

## Comparison of Value System among a Group of Military Prisoners with Controls in Tehran

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**Objective:** Religious values were investigated in a group of Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Tehran .

**Methods:** The sample consisted of official duty troops and conscripts who were in prison due to a crime. One hundred thirty seven individuals cooperated with us in the project (37 Official personnel and 100 conscripts). The instruments used included a demographic questionnaire containing personal data and the Allport, Vernon and Lindzey's Study of Values Test. Most statistical methods used descriptive statistical methods such as frequency, mean, tables and t-test.

**Results:** The results showed that religious value was lower in the criminal group than the control group ( $p < .001$ ).

**Discussion:** This study showed lower religious value scores in the criminals group, suggesting the possibility that lower religious value increases the probability of committing crimes .

Key words: *Crime, Military personnel, Prisoners, Religion*

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Crime is considered as the most serious social problem in every community; and overall crime rate in all countries, both industrial and non industrial, has grown tremendously. Of course, the increase in crime rate has been observed more in developed countries (1). From 1979 to 1980 the U.S. crime rate within one year increased by 42 percent (1). America is in the midst of the largest decline in violent crime rates in more than half a century. According to Uniform Crime Report (UCR) statistics, from 1991 to 1999, homicide rates in the United States fell by 41 percent and robbery rates by 44 percent (2).

According to FBI statistics, in the U.S., a capital crime is committed every one second, a robbery every two seconds and a rape every eight seconds, and a murder every 27 minutes (1), and this is while only less than 20 percent (1) to 25 percent (3) of criminals are arrested in the U.S .

Crime: the only common factor in all crimes is that criminal procedure has been banned. This characteristic is what Emile Durkheim has mentioned in his definition of crime. He defined crime as any action that its punishment has been determined in law (4). All attempts to act contrary to rules, regulations, and values of each community, will be considered delinquency or crime by the community and those committing such acts are called offender or offenders (5). In view of the fact that the authority and integrity of a country requires power and maintaining discipline in its armed forces, investigating crime and its related fields in military organizations is very important (6).

Usually in every community there are rules and regulations accepted by the majority. Military organizations, like other organizations have rules and regulations, which must be respected. Why an individual commits a crime? What causes a person to commit a crime? How can crimes be prevented? These are the questions that occupied the mind of researchers, and encouraged them to conduct this study. However, sometimes in many societies, including the military organizations, rules are not obeyed. Although the number of offenders may be small, their actions must be investigated , especially if they were committed in the military organizations. The armed forces are in fact the keeper of discipline and security in their countries. Fulfillment rules and regulations in these organizations cause more efficacy of the armed forces ; and irregularities, resisting principles and rules in the armed forces cause inefficiency. Therefore, to prevent crimes and offenses, leaders should educate people. Some important measures that may be taken to prevent crimes and offenses are to investigate and to gain knowledge about situations that may lead to crimes, as well as identifying risk factors of crimes in the armed forces .

In addition, like the official forces, the conscripts have an important role in implementation of the armed forces. That is why this study has tried to investigate both groups .

In recent decades, greater attention has been paid to religion. Much attention has focused on religion in relation to various indices of social and civic well-being. While much worthwhile scientific research has

been done, religion remains a neglected variable in criminology and in criminal justice studies. The popular view that "religion reduces crime" is neither without empirical foundation nor without need for far more refined and intensive testing (7).

Much research has been done to investigate the relationship between religious values and crime in different populations. For example, in a study, Laughrey (2009) attempted to discover whether religion serves as a potential protective factor in the severity of crimes committed by juveniles with sexually offending behaviors. Multi-paged pencil and paper surveys were collected from 325 adjudicated juvenile sexual abusers. Of these youth, 179 (55%) reported sexual victimization as children while, 146 (45%) said they had not been sexually abused. Findings showed that juvenile sexual offenders with religious affiliation were less likely to commit non-sexual crimes than their non-affiliated peers; however, propensity for sexual crime remained consistent between groups (8). Most researchers have generally revealed an inverse relationship between religiosity and various forms of deviance, delinquency, and crime. The complexity of the relationship and conditions under which it holds, however, continue to be debated. Although a few researchers have found that religion's influence is noncontingent, most have found support—especially among youths—for effects that vary by denomination, type of offense, and social and/or religious context. More recently the relationship has been reported as spurious when relevant secular controls are included. Evans, Cullen, Dunaway, and Burton (1995), in a research attempted to resolve these issues by testing the religion-crime relationship in models with a comprehensive crime measure and three separate dimensions of religiosity. They also controlled secular constraints, religious networks, and social ecology. They found that, among their religiosity measures, participation in religious activities was a persistent and non-contingent inhibitor crimes committed by adults (9).

The above studies suggest that the value of religion in people's lives is correlated with reduction of crime. We, therefore, hypothesize that offenders might be expected to have lower religious value scores than the normal people.

This study attempts to discover whether religion serves as a potential protective factor in the severity of crimes.

## Materials and Methods

In this study, researchers investigated the factors affecting crime; and it can be said that this study is a descriptive survey that examined the criminals and their beliefs.

### Subjects

The study population consisted of all prisoners who were in a military prison in Tehran during September 12, 2002 to December 19, 2002 (38 official personnel and 101 conscripts). The sample consisted of two

groups: one criminal and one control. The criminal group consisted of all official duty troops and conscripts who were in prison due to a crime. One hundred thirty seven (of 139) individuals were cooperating with the project (37 official personnel and 100 conscripts). There was no age restriction. The control group consisted of 40 matched military personnel who were not and never been to a prison. They were matched based on marital status, military job and age. No significant differences were observed between these two groups with respect to age and marital status.

### Instruments

Two instruments were used:

1 - A demographic questionnaire containing personal data by the project researcher has been prepared and compiled.

2- The translated form of Allport, Vernon and Lindzey's Study of Values Test. Allport and colleagues suggested values to be particular types of attitudes that are more intense and extensive (10). Life is made meaningful and is directed by these values. One useful classification of values was developed by E. Spranger (1928). He identified six kinds of value orientations (11). (1) Religious value: The religious man is one who seeks to relate himself to the universe in a meaningful way and has a mystical orientation. In this study, the religious persons were Muslim. (2) Theoretical value: The theoretical man is primarily interested in the discovery of truth, in the systematic ordering of his knowledge. (3) Economic value: The economic man is primarily oriented toward what is useful. He is interested in the practical affairs of the business world; in the production, marketing, and consumption of goods; in the use of economic resources; and in the accumulation or tangible wealth. (4) Aesthetics value: The aesthetic man finds his chief interest in the artistic aspects of life, although he need not be a creative artist. He values form and harmony. (5) Social value: The essential value for the social man is love of people, the altruistic or philanthropic aspects of love. (6) Political value: The political man is characteristically oriented toward power, not necessarily in politics, but in whatever area he functions. There is a well-known questionnaire, the Study of Values Test designed by Allport, Vernon and Lindzey to measure the relative strength within an individual of Spranger's six value orientations (12).

The Allport, Vernon and Lindzey's Study of Values Test evaluates six values: religious, social, economic, aesthetic, political and theoretical. Validity and reliability of the original form are reportedly high in different cultures (12, 13, 14 and 15). The Persian form of the instrument has been used several times in Iran. For example, Bayzai (1969) reported a high correlation between the Persian form and the original form (13). Mirzamani (1983) reported reliability coefficients between .84 to .95 for split-half reliability and .77 to .93 for test-retest (15). These studies suggest that the

Persian form of the instrument is useful, with adequate reliability and validity.

**Results**

The frequency and type of crimes committed by the criminal group are shown in Table 1.

Demographic characteristics of both groups are shown in Table 2. As demonstrated in table 2, no significant difference was observed between the two groups with respect to marital status, age and education.

Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 13.0. Scheffe test showed there was no significant difference between the conscripts and the official forces regarding religious values. Mean scores for the two groups (control and criminal) on all values are shown in Table 3.

Mean scores for the two groups on all values are shown in Table 1. Mean scores on religious value for the criminal group was 41.82 (SD= 9.08), and for the control group was 52.9 (SD=7.36). A t test indicated that religious value was lower in the criminals than in the controls (p<.001).

**Discussion**

The advantage of belonging to a certain religion and believing in god helps you to strengthen your hope for a better living. Strong religious values protect an individual from losing self-integrity as he always thinks and acts rightly as if god is watching and recording his deeds for hereafter compensation.

Criminological and sociological theory have long assumed a negative relationship between religion and

criminality. This study, which investigated religious value in a criminals group, showed lower religious value scores in the criminals group, suggesting the possibility that higher religious value reduces the probability of committing a crime.

This is in agreement with previous studies conducted by John and DiIulio, (7); Laughrey, (8); and Evans, Cullen, Dunaway and Burton, (9) who found a positive correlation between crime and religious value [8, 9 and 10].

The hypothesis that religion exists to control people's behavior is one of the oldest hypotheses in the scientific study of religion (e.g., 16 and 17). In the present article we have extended this line of thinking by investigated religious value in a criminals group.

So it seems religion will be one of the prime factors of the 21st Century. I would think that crimes in religious countries are committed by people who are not religious who live there. I hardly expect that murders and rapes are mostly committed by people who go to mass and pray daily.

**Conclusion**

This study showed lower religious value scores in the criminals group, suggesting the possibility that lower religious value increases the probability of committing a crime. Religion in general and Islam in particular can play positive role in reducing crime in society. That said, such a difference in crime rates is a difference between people who are religious and people who are not religious.

**Table 1- The frequency and type of crimes committed by criminal group**

Type of crime	Frequency		Total Frequency
	Official duty	Conscripts	
Fighting	2	5	7
Financial	8	2	10
Security	6	1	7
Weapons	5	2	7
Desertion	0	45	45
Theft	1	28	29
Fraud	2	2	4
Mischief	0	7	7
Murder	0	5	5
Back check	10	0	10
Accident	1	1	2
Moral or sexual	2	1	3
Drugs	0	1	1
Acid spray	0	1	1
sum	37	100	137

**Table 2- Demographic characteristics of both groups**

Groups	Marital status		Mean of age	Education
	Single	Married		
Criminals N=137	85 (62.04%)	52 (37.96%)	22.20 SD=3.77	Diploma= 69 (50.36%) Associates Degree= 28 (20.44%) BSc= 27 (19.71%) MA= 13 (9.49%)
Control N=40	25 (62.5%)	15 (37.5)	22.15 SD=2.62	Diploma= 20 (50%) Associates Degree= 8 (20%) BSc= 8 (20%) MA= 4 (10%)

Table 3- Values of six values compared with a group of ordinary people

Groups	values	Frequency	Mean scores in each value	Std. Deviation	Sig. (T-test)
Control	Artistic	N= 40	28.78	6.32	P<.001
Criminals		N= 137	36.27	6.88	
Control	Political	N= 40	38.46	4.74	Not Sig.
Criminals		N= 137	39.5	5.83	
Control	Academic	N= 40	38.45	5.04	Not Sig.
Criminals		N= 137	40.17	5.59	
Control	Religious	N= 40	52.9	7.36	P<.001
Criminals		N= 137	41.82	9.08	
Control	Social	N= 40	45.03	5.77	P<.001
Criminals		N= 137	39.89	7.24	
Control	Economic	N= 40	37.16	5.27	P<.001
Criminals		N= 137	42.26	8.48	

These are religiously based programs which can be operated within the institution or the larger community. They can be run by inmates or religious leaders, and use spiritual beliefs and values to change offenders' attitudes and behaviors.

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