

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN CHILD REARING PRACTICES IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about child rearing practices, the right way, the wrong way, the American way, the Nigerian way, the Kenyan or the Japanese ways etc. Frankly, child rearing practices change from culture to culture, from generation to generation and from social class to social class. What is perfectly acceptable in one culture or decade, may be seen as shocking in another. As American society and all other societies' worldwide become increasingly more global and less homogenized, understanding and accepting cultural differences in child rearing will become more important. Juvenile delinquency is one of the most serious problems plaguing contemporary societies in different countries across the world. For decades, society has been seeking effective ways to address and resolve the issue, by developing different theories accounting for the progress of juvenile delinquency. One of the powerful factors related to the problem are child rearing practices applied by parents and approved by society. The analysis of authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian parenting styles and the effects they have on children's social behavior in developed and developing countries demonstrate significant differences between the groups of countries and the connection between child rearing practices and risks of developing juvenile delinquency.

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is one of the most serious problems that need to be addressed both in developed and developing countries. In the U.S.A., the definition of juvenile delinquency embraces a wide range of situations when the law is broken by individuals who are underage, i.e. by those who have not reached 18 years. Such cases may include matters from violating the curfew to committing a murder (Basics on Juvenile Delinquency). Child rearing practices are often associated, although to a varying extent, with juvenile delinquency as rooted in the negative experience acquired during childhood years and exacerbated by faulty child rearing practices. Some of the latter can be interpreted as malpractices causing antisocial behavior of children and teenagers. However, a linkage between child rearing practices and juvenile delinquency and its magnitude have not been studied in depth so far. Articles published in recent years provide an outline of major features of parenting styles and practices that can act as possible predictors of juvenile delinquency specified (Hoeve, Dubas, & Gerris, 2009). These features that are of multifaceted nature need to be studied in different national, cultural, and socio-economic settings. A comparative analysis of different child rearing practices used in the developed and developing countries against the background of juvenile delinquency suggests that factors that can predict the outcomes of the types of social behavior of young people have universal nature. However, they may operate differently in different settings of family and wider social environment and demonstrate their correlation with social, economic and cultural conditions of a given society, community or family.

DISCUSSION

The basic traditions of child rearing in the USA and other developed countries as contrasted to traditions existing in developing countries are an important area for studying some of the most powerful factors of children's social development. The most important issue for communities and society is whether a child or teenager will develop into a socially adequate member of society or, instead, will go along the way that will lead take him or her to juvenile delinquency. Child rearing practices and conditions should be understood as a share of the set of various factors that put young people on the tracks of antisocial behavior and juvenile delinquency. Without such a comprehensive approach, it is too easy to fall into exaggerating a group of factors under consideration and present a biased or even distorted account of the area, whether the analyzed factors may prove to be relevant or not. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the impact of child rearing as a specific factor that contributes to the development of juvenile delinquency within the general context of juvenile delinquency.

Society defines and regulates legislative and court procedures that it deems appropriate to be applied to teenagers and young people that demonstrated antisocial behavior or committed crimes. The measures used in such cases are aimed not only at providing a more secure social environment by isolating an offender but also at correction of the offender's behavior, which is of particular importance for juvenile delinquents. In this way, society and community exercises its functions that might have been neglected or overseen in the family. In the USA, juvenile delinquencies are dealt with in special court procedures, so that such hearings are separated from the adult criminal procedures. The law also imposes severe restrictions on the public access to juvenile delinquent cases, with an exception made only for serious crimes committed by individuals who are over 16 years old (Basics on Juvenile Delinquency). These and other regulatory procedures and provisions that are aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency have only a limited effect, with juvenile delinquency becoming an ever more serious problem. Neither special programs designed to prevent it, nor studies that attempted to define the causes of juvenile delinquency have been able to resolve or alleviate its proliferation and growing rates.

The issue of juvenile delinquency has been in the focus of scholars for a long enough period of time, with some relevant approaches to research identified decades before now. In these studies, the role of child rearing and its relevance for juvenile delinquency was evaluated and interpreted differently. Some studies chose not to focus on it and emphasized other aspects and their complex, cross-relating effects. Banham Bridges (1927), for example, pointed out that "the factors which operate to turn a child's behavior in one direction rather than another may be very obscure, many as yet are beyond the detection of expert sociologists, psychologists, physiologists and others" (Banham Bridges, 1927, p. 531). This statement remains true today, with different causes underpinning juvenile delinquency still remaining a debatable issue.

One of the theories that highlighted the importance of family background and strategies of child rearing in the early years for developing juvenile delinquency or preventing it is the self-control theory of crime. It was developed by Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi in the process of their studies aimed at tracing "the outlines of reasonable public policy toward crime" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. xiv). The authors explored what they saw as the limits of public's ability to exercise control over crime. The classical traditions of interpreting the causes of crime were succeeded by positivistic theories, based on causation and determinism, which, in its turn, was criticized by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). Other

theories attempted to find different explanations of antisocial behavior interpreting it as a kind of psychiatric abnormalities and comparing to schizophrenia and other deviant mental states (Raine, 1993). These theories, however, were not generally accepted or recognized.

The studies of the origins and development of crime indicates the lack of its consistent relation to peer influence, deprivation or other causes commonly held accountable for teenagers' and young people's embarking on crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi describe crimes as "mundane, simple, trivial" and prompted by the need to satisfy some desires or ideas that emerge at a certain moment of time (1990, p. xv). Empirical studies of available data on crime revealed that it was not connected, as many researchers believed, by any inherited inclinations, faulty genes, or other reasons. These findings bring to the forefront the question of the impact of child rearing and parental practices on the development of children's externalized behavior patterns, antisocial behavior, and juvenile delinquency. Studies of recent years including those by Jacobson (2000) and Cauffman, Farruggia and Goldweber (2008) attempt to find an answer to the question. The public that is "much more aware of juvenile crime today than in the past... due in part to more thorough reporting techniques and greater emphasis on publicizing delinquent acts in the media" (Roberts, 2000) also expects to get helpful explanations and ideas about addressing the issues of juvenile delinquency.

Scholars have determined and described the main types of poor parenting practices that are likely to impair the child-rearing process and contribute to juvenile delinquency. The first type is an uninvolved-parenting practice. Uninvolved parents pose few requirements to their children, so that maintaining and exercising control would not be uncomfortable for adults. As a result, children in such families get little emotional support. They are likely to suffer from poor and limited emotional connection and often take liberties when they come home or leave it. Parents may be unaware of their children's needs and problems or just remain unresponsive (Secor, 2014). Parents of this kind usually care little about monitoring their children. They do not have adequate feedback from school or help their children with studying or school functions. In this way, children are deprived of proper moral, social, and developmental guidance.

Permissive parents represent the second type of poor parenting. They have closer contacts with their children who are not deprived of parents' affection. However, their parenting practices are characterized by little or low monitoring (Secor, 2014). Authoritarian parenting, which is the third type, is, unlike the previous two, focused on tight control and is demanding to children. However, these parents' feature shared with uninvolved parents is low levels of response to children's needs. Parents of this type make strict rules for their children and set standards of behavior but never care about the input from their children. They also tend to resort to punishment including corporal punishment (Secor, 2014).

These styles of parenting show that juvenile delinquency is the problem not only of the young as offenders but also as adolescents being the victims of poor parenting styles and practices. These young people may experience a serious negative impact on the process of their socialization and find it challenging to adjust to the norms of larger community or society. Results of some studies indicate that "an overwhelming majority of those who participate in violence against young people are about the same age and gender as their victims; in most cases the offenders are males acting in groups" (World Youth Report, 2003, p. 190). Adolescents "compensate" the lack of parental care and involvement with their own retaliation on society. It has been also described in literature that most teenagers having problems with the law and police used to experience problems at home and at school from an

early age. In some cases, such problems were observed as early as at pre-school age (Moffitt, 1883). Another study (Cauffman et al., 2008, p. 708) based on the data from “examining a sample of serious adolescent offenders” has revealed a correlation between problem behavior and interactions, in young delinquents’ lives, of poor parental practices with their relationships with dates that were also involved in antisocial behavior. Some scholars and legislators believe that parents of young delinquents should be held accountable to a much greater extent for offences committed by their children (Bessant, & Hil, 1998; Drakeford, 1996). These modes of child rearing will be surveyed in the next section against available data on parental practices in different countries and their relation to juvenile delinquency.

RESULTS

Parental practices in the USA are characterized by cross-cultural approaches due to the multiethnic characteristics of the population, with child-rearing practices demonstrating significant variance. However, common trends characterizing the nation as a whole show the focus parents have on education and health care of their children, child safety and family values development. Americans are seen as developing toward a family focused society. “A 2010 study by the University of California, San Diego found that parents spend more time with their children than past generations” (Etole, 2000). The ideals of parenting for a great many people in the USA are based on “middle class European American behaviors”. In contrast to the authoritarian style, they develop an authoritative kind of style that is based on support and control. An emotional component is an important part of this support while control provides for setting realistic expectations that can be shared by both parents and their children (Cultural Differences in Parenting Practices: What Asian American Families Can Teach Us).

Deviations from these parental practices cause problems resulting in juvenile delinquency. An example of uninvolved parenting effects is seen from the statistical data on Chicago adolescents with pre-arrest characteristics. 73 percent of those who were arrested also dropped out of high school. The level for not arrested young people was 51 percent, with a substantial difference of 22 percent” (Weigel, 2012). A positive attitude to education has been shown as a factor reducing the probability of participating in offences for students of different age in England and Wales (Bowling, Graham, & Ross, 1994). Therefore, holding education and school in high esteem is a positive factor of preventing juvenile delinquency.

Patterns of parenting that are seen in developed countries as faulty are common enough in in developing countries. For example, parents in African countries are often unaware of the impact their child rearing practices have on their children’s cognitive and social behavior. Disadvantaged from the early age by the lack of parental care, children in these African communities are further disadvantaged by restrictions conventionally by parents on their children’s inquisitiveness. Such an approach to child rearing is exacerbated even more by punitive discipline and a particular emphasis on unconditional respect toward elders and observance of religious rules (Makame, 2001). At the same time, African mothers are more permissive in terms of what they see in the sphere of sexual relations of their adolescent children than females of other cultures (Ensminger, 1990).

The data on parental practices commonly used in Brazil show the greater mothers’ involvement in child rearing as compared to fathers’. Mothers who specified having more situations with their children as difficult to manage also showed a significantly higher level of physical punishment of their children and coercive actions toward them (Piccinini,

Alvarenga, & Marin, 2013). “A harsh and coercive disciplinary style [has been found to] generate deficits in the child’s emotional self-regulation and behavioral capacity, which would explain, at least in part, externalizing symptoms, such as impulsivity and aggression” (Piccinini, Alvarenga, & Marin, 2013). Another example of non-Western type of parenting as combining authoritative (vigilant) with certain elements of harsh parenting carried out in Taiwan also demonstrates a dependence of early development of delinquencies as facilitated by the harsh parental style (Yi-fu Chen & Chyi-in Wu).

Parents behavioral expectations of their children show major similarities across cultures and can be interpreted as universals. The most widely acknowledged of such expectations are the respectful and polite attitudes to seniors and other members of society, honesty, sharing family values and studying well at school (Greenwod, B. (2014). However, some cultures are more particular about what they expect of their children. For example, “Asian and white parents expect children to exert self-control, while black, Latino and American Indian fathers often feel their children should have a religious or spiritual foundation” (Greenwod, 2014). Cross-cultural studies within the USA that also indicate different approaches to child rearing in different cultures, discovered that parenting styles and adolescent adjustment seen as two sides of a unified process suggest that it “transcends socioeconomic class and family structure” (Jacobson, 2000, p. 66). However, the connection between the two parts was found to be stronger in White and Hispanic American families than in African or Asian American adolescents. These results may indicate that certain parenting style patterns operate better in some social and cultural niches than others (Jacobson, 2000, p. 66). Child rearing and parental practices in particular have been found to show certain differences across cultures in terms of how they understand gender relations and what standards of behavior are require in relation to them.

CONCLUSION

The issues of juvenile delinquency pose serious concerns to communities and societies across the world considering their great social role and close relation to security people expect to have in their daily lives. Safe environment is one of the priorities for a modern individual, where ever he or she may resides. Numerous studies on juvenile delinquency approached the problem from different angles and studied it suggesting multiple causes underpinning it. However, a consistent and creditable theory has not been yet developed, which can deter the exercise of effective measures aimed against juvenile delinquency.

Child rearing and parental practices have been recognized as one of the major factors that have a significant impact on the development and formation of juvenile delinquency. Therefore, this aspect has come to the focus of scholars’ attention, although results of such studies are too few so far to construct any unified theory or concept. So far, authoritative style (vigilant parenting) preferred in developed countries is seen as the most appropriate for preventing juvenile delinquencies. It is favored by society in western countries, with deviations from it resulting in higher rates of juvenile antisocial behavior.

The main types of parental practices differing from an authoritative style are authoritarian, harsh parenting using coercive acts and punitive measures or permissive parenting. Developing countries are characterized by preferences of authoritarian style, which result from strong community traditions, unquestioned respect or elders, and other concepts. Parents in these countries are often unaware of the importance of parenting styles and their impact on children. Both authoritarian and permissive types have been found to pose risks of children’s

antisocial behavior, with the former explored in more detail so far and its relation to risks of developing juvenile delinquency demonstrated in a more consistent manner. Some child rearing practices are seen as a factor exerting a universal influence across cultures. For example, the value of education is a strong factor of preventing juvenile delinquency. Certain differences of child rearing that depend on deeply rooted cultural traditions or social standards can be seen within a nation, particularly when these are supported by the ethnically unified community.

Finally, to spare the rod is to spoil the child; but how true this is maybe dependent on cultural values within the developed/ developing countries/societies. It takes a people, a community to raise a child in group oriented society while it takes a parent to raise a child in an individualistic society

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