

## THE IMPACT OF THE RELATIONS WITH PARENTS ON DELINQUENT BEHAVIOURS OF JUVENILES

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### ABSTRACT

The main goal of this study was to assess the prevalence of delinquent behaviours and the impact of the relations with parents on the extent and the distribution of these behaviours. A total of 372 students from secondary schools of the Pristina town and vicinity, of age 14-17 years, of which 229 males and 143 females, participated voluntarily in this study. The instrument for the collection of data on the prevalence of delinquency was adapted from Section 28: Delinquency Scale of Wave II questionnaire, while the questionnaire used for the evaluation of the relations with parents was adapted from Section 16: Relations with Parents of Wave I questionnaire. The values of Chronbach alfa for this questionnaire were .612 and .745. Students differed by gender, the type of family they lived with, the education background of parents, their employment, age, place of residence and family incomes. The descriptive analysis showed the values and the distribution of the prevalence of delinquent behaviours, while the analysis of multiple regressions was used in order to evaluate the impact of family relations on those behaviours. The findings indicated that delinquent behaviours have a prevalence of 8.6 % in the sample covered by the study. Girls showed higher values in comparison to boys, while the juveniles of age 15 and 17 showed higher values in comparison to other age groups. None of the variables used for measuring the relations with parents showed an impact of statistical significance on delinquent behaviours of juveniles. Such findings reinforce the need for developing further, more inclusive studies.

**Keywords:** Juveniles, delinquent behaviour, family, structure, relation.

### INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is increasingly becoming an issue of concern to the society. Knoll and Sickmund (2012) suggested in their study that delinquent behaviours are far more prevalent nowadays than they were in the past. According to Kosovo Police<sup>1</sup> juvenile delinquency is a psychological phenomenon which manifests itself through the violation of moral and legal norms. Delinquency is a form of behaviour that contradicts certain social norms. Whereas a delinquent is an individual who by his/her actions not only violates environmental norms, but also violates the rights and freedoms of others and falls directly in conflict with others. Although substantial discrepancies exist between data from different sources, all of the data show a large increase in offending by juveniles in recent years (UNICEF, 2010). The number of 'criminal reports' received by prosecutors concerning alleged offending by juveniles was 1,313 in 2005, 1,859 in 2006, 2,203 in 2007 and 2,059 in 2008<sup>2</sup>. The number of juveniles implicated in these cases increased from 1,811 juveniles in 2003 to 2,982 juveniles in 2008, an increase of 65 per cent. According to the UNICEF Report (2010:7), approximately 30 per cent of all reports of juvenile offending, and almost half of all reports of serious offences by juveniles, occurred in the capital.

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.kosovopolice.com/repository/docs/2\\_Dhuna\\_ne\\_mes\\_te\\_bashkemoshatareve\\_dhe\\_delikuenca\\_e\\_te\\_miturve.pdf](http://www.kosovopolice.com/repository/docs/2_Dhuna_ne_mes_te_bashkemoshatareve_dhe_delikuenca_e_te_miturve.pdf) (Accessed, 05 June 2015)

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2010). Assessment of juvenile justice reform achievements in Kosovo.

The types of juvenile offending include theft, minor offence, illegal possession of weapons, breach of public peace and order, aggravated theft, intimidation, bodily injury, attempted murder, endangering public traffic, robbery, escaping from home and school, assault against other persons, possession of psychotropic substances, fighting, trafficking, threatening official workers, etc. However, the reports indicate that almost half of criminal offences committed by juveniles and reported in 2008 (47%) included theft, while the second biggest category of criminal offences (20%) included assault or murder. Among the causes for the occurrence of such delinquent behaviours are considered to be the difficult economic situation in Kosovo families, families with internal conflicts, the high unemployment rate, migrations from villages to towns, etc.

This study aims to detect the prevalence of delinquent behaviours among juveniles attending secondary schools in the town of Pristina and the impact of the relations between the juveniles and their parents on the extent and the distribution of these behaviours.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Two of the main factors affecting juvenile delinquency are the structure of the families of juveniles with delinquent behaviours (Apel & Kaukinen, 2008; Price & Kunz, 2003) and the relations of these juveniles with their parents (Leiber, Mack, and Featherstone, 2009; Petts, 2009). Research has shown that the family and the social setting in which children are raised may have major implications on their wellbeing (Wallman, 2010). In general, children who live with non-traditional families are at greater risk of developing negative behaviours, including delinquent behaviours (Prais & Kunz, 2003), in comparison to children who live in traditional families (with married parents) (Demuth & Brown, 2004). Most of the research has found that juveniles living in disrupted families report an increased level of delinquency, for instance in a longitudinal study of 411 male juveniles residing in South London, Juby and Farrington (2001) found that the delinquency rates were higher among 75 boys who lived in disrupted families in comparison to boys who lived in intact families.

In their meta-analytical study, Prais & Kunz, 2003, showed that children from divorced families have a higher rate of delinquent behaviours, such as criminal offences, crimes against other persons, theft, general delinquency, consumption of tobacco and narcotics, in comparison to children from intact families, with the exception of the consumption of alcohol. In their study, Burt, Barnes, McGue, and Lacono (2009) specifically examined whether parental divorce was the cause for delinquency. In a sample of 610 adoptive and biological families they found that the experiencing of parental divorce is related to and does affect juvenile delinquency.

Children who live in different family structures also experience many forms of monitoring, supervision, inclusion and attachment they receive from their parents (Hoeve, 2009). These factors may also play a role in determining why adolescents turn to juvenile delinquency. Parenting practices also may affect the development of delinquent behaviours. The results of the study carried out by Petts (2009) showed that residing with two parents deters youths from becoming delinquent and that supportive parenting practices reduce their likelihood of becoming involved in delinquent behavior early in adolescence. This study shows that parenting may have long-term effects on crime and deviance and parenting practices impact delinquency across different ages.

## METHODOLOGY

This study involved 372 students of secondary schools of the town of Pristina, who are considered juveniles according to the Juvenile Justice Code of the Republic of Kosovo. The mean age of the participants was  $MA=15.5$  years ( $SD=1.12$ ). 143 or 38.4 % of participants were females ( $MA= 15.29$ ;  $SD=1.09$ ) and 229 or 61.6 % were of male gender ( $MA=15.63$ ;  $SD=1.11$ ). The complete data on the characteristics of the study participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the participants in the study

		<i>N</i>	%
Gender	M	229	61.6
	F	143	38.4
Place of residence	Town	333	89.5
	Village	39	10.5
Age	14 years	89	23.9
	15 years	105	28.2
	16 years	81	21.8
	17 years	97	26.1
Father's employment status	Yes	232	62.4
	No	140	37.6
Mother's employment status	Yes	120	32.3
	No	252	67.7
Family structure	Divorced	42	11.3
	Married	330	88.7
Monthly incomes of the family	Under 200 Euro	66	17.7
	201-350 Euro	132	35.5
	351-500 Euro	94	25.3
	Over 5001 Euro	80	21.5

### Data collection instrument and method

In order to collect demographic data in the study nine questions were designed and attached to the questionnaires. The questions obtained data on the place of residence, gender, age, parents' education background, parents' employment, family structure and the level of monthly incomes. The data on delinquent behaviours of juveniles were collected through Section 28: Delinquency Scale based on Wave II questions, adapted to and validated in our context. The questionnaire asked how often the adolescents engaged in certain activities within the last 12 months. Responses range from 1 (never) to 4 (more than 5 times). The Chronbach Alpha is .612.

The data on the relations with parents were collected through Section 16: Relations with Parents of **Wave I questionnaire**, adapted to and validated in our context. Respondents are asked about various aspects of their relationship with their parents (or the parental figures in the household). In the unlikely event that a respondent lives alone, or in an institution, the

section is skipped. Topics include rules, activities, educational aspirations, and perceived closeness of the relationship. The questionnaire was divided in three separate sections. The first section consisted of 8 situations in which juveniles responded in a range from 1 (never) to 4 (always), as to whether their parents allowed them to make their own decisions in eight different situations. The second and the third section referred to carrying out specific activities with the mother and the father, with responses ranging from 1 (Yes) to 3 (Refused).

The Chronbach Alpha is .745. The data were collected in direct meetings between teachers and students, who were informed in advance about the purpose of the study and agreed to voluntarily participate in the study. The questionnaire was completed individually by each student and was returned to the author on the same day.

### The procedure of data analysis

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) was used as the index of internal consistency of both questionnaires. The numbers of responses and the respective percentages have been calculated in order to evaluate the prevalence level and the distribution of delinquent behaviours according to all students and their gender. The impact of the relations with parents on delinquent behaviours was discovered through the multiple regression analysis. The statistical package used in the present study is SPSS Ver. 19.0.

## RESULTS

As expected, our data have a positive skew, which is typical for delinquent behaviour scores in generalized samples, where most of the juveniles have relatively few problems. Presentational values of delinquent behaviours of children of age 14-17 years were found to be MA= 1.09; SD=.31. Expressed in percentages, 340 participants in the study had never developed delinquent behaviours; 30 or 8.1 % of them had demonstrated delinquent behaviour 1-2 times during the last 12 months, whereas only 2 or 0.5 % of juveniles had demonstrated such behaviour 3-4 times.

If we refer to the age, the results show that children of age 15 and 17 are those who demonstrate such behaviours most, and we only had two cases among 16 year olds of demonstrating such behaviour 3-4 times. A very interesting fact is that delinquent behaviours were found to be more frequent among girls (21 cases; MA=1.16; SD=.41) than among boys (11 cases; MA=1.05; SD=.21)

Table 2 contains the data obtained from the Section 1 of the questionnaire evaluating the relations with parents

Table 2: MA and SD values for Section 1 of the questionnaire

<b>Do you parents allow you to make your own decisions regarding...</b>	<i>MA</i>	<i>SD</i>
The time you have to be home on weekend nights? [Friday, Saturday, Sunday]	1.38	.49
People you would like to hang out with?	1.76	.83
The way you dress?	1.73	.85
How much time you spend watching television?	1.50	.89
The kinds of programs you watch?	1.94	1.23

Your bedtime during the weekdays?	2.27	1.24
What you eat?	1.86	1.09
On how many days during the last seven days was one of your parents with you when you had dinner?	2.00	1.96

The multiple regression analysis was carried out in order to predict delinquent behaviours from the variables involved in Section 1 evaluating the relations with parents. These variable did not statistically predict delinquent behaviours  $F(8, 95) = .957, p = .469, R^2 = .021$ . None of the variable showed values of statistical significance.

The results obtained from Section 2 of the questionnaire evaluating the relations with parents, but focused here on the relation with the mother, are presented in the Table below.

Table 3: MA and SD values for Section 2 of the Questionnaire

<b>Which of the listed activities have you done with your MOTHER during the last four weeks?</b>	<i>MA</i>	<i>SD</i>
Went shopping together?	1.33	.55
Went to a party or visit together?	1.32	.51
Talked about a guy or a girl you like?	1.45	.56
Went to a museum, or a sports game?	1.83	.45
Talked about a problem that has been bothering you?	1.68	.58
Had a serious conversation about your behaviour?	1.66	.80
Talked about your grades at the school?	1.12	.40
Talked about other activities you are doing at school?	1.14	.43

In this case, two, we carried out the multiple regression analysis in order to predict delinquent behaviours from variables involved in the section evaluating the relation with the mother. As expected, if we referred to the values presented in Table 3, these variable did not statistically predict delinquent behaviours  $F(8, 363) = .358, p = .942, R^2 = .008$  in any of them.

Table 4 shows the results obtained from Section 3 of the Questionnaire evaluating the relations with parents, now focused on the relation with the father.

Table 4: MA and SD values for Section 3 of the Questionnaire

<b>Which of the listed activities have you done with your FATHER during the last four weeks?</b>	<i>MA</i>	<i>SD</i>
Went shopping together?	1.55	.58
Went to a party or visit together?	1.20	.44
Talked about a guy or a girl you like?	1.79	.47
Went to a museum, or a sports game?	1.65	.51
Talked about a problem that has been bothering you?	1.68	.55
Had a serious conversation about your behaviour?	1.62	.59
Talked about your grades at the school?	1.13	.38
Talked about other activities you are doing at school?	1.40	.54

The multiple regression analysis carried out in order to predict delinquent behaviours from the variables involved in the Section evaluating the relations with the father, showed no predicting values of statistical significance for the development of delinquent behaviours  $F(8, 363)=1.152$ ,  $p=.328$ ,  $R^2 = .025$ . In this equation, too, none of the variables showed values of statistical importance.

## DISCUSSION

The results presented above show the extent of the prevalence of delinquent behaviours and their distribution across gender and age among 14-17 year old juveniles, attending secondary school in the town of Pristina and its vicinity. The results show that the prevalence of 8.6 % is somewhat lower in comparison to other studies that evaluated the prevalence of delinquent behaviours among juveniles (Snyder, 2001).

One interesting result was that girls showed higher values of delinquent behaviour in comparison to boys. This result contradicts a series of studies according to which boys show a higher percentage of manifesting numerous behaviours that are considered delinquent (Snyder, & Sickmund, 2006; Stahl et al, 2007). However, the result is consistent with the findings of Stahl (2008), according to which the percentage of delinquent behaviours among girls is in increase more than among boys.

In our study none of the variables evaluating the relations between parents and children showed an influence of statistical significance on manifesting delinquent behaviours. This result is also consistent with other results emphasising that the relations with parents are considered as one of the most important factors in the prevention of delinquent behaviours among juveniles (Williams-Evans, & Myers, 2004; Meadows, 2007). The values we obtained in our study were mostly drawn from the responses that showed a close relation and communication among parents and children, which certainly showed its impact on the non-occurrence of such behaviours among juveniles.

However, our values indicated a slight difference in responses to variables showing the activities with the mother and the father. Such values and results evoke the need for a deeper examination of this phenomenon, with the view to specifying and including additional important variables.

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