

Parenting Effects in Conjunction with Family Structure on Children' Delinquency Behavior at School

Sarwat Sultan

Bahauddin Zakaria University, Multan, Pakistan

sarwatsultan@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Parenting practices have always been found significant in children development. This article has examined the effects of parenting practices combined with family structure on delinquency behavior among children at school. A sample of 263 male children aged 12-15 years from seven elementary schools of Multan-Pakistan were contacted through convenience sampling technique. School children completed the questionnaires measuring eight dimensions of parenting and delinquency behavior along with a demographic variable sheet measuring family structure in terms of single-mother household, single-father household, and intact household. Employing zero-order correlation, results indicated the significant positive relationship of two parenting dimensions out of eight; parent/child conflict and parental punishment with delinquency behavior. Delinquency behavior was significantly predicted by parental punishment and parent/child conflict. Findings from Two-way ANOVA depicted the significant main and interaction effects of family structure and parenting practices for delinquency behavior. Findings suggested through 2x3 factorial design that the children from intact household tended to have less delinquency behavior as compared to single-mother and single-father household structures. A significant interaction effect of single-father household combined with parental punishment and parent/child conflict was found for delinquency behavior. This study is an empirical addition to the field of Child Development and Criminal Justice by looking at the parenting practices to understand the boundaries of what parents can do in reducing delinquency behavior in their children. .

General Terms

Family, Community, School Children, Educational Outcomes

Keywords

Parenting practices, Family structure, Delinquency, Single household, School children

1. INTRODUCTION

A family is considered the ground base of human society [1] and thus the role of parents within a family is the most natural source for a child development. A child behavior can be understood by emphasizing the aspect of relationships between child and parents within the family. A number of researches have provided the notions that the ways of parenting used by parents contribute not only to their children behaviors but also take part into their deviant behaviors. Conclusion to these investigations revealed that a child's development and later youth behaviors are the matter parenting dimensions [2].

A review of the literature on parenting has demonstrated that parents differ in terms of their parenting practices. Previous research showed that the parents lacking in monitoring their children contribute not only to antisocial acts at school, but also contribute to their greater likelihood to link with aberrant classmates, that is a predictive mark for higher tendency of delinquent behaviors [3]. .

Previous longitudinal studies on the connection between parenting and delinquency have concluded that there was wide prove to depict that various parenting dimensions and practices have significant affect on children behaviors at school [4]. They sketched out four prototypes of parenting practices contributing to delinquency: (a) neglect (lack of guidance and involvement); (b) conflict (unequal, harsh, short or discrepant rules); (c) parents' aberrant attitudes; (d) family break (marital breakup, single parent). Under this perspective, several studies have updated review to similar conclusions that parenting practices play vital role in leading to delinquency behavior at school.

Parental monitoring and guiding, affect the way of children being connected with their delinquent fellows at school [2]. Children when are neglected by their parents, are not supported and guided by their parents, and have conflicts with their parents remain at high

tendency of adopting and developing delinquency behavior. The act of delinquency is successfully explained by the lack of cohesion within the family. Parent/child conflict and punishment leads to delinquency in children [5].

Patterson, Reid, and Dishion, [6] also debated on the influence of parenting on delinquency, and explained that supervision and monitoring the children behavior is central to controlling delinquency. Parental consistency has also been found fundamental to determining the delinquency in children. Patterson and his colleagues also reported the authenticity of parental way of openness to arguments, sharing of ideas, and negotiation. Although supervision and monitoring has main impetus, the findings revealed that this can only be achieved when the children are also reporting their parents as supportive and friendly [7]. When parents provide the opportunity to their children to disclose their desires friendly, the children get a healthy environment of development, and this disclosure of children is only be effective and dependent on how parents are controlling their children [7].

Family structure is also another key element to explain parenting practices effects on delinquency behavior at school. Children living in single-parent household where parents' marriages are disrupted by separation and divorce are more prone to exhibit several emotional and behavioral problems including delinquency, as compared to those living in two-parent household [9]. Compared to intact families, the single-parent families, and especially mother-led families, give rise high delinquency rate in children [1]. However opposite to these findings some studies have proved that intact families produces more delinquents [10]. (Muehlenberg 2002).

Many explanations can be accounted for the findings of single-parenting effects on children behaviors. Families characterized by joblessness, financial hard knocks, parental conflicts, aggressiveness, parental criminality, and low education rate, are more indicative of children behaviors including vagabonding, late-outings, running from school, disobedience, fraud, drugs, sadism and stealing [11].

Research to date exploring connection between parenting practices and family structure and its effects on children delinquency behavior is very sparse. Therefore this study focused on to knowing main and interaction effects of parenting and family structure on delinquency. It was hypothesized that parenting practices and family structure will influence the delinquency behavior. It was also assumed that parenting practices by single-parent will be found more leading factor towards delinquency behavior at school. The study also called forth the question whether mother-take household will contribute to the problem of delinquency or father-take household.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

This study surveyed 263 male school children aged 12-15 years old approached at seven different elementary schools of Multan city in Pakistan. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study.

2.2 Instruments

Parenting practices were measured using Dimensions of Parent Scale [12]. It has eight subscales measuring eight different parenting dimensions namely; monitoring, trust/autonomy, parent/child conflict, time together, disclosure, parental punishment, negotiation, consistency. The responses are obtained on scores from 0 to 3, and the scores are added up to get a total score on each subscale. Delinquency behavior was measured through a self-reported check list (13) consisting of 18 behaviors. A count of behaviors on check list shows the level of delinquency. Family structure was measured using a single item added in demographic variable sheet.

2.3 Process

The study was completed using survey research design. A total of 263 school children were sampled through convenience sampling technique. After obtaining the consent from the school principals, the children were contacted at school time with the help of their teachers. Questionnaires were distributed to the students in the class room, and then students were clearly instructed about how to fill the questionnaires. They were encouraged to ask question in case of any ambiguity in questionnaires. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their responses. Data was then statistically analyzed using SPSS-17.

3. RESULTS

To see the relationship between different parental practices and delinquency behavior, correlation was computed (Table 1). To identify the dependency of delinquency behavior on specific parenting practices, standardized regression analysis was performed (Table 2). Two-way between groups ANOVA was employed to analyze the main and interaction effects of parenting practices (parental conflict and punishment) and three family structures (single-mother, single-father, and intact household). This analysis was done with only two parenting practices because of their strong positive association with delinquency found in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive data and correlation between parenting practices and delinquency behavior

	M	SD	Delinquency
Monitoring	22.54	4.6	-.53**
Trust/Autonomy	18.01	3.7	-.429*
Parent/Child Conflict	17.91	4.2	.793**
Time Together	19.13	4.0	-.47*
Disclosure	20.51	3.1	-.58**
Parental Punishment	16.32	4.1	.644**
Negotiation	15.93	5.3	-.38*
Consistency	16.14	3.5	-.40*

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 1 shows the mean, SD, and correlations for the scores of parenting practices and delinquency behavior. Results indicate that parenting practices of monitoring, trust, time together, disclosure, negotiation and consistency are negatively correlated with delinquency, while parent/child conflict and parental punishment are positively associated with delinquency.

Table 2. Standard Regression Model showing impact of Parenting Practices on Delinquency Behavior

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
(Constant)	5663.21	117.72		1.15
Monitoring	.411	.037	.321	1.63
Trust/Autonomy	.354	.021	.243	0.99
Parent/Child Conflict	.639	.036	.756	5.4*
Time Together	.299	.070	.179	1.22
Disclosure	.311	.014	.347	1.57
Parental Punishment	.579	.027	.691	4.3*
Negotiation	.187	.032	.248	1.69
Consistency	.212	.043	.202	0.82

$R^2 = 0.68$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.51$, ($F(8, 255) = 18.07$, $p < 0.001$), * $p < 0.001$,

Table 2 reveals that dependent variable of delinquency is 68% explained by the independent variables of parenting practices as indicated by the value of $R^2 = 0.68$. A significant F -value for the standard regression model ($F(8, 255) = 18.07$, $p < 0.001$) also depicts that model significantly explains the outcome variable. Examining the t -values from the table is also an indicative of the notion that parent/child conflict and parental punishment practices are significantly contributing in the prediction of delinquency behavior.

Table 3. Two-way ANOVA of participants' 2(Parenting practices; Parent/child conflict & parental punishment) \times 3(Family Structure; single-mother, single-father, & intact household) for scores on delinquency behavior

Source Main Effect	F	p	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Parenting	16.92	.00*	.804	.773
Family Structure	21.57	.00*	.753	.613
Interaction Parenting * Family structure	19.73	.00*	.761	.658

* $p < 0.001$

Results in Table 3 indicate the main and interaction effects of parenting practices and family structure. Examining the eta, observed and F -values, it is demonstrated that parenting and family structure are significant predictors of delinquency when are entered independently in the model of analyses. Interaction effect of all these two independent variables is also significant.

Table 4. Descriptive data for the scores of family structure in relation to parent/child conflict & parental punishment

Parental Practices	Family Structure	N	Mean	SD
Parent/child Conflict	Single-mother Household	77	19.54	3.45
	Single-father Household	61	23.71	4.32
	Intact household	125	11.08	5.37
Parental Punishment	Single-mother Household	77	17.33	4.33
	Single-father Household	61	21.48	4.82
	Intact household	125	14.26	6.36

Table 4 shows that mean score on delinquency is higher for the group of parent/child conflict*single-father household than that of other two groups. The same findings are found for parental punishment*single-father household which depict mean is higher for single father using punishment.

4. DISCUSSION

This study examined the question whether parenting practices in conjunction with family structure

contribute in producing delinquency behavior. Findings answered the question positively and suggested that two ineffective parenting dimensions when are confluence with single-parenting, are more associated with delinquency behavior among children at school. As the delinquency behavior is self-reported by children, therefore is more authentic to explain that delinquency comes from parent/child conflict and parental punishment especially when the family structure is disrupted, or parents are separated and divorced.

Statistics collected indicate that beta coefficients for parent/child conflict and parental punishment (beta = .756 & .691 respectively) are high that suggest that both parenting practices contribute in delinquency significantly. The hypothesis that delinquents will come from families that would be with impaired functioning due to marital break, separation, divorce, withdrawing responsibility, and death of one or both parents has been supported by the findings of present study. Broadly addressing, it is evident that the family structure is one aspect of deviant behaviors in children that is generally connected with delinquency. These findings are also in consistent with the study of Thornberry [9] that postulated that broken families should be considered as first signal and causative factor of juvenile delinquency,

Related to the hypothesis regarding the question of which single-parenting will be the function of producing delinquency, it was found that father-led homes are more reluctant to produce the delinquents as compared to the homes where single-mothers are supervising their children. These findings are contrary to the previous findings where single-mother households were found to be more leading and key factor for delinquency. Contrary to the general assumption that a mother acts as a most primary source of child growth and development, and that single- mother households reduce the chances of juvenile delinquency [1]. This study evidences that most delinquents may come from single-father households. What factors can account for this present finding can be justified with the facts that

Fathers usually leave their authoritarian style after separation from partner, feel emotionally aloof from their children, and loose absolute supervision and control over their children. This parenting style causes delinquency among children. On the other side, the explanation for single-mother household effects on delinquency might be taken in the causal relationship between low socio-economic status of mothers and juvenile delinquency. Because children from single-mother homes face problems in meeting their basic needs like tuition fee, books, clothing, sports, and medicines. This penury produces deserted children to leeway for delinquency behavior.

In our opinion, in single parenting usually mother or father spend their time on job for earnings but remain to provide basic needs, remain unavailable, remain

untouched to get feedback for performance from school, and remain indifferent about the consequences. In result children avoid studies and run away from school, and avoid going home because of parent absence at home. This thing pushes them to hang around in the street, and increase the likelihood of becoming delinquent.

4.1 Conclusion

This study has postulated that ineffective parenting such as parental punishment, conflicts between parents and children, lack in monitoring, and hesitations in children for their expressions and disclosure are the key risk factors for delinquency behavior in children. Numerous negative, antisocial, and deviant behaviors among school children are caused by the absence of one parent in the family. Particularly, father-led homes are considered to be at most leading factor for children delinquency.

4.2 Limitations & Suggestions

In spite of several useful findings that have been obtained from this study, the study also bore some limitations. As the study has been completed only with male school children, thus cannot be generalized to the female population of this kind. Another factor to lacking the external validity is small sample size selecting through convenience sampling technique. Therefore, it is suggested that study may well be replicated with a larger sample through random sampling. Further researchers are invited to explore the same issue with female children sample incorporating some other factors i.e. teacher/student relationship.

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