Empathy and Criminal Behaviour of Aggressors at Detention Centre of Kendari, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the empathy in aggressors at the detention centre class two of Kendari. This quantitative study obtained data using a questionnaire referring to the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) scale. The close-ended questionnaire is used to measure the aggressors' empathy and aggressive behaviour against the committed crimes. The obtained data were analysed in two ways, descriptive and inferential analysis. The data were tested using Anova for a simple linear regression test to examine whether empathy in aggressors affects their aggressive behaviour, followed by a t-test to investigate whether the empathy level is developed when committing certain crimes. The result of the study indicates that the empathy and behaviour of the aggressors have a significant correlation. In this line, most of the aggressors at the detention centre class II of Kendari have strong empathy when they are committing a crime. Besides, the aggressors tend to respond against empathy negatively.

Keywords

Aggressor; Empathy; Aggressive Behaviour; Interpersonal reactivity index

Introduction

Aggressors refer to the people committing certain crimes, found guilty, and considered unable to manage to live a social life. They failed to obey the existing norms in the society, as well as the rules and laws (Sarbaitinil & Firdaus, 2019). This phenomenon often occurs because, one of which, the people's psychological and social needs are not considerably managed. As a result, this can lead to a violation of the law. One of the problematic social-psychological needs is empathy, which is supposed to belong to the people, but the criminal aggressors tend to not have this leading to unlawful acts and end up in a prison. Empathy as one's ability to project oneself to others has a profound effect on one's life (Konrath & Grynberg, 2013). Empathy interventions can reduce some types of aggression such as abuse, sexual crime, and victims of bullying (Shamad & Wekke, 2020; Kristiyanti, 2019).

Beven, et. al. (2004) used the Criminal Sentiments Scale, Karolinska scale, and IRI scale to assess empathy to 88 aggressors of non-sexual violence. This study indicates a person's tendency to accept other people's views is related to positive behavior, whereas the low tendency is associated with increased impulsivity in aggressors.

In Indonesia, research on empathy is still limited in numbers. Latifa & Astuti (2016) conducted an empathy-related study entitled "The Influence of Cognitive Behavior Therapy in strengthening empathy in adolescents with aggressive behavior" which showed that there were significant differences in the level of empathy of adolescents before and after being treated with the CBT model. Besides, Badriyah (2013) also conducted a similar study with the title "The influence of empathy and self-control on the aggressiveness of adolescents at SMA Negeri 3 Kota Tangerang Selatan" which shows that empathy and self-control have a very significant influence on adolescent aggressive behaviour.

This study is like the previous studies because it uses the IRI (Interpersonal Reactivity Index). However, unlike previous studies, this recent study does not use any control tools or treatments. This study is qualitatively collecting the data related to the empathy of the respondents by distributing questionnaires based on the IRI scale to determine the effect between empathy and aggression behavior. Aggression refers to the desire to attack something destructive. According to Tedeschi & Quigley (2000), several factors

underlying the occurrence of aggression are frustration, anger, temperature, genes, social environment, the influence of alcohol. Furthermore, Fernandez & Kramp (2011) explains the factors that influence the relationship between empathy and behavior. First, perspective-taking is the tendency for someone to take another person's point of view spontaneously. If related to the theory of mind, where someone can deduce the mental condition of others, understand from their perspective, and can also interpret and predict the subsequent behavior of others. The main key is where a person can use his thinking ability to understand the condition of others, through the interpretation of attitudes and behaviors. Because it is closely related to the power of cognition, the ability of each person to do perspective-taking will vary depending on the accuracy of the analysis. Second, fantasy is the ability of someone to change themselves imaginatively to experience the feelings and actions of the imaginary character in movies, books, or novels. Third, Emphatic concern is a feeling of sympathy oriented towards others and attention to the misfortune experienced by others. Finally, Personal distress is self-oriented personal anxiety in dealing with unpleasant interpersonal settings.

According to Tabullo (2018) who examined the relationship between reading fiction, the nature of empathy, and the ability to think in the Latin American sample (208 adults - 137 women, ranging from 18 to 59 years), the relationship between reading fiction, empathy and thinking ability remains significant after controlling for age, education level and trait empathy score. It is still a matter of debate that empathy plays an important role in the possibility to feel both feelings of shame and guilt in certain situations, then shame and guilt are very important contributions to one's overall morale. Bateman (2015) explains that Situational Action Theory (SAT) is a theory of moral action that is responsible for all criminal acts as moral acts of breaking the rules. Weak feelings of shame and guilt, combined with weak moral rules, form a weak overall morality in a person; and this is a core component of the explanation of a criminal. Thus, someone because of empathy, shame, and weak guilt is more likely to commit acts of violence or crime (Bateman, 2015). This is in line with previous research that the level of empathy

will affect one's tendency to act aggressively (Marshall & Marshall, 2013; Feshback, 1987; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988; Blair, 2010), both direct or indirect influence (Braver & Tittle, 2016; Musthan & Wekke, 2018). Joliffe & Farrington (2004) suggested that the ability to cuddle the emotions of others is closely related to aggressive behavior that will be done, including criminal behavior, although with the help of penal institutions the level of empathy of a criminal will increase (Heyne, et.al, 2017) and become a variable gauge not to repeat the same actions in the future (Bock & Hosser, 2014). Due to various results from previous studies, the researchers investigated the relationship between the empathy level and aggressive behaviour of aggressors before and after committing certain crimes, and what makes this research is different, how they respond to such feelings when they commit crimes.

Methods
Sample and Procedure

The sample of this study was 51 aggressors of murder cases) at the detention centre of class II Kendari, all of which were male. All participants filled the given questionnaire and answered by the conditions of the attitude, and feelings of respondents. The questionnaire given to respondents was a standard questionnaire based on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI).

Instrument

The questionnaire is designed using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) to measure the level of empathy and aggressor behavior before taking action and the aggressor's response to empathy when committing a crime. Aggressors are given the freedom to give answers or responses according to their feelings. The score criteria for each statement will be different. The criteria are: if they answer "no", they got (2) as the score, "yes" (1), and if they do not answer, they got (x). The empathy questionnaire consists of 4 indicators, namely perspective talking, personal distress, fantasy, and emphatic concern.

Perspective talking: 1) I daydream and fantasize, with regularity, about things that might happen to me, 2) Sometimes I find it difficult to see things

from the "other" point of view, 3) I try to see the other side of the disapproval before making a decision, 4) I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their point of view, 5) If I am sure I am right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments, 6) I believe that there are two sides to each question and try to see both, 7) When I get angry at someone, I usually try to "put my self on their shoes" for a while, 8) Before criticizing someone, I tried to imagine how I would feel if I were in their position.

Personal distress: 1) In an emergency, I feel worried and uncomfortable, 2) I sometimes feel helpless when I am in a very emotional situation, 3) When I see someone hurt, I tend to stay calm, 4) Being in an emotionally tense situation scares me, 5) I am usually quite effective in dealing with emergencies, 6) I tend to lose control during emergencies, 7) When I see someone who is in urgent help need in an emergency, I am very sad.

Fantasy: 1) I am involved in the feelings of characters in a novel, 2) I am usually objective when watching a movie or playing, and I do not often get stuck in it, 3) Being entertained by a good book or movie is a bit rare for me, 4) After seeing a game or movie, I feel as if I am one of the characters, 5) When watching a good film, I can easily put myself as the leading characters, 6) When I read an interesting story or novel, I imagine how would I feel if the events in the story happened to me.

Emphatic Concern: 1) I often have soft feelings and concern on the people who are less fortunate than me, 2) Sometimes I do not feel very sorry for others when experiencing problems, 3) When I see someone being used, I feel very protective of them, 4) The misfortune of others usually do not bother me, 5) When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes do not care, 6) I am often touched by the things or events that I see, 7) I will describe myself as a person who is calm and kind-hearted.

Data analysis

This study uses a quantitative approach, where data is obtained by a questionnaire instrument, based on the IRI scale. Before testing the correlation, the researcher tested the normality and homogeneity with a significance level of 0.05. Descriptive data is used to see the sample data centering and response presentation. Whereas, for testing the existence of empathy for the aggressor behavior, the researchers used Simple Linear Regression analysis with a significance level of 0.05. The following are the test criteria that is if the value of sig. $> \alpha = .05$ then H0 is accepted. Test differences in the increase in empathy scores for Aggressors' behavior are tested using a statistical t-test for unpaired data (independent t-test) on the value of N-Gain (Walpole, 1993).

Results & Discussion

This research was conducted in three stages. The first stage is looking for a picture of empathy for criminal aggressors at the detention centre of Class II Kendari (Perspective Taking and Personal Distress). In the second stage, the researchers looked for the relationships between low empathy of aggressors and the aggressive behavior of aggressors before committing a crime (Fantasy). As well as the third stage of the aggressor's response to empathy that arises when committing a crime (empathic concern). Based on the results of field data at the detention centre, Table 1 indicates the aggressors' response:

Table 1. Percentage of Respondent Answer Scores

1	*Taking perspective*	Yes	296	72.55%
		Not	109	26.72%
		No response	3	0.74%
2	*Personal Distress*	Yes	230	64.43%
		Not	125	35.01%
		No response	2	0.56%
3	*A fantasy*	Yes	156	50.98%
		Not	145	47.39%
		No response	5	1.63%

		Yes	248	60.78%
4	*Emphatic Concern*	Not	106	25.98%
		No response	3	0.74%

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The results of the tabulated data analysis in Table 1, show that a person's tendency to take the perspective of others spontaneously in Perspective Taking, Personal Distress, Fantasy, Emphatic Concern shows in the high category. This can be seen from the respondents' answers to the questionnaire given, for perspective-taking, the respondents answered "Yes" up to 296 with the percentage of 72.55 per cent and "No" up to 109 with a percentage of 26.72 per cent and did not respond taking up to three with the percentage of 0.74 per cent. In Personal Distrees aspect, respondents score on the answer "Yes" taking up to 230 with a presentation of 64.43 per cent and "No" up to 125 with a percentage of 35.01 per cent and the aggressors who did not respond to the questionnaire given up to 2 with a percentage of 0.56 per cent. In Fantasy, respondents' answers are "Yes" for 156 with a presentation of 50.98 per cent and "No" for 145 with a percentage of 47.39 per cent and did not respond to the questionnaire given is five with a percentage of 1.63 per cent. Meanwhile, in emphatic concern, respondents who answered "Yes" were 248 with a percentage of 60.78 per cent and "No" as many as 106 with a percentage of 25.98 per cent and did not respond to the questionnaire given by three respondents with a percentage of 0.74 per cent.

Also, a descriptive analysis of empathy and aggressive behaviour data at the detention centre of class II Kendari is presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Descriptive Data between Empathy and Behavior

Column 1	
The mean	37.19608
Standard Error	0.624355
Standard Deviation	4.458787
Sample Variance	19,88078
Minimum	22
Maximum	45
Sum	1897
Count	51

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Based on the results of the statistical average test (mean) of empathy in criminal aggressors at the detention centre, the mean value is 37.19. The lowest value is 22 and the highest value is 45. Furthermore, the standard error value is 0.62, the Standard Deviation is 4.45, and the sample variance is 19.88. Inferentially, to determine the relationship between empathy and behavior, a correlation test was performed using SPSS software. The results of the empathy and behavior correlation test are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Correlations between Empathy and Behavior

	Correlations	Empathy	Behavior
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	1	604
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	51	51
Behavior	Pearson Correlation	604	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	51	51

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Based on the correlation test between empathy and behavior, a significance value indicates 0.00 <0.05 which means there is a significant correlation. This shows that there is a relationship between empathy and criminal behavior at the detention centre of Class II Kendari. To see the contribution of empathy to behavior, it can be seen in R Square, which is presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.353a	.125	.107	1.65694

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Table 4 shows that the R-value of the correlation coefficient between empathy and behavior is 0.353. This shows the magnitude of the effect of empathy on behavior by 35.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent is influenced by other factors.

To find out the significance of the empathy variable to the aggressor's behavior, an ANOVA test was carried out, which is presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5. ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.159	1	19.159	6,978	.0a
	Residual	134,528	49	2,745		
	Total	153,686	50			

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Based on Table 5, the F count is 6.978 with a significant level of 0.11 <α = 0.05 so that H0 is rejected, meaning that there is a real relationship between empathy and aggressive behavior. Thus it can be explained that the lower empathy a person has, the higher tendency for aggressive behavior he has. To find out the increase in the empathy rate of the aggressor's behavior, the t-test statistics (independent t-test) on the N-Gain value was done and presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6. Difference Test (t-Test)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4,755	1,528		3.112	.003
	Behavior	.425	.161	.353	2,642	.011

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Based on Table 6, it is known that the significant value is 0.11 <α = 0.05 so that H0 is rejected. Thus it can be concluded that if there is an empathy stimulus, the aggressor tends to reject the stimulus.

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