

# The relationship of family functionality and parent behavior on adolescent delinquent behavior

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## ABSTRACT

Adolescent social problems involving juvenile delinquents concentrate around factor such as family functionality and parental behavior. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of family functionality and parent behavior on adolescent delinquent behavior. This study included 196 female delinquent adolescent inmates from four Malaysian correctional and rehabilitation centers in Malaysia. Data was collected using a questionnaire set that included background characteristics, The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES) IV, The parental behavior inventory (PBI), and Inventory Delinquency Scale. The descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to analyses the data. The result showed that family functionality has a significant association with delinquent behavior ( $r = -.255$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Parental behavior also has a significant association with juvenile delinquent behavior ( $r = .411$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are the generation who will inherit our country in the future. Adolescents in general, are the lining that will replace the current leaders. Various hopes are placed in them so that they will be able to be a useful person and contribute to the well-being of the country. Hence, concerns relating to adolescent issues are a source of concern and priority. Lately, adolescent involvement in delinquent behavior has become increasingly concerning. Delinquency has increased exponentially around the world, causing concern and necessitating immediate action [1]. This pathetic situation affects not only developed countries but also developing countries, though the circumstance and context differ in terms of culture, society, and class [2]. If these issues are not addressed, the adolescent will continue to become involved in delinquent will grow into more serious criminals.

Adolescent who have violate the law and social norms can be defines as delinquent [3]. Fighting, stealing, cheating, and causing property damage to others are examples of adolescent delinquency that violates behavioral norms and societal regulations [4]. According to Choon *et al.* delinquent behavior can range from abusive behaviors such as breaking school rules, skipping classes, truancy, smoking and vandalism to further serious crimes such as theft, robbery, drug abuse, rape and weapon possession [5]. Furthermore, teenage girls are frequently involved in risky behavior such as sexual intercourse, pregnancy out of wedlock to the point of abortion as a result of a secret and risky birth. When these delinquent behaviors are committed by those who are still in school or minors, they are known as Juvenile delinquent as described by Siegel *et al.* [6]. Meanwhile, the Malaysian Child Act 2001 defines a juvenile as someone under the age of 18 but older than the age of ten [7].

According to Department of Social Welfare Malaysia, the number of juvenile cases increased from 4,469 cases in 2015 to 4,886 in 2016 and then to 5,443 cases in 2017. However, the statistics show there is a slight decrease of juvenile cases in 2018 which is decrease to 5,294 cases. The situation become even more concerning when it is discovered that the number of adolescent girls involved in delinquent behavior is high and not consistent. A total of 301 cases involved female adolescent were reported in 2015 and decrease to 279 case in 2016. However, in 2017 cases involved female adolescent increase to 297 cases and then there is a slight decrease to 290 cases in 2018. If the issue of uncontrolled female adolescents is not addressed properly, it poses a significant threat to the country. This is because delinquency not only harms adolescent futures, but it can also disrupt the country's well-being. Besides, the involvement of adolescent in delinquent has clearly shown that they have been influenced with unhealthy behaviors that could cause negative effects psychologically [8].

Studies on the problems and causes of adolescent involvement in delinquent issues have been conducted both locally and internationally. Previous research on the problems of adolescent social behavior has discovered that family factor is one of the contributing factors to this problem [9]–[11]. This is because the closet and most significant environment for adolescent is their family. According to Hoffman [12], the family has shaped a person's personality since childhood and continues to have a huge influence on a person's behavior, attitudes, and thoughts in adulthood. Family factors such as stability, cohesiveness, and adaptability all play an important role in influencing juvenile delinquency [9]. Furthermore, a lack of parental supervision, family disruption, and a lack of information about the importance of family cohesion in raising children has resulted in many delinquents [13].

According to Cuzzocrea *et al.* family functionality is an important feature of a family [14]. Family functionality refers to the quality of interaction in the family and it includes resilience, unity, adaptation and communication [15]. Any type of family dysfunction can destabilize a child's emotional, physical, social, and psychological well-being [16]. Failure in any element of family functionality can lead to poor family support and control and be among the factors causing delinquency behavior. Because family negativity affects and is influenced by other family subsystems, it's critical to look for patterns of connected change between negativity in all these family interactions and adolescent delinquent behavior [17].

Furthermore, parental behavior also plays a role in adolescent delinquent behavior. Humans, including children, learn by mimicking what they see around them, according to Bandura's Social Learning Theory [18]. Bandura's emphasized that humans learn by observing the behavior of others [19]. In this sense, children will imitate delinquent behaviors such as drug abuse and violence if they see their parents engaging in such behavior without realizing the behavior imitated is improper [20]. This shows that mothers and fathers play critical roles in family harmony, and it is the responsibility of parents to set a good example and educate their children to be useful human beings. Even though several studies have been conducted in various parts of the world about delinquent behavior and the cause or factor of delinquency, research on Malaysian adolescents' context is still limited. There is still a lack of current work on the topic family functionality and parental behavior in Malaysia. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationships between family functionality and parental behavior on adolescent delinquent behavior.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was a quantitative study that used the survey design. The sample for this study includes 196 female delinquents ranging in age from 10 to 18 years old from four Malaysian Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre. They were selected using purposive sampling. Only female delinquent adolescent ages 10 to 18 years old are eligible to participate in this study.

A demographic questionnaire was used to gather information about the participant background, which include question such as age, race, parental marital status and parent educational background. Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales Fourth Edition (FACES IV) developed by Olson, Russell and Sprenkle (1979) was used in this study. This scale has 42 items that are used to measure real family condition as well as the ideal or fictitious state of a family. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The reliability of FACES IV for the Malay version was  $\alpha=.91$ . The parental behaviour inventory (PBI) by Schaefer (1968) which contained 20 items was used to identify the characteristics of parental behaviour that become daily practice. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The PBI for the Malay version was  $\alpha=.88$ . Meanwhile, Inventory Delinquency Scale Junger (1997) was used to measure risky behaviours which consisted of 40 items. Junger's Delinquency Scale was scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). A higher score indicated a higher frequency in committing behavioural misconduct and vice versa. The delinquency scale for the Malay version was  $\alpha=.93$ .

Before the data collection process begin, an application to conduct research at correctional and rehabilitation centers was submitted to Malaysia Social Welfare Department. Permissions from the respective correctional and rehabilitation centers were obtained prior to the research. After obtaining permission, the researcher arranges a date and time to collect data at selected correctional and rehabilitation centers. Then, questionnaires were distributed to the adolescent involved in this study. Instruction on how to complete the questionnaire as well as information on the study confidentiality were explained to the adolescent. After completing the questionnaire, the questionnaires were promptly collected. The data obtained from the participant were then analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science 20.0 software. Pearson correlation is used to test the correlations between family functioning, parental behavior and adolescent delinquency behavior.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents such as, age, race, parental marital status, parent education level was included in this study and can be seen in Table 1. Frequency distribution and percentage distributions were used to describe responses on categorical demographic variables. The participant gender in this study is all female (100%). In terms of age, most of the respondents were in the age 13–15 years (50%). In terms of race, majority of the respondents are Malays 169 (87.1%). As for the parental marital status, the majority of participant parental marital status are still intact which is 96 (49.5%) and based on the level of education of the respondent's parents. The highest level of parental education in this study is at the level of The Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) which is 91 people (46.9%) for mothers and 87 people (44.8%) for fathers.

Table 1. Demography

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	<12	9	4.6
	13-15	97	50
	16-18	88	45.4
Race	Malay	169	87.1
	Chinese	8	4.1
	India	11	5.7
	Other	6	3.1
Parent marital status	Intact	96	49.5
	Divorce	92	47.4
	Other	6	3.1
Parent education level (father)	Degree	9	4.6
	Diploma	15	7.7
	Malaysian higher school certificate (STPM)	26	13.4
	The Malaysian certificate of education (SPM)	87	44.8
	Lower secondary assessment (PMR)	18	9.3
	Primary school	20	10.3
	Not go to school	7	3.6
	Others	12	6.2
	Degree	10	5.2
Parent education level (mother)	Diploma	19	9.8
	STPM	19	9.8
	SPM	91	46.9
	PMR	19	9.8
	Primary school	18	9.3
	Not go to school	8	4.1
	Others	10	5.2

Table 2 presents the relationship between family functionality and adolescent delinquent behavior. The relationship between family functionality and adolescent delinquency behavior is equal to -0.255. Significant values show that  $p=0.000$  is smaller than 0.001 so this study hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is a significant negative relationship between family functionality and delinquent adolescent behavior. This negative correlation implies an inverse between family functioning and adolescent delinquent behavior. This suggests that the better the family functionality, the lower the adolescent delinquent behavior. In summary, these finding imply that the family functionality factor has been found as having a weak correlation with adolescent delinquent behavior.

Table 3 present the relationship between parental behavior and adolescent delinquent behavior. Result show that there is a significant relationship between parental behavior and delinquent adolescent behavior. The relationship between parental behavior and adolescent delinquent behavior is equal to 0.411. This shows a significant relationship. Significant values show that  $p=0.000$  is smaller than 0.001 so this hypothesis is

accepted. As a result, it is concluded that there is a moderate significant relationship between parental behavior and delinquent adolescent behavior.

Table 2. Relationship between family functionality and adolescent delinquent behavior

Variable	Correlation (r)	p
Family functionality	-0.255**	0.00
Delinquent behavior		

\*\*p<0.001

Table 3. Relationship between parental behavior and adolescent delinquent behavior

Variable	Correlation (r)	p
Parental behavior	0.411**	0.00
Delinquent behavior		

\*\*p<0.001

Based on the result from Table 2, family functioning has a negative relationship with adolescents' delinquency behavior. This showed that adolescent who have low family functioning are expected to be involved in delinquent behavior. These finding were consistent with previous study which showed relationships between family functionality and delinquent behavior [11], [16], [21], [22]. The finding from Gao *et al.* [23] indicate family functioning had a moderate negative association with delinquency ( $r=-.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ). These findings are also in line with the studies of Córdova *et al* [24]. He initiates that the inconsistency between parent and adolescent perceived family functioning predicts an increase in HIV risk behaviour among adolescent. A study conducted by Haines *et al.* [22] which focusing on family functioning and behavior of individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 indicates that family functionality influences behavior. Dishion *et al.* [25] revealed that adolescent who has fragile family bonds such as high levels of family conflict, poor family affiliations are more expected to involve in risky behaviours with their peers. In addition, poor family functioning can result in adolescent disengagement with family members and an increased chance of adolescents engaging in risky behaviors [26]. Rwengo study [16] which proved that family dysfunctionality was a primary cause of delinquency since it can disrupt children's emotional and psychological. Kim and Kim [21] in a study conducted in Korea found that delinquent adolescents had more dysfunctional parental partner dynamics, poor family functioning, and greater levels of family violence than non-delinquent adolescents. Adolescents are more likely to involve in delinquent behaviors when their family does not function well. These studies show that, it is true that a well-functioning family would be able to provide a conducive atmosphere for adolescent and reduces the chances of the adolescent to be involved in delinquent behaviors.

Table 3 show that there is a significant relationship between parental behavior and delinquent adolescent behavior. This suggest that adolescent delinquent behaviors are often influenced by behavior of their parents. Previous studies also showed relationship between parental behavior and delinquent behavior [2], [27]. Ahmad *et al.* [27] in his study, discovered that parents' verbal, physical and anti-social behavior have significant medium relationship on delinquent behavior. Baharom [28] has conducted a study to identify the relationship between family environment and adolescent's behavior among adolescent students. The finding of the study indicates that there is a significant relationship between parent's behavior and adolescent's delinquency behavior. This suggest that parents who fail to model excellent behavior in front of their children contribute significantly to their children's behavior problem. Parent who can play a constructive role not only can establish a functioning family, but they also can nurture self-esteem and positive self-concept in their children [29]. The family, particularly parents, is a vital institution that provides positive atmosphere in which adolescents can growth in healthy environment. Every parent should be aware of their children's requirements, be accountable for them, educate them appropriately and show them the essence of good people for their children to be exceptional and have a noble character to lead their future [30].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that family functioning and parental behavior has a significant relationship with juvenile delinquency. This showed that, family particularly parents, is a vital institution that must provide positive environment toward their children. Functional family dynamics offer a safe atmosphere for adolescent when their role in life is changes. Dysfunctional family dynamics frequently result in negative repercussions such as delinquency. It is highly anticipated that this study would provide understanding regarding the factor adolescent involved in delinquency especially family functioning and parental behavior. It is hoped that the finding of this study would assist counselors or social worker in providing better service to their clients.

Next, future studies are recommended to look at the causal variables from demographic aspects such as gender, parent education and income factors on delinquent behavior. In addition, future researchers are encouraged to study several other relevant constructs such as parental religious adherence, mental health and social support with delinquent behavior. Besides, future research should add qualitative method. This addition will make the finding of the study more precise and clearer, at the same time can find out the understanding of delinquent behavior. This study also only involves delinquent adolescent female, therefore for further study, the researcher is proposed to include male's delinquent adolescent. The findings have several implications. Firstly, there is a need to consider interventions that include family therapy in the treatment of delinquent adolescent. Following that, counsellors or social worker who works with adolescents should consider investigating family functioning and parental behavior and how they contribute to the problem of delinquency.





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