



PARENTAL AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR AND THE PREVALENCE OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG STUDENTS IN THIKA WEST SUB-COUNTY, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA.

¹SARAH Wangui Mwangi and ²MOKUA Gilbert Maroko

¹Department of Counselling Psychology, Mount Kenya University and ²Department of Counselling Psychology, Mount Kenya University

Email: ¹sarahsteve20211@gmail.com and ²marokomokua@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to determine the reason for the prevalence of juvenile delinquency as well as to establish the influence of parental aggressive behavior on juvenile delinquency. This study is based on attachment theory using ex post facto as research design. Queen of the Rosary Mixed Secondary School and Kimuchu Secondary with target population of 850 were the chosen locations of the study. Simple random sampling was used to pick the proportionate sample from each cluster. From each cluster 10% of the population was selected as sample size which is 85 students. For purposes of this study, a structured self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. The study reveals a high prevalence of delinquent behavior among students, including property damage, theft, and violence. Mean scores and standard deviations indicate strong agreement among respondents about their involvement in such activities. Specific actions, such as damaging school and public property, stealing motor vehicles, and holding stolen goods, were reported consistently. Behaviors like running away from home, carrying hidden weapons, and attacking others showed significant agreement. Findings on parental aggressive behavior indicate frequent engagement in actions like threatening physical harm and yelling at children, with mean scores ranging from 2.1234 to 2.7890. The results highlight the critical need for targeted interventions to address both student delinquency and parental aggression, aiming to foster a safer and more supportive environment for children. Recommendations include behavioral intervention programs, parental education workshops, school-community partnerships, robust monitoring systems, and promoting positive extracurricular activities.

Keywords: Parental aggressive behavior, Juvenile delinquency, Students, Thika West Sub-County.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Youth crime is very rife in society, having large implications to societal order and future social relations across the world. In Thika West Sub-County of Kiambu County, Kenya, experiences have revealed high levels of juvenile delinquency among students which has attracted the concern of policy makers, educators and parents. A key determinant of this tendency stems from parental aggressive behavior which includes physical aggression, verbal aggression as well as emotional aggression. Studies show that those children who experienced aggression at home are inclined to act inappropriately, get involved in criminal activities, and poor academic performance. Here, parents can help the child in determining his or her behavior and

interactions with others through observing things at home and parents' behavior or attitude towards the kid. Hence, it is apparent that knowledge of the association between parental aggressive behavior and juvenile delinquency is imperative to devise control strategies in relation to this phenomenon.

The approach to studying the influence of parental behaviour on delinquent adolescents in Thika West Sub-County is a complex one because there has been increased incidences of juvenile delinquency across the region thus necessitating the need for detailed investigation of causes of this social vice. The issues that are said to lead to these delinquent behaviours include economic pressures, cultural expectations, and sometimes lack of parental role-modelling, which trickle down to the kids. Bearing these in mind, this study intends to illuminate on the aforementioned dynamics in relation to parental aggression and juvenile delinquency in Thika West. It will also contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of this important issue as well as aid the development of specific measures and interventions that will help families and lower delinquency levels of students within the region.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Juvenile delinquency among secondary school students is on the increase in schools in Kenya and affects both academic performance and the physical and psychological aspects of the students. Cases of juvenile delinquency in schools sometimes get complicated because the factors causing them are beyond teachers in the guidance and counselling department making it difficult to effectively manage them. School administrators impose punishment in the view that punishment is the most effective way of deterring students from bad behavior. Most schools use documented policies such as school rules that inform students of what is expected of them in maintaining good conduct. Despite such policies schools continue to experience juvenile delinquency. The situation has been escalating over the years since the abolition of corporal punishment in Kenyan schools. A study by Loeber and Hay (1997) shows that many teachers have to deal with undisciplined students due to increased juvenile delinquency. Neely and Griffin-williams (2013) discovered in a related study that the proportion of juvenile offenders increased from 6,318 to 13,108 per 100,000 between 2008 and 2012. This represents an increase of more than 60%. Thus, it is against this background that this study is conducted with the objective of ascertaining the influence of parental aggressive behavior on the prevalence of juvenile delinquency among students in Thika West Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Juvenile delinquency, defined as illegal or antisocial behavior by individuals under the age of 18, has been a growing concern in many regions, including Thika West Sub-County. Studies have shown that the prevalence of juvenile delinquency is influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic status, family dynamics, peer influence, and educational environment. In the context of Thika West, research indicates a rising trend of delinquent behaviors among students, manifesting in acts such as truancy, vandalism, theft, and violence. According to a report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (Lucy & Muriithi, 2022), there has been a significant increase in juvenile crime rates in the past decade, reflecting broader societal issues such as unemployment, poverty, and limited access to quality education. These findings underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies (Gitau, 2018).

Parental behavior, particularly aggressive behavior, has a profound impact on the psychological and social development of children. Aggressive behavior by parents, which includes physical violence, verbal abuse, and emotional neglect, creates a hostile home

environment that can adversely affect a child's well-being. Research by Prevention and Cornell (2019) highlights that children exposed to high levels of parental aggression are more likely to develop behavioral problems, including aggression, defiance, and delinquency. Furthermore, Craig (2002) posits that children learn behaviors through observation and imitation, suggesting that exposure to aggressive behavior by parents can lead to the internalization and replication of such behavior by children. This theory has been supported by numerous studies, which have found strong correlations between parental aggression and subsequent delinquent behavior in children (Kramer-Kuhn & Farrell, 2016).

In Thika West Sub-County, the issue of juvenile delinquency is particularly pronounced among students, reflecting broader socio-economic and cultural dynamics. A study by Kiche Solomon, Muhindi and Thinguri, (2020) found that a significant number of students in the region are involved in delinquent activities, driven by factors such as peer pressure, lack of parental supervision, and economic hardship. The study also highlighted the role of family dynamics, particularly the prevalence of aggressive behavior among parents, in shaping children's behavior. Interviews with educators and social workers in Thika West revealed that many students from homes characterized by aggressive behavior exhibit higher rates of truancy, academic underperformance, and involvement in criminal activities (Mugambi & Kamau, 2022). These findings suggest that addressing parental behavior, particularly aggression, could be a key strategy in reducing juvenile delinquency in the region (Kamau & Njeri, 2019).

The interrelationship between parental aggressive behavior and juvenile delinquency has been the subject of extensive research, with numerous studies indicating a strong correlation between the two. For instance, a longitudinal study by Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber (2016) found that children exposed to parental aggression were significantly more likely to engage in delinquent behavior during adolescence. This relationship is mediated by various factors, including the child's emotional and psychological response to aggression, the modeling of aggressive behavior, and the lack of positive parental support and guidance. In Thika West, the cultural context and socio-economic challenges exacerbate these dynamics, making children more vulnerable to the negative effects of parental aggression (Muthoni & Kariuki, 2021). Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes supporting families, promoting positive parenting practices, and providing resources for children affected by aggression (Gitau, 2018). By focusing on these areas, it is possible to mitigate the impact of parental aggressive behavior on juvenile delinquency and create a more supportive environment for the development of children in Thika West Sub-County.

The Attachment Theory

The foundation of this research is attachment theory. This theory was developed by John Bowlby (1977–1980) and has been advanced by John Muhia (2021). Its central thesis is that for emotional and social growth to proceed normally, children must form a bond with a minimum of one primary caregiver (Hentges, 2023). This theory was selected to guide this investigation because it consistently places analytical importance on the fundamental need for children to have a lasting relationship with a minimum of one primary caregiver for emotional and social growth. Positive establishment of later psychological and personality traits is attributed to the development of an emotional connection to a long-term caregiver. An abrupt separation from known individuals or a carer's marked incapacity to be responsive, sensitive, or consistent in their interactions are examples of events that disrupt attachment, and may negatively impact a child's sentimental and mental growth in both the immediate and future. Bowlby's main point is that many people suffer serious consequences to their mental and psychological health as a result of not having a warm, continuous, and close connection with their parents, during which both parties find happiness and pleasure (Li, Ma, & Zhang, 2023).

For the purpose of survival, children's attachment, according to Bowlby, J. (1980), is essentially a process of close proximity seeking for a discovered attachment figure in noticed anxiety or alarm (Brown, 2002). Children develop attachments to parents when they are consistent, show sensitivity and responsiveness in their social interactions with them (Loeber & Hay, 1997). Parental emotional presence, guided by the attachment theory, should encompass more than just parents being there for their kids out of the blue; it should also involve parents consciously wanting to meet their kids' psychological and emotional needs. This promotes the social and psychological stability needed for a well-behaved child's development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was modelled upon the Ex-post facto design. This design was retrospectively being applied to the study variables under consideration. These variables namely parental aggressive behavior and delinquent behavior are already manifested in the participants. Therefore, these variables can only be studied as they are currently manifested. The design was also being appropriate as it was required of the participants to respond to questionnaires since it deals with quantitative data.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted when selecting the sample for this study. The two schools were classified as strata. From each stratum, cluster sampling placed the boys and girls into clusters. Simple random sampling was then used to pick the proportionate sample from each cluster. From each cluster 10% of the population was selected into the sample. The sample size was presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size

Name of School	Girls	Boys	Total
Kimuchu Secondary School	30	20	50
Queen of the Rosary Mixed Secondary School	20	15	35
Total	50	35	85

Source: Researcher 2023

Table 1 shows that 30 girls and 20 boys from Kimuchu Secondary School with a total of 50 were selected. From Queen of the Rosary Mixed Secondary School, 20 girls and 15 boys with a total of 35 students were selected. This translated to 85 students as the sample size for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher printed hard copies of the questionnaire. Together with 2 trained research assistants, principals of the selected 2 schools were approached for permission to administer the questionnaires. With administrative support from the schools, students were sampled. Those who were to be in the sample were briefed about the study upon which they signed the consent form. The participants were then issued with a questionnaire and given a minimum of 20 minutes to fill the questionnaire. After filling the questionnaire, the researcher and the assistants collected the questionnaires from the participants.

The questionnaires were screened then coded and then keyed in the SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics namely counts, percentages and means will be used. Inferential statistics

namely the linear regression was used to test the null hypotheses. Every hypothesis was examined at the significance level of 0.05. Pie charts and tables were used to display the results.

RESULT

This section covers the results presentation, analysis and discussions. The study had a 100% return rate as all questionnaires were returned.

Gender of the Respondents

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the respondents' gender. Figure 1 presents the study's findings.

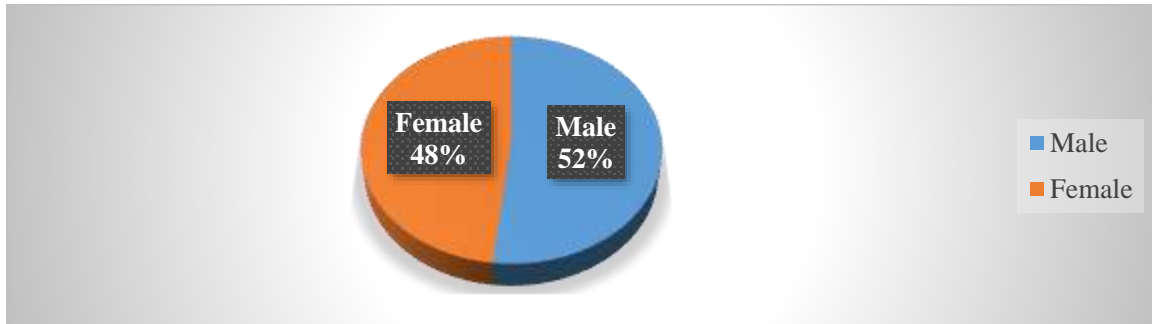


Figure 1: Gender

According to the study's findings, 52% of the learners who participated in the research were male and 48% were female. The findings indicate that the study gathered data from both gender thus eliminating any chance of gender bias.

Parental Status

The study findings indicate that 62.1% of the students had both parents, 32.9% had single parents and 5% had no parents. The findings were crucial since the presence of the parent plays a key role in the behavior of the students both at home and in school.

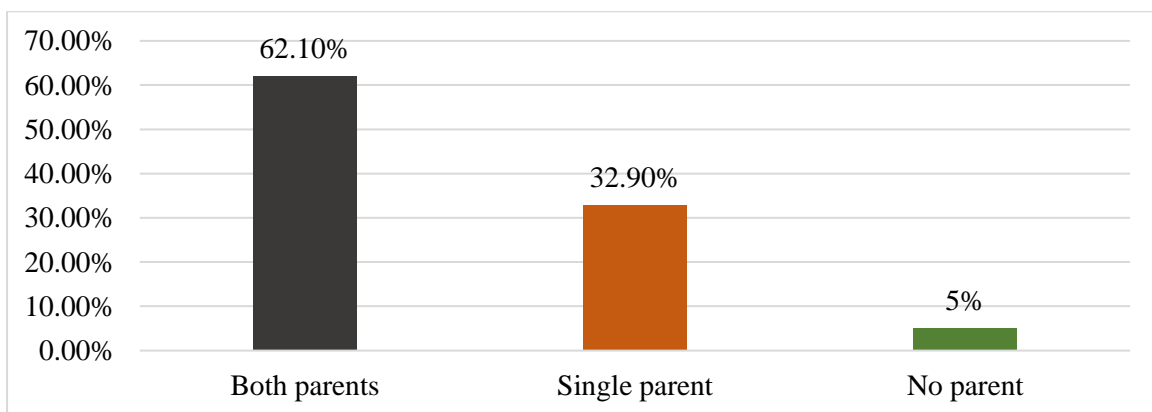


Figure 2: Parental Status

Students Delinquent Behaviour

The study sought to determine the prevalence of juvenile delinquency among students in selected schools in Thika West Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Findings are captured in table 2.

Table 2: Delinquent Behavior

Delinquent Behavior	Mean	SD
I have damaged family property	1.9704	1.10383
I have damaged school property	1.7085	.93486
I have damaged public property	1.9321	.95501
I have stolen a motor vehicle	1.8315	.97990
I have bought/sold/held stolen goods	1.9142	1.04043
I have ran away from home	2.2390	.90699
I have carried a hidden weapon	2.2686	.90536
I have attacked someone with the intent to harm them	2.1619	.99495
I have stolen from family members	2.1748	1.03704
I have hit a teacher at school	2.1992	1.04440
I have hit a family member or peer	2.3293	1.01886
I have bought/sold/held drugs	2.1434	1.00611
I have broken into a building	2.1660	1.00113
I have been consumed alcohol	3.9779	.92670
I have spent a night out partying	4.1673	.80669
I have taken part in a robbery	3.9700	.86659
Mean	2.494	.5442
Mean score	38.774	7.6414

Source: Field Data (2023)

The study findings indicate that respondents who have damaged family property had a mean of 1.9704 and a SD of 1.10383 indicating that there was an agreement. I have damaged school property had a mean of 1.7085 and a SD .93486 indicating that there was a strong agreement with the statement. I have damaged public property had a mean of 1.9321 and a SD of .95501 indicating a strong agreement with the statement. I have stolen a motor vehicle had a mean of 1.8315 and a SD .97990 indicating a strong agreement with the statement. I have bought/sold/held stolen goods had a mean of 1.9142 and SD of 1.04043 showing a strong agreement with the statement. The study findings of I have ran away from home had a mean of 2.2390 and a SD of .90699 indicating an agreement with the statement. I have carried a hidden weapon had a mean of 2.2686 and a SD of .90536 indicating an agreement among the respondents. I have attacked someone with the intent to harm them had a mean of 2.1619 and a SD of .99495 indicating that there was an agreement with the statement. I have stolen from family members had a mean of 2.1748 and SD of 1.03704 indicating that there was an agreement among the respondents regarding the statement. I have hit a teacher at school had a mean of 2.1992 and a SD of 1.04440 indicating an agreement with the statement. I have hit a family member or peer had a mean of 2.3293 and a SD of 1.01886 indicating that there was an agreement towards the statement. I have bought/sold/held drugs had a mean of 2.1434 and SD of 1.00611 showing that there was an agreement. I have broken into a building had a mean of 2.1660 and a SD of 1.00113 indicating that there was an agreement with the statement. I have

consumed alcohol had a mean of 3.9779 and a SD of .92670 indicating undecidedness among the respondents. I have spent a night out partying had a mean of 4.1673 and a SD of .80669 indicating a disagreement with the statement. I have taken part in a robbery had a mean of 3.9700 and a SD of .86659 indicating that there was undecidedness among the respondents. The statements had a mean of 2.494 and SD of .5442 indicating an agreement with the statement and thus showing that there was delinquent behavior among the students. The statements also had a mean score of 38.774 and a SD of 7.6414 indicating that delinquent behaviour because the score ranged between 16 and 48.

Prevalence of Parental Aggressive Behavior

The table 3 presents data on various forms of parental aggressive behavior, showing the mean scores and standard deviations (SD) for each behavior. The behaviors assessed include the use of harsh physical punishment, yelling or shouting, using derogatory language, restricting children's movements, exhibiting aggression towards other family members in front of children, threatening physical harm, blaming children for household problems, ignoring children's emotional needs, using intimidation, and unfavorable comparisons causing emotional distress.

The mean scores for these behaviors range from 2.1234 to 2.7890, indicating varying levels of agreement among respondents regarding their engagement in these behaviors. The highest mean score (2.7890) is for parents threatening their children with physical harm during moments of anger, suggesting this is the most commonly reported aggressive behavior. In contrast, the lowest mean score (2.1234) is for restricting children's movements as a form of punishment, indicating this is the least commonly reported behavior.

The standard deviations range from 0.98765 to 1.12345, reflecting the variability in respondents' answers. The behavior with the lowest variability (SD = 0.98765) is yelling or shouting at children when they misbehave, while the behavior with the highest variability (SD = 1.12345) is using derogatory or demeaning language towards children during arguments. This suggests that while yelling or shouting is relatively common and consistent among respondents, the use of derogatory language varies more widely.

The data highlights significant instances of aggressive behavior among parents, with certain behaviors, such as threatening physical harm and yelling, being more prevalent. This underscores the need for interventions aimed at reducing parental aggression to improve the emotional and psychological well-being of children.

Table 3: Prevalence of Parental Aggressive Behavior

Parental Aggressive Behavior	Mean	SD
I have frequently used harsh physical punishment as a form of discipline for my children.	2.3456	1.04532
I often yell or shout at my children when they misbehave.	2.6789	0.98765
I have used derogatory or demeaning language towards my children during arguments.	2.4567	1.12345
I have restricted my children's movements as a form of punishment (e.g., locking them in a room).	2.1234	1.06543
I have exhibited aggressive behavior towards other family members in front of my children.	2.5678	1.00432
I have threatened my children with physical harm during moments of anger.	2.7890	1.09876
I have blamed my children for problems in the household.	2.2345	1.01234
I often ignore or dismiss my children's emotional needs when they are upset.	2.6789	1.04567
I have used intimidation to control my children's behavior.	2.3456	1.07654
I often compare my children unfavorably to others, causing them emotional distress.	2.5678	1.08765

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals a high prevalence of delinquent behavior among students, as evidenced by various forms of property damage, theft, and violent actions. The mean scores and standard deviations indicate strong agreement among respondents about their involvement in these activities. Specifically, actions such as damaging school and public property, stealing motor vehicles, and holding stolen goods were reported with notable consistency. Additionally, behaviors like running away from home, carrying hidden weapons, and attacking others also showed significant agreement. The findings on parental aggressive behavior indicate that parents frequently engage in actions like threatening physical harm and yelling at children, with mean scores ranging from 2.1234 to 2.7890. The variability in responses, particularly in the use of derogatory language, suggests diverse experiences among respondents. These results highlight the critical need for targeted interventions to address both student delinquency and parental aggression, aiming to foster a safer and more supportive environment for children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should introduce behavioral intervention programs to address and reduce delinquent behaviors. Programs like mentorship, counseling, and conflict resolution training can help students develop better coping mechanisms and decision-making skills.

Conduct workshops and training sessions for parents to educate them on the negative impacts of aggressive behavior. Providing resources and strategies for positive parenting can help reduce the prevalence of harmful behaviors towards children.

Schools should collaborate with community organizations to create a supportive network for students. Engaging community leaders, law enforcement, and social services can provide a comprehensive approach to addressing delinquency. Develop robust systems for monitoring

and reporting delinquent behavior and parental aggression. Early identification of issues can lead to timely interventions and support for affected students and families.

Promote Positive Extracurricular Activities: Encourage students to participate in sports, arts, and other extracurricular activities that provide positive outlets for energy and creativity, reducing the likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior.

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