

## Exploring Role model, Parenting and Juvenile Delinquents in the Selected Poems

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### ABSTRACT

“What Children see, Children do”, role modeling is a momentous progression in child’s life. All children have role model at some point in their lives. The point is whom they see as their model. This may seem trivial whereas it creates an enormous impression on the impending behaviour and resolutions of the child. It is important for a child to have a social life. Peer and community may also affect the antisocial behaviour of a child. If a child is antisocial or excluded by the peer group, this may lead to stress, apprehension and downheartedness and may even shoddier psychological disturbances. This escalates the risk of crime among juveniles. There are various reasons for delinquency it can be psychological, economic, political and social. This paper tries to answer the questions, whether Juvenile Delinquency is a social issue and how it can be recognized in the teaching or learning environment and what are the implications of Juvenile Delinquency for teachers and students. It also analyses role modeling and parenting in the selected poems in the anthology titled *Teen Poems from behind Bars* poems written by youth at Denney Justice Center in Everett, Washington.

### 1. Introduction

Family milieu plays an important role in the nurturing process of a child. There are many juvenile crime rates all over the world, the hub for all these crimes starts from poor family milieu (Anwar & Derin, 2019). Parents and members in the house often consider the changes and domestic violence in the family has nothing to do with the psychological disturbances of a child. Children are innocent beings who can easily be influenced. “A family may influence a person’s behaviour either negatively or positively both at childhood and adulthood. An intact family can be said to be a functioning union between a mother and a father, so when a break up exist, the turmoil may affect a child to a greater extent. A functioning family is beneficial to a child than a dysfunctional one,” (Kimani, 2010). Most of the children tend to be influenced by family members especially parents.

Among the major factors in the home, which are known to be related to crime, are the parent’s attitude towards their children, their methods of discipline and their attitude towards society. The people in the neighbourhood, teachers, peers, media icons and celebrities, may influence other few. Role models may vary according to the tastes and level of expectation of a child. It is substantial for the child to take right choices. “For many young people today, traditional patterns guiding the relationships and transitions between family, school and work are being challenged. Social relations that ensure a smooth

process of socialization are collapsing; lifestyle trajectories are becoming more varied and less predictable. The restructuring of the labor market, the extension of the maturity gap (the period of dependence of young adults on the family) and, arguably, the more limited opportunities to become an independent adult are all changes influencing relationships with family and friends, educational opportunities and choices, labor market participation, leisure activities and lifestyles,” (World Youth Report, 2003). With the perennial chaos of politics dealing significant impact on people’s livelihood at large and the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s pandemic forcing rapid changes onto people’s daily activities, it is all the more important for parents and children to regain and maintain stability (Anwar et al., 2020; Rahman, 2019).

The present study believes that family is important throughout the period of early adolescence. Since the early 1980’s research has proven that, the area of adolescence and the family has become one of the rapidly growing fields in social science research. Role model can influence a child to be aggressive and adapt antisocial behaviour, “Whether youth learn positive and/or negative attitudes and behaviour depends on available models who they deem to be more worthy of imitation than others” (Bandura, 1986). A role model is an individual who is perceived by others as worthy of emulation (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Bad parenting is the main reason for delinquent behaviour, “In the criminogenic literature,

“bad” parenting is typically called ineffective, inept or dysfunctional parenting, and it is regularly portrayed as a risk for unhealthy social development and, in turn, for antisocial behaviour, (Loeber & Farrington, 2000).

## 2. Methodology

A descriptive study shall be undertaken with reference to the anthology *Teen Poems from behind Bars* written by youth at Denney Justice Center in Everett, Washington. Literature best illuminates the dark side of human life. Drug addiction is strongly linked with juvenile crime cases (Tanner-Smith, Lipsey, & Wilson, 2016). Drug is a sweet poison, it gives the heavenly pleasure to the addicted individual and it also equally plays its hand in crime by slaying, burglary, molestation etc. The root cause for all evil starts with addiction to drugs. This is a social issue which needs to be addressed in the present milieu. The anthology is unique in its own way because of its description. It describes the life of juvenile delinquents in another angle. This anthology focuses on different types of people from multiple eras facing various struggles and ultimately provide a humane approach to delinquency. The protagonists of this anthology are juveniles with delinquency. It provides a realistic account of the rationalizations and justifications people make as they gradually feel their lives slip out of their control. The juvenile protagonists of the anthology will be analysed on the basis of Rolemodel and Baumrind’s “Four Style of Parenting.

## 3. Findings of the Study

Juvenile Delinquency is a social problem that harms any segment of the population. It affects the government, community members and the economy. It puts strain on the government and economy because owners suffer huge losses and the government has to find facilities in order to promote the rehabilitation of the juveniles. *World Youth Report* states:

The problem of juvenile delinquency is becoming more complicated and universal and crime prevention programs are either unequipped to deal with the present realities or do not exist. Many developing countries have done little or nothing to deal with these problems, and international programs are obviously insufficient. Developed countries are engaged in activities aimed at juvenile crime prevention, but the overall effect of these programs is rather weak because the mechanisms in place are often inadequate to address the existing situation. (Web)

In 2006, Gleaner published an article titled “Addressing Juvenile Delinquency”, it highlights the wounding of two teachers at St. Thomas Technical High and Knowlva Technical High in Hanover. The

implication on teachers may involve emotional implication and professional implication. In the emotional implication, the teacher may be threatened by students because of their social background. Teachers may feel discouraged to teach still they have to be firm, brave, vigilant in handling students. In professional implication, teachers may feel frustrated and start conducting themselves in unprofessional ways like shouting at students, cursing and hitting. Teachers have to help their students to give proper guidance.

Implications on students may vary they may feel discouraged to attend class. Bullying students may be bullied by the delinquent students. It is necessary to conduct workshop and seminars with students, parents and guidance counsellors. The juvenile delinquents in the poem are usually school drop outs.

Delinquents have the willingness to reform, at last all they get is getting back to drug life. From the study it is also seen that the juvenile delinquents have a strong liking for drugs, they all try to change their imperfect lives better with no drug usage, whereas they are easily influenced by peers which is evident in one of the poems in the anthology titled “One Last Chance”, here the teen age boy needs a last chance to get over from this dull, gloomy drug life, whereas he gets easily influenced by his peer group, the teen boy says:

In the past, I’ve said I’m going to change  
With no intention in my heart  
I say I want to stay sober  
Yet all I want is to get high.  
Every time I get out  
I run straight to the block  
Thinking they can help me manage my life  
But all they do is corrupt me with the drugs  
That make me a slave. (4-11)

The analysis with reference to the anthology *Teen Poems from behind Bars* believes that hastened track towards juvenile delinquency and subsequent more serious offending may be the consequence of the following factors:

- a) Antisocial tendencies of juveniles with tenacious early disruptive behaviours
- b) Association of peers who already show deviant behaviour

The study highlights the parental role in juvenile delinquency. This study was undertaken to analyse the mutual relationship between parents and the grown up child. Adolescence is always viewed as a changing period from childhood to adulthood. The relationship between parent and child acts a building block for a child to be delinquent or non-delinquent. From the study it is known that in four parenting styles, children who have authoritative parents engage in less delinquent cases.

In the anthology, parents those are authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful were visible whereas authoritative parents were not to be seen in the study and it is believed that authoritative parenting style is good when compared to other parenting styles. Juvenile raised by authoritative parents are more likely to become independent, self-reliant, socially accepted and well behaved. They are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour.

#### 4. Discussion

In the anthology *Teen Poems from Behind bars*, there is a poem titled "Role Model" in which the teen boy says:

I've lived my life as a gangster  
But now it's time for me to say good-bye.  
I don't need this stuff in my life  
I'm going to be a Dad.  
I don't want this stuff for my son's life. (1-5)

The teen age boy is locked up behind the bars for being a gangster. He had always been influenced by wrong role model which later turned him into a gangster. He does not want his children to be influenced by the wrong role model like him. So, the boy seeks necessary ways to purify himself with good deeds so that the child can follow his good ways.

According to *Psychology Dictionary* (2000) "Juvenile Delinquency" is illegal behaviour by a minor that would be considered criminal against the state (vandalism, petty theft, auto theft, arson, rape etc.) (Web). Parenting plays an important role in the development of a child. Parenting is a boon. There are many parents who see parenting as a tiring or neglected job. Only when the parents sow good deeds in a child, can they reap good results. When the parents are not concerned about the child, the mind of the child remains empty and bad deeds are easily sowed in them.

This makes the child involve in delinquent activities. Violence in the family environment is a crucial problem because it has huge impacts on the child. Violence may be loud or silent. Only the person traumatized can explain their violence. It is the duty of the parents to understand the changes in the psychological aspects of a child. When the negative signs that the children show are ignored, delinquency naturally falls in place. Children are pure and innocent; it is the surrounding that usually transforms a child in a positive or in a negative way.

Diana Blumerg Baumrind, a well renowned psychologist has conducted a research on parenting styles which is an appreciative area of research among the researcher's circle. According to Baumrind, parenting style can be divided into four (See Figure 1).

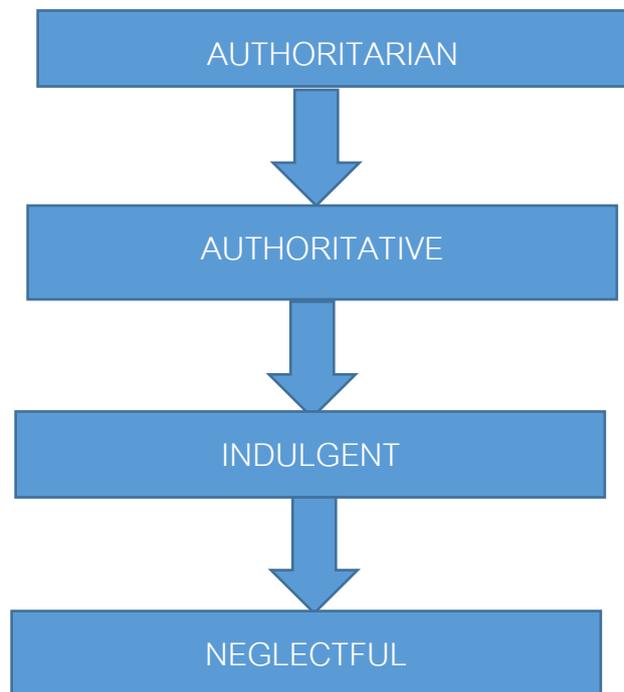


Figure 1: Baumrind's Four Style of Parenting

#### 4.1 Authoritarian Parenting

"Research has found that conflicting quality of parent-adolescent relationships leads to adolescent maladjustment. Adolescent deviant behaviour from the social norms is also associated with parent's relationship with adolescents. In a study conducted by (Poduthase, 2012) three major factors of family process are identified. They are parental guidance, parental involvement and parental attachment that have effects on delinquent behaviour. Parent's attachment style is different in different parenting style. In the Authoritarian style of parenting, the children are expected to follow the strict rules established by the parents. When children fail to digress from the framed rules usually results in punishment. Authoritarian parents have a pride of doing this harsh treatment they fail to understand the psyche of the children which often results in violent crime. In the poem "Powerless" the young teen girl is misled for which the parents give her punishment when they find her on the wrong path. Instead of bringing the child on the right track, the parents ostracize her from the house. Later she becomes a juvenile delinquent locked up behind the bars. She calls herself as "Powerless"

They think I'm Powerful  
Because I do whatever I want  
Because I tell everyone to screw off  
Because I don't listen to anyone (1-4)

She was given all the liberty, whereas the girl was on the wrong track which was evident in her every day activity. The family members considered the girl as “Powerful” whereas the teen girl considers herself as “Powerless” because she did not have trustworthy friends, all turned out to be backstabbers.

Because I can't trust anyone  
Because I was raped  
Because I was jumped  
Because my Mom doesn't want me in her house  
Because I cry everyday  
Because I'm an addict  
Because I miss my old, happy life. (8-14)

The parents failed to understand the trauma and agony of the juvenile which resulted in a bad denouement.

#### 4.2 Authoritative Parenting

This parenting style is more democratic, because the parents establish rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow. Authoritative parents are often responsive and listen to the queries of their children. When children fail to meet their expectation they are nurturing and forgiving rather punishing.

Research suggests that having at least one authoritative parent can make a big difference (Fletcher et al, 1999). Alfonso Osario and his colleagues recently tested this idea, and found support for it. Once Spanish adolescents were evaluated with the same questionnaire used in the United States, authoritative care-giving was linked with the best child outcomes. (Osario et al, 2016).

In the anthology, authoritative parenting style is not seen. It is believed that, among the four parenting styles, Authoritative Parenting style has proven positive and good way of parenting. In this parenting, crime rate among the children is less seen.

#### 4.3 Indulgent Parenting:

Indulgent Parenting can otherwise be called as Permissive Parenting. They make very few demands on their children. Parents rarely discipline their children. Permissive parents are generally nurturing and communicative with their children. They often take status of a friend more than that of a parent. In the poem “I Always Wanted to Tell You”, the teen boy had enjoyed the privileges of good parenting where he says:

Mom, I always wanted to tell you...  
Simply I love you.  
But I never had the guts  
And I don't know why  
When I love you very much.  
I always wanted to tell you

I appreciate what you do. (1-7)

In this style of parenting, parents are like friends, they demand very little from the child. These kind of children are not under the constant supervision of the parents. They get easily influenced by the peer group. In this case, the teen boy is influenced and affected by his wrong peer group.

Researchers have found that the relaxed approach in indulgent parents can always bring negative outcome in an individual. Children under this parent style often tend to lack self-discipline, possess poor social skills and they often tend to make poor decisions. “Susie Lamborn and colleagues surveyed over 4000 American families and found that adolescents with permissive parents achieved less at school, and were likely to engage in self-destructive activities, like drug or alcohol use.” (Lamborn et al, 1991.)

Another study focusing on American children under the age of 8, found that permissive parents were more likely to have kids showing deficits in self-control. (Piotrowski et al, 2013).

#### 4.4 Neglectful Parenting

Low demand, low responsiveness and little communication. The parents only fulfill the child's basic needs. They are detached from their child's personal life. These parents often ignore or reject the needs of the children.

In the anthology of *Teen Poems from behind Bars* written by youth at Denney Justice Centre in Everett Washington, in the poem “Poetic Justice” the teen boon quotes.

My Momma told me to stay home  
But boy, oh, boy did I want to roam  
Hated the thought to be alone  
So I hit the streets that I call home. (1-4)

In this poem, the juvenile delinquent reveals about his neglectful parents. They were able to provide basic needs, but the parents did not strongly impose their care and rules on the child. Even staying at home with his family, the child always felt lonely and alone so he chose street as his home and started committing crimes and later ended up in juvenile prison.

For a child to become a delinquent, family parenting acts as a foundation. In the poem “Choices” the delinquent child expresses her agony where she says:

I was just a little girl  
I didn't know what was going on.  
My Mom's boyfriend sneaked into my room  
Every night...  
She chose her boyfriend over her kid.  
I felt sorry for the man who raped me (1-6)

When the parents fulfill their desires not listening to the likes and dislikes of a child, the child often undergoes traumatic experience. Behind any delinquency there is a violent behaviour of a parent or a stranger. From the study it is seen that in Authoritative Parenting style, crimes are less to be seen.

Addiction to drugs is a common problem which each juvenile delinquent in the poem faces. Addiction to drugs is strongly linked with delinquency. The juvenile delinquent in the poems struggle hard to get over it, but each time they fail because of their strong addictive nature for drugs. There comes a crisis in the life of juvenile delinquents that it is better to die for drugs than live a life without drugs.

## 5. Conclusion

Childhood experiences are important in the development of criminality. Delinquency is not an intentional crime; juveniles often involve in anti-social activities when triggered by the environment in which they live. Blindly accusing them will not fetch good solutions. In order, solve this problem, it is necessary to understand the situations and traumatic experiences that made a non-delinquent, a delinquent. From here on, choosing the role model of parenting which is expose in this study teaches us many lessons and consequences.

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