranging educational and rehabilitation programs for them.

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