



Impact of Family Relations on Aggression among Juvenile Delinquents in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract:

Parents' relationship with their children plays a vital role in the development of their positive psychological health and social circle. The present study examined the impact of parents' relation on aggression among juvenile delinquents in Pakistan. The sample of 500 juvenile delinquents (age range from 13-18 years) was selected conveniently from different cities of Pakistan i.e., Multan ($n=80$), Faisalabad ($n=130$), Sahiwal ($n=80$), Rawalpindi ($n=70$) and Bahawalpur ($n=140$) having different educational levels. The research's main objective was to explore the impact of parents' relation on aggression among juveniles along with their educational level. Index of Family Relations (IFR) and Aggression Questionnaires (AQ) were used for measuring the study variables. The co-relational analysis results revealed that parents' relation has a profound impact on aggression and its subscales among juvenile delinquents. The study further found that low educational level significantly impacts parents' relation with juvenile delinquents and aggression among them.

Key words: Juvenile delinquency, parents' relation, aggression

INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, one of the most widely studied criminology topics is the relationship between the family system and the criminal behaviour that strengthens crime and delinquent behavior. Among these studies, a remarkable number of studies found that the children reared by either single parent or unusual parenting are at high risk of substance use subsequently developing delinquent behaviour. The crimes committed by young members (less than 18 years) of the society qualify for juvenile delinquency. Some of the responsible factors for teenager criminals' behaviors include school failure, substance use, environmental or individual factors, and psychological disorders (Lutz & Riera, 1999).

Literature has also established (Tremblay & Craig, 1997) a strong link between criminal behaviour and aggression. It has been observed that aggression can be prevented or reduced largely. A significant causal factor that contributes to teenager's increased level of anger includes physical punishment that may ultimately lead them towards delinquent and antisocial behaviors. Similarly, young children may also develop a tendency toward anger, crime, antisocial and delinquent

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behaviour if treated harshly by parents. One of the factors contributing to the development of anger, crime, antisocial and delinquent behaviour at a young age includes physical punishment to children by their parents. Wilson (1980) explained that physical punishment to the teenagers by parents possibly leads them to develop anger and criminal behaviors, including delinquency.

Juvenile delinquency and the problems related to it have been faced by all societies worldwide; however, in the developing world, the problems are all the more formidable. The process of development has brought in its wake a socio-cultural upheaval affecting the old traditional ways of life in the congenial rural milieu. A clear understanding of juvenile delinquency's risk factors is a prerequisite to initiate remedial or preventive measures. This study was conducted to study the effects of family factors on juvenile delinquency.

Researchers believed that children's proper nurturing is the primary responsibility of parents because the values given to children and the type of training they receive from their parents seem to determine their future life-style. Parents help their children establish certain behavioral attitudes, and once established, these attitudes are difficult to change or suppress. Parents who instill antisocial attitudes and behaviors in their children, indirectly encourage such attitudes to persist into adulthood. Child development has emotional, intellectual, social, and physical aspects, with the family being the foundation upon which this development occurs. The family structure plays a vital role in shaping a child by providing security and developing their, values and skills (Chaffin, et al. 2004).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DELINQUENCY

There are various psychological theories that tend to explore the possible causes of juvenile delinquency. Unfortunately, no single theory explains juvenile delinquency related to aggression and parenting styles, yet there are a few perspectives that explain the phenomenon to some extent. This theory maintains a view that a person may get involved in crimes when he fails to achieve his goals in society through socially acceptable ways (Eadie & Morley, 2012). Literature suggests that lack of education may contribute to a greater extent. Lack of education results in unemployment because those who are not well educated cannot get good jobs which leads them towards delinquency. Juveniles are living below the poverty line. They live in the slums of Pakistan, having lack of education and access to resources.

The theory suggests that labeling juvenile delinquents such as "criminals" often leads them towards antisocial and criminal behaviour. When children are labeled as criminals or antisocial in their developmental age where they do not have proper direction to their life goals, they can quickly adapt to these roles. At the same time, they also observe and learn from other teenagers labeled in the same way. A study conducted by Walklate (2003) stressed that teenagers from low-class families are labeled much frequently, and as a consequence, they are more involved in criminal activities. Moreover, other factors contributing to delinquency among teenagers include parenting styles, criminal family history, level of strictness, communication between parents and child, neglecting and parental abuse (Graham & Bowling, 1995).

Furthermore, the children raised by single parents are more likely to develop delinquent behaviour than those raised by both parents. Yet some studies reveal that if single parent focuses on the parenting style, the chances of children becoming delinquent can significantly be reduced. On the

other hand, children reared by the only parent or those parents having conflicts are also at high risk for developing such behaviour (Walklate, 2003). Parents' supervision during childhood is said to have a strong impact on delinquent behaviour among children (Farrington, 2002). Studies have also found a strong link between the level of supervision by parents and the criminal behaviour among the juveniles, which is one of the most important family factors contributing to such behaviors (Farrington & Welsh, 2003). The level of supervision is also associated with the level of communication between the children and the parents. Distorted supervision may prohibit children from discussing their illegal actions with their parents, due to which they get involved in delinquent behaviors.

It has also been observed through the literature review that the corresponding strength of parent-child relationship and harsh parental treatments may not serve as the directly responsible factors but may serve as mediating factors for delinquency. Moreover, the children raised by single parents are more prone to develop such behaviors because theories suggest that children's ideal is mostly the same gender parent. When boys are raised by female parents, they do not get sufficient supervision or guidance from their father, which increases the likelihood of becoming offenders (Loeber & Hay, 1997).

Like any other country, Pakistan is faces the problem of juvenile delinquency. There are a variety of factors that contribute to such issues including the single parents, environment of the jail, and the level of aggression. The current study aims at assessing the role of single-parent rearing upon juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, this study attempts to figure out the factors that may contribute to personality and behavior problems after being raised by a single parent. Therefore, there is a dire need to study such factors in Pakistan at an advance level. In addition to this, it is also imperative to analyze the relationship between the level of stress in single-parent and aggression level among juvenile delinquents. It is predicted that the level of aggression will be high among the juvenile delinquents. Therefore, besides discussing deviant/ antisocial behaviors, the present study aims to carry out empirical investigation regarding the impact of being reared by single parent, along with their aggression levels.

Furthermore, it is also necessary to investigate if having low education background is one of the possible causal factors of criminal behavior. This study is helpful for the future researchers to find the impact of education of juvenile delinquents on their behavior and for the policymakers to deal with the problems faced by juvenile delinquents in different jails in Pakistan. Furthermore, additional factors are involved in the development of delinquency among children in Pakistan. There is a strong need to explore those factors related to family issues (Altaf, 1988; Tariq, 1991, Khurshid, 2003). The present study aims to investigate the impact of parents' relationship on aggression among juvenile delinquents, and; to explore the effects of education on parent relations and aggression among juvenile delinquents.

Hypotheses

On the basis of these objectives, following hypotheses were formulated: There is a significant positive relationship between the scores on indices of family relationship and Aggression Questionnaires among juvenile delinquents; Juveniles who are uneducated will report more

problems with their parents and will score high on aggression Questionnaire than educated juveniles.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised 500 convicted male juvenile delinquents with the help of purposive sampling. The data was taken from jails in different cities of Pakistan e.g., Multan ($n=80$), Faisalabad ($n=130$), Sahiwal ($n=80$), Rawalpindi ($n=70$) and Bahawalpur ($n=140$). The sample age ranged between 13 to 18 years (16.63 ± 1.33) and belonged to different educational background from illiterate to literate.

Instruments

The Index of Family Relationship

The Index of Family Relations or IFR is designed to measure the severity, or level of a problem that family members exhibit (parents and children). It is standardized by Hudson (1982). The IFR comprised 25 items with cut-off point of IFR as 30. High scores mean interfamilial problems. The minimum score is 25, and the maximum score can be 125. Reverse scoring has been assigned to items no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 23.

Aggression Questionnaire

To assess aggression among the sample Buss & Perry aggression questionnaire is used (1992). This questionnaire comprised four subscales of aggression i.e., Physical Aggression assessed by item no. 1-9, Verbal Aggression assessed by item no. 10-14, Anger through item no.15-21 whereas Hostility assessed through item no. 22-29. High scores mean high aggression problems. It is a five point likert scale. Item no 7 & 18 are reverse scored.

Procedure

The test booklet consisted of two scales together including Index of Family Relations, and Aggression Questionnaires. Necessary demographic information was recorded regarding the severity of crimes and education. Instructions for giving responses to the items of the scales were printed. The jail staff was requested to help in this regard. Juveniles were approached in the jails with the permission of the jail superintendent. Subjects were also assured of their confidentiality of information. Instructions typed on the booklet were read out by the researcher herself for the delinquents. The illiterate juveniles were approached for data collection by the researcher herself.

RESULTS

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20. Bivariate correlations and ANOVA were carried out to check different hypotheses.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of Scores of IFR (Index of Family Relations) and AQ (Aggression Questionnaire) and its Sub-Scale of juveniles (N=500)

Scales	Verbal	Anger	Hostility	Total Aggression	IFR
Physical	.47**	.99**	.99**	.98**	.97**
Verbal	-	.47**	.47**	.63**	.47**

Anger	-	1.00**	.98**	.99**
Hostility	-	-	.98**	.99**

** $p > 0.01$ Note. IFR = Index of Family Relations, AQ = Aggression

Results demonstrate high significant correlations between the measures of the study. The study hypothesis that “aggression is significantly correlated with problematic family relations” is hence supported. Significant positive inter-correlations among subscales of aggressions questionnaire show internal consistency.

Table 2a. Means, Standard Deviations of Different Educational Groups of Juvenile Delinquents on IFR, total AQ & Subscales (N=500)

Measures	Illiterate (n=175)		Primary (n=87)		Middle (n=99)		Matric (n=74)		HSSC & Above (n=65)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
IFR	75.86	18.08	72.45	18.29	70.32	17.64	64.92	17.61	61.22	18.07
Total AQ	87.13	22.39	83.37	21.86	80.64	22.22	74.95	22.68	68.91	20.43
Phy.Agg.	26.89	7.85	25.71	8.19	24.99	7.64	23.15	7.49	21.28	6.92
Verbal	15.21	4.82	14.36	4.97	13.73	4.34	12.99	4.92	11.66	3.94
Anger	21.09	5.94	20.11	5.94	19.53	5.73	18.07	5.46	16.95	5.31
Hostility	23.95	6.42	23.18	6.24	22.39	6.33	20.76	6.35	19.02	5.87

Table 2a shows the highest mean of total AQ among illiterates ($M=87.13, SD=22.39$), followed by primary ($M=83.37, SD=21.86$), middle ($M=80.64, SD=22.22$), matric ($M=74.96, SD=22.68$) & HSSC & above ($M=68.91, SD=20.43$). The table further shows that mean scores of verbal aggression gradually decreased as the education level increased.

Table 2b. One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Different Educational Groups on IFR of Juvenile Delinquents (N=500)

Sources of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	P	Post
Between Groups	12801.85	4	3200.46	9.92	.001	1<2<
Within Groups	159661.47	495	322.55			
Total	172463.32	499				

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the scores of juvenile delinquents on IFR based on their different educational groups. The data on cumulative frequencies of education among juvenile delinquents was divided into five groups. The results reveal that uneducated juvenile delinquents perceived more problems with their families as compared to educated ones. Post hoc is also shown in the table.

Table 3

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Different Educational Groups on Physical Aggression, Verbal, Anger & Hostility of Juvenile Delinquents (N=500)

	Sources of Variance	SS	Df	MS	F	p	Post-hoc
Physical Agg.	Between Groups	1820.81	4	455.20	7.67	.001	1<4<3
	Within Groups	29360.90	495	59.32			

	Total	31181.72	499				
Verbal	Between Groups	703.99	4	175.99	8.09	.001	1<5<3
	Within Groups	10775.73	495	21.77			
	Total	11479.71	499				
Anger	Between Groups	1038.54	4	259.63	7.86	.001	1<2<3
	Within Groups	16360.78	495	33.05			
	Total	17399.31	499				
Hostility	Between Groups	1420.66	4	355.16	8.98	.001	4<2<3
	Within Groups	19586.93	495	39.57			
	Total	21007.59	499				

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on sub scales of aggression related to different educational groups of juvenile delinquents. The data was divided into five groups based on cumulative frequencies of education of juvenile delinquents. The results in the table show a confirmation of hypothesis that uneducated juvenile delinquents show high aggression as compared to educated juvenile delinquents inside and outside of the jail environment. Post hoc is also shown in the table.

DISCUSSION

The present research was conducted to examine the impact of parent's relationship on aggression among juvenile delinquents. More specifically, the data was collected from juvenile delinquents in jails who were convicted from the courts. The results indicate that problems in family relations have a significant effect on aggression among juveniles.

The result, presented in table 1, further confirmed the hypothesis that uneducated juvenile delinquents perceive more problems with their family and will be high on aggression as compared to educated juvenile delinquents. Results of ANOVA analysis also confirmed the hypothesis that those who perceive more family problems and have high aggression levels were more vulnerable to severe crimes. As discussed earlier in this study, crimes are more prevalent among lower social classes, primarily featured through illiteracy and disturbed family relations. The present findings empirically support the assumptions of study reported in Table 2a and b, which demonstrate that high aggression level among juvenile delinquents was exhibited by illiterate group of the sample. According to Archer (2004), lack of education in many underdeveloped countries is primarily linked with poverty. Such children and adolescents usually have to discontinue their education because they have to extend help to their parents to cope with domestic problems due to financial crisis. In the majority of cases, getting reasonable paid work is a challenge. Subsequently, in striving for daily living, they may engage themselves in voluntary illegal activities. In addition to this, the financial crisis also plays a vital role among such youth due to their discontinued education. Barton, Corteen, Scott & Whyte (2011) revealed that poverty and illiteracy both might act as independent causal factors for delinquency and crimes.

It is worth mentioning here that most psychologists and theorists regard "adolescence" as one of the most crucial periods in human life. It is a vulnerable stage where youth is more susceptible to negatives outcomes. At this stage, the role of parent is important in controlling adolescent behavior. Hagan & Foster (2001) stressed the significance of a healthy relationship between parent and child. Such a relationship minimizes the probable chances of developing undesirable

behavior by adolescents. Sobolewski (2001) revealed that among less supportive parents, a remarkable decrease in parental control and a high frequency of delinquent behaviors was observed. Thus a strong link between problematic family relations and delinquents acts among adolescents is stressed.

The results of this study also show that juveniles, who perceive more problems in their family relations, have a high level of aggression. Perhaps due to this, they find it difficult to adjust to their home environment. They have to face more intra-familial problems.

The overall purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between various family-related factors and crime. The study also attempted to ascertain whether those factors can act as causative agents for "juvenile delinquency." The study postulated that although there are different factors that impact on the development of child character, the family plays a central role in child development. To critically analyze the hypothesis of the study, the paper reviewed the concepts of juvenile delinquency and family. Although this study centered on the family factors influencing delinquency, it equally attached premium on the non-family factors influencing juvenile delinquency. The study found out several notable family-related factors that impact child crime. These include parental attitudes, the degree of family cohesion, physical violence, and uninvolved parenting. While non-family factors that impact on juvenile delinquency, include the failure of the juvenile justice system, poverty, a lack of access to education, drug abuse and genetic problems.

Some research indicates that family problems lead towards aggression in the family which consequently can lead to positive or negative outcomes for children (Booth & Amato, 2001; Strohschein, 2005). To illustrate, uneducated family with a high degree of parental conflict may lead to positive outcomes for children, whereas divorce in families with less conflict may lead to negative outcomes. Consequently, the results of the current study present a generalized relationship between parental divorce and delinquent behavior and cannot distinguish which elements of parental divorce may influence delinquent involvement. The present study did not consider the possible influence of juvenile delinquency on parental divorce and shifts in family structure. While parental divorce has been linked with juvenile delinquency, it is also possible that delinquency can increase the likelihood of parental divorce. A delinquent child may cause stress and discord in a family environment leading to deterioration in the parents' relationship (Beaver & Wright, 2007). As a result, since the present study did not consider the possible influence of previous delinquency on parental relationships before shifts in family structure, it cannot determine the direction of this relationship.

It is a fact that high aggression reinforces a subtle amount of helplessness or incapability in behaving positively to the environmental stressors. The group's feelings about their mood and actions are quite aggressive, which suggests that they find it difficult to maintain better relationships with their family members.

CONCLUSION

Current study findings are in line with the previous literature in this regard which states that adolescents are more vulnerable in involving in deviant acts because of violence perpetration and victimization in their childhood. Moreover, they may also develop aggressive tendency due to parental maltreatment, harsh treatment and problematic relationship. Heltberg, Hossain & Reva, (2012) established a strong degree of continuity in aggression and hostility among this group, thus confirming aggression as a permanent attribute of their personalities.

Akers (1991) also reported that aggression and lack of perceived closeness are related to delinquency. Branden (1994) examined the reciprocal relationship between aggression, family problems and delinquency, poor school performance, and depression. Their findings suggest that aggressive behavior often resulted in delinquency.

Limitations & Suggestions

The study has few limitations. The phenomenon of Juvenile delinquency is an important social issue in Pakistani culture; however, sample was restricted to few jails of Punjab only, limiting the researchers to generalize the whole population of juveniles in Pakistan. In addition to this, the study has no comparison group. It is suggested that in the future such studies may be conducted in comparison group to have a clear picture of the overall phenomenon. There is also a need to supplement this information through semi-structured questionnaire, to more accurate information related to family problems and causes of aggression. A large representative sample is needed, including both boys and girls imprisoned in the jails of all provinces of Pakistan. A comparative sample of non-delinquents may be included to have a clear picture. For collecting data from illiterate juveniles, semi-structured interviews are also recommended.

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