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MIRANDA GASHI
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA, Albania

FAMILY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND DELINQUENCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PRISHTINA

Abstract:

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the differences among juveniles who demonstrate delinquent behaviours, across their parents' education background, the level of family income and their parents' employment status.

A total of 372 juveniles of age 14-17 years participated voluntarily in the research. The Mean Age of the participants was MA=15.5 years (SD=1.12). 333 (89.5 %) of them live in Pristina and 39 (10.5%) of them live in a village. The study participants showed differences of statistical significance in the level of father's employment ($\chi^2(1, N=372)=22.753, p=.000$); mothers employment ($\chi^2(1, N=372)=46.839, p=.000$); in father's education background ($\chi^2(3, N=372)=233.699, p=.000$); in mother's education background ($\chi^2(3, N=372)=341.570, p=.000$) and in the level of the monthly family income ($\chi^2(3, N=372)=26.022, p=.000$). The Delinquency Scale of Wave II questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument.

The Croanbach alpha coefficient (α) which was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, showed the value of .612. The T-test for independent groups and one-way ANOVA were used to verify potential differences across indicator variables.

The findings showed that juveniles whose mother was unemployed demonstrated higher levels of delinquent behaviours in comparison to juveniles whose mother was employed. Father's employment status and the education background of both parents showed no differences of statistical significance. The level of family income showed that children from families with an income level under 200 Euro/month reported higher levels of delinquent behaviours in comparison to children from families with monthly income of up to 350 Euro/month and families with income level over 500 Euro/month.

The results reinforce the complex nature of the factors affecting the emergence of delinquent behaviours among juveniles, which should certainly be examined from their cultural perspective, as well.

Keywords:

socio-economic status, juvenile, delinquent behaviour, differences

JEL Classification: I19

INTRODUCTION

According to Random House Webster's college dictionary, delinquency is defined as "wrongful, illegal or antisocial behaviours" (2005:327). If we refer to definitions of the term delinquency used in Kosovo, then we should refer to the definition used by Halili (2011) according to which 'delinquency includes all deviant, antisocial behaviours of juveniles, regardless of whether they are incorporated in the positive legal provisions of a country as criminal offences'. The same author also gives a restrictive (narrow) definition of the term delinquency: delinquency includes only deviant behaviours of minors, explicitly defined in positive criminal law provisions of a country (2011).

The socioeconomic status of the family can freely be considered as an amorphous concept, understandably used and interpreted in different ways by different disciplines and different researches in social science. Usually the socioeconomic status is measured by employment, education background, income level, place of residence, possession of certain appliances at home, etc. However, the most frequent indicators of the socioeconomic status are parental education, their profession and family income (Ensminger & Fothergill, 2003). In our research we will refer to employment status, parental education and family income, as measurable variables of the socioeconomic status.

Kosovo is situated in the heart of the Balkans, bordering Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Its population is 1,815,606 (Statistical Office, 2014:10), with 42% living in urban and 48% in rural areas. According to 2011 Census, approximately 10.0 % of its population is aged 14-18 years old (174,983), which in comparison to the rest of the countries in the region is relatively high, making Kosovo the country with the youngest population. However, considered as one of the poorest countries in the region, Kosovo has the lowest percentage of investments in healthcare, education and child protection, as opposed to other countries in the region and wider (Brutto et al, 2011).

Various sources that referred to the presence and the distribution of delinquent behaviours in Kosovo contain considerable inconsistencies in their data. However, all those sources point to considerable increase in the number of delinquent behaviours among juveniles in the recent years, from 1,313 in 2005 to 2,059 in 2008 (UNICEF, 2010). Approximately 30 per cent of all reports of juvenile offending, and almost half of all reports of serious offences by juveniles, occurred in the capital, Pristina. Almost half of the offences by juveniles reported in 2008 (47 per cent) involved theft, and 20 per cent involved assault or homicide. Among the causes most frequently referred to in these reports are the difficult economic situation in Kosovo families, familial conflicts, unemployment, child-parent relations, migrations from villages to towns, etc.

Our research covered only the town of Pristina and its main goal is to unveil the relations between the socioeconomic status of the families and the degree of the occurrence of delinquent behaviours among juveniles. The objectives of the research are to discover potential differences in the occurrence of juvenile delinquent behaviours across parental education, employment status and family monthly income. The hypotheses of the study are:

H₁ = Juveniles from families with low incomes will demonstrate higher levels of delinquent behaviours.

H₂ = Juveniles will show differences in the level of occurrence of delinquent behaviours across parental education.

H₃ = Juveniles will show differences in the level of occurrence of delinquent behaviours across parental employment status.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Statistics show that delinquent behaviours among the youth, particularly among juveniles, are a growing concern. Moreover, it is argued that the youth incorporate multiple factors that exercise direct and indirect effects on their behavior (Hinton, Sheperis, and Sims 2003). Most authors try to identify and understand the causes or factors which affect the occurrence of such behavior in this age. A number of studies have suggested that the main factors are those related to family, such as parenting style, where the autocratic style was found to have significant correlation with a series of delinquent behaviours in comparison to the democratic parenting style, and family relations with juveniles, where research has found that maternal attachment was an especially important predictor of nonserious and serious delinquency irrespective of family structure, economic factors, and race and ethnicity (Leiber et al., 2009).

Inevitably, researchers have also devoted much attention to the study of potential correlation between the socioeconomic status of the family and delinquent behaviours of juveniles. Although previous empirical studies consistently found weak correlations or lack of correlation between the socioeconomic status of individuals and their self-reported delinquent behaviours (Hagan et al, 1985; Jensen, 1993; Tittle, 1995); other studies have consistently shown in the recent years that juveniles from lower income families demonstrate higher levels of involvement in delinquent behaviours in comparison to individuals from higher income families; so, the poor are more likely to commit a crime (O'Donnell et al 2006; Smith and Bohm 2008).

Interestingly, Giordano (2003) suggested that socioeconomic differences are reproduced within youth's social hierarchies. Youth from families of low socioeconomic status experience peer rejection, and are thus more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours. As opposed to them, youth from families of higher socioeconomic status have more resources to gain peer alliances in accordance with their higher status. Longshore et al. (2004) pointed out in their study that delinquent behaviour results from fragile social bonds, which included poor attachment to other people, low involvement in traditional activities, insufficient commitment to conventional lifestyles, and low endorsement of conventional moral beliefs.

Carney et al (2013), Defoe, Farrington, and Loeber (2013); Le and Stockdale (2011); and Legleye et al. (2010), in their studies suggested that family structure and socioeconomic status of the family are significant factors to the occurrence of delinquent behaviour. Veenstra et al. (2006) pointed out that delinquent behaviour is more likely to link up with low-class youth because they have insufficient social bonds with their parents. Because their parents have lower education level, they use unresponsive

parenting style to take care of their children. Therefore, the youth are more likely to associate with delinquent behaviour without appropriate parenting style.

Another family characteristic - poor parental supervision of children - is often studied as a risk factor for future delinquency or crime, and children who come from such homes are believed to be at greater risk or are more likely to commit offenses than children who do not (Derzon, 2005). When the reverse occurs—such as a child growing up in a loving and supportive home—researchers often refer to these variables as “protective” factors, as they promote a child’s resiliency or provide protective barriers against the onset of criminal involvement—even in the light of adverse conditions (e.g., Derzon, 2005).

Some studies suggested in their results that there is no correlation between the low socioeconomic status of the family and delinquent behaviours among juveniles (Defoe et al. 2013). In addition, Legleye et al. (2010) argued that delinquent behaviours have shown correlation not only with the low socioeconomic status of the family, but also with the high socioeconomic status of the family. In addition, Inderbitzin, Bates, and Gainey (2013) claimed that delinquency is a class-specific behaviour, so the impoverished youth are often labelled as delinquents. As a consequence, social bonding, class consciousness, alienation, and negative labelling are the mediators on the relationship between the socioeconomic status of the family and delinquent behaviour. A conception of delinquency largely restricts to the lower class because the behavior that trigger labels occur more frequently in this group than that in other groups, Clinard and Meier (2008).

Therefore, if we take into account the various research results, the correlation between the socioeconomic status of the family and the delinquent behaviours of juveniles is still very unclear. Derzon (2005) suggested that it is also likely that family factors interact with other factors in a complex relationship difficult for researchers to tease out.

METHODOLOGY

According to the Juvenile Justice Code of the Republic of Kosovo individuals of age 14-18 years old are considered juveniles. The participants of our study were 327 juveniles, aged 14-17 years old, attending secondary schools of the town of Pristina. The mean age of the participants was $MA=15.5$ years ($SD=1.12$). 143 or 38.4 % of the study participants were females ($MA= 15.29$; $SD=1.09$) and 229 or 61.6 % of the participants were male students ($MA=15.63$; $SD=1.11$). Regarding the place of residence, 333 (89.5 %) of them live in Pristina and 39 (10.5%) in villages. The characteristics in number and percentages related to parental education, their employment status and the level of family financial income are presented in Table 1. The study participants showed differences of statistical importance at the level of father’s employment ($\chi^2(1, N=372)=22.753, p=.000$); mother’s employment ($\chi^2(1, N=372)=46.839, p=.000$); father’s education background ($\chi^2(3, N=372)=233.699, p=.000$); mother’s education background ($\chi^2(3, N=372)=341.570, p=.000$) and at the level of family’s’ monthly income ($\chi^2(3, N=372)=26.022, p=.000$)

Table 1. Characteristics of study participants

		<i>N</i>	%
Gender	M	229	61.6
	F	143	38.4
Place of residence	Town	333	89.5
	Village	39	10.5
Father's education	Primary school	23	6.2
	Secondary school	192	51.6
	University	136	36.6
Father's employment	Higher	21	5.6
	Yes	232	62.4
Mother's education	No	140	37.6
	Primary school	56	15.1
	Secondary school	243	65.3
Mother's employment	University	64	17.2
	Higher	9	2.4
Family monthly income	Yes	120	32.3
	No	252	67.7
Family monthly income	Under 200 Euro	66	17.7
	201-350 Euro	132	35.5
	351-500 Euro	94	25.3
	Over 5001 Euro	80	21.5

Data collection instrument and method

Data related to delinquent behaviours of juveniles were collected through participants' self-reporting of delinquent behaviours in the study, using the questions Section 28: Delinquency Scale based on Wave II questions, adapted to and validated in our context. The questionnaire asks how often the adolescent engaged in the certain activities within the last 12 months. Responses range from 1 (never) to 4 (more than 5 times). The Cronbach Alpha is .612.

We supplemented the questionnaire with the first part of questions related with data on the family income level, parent's employment status and their education background. Meetings were held with all students in their schools, wherein the purpose of the study was explained to them. The teachers organized the meetings where they obtained the consent for voluntary participation in the research. The questionnaire was completed individually by each student and was returned to the author on the same day.

The procedure of data analysis

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test was administered in order to

identify the differences among the responses. The differences across the variables used in the study were identified through the t-test for independent groups and the one way ANOVA. The data were analysed through the SPSS Ver. 19.0 statistical package.

RESULTS

In order to identify differences between the occurrences of delinquent behaviours across father's employment, the analysis of the t-test for independent groups was carried out. The results presented in Table 2 show that there were no differences of statistical significance among the juveniles regardless of their father's employment status.

Table 2. T-Test results on father's employment

Father's employment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	232	1.08	.268	1.041	.299
No	140	1.11	.362		

The differences in the occurrence of delinquent behaviours depending on mother's employment status were identified through the t-test for independent groups. The results obtained and presented in Table 3, showed that unlike the father's employment status, the mother's employment status did relate to differences of statistical significance among the juveniles. The highest values for delinquent behaviours were reported by juveniles whose mothers were not employed.

Table 3. T-Test results on mother's employment

Mother's employment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yes	120	1.04	.201	-2.588	.010
No	252	1.12	.344		

One way ANOVA was carried out to identify potential differences across father's education background. The results showed that there were no differences of statistical significance in the occurrence of delinquent behaviours among the juveniles, regardless of their father's education background ($F(3,368) = 2.196, p = .088$).

One way ANOVA was also carried out in order to detect potential differences in delinquent behaviours among juveniles across mother's education background. Again, no statistically significant values were found to prove the differences ($F(3,368) = .276, p = .843$).

The level of the monthly income of the family came out as a factor, defining statistically significant differences in delinquent behaviours demonstrated among juveniles ($F(3,368) = 3.614, p = .013$). Table 4 contains the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values for the category of financial income of the families of juveniles.

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Table 4. Mean and SD values for the family income level

Income		Mean	Std. Deviation
Under 200 Euro	66	1.20	.471
201-350 Euro	132	1.05	.225
351-500 Euro	94	1.10	.296
Over 501 Euro	80	1.06	.244

The Tukey HSD test showed that difference of statistical significance existed among families with incomes under 200 Euro and families with incomes from 201 to 350 Euro ($p=.010$) and families with incomes over 501 Euro ($p=.040$). The rest of the income categories showed no statistically significant differences amongst them.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this research was to assess whether the socioeconomic status of the family measured through the following variables - parental education, level of monthly income and the parents' employment status – affects the occurrence of delinquent behaviours among secondary school students in Pristina, who are considered juveniles by age. Our results proved the first hypothesis, according to which juveniles from families with lower income will demonstrate higher levels of delinquent behaviours. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences between the level of income under 200 Euro and the level of income over 350 Euro. Our results are consistent with the findings of other studies, reinforcing the fact that juveniles from families with low incomes have a higher rate of delinquent behaviours (O'Donnell et al 2006; Smith and Bohm, 2008). However, our results contradict the findings of Legleye et al., (2010), who had found correlations of statistical significance between delinquent behaviours and high level family incomes.

The results disproved the second hypothesis, according to which juveniles would show differences in the level of demonstrating delinquent behaviours depending on parental education level. No differences of statistical significance were proved in relation to the education background of both parents. Parental education has often been addressed in the literature as part of variables such as socioeconomic status, family behaviours, parenting style, etc., for which various studies obtained various findings.

With regard to the third hypothesis, according to which juveniles would show differences in the level of demonstrating delinquent behaviours depending on the parents' employment status, our results showed a statistically significant negative correlation only in the case of mother's employment. Our findings were interesting because children whose mothers were unemployed showed higher levels of delinquent behaviours. These findings are consistent with the findings of Leiber et al., (2009), who found that maternal attachment was an especially important predictor of nonserious and serious delinquency irrespective of family structure, economic factors, and race and ethnicity.

Our findings have significant implications on understanding more clearly the correlation between family related variables and delinquent behaviours of juveniles of this age. The results have instigated the need for further research on educational practices, the level

of supervising juveniles, and the parenting style, including dimensions such as psychological control and positive or negative aspects of support. Finally, such results, reinforcing the fact that family related variables are closely connected with school age and preadolescence delinquency, emphasize even more the importance of designing and implementing prevention strategies for such behaviours at the earliest possible age.

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