

Relationship between Family Functioning and Attitude towards Delinquency in Adolescents in Babol County

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Article history:

Received date: 12 April 2018

Review date: 28 May 2018

Accepted date: 13 July 2018

Keywords:

family functioning, delinquency, adolescents, Babol, regression

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family functioning and attitude towards delinquency in adolescents. **Methodology:** The research method was correlational. The statistical population of the study included all high school students in Babol in the academic year of 2016-2017. Among them, 689 people (334 boys and 355 girls) were selected by cluster sampling method. The research tool was Fazli's questionnaire for attitude towards delinquency and McMaster family functioning scale. The results of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between family functioning and its dimensions including problem solving, roles, communication, emotional attachment, emotional association, control, and attitude towards delinquency. **Findings:** The results of stepwise multivariate regression indicated that among the components of family functioning, only the component of roles explained the 0.03 of the variance of attitude towards delinquency. **Discussion:** Based on the results of this research, it is suggested that in schools, family education programs should have emphasized the family psychological empowerment and promotion of family functioning. Family counselors should also work on counseling sessions and work with families to improve family functioning, in particular, component of roles.

Please cite this article as: Ahmadi Sartakhti H, Afrooz Gh, Sepah Mansour M, Lavasani M, Koochak Entezar R . (2018). Relationship between Family Functioning and Attitude towards Delinquency in Adolescents in Babol County, *Iranian journal of educational Sociology*. 1(10), 87-93.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period of physical, cognitive, socio-emotional changes and a dynamic and emotional period for individuals that includes increased ability to think, start of puberty and change in relationships with family, friends, school and community, peers, family roles, responsibilities, striving to acquire new emotional and social roles, managing life's assignment without being too dependent on others, and creating a new direction for the future as independent and productive adults (Kerig, Schulz & Hauser, 2012). This period is associated with high risk of conflict in many types of problematic behaviors such as substance abuse, delinquency, and so on. One of the troublesome issues of today's societies attracting the attention of many researchers is the subject of delinquent adolescents and youth (Shaffer & Kipp, 2014).

Delinquency is acts done because of the inability of individuals to comply with a set of rules, regulations, and value and cultural criteria of a society (Thompson & Morris, 2016). Juvenile delinquency is one of the basic problems facing many societies, which has caused great concern among various institutions due to the damage to the lives of victims and delinquents and to a wider community (Loeber, Wesley, Ahonen, Piquero & Farrington, 2017). Understanding the causes of delinquent behavior can help planners to design and implement more precise and appropriate plans for certain time and place, because in addition to social causes, biological, psychological, geographical, and ethnic factors also play a very important role in the formation and emergence of delinquency (Griffin, Germain, & Wilkerson, 2012). The study of existing research literature on delinquency highlights the role of several important factors which family-related factors are at the top (Shoemaker, 2013).

2. literature Review

Family as the most fundamental social institution, along with the intrapersonal factors, plays an important role in the development of adolescents. Parents, as the first factor in socializing children, play an important role in satisfying their psychological needs and their positive development (Browning & Pasley, 2015). Some studies suggest that parenting style and parents' interactions with children have an impact on their cognitive, emotional, and social development and growth (Ng et al., 2012).

On the other hand, when the family functions properly, family members are less likely to experience psychological problems, and are able to adapt to stressors and can have more coherent functioning and family-specific rules and boundaries (Alexander, Waldron, Roobins and Neeb, 2013). Rupture in the family structure, especially if it occurs through divorce, can lead to parents' minor supervision (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Shoemaker, 2009; Shoemaker, 2010) and friendship with delinquent peers in addition to increasing the likelihood of crime (Gasper, 2010; Eitle, 2006; Zimmermann, 2006). Moreover, lack of proper care, pessimistic discrimination, violence, family rupture, mental illness, lack of attachment, lack or absence of parents, affective deficits, personality traits, social factors such as population density, place of residence, social conditions and family conflicts are related to delinquency (Siegel and Welsh, 2008). The cases mentioned show somehow the role of family functioning in delinquency.

Family functioning is considered as family system processes used for the cognitive, social and biological development of family members. Family functioning is a way of family members' interacting with each other including pursuing common goals and activities of the members and accepting family habits (Becvar, 2014). In the field of family functioning, several patterns have been introduced and one of the most common and most important models is McMaster model. McMaster model considers six dimensions of functioning associated with clinical families including problem solving, communication, roles, emotional responsiveness, and behavioral control. This model is an appropriate tool for evaluating marital relationships and the family environment and explains the structure, organization and interactive patterns of the family (Vliem, 2009).

Then problem solving dimension is considered as the ability of family members to solve family problems together with each other so that the family effective performance is preserved. Communication refers to the effectiveness of the relationship in the family. This dimension looks at how information is exchanged between family members. Roles also indicate the family efficiency in assigning and performing tasks. Emotional accompaniment also indicates the ability of family members to give appropriate emotional responses to the different situations, and dimension of emotional participation includes the interest that family members show to the life of other members (Ryan, 2005). Behavioral control is, in fact, the behavioral expectations that a family adopts as a model for managing behavior in the context of exposing and expressing the psycho-biological needs and the conditions for socializing behaviors both inside and outside the family (Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller and Keitner, 2003).

Inefficiencies in any dimension of family functioning can be associated with negative outcomes including delinquency for children. In this regard, the research also supports the relationship between inappropriate parenting and deviant and high risk behavior of adolescents (Hill et al., 2005 and Nakamura, 2005). Parker and Benson (2004) investigated the relationship between the parent-child relationships for adolescents and their role in delinquency. The findings of this study confirmed the relationship between the quality of the relationship and delinquency. Tzeng (2006) concluded in a longitudinal research entitled *An Examination of Gender-Specific Effects in the Reciprocal Relationships between Parenting and Delinquency during the 12-13 years* that parenting and juvenile delinquency affect each other over time and, taking into account parent and child gender, reciprocal relationships between parenting and delinquency in various parent-child relationship combinations are different.

In Iran, Nazari (2015), in a study using meta-analysis method, confirmed the role of family functioning in juvenile delinquency. Hasanwand and Hasanwand (2011) also concluded that there is a significant relationship between student delinquent behavior and family structure. This means that students living in the disadvantaged families commit more delinquent behaviors. Mahdavi and Esfjir (2007) concluded that the weakness and lack of social and family ties are the causes of delinquency and, on the other hand, a solid social and family bond is a major barrier to the emergence of delinquency.

Considering the financial, social and cultural costs of delinquency for families and society and the family's important role in this regard, it is necessary to study the family factors affecting juvenile delinquency. Researches so far done have been often focused on the role of one of the characteristics and dimensions of family functioning in juvenile delinquency and have studied behavioral delinquency totally. In this sense, no research both on all the dimensions of family functioning and on the attitude towards juvenile delinquency was found, and in this context, there is a gap. Accordingly, the present study was conducted using McMaster model with the aim of investigating the role of family functioning in attitude towards delinquency in adolescents and seeking answers to the following questions: 1. What is the relationship between family functioning and attitude towards juvenile delinquency in adolescents? 2. How much family functioning can explain the attitude towards juvenile delinquency?

3. Methodology

The present research is applied in terms of purpose and correlational in terms of the nature of data collection. The statistical population of the study included all high school students in Babol in the academic year of 2016-2017. Among them, 689 people (334 boys and 355 girls) were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling method. First, seven boys' and seven girl's schools were selected and two classes were randomly selected from each school and questionnaires were distributed among students. Choosing 689 people as sample is due to the fact that in the present study, correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. In regression analysis, the ratio of sample size (observations) to predictor variables should not be less than five, otherwise the results from the regression equation will not be much generalizable. The more

conservative ratio is 10 observations per predictor variable. From Stevens' point of view, even considering 15 observations for each predictor variable is appropriate in regression analysis (Hooman, 2014). Since the sample included all the above suggestions, it can be said that the sample size is appropriate. The mean age of the subjects studied was 17 years. Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression were used to analyze the data. All analyzes were performed using SPSS-21 software. The significance level in all tests was considered 0.05. It is worth noting that the following ethical considerations were followed in the research: participants were informed of the research project and participated in the sessions of answering the questionnaires with full satisfaction. The research participants were assured that their private information is hidden by the researcher. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the researcher administered the questionnaires in the appropriate environment.

1. Attitude towards delinquency: To measure attitude towards delinquency, Fazli's questionnaire developed for adolescents aged 15-18 years in 2010 was used. This questionnaire is intended to determine the positive and negative attitudes towards delinquent behaviors and has 28 items. Items were measured based on the 4-point Likert spectrum form "completely disagree" (1) to "completely agree" (4). An evidence of using this questionnaire is that Fazli during a study on 200 teenagers aged 15-18 years old in public schools in Tehran using Cronbach's alpha method obtained a reliability of 0.71 for positive attitude towards delinquent behaviors and 0.77 for negative attitude towards delinquent behaviors (Khodayari and Sa'adat, 2012). Moreover, in a study by Dowlat Abadi & Ghassemi (2013), Cronbach's alpha for positive attitude towards delinquency was 0.86 and for negative attitude towards delinquency was 0.83. One can also mention the research by Yousefi, Amani and Babaei (2015) who used Fazli's questionnaire to measure attitude towards delinquency. By pilot administration of the questionnaire among 400 students, researchers found that Cronbach's alpha is 0.83 for items of positive attitude towards delinquency and 0.88 for items of negative attitude towards delinquency. The reliability of this questionnaire was calculated 0.56 using Cronbach's alpha method.

2. Family functioning: In this study, Family Assessment Device (FAD) developed by Epstein, Baldwin and Bishop (1983) was used to measure family functioning. This device has 53 items. Items were measured based on the 4-point Likert spectrum form "completely disagree" (1) to "completely agree" (4). Najjarian (1996) obtained 0.93 for the internal consistency of the whole test. In Amini's research (2000), the alpha coefficients of the whole scale and the subscales of problem solving, communication, roles, emotional attachment, emotional association, behavioral control, and total functioning were 0.61, 0.38, 0.72, 0.64, 0.65 and 0.81 respectively. In a study by Salari and Shamlou (2001), the internal consistency of this questionnaire was 0.58-0.85 with Cronbach's alpha and its re-test validity was 0.42-0.78. The reliability of this questionnaire in the present study was calculated 0.92 using Cronbach's alpha method.

4. Findings

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of research variables

Standard deviation	mean	maximum	minimum	Variable
3/61	13/86	20	5	1. Problem solving
4/30	16/77	24	6	2. Communication
5/41	22/29	32	8	3. Roles
4/15	16/71	24	6	4. Emotional attachment
4/87	19/54	28	7	5. Emotional association
4/87	24/58	35	11	6. Behavioral control
7/74	33/61	48	13	7. Total family functioning
5/84	69/36	86	54	8. Attitude towards delinquency

The mean and standard deviation of the research variables in Table 1 show that family functioning and its dimensions were desirable among the subjects. Also, this table shows that attitude towards delinquency among adolescents have been low.

Table 2. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for investigating the relationship between family functioning and its dimensions with attitude towards delinquency in adolescents

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Variable
							1	1. Problem solving
						1	0/63**	2. Communication
					1	0/71**	0/67**	3. Roles
				1	0/68**	0/67**	0/63**	4. Emotional attachment
			1	0/66**	0/69**	0/67**	0/65**	5. Emotional association
		1	0/68**	0/64**	0/68**	0/66**	0/63**	6. Behavioral control
	1	0/70**	0/74**	0/69**	0/73**	0/72**	0/67**	7. Total family functioning
1	-0/13**	-0/14**	-0/15**	-0/12**	-0/17**	-0/11**	-0/11**	8. Attitude towards delinquency

n=689 . *P<0/05 . **P<0/01

The results of Pearson correlation coefficient in Table 2 show that there is a negative and significant relationship between family functioning and its dimensions including problem solving, roles, communication, emotional attachment, emotional association, control and attitude towards delinquency ($P < 0.05$). Stepwise multivariate regression was used to investigate prediction of attitude towards delinquency in adolescents through family functioning and its dimensions. The results are represented below.

Table 3. Summary of the stepwise regression model of family functioning and its dimensions on attitude towards juvenile delinquency

P	F	Mean squares	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	Index	Family functioning and its dimensions
0/000	21/23	705/03	1	705/03	Regression	Roles
		33/19	687	22806/25	Residual	

The results in Table 3 show that only the role component could predict the attitude towards delinquency among the family functioning and its dimensions, and F observed for the mentioned variable is significant ($P < 0.05$). Accordingly, other variables including problem solving, communication, emotional attachment, emotional association, control and total family functioning were eliminated from the regression equation.

Table 4. Summary of the statistical characteristics of the stepwise regression of family functioning and its dimensions on the attitude towards delinquency in adolescents

P	t	Non-standardized regression coefficients (B)	Non-standardized regression coefficients (B)	Estimated standard error (S.E)	Multiple correlation coefficient square (R^2)	Multiple correlation coefficients (R)	Family functioning and its dimensions	Model
0/000	4/60	-0/17	-0/18	5/76	0/03	0/17	Roles	1

A summary of the statistical characteristics of the stepwise regression of family functioning and its dimensions on the attitude towards delinquency in adolescents in Table 4 shows that 0.03% of the variance related to attitude towards delinquency is explained by the component of roles. Regression coefficients of the predictive variables show that the component of roles ($\beta = -0.17$; $t = 4/60$) can significantly explain the variance of attitude towards delinquency in adolescents.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between family functioning and attitude towards delinquency in adolescents. The results of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between family functioning and its dimensions including problem solving, roles, communication, emotional attachment, emotional association, control, and attitude towards delinquency. This result means that the more desirable the family functioning, the attitude towards delinquency in children decreases. Other research findings showed that among the components of family functioning, only the component of roles could explain 0.03 of the variance of attitude towards delinquency. Although this prediction is not strong, it shows the important role of playing proper roles in the family in reducing the attitude towards juvenile delinquency, which means that if in the family, assigning and playing roles are done correctly, attitudes towards delinquency in children will be reduced. The results of the present study are consistent with the findings obtained by Demuth and Brown (2004), Parker and Benson (2004), Hill et al. (2005) and Nakamura (2005), Gasper (2010), Eitle (2006), Zimmermann (2006), Shoemaker (2009), Soemaker (2010), Nazari (2015); Hasanvand and Hasanvand (2011); Mahdavi and Esfjir (2007).

In explaining the results, it can be said that in an efficient family, relationships between family members are clear and consistent to the extent that they can solve the problem and maintain the effective functioning of the family. Family members perform well in the specified roles, so that the allocation of roles is clear and in line with the ability of the members, and the members respond to the assigned roles; family members accompany each other in emotional responses and express emotions like love, kindness, sympathy, empathy, joy and happiness. For individual activities, members value and there is a kind of empathic partnership and they act according to developed rules for controlling behavior (Epstein et al., 1983). In explaining the negative prediction of delinquency from the component of roles, it can be said that roles are repetitive behavioral patterns through which family functions are performed. Therefore, roles will be realized in their most effective way when they include all essential family functions and they are fairly shared among family members, and continuous follow-up is done. Based on what was said, one can expect that the constructive functioning of the family can reduce the attitude towards delinquency in adolescents. The results of this study suggest two theoretical and practical applications. At the theoretical level, considering that previous researches have been focused on the behavior of juvenile delinquency in adolescents, attention to attitude towards delinquent behavior in this research can lead the future research into the factors affecting attitude towards delinquent behavior in adolescents. In this regard, it is suggested that in subsequent researches, the role of other factors such as parenting style, the quality of marital relationships, and intrapersonal factors such as psychological well-being, resilience and personality traits in the attitude towards delinquency in adolescents is investigated. At the practical level, based on the results of the research, it is suggested that in schools, family education programs should have emphasized the family psychological empowerment and promotion of family functioning. Family counselors should also work on counseling sessions and work with families to improve family functioning, in particular, component of roles. Since the present study was conducted on adolescents in Babol city, the generalization of the results to other cities and cultures should be done with caution. We have a deep gratitude for the contribution made by all the adolescents who participated in the research, and in collaboration with them, carrying out this research was possible.

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