

A social work study on juvenile delinquency

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ABSTRACT

We present an empirical study to study the effects of different factors on juvenile delinquency. The investigation distributes 100 questionnaires among people who are involved with crime and analyzes their feedbacks. There are five hypotheses in our survey and we look to see whether family conditions, religion, economical conditions, media and physical and psychological characteristics play important role on juvenile delinquency in Iranian society. The results shows that while family conditions, physical and psychological characteristics play important role on juvenile delinquency, other factors do not statistically have any impact on juvenile delinquency. The study suggests that a better family condition could help reduce juvenile delinquency and people could guide their children through better consultations.

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1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency is one of the most important issues in our society and there are many efforts to reduce crimes and violence among children. For years, there have been extensive efforts for investigating the reasons behind the juvenile delinquency. Swift (1909) is believed to be one of the first who discussed juvenile delinquency and juvenile control. He recommended that the best literature on juvenile control ought to be focused in the works, which approach the problem through the ideals and inherited tendencies of boys. Durea (1933) performed an experimental investigation of attitudes toward juvenile delinquency and reported murder as the most serious offense and truancy as the least serious.

Peterson et al. (1959) investigated personality and background factors in juvenile delinquency. Quay et al. (1960) interpreted three personality factors in juvenile delinquency. Kósa et al. (1993) studied

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juvenile delinquency and drug dependence in Hungary. Ryan & Testa (2005) studied child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency by investigating the role of placement and placement instability. They reported that substantiated victims of maltreatment average 47% higher delinquency rates compared with children not indicated for abuse or neglect while 16% of children placed into substitute care experienced at least one delinquency petition. Placement instability further elevates the risk of delinquency for male foster children, but not for female foster children. Other characteristics associated with delinquency are race, age, and recurrence of maltreatment.

Ozen et al. (2005) studied juvenile delinquency in Turkey to determine offence behavior, socio-demographic specifications and some issues of the juvenile offenders' families in a selected region, and compared the results with developed countries. They reported that some items such as low income and low family educational levels, insufficient parental control, crowded family, migration, repetition of offences, and cigarette smoking are risk factors for offensive behavior. van Dam et al. (2005) examined which of the two personality models, PEN or Big Five, differentiates best between Dutch juvenile offenders and college students, between Dutch self-reported recidivists and non-recidivists, and between officially recorded recidivists and non-recidivists.

Chung and Steinberg (2006) performed an investigation on relationship between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. They reported that weak neighborhood social organization was indirectly associated with delinquency through its associations with parenting behavior and peer deviance. They also concluded that a focus on just one of these microsystems could lead to oversimplified models of risk for juvenile offending.

Ryan et al. (2008) used administrative data from a large urban county and propensity score matching to study the relationship between group home placements in child welfare and the risk of delinquency using a sample size of 8226 people. They reported that the relative risk of delinquency was nearly two and one half times greater for adolescents with at least one group home placement. They criticized about the implementation of group homes for victims of physical abuse and neglect.

Ohtani et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between the month of birth and juvenile delinquency and reported no significant difference between observed and expected numbers of births in winter/summer or those in the first/last months of the sample size of investigation.

Gardner et al. (2009) performed a comprehensive study for the role of peer context among adolescent boys and girls with varied histories of problem behavior by investigating the relationship between sports participation and juvenile delinquency. They reported that the odds of nonviolent delinquency were higher among boys who participated in sports when compared to boys who participated only in nonathletic activities.

Ryan et al. (2010) studied the relationship between kinship foster care and the risk of juvenile delinquency. They reported that the relative risk of delinquency was substantially greater for African American and white male adolescents served in kin homes. For Hispanic males and Hispanic females, kin homes were related to a decreased likelihood of delinquency, while they did not report any kin placement effect associated with African American or white females.

Chui & Chan (2011) performed an empirical study on social bonds and male juvenile delinquency while on probation. The study was performed in Hong Kong and reported that poor parental bonding and negative belief in the legal system were likely to elevate the propensity to commit theft and violent delinquency, respectively, including the probation period. They reported that the increase level of involvement in organizational activities yields in the increase of propensity to commit violent crime. The investigation suggested the implications for social services, which target the juvenile offenders in terms of fostering a healthy parent-child bonding.

In this paper, we study different parameters affecting juvenile delinquency in Iranian society by gathering information from 100 people. The organization of this paper first, presents the questions of our survey in section 2 and the results are given in section 3. Finally, concluding remarks are given in the last to summarize the contribution of the paper.

2. The proposed study

The study investigates five groups of reasons for having juvenile delinquency, which are family, religion, society, economic and psychological issues. The study tries to find out whether a worse family condition yields more juvenile delinquency, whether the rate of crime is less among more religious youth or not. The study investigates whether a society with better condition in terms of crime could result to less juvenile delinquency. In addition, the study tries to find out whether young people with better physiological backgrounds are less likely to commit crimes. Finally, we try to understand whether weak economical conditions could increase juvenile delinquency. The proposed study chooses a sample of 100 young people and distributes a questionnaire among them, which were either in terms of yes/no responses or in Likert based scale. The primary aim of this paper is to provide some guidelines for reducing the impact of juvenile delinquency. The people who participated in our survey were committed crime and the responses play important role on our study.

The first question we asked was on the size of family among the survey people and according to our survey, 56% had more than five family members, 24% maintained 5 family members and only 18% had fewer than five family members. In terms of educational background, 78% of the participants did not enter high school and only 16% of the participants finish high school. Our survey people were mostly addicted with drugs such as opium (50%), heroin (22%). In our survey, 22% were also smoking cigarette. The other question we asked was on their parents attitude towards these people and realized that 60% of these people experienced violence on behalf of their parents, 30% of the people claimed that they were encouraged to commit crime, 17% had parents who were not having any reaction against their children's misbehavior and 15% believed their parents did not guide them, properly.

The other observation was that 86% participants were living in cities and the remaining 14% were living in rural areas. In terms of shelter, 60% of the people did not own house and only 40% own their house. In terms of social relationship, 69% claimed they were shy in society and 31% did not. 67% of the survey people did not have job and the remaining were employed but 54% of the survey people did not complain about financial problem. In terms of multimedia activities, 97% of the survey people reported that they were watching TV and 56% of the people were interested in action movie, 23% of the people were watching sport movies, 11% of the survey people were interested in fictions and other stories and the remaining 10% were interested in unethical movies.

Since the study was performed in a Muslim society, we asked them whether they regularly pray god and 60% responded negatively and the remaining 40% reported they pray, regularly. We asked them whether they care about ethics and moral issues and 78% of the survey people either did not care about these issues, completely or they believed little on these issues. However, 22% of the survey people relatively care about moral issues.

3. The results

As we explained earlier, there are five main hypotheses associated with this survey. The first hypothesis is associated with the family affairs. According to our survey, 63% of the survey people believed they were not raised in good family conditions and they had unsuitable relationship with their parents. Table 1 summarizes details of our survey.

Table 1

The relationship between family conditions and juvenile delinquency

	juvenile delinquency			
		Yes	No	Sum
Unsuitable family conditions	No	59	4	63
	Yes	23	6	29
Sum		82	10	92

The Chi-square was calculated as $\chi^2 = 4.21$ with $df=1$, which means we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that a sever family relationship could significantly influence juvenile delinquency.

The second question of our survey is associated with religious beliefs and juvenile delinquency and our survey indicates that 68% of the survey people believed that religious beliefs had no impact on juvenile delinquency. Table 2 shows details of our survey.

Table 2

The relationship between religious beliefs and juvenile delinquency

	juvenile delinquency			
		Yes	No	Sum
Religious beliefs	No	60	8	68
	Yes	24	6	30
Sum		84	14	98

In other word, Chi-square was calculated as $\chi^2 = 1.15$ with $df=1$, which is not statistically meaningful and we cannot reject the null hypothesis.

The third question of our survey is related to the relationship of people's physical and psychological characteristics of the people and juvenile delinquency. Table 3 describes the feedback we received from the our survey people.

Table 3

The relationship between physical and psychological characteristics and juvenile delinquency

	juvenile delinquency			
		Yes	No	Sum
Physical and psychological characteristics	No	57	4	61
	Yes	27	8	35
Sum		84	12	96

According to our survey, 57% of the survey people believed that physical and psychological characteristics play important role on juvenile delinquency. Therefore, the chi-square is calculated as $\chi^2 = 6.42$ with $df=1$, which is statistically meaningful and we can reject the null hypothesis, leaving us to conclude that physical and psychological characteristics have positive impact on juvenile delinquency.

The fourth hypothesis studies the relationship between economical conditions of the survey people and juvenile delinquency. Table 4 demonstrates details of our survey. Based on the results of our survey, the chi-square is calculated as $\chi^2 = 0.34$ with $df=1$, which is not statistically meaningful and we cannot reject the null hypothesis, leaving us to conclude that there is no relationship between economical conditions and juvenile delinquency.

Table 4
The relationship between economical conditions and juvenile delinquency

	juvenile delinquency		Sum
	Yes	No	
Economical conditions	No 62	10	72
	Yes 23	4	27
Sum	85	14	99

The last hypothesis studies the relationship between the effects of media and juvenile delinquency. Table 5 shows details of our survey.

Table 5
The relationship between the effects of media and juvenile delinquency

	juvenile delinquency		Sum
	Yes	No	
Media	No 73	14	87
	Yes 10	-	10
Sum	83	14	97

According to the results of our survey, the chi-square is calculated as $\chi^2 = 1.88$ with $df=1$, which is not statistically meaningful and we cannot reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we can conclude that there is no relationship between media and juvenile delinquency.

In summary, we have found that family conditions as well as physical and psychological characteristics play important role on juvenile delinquency in Iranian society. However, there were no evidence to believe that religion, economical condition and media have any impact on juvenile delinquency.

4. Conclusion

We have presented an empirical study to investigate the effects of different factors on juvenile delinquency. The study distributed 100 questionnaires among people who were involved with crime and analyzed their feedbacks. There were five hypotheses in our survey and we were looking to find out whether family conditions, religion, economical conditions, media and physical and psychological characteristics play important role on juvenile delinquency in Iranian society. The results of our survey indicated that while physical and psychological characteristics were important on juvenile delinquency, other factors did not statistically impact juvenile delinquency. The study suggests that a better family condition could help reduce juvenile delinquency and people could guide their children through better consultations.

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