

Extent of the Factors Influencing the Delinquent Acts among Children in Conflict with the Law

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Abstract

This study intended to determine the extent of the influence of several factors in the commission of delinquent acts among children in conflict with the law. This study was conducted at People Recovery Empowerment Authority (PREDA) a non-government agency which care for children in conflict with the law. A descriptive research was utilized to gather information regarding the profile of the children and their family background. A total of 27 respondents were utilized to assess how the internal factors (parental relationship, sibling relationship and home environment) and the external factors (environment outside home, peer pressure, and community rules) influence the respondents to commit delinquent acts. This study found out that external factors which include the environment outside home (2.57), peer pressure (2.62) and community rule (2.61) all has been found to a great extent of influence in the lives of children in conflict with the law. This study further holds that there has been a strong positive relationship with the internal factors and the external factors ($r=0.646$) identified which thereby influenced the respondents to commit delinquent acts.

Keywords: Delinquent acts; Children in conflict with the law; Juvenile delinquents; Factors influencing

Introduction

Children are the priceless gift from God and are the treasure of one family. The family and the community have the primal role in shaping the totality of these children. However, due some circumstances some children deviate from the standard norms and become in conflict with the promulgated laws. Mental health professionals describe delinquency as a pattern of bad or disruptive behavior, such as bullying and lying, which may lead to more serious anti-social activities, such as fighting and stealing. If not corrected, bad juvenile behavior can have far-reaching ramifications, such as serious bodily injury, arrest or death, for both you and your teen.

Biological influences specific to the individual child are often factors leading to bad juvenile behavior. Anti-social behavior, defined as actions that show a lack of consideration for others, is considered to have a biological origin. Other biological issues, such as abnormally high or low behavioral triggers in response to slow cognitive growth and abnormal emotional development, can also lead to bad juvenile behavior. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder commonly referred to as ADHA, can cause children to act out on a consistent basis. In many cases, biological factors can be remedied, or at least mitigated, with medical treatment and cognitive therapy. The child's environment is often a catalyst for bad behavior. Failure to make friends at school or poor academic performance can often be the cause of juvenile delinquency. Poverty and living in a dangerous neighborhood will sometimes lead children to engage in criminal activities. If your child has easy access to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or weapons, he may turn to risky behavior, as a way to escape the pressure of what he feels is an unhappy life [1,2].

Dogget et al. [2] comes into realization that his hypothesis was accurate when he conducted a study and found out that the least amount of structure the family provides the more likely the child will be driven to committing delinquent activities. Fagan et al. [3] conducted a study on the influence of sibling on adolescent delinquent behavior. The study examines sibling influences on adolescent delinquency at age 14, using data from an Australian longitudinal study of 374 same-and mixed-sex sibling pairs.

Based on maternal and self-reports, a moderately strong association between siblings' delinquency is found. The relationship remains significant controlling for childhood aggression and family environment factors measured during childhood (age 5) and adolescence (age 14), using both standardized instruments and new scales. This effect varies according to the sex composition of the sibling pair and is stronger for males and those whose parents have been arrested. The need for increased attention to sibling influences by researchers and prevention practitioners is discussed.

In the Philippines, where the plight of majority of the poor remains largely unaddressed, many places become breeding grounds for youth offenders. While many of these children were able to rise from the rut---proving that poverty isn't a justifiable excuse for committing crime---thousands of other juveniles have failed to get out of the trap and are forced to break the law primarily to survive.

The Philippine law is very clear that the Local Government Units (LGU) shall be the primary player in implementing the Delinquency Prevention Program which involves the allocation of budget for homes and counselor as part of the program implementation. However it is very evident that most of the LGU do not adhere to this. In cases like these, non-government foundations like PREDA Foundation, Inc. (Peoples Recovery Empowerment Development Authority) respond to the problem. Under the leadership of Father Shay Cullen, the New Dawn Boys Home reintegrates values among the children for them to

shun away from delinquency. The importance of re-acceptance of family and society is also addressed [4].

But how do we criminals out of children? [5]. Claimed that you have to put them in areas where they won't be able to meet their basic needs for food, water, shelter, health care, education and sanitation. Strip them of their rights to develop and maintain a life of dignity so that they'll grow up uneducated and unemployed. Mire them in places where there is no solution to despair and destitution [5]. The Philippine Juvenile Law is consistent with Western norms, Philippine law which considers anyone under the age of 18 a minor and not criminally liable for their actions. Offenders between the ages of 15 and 17 are sent to child rehabilitation facilities, while those below the age of 15 are exempted altogether from prosecution. In reality, however, rehabilitation programs are seldom carried out as most local governments do not have the capacity or funds to implement them. The criminal syndicates that increasingly resort to youth to ply their illicit trades have leveraged into that weak law enforcement [6]. Before Marcos time the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts provided a unique form of adjudication to youthful offenders and disposal of family cases. It was effective in administering justice, because the methods were not adversarial, but it was oriented to rehabilitation [7].

Methods

A total of 27 respondents met the criteria for participation in this study. The main respondents of the study were the children in conflict with the law who are currently under the supervision of Peoples Recovery Empowerment Development of Authority (PREDA). The key informants were identified to provide the necessary information pertaining to the Juvenile Delinquent. They were conveniently recruited to participate in this study. This sampling technique is useful in documenting that a particular quality of a substance or phenomenon occurs within a given sample. Such studies are also very useful for detecting relationship among different phenomena. All statistical tests were run using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

The research subjects were treated with utmost respect to conserve their individuality. An informed consent was secured from Fr. Cullens the founder of the institution to allow the researcher to conduct the study. During the data gathering social workers who were on duty directly observed the manner of data collection to secure that the researcher abides with the ethics proclaimed in his study. Information shared during the data gathering of the study will be highly confidential and shall only be used for research purposes only. An informed consent was given to the respondents to determine whether they would like to be part of the study or not. Respondents were given an ample time to answer the questionnaires and they may even answer it in an area where they may feel comfortable and at ease. Thus this prevented any induce activity by the researcher.

A questionnaire was prepared to be accomplished by the recruits. This was rated by respondents whether the internal factors which includes; parental relationship, sibling relationship and home environment. This was rated using a Likert scale to determine their response and the degree of these factors influenced their activity. On the other hand the external factors were identified as; environment outside the home, pressure with friends and community rules that governs the external environment where these children interact.

Results of the Study

Demographic profiles of the respondents

From the total respondents of 27 there were twenty or 74.07 percent on the age bracket of 15-17 year old. While three or 11.11 percent were on the age bracket of 18 years old and above. Based on the results majority of the respondents were teenagers. The teenage years are a prime time for experimenting and in this period peer pressure is so strong sometimes so much that the teenagers engaged in antisocial acts because of the pressure. As teens transition into adulthood, they often become tempted by adult activities. They want to follow their parents' lead, try the activities already done by their friends and establish their own identities. Drugs and alcohol frequently become involved in this mix [8]. Educational attainment of the respondents showed that fifteen out of 27 or 56% of the respondents were on elementary level while 9 or 33% of them were in high school level. Whereas two or 7% graduated from elementary meanwhile one or 4% were high school graduate. It could be observed that majority of the respondents among the individuals under PREDA custody were just able to finished elementary level however based on their age level they should be in high school level predominantly near graduating.

The occupation of parents showed that 52 percent of the respondents' mother was housewife. While 44 percent of the respondents' father works as a driver meanwhile a small majority (19%) of the respondent's father were already dead. Majority of the respondents' family sized were composed of 4 members reaching up to 7 and more. Out of 27 respondents 11 of them or 40.74% belong to a large family size while five or 18.51% of the respondents' family is composed of 1 to 3 members.

The respondents' arrangements in the family proved that nine or 33 percent of the respondents were the eldest child in the family. While eight or 30 percent were second child. Meanwhile, four out of twenty seven or 15 percent are the fourth born child. Lastly, 11 percent were third and fifth born child (Table 1).

Extent of the Internal Factors as Rated by the Respondents

Internal Factors	Average Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Parental Relationship	2.32	Some Extent
Siblings Relationship	2.27	Some Extent
Home Environment	2.78	Great Extent

Table 1: Internal factors that influence delinquent acts.

The above table presented that home environment which has the highest mean of 2.78 "Greatly" influence the behavior of children considered as juvenile delinquents. While parental relationship influences the child which yielded "Some Extent" with a mean of 2.32, while sibling relationship got a mean 2.27 described as "Some Extent". Based on the above data home environment is one of the factors that affect child delinquency due to lack of family support system which is very important to individual especially during times where their morale is at its lowest. Surely home environment will affect children to become delinquent if parents and sibling relationship is not discordant inside the house (Table 2).

Extent of the Internal Factors as Rated by the Respondents

External Factors	Average Mean	Weighted	Interpretation
Environment outside the house	2.57		Great Extent
Peer pressure	2.62		Great Extent
Community Rule	2.61		Great Extent

Table 2: External factors that influence delinquent acts.

The above table presented the external factors affecting delinquent activities among respondents of PREDA. It has been found out that it is more on peer pressure which “Greatly” affects the external factors of juvenile delinquents. It is also evident that community rules influences the child “Greatly” with 2.61 score, while environment outside the house also “Greatly” influence the respondents behavior with 2.57 score. Based on the above data majority of the respondents rated peer pressure as the major external factor which affects their behavior. This goes to show that respondents are greatly influence by their friends and peers to do some unlawful things to their community (Table 3).

Test on the Significant Relationship of the Factors

Pearson r Value	Value	Alpha Level	Association	Decision
0.646	0.3233	0.05	There is a strong and positive association between internal and external factors	Reject the null hypothesis

Table 3: Significant Relationship between Internal and External Factors Influence on Delinquent Acts.

The table showed the association between internal and external factors that affects child delinquency. The calculated Pearson r value is 0.646 with critical value of 0.3233 at alpha level of 0.05. It can be seen that there is a strong and positive relationship between internal and external factors. Since the Pearson r value is greater than the critical value the decision of rejecting the null hypothesis was made.

There is a significant relationship between the internal and external factors. An internal factor has a significant relationship with external factors. As the internal factors contribute to the child delinquency, it is more likely that the external factors also contribute to it. Parents, siblings and the kind of environment at home play an important role in the development of a child. If parents would not take care and show the love that their child supposed to have it is more likely that their child would show an unlawful behavior and this behavior would worsen if the child would encounter a severe environment outside their home.

This child would not clearly asses right from wrong for they have not seen or felt it within their home or outside. As a result, a child might do unnecessary things for them to be noticed by their family or other people and expecting that this act would make their family and friends care for them. Internal and external factors would make or break a child (Table 4).

Test on the Significant Difference on the External and Internal Influence

Profile	t Value	Critical Value	Degrees of Freedom	Alpha Level	Decision
Age	0.309	2.365	7		
Educational Attainment	0.8592	3.182	3	0.05	Accept Null Hypothesis
Occupation of Mother	0.6217	2.571	5		
Occupation of Father	0.0753	2.447	6		
Family Size	0.7803	2.262	9		
Arrangement in the Family	0.2547	2.776	4		

Table 4: Significant difference between the external and internal influence on delinquent acts grouped according to profile.

The table showed the computed t-value between External and Internal factors that affect child delinquency when respondents were grouped according to their profile. A t-value of 0.309 was yielded when respondents were grouped according to their age with a critical value of 2.365 and degrees of freedom of 7. The computed t value of 0.8592 was yielded with the critical value of 3.182 and degrees of freedom of 3 when they were grouped according to their educational attainment. Meanwhile, when grouped according to the occupation of their mother and father a t value of 0.6217 and 0.0753 was computed with a critical value of 2.571 and 2.447 respectively. 0.7803 was the calculated t value when they were grouped according to their family size with a critical value of 2.262 and degrees of freedom of 9. Lastly, when respondents were grouped according to their arrangement to their family a t value of 0.2547 was calculated with the critical value 2.776 and degrees of freedom of 4. An alpha level of 0.05 was used for the study.

It could be seen from the table that all the computed t value were less than to their corresponding critical value. Through this, a decision of accepting the null hypothesis was made. There is no significant difference between external and internal factors that affects child delinquency when the respondents were grouped according to their profile.

In this study, effect of external and internal factors doesn't differ even if the respondents were grouped to their profile. Effects of these factors might have the same weight in the reason of respondents' delinquency regardless of their profile.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the external and internal factors effect on the commission of the juvenile actions among children at PREDA foundation. Moreover, this also provide the readers about the experiences of the children in complicit with the law prior to their custody to PREDA institution.

Results reveled that majority of the respondents were ages 15 to 17 to which a great majority were only through elementary level of

schooling. The result also showed us that family size is a factor to which these children went out and invade the streets of Manila and other provinces where most of these children were taken from. Their parents though employed still cannot support their family's need because of the family sized which is comprised of 7 members and more. On a data presented by the United Nations Children's Fund an estimated 4,000 children were imprisoned at the end of 2005, most of them charged with minor crimes. This goes to show that child offenders become increasingly younger. But what is the government doing to address this problem? With the signing of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act 2006 by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Philippines introduced a new juvenile justice system. Among the many provisions seeking to protect children in conflict with the law, the legislation calls for restorative justice to be an integral part of the new system.

Under the new legislation, children under the age of 15 cannot be charged with a crime. For 15 to 18 year-old juveniles, diversion away from court is the preferred method for responding to crimes that carry a possible sentence of six years or less. This program involves the participation of the parents by conferencing and conciliation.

As to the extent of the factors which affects the child's commission of the act. The findings showed us that the most prominent internal factor that affects a child delinquent act is due to home environment followed by parental relationship and some are due to sibling failed relationship. The result is in consonance with several studies which proved that familial characteristics suggesting familial antisocial behavior or values such as family history of criminal behavior, harsh parental discipline, and family conflict have been among the most consistently linked. In another study conducted by Gorman-Smith and her colleagues, data show that children are more likely to resort to violence if there is violence within relationships that they may share with their family. Indeed the very absence of intact families makes gang membership more appealing. Further details have supported these findings as World Youth report [9] claimed that children who receive adequate parental supervision are less likely to engage in criminal activities. Dysfunctional family settings-characterized by conflict, inadequate parental control, weak internal linkages and integration, and premature autonomy-are closely associated with juvenile delinquency. Children in disadvantaged families that have few opportunities for legitimate employment and face a higher risk of social exclusion are overrepresented among offenders. The plight of ethnic minorities and migrants, including displaced persons and refugees in certain parts of the world, is especially distressing. The countries in transition are facing particular challenges in this respect, with the associated insecurity and turmoil contributing to an increase in the numbers of children and juveniles neglected by their parents and suffering abuse and violence at home.

On the other hand an external factor to be most influential seems to maintain the pressure with peers. World Youth Report [9] supported this as membership in a delinquent gang, like membership in any other natural grouping, can be part of the process of becoming an adult. Through such primary associations, an individual acquires a sense of safety and security, develops knowledge of social interaction, and can demonstrate such qualities as loyalty or leadership. In "adult" society, factors such as social status, private welfare, race and ethnicity are of great value; however, all members of adolescent groups are essentially in an equal position and have similar opportunities for advancement in the hierarchical structure. In these groups well-being depends wholly

on personal qualities such as strength, will and discipline. Quite often delinquent groups can counterbalance or compensate for the imperfections of family and school.

Community rules play a major role in influencing the commission of delinquent activities among minors. To further support this findings [10] asserted that the bad influence of a repeat juvenile offender exerts a strong force on kids nearby. The study's authors discovered a powerful correlation between the type of crime, or crime specialization, committed by the observed juvenile and the crimes chosen by their suddenly trouble-making neighbors. If the juvenile picked a property crime for his repeat offense, other kids within the one-kilometer circle were significantly more likely to also engage in property crime. The same was true for drug crime and violent crime. Researchers believe this force of influence could be the reason certain areas become known for a particular type of crime. A high-crime neighborhood can, in fact, be born from the activities of one criminal resident. The phenomenon of crime specialization was especially strong when observing drug offenses. In the study, researchers discovered that for every 10% increase in drug crimes committed in close proximity to a youth's home, the odds of that youth eventually engaging in illegal drug activity himself nearly doubled. Criminologists believe this is due to the relatively well-organized neighborhood structure required for drug crime to thrive. Moreover, a strong positive association between internal and external factors was found out. As the internal factors contribute to the child delinquency it is more likely that the external factor also contribute to it. On the other hand there has been no significant difference on the factors that influences delinquent acts when children are grouped according to their profile.

Conclusion

This study has further supported that there is really a strong relationship between the home and the outside environment of the children in conflict with the law. Offenders are also becoming younger and younger. This study indeed provided useful information of the extent to which these factors augment the commission of delinquent activities. Home is an important factor that we should consider to address the increasing number of younger generation committing crimes. Therefore all efforts should be done to build and strengthen the family to make it stable. The Local Government Unit on the other hand must give extra effort as should serve as the primary implementer of laws and adopt a comprehensive plan to prevent delinquent activities.

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