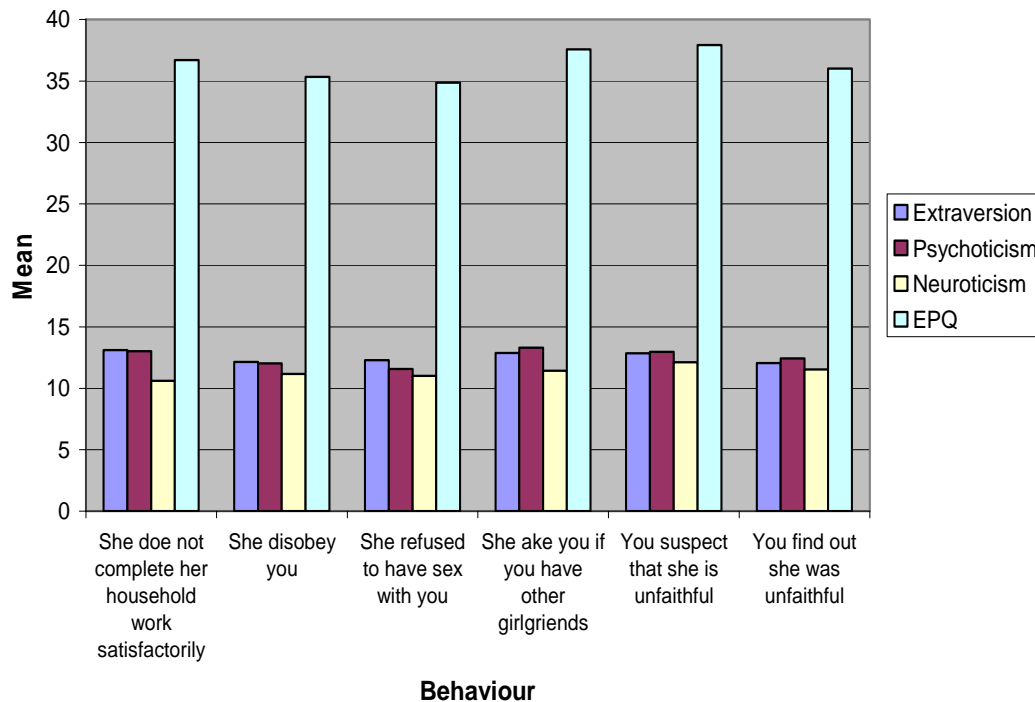


Figure 28 EPQ scores of inmates by motivation for violent behaviour



7 DISCUSSION

This study focuses primarily on the characteristics of male perpetrators of violence against women and girls in Namibia. The method of investigation was to study prison inmates who had been convicted of rape or other violent crimes against women or girls. In so doing, developmental, social, and psychological variables were studied.

In addition to interviews and questionnaires, focus group discussions were used to gather data from the inmates. The study revealed several factors that are associated with the violent crimes committed against women and girls. Prominent among these is the use of alcohol, which was present in almost every case that led to a conviction.

According to the disinhibition theory, alcohol suppresses the functions of the superego, a Freudian personality mechanism that is considered to be the storehouse of the human's moral values. Basically, the superego regulates the moral conduct of the individual and invokes a guilty conscience in the individual when he behaves contrary to the wishes of the superego. Thus, with the proper functioning of the superego suppressed, the id manages to drive the individual to commit an immoral act only to feel guilty later on. Socially, when under the influence of alcohol, an individual loses all sense of rationality and, as a result, takes irrational decisions and actions. This was indeed the case with the inmates who were interviewed, for they revealed through the focus group discussions that they committed these crimes while under the influence of alcohol and did not know what they were doing at the time. Most related how they were shocked and surprised to be picked up by the police the following

day. This finding confirms the views held by Gerson (1978) and Chimbos (1978) that the use of alcohol is involved in cases of violent crimes ranging from common assaults to homicide.

The study also revealed that the majority of the perpetrators had very little or no education at all. As a result, they were either unemployed or performed only unskilled, menial, low-paying work such as manual and farm labour. This places these inmates in the lower socioeconomic strata; they are condemned always to belong to the socioeconomically marginalised sections of Namibian society. Typically, those who live in poverty tend to develop an alternative lifestyle or subculture. They develop an independent value-system that places them at loggerheads with middle-class norms and values; the lower-class positively sanctions a competing set of norms and values (Siegel 1989). For example, not showing fear, being disrespectful of authority and being “street-smart” may be the value system of the lower class (Siegel 1989). This value system is perpetuated and transmitted from one generation to the next. Consequently, the perpetrators of violent crimes against women and girls may have their own value system that does not conform with the mainstream value system. Committing crime, including violent crimes that take no account of who the victim is, may be one way of venting their frustrations and expressing anger at a system that marginalises and excludes them from virtually every aspect of society.

Furthermore, there is the question of affordability of and access to legal representation. The majority of the inmates interviewed indicated that they had had no legal representation at all, as they could not afford it, and the state had not provided it. Many of these inmates claimed that their cases had not been properly investigated. For example, one inmate claimed that no forensic tests were performed on either himself or the complainant, and that there was no evidence to link him to the crime he was accused of having committed. Another inmate related how the magistrate had told him that he was going to lock him up and use him as an example of how the legal system can and will deal with rapists. This, he claimed, was in the absence of any evidence to link him to the crime. There must therefore be some doubt as to whether or not all the inmates received fair trials. It is possible that with legal representation, some of the inmates may not have been convicted and imprisoned.

The study further revealed that the majority of the inmates are from singly headed families. Some lived with one parent, and thus did not enjoy the benefit of growing up with the love and care of both parents; others were raised by a grandparent or another member of the extended family, often under extremely difficult conditions. Where there is no love and unconditional acceptance, a growing child will try to find affirmation elsewhere. It is unfortunate that quite often the child finds the acceptance he is looking for in other “rejects” of society, who are themselves also looking for acceptance. Being of low socioeconomic status, and embracing a subculture or value system that places them at loggerheads with mainstream values, such young people are more likely to become involved in criminal activities. If approval and acceptance are contingent upon criminal activity of whatever nature, then so be it. This is in part a matter of modelling the behaviour of those who are considered to be influential or role models in order to be accepted by them, and to be more like

them. Unconditional acceptance by and similarity to the perceived “hero” satisfies the psychological needs of the individual at a number of levels. It is therefore not unrealistic to suggest that in many cases, the perpetrators of violence against women and girls committed their crimes in order to fulfil their own psychosocial needs.

Some of the inmates also indicated that their fathers, stepfathers or primary caregivers were abusive towards their mothers. As a result of being exposed to this behaviour, the inmates may have learnt from an early age that beating a woman and resolving conflict through violence, especially directed against a woman, are normal and acceptable behaviours. Thus, their violent and aggressive behaviour towards women may be a function of the values they have internalised at a very young age. This finding is consistent with the basic tenets of social learning theory.

Cultural factors also emerged as strong contributors to violence against women. Many of the inmates believed that the man is naturally the head of the family, and as such, has certain rights related to exercising control over his family. These rights include beating his wife or partner in order to discipline or correct her if in his opinion she has done something wrong. This belief was mirrored by some inmates who indicated that a woman deserved to be punished if she disobeyed her husband or partner. Thus, many beat up their partners because they believed that it is appropriate for a man to do so. This study found that in some cases, where the beating was simply meant to discipline the woman, it resulted in her death. While this was not the original motive, it turned out to be the end result. The initial intention (to discipline the woman, as is expected of a man) may have been well-meant, but was nonetheless a violent act that had unfortunate unintended consequences, adding to the number of women who have perished at the hands of their husbands or partners in Namibia.

Furthermore, several perpetrators revealed that once they had paid *lobola* (bride price) and were officially married according to their cultural traditions, they were entitled to have sex with their partners at any time they pleased. They indicated that under such circumstances, the woman had no right to refuse her husband sex. Those who were not officially married but had been in relationships with their partners for more than 10 years also felt that rape in such relationships was impossible, and that their partners were not supposed to refuse them sex. From this perspective, they felt that all they had done was to have sex with their wives or partners of long standing, and they did not grasp why they had been imprisoned. (After having become familiar with the Combating of Rape Act (2000), however, one of these inmates did eventually agree that rape within a marriage is possible.) Such a degree of ignorance of the law calls for the judicial system to launch extensive campaigns to educate the public regarding the provisions of pertinent legislation, notably the Combating of Rape Act (No. 8 of 2000) and the Combating of Domestic Violence Act (No. 4 of 2003).

Another method of data collection was a psychological instrument known as the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). Developed by Eysenck and Eysenck (1975), the EPQ measures certain personality dimensions, namely extraversion/introversion (E), neuroticism (N) and psychoticism (P). According

to Eysenck (1976), the scale also measures a stable personality factor connected with social naiveté or orthodoxy.

The typical extravert scores high on the E scale. He is sociable and has many friends. He is fond of excitement and tends to be impulsive and take chances. He jokes a lot and needs to talk to other people. The typical introvert, on the other hand, scores low on the E scale, and is quiet, introspective and reserved. He tends to plan his actions and has a generally serious disposition. The term neuroticism (N) or emotionality refers to the stability/instability dimension of personality. The typical high N scorer is given to worrying and moodiness. He is generally anxious, although he may suffer from depressive episodes. He sleeps badly and tends to suffer from psychosomatic complaints. He has an excessive emotional reaction to stimuli and has difficulty regaining his equilibrium after an emotionally arousing experience (Eysenck and Eysenck 1975).

Results presented so far have shown that inmates generally scored high on EPQ. On the social variables, results showed that inmates with a history of family violence and parental conflicts scored higher than convicts without such a history. Convicts with a long history of alcohol use (heavy drinkers) scored higher than low and moderate alcohol users. Regarding perceived violent behaviour towards partners, inmates scored highest on P and E, followed by N. They seemed to be overly suspicious of their partners.

The EPQ scores of inmates were generally high, but taking demographic variables into account, inmates who had been unemployed prior to their imprisonment scored higher than those who had been employed, and the skilled inmates scored higher than the semi-skilled and unskilled inmates. Inmates with more education and those who were married also scored higher than those who were relatively uneducated or single. Younger inmates had higher EPQ scores than middle-aged and older convicts.

The high P, E, and N scores observed in inmates support the theory propounded by Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) that the propensity to commit crime is held in check by conscience, which can be underdeveloped either through the failure of social and family conditions to provide the proper environment for its development, or through an innate weakness in the person concerned; and furthermore that benign psychoses may arise from non-specific vulnerability. The inmates studied generally had a long history of family violence and parental conflict; were heavy drinkers; were predisposed to stress; and were poorly conditioned. In this case, the inmates could not help themselves, but were innately driven due to their personality make-ups.

7.1 Conclusions

- 1) This study has demonstrated that violent inmates register high EPQ P, E and N scores. This suggests that psychological factors or the personality of the perpetrator were major contributing factors that led to violent crimes being committed against women and girls. Imprisonment should therefore focus on and emphasise exemplary conduct and corrective rehabilitation.

- 2) The study further demonstrated that cultural factors, alcohol consumption, low levels of education, unemployment, socioeconomic marginalisation, and poor family systems and socialisation all seem to underlie the violent crimes committed against women and girls.
- 3) The study found that most, if not all of the interviewed inmates were ignorant of the Combating of Rape Act (No. 8 of 2000). They did not know that this act defines having sex with one's wife or partner under coercive circumstances as rape. They consequently did not understand why they had been convicted of rape, when all they had done was to have sex with their longstanding wives or partners.
- 4) The study also found that inmates perceive the criminal justice system to be biased and unfair. As far as they are concerned, the legal system discriminates against men and favours women; and discriminates against the poor and favours the wealthy.
- 5) The current programmes for prisoners in Namibia utterly neglect psychotherapy and psychological counselling as tools for modifying deviant behaviour, despite the fact that psychologists, psychiatrists and other mental health practitioners elsewhere in the world have long-since recognised their importance. This is a serious omission, and may account for the unimpressive levels of success in the struggle against crime in Namibian society. In order for comprehensive mental healthcare to be provided for inmates, their social, physical and psychological well-being must be adequately taken care of by health planners, including clinical psychologists.
- 6) Personality factors have the potential to be predictive of a violent disposition, and should therefore be assessed in advance by clinical psychologists prior to sentencing, or even after sentencing. A rational approach would be to follow up cases of prisoners who registered high EPQ P, E and N scores. By so doing, it would be possible to monitor the severity and nature of their psychological disturbance, and to offer inmates prompt psychological treatment as an adjunct to other medical services. Such a practice would be of value to the courts and the police, and would also help to decongest prisons. It would have far-reaching implications for decisions made regarding appropriate sentences, and would also enable police and prison wardens to act from a position of understanding rather than ignorance.
- 7) This study does not provide any definitive answer to the question of the root causes of violence against women and girls. However, it has shed some light on some general factors that, in the case of the inmates who constituted the sample for this study, are associated with their violent behaviour against women and girls.

7.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) It is recommended that fully fledged psychological services should be instituted at the various prisons in Namibia. In prisons where this is not currently feasible, psychological services should be merged with the welfare section as a temporary measure. The psychological services should include a periodic assessment of personality and prison situations/conditions, and daily or weekly intervention programmes.
- 2) Psychological services and programmes should also be developed with a view to educating inmates about the dangers of alcohol abuse, and training inmates, especially those with high EPQ scores, in anger management and conflict resolution. Furthermore, such programmes should educate men in learning to accept a woman's answer of "no" to sex. As there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that in some cases, men hurt or kill their partners when they (the partners) terminate a romantic relationship, such programmes should also educate men to cope with the termination of a romantic relationship by a partner with dignity and integrity. Additionally, psychosocial clinics should be established so that similar interventions and educational programmes are made available to the general public as well. Hopefully, such practices will help to reduce the impulse towards violent behaviours in the general population before they actually occur.
- 3) Ideally, psychosocial educational and intervention programmes should be implemented at school level. These programmes would have to address moral, cultural, personal and interpersonal issues so as to enable young people to conduct themselves appropriately in society. Issues to be addressed would include respect for self and others; how to relate to others and members of the opposite sex; how to behave when in a romantic relationship; what steps to take to terminate a romantic relationship; how to deal with a terminated romantic relationship; the availability of counselling services to help cope with a broken love affair; and basic etiquette. Again, it is hoped that through such intervention at an early age, the phenomenon of violence in general, and violence against women and girls in particular, will be minimised.
- 4) Programmes aimed at easing the reintegration into society of discharged prison inmates should be designed and developed. In order to assist the released inmate in the difficult task of post-prison adjustment, after-care services should be made widely available. An after-care scheme should be complemented by sincere and demonstrable commitment and a clear policy orientation on the part of the government. Prison reforms should be backed up by a responsive and understanding public attitude towards prisons and their inmates. The prisoner ordinarily deserves empathy, not rejection, for it is only through such accommodation that he may properly be re-integrated into normal social life, with the minimum of discomfort. Society should give the discharged prisoner a chance to prove that prison is not the end of civilization.
- 5) Given that this study was limited to unearthing some of the factors that may be associated with violent crimes against women and girls, it is recommended that one-on-one studies or in-depth case studies of individual perpetrators should be undertaken in order to establish the actual

root causes of their violent behaviour. It is probable that no two perpetrators will have committed the same violent crime against a woman or a girl for exactly the same reasons. Such studies would therefore have to consider the social, economic, cultural and psychological or personality profiles of all perpetrators. This approach would be more likely to identify the individual's motivation for having committed the violent crime, and would allow for intervention to be tailored to the individual perpetrator's profile.

- 6) Future studies should also investigate the relationship between language groups and patterns of violent behaviour against women and girls so that intervention strategies can be tailored to address the motivations of respective language groups. Insofar as such motivations overlap, however, intervention programmes should be designed in such a way that they address all perpetrators' psychosocial and other needs.
- 7) Many of the interviewed inmates admitted to not knowing that having sex with one's wife or partner under coercive circumstances when she has refused sex is a criminal offence. The judicial system and law enforcement agencies should therefore embark upon extensive campaigns to educate the public, especially in rural areas, about the Combating of Rape Act (No. 8 of 2000). Similarly, the content of the Combating of Domestic Violence Act (No. 4 of 2003) should also be disseminated. Furthermore, in view of the fact that some of the interviewed inmates felt that they had not been given a fair trial, the judicial system and in particular the law enforcement agencies will need to critically assess the even-handedness or otherwise with which justice is dispensed, the effectiveness of current methods of investigating crimes, in particular rape, and the appropriateness of court procedures and sentencing in rape trials.
- 8) The Government of the Republic of Namibia should take psychosocial issues more seriously and budget adequately for corrective services.

7.3 Additional observations

During the phase of data collection for this study, a few things that seemed inappropriate were noted. Foremost amongst these was the accommodation of a 16-year-old inmate who had been convicted of the statutory rape of his girlfriend together with much older inmates. For this young man, every day was a fight for survival amongst the older prisoners, as was exposed to harsh realities of which he had no knowledge prior to his incarceration. According to him, the older inmates used drugs and engaged in other illegal activities in prison. Quite often he was forced to participate in these activities, and as a result, he was visibly traumatised, and expressed the fear that by the time he left prison, he would have become more of a criminal than he was when he entered the prison. In view of the above, the research team concluded that the prison authorities should pay urgent attention to the accommodation of younger criminal offenders, and avoid placing them together with the older inmates.

A second observation concerns shebeens. The majority of the violent crimes investigated in this study were committed under the influence of alcohol consumed at shebeens and other liquor outlets. Although the relevant

authorities across the country do make efforts to enforce the stipulated hours of operation for shebeens, much still needs to be done, especially in Windhoek. It is therefore imperative that the relevant authorities act very strictly in enforcing all regulations pertaining to the sale and consumption of alcohol, especially at shebeens. Enforcement should be as frequent as possible, rather than occasional and haphazard, so that shebeen operators learn to respect and abide by the regulations because of the consequences they will have to face if they fail to do so.

It is true that enforcing the relevant rules and regulations regarding the operation of shebeens will not be sufficient intervention to solve the problem of violent crimes against women and girls. Nevertheless, curbing the operating hours of shebeens should help to reduce the extent to which people become intoxicated, and thereby reduce the incidence of crimes committed against women and girls where the intoxication of the perpetrator was a causative factor. Furthermore, any unlicensed liquor outlets should be closed down in order to restrict the availability of alcohol to the public. Such a measure should have a similar effect to curbing the operating hours of licensed shebeens.