

The Impact of Parental Warmth and Exposure to Violence on Crimes Committed Among Juvenile Offenders

Sandra Ramirez

Department of Social Work

ABSTRACT

Juvenile offenders who experienced violence and harsh parenting are more likely to engage in criminal activity. These factors have led many adolescents to commit more types of crimes and violent crimes than the general adolescent population. This secondary data analysis examined baseline data from the Pathways to Desistance study data set which was conducted between 2000 to 2010. The current study included participants (N=1,354) who were serious juvenile offenders detained in residential facilities in two states. Results of the Spearman *rho* analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between parental warmth and exposure to violence on types of crimes and aggressive crimes committed. It is imperative for development of evidence-based prevention and interventions programs in school and in community settings.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

- Adolescents who are abused as children are nine times more likely to become involved in criminal activity
- Parental marital relationships and harsh parenting are more likely to cause children and adolescents to engage in criminal activity

Purpose of Research

- The aim of the current study was to examine the effects of parental warmth and exposure to violence on types of crimes as well as aggressive crimes committed among juvenile offenders

Research Questions

- 1) What are the effects of lack of parental warmth on the types of crimes committed by juvenile offenders?
- 2) What are the effects of exposure to violence on types of crimes committed by juvenile offenders?

Hypotheses

- Juvenile offenders who have witnessed or are victims of violence will engage in more diverse types of crimes as well as aggressive crimes
- Juvenile offenders who experienced low parental warmth will engage in more diverse types of crimes as well as aggressive crimes

LITERATURE REVIEW

Juvenile Delinquency and Parental Warmth and Exposure to Violence

- Asghar and Iqbal (2016) suggest that children and youth who experience neglect and derogative behavior from their parents are prone to commit crimes
- Findings suggest that violence exposure is associated with early history of behavioral problems, serious criminal behavior, and or poor anger control

Ecological Transactional Model/Theory

- Ecological transactional model seeks to explain the relationship between individual, family and community level factors that either protect youth from negative outcomes or negatively impact youth directly who live in communities with violence
- Emphasize the importance of examining contextual factors when analyzing the impact of violence exposure among adolescents

GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

- Most studies conducted only examined male delinquents and female juvenile delinquents were not examined
- There is lack of research conducted using all four variables in the current study
- Theory alone does not provide an adequate explanation of the intersection of juvenile offenses, types of crimes, and severity of crimes

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- This study utilized secondary analysis of the data collected from the Pathways to Desistance study data set which was conducted between 2000 to 2010
- Data was gathered based on individual characteristics of youth offenders, consisting of demographics, history of offense, psychological functioning, antisocial behavior, family background, peer relationships, and community environment
- The original study was conducted by investigators at the University of Pittsburgh who conducted surveys via computer-assisted interviews, for participants who were followed for seven years past their enrollment

Sample and Sampling Method

- Study sample consisted of serious juvenile offenders who are between 14 to 18 years old and who are mainly males
- A purposive sampling process was utilized to obtain a sample of 1,354 juvenile offenders
- The current study utilizes total population sampling which means that all of participants in the original sample will be used for this current study

Measures

- The first independent variable was parental warmth. There were 21 questions examining mother's parental warmth and 21 questions examining father's parental warmth
- The second independent variable was exposure to violence. There were six questions evaluating victims scores and seven questions evaluating witness scores
- The first dependent variable was types of crimes. There were 24 questions evaluating the different types of crimes committed by juvenile offenders
- The second dependent variable was aggressive crimes. There were 24 questions evaluating the severity of crimes committed by juvenile offenders such as destroyed/damaged property, set fire, forced someone to have sex, killed someone, shot someone bullet hit, shot someone no bullet hit, took by force with a weapon, took by force without a weapon, beat up someone and caused injury, involved in fights, and beat up someone as part of gang

RESULTS

Spearman *rho* Test

- A Spearman rho test was calculated to examine the impact of mother's and father's parental relationship on types of offenses and aggressive crimes committed
- A Spearman rho test was also calculated to examine the impact of being victims of violence and witnessing violence on types of crimes and aggressive crimes committed
- A significant association was found for mother's parental relationship $r_s(1301) = -.116, p < .01$ on types of crimes committed and aggressive crimes committed $r_s(1301) = -.110, p < .01$, while it suggested a weak relationship
- A significant association was found for father's parental relationship $r_s(834) = -.149, p < .01$ on types of crimes and aggressive crimes committed $r_s(834) = -.111, p < .01$, while it suggested a weak relationship
- A significant association was found for being victims of violence and types of crimes committed $r_s(1346) = .579, p < .01$ and aggressive crimes $r_s(1346) = .553, p < .01$, while it suggested a moderate relationship
- A significant association was found for witnessing violence on types of crimes $r_s(1346) = .529, p < .01$ and aggressive crimes committed $r_s(1346) = .529, p < .01$, while it suggested a moderate relationship
- Figure 1 and 2 summarize some of these findings for parental warmth and total offending

Table 3

Correlation Analysis of Parental Warmth, Exposure to Violence and Types of Offenses and Aggressive Crimes

Independent and Dependent Variables	r_s	df	P
Parental Warmth – Mother and Total Offending	-.116	1301	<.001
Parental Warmth – Father and Total Offending	-.149	834	<.001
Parental Warmth – Mother and Aggressive Offending	-.110	1301	<.001
Parental Warmth – Father and Aggressive Offending	-.111	834	<.001
Victim of Violence and Total Offending	.579	1346	<.001
Victim of Violence and Aggressive Offending	.553	1346	<.001
Witnessed Violence and Total Offending	.529	1346	<.001
Witnessed Violence and Aggressive Offending	.520	1346	<.001

Table 1		
Sample Characteristics (N=1,354)		
Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	1170	86.4
Female	184	13.6
Age in years	M=16.04	SD=1.14
Racial Origin		
White	274	20.2
African American	561	41.4
Hispanic	454	33.5
Other	65	4.8
Biological Father in House		
Absent	1039	76.7
Present	315	23.3
Biological Mother in House		
Absent	358	26.4
Present	996	73.6
Enrolled in School (currently before coming to detention)		
No	382	28.2
Yes	972	71.8
Family Structure		
Two bio parents	199	14.7
Single bio mom, never married	288	21.3
Single bio mom, divorced or separated	218	16.1
Single bio mom, widowed	22	1.6
Bio mom and stepdad	238	17.6
Single bio dad	74	5.5
Other adult relative	164	12.1
Bio dad and stepmom	42	3.1
Two adoptive parents	10	.7
No adult in the home	64	4.7
Other	4	.3
Single bio mom, married, bio dad not present	23	1.7
Single bio mom, marital status unknown	8	.6

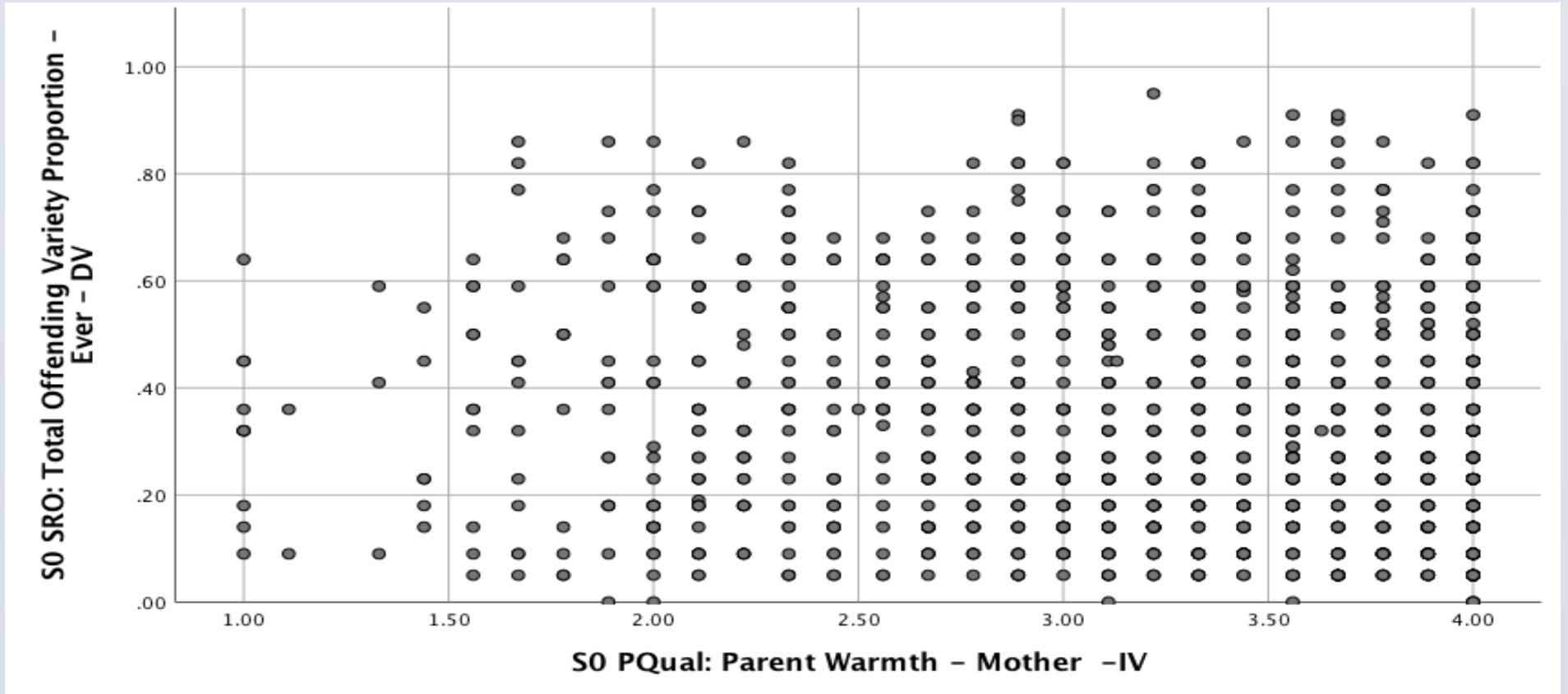


Figure 1. Scatterplot showing relationship between mother's warmth and total offending

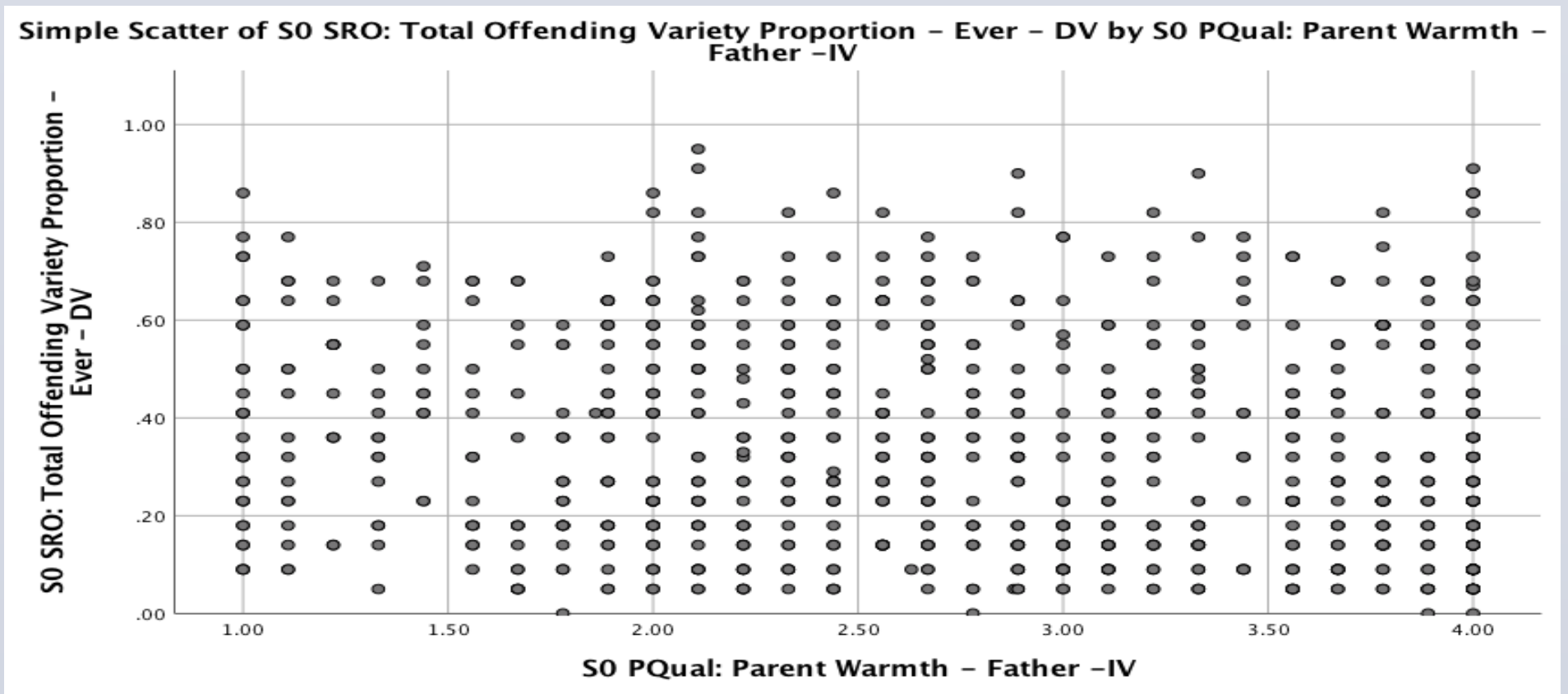


Figure 2. Scatterplot showing relationship between father's warmth and total offending

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The current study results are consistent with findings of previous research and provides evidence that there is an association between parental warmth and exposure to violence on the types of crimes and aggressive crimes committed by juvenile offenders. There were two major findings. First, the lack of parental warmth with juvenile offenders who engaged in violent crimes is similar to findings in prior research (Asghar & Iqbal, 2016; Gold et al., 2011; Meldrum, Connolly, Flexon, & Guerette, 2016). The results indicate that parents who are abusive and lack self-control are more likely to abuse their children which has been found to correlate with delinquency in children. Research findings also indicate that not all youth who lack parental warmth will engage in criminal activity, yet most juvenile offenders do commit crimes (Baskin-Sommers and Baskin (2016). Consistent with prior findings, juvenile offenders who experienced violence within their family or in their community were found to engage in criminal activity. (Buka et al. 2001; Nofziger & Kurtz, 2005; Schraft et al., 2013; Nofziger & Kurtz, 2005). The current study found that more varied and aggressive crimes are committed when lack of parental warmth and exposure to violence were present.

Implications for Research and Practice

- The current research findings are important to social work practice as it highlights the need to understand the social and psychological pathways that lead adolescents to engage in criminal activity (Maschi & Bradley, 2008)
- Findings of the current study depict target areas of intervention that may contribute to the social and psychological wellbeing of juvenile offenders
- Studies have conducted research on the effects of parental and family dynamics in relation to juvenile delinquency and have suggested for future research to collect data in a single study on parental self-control, characteristics of the family environment, juvenile delinquency, and variables that might pacify the effects of the family environment on delinquency

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths:

- Diverse demographic information
- Large sample size

Limitations:

- Entire population of juvenile offenders with certain characteristics contributes to selection bias
- Cross sectional study analyzing data from a population with certain characteristics at a specific point in time
- Face-to-face interviews contributes to response bias among participants

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