

PERCEIVED CHILDHOOD PARENTAL REJECTION AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR IN ADULTHOOD

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

To determine difference in the level of perceived childhood parental rejection in male criminals and non-criminals' of city of Karachi, Pakistan.

STUDY DESIGN

Comparative Study

PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

The study was conducted at Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, in duration of five years.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

One hundred male prisoners of Karachi central jail, 20 each from five criminal types were included in criminal group. The second non-criminal group consisted of 100 participants. To them Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran (EMBU- Short Form) Urdu Version was administered. To determine difference between two groups 't' test was applied.

RESULTS

Results revealed that criminals perceived significantly higher childhood father's rejection, mother's rejection and combined parental rejection than non-criminals. Additionally criminals perceive that they have been provided with less childhood father's, mother's and combined parental emotional warmth than non-criminals.

CONCLUSION

Childhood parental rejection has negative impact on lives of children and can contribute in the development of adult criminal behavior.

KEY WORDS

Childhood parental rejection, Criminal behavior, Adulthood.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting style has been found extremely important in the psychological developmental of children and adults. Its influence can be observable immediately in childhood and its impact can also be seen in adulthood. As cited "it has been theoretically and practically demonstrated by researchers and scholars in the field of psychology that patterns of child rearing are the main moulding agents of the entire behavior of the grown up individual".¹ Psychoanalytic theories as well as behavioral approach do give importance to the relationship between psychopathological problems and child rearing behavior adopted by parents.¹

Criminal behavior is one of the maladaptive behaviors where importance of childhood parenting cannot be denied. Various researches give importance to childhood parental rejection in later antisocial behavior for example it was found that delinquency was significantly associated with perceived parental rejection.² Parental rejection, lack of their supervision and interaction were considered as predictors of conduct problem and juvenile delinquency.³ On 300 adolescents researchers found moderate relation of parental rejection and delinquency.⁴ Poor parental relations with family members can also make adults more vulnerable to adult criminal behavior.⁵

Importance of deviant behavior having its beginning in childhood or adolescence is highly emphasized in literature. It is viewed that one of the risk factor is psychosocial that includes parental rejection, deficits, ignorance, unsound relations and mistreatment.⁶ Those who were experiencing perceived childhood parental rejection; they displayed higher aggression and resentment. Their self-worth was low and they were emotionally unstable, as well as dependent. It was believed that this attitude of children may be due to parental rejection that hampers child's attachment with the parents and pull down child's desires to agree with the morals and attitudes of parents.⁷

In Pakistan results of study conducted on criminal and non-criminal adolescents indicated that perception of mothers and fathers as rejecting, neglecting and aggressive was more present in former group.⁸ Recently it was found that parental rejection can results in conduct and delinquent behavior.⁹

Although few researches has been conducted in Pakistan on parenting style and psychopathology including misconduct and delinquency, however none has yet focused their design on childhood parental rejection of criminals in prison. Alike other countries, some people of Pakistan are also involved in various types of criminal acts; therefore our present research is to focused on criminals who were in prison by law. The current work is an original and unique research as its criminals includes equal numbers of five types of criminals involved in First –degree murder, robbery, rape, drug trafficking and kidnapping. The objective of the present study is to investigate difference in perceived childhood parental rejection between male criminals and non-criminals' of city of Karachi, Pakistan. The study hypothesized that perceived childhood father's and mother's rejection would be more in criminals as compared with non-criminals.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Participants

First group consisted of 100 male prisoners of central jail Karachi, from five criminal types; 20 from each type, who were sentence in prison by law for committing crime involving first –degree murder, robbery, rape, drug trafficking and kidnapping. The second group that is, non-criminal also consist of 100 male participants from different localities of city of Karachi, selected through convenient sampling but matched with the criminals on basis of their age, education and similar residential area. Non criminals mean educational qualification was slight more than criminal groups because of difficulty in matching their qualification with criminals.

Measures

Personal information form was prepared to collect personal information related to two groups of the participants; it included variables like name (optional), age, education, marital status, family system etc.

Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran Scale (EMBU- Short Form)¹⁰

The short version of EMBU comprised of 23 items. It assesses three main child parental rearing behavior, namely rejection, emotional warmth and protection. Childhood parental rejection is measured through Items 1, 4, 7, 14, 15, 16 and 21, whereas emotional warmth through Items 2, 6, 12, 13, 19 and 23; and protection through items 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20 and 22. Individual is instructed to read the statement and mark on childhood parenting rearing behavior on one out of four options i.e. No Never, Yes Occasionally, Yes Often and Yes Always, separately for father and mother. All the items are just scored through adding the scores on options in order of 1,2,3,4, except item 17 that is scored reverse as 4,3,2,1. Item 9 is not scored for any scale due to its low psychometric property. Over all entire Short form of EMBU has high level of reliability and validity. Its cronbach's alpha was 0.70. For sample of fathers of East German it was 0.75 for rejection, 0.84 for emotional warmth and 0.72 for protection. For mothers it was 0.70, 0.82 and 0.78 respectively.¹¹

In current study for EMBU- Short Urdu version,¹² cronbach's alpha for parental rejection was .67, emotional warmth was .63 and for protection it was .58. For criminal group cronbach's alpha for parental rejection was .70, emotional warmth was .71 and for protection it was .53. For non-criminal group cronbach's alpha for parental rejection was .51, emotional warmth was .53 and for protection it was .63.

Procedure

After taking consent from Inspector General of Prisons Sindh, Camp office at Central Prison Karachi, the incharge at central jail Karachi was approached. With his cooperation and with the help of supporting staff, the prisoners were requested to participate in data collection on mutually agreed date and time with jail authorities and researcher. After introduction to them about the research, their consent was taken and then personal Information form was filled up individually. To them Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran (EMBU- Short Form) Urdu Version was then administered. Same procedure was applied for collection of data for non-criminals except consent that was taken

from participants only. Following the ethics of the research all participants were given right to withdraw themselves any time, during their data collection. Scoring of each questionnaire was made as per procedure and then t' test was applied for statistical analysis of the data.

RESULTS

Mean age of criminal was 34.65, their mean education was 10.24 grades, 67 were married and 33 were unmarried. 41 belonged to nuclear and 59 from joint families. About non-criminal group their mean age was 34.02, their mean education was 12.43 grades, 27 were married and 73 were unmarried. Moreover 49 belonged to nuclear and 51 from joint families.

As shown in Table 1, the criminals had significantly higher mean scores on three Rejection variables, i.e. Father's rejection, $t(198) = 9.71, p < .01$; mother's rejection, $t(198) = 4.19, p < .01$ and combined scores of parental rejection, $t(198) = 8.22, p < .01$ than non-criminals, indicating that criminals perceived more of childhood father's, mother's and parental rejection as compared with non-criminal group.

Table 1
Difference in the mean scores of criminals and non-criminals on perceived childhood father, mother and parental rejection (N=200)

Variable	Criminals		Non Criminals		t (198)	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
FRJ	17.59	6.09	10.91	3.18	9.71**	.00
MRJ	13.38	4.15	11.19	3.16	4.19**	.00
PA RJ	30.97	8.96	22.10	5.99	8.22**	.00

Note: FRJ= Father's Rejection; MRJ=Mother's Rejection; PA RJ= Parental Rejection N criminals= 100, N Non criminals = 100, $df = 198$; ** Significant at < 0.01 level

As shown in Table 2, the criminals had significantly lower mean scores than non-criminals on childhood father's emotional warmth, $t(198) = -5.13, p < .01$, mother's emotional warmth, $t(198) = -4.50, p < .01$ and combined parental emotional warmth, $t(198) = -5.15, p < .01$. Further it was also found that the criminals had significantly less mean score only on domain of mother's protection, $t(198) = -3.08, p < .01$, whereas insignificant difference in their perception of father's protection, $t(198) = .07, p > .05$, and combined scores of parental protection, $t(198) = -1.72, p > .05$ was noted.

Table 2
Difference in the mean scores of criminals and non-criminals on perceived childhood father, mother and parental emotional warmth and protection (N=200)

Variables	Criminals		Non Criminals		t (198)	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
FEW	12.19	5.17	15.48	3.78	-5.13**	.00
MEW	13.93	4.55	16.60	3.80	-4.50**	.00
PA EW	26.12	9.12	32.08	7.12	-5.15**	.00
F P	19.98	3.42	19.94	4.34	.07	.94
M P	19.42	4.22	21.26	4.21	-3.08**	.00
PA P	39.40	6.65	41.20	8.04	-1.72	.08

Note: FEW= Father's emotional warmth; MEM=Mother's emotional warmth; PA EW= Parental emotional warmth; FP=Father's protection; MP= Mother's protection; PA P= Parental protection. N Criminals= 100, N Non criminals = 100, $df = 198$; ** Significant at < 0.01 level

DISCUSSION

It was obvious that criminals and non-criminals differed on perceived parental rearing behavior comprised of father's and mother's rejection. Criminals who were in prison had experienced more of childhood parental rejection than non-criminals. Hence our hypothesis that, "Perceived Childhood father's and mother's rejection would be more in criminals as compared with non-criminals" was proved. This result goes well along with the similar findings indicating that parental rejection in childhood results in adjustment problems in adulthood.¹³ Another research where delinquent and non-delinquents were studied on the dimension of parenting, indicated positive relationship of neglecting and authoritarian parenting with delinquency.¹⁴

In current study additional findings showed that criminals perceived less childhood father's, mother's and parental emotional warmth as compared with non-criminal group. Alike inverse relationship of parental warmth with delinquency in adolescent was proposed.¹⁵ Parental warmth encourages children to share their personal information with their parents. This warmth in turn helps parents to guide their children against any unlawful activities in which they might involve. It is clear from another additional finding that criminals were less protected by their mothers in their childhood than non-criminals. This mother's protection can be related to parental affection that when children lack emotional warmth they prefer not to share information with that person, whether it is of legal or illegal activities. This was true for criminals of our study; however there was insignificant difference of childhood father and parental protection between criminals and non-criminals. Similarly in a study on females' parental overprotection at the stage of adolescents was insignificantly positively correlated with aggression in their adulthood.¹⁶

It is clear from present study that negative childhood experiences with parents and unhealthy parental child rearing behavior are important risk factors for later delinquent behavior.

CONCLUSION

Perceived childhood parental rejection including mothers as well as fathers may contribute in development of adult criminal behavior.

IMPLICATIONS

As perceived childhood parental rejection is important in adult criminals than non-criminals therefore it is suggested that both parents should give attention to their child rearing practices and avoid rejection, neglect and ignorance and encourage emotional warmth, affection and protection. This can promote positive growth of childhood behavior and discourage misconduct, delinquent and antisocial behavior in adulthood.

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