

The Effects of Parenting Styles on Juvenile Delinquency

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Abstract – The following paper aims to examine and determine the risk factors for the development of criminal behavior in adolescence, including the influence of parenting styles as well as other possible factors in criminal behavior. Definitions and analysis of these risk factors require an interdisciplinary approach. To analyze this hypothesis, a wide literature material is used as well as data obtained through the study, which consists of interviewing teenagers who are part of the re-education school in Kavaja, by completing the questionnaire on parenting styles (Parental Authority Questionnaire) as well as a semi-structured interview. The application of these instruments was done to collect data on the experience and personal perspective of 8 participants regarding the parenting style used by their parents as well as the factors that may have led them to commit criminal acts. Based on the collected and systematized empirical material, conclusions are formulated, which, on the one hand, partially prove the raised hypotheses, on the other hand, leave open some possibilities for further discussions and suggestions.

Keywords – Parenting Styles, Delinquency

Introduction

Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice. Human beings are social creatures and cannot live alone or in isolation. They need each other to fulfill their needs and to express their feelings and thoughts. Human beings are born into a microsystem, with the family as its foundation, where individuals are first introduced to the process of socialization. Psychology and social sciences clearly demonstrate the importance of the family in the life and development of children. Attachment experiences are essential for cognitive and emotional development in humans. Typically, the family is the primary source from which a child learns to manage their emotions and the place that shapes their future relationships with others. Juvenile delinquency is a social problem that has received significant attention from psychologists, criminologists, and others. Many psychological theories that have been attentive to delinquency have focused on various influencing factors, including peer influences, parenting styles, environment, and social pressure. This work not only describes how parental supervision and other aspects of healthy family life prevent delinquency but also how the lack of parental involvement or negative parental influences can promote its development. Through their relationship with their parents, children acquire moral values that are likely to shape their behavior in the future. It appears that there is such a cumulative effect that the presence of more than one of the negative attributes of the family further increases the likelihood of delinquency (Ferdinand & Enrique Gracias, 2009). Not all children follow the same path to delinquency; different combinations of life experiences can produce delinquent behavior. Positive parenting practices during the early years and later in adolescence seem to act as preventive measures against delinquent behavior and help already-engaged adolescents to abandon further delinquency. Research confirms that children raised in warm, loving, and supportive family environments are less likely to deviate. Children rejected by their parents are among the most prone to becoming delinquents. Studies also show that the

child's predisposition plays a role in this causal chain. A problematic child or adolescent is more likely to be rejected by parents, creating an escalating cycle that can lead to delinquency. The aim of the study is to address a possible link between the parenting style exhibited in the subject's childhood and delinquent behavior exhibited in adolescence.

Adolescence has been one of the interests of many Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato, who discussed various challenges faced by adolescents. However, a clearer perspective on adolescence was formulated by Stanley Hall, who believed that adolescence is a period of storm and stress (1904). His concept of adolescence laid the foundation for further research by psychologists and various scholars to provide a more accurate definition of adolescence. The term 'adolescence' defines the period of life between childhood and adulthood (Kaplan, 2004). It is a transitional period consisting of various aspects of individual development, where alongside physical maturation, adolescents develop cognitive abilities and social relationship skills. Some of the challenges all adolescent faces during this period include the journey towards autonomy and the formation of an identity. Therefore, the key issue for adolescents is the development of an identity that will provide a healthy foundation for their future. Individuals develop a self-concept from childhood with attachment models, but adolescence marks the first time when an individual tries to answer the question, "Who am I?". The conflict that defines this phase is the struggle to identify oneself and the inability to find the desired role in life.

One of the most significant theories of adolescent development is Erik Erikson's theory. Erikson's psychosocial development theory explains adolescence as a period of psychological instability. Since the individual is partly a child and partly an adult, this is a period of identity formation that affects both physical and sexual aspects (Erikson, 1968). According to him, individuals go through eight stages of development: 1. Trust vs. Mistrust (0-1 year), 2. Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (1-3 years), 3. Initiative vs. Guilt (3-5 years), 4. Industry vs. Inferiority (5-12 years), 5. Identity vs. Role

Confusion (12-18 years), 6. Intimacy vs. Isolation (18-35 years), 7. Generativity vs. Stagnation (35-65 years), 8. Integrity vs. Despair (65 years and above).

Erikson suggested that adolescents may be caught in a psychosocial role confusion vacuum during the adolescent phase, in which their role is unclear both to themselves and to adults. This role vacuum period is an integral part of identity formation as it provides the necessary opportunity for adolescents to explore their interests, perspectives, and beliefs to make different identity commitments, distinct from those of childhood (Erikson, 1950). By doing so, adolescents can move between two opposite points of this phase: identity and identity confusion. Adolescents who make meaningful choices about their identities and form lasting commitments can achieve a unique personal identity. Adolescents who move from one commitment to another, resulting in a lack of meaning or purpose, may remain in a state of identity confusion. The search for identity involves creating a comprehensive self-concept, based on past and present experiences that come together to form a unified whole (Erikson, 1950).

The period of adolescence is a delicate time during which adolescents can easily deviate and, in some cases, become involved in criminal activities. Such behavior can result from adolescent recklessness, meaning that it is not always repeated in the future. In many cases, adolescents involved in criminal behavior have emotional problems and are part of dysfunctional families. Antisocial adolescents seek to demonstrate the harm and neglect shown to them, whether in a violent or gentle manner (Álvarez-García, 2016).

Many studies have been conducted on the authoritative parenting style regarding its influence on children's behavior, especially during adolescence, where it consistently emerges as the parenting style with the most positive outcomes. Parents who raise children with an authoritative style allow them to be less drawn to substance abuse, have better psychological competence, and employ better coping strategies. Additionally, children raised with this parenting style are less likely to engage in a wide range of problem behaviors (Lamborn & Mounts, 1991). Moreover,

the authoritative style also affects adolescents' academic achievements, as observed in a study by Dornbusch (1987), the results of which showed that this parenting style positively affects children's schooling and is considered the most optimal style for high academic achievement based on comparisons with other parenting styles. Children who described their parents as warmer and more encouraging had better school outcomes.

The authoritative style is considered the gold standard—the golden mean between authoritarian and permissive parenting. Authoritative parents set boundaries for their children but are simultaneously responsive to their needs (Schaeffer & Emerson, 1964). This style is considered consistent and nurturing in terms of affection. "Parents operate as leaders, but in a friendly manner that offers respect and allows the child to learn from the consequences of their actions," says Schaefer (Schaeffer & Emerson, 1964). Authoritative parents allow their children space to make decisions and learn from their mistakes, but they also provide guidance and rules that children need. When children break the rules, the punishments usually stem from the natural consequences of their behavior, and parents take the time to explain to their children that their behavior needs correction.

The term "delinquent behavior in minors," also known as "juvenile delinquency," refers to engaging in behaviors considered illegal during the minor age or if the individual is younger than the legal age of majority. Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory is one of the most widely used theories to explain the link between parenting styles and criminal behavior in adolescents. The control theory, created by Hirschi (1987), states that individuals commit crimes when they do not develop healthy social bonds. This theory focuses more on explaining why individuals do not engage in criminal behavior rather than the opposite. The control theory posits that most individuals would not commit criminal behavior if they had healthy attachments to social institutions, such as the family, and lacked social control (Weis & Hawkins, 1981). However, if individuals fail to establish a healthy attachment to

their families, they are more likely to engage in criminal activities.

However, there are several other theories about the factors that lead to adolescent deviance. According to Durkheim (1893/1933), the lack of socialization encourages criminal behavior. In the past, community members were obligated by strong family ties and professions to integrate into society, with little room for antisocial activities. Social development has led to a shift towards larger cities, and as a result, family ties have also weakened. Professions are primarily outside the family circle, and old values have dissolved without creating new ones. This means that individuals increasingly find themselves in a social vacuum with no place, professional group, or tradition. Such a society, according to Durkheim, is a breeding ground for criminality, and its influence is penetrating younger age groups (Sandstrom, 1968). The need for belonging is what drives individuals to associate with different groups, some considered to have positive influences and others with negative influences.

While many researchers have found a clear correlation between parenting styles and criminal behavior in adolescents, other studies have concluded that there is no direct link between parenting styles and children's psychopathology (Havill, 1996; Olafsson, 2001; Revie-Peterson, 1998). Therefore, it is important to note that the influence of parents on these deviant behaviors is also moderated by various other variables such as temperament (Owens-Stively et al., 1997), gender, children's perception of the parenting style used, socioeconomic status and ethnicity and family structure.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate a potential relationship between the parenting style experienced during the subject's childhood and delinquent behaviors exhibited during adolescence.

The participants in this study were adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18, which corresponds to the age of criminal responsibility. All participants were randomly selected from the social services of

the re-education school. They completed a questionnaire and underwent a semi-structured interview, which lasted approximately 40 minutes. In total, 8 individuals were interviewed, all of whom were males with an average age of 16.8.

The first step in conducting this study was obtaining permission from the respective institution. Interviews took place in one of the youth institution's facilities, under the supervision of a social worker who assisted in facilitating communication. Additionally, a state police officer was present to observe. All participants were informed that this interview was solely for academic purposes. After each participant agreed to participate, they were given the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) for each parent. They were also subjected to an interview consisting of 15 questions aimed at obtaining detailed information about each adolescent's relationship with their parents, as well as some demographic questions. This interview was based on a questionnaire developed by the Queensland Government, Department of Child Safety.

Instrument I: The data were collected through the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), created by John R. Buri to measure permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles, as described by Baumrind (1971). This questionnaire was finalized in 1991 and consists of 30 items, with 10 items reflecting permissive style, 10 items reflecting authoritarian style, and 10 items reflecting authoritative style. In line with the perspective of interactionism, the authors argued that parental behaviors encountered during childhood significantly influence how an individual perceives specific behavior. Therefore, instead of creating a questionnaire on parenting styles from the parents' perspective, this questionnaire was designed to measure parenting styles perceived by children.

Two versions of this questionnaire were created: one to assess the level of authority or parenting style expressed by the mother and the other to assess the level of authority expressed by the father. Responses to each statement were measured on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with options including strongly disagree (1),

disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Total scores were calculated by summing the points for each statement, ranging from 10 to 50. The higher the score, the higher the perceived level of parenting. Various studies have considered the parenting styles questionnaire to be reliable and an important measurement tool for individuals classified with authoritarian parenting styles, and it has been found to be a valuable measurement tool in investigating the parenting styles.

Results

Case study 1

Age 17, student, male, residence: Vlorë. Based on the answers given in the questionnaire about the mother, case 1 scored 38 points in the permissive parenting style, 26 points in the authoritarian style, and 45 points in the authoritative style. Similarly, in the questionnaire about the other parent (father), case 1 scored 36 points in the permissive style, 31 points in the authoritarian style, and 42 points in the authoritative style. The total points indicate that case 1 was raised with an authoritative parenting style, as the results also showed.

During the semi-structured interview, he expressed that he has good relationships with both parents, even though he was raised by his grandparents until the age of 14. Since he spent his childhood and part of his adolescence under the care of his grandparents, they had the most influence on shaping his personality foundations, while the relationship with his parents was formed based on their adaptation to him. During the interview, case 1 expressed that his grandparents always tried to create an image close to that of his parents in their absence. However, he stated that they were more tolerant than they should have been and often let him do as he pleased. Due to excessive freedom and poor choices, his academic performance continuously deteriorated, leading to his expulsion from school. During this time, he began to exhibit delinquent behavior. Apart from poor academic performance, another significant influencing factor was economic hardship.

Case study 2

Age 15, student, male, residence: Gramsh. Based on the answers regarding parenting styles, specifically in the questionnaire about the mother, case 2 resulted in a score of 26 points in the permissive style, 12 points in the authoritarian style, and 39 points in the authoritative style. In the questionnaire about the other parent (father), he had similar scores as with the first parent, with 28 points in the permissive style, 10 points in the authoritarian style, and 39 points in the authoritative style. Based on the results, case 2 was raised by authoritative parents.

Case 2 described his family as a peaceful one with common rules that they established together. In cases where these rules were broken, they would discuss them calmly, and as he mentioned, he was never punished. He grew up in a warm environment where he lacked neither affection nor warmth from either parent. As evidenced by the scores above, case 2 had a healthy relationship with parents who were not only demanding but also willing to always provide necessary advice and support. However, despite their care, the case in question engaged in delinquent behavior because of parental neglect and lack of supervision. Based on his answers and personal analysis, case 2 expressed that the factors that may have contributed to his deviation were various, ranging from a lack of supervision or moral guidance for different situations by his parents to societal pressure.

Case study 3

Age 16, student, male, residence: Gramsh. Based on the completion of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), case 3 scored 26 points in the permissive parenting style, 26 points in the authoritarian style, and 39 points in the authoritative style regarding the mother. Similarly, the results were the same for the other parent, with 26 points in the permissive style, 26 points in the authoritarian style, and 39 points in the authoritative style. The points obtained in the PAQ questionnaire indicate that case 3 was raised with an authoritative parenting style.

During the interview, case 3 expressed that he grew up in a healthy and warm family where he never

lacked affection and love. He stated that his parents never had any negative outbursts towards him, even in cases when he might have made mistakes. He also mentioned that he was never punished for wrongdoings, and his parents were always willing to explain the right path to him. When asked what he would do similarly to his parents, he explicitly said that he would want to be as loving and warm as they are. Case 3 expressed that his parents never punished him and that he was free to tell them anything. According to him, it was society that influenced his involvement in delinquent activities, and they were the main reason he was being interviewed in such environments.

Case study 4

Age 17, employed, male, residence: Dibër. According to the results obtained from the questionnaire about the father, case 4 scored a total of 27 points in the permissive parenting style, 42 points in the authoritarian style, and 11 points in the authoritative style. On the other hand, for the mother, the results showed a total of 30 points in the permissive style, 14 points in the authoritarian style, and 46 points in the authoritative style. Based on the results obtained, it is understood that case 4 was raised with an authoritarian style by his father and an authoritative style by his mother.

Unlike the previous cases, case number 4 did not speak positively about his family. He expressed that he grew up in a dysfunctional family where the disciplinarian parent was his father. Case 4 described his father as an irrational and unfair man whose main goal was to exercise authority in the family, but at the same time, he felt no responsibility for the family. Case 4 stated that he constantly felt bad under his father's discipline, as he was often subjected to verbal and sometimes physical abuse. According to the adolescent's description, his father showed high levels of control and demands but had low levels of response to the basic needs of the children. According to him, his father was mostly absent from his life, a factor that negatively influenced his psychosocial development. Since the adolescent grew up under the pressure of having an irresponsible and distant parent, he took on roles that did not correspond to his position in the family.

Living in a dysfunctional family with continuous conflict and abuse led to role confusion for the adolescent in question.

Based on his responses, the main factor responsible for the adolescent's deviance is the violence inflicted on him by his father in his family.

Case study 5

Age 18, student, male, residence: Tropojë. Based on the completion of the questionnaire about the mother, case 5 scored 31 points in the permissive parenting style, 12 points in the authoritarian style, and 47 points in the authoritative style. Regarding the father, he scored 30 points in the permissive style, 15 points in the authoritarian style, and 44 points in the authoritative style. Since the highest scores were in the authoritative style, the results indicate that case 5 was primarily raised with an authoritative parenting style by both parents.

During the interview, case 5 expressed that he grew up in a healthy family where authority in the home was mainly exercised by his mother. Although rules were established by both parents, they always communicated the reasons behind them to the children. However, they were not always willing to change them if the children found them unreasonable. In the questionnaire responses, case 5 also stated that he was raised with a disciplinarian parenting style within the norms of a functional family. According to him, he could always rely on his parents for a specific problem, and they would guide him to find a solution. Case 5 also claimed that he did not think that his family influenced his involvement in delinquent behavior, but that other factors may have had an impact.

Case study 6

Age 17, student, male, residence: Tropojë. Based on the answers to the questionnaires about his mother, case 6 scored 36 points in the permissive parenting style, 30 points in the authoritarian style, and 25 points in the authoritative style. He scored similar points in the questionnaire about his father, with 35 points in the permissive style, 30 points in the authoritarian style, and 28 points in the authoritative

style. It is understood that case 6 was primarily raised with a permissive parenting style.

In contrast to the other adolescents, case 6 spoke freely about his family and did not use short sentences. He described his family as a welcoming, warm, and helpful family that was considered normal. Rules in the family were considered normal, where parents asked him not to return home late, to keep his room clean, and not to associate with people who could have a negative influence on him. Although both parents were disciplinarians, his father was the stricter one and the one who punished him more often. However, punishments consisted of confining him to his room, which did not bother him. On the other hand, when the adolescent had success in something, his parents used positive reinforcement by fulfilling his desires. Case 6 also expressed that despite their care, his parents did not spend much time with him due to occupational commitments. This was the only detail he would like to change about his family. The adolescent expressed that, despite his parents continuously guiding him by showing him what is right and wrong, he did not always listen. According to him, one of the reasons for his criminal activities is the influence of various media portals and societal influences.

Case study 7

Age 18, student, male, residence: Kukës. Based on the answers given in the PAQ questionnaires, case 7 scored 27 points in the permissive parenting style, 28 points in the authoritarian style, and 36 points in the authoritative style regarding the mother. For the father, he scored 27 points in the permissive style, 31 points in the authoritarian style, and 35 points in the authoritative style. The total points indicate that case number 7 was primarily raised with an authoritative parenting style.

The adolescent described his family as a small one with warm, loving, and reasonable people who always provided their help when he asked for it. However, when he repeated a mistake continuously, they would change the method used. Often, he was subjected to verbal abuse and sometimes physical abuse. Despite this, when asked about the reason for

their behavior, case 7 blamed himself for repeating the same mistakes even though he had been punished for them before. During the interview, it was noted that the adolescent in question blamed himself for every mistake and believed that his parents were right.

Case study 8

Age 16, student, male, residence: Gramsh. Based on the answers given in the PAQ questionnaire about his mother, the adolescent in case 8 scored a total of 37 points in the permissive parenting style, 22 points in the authoritarian style, and 40 points in the authoritative style. On the other hand, for the father's parenting styles, he scored 31 points in the permissive style, 19 points in the authoritarian style, and 35 points in the authoritative style. Based on the total scores, it is understood that case 8 was primarily raised with an authoritative parenting style.

Unlike other adolescents, case 8 spoke openly about his family and did not use short sentences. He described his family as welcoming, warm, and willing to help with anything. He considered the family rules normal, where parents asked him not to return home late, to keep his room clean, and not to associate with people who could negatively influence him. Although both parents were disciplinarians, his father was stricter and punished him more often. However, punishments consisted of confining him to his room, which did not bother him. On the other hand, when the adolescent had success in something, his parents used positive reinforcement by fulfilling his desires. Case 8 also expressed that despite their care, his parents did not spend much time with him due to occupational commitments. This was the only detail he would like to change about his family. The adolescent expressed that, despite his parents continuously guiding him by showing him what is right and wrong, he did not always listen. According to him, one of the reasons for his criminal activities is the influence of various media portals and societal influences.

Discussions and Conclusions

This study aims to determine the importance of parenting styles in the development of criminal behavior in adolescents. The study's objective is achieved through an analysis of data on this issue and its application to institutionalized adolescents at the School for Rehabilitation, also known as the Punishment Suffering Institute in Kavaje. The hypothesis was confirmed as all the cases in the study were influenced by their families in engaging in criminal activities, either directly or indirectly.

Psychologists and various researchers have agreed that parenting styles play a significant role in the development and well-being of children and adolescents. This is supported by several studies that clearly express that one of the factors influencing adolescent delinquency is the family factor (Cottle et al., 2001; Gendreau et al., 1996; Hubbard & Pratt, 2002; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Loeber & Dishion, 1983).

According to the case analysis, it has been observed that parental influence can come in various forms, ranging from verbal, psychological, or physical abuse to the freedom parents grant their children to socialize with deviant peers. The latter plays a crucial role in influencing engagement in criminal behavior (Thornberry & Krohn, 1997). This fact was also confirmed through the claims of the interviewees, who believed that the main reason influencing their involvement in criminal activity was their deviant peers.

However, it is males who are more involved in deviant behavior. During the study, it was noticed that there were no females at the school for rehabilitation. One of the explanations for the difference in delinquency rates based on gender is that males may be more vulnerable to harsh parenting compared to females.

It should be emphasized that the suboptimal cooperation of the interviewees was one of the factors that significantly affected the attainment of an adequate result. During the interview, it was noted that some participants, such as cases 1, 2, 5, and 7, were not honest in all their answers, keeping part of the information hidden or having

inconsistencies in their responses. Especially regarding case number 7, it was observed that despite expressing warm relations with his parents and growing up in a healthy environment, there were clear signs of anxiety, shame, and embarrassment.

During the process of analyzing the cases, it was noticed that cases 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7, who grew up in problematic or dysfunctional families, experienced anxiety. Therefore, it can be said that one of the emotional consequences of unhealthy parenting is the emergence of feelings of anxiety.

To draw a conclusion, inconsistencies in the literature make it difficult to reach a specific conclusion accepted by all, as there are studies that reject this hypothesis and others that support it. The violence exercised by his father indirectly influenced his involvement in criminal activities. Martin Pinquart found that strict discipline and psychological control were, in fact, the most significant determinants of a child's behavior, which worsened over time (Pinquart, 2017). Children subjected to authoritarian tactics tended to develop maladaptive behavior. Pinquart's research focuses only on a specific form of problematic behavior such as aggression (Hariyani, Marmawi, & Sutarmanto, 2013; Rachmawati & Hastuti, 2017) and temper outbursts (Watiningsih, Rismayanti, & Sriastiyani, 2018; Zakiyah, 2017).

Case 4 claimed that the authority exercised by his father resulted in significant consequences for his emotional and psychological state. Also, he expressed that since his father did not show interest and did not provide warmth, he found support in other things such as substance abuse or involvement in criminal activities. According to him, he found a kind of conformity in aggressive behaviors, which, in the absence of directing them toward his father, manifested in various forms in the social environment where he belonged. Similarly, it is believed that the authoritarian parenting style plays an influential role in the development of criminal behavior in adolescents, and parenting styles play a key role in the occurrence of negative consequences in children (Kerr, Stattin & Ozdemir, 2012). Tompsett and Toro (2010) also consider the

authoritarian style as the most influential in the development of criminal behaviors.

Parents who use a permissive parenting style are supportive and interested in their children, but they are considered highly tolerant and often fail to set some boundaries (Trinkner, Cohn, Rebellon & Van Gundy, 2012). Permissive parents reinforce freedom more than responsibility, leading to non-positive consequences for adolescents. This is supported by a study that found that children raised with a permissive parenting style have lower academic outcomes and a higher probability of bullying peers.

Adolescents raised with a permissive parenting style have difficulty adapting to reality. When parents lack monitoring or control to a necessary extent, the effect on adolescents can be a lack of self-control, increasing the risk of delinquency.

The neglectful parenting style exposes the individual to a lack of parental supervision and warmth, causing adolescents to take care of themselves. These parents emotionally detach themselves from their children, which, according to studies, has negatively affected them, allowing access to unlicensed firearms, substance abuse, rape, prostitution, and violent behaviors. Another study supporting this is by Martinez and Garcia (2007), who linked neglectful parenting style to various criminal behaviors such as rape, vandalism, and aggression. Also, other studies show that adolescents raised with a neglectful parenting style consume alcohol and other drugs twice as much as those raised with other parenting styles. However, none of the cases in this study match the claims of the studies.

Recommendations

Unfortunately, despite many studies examining the influence of parenting styles on delinquency, we cannot calculate absolute results. Further social studies need to be conducted to provide a more accurate definition of whether these combinations of parental characteristics are what influence adolescents' involvement in criminal behavior or if other factors play a more significant role in this

issue. Since one of the conclusions of this study is that involvement with groups or peers who exhibit criminal behavior has an almost inevitable effect when overlooked by parents, further research is recommended regarding the societal factor and its influence on delinquent behavior.

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