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Parenting Styles Criminal Propensity among Adolescents : A Correlational Study

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Abstract: Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by increased demands for autonomy and the consolidation of self-identity. During this period, shifts in social influence and exposure to high-risk environments contribute to a documented prevalence of involvement in antisocial behaviour and conduct that is both criminal and self-injurious. Given the established link between familial environment and subsequent delinquent outcomes, this investigation sought to examine the relationship between specific parenting styles and the manifestation of criminal proneness in a non-clinical adolescent sample. A total of 152 adolescents (aged 15–19 years) recruited from colleges in Mysore, India, completed the Criminal Proneness Questionnaire (measuring Aggression, Violence, Psychopathic behaviour, Addiction, and Disrespect towards Law) by Rajasekhara and D'Souza (2013) and the Parenting Style Inventory (Gottman, 1997), assessing Dismissing, Disapproving, Laissez-Faire, and Emotion Coaching styles. A one-way Analysis of Variance revealed a statistically significant main effect of parenting styles on overall Criminal Proneness, $F(3,148)=3.17, p=.026$. Subsequent analysis using Duncan's post hoc test demonstrated differential risk profiles. The Disapproving parenting style was associated with significantly higher proneness scores in Aggression, Psychopathic Behaviour, and Disrespect towards Law, whereas the Dismissing parenting style predicted elevated proneness to Addiction and Violence. These findings underscore that specific deficits in parental emotional socialization are linked to distinct trajectories of adolescent criminal risk, highlighting the need for targeted intervention based on the nature of parental engagement.

Keywords: *Adolescent development, Antisocial behaviour, Criminal proneness, Parenting styles.*

Introduction:

Adolescence is conceptualized as a critical and dynamically evolving developmental period, defined by physiological, psychosocial, temporal, and cultural determinants. Conventionally, this period spans the years from the onset of puberty to the attainment of social independence (Steinberg, 2014).

Navigating the challenges inherent in this transitional phase requires the sustained commitment to high-quality parental involvement, given that the influence of parenting during adolescence exerts a long-term impact on adult behavioural trajectories.

During adolescence, a pronounced shift occurs wherein peers become the principal agents of socialization and bonding. While this involvement can foster the development of distinct group norms—sometimes leading to involvement in risk behaviours such as substance use or antisocial conduct—the essential role of parents endures. Research suggests that core adolescent values often align closely with those of their parents (Offer & Church, 1991). Furthermore, despite seeking companionship and intimacy from peers, adolescents continue to rely on their parents as a "secure base" necessary for psychological exploration and the development of autonomy (Laursen, 1996). The quest for independence creates an inherent developmental tension between adolescents' growing desire for separation and parents' understandable hesitation to relinquish control. Effective parenting requires balancing the provision of adequate autonomy with protection from premature or high-risk judgments. These dynamics frequently manifest as family conflict, the management and outcomes of which are significantly mediated by specific parenting styles. Nonetheless, as adolescents mature, they perceive themselves as increasing contributors to family dialogue, and their relationships with parents evolve into more positive, autonomous dynamics, where parents remain a consistent source of comfort, support, and guidance (Larson et al., 1996; Fuligni, Eccles, Barber, & Clements, 2001).

The consensus in the literature highlights a strong correlation between a positive family environment and successful psychosocial adjustment in adulthood (Clark, 1970; Whitney-Thomas & Molony, 2001). Conversely, numerous family factors, particularly specific parenting behaviors and styles, have been demonstrated to influence engagement in juvenile criminal and antisocial conduct (Bush & Horn, 1997). Consequently, a rigorous investigation into the specific relationship between differential parenting styles and various manifestations of juvenile delinquency remain an area of critical importance for developmental criminology.

Research Objectives

The present investigation was guided by the following primary research objectives:

1. To examine the differential levels of criminal proneness observed between male and female adolescents within the study sample.
2. To investigate the specific relationship and predictive utility of parental emotion-coaching styles on overall criminal proneness and its specific subtypes among adolescents.

Methodology

The design utilized an empirical, correlational approach to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent criminal proneness.

Participants and Procedure

The study sample consisted of 152 adolescents (aged 15–19 years) recruited from various college settings within Mysore city, India. Ethical compliance procedures were followed prior to data collection. The data were collected in two corresponding parts:

1. **Adolescent Self-Report:** Participants completed the measure assessing criminal proneness.

2. **Parent Report:** The corresponding parents of the adolescents were administered the measure assessing parental emotion-coaching style.

The final sample size was N=152. The inclusion of the institutional and regional context is vital for establishing external validity, as the relationship between parenting practices and criminal behaviour can be moderated by specific cultural, legal, and social factors.

The research utilized two key psychometric instruments to assess the primary study variables:

1. **Health and Criminality Proneness Questionnaire (HCPQ):** Developed by Rajasekhara and D'Souza (2013), this instrument assesses a latent propensity toward criminality rather than manifest criminal conviction. The HCPQ contains specific subscales that were utilized to assess differential risk phenotypes, including: Aggression, Violence, Psychopathic behaviour, Addiction, and Disrespect towards Law.
2. **Parenting Style Inventory (PSI):** Developed by John Gottman (1997), this questionnaire assesses four distinct emotional socialization styles defined by how parents respond to and regulate their child's negative emotions:
 - **Dismissing Parent:** Minimizes or ignores the child's feelings.
 - **Disapproving Parent:** Judges and criticizes emotional expression.
 - **Laissez-Faire Parent:** Accepts emotion but fails to set limits or guide behaviour.
 - **Emotion Coaching Parent:** Values negative emotions as an opportunity for teaching regulation skills.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using statistical software. The analysis was conducted in several stages:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Measures of central tendency (Means) and dispersion (Standard Deviations) were calculated for all subscales and total scores of the Criminal Proneness and Parenting Style measures.
2. **Bivariate Analysis:** Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the preliminary linear relationships between the overall Criminal Proneness scores and the measured parenting style variables.
3. **Inferential Analysis:** To test the core hypothesis regarding the differential impact of parenting styles on overall criminal proneness, a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed. Following the determination of a statistically significant main effect, post hoc comparisons were conducted using Duncan's multiple range test to identify the specific group means responsible for the variance observed.

Results

a) Descriptive and Gender Comparison Findings

Descriptive analysis indicated that the overall levels of criminal proneness were generally low across the sample (N=152). The majority of participants scored in the lower ranges for all dimensions of the Criminal Proneness Questionnaire, with the fewest participants exhibiting high-level proneness for any subtype, suggesting that the sample reflects a non-clinical distribution of latent risk. Furthermore, analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in

the overall level of criminal proneness between male and female adolescents, suggesting negligible variation in risk levels based on gender in this sample.

b) Impact of Parenting Style on Criminal Proneness

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed a statistically significant main effect of parenting styles on overall Criminal Proneness, $F(3,148)=3.17, p=.026$. This finding indicates that the four distinct parental emotional socialization styles exerted a meaningful difference on adolescent criminal risk.

Subsequent analysis employing Duncan's post hoc test demonstrated differential risk profiles across the maladaptive parenting styles:

- **Disapproving Parenting Style:** This style, characterized by judgmental and critical responses to emotion, was associated with significantly higher levels of proneness to **Aggression, Psychopathic Behaviour, and Disrespect towards Law.**
- **Dismissing Parenting Style:** This style, characterized by minimizing and ignoring emotional expression, was associated with significantly higher levels of proneness to **Addiction and Violence.**

Conclusion: This investigation sought to examine the prevalence of criminal proneness among adolescents and to evaluate its predictive relationship with parenting styles. The investigation successfully established a statistically significant relationship between specific parental emotion-coaching styles and the overall proneness to criminal behaviour in adolescents, $F(3,148)=3.17, p=.026$. Crucially, the subsequent analysis detailed that this relationship is not uniform across all subtypes of criminal risk.

The findings indicate that parental emotional rejection (Disapproving style) correlates with higher risks of trait-based hostility (Psychopathic Behaviour, Aggression, Disrespect towards Law), whereas parental emotional neglect (Dismissing style) correlates with risks related to self-dysregulation and external coping (Addiction, Violence). These differentiated results represent a valuable contribution to the literature on criminal proneness and parental intervention by offering a granular map of risk pathways.

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