



## Original Research Article

# Psychological profiling of prisoners: assessing personality traits and locus of control in a correctional facility, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

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## Abstract

The study investigates the psychological profiles of prisoners in a correctional centre in Shimla using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) and Rotter's Locus of Control Scale. By employing these standardized psychological assessment tools, we aim to explore personality traits and locus of control among inmates. The EPQ helps in identifying dimensions such as extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie scale, providing insights into their behavioural tendencies. Simultaneously, Rotter's Locus of Control Scale differentiates between internal and external locus of control, shedding light on how prisoners perceive their control over life events. The research findings are expected to contribute to tailored rehabilitation programs, enhancing the psychological well-being and reintegration prospects of inmates. The study underscores the importance of psychological profiling in developing effective correctional interventions.

**Keywords:** Psychological profiling, Prisoners, Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, Personality traits, Inmate well-being.

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## 1. Introduction

Forensic psychology is the intersection of psychology and the legal system, where professionals apply psychological theories and methods to understand various aspects of law and legal issues. Within this field, practitioners contribute expertise in areas such as criminal behavior analysis, mental health evaluations, the reliability of witness testimony, and strategies for offender rehabilitation.

Crime and violence manifest in various forms across all societies, including scenarios where young men are lost to violence before reaching adulthood, families are affected by parental incarceration or loss, communities are plagued by poverty and lack of support, neighborhoods are engulfed in gang conflicts, women face domestic violence or sexual assault risks, and marginalized groups endure victimization in isolated areas or informal settlements.<sup>1-9</sup> These incidents incur significant costs for society. Research indicates that a small proportion, around 5%, of the population is responsible for a substantial portion of total crime. Preventing individuals

at high risk from transitioning into offenders can lead to considerable societal savings. To achieve this, it's crucial to identify risk factors for criminal behavior, which can then be used to track high-risk individuals and customize prevention programs accordingly. Understanding these risk factors not only broadens the scope of treatment options but also enhances their effectiveness.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Eysenck's Personality Scale

Hans J. Eysenck, the renowned British psychologist, is best remembered for his theory linking personality traits and criminal behavior. According to his theory, criminal conduct arises from the interplay between specific environmental factors and characteristics of an individual's nervous system. Proponents of his theory argue that each offender possesses a distinctive neurophysiological composition, which, when exposed to particular environmental conditions, predisposes them to engage in criminal behaviour.<sup>3</sup> Eysenck's theory of criminality posits that a combination of environmental, neurobiological, and personality factors influences the

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likelihood of engaging in antisocial behavior. It suggests that certain neurobiological traits, when combined with environmental influences such as upbringing, increase the propensity for specific antisocial actions. Personality traits like extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism play a significant role in this theory, affecting how individuals respond to socialization and punishment. For instance, individuals with high levels of extraversion and neuroticism may be less affected by punishment and more prone to engaging in antisocial behavior. Studies have found correlations between Eysenck's personality traits and criminal convictions, with offenders often scoring higher in psychoticism and neuroticism. Overall, Eysenck's theory highlights the complex interplay between personality, biology, and environment in shaping criminal behaviour.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Rotter's Locus of Control Scale

In personality psychology, locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them. Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954. A person's "locus" (Latin for "place" or "location") is conceptualized as either internal (the person believes they can control their life) or external (meaning they believe their decisions and life are controlled by environmental factors which they cannot influence, or by chance or fate). There is little guidance in the literature concerning the relationship between criminality and locus of control. However, research shows that Offenders who had been physically abused as children were more externally controlled. External locus of control was also found to be related to higher risk of reconviction for future sexual offending and less adjustment among inmates. It was also found that active offenders and desisting ex-offenders differ in terms of explanatory style; i.e., offenders tend to interpret negative events in their lives as being the product of internal, stable, and global forces (e.g., "That's just the type of person I am, Bad to the bone, born to lose, etc.") whereas they tend to view positive events in their lives as being the product of external, unstable, and specific causes (i.e., "lucky breaks"). These dimensions of offender cognitions may be useful in understanding the psychological aspects of desistance from crime. It also suggests an interesting, possible relationship between explanatory style and criminal desistance. First, negative-internal attributions are associated with persisting in criminal behavior. Someone might be less able to desist to the extent that negative events are seen as originating from internal sources ("This is just the way I am")—especially when these are stable ("I've always been this way") and global ("I fail at everything I do, no matter where I go"). One might speculate, therefore, that the more individuals are able to attribute positive life events to broad, long-lasting personal qualities (e.g., "Because I am a worthy individual"), the greater the odds may be that they will be able to stay crime free.<sup>27</sup> Thus the objective of the present study was to identify

prominent personality traits and locus of control among prisoners.<sup>10-16</sup> You can add the following statement to your manuscript:

## 4. Materials and Methods

### 4.1. Aim

It intends to understand the psychological characteristics of inmates at the Shimla District Correctional Centre. It aims to create psychological profiles by assessing personality traits using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (likely measuring dimensions such as Extraversion/Introversion and Neuroticism/Stability) Determining their locus of control (internal or external) with Rotter's Locus of Control Scale. By combining these two measures, the research seeks to develop a more nuanced understanding of the psychological profile of the incarcerated individuals within this specific correctional facility. Based on existing literature, it is hypothesized that incarcerated individuals will exhibit higher levels of Neuroticism and Psychoticism, along with a greater tendency toward an external locus of control compared to the general population.

### 4.2. Study design

This study employs a cross-sectional research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The Data was collected from the Model Central Kanda Jail, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India. A sample of 20 prisoners were selected through purposive sampling, comprising 10 male and 10 female prisoners. This method was chosen due to practical constraints within the correctional facility and the need to focus on individuals who were available and willing to participate. Inclusion criteria required that participants be current inmates of Kanda Central Jail, who could provide relevant psychological insights based on their incarceration experience; while exclusion criteria involved individuals with severe cognitive impairments or those unwilling to provide consent.<sup>17-26</sup> The majority of participants in this study were illiterate.

### 4.3. Measures

Each participant was administered two scales to assess personality traits and locus of control. Personality traits were measured using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Miles, 2004), which consists of 90 items and is designed to evaluate three key dimensions of personality: psychoticism, neuroticism, and extraversion. The EPQ-R subscales demonstrated good internal consistency, with reliability estimates ranging from 0.89 to 0.91 for extraversion, 0.84 to 0.86 for neuroticism, and 0.67 to 0.68 for psychoticism (Eysenck, 1989). Locus of control was assessed using Rotter's Adjustment Scale (Rotter, 1966), a 29-item survey designed to determine whether an individual has an internal or external locus of control. The test-retest reliability of this scale was 0.61.5 Statistical analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, with percentages calculated to interpret the results.<sup>28-37</sup>

#### 4.4. Procedure

The framework and research design for this study was finalized with the nature of the study being qualitative and quantitative. The researcher used a revised version of Eysenck’s Personality Questionnaire, which includes 60 yes-or-no questions. Furthermore, the study incorporated Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale, featuring 29 items that present two statements for each question, enabling participants to choose the statement that resonates with them the most. The participants were free to express themselves since the questions were open-ended.

The interviews were carried out with a group of 20 prisoners, consisting of 10 males and 10 females, all of whom consented to participate, thereby ensuring compliance with ethical standards throughout the process. Audio recordings of the interviews were made using mobile devices. Both the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) and Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale were administered through an oral interview format.<sup>38-40</sup> Researchers read each question aloud in the participants’ preferred language (Hindi) and recorded their responses to ensure comprehension and accuracy. This adaptation was made to maintain the validity of the assessments while accommodating the literacy limitations of the sample. This method also enabled the observation of non-verbal cues, such as body language, which could reflect the participants’ emotional states, including signs of nervousness like sweating, changes in eye contact, and fidgeting. The analysis of the gathered data utilized thematic methods along with statistical techniques to identify common themes in the prisoners’ responses, with percentages calculated to quantify the findings. The interviews concluded with the researcher thanking the participants for their cooperation and reaffirming the commitment to preserving their confidentiality.

#### 5. Results

This research examines the occurrence of particular personality characteristics and orientations of locus of control among a prison population, differentiated by gender. It was observed that 60 % of all the prisoners showed neuroticism as the predominant personality trait followed by extraversion (35%) and psychoticism (5%). Among male inmates, 55% prisoners scored high on extraversion trait, followed by neuroticism (35%) and psychoticism (10%). Among Female inmates, 65% females also showed neuroticism as the predominant personality trait. Remaining 20% of the females scored high on psychoticism, followed by the lowest score 15% in extraversion (**Table 1**). Regarding the lie scale, all but one participant scored high, indicating a tendency toward socially desirable responding, which may have influenced self-reported responses.

In terms of locus of control, 66.67 % of all the prisoners demonstrated an internal locus of control with similar distributions among males and females. Specifically, 55% of males and 60% of females exhibited internal locus of control,

while 45% of males and 40% of females had an external locus of control (**Table 2**).

The analysis reveals notable gender differences in the manifestation of personality traits, with neuroticism identified as the predominant characteristic throughout the prison population. Moreover, a significant proportion of inmates exhibited an internal locus of control suggesting they attribute life outcomes to personal efforts rather than external forces. Lastly, the sample displayed a nearly universal increase in lie scale scores.

**Table 1:** Percentage of prisoners exhibiting 3 personality traits

Attributes	Male	Female	Both
Psychoticism	10%	20%	5%
Neuroticism	35%	65%	60%
Extraversion	55%	15%	35%
Lie Score	100%	95%	98.67%

**Table 2:** Percentage of prisoners exhibiting internal and external locus of control

Attributes	Male	Female	Both
Internal LOC	55%	60%	66.67%
External LOC	45%	40%	33.33%

#### 6. Discussion

An assessment of personality traits revealed that neuroticism was the most prevalent characteristic among all prisoners. However, when analyzed by gender, male prisoners exhibited extraversion as the most dominant trait. Individuals who score high in extraversion tend to be sociable, energetic, impulsive, and sensation-seeking. They often seek excitement and may act spontaneously. While these traits are not exclusive to offenders, previous research has identified them as potential risk factors for criminal behavior. Among female prisoners, neuroticism emerged as the most prominent trait. Individuals with high neuroticism scores often experience anxiety, depression, and heightened emotional sensitivity to stressors.

Previous studies have found that prisoners tend to score higher than the general population on neuroticism, psychoticism, and extraversion. However, the current research aimed to determine the most dominant personality trait rather than comparing overall trait levels. Findings align with prior research indicating that women tend to score higher in neuroticism, whereas men tend to score higher in extraversion<sup>26</sup> (Lynn & Martin, 1997; Barrett, 1998; Ruch, 2020). As existing literature suggests, women generally exhibit higher neuroticism and are more susceptible to mood and anxiety disorders.

The current study supports these patterns, showing a similar personality distribution among female prisoners.

Regarding response validity, nearly all participants, except one, scored high on the lie scale. This suggests a tendency to provide socially desirable responses. Given that many inmates were not lifelong offenders, they may have been motivated to present themselves in a more favorable light to avoid negative judgment. Therefore, the elevated lie scale scores indicate that the findings should be interpreted with caution. A significant proportion of inmates (66.67%) demonstrated an internal locus of control, with 55% of males and 60% of females exhibiting this orientation. Prior research suggests that offenders often attribute negative life events to internal, stable, and pervasive factors, whereas they perceive positive experiences as externally influenced and situational.<sup>27</sup> The current findings align with this perspective, contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychological tendencies of incarcerated individuals.

## 7. Conclusion

This research investigated the psychological characteristics of inmates at a correctional facility in Shimla, concentrating on personality dimensions and locus of control through the application of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) and Rotter's Locus of Control Scale.<sup>28-35</sup> The results indicated a significant prevalence of neuroticism within the inmate population, with extraversion being notably higher among male inmates, while neuroticism was also common among female inmates. The elevated lie scores recorded across the sample suggest a propensity for socially desirable responding, which necessitates careful consideration when interpreting these personality findings. Additionally, a substantial proportion of the inmates exhibited an internal locus of control, a result that diverges from some earlier studies on offender cognition. This surprising outcome, where inmates perceive control as stemming from internal factors, may be shaped by the unique attributes of this prison demographic, particularly the prevalence of first-time offenders. This observation underscores the intricate relationship between individual control perceptions and the contextual factors associated with incarceration. Future investigations involving larger and more varied samples, as well as employing more sophisticated assessments of personality and locus of control, are advisable.<sup>36-40</sup> Such research could provide deeper insights into the psychological mechanisms at play within correctional environments and aid in the formulation of more effective rehabilitation strategies aimed at enhancing inmate welfare and promoting successful societal reintegration. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the underlying causes of the high lie scores and their potential implications for the reliability of self-reported data in future studies within this domain.

## 8. Recommendation

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentages, to

summarize the psychological characteristics of the participants. Given the exploratory nature and small sample size of the study, inferential statistical analyses were not conducted. Future research with a larger sample may incorporate inferential techniques to examine statistical significance and broader applicability of the findings and to enhance the generalizability of the results.

While the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) and Rotter's Locus of Control Scale are well-established psychological assessments, their validity in Indian correctional settings remains somewhat limited rather than entirely new. As these tools were originally developed in Western contexts, cultural factors may influence participants' responses, potentially affecting the interpretation of results. This represents a potential limitation of the study, highlighting the need for further research to enhance their applicability and validation within incarcerated populations in India. Additionally, future studies could explore the impact of cultural differences on personality traits and locus of control, examining how results may vary across diverse sociocultural backgrounds

## 9. Source of Funding

None.

## 10. Conflict of Interest

None.

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