

COMPARING DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENT SIBLINGS WITH REGARD TO SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RESOURCES

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Comparison between delinquents and non-delinquent siblings was made using a subsample of 16 male subjects having non-delinquent male siblings close in age. It was part of a bigger study carried out to ascertain whether social and personal resources are related to deviant behaviour of adolescents.

The social resources investigated are those available to them in their homes, peer-group and school, and are measured in terms of parental support, peer-group support and school experiences. The personal resources studied are concepts of self, coping behaviour and moral development. The subjects are all the 63 male delinquent subjects in an Approved School.

The survey method was used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to all the delinquent subjects. Among the delinquent subjects, 63.6 percent were referred for property crimes, 23.7 percent for drug charges, only 9 percent for violent crimes and 3.6 percent for status offences. The same questionnaire was sent to their siblings for comparison.

Only 10 of them responded over a period of one month. Results show that they are significantly different only with respect to their peer-groups, school experiences and moral development. No significant differences were found in their parental support, concepts of self and coping behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

According to Kornhauser (1978), all the delinquency theories originated from two main delinquency models that are the Strain Model and the Control Model. The Strain Theory suggests that felt strain resulting from frustrated needs or wants, acts as motivation for deviant behaviour. According to the Social Control Theory, social resources resulting from positive bonding with significant others such as parents, conventional peer-groups and teachers in school, act as restraints on deviant behaviour. This study hypothesizes that behavioural outcomes is not the direct result of the strain felt. Instead, behavioural outcomes are moderated by the presence of personal and social resources. While personal resources come from within an individual and help them abstain from deviant behaviour, social resources are the support they receive from the family, school teachers and peers that restrain and inhibit them from deviant behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

Non-delinquent siblings of the same gender and close in age to the delinquent subjects were selected for comparison. A similar comparison made by Healy and Bronner in 1969 used siblings close in age to the delinquent subjects as controls was cited in Toch (1987). Their subjects comprised 105 delinquents. This procedure is based on the premise that both the delinquent subject and his sibling have more similarities than any other form of control since they are from the same family and living in the same neighbourhood. This comparison of delinquents with their non-delinquent siblings can reveal the differences between them and provide information on what propels one to delinquency and what does not.

Self-reported measures were used instead of formal reports because they are deemed more reliable and comprehensive. A total of 49 items were constructed to measure both the social and personal resources. The questionnaire resulted is shown in Appendix A. The social resources measured are Perceived Parental Support, Peer-group Support and School Experiences, while the personal resources investigated are Concepts of Self, Coping Behaviours and Moral Development. Aspects of Parental Support examined are emotional support, information

support, social companionship and financial support. Two items were constructed for each aspect of Parental Support, thus this scale has a total of eight items. Each item requires two responses; one makes reference to the mother and another to the father. Five items were constructed to ascertain the type of Peer-group Support the delinquent subjects have been receiving prior to their admission into the Approved School. Each item requires the respondents to respond to a 5-point Likert scale. A total of seven items are used to measure the three aspects of School Experiences namely academic achievement, contributions to school, school enjoyment and truancy.

Concepts of Self refer to how they view themselves. Aspects include scholastic competence, physical appearance and peer acceptance. Five items were constructed and responses are given in the form of a 5-point scale. An inventory of 12 coping behaviours is drawn up. Subjects were required to indicate how often they employ each of the behaviour when faced with a problem. The responses are again given in the form of a 5-point scale. In this study, the Heinz Dilemma used to measure Moral Development was presented in the written form unlike the interview in Kohlberg's, Duska and Whelan (1977). Sets of five responses were provided, each response representing a level of moral reasoning.

At the approved school, the Principal introduced the researcher to all the 63 East Coast students in the school selected for the bigger study. The main purpose of the visit and the objectives of the study were clearly explained to them. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The questionnaire was distributed to the students. To ensure that their reading level did not impede the students' ability to complete the questionnaire reliably, the instructions as well as the items and their responses were read out slowly and clearly for all of them. They were required to indicate their choice of responses in the spaces provided. Four of their teachers assisted by making sure that the students had understood the items, explaining the items when requested and making sure that they checked at the correct places. The whole session lasted more than an hour.

The subjects were asked to list their siblings according to age and to indicate their gender. Sixteen of them have non-delinquent siblings of the same sex and close in age. They form the subsample for this comparative study. The same questionnaire was sent to the 16 non-

delinquent siblings by post. A cover letter was enclosed to explain the purpose of the study and to thank them in advance for their kind cooperation. Self-addressed envelopes with stamps affixed were enclosed to help increase the return rate. Ten of them replied over a period of one month.

DATA ANALYSIS

Only 10 pairs of delinquent and non-delinquent siblings were available for comparison. Non-parametric procedure used with paired samples, the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks test was used to determine differences between the ten pairs of siblings. Table 1 shows that seven correlates of deviant behaviour are significantly different between delinquent subjects and their non-delinquent siblings at the 0.05 level. These seven correlates are peer-group variables: Number of Delinquent Peers, Time Spent with Friends after School Hours, and Follow Friends with Plans for Deviant Activities, school experiences, Gave Teachers Problems, Played Truant and moral development items, Evaluate Heinz's decision to Steal, and Give Situation when Stealing is Acceptable.

Delinquent subjects scored higher on peer-group variables Number of Delinquent Peers, Time Spent with Friends after School Hours and Follow Friends with Plans for Deviant Activities. Delinquent subjects also scored higher for school experiences, Gave Teachers Problems and Played Truant. Delinquent subjects however, reasoned at lower stages of moral development for two of the three items measuring moral reasoning; Evaluates Heinz's decision to Steal and Give Situation when Stealing is Acceptable.

Comparing Delinquents and Non-Delinquent Siblings

**Table 1: Significant Differences in Social and Personal Resources
Between Delinquent Subjects and Non-delinquent Siblings**

Correlates of Deviant Behaviour	Siblings Less than Delinquents (Mean Rank)	Siblings Greater than Delinquents (Mean Rank)	Siblings Equal to Delinquents	Missing	z	p
Peer-group Variables						
Number of Delinquent Peers	6 (3.50)	0 (0.00)	4	-	-2.02	0.03*
Time Spent With Friends after School Hours	6 (5.33)	2 (2.00)	2	-	-1.96	0.05*
Follow Friends with Plans for Deviant Activities	7 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	2	1	-2.36	0.02*
School Experiences						
Gave Teachers Problems	8 (5.81)	2 (4.25)	0	-	-1.94	0.05*
Played Truant	8 (6.13)	2 (3.00)	0	-	-2.19	0.03*
Moral Development						
Evaluate Heinz's decision to Steal	1 (2.50)	6 (4.25)	3	-	-1.94	0.05*
Give Situation when stealing is acceptable	0 (0.00)	6 (3.50)	4	-	2.20	0.03*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

These two groups of subjects were expected to have more similarities between them than any other form of controls. However, in spite of their close genetic makeup and being brought up in the same household and neighbourhood, several differences between them were found to be significant at the level of 0.05. The differences were with respect to their peer-groups, school experiences and moral development.

Although they were siblings, they had different peer-groups. Delinquent subjects had a significantly greater number of delinquent peers. These findings were in accordance to the Differential Association Theory by Sutherland. According to this theory, delinquency is learnt in group-interactions. Delinquent behaviours, that were encouraged and rewarded by the group, were reinforced.

Delinquent subjects spent more time together with peers after school hours compared to their non-delinquent siblings. Frequency of contact with peers is thus an important factor in delinquency because peer influence increases with the time together. Delinquent subjects were also significantly more willing to follow friends with plans for deviant activities. This results either indicated their greater tolerance for delinquency or that they had a greater need for group acceptance and thus more vulnerable to peer-pressure.

In school, delinquent subjects gave their teachers more problems and played truant more often than their non-delinquent siblings. Delinquent subjects thus displayed more problem behaviours in class.

Non-delinquent siblings scored higher than the delinquent subjects on two of the three items measuring moral reasoning. They were *Evaluate Heinz's decision to Steal* and *Give Situation When Stealing is Acceptable*. Non-delinquent siblings had reasoned at higher stages of moral development and that could have helped them restrain from deviant behaviour.

Apart from those stated above, delinquent subjects were not significantly different from their non-delinquent siblings in all the other aspects. Delinquent subjects did not differ significantly from their non-delinquent siblings in perceived parental support. Apparently their parents were not biased nor showed favouritism towards their children. There were no significant differences in peer-group variables such as *Importance of Getting Good Grades in School* and *Delinquency is Normal Among Adolescents* either. The delinquent subjects and their non-delinquent siblings did not differ in the importance placed on good grades and their belief with respect to delinquency.

There were no significant differences in their school experiences such as *Academic Achievement*, *Sports Involvement*, *Responsible Posts Held*,

and *Co-Curricular Activities*. Both the delinquent subjects and their non-delinquent siblings had not experienced a meaningful schooling process because they lacked opportunities to participate actively nor taste success in school.

Delinquent subjects and their non-delinquent siblings did not differ significantly in their concepts of self and coping behaviours. The sample of delinquent subjects and their non-delinquent siblings compared was too small to obtain conclusive findings. A bigger sample should be used in further studies for such comparisons. Studies on twins would be even more conclusive.

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Questionnaire

This study is a project carried out in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This questionnaire intends to find out the the social and personal resources of the students of Sekolah Tunas Bakti Jerantut (L), Pahang.

You are requested to read the questions carefully. Then, answer them truthfully.

Your answers are strictly confidential and solely for the PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY.

For your kind co-operation to help make this study a success.

I Thank You

Title

**CORRELATES OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR:
AN ETIOLOGICAL STUDY**

by

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON SOCIAL RESOURCES

Read the questions carefully and answer them truthfully. Your answers are strictly confidential and are solely for the purpose of this research.

I. PERCEIVED PARENTAL SUPPORT

(a) Emotional support

Q1. Do your parents seem to understand you?

	mother	father
always		
usually		
sometimes		
seldom		
never		

Q2. Have you ever felt unwanted by your parents?

	mother	father
always		
usually		
sometimes		
seldom		
never		

(b) Information support

Q3. Do you talk to your parents about what bothers you?

	mother	father
always		
usually		
sometimes		
seldom		
never		

Q4. Can your parents help you with your schoolwork?

	mother	father
always		
usually		
sometimes		
seldom		
never		

(c) Social support

Q5. Do you often like to be together with your parents?

	mother	father
always		
usually		
sometimes		
seldom		
never		

Q6. Do your parents enquire about your daily activities?

	mother	father
always		
usually		
sometimes		
seldom		
never		

(d) Socioeconomic status-economic support

Q7. What are your parents' occupations?

Mother :

Father :

Comparing Delinquents and Non-Delinquent Siblings

Q8. What are your parents' educational levels?

Educational level	mother	father
degree		
diploma		
STPM/certificate		
SPM		
PMR		
Primary School		
No Formal Education		

II. PEER-GROUP SUPPORT

Q1. How important are getting good grades in school to your friends?

Value system of peer group, priority given to academic achievement

very important	
important	
quite important	
not important	
not at all important	

Q2. How many of your friends have been in trouble with the law?

Number of delinquent peer

none	
1 to 2 persons	
3 to 4 persons	
5 to 6 persons	
more than 6 persons	

Q3. How much time in a day do you spend with your friends after school?

Commitment to peer group

1-2 hours	
2-3 hours	
3-4 hours	
4-5 hours	
more than 5 hours	

Q4. If you know your friends are heading towards trouble, would you still follow?

Tolerance for delinquency

never	
seldom	
sometimes	
usually	
always	

Q5. Do you think delinquency is normal among adolescents?

Attitude to delinquency

strongly disagree	
disagree	
quite agree	
agree	
strongly agree	

III. SCHOOL SUCCESS

(a) Academic Achievement

Q1. Your average marks during school assessments often falls within the range of:

Marks	
80-100	
65-80	
50-65	
30-50	
0-30	

(b) Positive Contribution to School

Q2. List out the games you played while in school and indicate the level you represented.

Sports Excellence	
Games	Represented

Q3. Indicate the responsible positions held while in school.

Responsible Positions Held	
School prefect	
President of clubs/societies	
Vice-president of clubs/societies	
Secretary of clubs/societies	
Treasurer of clubs/societies	
Class monitors	
Others	
None	

Q4. List down other extra-curricular activities that you were involved at while in school.

(c) General School Enjoyment

Q5. To what extent do you like school?

very much	
a lot	
a little	
not much	
I detest	

Q6. Do you often give the teachers a lot of trouble?

never	
seldom	
sometimes	
usually	
always	

Q7. Do you often skip school without legitimate excuse?

never	
seldom	
sometimes	
usually	
always	

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PERSONAL RESOURCES

Read the following questions carefully and answer them truthfully. Your answers are strictly confidential and solely for the purpose of this research.

I. CONCEPTS OF SELF

(a) Scholastic competence

Q1. Compare your intelligence to others your age?

much more than them	
more than them	
the same	
less than them	
far less than them	

(b) Physical appearance

Q2. How satisfied are you with your looks?

very satisfied	
satisfied	
quite satisfied	
dissatisfied	
very dissatisfied	

(c) Social acceptance

Q3. Do others listen to you when you talk?

always	
usually	
sometimes	
seldom	
never	

(d) Aspirations

Q4. What were your ambitions while in school?

(e) Expectation of attaining aspirations

Q5. What will you become in ten years time?

II. COPING BEHAVIOURS

Please indicate how often do you use these behaviours when faced with problems or felt tense?

Coping Behaviours	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
	1	2	3	4	5
Get angry and yell at people					
Organize my life and what I have to do					
Talk to friends about how I feel					
Joke and try to be funny					
Sleep a lot					
Complain to friends and family					
Try to make my own decision					
Talk to parents about it					
Tell myself that the problem is not important					
Do strenuous physical activity					
Cry alone					
Pray to God					

III. MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Below is a hypothetical moral dilemma.

Heinz Dilemma:

Heinz's wife is dying of cancer. Heinz is unable to raise funds to buy a life-saving drug that is sold at an exorbitant price by a druggist. In desperation, he steals it.

Q1. What do you think of Heinz's act of stealing?

He should not steal because the police might catch him	
He should not steal because his action will bring more problems to himself	
He was right to steal so that he would not lose his wife	
He should not steal because it was against the law	
He was right to steal because he saved a human life	

Q2. Why is the act of stealing often considered wrong?

The offender can be fined	
It can bring shame to the family	
Many people disliked it	
It disrupts the public peace	
It interferes with the rights of others	

Q3. When is the act of stealing acceptable?

When there is no way of detecting it	
When it is not likely to be punished	
When we are just following the crowd	
During riots or in times of war	
When it involves life and death	

Q4. What will you do if you were in Heinz's position?

I would steal the drug	
I would not steal the drug	