

ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency has been a nationwide phenomenon that affects the child in every aspect of life. Delinquency can affect a child's developmental milestones, life trajectory, academic achievement, peer influences, and traumatic experiences. A child that is participating in delinquent acts at younger ages are more likely to drop out of school and engage in risk behaviors such as getting into fights, portraying antisocial behavior in school, witnessing violence, and lack a school connection. A common theme is that there is no parental supervision and no positive adult present in the child's life. Further research indicates that schools can serve as a protective factor for youth who do not have support systems at home or positive influences. Therefore, finding a connection to the school and school community is important to act as a protective factor. The present study aimed to examine the effects of school connection on delinquent behaviors of adolescents. The secondary data analysis examined from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescents to Adult Health (NSAAH), which occurred from 1988 to 2008. This study will use the first wave sample which is comprised of 6,504 adolescents. This study will include 2,253 males and 2,629 females from the data that was retrieved from the original data set using questionnaires and self-surveys of the participants. The chi-square test was used in this study and revealed that there is a slight significance between school connection and getting along with teachers and peers. These findings contribute to the research that school connection can be a protective factor to those exhibiting delinquent behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

As of 2019, there are over 300 million youth incarcerated in the United States. It is important as social workers to advocate for change and implement preventative factors in schools to decrease this phenomenon.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of school connection and juvenile delinquency.

Research Question

“What are the effects of school connection on delinquent behaviors of adolescents?”

Hypothesis

The data will show that adolescents with low school connection are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Bond Theory

Children who have positive social bonds with schools are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior compared to those who do fail to create a social bond is a contributing factor for juvenile delinquency.

School Connection and Juvenile Delinquency

Adolescents with negative perceptions of school are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. This is due because of the lack of social control and inadequate resources offered at the school, this can lead older adolescents to drop out of school because of the vulnerabilities these children are exposed to.

Parental Supervision and Juvenile Delinquency

Children who do not have strong supervision from parents are more likely to engage in deviant acts. Lack of supervision means that a child is more likely to deviate and commit delinquent acts and fall under peer pressure because of the lack of support and structure they are missing from home.

Research Design and Data Collection

- The current study uses secondary data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescents to Adult Health (NSAAH), which occurred from 1988 to 2008.
- The participants that were selected were enrolled in 7th to 12th grade in the years of 1994-1995. A cross-sectional designed is used with Wave I and a total of 6,504 respondents. The data was collected using in school surveys.

Sample and Sampling Method

- The first wave in the time of 1994-1995 and used random and stratified sampling to gather their sample.
- For the purposes of my study, I will be using the first wave sample which is comprised of 6,504 adolescents. I will be using boys and females for my study which will include 2,253 males and 2,629 females from the data that was retrieved from the original data set.

Measures

- The variables that will be examined in this study are feeling close to others in school, trouble with other students, trouble getting along with teachers, and the grade the participants were in.
- Independent Variable:** Feeling Close to Others in School (Five-point Likert scale, 1= : 5=)
- Dependent Variable:** Trouble Getting Along with Teachers (Five-point Likert scale, 1= : 5=)
- Trouble Getting Along with Other Students (Five-point Likert scale, 1= : 5=)
- Control Variables:** Grade was used to measure age of the participants as a demographic variable.

Closeness and Trouble with Teachers

- Table 3 shows the result of chi-square analysis to examine the relationship of the sense of school connection and students' troubles with their teachers.
- Students who agreed or strongly agreed that they have connection with people in school were more likely to be involved in few times of troubles with teachers (23.5%-35.2%) while those who disagreed were less proportion (7.8%).

Closeness and Trouble with Other Students

- Table 4 shows the result of chi-square analysis to examine the relationship of the sense of school connection and students' troubles with other students.
- Students who did disagreed that they have a connection with people at school were significantly more likely to have trouble getting along with other students (37.7%) every day than the students who felt they had a connection with people disagreed to getting in trouble with other students every day (13.5%).



METHODS

Descriptive Statistics: Study Variables (N = 924)

Variables	f	%
<i>Independent Variables</i>		
Feel Close to People at School		
Strongly Agree	1273	19.6
Agree	3025	46.5
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1214	18.7
Disagree	627	9.6
Strongly Disagree	227	3.5
Feels Part of School		
Strongly Agree	1049	16.1
Agree	1483	22.8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	980	15.1
Disagree	445	6.8
Strongly Disagree	336	5.2
<i>Dependent Variables</i>		
Trouble Getting Along with Teachers		
Never	2508	38.6
Just a few times	2738	42.1
About once a week	583	9.0
Almost Every Day	350	5.4
Every Day	189	2.9
Trouble with Other Students		
Never	2496	38.4
Just a few times	2856	43.9
About once a week	514	7.9
Almost Every Day	295	4.5
Every Day	207	3.2

RESULTS

Table 3

Prevalence of School Connection and Trouble Getting Along with Teachers (N=6504)

Variable	Trouble Getting Along with Teachers							
	Just a few times		About once a Week		Almost Every Day		Every day	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Connection with people in school:								
Strongly Agree	442	23.5	75	19.3	40	21.3	21	19.3
Agree	662	35.2	127	32.7	43	22.9	37	34.9
Neither Agree or Disagree	385	22.8	437	23.2	40	21.3	18	17.0
Disagree	132	7.8	200	10.6	34	18.1	18	17.0

Table 4

Prevalence of School Connection and Trouble Getting Along with Other Students (N=6504)

Variable	Trouble Getting Along with Other Students							
	Just a few times		About once a Week		Almost Every Day		Every day	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Connection with people in school:								
Strongly Agree	470	16.5	61	11.9	31	10.5	40	19.3
Agree	1434	50.2	198	38.5	99	33.6	78	37.7
Neither Agree or Disagree	619	21.7	134	26.1	65	22.0	26	12.6
Disagree	267	9.4	89	17.3	59	20.0	28	13.5

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

- The purpose of the current research was to examine the relationship between school connection and delinquent behavior.
- The findings in this study supported the hypothesis school connection contributes to juvenile delinquency.
- The findings of this study were consistent with previous studies that a child with strong bonds with school and academic achievement have more protective factors than those with weak connections and achievement.
- Having a protective factor such as feeling closeness with their school environment can be beneficial for a child, even if there are risk factors that home.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths:

- A strength of this study was how the data collection procedure was taken, the population and sample were chosen from different communities to ensure a diversified sample.
- Another strength of this study is that the male to female ratio was relatively even..

Limitations:

- A limitation was that this study focused primarily on self-reports, self-surveys, and questionnaires completed by the students which creates a limitation because the participants might not have disclosed the correct information and it may create biases in their answers.
- Another limitation was that the data set was from 1998 and there have been changes over time and it is important to view other studies that are more current for more accurate results based on the population now

Implications for Research and Practice

- Students spend more than half of their day in schools, and it is important that we focus on creating a safe space to act a protective factor.
- Previous studies have indicated that preventative measures may decrease delinquent behaviors. As social workers we should focus on preventative and holistic measures when working with students.
- In the school setting, we should be able to host groups that involve educating at risk students on healthy relationship dynamics. There have been many studies that link unhealthy relationships to poor peer relations
- Social Workers should advocate for school reform to create policies where multisystemic therapy should be provided for free to families that are struggling and their children who are at risk for developing delinquent behavior.

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