

## Original paper

# The Factors Contributing to the Juvenile Delinquent Youth in Kerbala Province. A Prevalence Study

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## Abstract

**Background:** juvenile delinquency is problem that affect the youth in many societies and can lead to many complication in regard the legal system, increase the crime and affect the moral and ethical issues of each society so it was better to understand the factors that contributing to the development of this condition.

**Aim of the study:** to explore the family, school and economic factors of juvenile crime. It has been conducted in police offices throughout the governorate of Karbala.

**Subject and Methods:** Interview schedule has been used as a tool of data collection. A sample of 172 juveniles was interviewed 93.6% male; most of the delinquents were in the age group of 9-19 years.

**Results and Discussion:** This study found that majority of the respondents were dropped out of school and engaged with juvenile employment, which in turn increases the rate of juvenile crimes. The dynamic and function of the family was found to be a determining factor for delinquency, only 56.97% lived with both of parent were 19.18% of the delinquent youth lived away from their families, 43.02% suffered from family neglecting, most of them belonged to low income profile, and keeping watching violent movie or electronic games.

**Conclusions:** from this study it was concluded that the character of delinquent case are those who are spend most of their time outside their home, they have low level of education, coming from poor parenteral education, they live in overcrowded area or coming from other governorate, they prefer to watch violent movie and violent games, they are cared by only one parent or by relatives,, with big family size, they have been curled or neglected by their care giver and finally have low financial state.

**Keywords:** Juvenile Delinquent, Kerbala, level of education, family structure, poverty and violent media.

## Introduction

Juvenile crimes are a common topic in a social research, and it adversely affects the development of a society. Clark (1997) clarified that the importance of good communication for the family functioning has major role developing the delinquent behavior. <sup>(1)</sup>

Hagan (2001) Indicated that various exposures to violence are very important resources of early adolescent role in the community, so it means that not only youth witness aggression or crime within the

family but on the outside as well <sup>(2)</sup>. Aoulakh (1999) argued that crimes can affect customs, laws and values. The crimes disturbed the social and political orders. The factors responsible for juvenile delinquency are: disrupted home, delinquent community environment, bad peer/school group, poverty, and unemployment. Children suffer from the poverty and spend their time with job are much more likely to developed delinquent behavior <sup>(3)</sup>

Cashwell (1996) argued that in the realm of family functioning there is a theory known

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as the coercion theory, in which that family environment affect an youth interpersonal style, which then affect peer group selection. So he next have more thinking about those family behaviors, mainly parental monitoring and disciplining; that affect relationship with abnormal peers throughout the adolescent period.<sup>(4)</sup>

Pollard, et al (1999), explain different protective factors that effect of exposure to risk factors, end with decreasing incidence of abnormal behavior.” reducing risk, reducing negative chain reactions, so stabilizing the self-esteem and self-efficacy, and opening up opportunities. Good performance in school might be regard as a protective factor because it is the against the poor school achievement—a known risk factor. Poverty is mostly seen as a risk factor, but the presence of both parents may affect the negative sequence of poverty to decrease a youth’s chance of becoming delinquent.<sup>(5)</sup>

Smith (1997) founded that parental problem and violence predicted violent offending; whereas, lack of mother emotional response toward their kids and father criminality predicted involvement in property crimes. He further found that parental conflict and parental aggressiveness predicted violent offending; whereas, lack of maternal affection and paternal criminality predicted involvement in property crimes. Family history of criminal behavior, harsh parental discipline, and parenteral conflict has been among the most related factor for the youth criminality. He mentioned that children are more likely to develop violence if there is violence within relationships that they may share with their family.<sup>(6)</sup>

Thornberry et al., (1999) mentioned that the family structure is very important in the development of delinquency. Children who live in homes with only one parent are more to show a behavioral problems including delinquency, than those who live with their parent. So they stated that for family disturbance and delinquency, the composition of families is one aspect of

family life that is firmly associated with delinquency.<sup>(7)</sup>

Loeber (1986) examine 300 families and delinquency he concluded that the most predictors of future delinquency were parental supervision, parental rejection. Marital relations, parental criminality, parental discipline, and parental absence were also having moderate influence on a child's subsequent behavior.<sup>(8)</sup>

Walklate (2003) found that strain theory holds that crime is caused by the many difficulty and those in poverty have in achieving socially valued goals by legitimate means. As those with, poor educational chance has difficulty achieving wealth and status by securing well paid employment; they are more to use criminal means to obtain these gains. Social and financial state outside the family may also contribute to juvenile delinquency. The poverty in overcrowded areas may breed contempt for oneself and for others. The older youth who has quit of school is more prone to delinquency. The dropout may be because his performance is not sufficient to get a job, and to get money he may turn to robbery or mugging.<sup>(9)</sup>

The aim of this study therefore was to explore the related risk factors that affect the prevalence of delinquency throughout the province of Kerbala.

## Methods

**Sample** For the present study, only 173 juvenile cases, their age range from 9 to 19 years old, was referred from the court to asses them inside the al Hussein teaching hospital, with their guards (policemen) from police office in the consultation room and this consultation of cases occur at Monday from each week and about 4–9 case/week from February 2016 to August 2016, and each interviewed privately for about 15 minute

**Tools** The tools for the study were used questionnaire which was developed by investigator himself keeping into account the various causes of juvenile delinquency

in relation to personal factors, social factor, family factor, psychological factors and academic factors. It consist of 16 variable (gender, age, social state, level of education, residency, family size, number of sibs, the delinquent living with whom, care received from the family, if they work outside their homes, two variable for economic status of the family, for academic achieving if they still attending the school or not and they can give the reason for that, also show their parenteral level of education, and finally there is variable about the preferable selection of media program and video games.

**Statistical Analysis** of data for the present study has been made in conformity with the objectives as formulated by the investigator.

## Result

As shown in (table 1), in this study there were 11 case of female (6.4 %) and 161 male (93.6%). This indicates gender difference in juvenile delinquency, while their age mostly ranges from age of 16 – 18 years old (57.55%) that's the middle of adolescents (period of risk behavior), while most of them are single (95.9% ), in regard their level of education about (63.9%) are in primary school and (29.06%) not inter school, while their residency about (41.86%) lived in the old city, (19.18%) lived in overcrowded area and the same number they are coming from other governorate so they live in the street or with others colleague, in regard the family size show that the most of them have sibs number range from 6 – 9 (45.34%), while these respondent are mostly live with both parent (56.97%) it mean half of them either with one of them or with other relatives, while care received from their family show that (43.02%) were neglected and curled ,finally in regard working outside their homes about (80.23%) can work mean spend more time outside the home and more problem with others. As it appear from the total number of delinquent cases

172 only 122 (70.94%) inter school and then from this number only 17(13.93%) cases still join the school, while the rest 105 (86.06%) left the school, as shown in table 2.

As appear from this table about (105) left the school of total of delinquent cases (172) and it was found that the most reason for them was lake of interesting in school (52.38%) and financial problem was (40%), as shown in table 3.

From this table show that the level of education range between illiterate and primary school for the fathers were 151 (87.7%) and for the mothers were 146 (84.8%), as shown in table 4.

This table shows their TV program preference for the delinquent case was 93 of total number (54%) prefer to see violent movie and games and this is could predispose for their delinquent behavior, as shown in table 5.

It appear from this table that most of these families 97 (56.3%) of middle condition while the rest belong to the poor situation 67(38.9%) and only 8 of total cases respond that have good situation, and this is also supported by their house owner ship that most of them they rent house 84 case (48.7%) and about 15 case (8.7%) the live in illegal houses, as shown in table 6.

## Discussion

age distribution that appear in this study mostly are at age of 16 – 18 years old (57.55%) and this is supported by the standard definition of American Psychological Association that Juvenile delinquent is a person who is age usually below 18 <sup>(10)</sup>, also look like other study for example Nisar et al. that most of the delinquents were in the age of 16-18 years (57.8%),A. Shamim et al. most of them (70%) belong to the age group 16-18 years , Jhessie L Abella show that majority are (54.4%) of the study sample were age between 14 – 15 years old and Hamoo et al. majority(51%) around age 14 – 15 years old around age <sup>(11)(12)(13)(14)</sup>.

**Table 1.** socio demographic data of the sample:

Variable		Cases = 172	
		No.	%
Gender	Boys	161	93.60
	Girls	11	6.40
Age	Less than 10 years	1	0.58
	10 – 12	7	4.06
	13 – 15	49	28.48
	16 – 18	99	57.55
	19 and more	16	9.30
social state	Single	165	95.93
	Married	6	3.49
	Divorced	1	0.58
level of education	Illiterate ( not join the school)	50	29.06
	Primary stage	110	63.95
	Secondary	9	5.23
	Higher school	3	1.74
Residency	Those lived in overcrowded area	105	61
	Those from other governorate and lived in street	33	19.18
	Those lived in rural area	19	11.04
	Others	15	8.72
Family size ( no. of sibs)	Less than 3	14	8.13
	3 – 6	44	25.58
	6 – 9	78	45.34
	9 and more	36	20.93
living with whom	Father	28	16.27
	Mother	29	16.86
	Both	98	56.97
	Relative	17	9.88
Care received from the family	Neglecting	72	41.86
	Accepted	98	56.98
	Cruel	2	1.16
Working outside their homes.	Yes	138	80.23
	No	34	19.77

**Table 2.** Joining the school:

Still attending the school	No.	%
no	105	86.06
yes	17	13.93
total	122	100

**Table 3.** Reason for leaving the school:

Reason	No.	%
Financial cause	42	40
Lake of interest	55	52.38
Family problem	5	4.76
School problem	3	2.85
Total	105	100

**Table 4.** Level of parental education:

Variable		Cases =172	
		No.	%
father	Illiterate	52	30.23
	Primary stage	99	57.56
	Secondary	6	3.49
	Higher school	6	3.49
	Institution	2	1.16
	Don't know	7	4.07
mother	Illiterate	73	42.44
	Primary stage	73	42.44
	Secondary	5	2.91
	Higher school	2	1.16
	Institution	2	1.16
	Don't know	17	9.88

**Table 5.** Selection of media program

TV program	No.	%
Violent movie and electronic games	93	54.06
Other program (kid, social, science and religion)	48	27.9
Sport	26	15.11
Not interested in TV program	5	2.9
Total	172	100

**Table 6.** Economic status of the family

Variable		Cases= 172	
		No.	%
Financial level	Good	8	4.65
	Middle	97	56.39
	Poor	67	38.95
House ownership	Rent	84	48.83
	Illegal	15	8.72
	Owner	73	42.44

And this is usually accepted because they are teen age and it's a prime time for experimenting, also this period is critical for the family because the teen is prefers to spend most of his or her time with their friends, resist their parent in their opinion and they may be impulsive in their behavior.

Structure of the marital state in this study was (3.4%) married and (95.9%) single this is same as in Nisar, et al. and Hamoo et al. the singles are 95.6% and 92% respectively <sup>(11,14)</sup>, and this is accepted in our society that these ages are still not suitable age for marriage they cannot support them

financially and socially so they still in need to under care of their families

It was found that about (80.23%) of them they working outside their homes and this is very critical that show how often of them spend their time outside their home, more contacting with the peers, financial problems and could be acceptable cause for leaving the school because of low grade and failure that lead to more drop out from the school (Apel et al. ; Lee and Staff; Marsh and Kleitman) <sup>(14,16,17)</sup>

In regard their level of education that (63.9%) are in primary school and (29%) illiterate and this supported by different

study like A. Shamim et al.; Hamoo et al.; Mohammed; Sakir et al.; Jhessie L Abella; John Onyango Omboto et al., reported that the majority of them has low level of education<sup>(12-14,18-20)</sup>

In this study appear that (52.38%) left the school because of lack of interesting and (40%) because of financial problem that affect their attendance to the school so they will leave it, and this also explained by other study, Hawkins et al.<sup>(21)</sup>

Level of education of father show (87.7%) between illiterate and primary school and for the mother (84.8%) between illiterate and primary school so this is could be highly influencing the child to be engaged to the school or not because most father and mother level of education of low level and this could influence the sickness of the child in their school so more attempting the delinquent behavior and this is also could be supported what was found in the Petrosino et al.<sup>(22)</sup>

In regard their residency most of our cases are came from urban overcrowded area (61%) or from other governorate (19%) so they are homeless and can sleep at street, also this supported by Hamoo et al. (71%) and Mohammad 1992 (91%) live in urban area while A. Shamim et al. Found its more in rural than urban area<sup>(12, 14, 18)</sup>

In this study we found that only about (56.9%) lived with both parent so the rest either with one of them or with their relative and absence of father could affect the behavior of their children and so they can committed the delinquent behaviors its supported by Nisar M et al.; also exposure to high levels of marital and family conflict also appears to increase the risk of later violence Farrington; McCord; Maguin et al.; Elliott; John Onyango Omboto et al.; Ojo, M.O.D.<sup>(11, 20, 27-31)</sup>

In regard the care received from their family show that (43.02%) were neglected and curled, Nisar et al. found (48.9%) of the respondents were of the opinion that their father behavior was normal and caring them, also Farrington explained that the family role is important in determining the

well-being of the adolescents and the way that parents used to educate their children can predict their behavior.<sup>(11, 27)</sup> Widom; Zingraff et al.; Smith and Thornberry also observed that children who have been physically abused or neglected are more than others to commit violent crimes later in their life<sup>(32-34)</sup>, also Capaldi, D.M., and Patterson, G.R. And Hawkins, J.D. et al. mentioned that family failure to have poor monitoring and supervision for their child behavior predict later delinquency<sup>(35, 36)</sup>

Further details have supported these findings as World Youth report 2003, claimed that children who receive adequate parental monitoring are less likely to engage in criminal behavior<sup>(37)</sup>

In regard the number of sibs in the family for each one shows that (45.34%) with 6 – 9 sibs and in other studies like A. Shamim et al. found (44.4 %) had 6-8 family members, Hamoo et al. Found (40%) have 7-9 family member, Mohammed (1992) which revealed that (77.2%) of the study sample came from big families with 7 or more member and Jhessie L Abella found that parents though employed still cannot help their family's need because of the family sized which is comprised of 7 members and more.<sup>(12-14, 18)</sup>

Also appear that most of them they prefer to watch violent movie and games (54%) and this could explain why they did the delinquent behavior, could be imitation, ventilation for their frustration, most experts agree that watching high levels of media violence makes viewers more susceptible to acting aggressively e.g. increased rate of delinquent behavior and aggression in youth who frequently played violent video games and this supported by many studies Paul Boxer et al.; American Academy of Pediatrics 2009, Michael D; and L. Rowell Huesmann<sup>(23-26)</sup>

West & Farmington (1973) suggest low family income and large family size is a characteristic feature of offenders<sup>(38)</sup>

In regard the financial state for the family and about (56.39%) middle and (38.95 %) they are live in poor condition and this

could be similar in other studies like in Nisar, et al. and Donnermeyer that majority of the of them being (53.3%) realized with the sense that income doesn't meet basic needs of the family<sup>(11,39)</sup>, while the rest of them being (46.7%) were satisfied with their income and revealed that it meets the expenses of the family. And this fact is clearly apply by American Psychological Association (1993) that Socio-economic disturbance is often linked with unemployment and low incomes among the young, which can increase their of their criminal activity.<sup>(38)</sup>

Gorman et al. (2001) also found that low socio-economic status of working fathers, high percentage of jobless mothers or living at rent home linked with criminality<sup>(40)</sup>

Sampson, R.et al.; J, Farrington, D.P.; Wikström, P.O.H.; Hogg, E., and Wolf, P. ; Henry et al; Prior & Paris; John Onyango Omboto et al. all of them agree that poverty has been found to produce to a greater effect in crime and violence<sup>(20, 27,41-45)</sup>

Also their home nature about (48.83%) live in rent houses and (8.72 %) live in illegal places and this also related to the theory of poverty as in Nisar M et al. Found (68.9%) were their own homes and (31.10%) of the them were residing in rented homes, Hamoo et al. found (58%) of their families were renting houses to be residence for them<sup>(11,14)</sup>

## Conclusion

Most of our sample they are single, Most of them they are working so spend most of time outside the home and this is could explain their in their school and this is give them more chance to contact the peer pressure, Most of them have low level of education that mean more delinquent behavior and if we see their family level of education it will appear that both father and mother education of low level.

In regard their residency most of them coming from overcrowded area or from other governorate that they may sleep at street so more prone to peer pressure,

family neglecting and more delinquent behavior and most of delinquent youth prefer to watch violent movie and violent games

About half of cases they are cared by only one parent either because death , divorce or they may be cared by relatives , and about half of case they mentioned how they have being curled or neglected by their care giver , so family monitoring and good care can protect youth from delinquency.

Family size is very important as we found it that is consistent with other study more family number mean more neglecting for other member

About half of them with low financial state so we should look to it carefully that poverty highly linked to delinquency.

## Recommendations

1. The family plays great role on the basis that parents must give more attention and care to their children up to the time when they would be in the position to stand on their own. Thus parents must not be too busy to know and monitor the activities of their teenage sons and daughters, especially in regard their friends and monitor their watching movies and their video games.
2. Effort must be provide quality education to every child, and to raise the educational levels of citizens, especially in rural areas. And also to raise the awareness of the school teachers about the relation between the delinquency and leaving the school.
3. Poverty alleviation programs. It is the responsibility of the government to eradicate poverty and enhance standard of living through welfare programs.
4. Governmental youth and sport office or center must take the responsibility about doing the sport activities for the youth to encourage them for good communication with others and to protect them from peer pressure of bad friends.

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