



# Does parenting behaviour impacts delinquency? A comparative study of delinquents and non-delinquents

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## Abstract

*The present study examines the relationship between mothers' and fathers' parenting behaviour and the development of delinquency in male adolescents located in Kolkata, India. The data were collected from 200 adolescents (100 delinquents and 100 non-delinquents) aged 11-18 years. A significant difference exists in the parenting dimensions of the two groups of adolescents. Further analysis revealed that parenting styles of mothers and fathers were linked to delinquency, of which authoritative style appeared to be the best style of parenting. On the other hand, neglectful and authoritarian parenting was positively related to delinquency. Furthermore, the impact of age and religion upon delinquency was also studied. Age of the delinquent was related to delinquency and it was noted that early adolescence was a richer breeding ground of delinquency. No impact was found between religion and delinquency. The findings have implications for parenting and its effort in reducing delinquency in India.*

Keywords: Delinquency; parenting dimensions; parenting styles; India.

## Introduction

A normal healthy development of any individual starts at home. It is the home, the family this constitutes the backbone of any human being. During childhood, the family constitutes the basic ecology in which the child's behaviour is manifested by way of positive or negative reinforcement (Dishion & Patterson, 2006). There is considerable evidence that the family plays an important role in the development of adolescent delinquent behaviour, by inappropriate reinforcement practices. Many research studies have emphasized the importance of the child's relationship with the parent in decreasing the likelihood of delinquency (Bachman, 1970; Bandura & Walters, 1959; Glueck &

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Glueck, 1962; Gold, 1963; Hirschi, 1969). Although most of these studies have found a link between parenting behaviour and delinquency, but only few of them have focused on parenting styles and delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009). Apart from this, in most of the studies only mother's role in parenting has been focused upon, without considering father's influence (Simons & Conger, 2007). To understand an adolescent behaviour it is very crucial to consider both mother's and father's role in parenting. To assess, whether there is any relationship between gender of the parent and probable link with delinquency is, therefore worthy of research.

### ***Parenting as a behaviour***

Two perspectives have been adopted in the parenting literature: research that focused on dimensions of parenting and research focusing on typologies (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; O'Connor, 2002; Ten Haaf, 1993). Dimensions are concepts to categorize parenting behaviours such as affection, punishment, reward, whereas typologies are combinations of parenting dimensions such as an authoritative parenting style. Support and control are the two widely used dimensions to assess the quality of parenting behaviour (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The support dimension (also known as warmth, responsiveness or acceptance – rejection by some scholars), refers to a child's feeling of comfort, acceptance and approval from his parents (Rollins & Thomas, 1979). The support dimensions can be represented as a range of positive and negative behavioural aspects such as acceptance, affection, love, support and intimacy, as well as hostility, neglect and rejection (Rohner, 2004; Ten Haaf, 1993). In general, supportive parenting is negatively linked to delinquency and neglecting parenting is positively linked to delinquency (Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Juang & Silbereisen, 1999; Simons et al., 1989). The control dimensions (also known as demanding), has been defined as placing demands on and controlling the child. This dimension can be further divided into two separate constructs, authoritative control reflects parental supervision as well as warmth and care; while authoritarian control refers to dominance and control without affection (Baumrind, 1968, 1971).

The second body of research has focused upon, parenting typologies or styles. Baumrind (1968, 1971), Maccoby & Martin (1983) defined parenting styles according to a two dimensional framework of support and control. Accordingly, four parenting styles can be identified: authoritative (high support, high control), authoritarian (low support, high control), permissive (high support, low control) and neglecting (low support, low control). For e.g. an authoritative style is characterized by high levels of warmth and affection and high levels of punishment, restriction and supervision as well. Relation between these four parenting styles and delinquency had been sought in the present study.

Parenting styles are combinations of attitudes and behaviours of parents toward their child, create a context or a climate for the parent's behaviour, and is displayed across many different situations (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). According to typological viewpoint single dimensions of parenting is not able to account for the interactional nature and dynamics of families and therefore parenting dimensions should not be examined in isolation (O'Connor, 2002). To identify family differences based on single dimensions, such as strict parental discipline, supervision and control and without considering how these various dimensions combine within specific families had not been studied much (Hoeve et al., 2009). However, Hoeve et al, favoured a multidimensional approach to understand parenting style and its link to delinquency.

Moreover, most of the studies have shown the importance of only mother's role as a parent in the development of delinquency. Hoeve et al., (2009) found that less than 20% of the studies have shown a link between father's parenting and the development of delinquency. In addition, studies have focused on single or both parents instead of differentiating between the sexes of the parent. Even back in 1986, Loeber and Stouthamer – Loeber (1986) point out “little is known regarding the effects of father as parents, it is important to understand the behaviour of mother and father separate impact on the children”. However, until now this issue has not been explored in a vast manner. Although, based on these few findings it was concluded that effect of poor paternal support was larger compare to poor maternal support, particularly for sons (Hoeve et al., 2009). It was observed that mothers still spend time taking care of their children as compared to the father. Accordingly, we decided to understand different parental styles of parenting and how they are related to delinquency.

### ***India as an Analytical Setting***

India, the world's largest democracy, is a secular nation. It includes both ancient and modern cultures, diverse languages, and religions. In the core of this diversity lies the universality of role played by the family. Family has always been the foundation of Indian society. Children and adolescents have always occupied a special place in Indian family system. Interdependency, support and nurturance across the generations are uniquely valued in the Indian family system. Parents always remain primary source of socialization of children adolescents and that is unique as compared to the rest of the world (Gupta, 1987; Shukla, 1994).

In India, parents usually live with their married children, typically with a son. There is really no concept of a grown-up son or daughter ‘moving out of the house’ unless it is a result of circumstances like job or higher study. It is almost and always a normal situation that a person being offered a job, first seek his/her parents’ approval. However, due to nation's rapid industrialization, urbanization, migration of families from the villages to the cities, and more recently globalization of the Indian market, every unit of the society is getting affected and so is the Indian family. Earlier extended families were pillars of Indian society. The interpersonal relation in a joint family was a network for satisfactions of various interpersonal needs by way of which a human being feels contended. When biological parents could not spend time with their off springs other respective members of the family provided necessary emotional support to the child. However, now, in nuclear families the situation is not the same. Parents also do not understand the significance of spending “quality time” with their off springs. As such, the adolescent turns to other groups in society and fall easy prey to deviant peer for fetching satisfaction. Due to this, contemporary Indian families are now encountering complex and disturbing problems of varied nature both internal and external having far reaching consequences, similar to their peers in other countries, including various forms of juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, illiteracy, school dropouts, low educational attainment, and family violence (Agarwal, 1989; Parikh & Krishna, 1992; Sarkar, 1988). According to the State Crime Records Bureau, Govt. of West Bengal (one of the State of India) report of Juvenile cases for the year 2009 - Theft: 37 cases; Rape: 20 cases and Murder: 8 cases. There is an increase of juvenile crimes as compared to the previous year record. This problem needs immediate attention of social scientists. However, there is a scarcity of empirical studies

linking parenting behaviour and the development of adolescent problem behaviour in India.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between parenting behaviour and the development of adolescent delinquency. Various dimensions as well as styles of parenting have been used to understand the development of delinquent behaviour. Following hypotheses have been framed:

- (1). There will be a difference between various parenting dimensions of delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents.
- (2) Both maternal and paternal style of parenting will be related to the delinquent behaviour
- (3) Different combinations of maternal and paternal parenting styles will result in delinquency.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The location of the study is Kolkata, the commercial capital of Eastern India, located on the east bank of the Hooghly River. Currently, the population of the city is 4.4 million (Census Report, 2011). The data has been collected from two groups of adolescents living in the city of Kolkata. The first group of adolescents consisted of 100 delinquent boys, residing in a Remand Home located in the city of Kolkata. The age range was from 11 to 18 ( $M = 15.52$  years;  $SD = 1.62$ ). In terms of academic level, 32% had no education, 40% had primary education, 25% had middle school education and only 2% had high school education. With regard to religious affiliation, 57% were from Hindu families and remaining 43% were from Muslim families. The participants of this group were from low socioeconomic background, with an average income of 4820 Rupees (95\$) per month. In terms of family structure, all of the adolescents had been residing with both biological parents. The average number of children in the home was three. The vast majority of the participants were dependent on drugs, that is, 94% and only 6% were not taking any kind of drugs.

The second group of sample consisted of 100 adolescents ranging in age from 11 to 18 ( $M = 16.13$  years;  $SD = 1.93$ ). Participants were selected from grades 6 to 9 of various government schools located in Kolkata. 18% of the participants were in grade 6, 33% in grade 7, 39% in grade 8 and the remaining 10% of the participants were in grade 9. In this sample, 71% of the participants belong to Hindu families and the remaining 29% belong to Muslim families. The participants of this group were also from low socioeconomic background, with an average income 6500 Rupees (130\$) per month. The adolescents were residing with both their parents and the average number of children per family was two.

The education level as well as employment status of the parents were examined. In the delinquent sample; 32% of the fathers were illiterate, 56% had primary education, and 12% had high school education. Whereas, 69% of the mothers were illiterate, and remaining 31% had only primary school education. With regard to employment status, fathers employment rate were 100%; 73% of the mothers were working and remaining 27% were homemakers. However, the job type was low in profile. In the non-delinquent sample, the literacy rate of the parents was better; 24% of the fathers had primary school education, 45% had mid school education, and remaining 31% had high school education. Mother education level was also high; 18% of the mothers were illiterate, 42% had

primary school education, 33% had mid school education and the rest 9% had high school education. Father employment rate was 100% in this group of sample as well, but only 22% of the mothers were working and the remaining 78% were homemakers.

### **Data collection**

The data collection process of the study was divided into two stages. In the first stage, the Superintendent of the Remand Home was contacted by one of the author permission to visit the home was sought. After getting the permission, a tentative time schedule was developed in discussion with the staff of the Home. Both the measures, i.e. Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) and Behaviour Deviance Scale, were administered directly to the delinquent participants using interview method under close supervision by the staff of Home authorities. The lead author in the present study administered the questionnaires, to those participants who gave their consent. The lead author spent two days for approximately half-an-hour daily to collect the response from each of the participants. Initially a rapport was established with each of the participant and that both the questionnaires, which were close end in nature, were administered. The questionnaires were adapted to the local spoken language of the participants (Bengali). The reliability of the adapted scale had been provided later in the measures.

In the next phase of the study, the lead author contacted the school administrators concerning the purpose of the study. Only Parental Bonding Instrument was directly administered to the non-delinquent participants in the school environment by one of the authors and under the close supervision by the teachers of that grade. In order to maintain the parity with the other group of sample, instructions were provided in Bengali language to this group as well. Consent was taken from each of the students before initiating the procedure.

### **Measures**

#### *Independent Variable*

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), developed by Parker et al., (1979), was completed by the participants in this study. The PBI is an individually administered instrument for assessing two fundamental parenting dimensions that is care and control, as perceived by the child. The measure is to be completed for both mothers and fathers separately.

The PBI is a 25-item scale, including 12 'care' items and 13 'control' items, with statements responded to in a 4 - point Likert type format. For scoring purposes, the four possible responses were assigned the following numerical value: 0 = very unlike; 1 = moderately unlike; 2 = moderately like; and 3 = very like. For mothers, a care score of 27 and above implies high score and a control score of 13.5 is an indication of high control. For fathers, a care score of 24 and above implies high score and a control score of 12.5 and high indicates strong control.

Participants were instructed to respond to each item according to category that best described their parental attitude towards them. Examples of items in the care dimensions (e.g., spoke to me in warm and friendly voice, appeared to understand my problems and worries), and items of the control dimensions (e.g. tried to control everything I did, invaded my privacy).

*Dependent Variable*

Behaviour Deviance Scale which was developed by Chauhan & Aurora (1989), is a 30-item scale designed to understand behavioural deviance of an individual. This measure was completed by two persons (for each juvenile) who know the adolescents very well. In this study, it was completed by two other delinquents, who know the participant (under the study) closely. Items are arranged in a 5-point Likert format, from very high =5; high =4; moderate =3; low =2; and very low =1. The final score is the mean scores obtained out of the score item scores given by the adolescents. High score indicates higher deviance. Examples of items are: “to steal, to be disloyal, to form company with bad people etc.”

Two of the personal characteristics age and religious affiliation were included for exploratory purpose. Age represented whether the adolescent was an early adolescent (coded as 1) or late adolescent (coded as 2). As the variable for religious affiliation was also included in the study, it represented whether the participant belongs to Hindu family (coded as 1) or to a Muslim family (coded as 2).

**Results**

Table 1 represents the mean, standard deviations and z-ratio among the delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents. From the z- ratio, it become evident that there exists a significant difference between both the delinquent and non-delinquent adolescent on their respective parenting dimensions. The mean score of each group further explain that the pattern of up bringing is poor in the delinquent families as compare to the non-delinquents.

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and z-Ratio among Delinquent (N =100) and Non-Delinquent Adolescents (N = 100).**

	Mother			Father		
	M	SD	z- Ratio	M	SD	z- Ratio
Care (Delinquent)	21.24	5.94	9.2**	16.49	7.29	9.95**
Care (Non-delinquent)	27.48	3.28		24.71	3.88	
Control(Delinquent)	19.8	6.34	6.41**	15.35	8.23	7.29**
Control(Non-delinquent)	24.89	4.78		22.39	5.07	

Correlations between both maternal and paternal dimensions of parenting and delinquency has been shown in Table 2. A significant negative correlation exists between mother’s caring attitude and delinquency, whereas a significant positive correlation has come out between maternal control and delinquency. Although there is no significant relations among father’s parenting dimensions that is care and supervision, and delinquency, however, the direction of the relationship is meaningful in nature – negative when fathers’ caring was correlated with delinquency and positive when fathers’ control was concerned. However, there was no statistical significance in either case.

**Table 2: Correlation matrix between Parenting Dimensions and Delinquency – Delinquent Adolescents**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Care (M)	-				
2. Control (M)	.52**	-			
3. Care (F)	.48**	.53**	-		
4. Control (F)	.40**	.21*	.54**	-	
5. Delinquency	-.32**	.37**	-.15	.02	-

\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

A one-way ANOVA was conducted by keeping maternal parenting style as a factor and delinquency as a dependent variable. It is shown in Table – 3. The result revealed that there exist a significant difference in the maternal style of parenting,  $F(3, 96) = 3.891$ ,  $p = .011$ , therefore it has a contribution towards the development of delinquent behaviour. As ANOVA gives an overall picture of the variable, so further analysis was carried out to find which group differ the most. Contrasts or planned comparison were carried out between each of the style of maternal parenting to understand which one of the style is the most contributing factor. Two, directional contrasts were carried out; in the first contrast it was assumed that adolescents with both neglectful and authoritarian mother will have higher chances of delinquent act. From the  $t(96) = 3.269$ ,  $p = .001$  (one-tailed) value it was evident that this relation is significant. Hence, it can be said that having authoritative maternal style reduces the risk for problem behaviour. In, the second contrast it was assumed that adolescents with a neglectful mother are most vulnerable to delinquent activities. The  $t(96) = 1.664$ ,  $p = .049$  (one-tailed) value came significant in nature, which implies that adolescents who doesn't receive any kind of care, attention and control from their mother are inclined to various forms of problem behaviours.

**Table 3: (One-way ANOVA) – Maternal Style as factor and Delinquency as Dependent Variable along with the Planned Contrasts**

	t- value	df	Sig.(1-tailed)
Contrast 1	3.27**	96	.001
Contrast 2	1.67*	96	.05

$F = 3.89$ \*\*; \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$   
 N Note. Contrast 1: Planned contrasts were conducted with authoritative parenting as control vs. neglectful and authoritarian style  
 Contrast 2: Planned contrasts were conducted between authoritarian and neglectful style of parenting

Table 4 represents one-way ANOVA and its corresponding contrasts for the paternal styles. The F- ratio indicates that there exists a significant difference in paternal style of parenting as well.  $F(3, 96) = 3.230$ ,  $p = .026$ , so, it can be inferred that fathers

independent style of parenting is equally contributing in the development of delinquency. In this case, as well two, directional contrasts were carried out. The result of the first contrast was found to be significant,  $t(96) = 2.725$ ,  $p = .004$  (one-tailed). This means that adolescent with either neglectful or authoritarian father is more prone to delinquent act as compared to authoritative father. The result of the second contrast came insignificant in nature,  $t(96) = 1.286$ ,  $p = .100$  (one-tailed), this implies that there is no difference between father of neglectful and authoritarian style, adolescents with either type of paternal styles is vulnerable toward delinquent acts.

**Table 4: (One Way ANOVA) – Paternal Style as factor and Delinquency as Dependent Variable along with the Planned Contrast**

	t – value	df	Sig. (1-tailed)
Contrast 1	2.72**	96	.004
Contrast 2	1.29	96	.10

F = 3.23\*\*; \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

Note. Contrast 1 : Planned contrasts were conducted with authoritative parenting as control vs. neglectful and authoritarian style  
 Contrast 2: Planned contrasts were conducted between authoritarian and neglectful style of parenting.

Table 5 indicates the result of two-way ANOVA. Age and religion were the factors and delinquency as dependent variable revealed that a significant main effect was found for age of the adolescent,  $F = 2.17$ ,  $p = .04$ . This difference can be seen from the mean value as well. The mean score for the early adolescent came 31.29, whereas for the late adolescent the mean value was 29.86. No significant main effect was found for religion and there were no interaction effect as well.

**Table 5 (Two-way ANOVA) – Age by Religion as factors and Delinquency as dependent variable**

Factors	df	F-value	Sig.
Age	1	2.17*	.04
Religion	1	.85	.36
Age*Religion	1	.57	.44

\* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

Note: Age was coded as (11- 14 years) = 1 and (15- 18 years) = 2. Religion was coded as Hindu = 1 and Muslim = 2.



## **Discussion and Conclusion**

By comparing the parenting dimensions, such as care/ support and control, of both the delinquent and non-delinquent families, it was evident that there exists a clear distinction among the families in the upbringing. The present study supported Loeber and Stouthamer – Loeber (1986) finding on the relationship between family and delinquency. They found that socialization variables, such as lack of parental supervision, parental rejection and parent-child involvement are among the most powerful predictors of juvenile conduct problems and delinquency (Laub & Sampson, 1988). Furthermore, mother and father separate styles of parenting revealed some interesting findings. Both mother and father separate role as a parent has found to be significant, which implies that both the parents play their own part in the development of a child or rather in the prevention of delinquency.

A detailed analysis of parenting styles revealed that, a neglectful and authoritarian maternal style of parenting is linked to delinquent outcome as compared to the authoritative style. Mother's neglectful attitude is of highest significance in producing delinquent child. In case of father as well, there exists a difference in neglectful and authoritarian styles compared to authoritative, but no significant difference was observed between father's neglectful and authoritarian styles. This indicates that irrespective of the type of control, father's care and attention is very much desired by the boys. On the other hand, those adolescent boys who are not receiving any kind of love, affection as well as supervision and control from their mother are very likely to exhibit problematic behaviour. This supports the research findings of Albert, Trommsdorff and Mishra (2007) that Indian adolescents reported less anxiety with the use of control by their mothers. Maternal control appeared as a source of security and acceptance to Indian youth, which is in contrast to any western countries. Therefore, it was observed that having a supportive as well as controlling parent diminishes the risk of delinquent behaviour. These results are in line with the findings of both Fletcher et al.,(1999) and Hovee et al.,(2011), that having at least one authoritative parent reduces the risk of youth's problem behaviour. This further indicates that parenting styles of mother and father should be studied separately rather than as single construct of parenting (Hovee et al.,2011).

Further analysis revealed that early adolescents (ages 11-14) were more prone towards delinquency as compared to late adolescents (ages 15-18), because when children enter adolescence other persons such as peers and romantic partners become more important than parents, and their influence on the behaviour of the adolescent is quite high when compared to their parents. Due to this reason, parenting is more crucial and vital during this phase of life. This was evident from the mean value, it supports the past research, and meaningful in the present context as well, which suggested that parents' influence on their children with regard to delinquency is relatively strong during childhood, but diminishes during adolescence (Loeber, Slot & Stouthamer –Loeber, 2006; Sampson & Laub, 2005). Due to disadvantaged family condition, this group of adolescent was not receiving appropriate parental care and control and because of external influences, they tend to deviate from the normal, healthy track of development. No differences were found between Hindu and Muslim adolescents regarding their criminal activity, suggesting that the process of upbringing is similar in both the communities. In addition, due to the impact of nation's rapid development is there is a drastic change in the values and beliefs of every Indian families, irrespective of their religion.

The finding of the present study was supporting Indian context, especially in view of the sample characteristics. As mentioned earlier that Indian society is very family oriented, children expect full care and attention of both the parents. Deviancy arises if the child does not get support and attention from either of the parent. A close look on the nature of the sample revealed that the delinquent boys were not receiving enough care and attention from their parents as both the parents were working in most of the cases, and also the number of family member on an average was high in delinquent families. Due to this reason probably, the parents were neither able to spend time with the children nor keep track of their children activities. As observed, that their literacy rate was quite low as compared to the non-delinquent families, so they perhaps do not know that spending time with their children is essential for their complete upbringing. The findings suggest that both maternal and paternal parenting should be the target of interventions among delinquents. It should be fruitful to include father as well in the treatment program, especially designed for delinquent boys. The result of this study has its strengths in practical implication. The findings of the present study suggest that both parents should develop a healthy relationship with their children, which in turn will enhance a healthy development of the adolescent, perhaps more so in countries such as India, where immediate family members play a unique and powerful role in the lives of their offspring.

### Limitations

As with most research, the present study has limitations. This study was conducted on delinquent boys only as due to unavailability of delinquent girls. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the female population. Only two of the parenting dimensions had been explored in the present study, it is suggested that future research is needed to examine various other dimensions of parenting and their combined effect on delinquency. In addition, the findings of the study were based on the self-report of adolescents only, so, actual parenting behaviour was not gathered. Finally, the findings of the study were also limited to Kolkata. The extent to which the results characterize adolescents and their families in other parts of India are a matter of debate. So, comparative studies on the relationship between parenting behaviour and delinquency within India are much needed.

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