

Low Levels of Parent's Income and Antisocial Behavior among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the association between income and antisocial behaviors among 395 school going male and female adolescents who are at the between 13 and 18 years in the capital of Iran, Tehran. Adolescent's income was hypothesized as correlation of antisocial behavior. As results suggest, the low levels of income served as a significant correlation of antisocial behavior among adolescents in Iran. Adolescents more probably exhibit antisocial behavior, if they experienced the lower level of incomes.

Keywords: Income, antisocial behavior, adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Antisocial behavior pertains to actions resulting from the inability of individuals to respect the rights of others (Fortin, 2003). It creates several problems for adolescents, their family, and the society. Although most individuals experience exposure to violence over their lives, the dramatic peak in violence exposure occurs at adolescence (Cyr et al., 2012). Antisocial behavior may be evolved at the early age (Tremblay, 2000) and this early antisocial behavior may have serious implications for society, because it exposed individuals to the increased risk of offending over the life course (Lanctot, Cernkovich, and Giordano 2007; Piquero et al. 2012; Piquero et al. 2009). Antisocial behaviors encompass a couple of delinquent acts including assault, vandalism, crime, theft, arson, and many others that are in conformity with social norms. Antisocial behaviors are often analogously applied to explain behaviors that violate social norms or the rights of fellow humans (Park, Lee, Sun, Vazsonyi, & Bolland, 2010, p. 409).

According to Farrington (2005), antisocial behavior in childhood and adolescence are classified into behavioral disorders, stealing, impulsiveness, bullying, vandalism, running away from home, physical and psychological aggression, stealing, and truancy. Adolescents accounted for 0.49% of the total number of prisoners in Iran in 2009, and the proportion increased to 4.33% in 2010 (Iran's statistics, 2010). To minimize the antisocial behaviors of adolescents, the Iranian government has taken different actions such as security and law enforcement agency, remand homes, the establishment and administration of juvenile justice, security and law enforcement agency, and promulgation of juvenile laws and courts (Mohammadiasl, 2006). As Mohammadiasl (2006) reported a remarkable number of children and adolescents, about 28,000, stay at correction and rehabilitation centers, which is one of main concerns of Iranian society.

Adolescents may be involved in all of the aforementioned types of antisocial behaviors. However, among antisocial behaviors, the developmentally conditioned type is apparently the most prevalent (Moffitt, 2003; Farrington, 2005). The fact supporting this assumption is that antisocial behavior over adolescence is specified by particular expressions, including conduct problems (e.g., truancy, lying, and being outside after dark without parents' permission), public or private property damage, physical fighting (fistfight), and shoplifting (Silbereisen &

Noack, 1988; Smart et al., 2004; Bonino et al., 2005). Moffitt (1993) indicated that antisocial behavior may relate to school failures, peer rejection, delinquency, impairments in socio-emotional development, and adult crimes. Then, he insisted that the persistence of such behaviors may differ based on the age of the antisocial behavior onset, if antisocial behaviors occur at individual's early life. There are two main dimensions for behavior disorders: internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior. Internalizing behavior intrinsically directed, is related to behavioral deficits like isolation, withdrawal, and depression. Externalizing behaviors are involved with verbal and physical aggression, disturbing others, and acts of violence. In this study, antisocial behaviors refer to a set of behaviors that is against any established rules or norms. Examples are vandalism (e.g., writing on desks and chairs, breaking down branches of trees and grass and bus seats, and cutting public phone) and cultural misconduct (e.g., getting warnings from school officials and police for violating the Islamic dress code and getting warnings from school officials for violating school rules).

Adolescents encounter several challenges, but the resolution of these challenges can be influential on their subsequent improvements. One of these critical challenges is to renegotiate on their position within the family while keeping their relationship with their parents warm and supportive (Laible, Carlo, & Raffaelli, 2000). Family income is another variable posing a direct effect in adolescent's antisocial behavior. Farrington (2005) maintains that the main factors resulting in development of antisocial behavior are parents with antisocial behavior, family with low income, cold attitude of parents, low attention of parents, and conflicts between parents. Other studies also (Kim, Capaldi & Stoolmiller, 2003; Rezayi et al., 2007; Menja, 2011) showed the family income adversely impact on adolescent's antisocial behavior; income also was significantly and positively related to positive parenting (e.g., effective discipline). Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBSS, 2006) poses the family income as a significant predictor of antisocial behavior. Factors that justify this finding include, first, according to McLoyd (1990) families who experiencing economic difficulties may have weak parental capacity to apply consistent social control. Secondly, economic stresses of families may lead to decreasing parental support and diminished parental involvement as parents spend more time at work (Wise, 2003).

Several longitudinal studies have linked aspects of low family income, living in subsidized housing, and low parental education to the development of conduct problems (Magnuson & Vortuba-Drzal, 2008) especially serious delinquency (Bjerk, 2007). Importantly, studies have also found that the link between SES and youth antisocial behavior cannot be completely accounted for by preexisting or time- constant confounds (e.g., low intelligence, family history of antisocial behavior). For example, one longitudinal study found that children displayed more conduct problems in years when their family income was lower than in years when their family income was higher (Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor, 2006). Furthermore, social service programs designed to increase parental income and employment have been found to reduce externalizing problems among adolescents residing within low SES families (Constello, Compton, Keeler, & Angold, 2003).

It is noteworthy, however, that children growing up in families with low level income are at the exposure to several other risk factors, which may account for their increased risk for engaging in serious conduct problems and delinquent behaviors. For example, one studies reported that maladaptive parenting strategies and family stress may partially mediate the association between SES and the development of conduct problems and delinquent behaviors (Schonberg& Shaw, 2007). The effects of family income and antisocial behavior among adolescents have generally been studied in western countries (Magnuson & Vortuba-Drzal, 2008, & Menja, 2011) However, similar studies in the Iranian context are scarce. The results

of previous research demonstrated a significant relationship between low level of family income and antisocial behavior of adolescents. Therefore, this research investigated the relationship between family income and adolescents' antisocial behavior.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to indicate the significant association between the family incomes and antisocial behavior of adolescents in Tehran, Iran. Thus, the researcher proposed the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: Family income is significantly related to antisocial behavior of adolescents in Tehran, Iran.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 395 male and female adolescents were recruited from daily secondary and high schools in Tehran, Iran. The research applies cluster sampling as a sampling design. The participants were at the age of 13 to 18. The mean age was 15 years with SD=1.44.

Measures

Income

Data collected on the participant's parents income was sourced by asking the students to write their parent's expected (monthly) income in a column specified under the demographic section in the questionnaire.

Antisocial Behavior

Antisocial behavior was evaluated through a survey questionnaire regarding antisocial Behavior (Dekovic, 1999). Using 18 items, the scale focused on some minor acts entailing truancy, public transportation usage without paying, and some serious deviant acts, encompassing purposely beating someone or intentionally setting fires. These questionnaire was administrated to ask adolescents how often they commit these acts during the last 12 months: 0 for never, 1 representing once, 2 presenting two or three times, 3 stands for four to 10 times, and 4 representing more than 10 times. As the research was conducted in Iran, these three items were deleted, namely, using hard drugs such as heroin, using soft drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, speed and LSD; and being drunk. But replaced by seven additional items, namely, skipped school without giving a good excuse, stealing little things with lesser prices than five dollars, watched pornography, trespassed on people's property, wore clothes against school policy, arguing with the school principal or teacher, and fighting with classmates or other students in school. Addition of these seven items to questionnaire was based on prior studies and discipline principles effecting in Iran. Here, the total scale ranged from 0 to 88, thus, the higher scores represents a higher level of antisocial behavior. The questionnaire indicates an overall alpha of 0.94 for the total scale (Dekovic et al., 2004). The reliability value of the scale in the current study present an alpha coefficient of 0.79 indicating the scale is reliable.

Procedure

This study was authorized by Department of Education of Tehran. To select the participants, students with discipline problems were listed by assistance of the school counselor. The whole students listed here, participated in the survey.

Statistical Analysis

To describe the variables of the study, a descriptive statistical analysis including frequency, percentage, means, and standard deviations was employed. Furthermore, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was also applied to determine the direction and strength of the linear relationship between the antisocial behavior of adolescents and family income.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, the measures applied in this survey indicated acceptable to excellent reliabilities ranging from 0.79 to 0.93. The skewness and kurtosis values of the study variables were between -2 and +2; therefore, the assumption of normality has not been violated. Based on exploratory data analysis, for antisocial behavior the distribution of scores indicates a slight and positive skewness of 0.324, and for family income it shows a slight and positive skewness of 0.273, the variables of which were within acceptable limits and imminent to normal distribution.

Table 1. Assessment of Normality for Study Variables

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>5% Trimmed Mean</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Antisocial Behavior	0.98	0.97	0.324	-0.145
Family Income	485.73	485.41	0.273	0.324

As shown in Table 2, the family income ranges between 0 to \geq USD 1400 with Mean of 485.73 (SD = 242.73). Therefore, the analysis showed that 40.3% of respondents parents were in family low-income (\leq 400USD per month) category, and 51.3 % of respondents parents were in middle income (401-800 USD per month) category. Only 8.4% of the parents were in high income (\geq 800 USD). Most of the respondents mother were homemakers or hairdresser and fathers respondents were either self-employed such as laborers, driver, and clericals. Based on Statistical Center of Iran (2012), the poverty line for family in Iran was above 800 USD per month. This means that the majority of the respondent's income was below the poverty line. It is important to mention that the sample of this study comes from south regions of Tehran, which is commonly known for residents with very low income. Thus, it is expected that the majority of the respondents come from families with incomes lower than poverty line.

Table 2. Psychometric Properties of the Major Study Variables (n = 394)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>F (%)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
<i>Antisocial Behavior</i>					
Low ≤ 20.95	193 (48.9)	20.95	9.54	0	48
High > 20.96	201 (51.1)				
<i>Family Income (USD/Month)</i>					
≤ 400	160 (40.3)	485.73	242.73	.00	1400.00
USD 401-800	200 (51.3)				
≥ 800 USD	31 (8.4)				

Note: F = Frequency, SD = Standard deviation, Min. = Minimum, Max. = Maximum

A Pearson Product Correlation revealed that there was a significant low and negative relationship between family income and adolescents antisocial behavior ($r = -.097$, $p \leq 0.01$) therefore, H_0 is supported. This means that low family income is related to more frequent adolescent's antisocial behavior. Researchers (Kim et al., 2003; Rezayi et al., 2007; Menja, 2011) reported that family income was significantly and inversely related to adolescent's antisocial behavior; income also was significantly and positively related to positive parenting (e.g., effective discipline). According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBSS, 2006), low family income is a significant predictor of adolescents' behavioral and emotional difficulties. Several factors may explain this finding. First, according to Mcloyd (1990) families who experienced economic difficulties may have weak parental capacity for consistently applying social control. Second, economic stresses of families may lead to decreasing parental support and diminished parental involvement as parents spend more time at work (Wise, 2003). A family with high levels of income was related to high level of parental solicitation and low levels of parent –youth conflict. In sum, these findings suggest that family income in south of Tehran are related to adolescents antisocial behavior.

Table 3. Relationship between the family income and antisocial behavior

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Antisocial Behavior (r)</i>
Family Income	-.097*

Note:* $p \leq 0.05$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated family income and the antisocial behavior of adolescents in Tehran, Iran. The study found a significant association between family income and the antisocial behavior of adolescents. Hence, adolescents with low level of family income tend to exhibit a higher level of antisocial behavior.

The research findings fill the existing gap regarding this social issue in Iran. The study contributed to the existing literature in terms of understanding the psychological developmental stage and family context as an important factor for the development of adolescents. The findings of this study will enable school and educational counselors to better understand the needs of adolescents who had unhealthy families. Moreover, these findings information is useful for educators to understand factors that may critically influence the development of antisocial behavior of adolescents. The results suggest that income plays a critical, unique role in adolescents' antisocial behavior. Therefore, parents should be conscious of and sensitive toward how antisocial behaviors affect adolescents. The current findings suggest that having a healthy family and experiencing high levels of warmth from family members may have beneficial effects on adolescents in families with a low level of warmth and supervision. Therefore, programs whose components focus on promoting a healthy family and improving the quality of parenting should be implemented.

There are several limitations on this study. The first is the sample. The respondents in this study were adolescents in Tehran, Iran. Therefore, the results are not generalizable. The second one is that the study is cross-sectional. Thus, the long-term effect of family income on the behavior problems of adolescents cannot be examined.

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