

## Understanding the Role of Criminal Propensity in different Offence motivation among Larceny Offenders in India

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### Abstract:

This study investigates the relationship between criminal propensity and various motivations for committing larceny among adult male prisoners in India. Focusing on motivations such as compliance, excitement, provocation, and financial gain, this research aims to explain how these factors correlate with the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior. Utilizing an exploratory research design, a sample of 135 adult male prisoners, convicted under IPC sections 378 and 379 for larceny offenses, was selected from diverse jails across India. Participants were chosen based on power analysis to ensure strong findings, and data collection was conducted within the prison to maintain a controlled environment. Two primary instruments were employed: the Offending Motivation Questionnaire and the Criminal Propensity Scale. The results reveal significant correlations between higher levels of criminal propensity and motivations for larceny, including compliance, excitement, provocation, and financial. It also highlights that individuals with high criminal propensity often show behaviors ranging from thrill-seeking to confrontational tendencies, aligning with existing literature that suggests sensation-seeking traits predict risky behaviors. Notably, compliance does not eliminate criminal tendencies; individuals may comply due to external pressures rather than genuine respect for the law. Furthermore, intercorrelations among offense motivations suggest that these traits are interconnected rather than isolated. This complexity implies that interventions focused solely on enhancing compliance may be inadequate; addressing multiple motivational factors is essential.

**Keywords:** criminal propensity, Indian prisons, IPC 378, larceny offenders, offense motivations

### Introduction:

In India, larceny is a significant issue, defined as the unlawful stealing and carrying away of another person's property to permanently deprive them of it. Larceny is classified under Section 378 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which establishes the legal repercussions and penalties associated with theft (Latha et al., 2018)

The IPC, which became law in 1860, establishes a comprehensive framework for prosecuting

various criminal offenses, such as larceny, and specifies the penalties imposed on convicted individuals (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2018). Offenders of larceny frequently emerge from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and their motivations can be influenced by factors such as destitution, a lack of education, and social pressure (Osundwa, 2021). The comprehension of the underlying causes of any behavior has been a primary objective of psychology throughout history (Adler, 2013). The function of drive-in triggering any behavior is highlighted throughout multiple theories of motivation (Botvinick & Braver, 2015). Criminal behaviors are also associated with specific motivations, including financial and social. Offense motivation is one of the factors that contribute to unlawful conduct. The interplay of psychological, social, and environmental factors is a complex interplay between criminal propensity and the motivations behind criminal offenses.

Criminal propensity is the probability of an individual engaging in criminal behavior, which is frequently influenced by their personality traits, social surroundings, and life circumstances. Research has shown that individuals who show personality traits such as aggression and low self-control are substantially more likely to commit crimes. Individuals with low self-control are more prone to engaging in impulsive and dangerous behaviors, which may result in criminal activity (McCrea et al., 2024). Furthermore, the "code of the street" concept indicates that social environments may encourage attitudes that normalize violence and crime among youth, which increases criminal propensity (Watkins et al., 2023). The reasons for executing crimes can be extensive. They frequently result from a combination of personal aspirations, socio-economic factors, and situational opportunities. Economic gain, social identity, and emotional factors are among the main motivations that research has identified (Díaz-Faes et al., 2023). For certain individuals, criminal activity is associated with group identity or peer pressure. In addition to creating cycles of violence and crime, gang affiliation can also offer a sense of belonging (Thielmann, 2023). Emotional stress or trauma can also serve as substantial motivators for criminal behavior. As a coping mechanism or in response to perceived discrimination, individuals may turn to crime (Bjerk & Bushway, 2022). In deprived areas where legal possibilities are limited, a significant number of individuals resort to crime as a way of financial survival.

The relationship between criminal propensity and motivation is essential for comprehending the reasons why individuals commit offenses. Propensity can lead individuals to criminal behavior, specific motivations frequently initiate the actual commission of crimes. A person who has a high propensity for criminal behavior may only act on those tendencies when confronted with specific stressors or opportunities (McCrea et al., 2024). The surrounding is a critical factor in the development of both motivation and propensity. The likelihood of an individual acting on their criminal tendencies can be substantially influenced by situational factors, such as the availability of targets or the absence of guardianship (Sampson & Kirk, 2022).

The underlying reasons or incentives that motivate individuals to engage in illegal activities are referred to as offense motivation (Heath, 2008). These motivations can be multifaceted and diverse, including factors such as financial gain, provocation, excitement, and compliance (Stults-Kolehmainen et al., 2020). Excitement is the thrill or adrenaline rush that is often

associated with the criminal act, while compliance often involves committing a crime due to external pressures or influences (Stodolska et al., 2019). Financial motivation is motivated by the desire for economic survival or monetary gain, while provocation encompasses responses that reflect slights or challenges (Anderson et al., 2015). In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in comprehending the multifaceted factors that contribute to criminal behavior, particularly within penitentiary populations. Criminal propensity is the probability of an individual engaging in criminal behavior. It is influenced by a variety of factors, such as genetic tendencies, environmental influences, and psychological attributes (Andrews et al., 2014). The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between Criminal Propensity and the motivations behind criminal offenses.

## **Methodology:**

### **Objectives:**

- To investigate the correlation between criminal propensity and various motivations for committing larceny among adult male prisoners.
- To understand the offense motivation (compliance, exhilaration, provocation, and financial) associated with criminal propensity in larceny offenders.

- **Research Design**

The study incorporates an exploratory approach to investigate the correlation between criminal propensity and the motivation (Compliance, Excitement, Provocation, Financial) for committing larceny among adult male prisoners in India.

### **Procedure**

Adult male prisoners convicted under IPC sections 378 & 379 of larceny offenses in various jails across India were chosen for the present study. Before collecting data from participants respective jail authorities were contacted and required permissions were obtained. A total of 135 participants were included in the study based on power analysis and effect size to ensure the efficacy of the study. This specific demographic has been chosen to represent a diverse section of the prison population, including different regions, prison types (e.g., central jails, district jails), and varying security levels and to ensure the study's focus on the motivations and criminal propensity of individuals engaged in larceny. The inclusion criteria were adult males aged 18 and above, currently serving sentences for larceny, and willing to participate in the study. Data collection was carried out within the prisons, ensuring a controlled and safe environment for both respondents and the researcher. The respondents were briefed on the study's purpose, and written consent was obtained before administering the tests. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the process by assigning the code to each participant.

- **Tools for data collection**

Two primary tools were used for data collection: The offending Motivation Scale and the Criminal Propensity scale

- **Offending Motivation Questionnaire (OMQ):** The OMQ includes 22 items that measure four factors of offending motivation: Compliance, Excitement, Provocation, and Financial. Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale, similar to the VPI. This scale is designed to capture the multifaceted motivations behind committing any crime.
- **Criminal Propensity Scale – SASN,** developed by Arjun Singh and Neelam Sharma in 2017, assesses criminal propensity through four dimensions: aggression, obedience, anti-social behavior, and drug abuse. These dimensions are measured using 50 items on a five-point Likert scale. The scale categorizes criminal propensity levels for males, with raw scores of 180 and above indicating an extremely high propensity, 168 to 179 as high, 157 to 167 as above average, 140 to 156 as average/moderate, 129 to 139 as below average, 117 to 128 as low, and 116 and below as extremely low, the very same scale is used in this research.

### Result:

The data presented highlights two critical factors Offence Motivations and criminal propensity among a sample of 135 larceny offenders. The frequency and percentage distributions for each variable provide a comprehensive view of the participants' behaviors and attributes.

### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CPS Score	116.84	50.184	135
OMQ-Compliance	19.01	10.754	135
OMQ-Excitement	16.36	9.575	135
OMQ-Provocation	17.81	9.278	135
OMQ-Financial	10.01	5.710	135

### Criminal Propensity (CP)

- **Mean (M = 116.84):** The mean of Criminal Propensity is 116.84. This score represents the average tendency toward criminal behavior across the larceny offenders. The relatively high mean indicates that, on average, individuals in this unit show moderate to high levels of criminal propensity, potentially reflecting the targeted nature of the sample (e.g., individuals with a history of or potential for criminal behavior).
- **Standard Deviation (SD = 50.184):** The standard deviation is relatively large, suggesting considerable variability in criminal propensity across larceny offenders. This high variability may reflect the diverse range of individuals' criminal tendencies, from lower-risk individuals to those with higher, more concerning levels of criminal inclination. This spread indicates that while the mean score is informative, individual differences in criminal behavior are significant within this population.

### Compliance

- Mean ( $M = 19.01$ ): The mean score for Compliance is 19.01, indicating that, on average, individuals in this sample show moderate levels of compliance as offense motivation. This score reflects their tendency to adhere to rules, regulations, or expectations set by the system.
- Standard Deviation ( $SD = 10.754$ ): The relatively high standard deviation suggests substantial variability in compliance behaviors. This spread indicates that while some individuals may show strong compliance, others may struggle to meet these expectations, reflecting a broad range of compliance behaviors.

### Excitement

- Mean ( $M = 16.36$ ): The average score for Excitement is 16.36. This score suggests that the individuals tend to show moderate levels of excitement-seeking or thrill-seeking behavior, a trait often associated with impulsivity or sensation-seeking in criminology.
- Standard Deviation ( $SD = 9.575$ ): The relatively high standard deviation here indicates substantial individual differences in excitement-seeking behavior. Some individuals in the sample show high levels of excitement-seeking, which may correlate with riskier or more impulsive behaviors, while others show lower levels of such tendencies.

### Provocation

- Mean ( $M = 17.81$ ): The mean score for Provocation is 17.81, indicating moderate levels of provocative behaviors. Provocation in this context could involve confrontational, aggressive, or antagonistic behaviors.
- Standard Deviation ( $SD = 9.278$ ): The standard deviation indicates a considerable range in provocation behaviors, with some individuals engaging in high levels of provocation, while others may exhibit more cooperative or less confrontational behavior.

### Financial

- Mean ( $M = 10.01$ ): The mean score for Financial is 10.01, suggesting that, on average, individuals in this sample exhibit low to moderate levels of financial misbehavior or criminal activity with financial motivations. This dimension captures behaviors related to financial misconduct, such as theft or fraud.
- Standard Deviation ( $SD = 5.710$ ): The lower standard deviation in this motivation compared to the others indicates less variability in financial behavior across the sample. While individual differences still exist, the financial aspect of criminal behavior appears more consistent than other motivations, such as compliance or provocation.

### Correlations

		CP	Compliance	Excitement	Provocation	Financial
CPS Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.354**	.333**	.269**	.294**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.002	.001
	N	135	135	135	135	135

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OMQ-Compliance	Pearson Correlation	.354**	1	.841**	.764**	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	135	135	135	135	135
OMQ-Excitement	Pearson Correlation	.333**	.841**	1	.832**	.682**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	135	135	135	135	135
OMQ-Provocation	Pearson Correlation	.269**	.764**	.832**	1	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000		.000
	N	135	135	135	135	135
OMQ-Financial	Pearson Correlation	.294**	.599**	.682**	.720**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	
	N	135	135	135	135	135

### 1) Criminal Propensity and Offence motivation factors

The Criminal Propensity shows statistically significant correlations with all four offense motivations.

- CP and Compliance ( $r = 0.354$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): A positive correlation indicates that individuals with higher criminal propensity are more likely to score higher on compliance-related behaviors.
- CP and Excitement ( $r = 0.333$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): The significant positive correlation suggests that offenders with higher criminal propensity also tend to experience higher levels of excitement or thrill-seeking behaviors.
- CP and Provocation ( $r = 0.269$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ): The relatively lower, yet significant, correlation between CP and provocation suggests that individuals with higher criminal propensity are moderately more prone to behaviors of provocation, such as engaging in aggressive or antagonistic actions.
- CP and Financial ( $r = 0.294$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ): This correlation indicates that individuals with a higher criminal propensity tend to be more associated with financially motivated behaviors or offenses. This finding is consistent with established criminological theories which highlight financial incentives as key drivers of certain types of criminal behavior.

### 2) Intercorrelations Among Offence Motivations

The Offence Motivations themselves show strong and statistically significant intercorrelations.

- Compliance and Excitement ( $r = 0.841$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): This powerful positive correlation suggests that higher compliance with the offense motivation is strongly associated with heightened excitement. The nature of this relationship



may reflect a complex interplay between regulated and unregulated behaviors, where compliance may coexist with certain sensation-seeking actions.

- Compliance and Provocation ( $r = 0.764$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): The strong positive association here indicates that higher compliance is also associated with higher levels of provocation. This finding suggests that individuals who show provocative behaviors are also those who are more visible within compliance.
- Excitement and Provocation ( $r = 0.832$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): The strong correlation between excitement and provocation implies that offenders who are more thrill-seeking are also more likely to engage in provocative or aggressive behaviors. This highlights the potential role of impulsivity and excitement in leading to provocative behaviors.
- Provocation and Financial ( $r = 0.720$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): A significant positive correlation suggests that individuals who are more prone to provocation are also more likely to be involved in financial misbehavior. This indicates that financial motives can be linked to prevocational tendencies, possibly as a result of conflict or aggressive strategies in obtaining financial gains.
- Financial and Other motivations: The financial motive has significant, although weaker, correlations with other motivations like compliance ( $r = 0.599$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and excitement ( $r = 0.682$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that financial motives and behaviors, while related, may operate somewhat independently from the more behavioral or affective motivation of excitement and provocation.

## Discussion:

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between criminal propensity and various Offence motivations. Criminal Propensity and its correlation with motivations such as compliance, excitement, provocation, and financial misbehavior offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of criminal behavior.

The positive association between criminal propensity and Offence motivation such as compliance, excitement, provocation, and financial behavior is consistent with previous research that has explored the behavioral patterns of offenders. Individuals with higher levels of criminal propensity tend to display a broad range of different behaviors, from thrill-seeking (excitement) to confrontational (provocation) tendencies, as well as behaviors related to financial gain (financial misconduct). The role of sensation-seeking in predicting criminal behaviors, suggests that individuals with higher sensation-seeking tendencies are more prone to risky and antisocial actions, which aligns with the positive relationship observed between criminal propensity and excitement in this study (Zuckerman,1994).

Compliance may suggest adherence to rules and regulations, but it does not necessarily indicate the absence of different propensities. This study found that individuals with higher criminal propensity still exhibit moderate levels of compliance. This finding parallels the work of Tyler (1990), who argued that compliance with legal authorities may sometimes be driven by external factors such as coercion or fear of punishment, rather than internalized respect for the law. Thus, individuals with high criminal propensity may comply with certain aspects of the system while still engaging in other forms of deviance.

The association between criminal propensity and financial behavior supports criminological

theories that emphasize the role of financial incentives in driving criminal activities. Rational choice theory (Clarke & Cornish, 1985) posits that individuals engage in financial misconduct when they perceive the rewards to outweigh the risks. This theoretical framework supports the findings, suggesting that individuals with higher criminal propensity are more likely to be involved in financially motivated crimes, reflecting a pragmatic approach to criminal behavior. The strong intercorrelations among the Offence motivations indicate that these behavioral traits are not independent but rather interrelated. The relationship between excitement and provocation, for instance, supports the view that impulsive and thrill-seeking behaviors often co-occur with aggressive or confrontational actions. This is consistent with the work of Eysenck (1996), who proposed that individuals with high levels of impulsivity and sensation-seeking are more likely to engage in aggressive or confrontational behavior due to their inability to regulate emotional responses. The relationship between compliance and excitement further suggests a complex dynamic where individuals may outwardly comply with the system while still engaging in high-risk behaviors. This could be explained by the dual-process theory of decision-making (Kahneman, 2011), where individuals may simultaneously engage in rule-following behaviors (systematic, deliberate thinking) and impulsive actions (intuitive, quick responses). While the findings of this study align with several established theories in criminology and psychology, they also diverge from some studies that emphasize the dominance of specific traits over others in predicting criminal behavior. Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime focuses heavily on low self-control as the primary factor driving criminal behavior, downplaying the role of situational factors such as excitement or provocation. However, the current study's results demonstrate that these dimensions are highly interrelated and collectively contribute to understanding criminal propensity.

The positive correlation between compliance and provocation challenges the assumption that compliance necessarily indicates a lower risk of criminal behavior. Unlike studies that emphasize a strict dichotomy between compliance and deviance (e.g., Sherman, 1993), the current results suggest that compliance behaviors can coexist with other different tendencies, implying that compliance within the criminal justice system might be more nuanced than previously thought. The observed interrelationships between criminal propensity and offense motivations have important implications. The complexity of these relationships suggests that interventions targeting a single behavioral dimension (e.g., improving compliance) may be insufficient to reduce criminal propensity if other factors such as excitement or provocation are not addressed simultaneously. This finding is supported by Andrews and Bonta (2010), who advocate for a risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model in offender rehabilitation, which emphasizes the importance of addressing multiple risk factors to achieve meaningful reductions in criminal behavior.

## Conclusion

The results of this study contribute to a complex understanding of the relationships between criminal propensity and various offense motivations. The significant correlations among these dimensions underscore the need for multi-faceted interventions that address the complexity of criminal behavior. This study offers valuable insights into the complex relationships between Criminal Propensity and various motivations. Specifically, compliance, excitement, provocation, and financial behaviors. The findings highlight that criminal propensity is not a singular, isolated trait but is linked to a wide range of behaviors. The significant correlations



observed between these dimensions suggest that offenders often exhibit multiple, interrelated behavioral tendencies, such as thrill-seeking, provocation, and financial misconduct, which collectively contribute to their overall risk profile. Importantly, the study challenges traditional contradictions between compliance and deviance, revealing that compliance motivation may coexist with other different tendencies, such as excitement and provocation.

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