

## Perceived parenting style, self-esteem and socio-economic status in juvenile delinquents

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### ABSTRACT

Parenting has been a well-researched area in the fields like psychology and other public health services, but less importance has been given to the parenting style that has been perceived by their children. This study aims to examine the relationship among perceived parenting style, self-esteem and socio-economic status of juvenile delinquents. 30 juvenile delinquents of age ranging 15 to 17 were administered with questionnaires for parenting style, self-esteem and socio-economic statuses and the responses were scored and analysed. The result suggests that there exists a weak correlation between perceived parenting style and self-esteem. But there was no significant difference on perceived parenting styles across different socio-economic statuses. The results also claim that there is no significant difference on self-esteem across different socio-economic status.

**Keywords:** *Perceived Parenting Style, Self-Esteem, Socio-Economic Status, Delinquency, And Adolescents.*

**T**he nature vs. nurture debate is never ending. At some point in our lives we would have found ourselves imitating our parents, be it physical imitation or mental aspects, parenting influences development of any organism to a very greater extent not only human beings. Even though it is apparent that parenting alone is not the sole variable influencing development of an individual which is evident by studies saying that “parent’s and family’s influence tend to gradually decrease after the age of 17 after which the major impact in the development is caused due to social and environmental factors.” (Flynn, 2016)

There are considerable numbers of researches to support nature or nurture or both as behavioral influences. It cannot be denied that parenting is probably the most important public health issue faced by our society. The large number of studies conducted in this area clearly shows the importance it plays in an individual’s development. It can be said as the single largest variable implicated in childhood illnesses and accidents; teenage pregnancy and substance misuse; truancy, school disruption, and underachievement; child abuse; employability; juvenile crime; and mental illness. Parenting is not confined to biological

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parents but also includes teachers, nurses, and other primary caretakers that fulfil the role of their parents. Good parents are often considered to care, control and work for the development of their children. Although a reasonable consensus exists about “bad parenting,” there is no argument about it, particularly in a diverse and rapidly changing society.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The data was collected from the residents of the juvenile observation home in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. The permission for data collection was acquired from the Tamilnadu State Government’s Department of Social defense, Chennai. The sample was male juvenile delinquents from the government observation home in Tiruchirappalli district in Tamilnadu. Sample size was 30, collected using purposive sampling and the tools used are *The Parental authority questionnaire* by Dr. John R. Buri, *Rosenberg self-esteem scales (RSES)* and *The Kuppuswamy’s Socio Economic Status scale (revised in 2017)*. The parental authority questionnaire and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale was translated into Tamil and then was back translated into English after which these tools were validated by external experts. This is because the population considered in this study is juvenile delinquents who might understand the questions better in their first language, Tamil.

**Inclusion criteria:** The sample included Juvenile delinquents who are in an observation home (away from home), whose age ranges from 15 to 17 years; that is, adolescent juvenile delinquents, who have at least one parent/ parental figure alive, who have lived with their parent(s)/ parental figure for a minimum of 5 years, who have spent a minimum of 5 year in their home.

**Exclusion criteria:** The sample did not include Juvenile delinquents who have physical disability, who are diagnosed as having any psychological disorder, and Juvenile delinquents who can’t speak and read Tamil or English.

#### ***Data collection and Analyses***

After getting approval from the Tamilnadu Juvenile Justice Board, the Observation home at one of the districts in Tamilnadu is approached. The perceived parenting style questionnaire, the self-esteem questionnaire and the Socio-Economic Status scale was administered on the sample. All the ethics are followed during this research study.

The normality of the data was examined using Shapiro Wilk test in SPSS. After checking normality, the data was not normal hence the spearman’s correlation test was used to study the relationship between self-esteem and perceived parenting style of delinquents, the differences across socio-economic statuses (SES) and perceived parenting style and the difference across Socio-Economic Statuses (SES) and self-esteem of juvenile delinquents were analysed using kruskal Wallis test.

#### ***Ethical considerations***

Since this study involved a very sensitive population, i.e. juvenile delinquents the ethical guidelines that were told by the department of social defense was strictly followed. Apart from that the APA ethical guidelines such as confidentiality was also strictly maintained. Informed consent was taken from the superintendent of the observation home as the participants were juveniles, yet verbal consent was taken from those who participated in the study. Apart from that, the names of the participants was also not disclosed at any point in this research due to ethical considerations. The delinquency behavior that resulted in participants ending up in the observation homes was also not disclosed due to ethical reasons.

**RESULTS**

Normality of the data was checked using Shapiro Wilk test (SWT) in SPSS. The only variable that was normally distributed was self-esteem. Even though self-esteem was normally distributed, the normality value obtained was not very significant. (Self-esteem;  $p=.060$ ). It was slightly higher than the p value. The variable socio economic status was not normally distributed with p value of .008 signifying very low normality rates. The normality for the variable perceived parenting style was not calculated as it was a categorical variable.

*Table 1; shows the relationship between self-esteem and perceived parenting style of juvenile delinquents*

			mother's parenting style	father's parenting style	Self-esteem scores
Spearman's rho	mother's parenting style	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.346	.176
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.061	.353
		N	30	30	30
	father's parenting style	Correlation Coefficient	.346	1.000	.132
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.061	.	.487
		N	30	30	30
	Self-esteem scores	Correlation Coefficient	.176	.132	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.353	.487	.
		N	30	30	30

\* $0.1 < |r| < 0.3$  weak correlation

The first hypothesis of the study was, “There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and perceived parenting style of juvenile delinquents.” The correlations of these variables were checked using spearman correlation test. The results claim that there is a week correlation between self-esteem and perceived parenting style. As the questionnaire allows the participants to score separately for mother’s parenting style and father’s parenting style the variable self-esteem was correlated separately for both mother’s ( $p=.176$ ) and father’s ( $p=.132$ ) parenting style. The correlation values show that the mother’s perceived parenting style has slightly higher correlation when compared to father’s perceived parenting style.

*Table 2; shows the difference in perceived parenting style (father and mother) of juvenile delinquents across Socio-Economic Statuses (SES), difference on self-esteem of juvenile delinquents across the categories of Socio-Economic Statuses (SES).*

	Null hypothesis	test	Sig.	decision
1	The distribution of SES total scores is the same across categories of mother’s parenting style.	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.134	Retain the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of SES total scores is the same across categories of father’s parenting style.	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.713	Retain the null hypothesis
3	The distribution of self-esteem is the same across categories of SES	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.425	Retain the null hypothesis

\*Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance is .05.

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The second hypothesis was “There is no significant difference on self-esteem of juvenile delinquents across the categories of Socio-Economic Statuses (SES).” The difference was checked using the Kruskal Wallis test and the results (mothers perceived parenting style;  $p=.134$ ;  $r=.08$ ), (father’s perceived parenting style;  $p=.713$ ;  $r=.047$ ) show that there was a significant difference on self-esteem across different SES.

The third hypothesis was that “there is no significant difference in perceived parenting style of juvenile delinquents across Socio-Economic Statuses (SES)”. The Kruskal Wallis test result suggests that there was no significant relationship on perceived parenting Style across the categories of SES ( $p=.425$ ;  $r=.059$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In case of perceived parenting style the juvenile delinquents scored their parents more in the category of authoritarian and authoritative and the least in permissive parenting style. In case of mothers, 17% of the participants perceived them as permissive, 40% as authoritative and 43% as authoritarian while fathers were perceived as 23% permissive, 23% authoritative and 54% authoritarian. In other words both the mothers and the fathers were perceived to be more authoritative and authoritarian in nature. Permissive parenting style was least scored, which shows that the adolescent delinquents mostly are not likely to perceive their parents to be permissive in nature. Another thing noticed was that fathers were perceived more permissive than mothers. Apart from the differences in the perceived parenting style among mother and father of the same participant for a few, 63% of the participants have perceived both the parents with the same parenting style.

Self-esteem was the only variable normally distributed and most of the participants range between the score of 10 to 15 which in case of Rosenberg self-esteem scale is said to have low self-esteem. Apart from these 7 participants also range among 15 to 20 and have normal self-esteem. Self-esteem has a very weak correlation with mothers’ and fathers’ perceived parenting style. Hence it can be inferred that adolescent delinquents perceive themselves as responsible for their action as reflected through their low self-esteem. This makes sense as most of them scored low on self-esteem showing that they blame themselves for the act they did and not their parent’s parenting.

In socio economic status almost all of them were from lower middle class and lower class. Statistically, 70% of the participants belong to upper lower class, 20% from lower middle class, and 10% from upper middle class. As most of the studies in the review of literature suggests higher SES was correlated with self-esteem. This study also claims the same as the results of Kruskal Wallis test suggests that there is no significant difference in self-esteem across the categories of SES. This might be because of lack of fulfilment of the resources in early period of their lives.

By the end of the perceived parenting style questionnaire, one open ended question was asked which was neither scored nor included in analysis in any way. The question was if their mother/father was neglectful towards the child for which every one answered ‘No’. This question was asked just to cover all four parenting style, and also because the questionnaire did not include neglectful parenting style. Some participants did not have father, for which the average of other father scores was taken and used for that purpose.

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Since the participants included were only males most of them scored their mothers positively as authoritative and their fathers as authoritarian in nature, this can be clearly in accordance with the Freudian principles of Oedipus complex.

### ***Findings***

Through this study it has been found that the adolescent (juvenile) delinquent's self-esteem is weakly correlated with the parenting style that is perceived to be used by their parents. There is no significant difference on self-esteem across the categories of SES and there is no significant difference on the variable perceived parenting style across different socio-economic statuses.

### ***Implications***

According to the results it seems like these juvenile adolescents considered in the study estimated their self-esteem more on the line of their social engagement and standing in the general society. The presence of a weak correlation between parenting style and self-esteem suggests that research claim that adolescents with behavioral issues and conduct disorder tend to identify themselves more with their peers. And misunderstanding their parent's parenting style might signify that they are less attached to their parents or not often identify parents as a part of their support system.

Hence in order to influence the children in a positive way, it is important for the parents to make sure that their teenage kids know to what level they are actually cared by their parents, for a better understanding between parents and adolescent kids. Parents should act in a way that they outweigh the significance of the kids' peers in their kids mind.

### ***Limitations***

One of the limitations of this study is that the parenting style questionnaire used was more time consuming and resulted in the participants to lose interest in the task. Hence a short break of 5 minutes had to be given after completing the parenting style questionnaire for mother, later after the break they filled in the responses for fathers parenting style.

One more limitation of this study is the sample size ( $n=30$ ). Further research can be done with a larger sample to establish more reliability and validity.

Another significant thing noticed was that the longer the stay the guiltier they felt which was clear in their self-esteem score. In other words, the longer the stay in observation home for delinquents the lower was the self-esteem. Even though this was just generally observed, it was not scientifically based through data collection. Hence there is scope for future research to study the duration of stay and other psychological factors.

### ***Recommendation for Future Research***

There is need for a better parenting style questionnaire, the topic parenting style has very good theoretical background but controversially there are not enough comprehensive questionnaire for parenting style that can be filled by children. Hence, if it is for children to fill about their parents' parenting style, then it would be better to call it perceived parenting style. The most important implication of this study is the need for a better perceived parenting style questionnaire. The parental authority questionnaire used in the study looked upon only three of the parenting styles and has neglected the neglecting parenting style. Therefore there is a strong need for a better questionnaire in this area of research.

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There are so many research evidences regarding the parenting style of the parents from the parents' perspective but almost no standard research from the children's perspective. There is an increases need to develop the concept of perceived parenting style, by developing scales to measure it and new studies relating it to other psychological and physical aspects.

Another implication for future research is that inclusion of female juvenile delinquents in studies like this. There is huge lack of studies in this area involving females. Though the observation home that was contacted for this research had both male and female residents, almost all of the females were victims and were going through rehabilitation.

There is scope for future research to study the duration of stay in the observation home and its relationship with other psychological factors.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

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