

Ego Development in Juvenile Delinquency among Bahraini Youths

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Abstract:

The rapid modernization in the Kingdom of Bahrain has brought wealth and prosperity but also many stresses in its traditional social roles and relations. The advent of juvenile delinquency is regarded as a symptom of such social changes.

In this study, certain measures were administered to a group of 30 juvenile offenders which were compared with those of 30 high school pupils who had no prior record of delinquency. Interrelations with delinquency versus non-delinquency statuses were hypothesized among the following study variables; family conditions, measured by the Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire and the ego development, measured by the Washington University Sentence Completion Test. Both these instruments were tested before by translation into Arabic and application on Arabic populations. The results showed that certain social and economic status criteria were significantly related to the delinquency status. Discriminant analysis revealed that level of ego development contributed enormously more to the prediction than any single another variable. Significant contributions were also made by the level of mother's education, of father's occupation and other family conditions such as the father being married to more than one wife and mothers being strictly housewives only.

These findings reveal social psychological changes due to rapid modernization that affect the core of the family system.

Key words: Juvenile Delinquency, Ego development, Personality disorder, Juvenile Care Center, WUSCT.

Introduction

The issue of delinquency among adolescents is complex and interwoven, and thus poorly understood. Most of the studies done on delinquency have been implemented in the Western countries in contrast to few done in Bahrain and other the Arab States. Thus the problem of delinquency remains poorly understood in this part of the world.

One of the important variables that have been shown to be linked to delinquency is the level of

ego development [1,2,3]. Ego development is a construct that includes several areas of personality traits including moral, social and character development [3,4]. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider the development of delinquent behavior in the context of ego development. Delinquency may result if the impulsive or self-protective stages of ego development are prolonged [4]. Studies on ego identity formation (one of the processes of ego development) have indicated that

ego identity may be related to the use of drugs by the adolescents [5,6].

In Bahrain, the cultural conflicts due to rapid transformation that adolescents have experienced inevitably influenced their ego development [7]. Ego development is one of the major variables that affects personality and could lead to delinquency. On the other hand, environmental stimulation, such as family cohesiveness and bonding and their relationship to the community, influences healthy development of various ego processes such as individuation, identity, and coping mechanisms [6,8]. Family cohesion is also related to the levels of ego development, the closer the bonding between family members, the higher is the level of ego development. Open communication between children and their parents would improve the children's ego development [9,10]. Also, family relationships and the correlation between parent-adolescent relationships are also related to levels of ego development. Although parent-child bonding was found to be related to ego development, the relationship is different for boys than girls. Family communication patterns that suggested separation occurred more often with conformist sons and post-conformist daughters, while communication patterns that suggested closeness occurred more often with conformist daughters and post-conformist sons [8,10].

Method

The research sample included two groups, the case, and control. The study was done on 30 male adolescents who were selected randomly from a total of 266 delinquent registered in a juvenile care center in Bahrain while the second group (the control) consisted of thirty normal adolescent male students who were randomly selected from two high schools that are geographically distant from each other. The average age of the non-delinquents and delinquents was 18 and 17 respectively.

Instruments:

A data sheet was developed consisting of the three sections; one dealing with the subject himself and the second and third to his father and mother's status. In addition to the demographic characteristics, information was collected about the delinquency behavior and the reason for the adolescent being confined at the juvenile center.

The Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) was used as the measuring instrument [1,2,3]. The WUSCT has been classified by the following stages:

Pre-social Stage (I-1)

During this stage, the child learns to recognize himself as being distinct from the environment

Impulsive Stage (I-2)

Here the child's identity is reinforced, but he develops a strong need for others and is demanding as well as dependent on them.

Self-protective Stage (I-3)

At this stage, the child can control his impulses by anticipating punishments and rewards.

Conformist Stage (I-4)

The child begins to see a relationship between his welfare and that of the other groups that he is part of (e.g., his family and friends).

Self-aware level (I-5)

At this level, there is a development of greater self-awareness.

Conscientious Stage (I-6)

The individual, at this stage, develops a conscience and has guilt and shame feelings when he does something wrong.

Autonomous Stage (I-7)

The individual at this stage develops a high capacity to handle conflicts and express his feelings freely.

Integrated stage (I-8)

The individual identity is solid and consolidated at this last phase. Furthermore, WUSCT was found to be translated into the Arabic language by other scholars and was used cross-culturally in other languages, i.e. has been used on people from different cultures [11,12,13,14].

The reliability of rating was investigated using agreement and inter-correlations among the test raters by one trained rater (the main author) and two self-trained raters. All used the manual, and the median percent agreement among the raters was 81%. The main aim of this work was to find whether there are any differences between the delinquents and non-delinquents as far as the level of ego development is concerned.

Procedure

For conducting the study on the control group, permission was requested and granted from the Ministry of Education and the school principals. Two secondary schools, one from the capital Manama and another from Muharraq city, were chosen randomly. Fifteen subjects from each school were selected by random sampling technique (a total of thirty students). Over the four days, the schools were visited and the WUSCT was distributed to the students to be completed in the presence of a social worker. During the last visit to the schools, the researcher met with the school authorities and social workers to obtain additional information that might help in the study. None of the students had records of delinquency, nor did their families. Most of the students belonged to the lower-middle level social class, from all parts of Bahrain. The same procedure was applied to the other school in Muharraq. The difference between this and the first school was that the population from which 15 subjects were randomly selected tended to be more homogenous. The students were from the same geographic area and the same lower-middle class socioeconomic status.

For the experimental group, the Deputy Director of Public Safety granted access to the juvenile care center. Thirty juveniles were selected from the inmate population, using a sample random procedure. All the subjects were Bahraini males and had been convicted of one or more offenses. The aim of the study was thoroughly explained to them by the social worker who was always

present during the study procedure. The subjects were administered the WUSCT questionnaire orally since the majority were illiterate. Each question was read thoroughly and repeated several times. The social worker noted that most of the delinquents' families do not know or even care where their children are.

Ethical considerations:

To ensure the ethical issues, the following measures were taken; oral consent from the students after ensuring them about the confidentiality of the gathered information, student's identity was obscured as each was given a code, and the researchers were available in each session to respond to the students' queries and to monitor the process of data collection.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the studied population showed that more delinquent subjects than non-delinquents came from the rural areas. Seventy percent of delinquents reported that their fathers had more than one wife while the fathers of only two of the non-delinquents had more than one wife. The parents of two delinquent children were separated, and three were divorced, but none of the parents in the non-delinquent families were divorced or separated (Table 1-2).

Almost half of the fathers of the delinquent subjects (n=14 or 47%) were illiterate versus 10% of the fathers of the non-delinquent. The difference between the delinquents and non-delinquents groups in level of their father's education was significant (chi-square of 11.94705, $p < .05$).

There was also a significant difference between the delinquents and non-delinquents group with regards to the level of mother's education; 67% of the mothers of the delinquents were illiterate in comparison to 47% of the mothers of the non-delinquent.

Ego Development

Based on the test results of the WUSCT and by using the item sum analysis, t-value was obtained to determine the differences in the level of ego development between delinquents and non-delinquents (Table 3). The delinquents tended to be mainly at the I-2 stage, and the non-delinquents tended to be mainly at an I-3/4 stage of ego development. Forty percent (N=12) of the delinquents tended to be mainly at the I-2 stage of ego development; versus 70% (n= 21) of the non-delinquents who were mainly at an I-3/4 stage of ego development (Table 4).

The Mann-Whitney U-test was calculated to determine the differences in the level of ego development between them. A value of 108.5 was significant at the p-0.001 level.

Discussion

This study was carried out to compare the ego development between delinquent and non-delinquent children. The study showed that the demographic characteristics have a major influence in distinguishing between delinquents and non-delinquents especially with regards to parents' education and the number of wives the father has.

Moreover, delinquents scored way lower than the non-delinquents in terms of the level of ego development indicating that these children have failed in the development of their characters and personalities. Studies have shown that delinquents who lack character development are more likely to be abused by their parents and have lacked the

care and discipline which would help them to control their impulses [19,20,21,22]. The family status between the delinquents and non-delinquents did, in fact, shed some light on the background for the test of ego development that was carried out in this study. The family status, emotional warmth, family practices and relations are all the major factors that contributed to the development of juvenile delinquency in this study. When poorly educated fathers marry more than one wife and have no steady income to support these wives, the family cohesiveness collapses and leads to children running away or committing crimes [19,21].

Conclusion:

It was concluded that ego development in the study of youth personalities along with family conditions could determine whether or not a child will become a juvenile delinquent. Children tend to form their identities around their parents, but if the parents tend to be lax in their discipline and do not set an example of being good parents, then children will lose their ties to them and try to find outsiders to compensate for such loss.

The instrument used to measure ego development in children and the implications for cross-cultural studies in other societies was found to be valid and reliable which has elicited valid responses from these subjects.

We recommend further studies to be carried on individuals of other cultures than Arab Islamic to validate more the use of WUSCT instrument in those cultures.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Delinquents and Non-delinquents and Parental Characteristics

Area	Delinquent Group n=30	%	Non- Delinquent Group n=30	%
Urban	4	13	15	52
Rural	26	87	14	48
Father marital status:				
Married currently to subjects mother	10	33	26	87
Married more one wife	20	67	2	6.7
Deceased	0	0	2	6.7

Father Education:				
High school	2	6.7	3	10
Less than High school	2	6.7	4	13
Can Read & Write	10	33	13	43
Illiterate	14	47	3	10
Father occupation:				
Professional	6	21	15	52
Non-Professional	23	79	14	48
Father's Employment Employed	17	57	26	90
Unemployed	13	43	3	10
Mother Marital status:				
Married	20	67	28	93
Separated	2	6.7	0	0
Widowed	4	13	2	6.7
Divorced	3	10	0	0
Deceased	1	3.3	0	0
Mother Education:				
High school	2	6.7	1	3.3
Less than High school	2	6.7	3	10
Can Read & Write	2	6.7	14	47
Reads Quran only	4	13	7	23
Illiterate	20	67	5	17

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

	Delinquent		None- Delinquent	
	M	SD	M	SD
Age	16.80	2.59	17.73	0.91
No of Brothers	5.04	2.15	3.41	1.74
No of Sisters	3.63	2.13	3.50	1.75
No of Siblings	8.68	3.79	7.04	2.78

Table-3 Item Sum Analysis for Ego Development

Delinquent			Non delinquent			t-value
<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
3	46.00	6.60	30	57.70	5.60	7.44***
***0.<.001						

Table-4 Total protocol rating of stages of Ego Development

Stage	Delinquent		Non Delinquent	
	N	%	N	%
I-2	12	40.0	1	3.3
DELTA	5	16.7	0	0.0
DELTA-3	4	13.3	1	3.3
I-3	2	6.7	0	0.0
I-3/4	7	23.3	21	70.0
I-4	0	0.0	6	20.0
I-4/5	0	0.0	1	3.3
	30	100.0	30	100.0

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