

## **Family Environment, Peer Relations, and Delinquent Change Tendencies among Adolescents**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the present research was to study the relationship between Family Environment, Peer Relations and Delinquent Change Tendencies among Adolescents. Data was taken from (n=30) adolescents through purposive sampling strategy. Family environment scale, adolescents peer relations instruments and the self-report delinquency scale were used as an assessment measure. The result showed that family environment ( $r = .14, p < .005$ ) with delinquent change tendency, and, peer relations have significant positive ( $r = .12, p < .002$ ) relationship with delinquent change tendency. However, the results for the regression analysis revealed that all models were significant. In the first step ( $\Delta R^2 = .02, F(1, 298) = .51, p = .000$ ) family environment was a statistically significant predictor ( $\beta = .04, p = .000$ ), implying that family environment predicts delinquent change tendency. In the second model ( $\Delta R^2 = -.06, F(2, 297) = 2.23, p < .004$ ) resilience ( $\beta = -.11, p = .004$ ) was significant predictor of delinquent change tendency. The study concluded that higher level of bad family environment and peer relations leads toward higher level of delinquent change tendency behavior which causes severe level of delinquent behaviours. The present study will help to understand to improve the family environment which delinquent behaviours among adolescents.

**Keywords:** Family Environment, Peer Relations, Delinquent Change Tendencies, Adolescents

### **Introduction**

Coleman and Hendry (1999) define adolescence as "an active stage in which people mature physically, emotionally, and informally". By Warr (1993), it is also a period in which the importance of the peer effect rises and the time spent with peers' peaks, and by Sweeten et al., it is a stage in which involvement in delinquent activity rises and peaks (2013). The comparative diversity of peer relationships reflects the active nature of adolescence. Adolescent friendships are usually short-lived, with significant fluctuations in peer networks over or within school years, according to Cairns and Cairns (1994), and even within months (Chan & Poulin, 2007).

According to Chan and Poulin (2007), "youths' social environment shows a continually in motion system in which friendship relationships are shaped, maintained, or split up on a daily basis". There are also other grounds to conclude that delinquent behaviour is common during adolescence. After all, delinquent behaviour isn't always consistent: even the most delinquent of youths will follow the law for the most part. Based on data from space-time budget interviews, Bernasco et al. (2013) discovered that active adolescent offenders commit crimes in just 2% of the time they are awake. In addition, evidence from a study that used life history calendars suggests that periods of significant delinquent behaviour should be avoided.

Despite our growing understanding of the rapid volatility of peer relationships and criminality, few studies have linked the two types of variability. Warr, (2002) discovered a correlation between friends' delinquent behaviour and teenage self-reported delinquency, and Weerman et al. (2013) identified a link between unstructured and unsupported interactions with peers (called "unstructured socializing") and self-reported delinquency. The vast majority of these investigations, on the other hand, have used cross-sectional or longitudinal data with quite large time intervals.

## **Family Environment**

In a variety of domains, the association between family environment and delinquency has been thoroughly investigated. Overall, Vanassche et al. (2014) discovered that parental separation is related with a slew of negative outcomes, containing psychological health issues, lower educational presentation and attainment, and higher participation in juvenile delinquency. Some researchers are suspicious that parental separation in childhood or adolescence is related to subsequent adjustment and behavioural issues, as well as criminal behaviour, because of the negative repercussions (Amato & Keith, 1991). The relationship between parental divorce and delinquency is of special relevance because of forms of variability in family environments and enlarges in divorce ratio throughout the previous period.

The present divorce statistics in the United States is 16.9 per 1,000 married females, according to Anderson (2016). To put this percentage in context, by Schoen and Romo (2006) anticipated that between 43 and 46 percent of marriages in 2000 would end in divorce. With divorce statistics hovering around 40-45 percent, a huge percentage of kids will raise up in broken families. According to the Bureau, 35-37 percent of American children live in unconventional families, either with a biological or non-biological parent (e.g., stepparents or grandparents). Given the huge number of children growing up in broken homes, a correlation between parental divorce and subsequent deviant behaviour shows that family structure changes may contribute to an increase in criminal behaviour in the broader population.

Because divorce and remarriage are becoming more widespread, new studies have looked into the relationship between the frequency of family structure transitions and unfavourable outcomes. Living with a stepparent is also associated with a higher likelihood of delinquency, according to Vanassche et al. (2014), who explored further alterations in family structure. Brown (2006) discovered that switching from a one-parent to a two-parent family (including a stepparent) is linked to higher levels of happiness delinquency and poorer levels of school engagement. These findings are noteworthy since the basic structures of living in a dysfunctional home are widely utilized to discuss the link between mental illness and homelessness.

If the negative impacts of divorce are due to parental absence, bringing in a second parent should minimize delinquent behaviour. Moving into a family with a stepparent may increase delinquency because the custodial parent's concentration may be diverted away from their children by marrying or cohabiting with a new partner, resulting in less Pagani supervision (1998). Moving into a household with a stepparent, according to Schroeder (2010), erodes the relationship between children and their custodial parent. Pagani et al. (1998) discovered that boys who lived with a stepparent had greater rates of delinquency at the age of 13-14 than boys who lived in intact households or single-parent families. Girls who live in stepfamilies, according to Vanassche et al. (2014), are more likely to participate in delinquent behaviour. Girls who live in stepfamilies are more likely to participate in delinquent behaviour than girls who live in intact or single-parent families, according to Vanassche et al. (2014). The findings of this study imply that family transitions, not just parental divorce, are a substantial risk factor for delinquent behaviour.

## **Peer Relations**

As a result, we don't know how variations in peer connections and peer-associated activities are linked to deviations in delinquency. Thornberry and Krohn (2003) conducted significant criminology longitudinal studies that followed young individuals across time with time gaps of generally one year or at most six months. Weerman (2011) and Knecht et al. gathered societal network data on peers and delinquency behaviour over one-year time intervals, while Knecht et al. (2010) used three-month time intervals. Chan and Poulin (2007) looked at monthly variations in teenage (ego) peer networks, although there was no data on delinquent behaviour in this study. Long time lags of numerous months to a year may be suitable for recording long-term adolescent changes. They are oblivious to the acute transient changes that appear to characterize adolescent peer relationships and behaviour.

As a result, attempting to relate peer relationships to behaviour with the normal time lags might result in miscalculations, as the peer network that characterizes one point in the school year is expected to be substantially dissimilar from conduct assessed many months or a year later. More broadly, mechanisms basic interaction between peers and behaviour may occur at a far faster rate than is suggested in present research. Relationship choice and modification of one's own behaviour to that of peers can happen in a matter of weeks or even days rather than months or years. Warr (2002) even assumes that some peer processes will occur promptly and without delay. In summary, the research on peers and delinquency lacks researches that capture instant (i.e., monthly or weekly) fluctuations in what Warr (2002) referred to as the "micro life course" in defining the multiple ways in which delinquent behaviour may be influenced by peers. The current research is the first to look into such rapid shifts and what they mean for three different peer processes: peer selection, peer socialization, and situational peer influences.

We investigate at within a single Kentucky school network of 9th graders, there were short-term changes in peer networks, everyday activities such as unstructured socializing and substance use, and violating behaviour. The first five waves of data collecting at the start of the school year are used to determine change. In summary, we use much shorter time intervals between waves than previous peer and delinquency studies: instead of several years or months, our study is only 10 weeks long, with peer networks, behaviour, and time use evaluated over the course of five waves, each separated by two weeks (Waar, 2002).

Several characteristics of the process of adolescent peer choosing are consistent across studies utilizing these sophisticated network analytic methodologies. Haynie et al. (2014) for example, report a preference for gender and ethnicity similarities in a number of researches. Furthermore, structural network impacts on peer selection, such as reciprocity, transitivity, and balance, are commonly described in this body of work by Ripley et al (2014). Knecht et al. (2010) discovered that similarity in delinquency influenced friend selection in a study of kids from school classrooms.

Also, Snijders and Baerveldt (2003) discovered that resemblance in delinquency has an influence on tie creation and dissimilarity in delinquency has an effect on tie breaking. Haynie et al. (2014) discovered clear selection effects for both violent and nonviolent delinquency. Burk et al. (2007) and Baerveldt et al. (2008), on the other hand, found relatively minor selection effects for delinquency similarity. After accounting for a variety of other comparison preferences as well as structural network impacts, Weerman (2011) found that In the NSCR school project data, resemblance in delinquency had no impact on peer selection.

### **Delinquent Change Tendencies**

Throughout adolescence, the desire for social bonding can lead to poor decision-making, which is frequently affected by peers. The neurological foundations of this peer influence sensitivity have already been examined. According to Steinberg (2009), the increasing relevance of peers in adolescence makes approval seeking in social settings increasingly important throughout this stage of life. According to Miller (2008), delinquency can be regarded as "valorizing," "desirable," and "integrative" inside a social group, allowing youngsters to assert themselves, their identity, and their membership in the group (Emler & Miller, 2008).

Finally, teenagers can join juvenile gangs to further their "delinquent reputation," which is a serious form of delinquency that can assist them transition into adult criminality. Fortunately, this extreme kind of maladaptive attachment is not the most common style of socializing in adolescence: as previously said, antisocial behaviour may be a normal part of development that fades away spontaneously in most people during the transition to adulthood by United Nations (1990). However, one can wonder why it persists in some situations, and why Hall's (1904) normative "semi-criminality" could develop into deep-seated prejudices.

Adolescent delinquency has gotten a lot of attention because of its high frequency and comorbidity with other developmental disorders such addictive behaviour and depression, according to Binik *et al.* (2019). Fighting, stealing, cheating, and causing property damage to others are examples of delinquency among adolescents, which breach behavioural norms and/or societal regulations. It has been deemed a public issue around the world since it is associated to unfavourable life outcomes like as depression, substance misuse, violence, and unemployment in the future (Jennings et al. 2019).

Shek et al. (2019) found parental behavioural control to be a protective aspect against delinquency, while emotional control was found to be a risk factor. Many research looked at how parental control predicts delinquency over time, in addition to cross-sectional relationships. For example, a meta-analysis directed by Pinquart by Shek et al. (2018) found that initial behavioural control predicted

decreases in externalizing problems such as delinquency, whereas psychological control predicted increases in the difficulties. Similar findings were observed in Shek and Zhu's, (2018) recent study, which also demonstrated that paternal PC substantially predicted the linear growth rate of delinquency in juniors.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

It is descriptive correlational research directed with adolescents. Correlational research design was used. We recruited (n=30 adolescents) through purposive sampling technique from different schools of Malaysia. The inclusion criteria were: adolescents with age range (13-18) years and lived in Malaysia. Three people were left out because they didn't match the eligibility requirements. Total (n=30) adolescents were included in this study. Majority of the participant (56.3%) were female students. Mostly participants (76%) have conflicted family environment.

### **Measures**

#### ***Demographic Questionnaires***

A set of queries were established to get appropriate personal information regarding adults. Adults details included age, academic level, socioeconomic status, family background and gender.

#### ***The Family Environment Scale (FES; Jacob & Tennenbaum, 1988)***

The family environment scale contains 99-items. It is a self-rating scale assessed (1= Yes, 0=No). The total is determined when the 99-questions are calculated. This measure has been reported as having strong psychometric properties. In the current research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was ( $\alpha=.79$ ) for the overall scale.

#### ***Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument (Parada; APRI, 2000)***

It is an 18-questions tool authorized by the Parada (2000) and is utilized to assess peers' relations and peers bullying. This tool used 5-point Likert, (1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree). The Cronbach alpha reliability of this tool is ( $\alpha= .80$ ).

### **Procedure**

Before data collection could begin, the principals of the schools were sought for permission to pick participants, and after permission was granted, adolescents were approached. Adolescents were kept informed of the research's goals on a regular basis, and those who agreed were given a questionnaire to fill out in secret. Meanwhile, data was collected using paper and pencil surveys in this study. Those who consented to participate in the study were given a series of paperwork to fill out. Adolescents were not compensated for their contributions, which were entirely voluntary. The reviews that were completed at the same time were ready for data analysis.

**Analysis**

The statistical analyses were performed with IBM SPSS Statistics: version 23 with a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . Mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages were used to determine the demographic variables. Means, standard deviations, and reliability values (i.e. Cronbach alphas) were determined for the primary study variables. It can be seen that all of the variables were within 2 standard deviations (Field, 2013). Pearson product moment correlation analysis and hierarchal regression analysis were utilised to confirm easy analysis and clarification.

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

**Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis**

The findings of the correlation analyses are described in Table 1. A significant positive association was examined between family environment ( $r = .14, p < .005$ ) and delinquent change tendency, and, peer relations ( $r = .12, p < .002$ ) has significant negative relationship with delinquent change tendency. See Table 1 for summary.

**Hierarchal Regression Analysis**

A hierarchical regression was used, with the first stage being the family environment and the second level being peer relationships. All of the models were determined to be significant. Results revealed all models were significant. In the first step ( $\Delta R^2 = .02, F(1, 298) = .51, p = .000$ ) family environment was a statistically significant predictor ( $\beta = .04, p = .000$ ), implying that family environment predicts delinquent change tendency. In the second model ( $\Delta R^2 = -.06, F(2, 297) = 2.23, p < .004$ ) resilience ( $\beta = -.11, p = .004$ ) was significant predictor of delinquent change tendency. See Table 2 for summary

**Table 1**

*Correlational Analysis between Study Variables (n=30)*

	1	2	3
1. Family Environment	-	0.10*	0.14*
2. Peer Relations	-	-	.12**
3. Delinquent Change Tendency	-	-	-

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Delinquent Change Tendency (n=30)*

<b>Delinquent Change Tendency</b>		
<b>Adults</b>		
Predictors	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	-.02**	
Family Environment		-.04**
Step 2	.06*	
Peer Relations		.11*
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.17%	

Note: \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

a. Dependent Variable: Delinquent Change Tendency

b. Predictors in the Models: Family Environment, Peer Relations

## Discussion

Prior study has discovered evidence of a constant relation between delinquent change inclination and home environment. An intensive emphasis on the enduring effects of modifications in family environment on engagement in delinquent behaviour is conspicuously absent from this research. This study filled a vacuum in the literature by looking at the links between teenage delinquency and parental environment, peer relationships, and delinquent change propensity.

Two key discoveries emerged from the study. First, family environment in adolescence was revealed to be strongly connected with engagement in delinquent changing propensity, in line with prior studies. Secondly, peer relationships were found to be strongly connected with engagement in delinquent change propensity in the current study's findings. These findings appear to be in line with a growing body of research relating parental divorce to both brief and enduring consequences on delinquent conduct (Amato, 2001).

While the current study's findings demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between home environment, peer relationships, and teenage delinquency changing tendency. Another study assessed three processes: peer selection, peer socialization, and situational peer influences by looking at short-term changes in peer affiliations, criminal activity, and daily activities. According to the findings, peer networks, offending, and ordinary activities were all fairly dynamic during the course of the study. Peer selection effects were observed for structural network traits, demographics, and delinquent values, but not for peer delinquency (Amato, 2012).

As a result, a study looked into the relationship between friends' delinquency and teenage delinquency, likewise the relationship between friends' delinquency and temporary thinking (Impulsivity

and a lack of school-based future planning). It was also looked at if this co-development is robust when teenagers involve in co-delinquency. The results of parallel process latent growth modelling revealed that when adolescents engaged in co-offending, the link between delinquency among friends and delinquency among teenagers was stronger. As a result, co-offending gives teenagers immediate access to a setting in which they can continue to model the delinquency they learned from their friends by Defoe et al. (2012). Another study looked at the impact of changes in family structure on delinquent involvement during adolescence from a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective. Changes in family structure were found to have a minimal and only transient relationship with teenage criminality (Boccio & Beaver, 2019).

## **Conclusions**

The research investigated how family environment and peer relations affect the delinquent change tendency among adolescents. We found that of family environment and peer relations predicted delinquent change tendency. The findings add to the growing body of knowledge about the importance and origins of peer relationships in minimizing delinquent change. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of including and emphasizing not only support from significant others, but also support from all other sources in delinquent change tendency promoting treatments aimed at reducing delinquent behaviours and improving family environments.

## **Key Points and Relevance**

This research suggests family environment has significant negative relationship; however, peer relations have significant negative relationship with delinquent change tendency among adolescents. This research was conducted to create awareness among adolescents who are needed assistance or help from the family and from the society. The present research was designed to educate and provide insight to adolescents on the benefits of peer relations. This study could help administrators, policy makers and social workers to educate families and society about the different level, styles and types of family environment and peer relations that leads to delinquent change tendency. Based on this study, it is not only particular for professionals or for students to be aware from delinquent change tendency in Malaysian society but to also be educated about culture itself both in social and clinical fields.

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## **DECERATIONS**

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## **Declaration of Interests Statement**

There are no conflicts of interest declared by the researchers.

## **Additional Information**

There is no additional information available for this paper.

## **Data Availability Statement:**

Because of confidentiality and ethical constraints, data is only available on demand. The data that backs up the findings of this study is available upon request from the corresponding author. Because of confidentiality and ethical concerns, the data is not publicly available.

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