



Systematic Review

The Link between Individual Personality Traits and Criminality: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: In addition to social and environmental factors, individual personality traits have intricately linked with maladaptive behaviour. Thus, the purpose of this article was to review the link between individual personality traits and criminality. A systematic review was conducted to obtain information regarding the link between individual personality traits with criminal behaviour in the Sage, Web of Science, APA PsycNet, Wiley Online Library, and PubMed databases. The results indicate that individual personality traits that contribute towards criminality are (i) psychopathy; (ii) low self-control; and (iii) difficult temperament. As an overall impact, the review is expected to provide in-depth understanding of the link between individual personality traits and criminality; hence, greater consideration will be given to the dimension of personality as a notable risk factor of criminal behaviour.

Keywords: personality; traits; criminal; behaviour; systematic review



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1. Introduction

Criminology has become an interdisciplinary field where the focal point of each study has diversely evolved from individual-level to environmental-level risk factors associated with criminal behaviour. As such, individual personality traits constitute one dimension of the bigger picture which has received significant empirical attention in recent decades, especially research linking personality traits to various measures of crime. According to Beaver (2017) [1], personality refers to the stability of individuals in regard to patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In general, personality traits can be categorised into four general combinations, namely (i) high control–high affiliation; (ii) low control–low affiliation; (iii) high control–low affiliation; and (iv) low control–high affiliation [1]. Some empirical research has suggested that high interpersonal control and low interpersonal affiliation are strongly interrelated with antisocial behaviour [1].

The Big Five Model of Personality suggested that five domains largely account for individual differences in personality including (i) extraversion; (ii) openness; (iii) neuroticism; (iv) agreeableness; and (v) conscientiousness [2]. Sleep (2021) [2] stated that low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, and high neuroticism increase aggression, mental distress, and antisocial behaviour among individuals. Similarly, the personality theory constructed by Eysenck (1966) (trait-psychologist) proposes a significant relationship between criminal behaviour and personality variables [3]. Based on the Eysenck personality theory, there are three fundamental factors of personality including psychoticism (P), extraversion