

# Exploring the Impact of Parenting Styles on Juvenile Delinquency through the Lived Experiences of Adolescents

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of parenting styles on juvenile delinquency through the lived experiences of adolescents in one of the cities of Misamis Occidental, Philippines. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, twelve adolescents with histories of engagement in violent or risk-related behaviors were interviewed to gain insight into how parental discipline, emotional support, and family dynamics shaped their behavior and decision-making. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' phenomenological framework, emphasizing credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Findings revealed six central themes. Fear-based and overly controlling discipline fostered compliance without moral understanding, often resulting in rebellion, secrecy, and emotional withdrawal. Lack of emotional support and meaningful parental engagement contributed to feelings of isolation, prompting adolescents to seek validation from peers, sometimes leading to risky or antisocial behavior. Positive parent-child communication, empathetic interactions, and emotional presence were associated with trust, internal motivation, and responsible behavior. Peer influence emerged as a substitute for absent parental support, reinforcing the importance of strong family connections. Economic stress and parental fatigue reduced emotional availability, highlighting that emotional support is often valued more than material provision in fostering adolescent resilience and well-being.

The study concludes that parenting practices that combine clear guidance with warmth, empathy, and open communication are essential in promoting moral development, emotional security, and positive behavioral outcomes. It is recommended that parents prioritize consistent emotional engagement, supportive discipline, and attentive communication, even in the face of financial or occupational stress, to reduce the risk of delinquency and strengthen adolescent resilience. These findings provide insights for family-based interventions, educational programs, and policy initiatives aimed at improving adolescent development and preventing juvenile delinquency.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles, juvenile delinquency, adolescent experiences, emotional support, qualitative phenomenology, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale of the Study

Juvenile delinquency continues to be a persistent and complex social concern affecting societies worldwide. Adolescents who engage in behaviors such as truancy, substance use, theft, vandalism, aggression, and other unlawful acts often experience significant disruptions in their emotional, psychological, and social development. Early involvement in delinquent activities may increase the likelihood of continued offending in adulthood and negatively influence an individual's educational attainment, relationships, and future opportunities (Lee et al., 2020). Reports from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020) further emphasize that youth involvement in crime contributes substantially to broader crime patterns globally, highlighting the need to examine contextual factors that shape adolescent decision-making.

Among the various influences associated with juvenile delinquency, the family environment—particularly parenting style—has been widely recognized as a critical determinant of adolescent emotional, behavioral, and social outcomes. Parenting styles, commonly categorized as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, represent distinct patterns of parental attitudes, behaviors, and disciplinary practices that influence children’s socialization, coping strategies, and risk behaviors. Research indicates that adolescents raised in authoritative households, characterized by warmth, guidance, and consistent discipline, tend to exhibit stronger emotional regulation, social competence, and moral reasoning (Xiong et al., 2020). In contrast, authoritarian parenting may contribute to resistance, aggression, and covert defiance, while permissive and neglectful parenting are associated with weak behavioral control, impulsivity, and higher engagement in risky or delinquent activities (Agbi et al., 2024; Chen, 2025).

Although numerous studies have established associations between parenting practices and delinquent behavior, much of the existing research relies primarily on quantitative approaches focusing on statistical relationships. Such approaches often overlook the subjective experiences and perspectives of adolescents, particularly how they interpret parental discipline, emotional support, and family interactions in their everyday lives. Exploring adolescents’ lived experiences can provide richer insight into the processes through which parenting influences behavioral outcomes, coping mechanisms, and decision-making. Qualitative research in this area therefore offers critical perspectives on both the protective and risk factors embedded within family dynamics.

The issue is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where concerns regarding youth delinquency continue to challenge social institutions, educational systems, and community well-being. Studies suggest that certain parenting approaches, particularly permissive or inconsistent disciplinary practices, may contribute to behavioral and academic difficulties among adolescents (Peters, 2024). However, limited research has examined how Filipino adolescents themselves perceive and interpret the influence of parenting on their behavior. By examining these lived experiences, the present study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between parenting styles and juvenile delinquency, offering insights that may inform family-based interventions, school programs, and community initiatives aimed at strengthening parent–child relationships and promoting healthier developmental outcomes among Filipino youth.

## Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the impact of different parenting styles on juvenile delinquency, focusing on how parental discipline, involvement, emotional support, and external factors influence adolescent behavior.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does parental discipline influence the behavior of children and adolescents in relation to juvenile delinquency?
2. In what ways do parental involvement and emotional support affect the likelihood of delinquent behavior among juveniles?
3. How do external factors, such as peer influence and socioeconomic status, interact with parenting styles in contributing to or preventing juvenile delinquency?

## METHODS

The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological design to explore adolescents lived experiences regarding the influence of parenting styles on juvenile delinquency. This approach enabled an in-depth understanding of how adolescents interpret parental discipline, emotional support, and family dynamics and how these factors shape their behavioral decisions. The research was conducted in a selected city in Misamis Occidental, Philippines, providing a contextually relevant setting to examine adolescent experiences within typical Filipino family environments.

Twelve adolescents (7 males and 5 females, aged 14–17 years) with prior involvement in delinquent or violent activities were purposively selected to ensure participants were information-rich cases capable of providing meaningful insights. Participants were included based on their experience of parental influence within the household and their willingness and ability to articulate personal experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, which explored participants' background, perceptions of parenting practices, emotional experiences, and reflections on how parental discipline and involvement influenced their behavior and decision-making. Interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and were conducted in private, culturally sensitive settings to encourage openness and comfort.

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, while assent was obtained from adolescent participants prior to the interviews. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence, and the measures taken to protect their privacy. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing identifying information from transcripts and assigning pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner to ensure participants felt safe sharing personal and sensitive experiences.

The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, which involved reading transcripts multiple times to immerse in the data, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering these meanings into themes, and developing a comprehensive description of the participants' lived experiences. To enhance methodological rigor, the researcher employed strategies such as member checking, peer debriefing, and reflexive journaling to monitor potential biases and ensure transparency in interpretation. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with participants' narratives and cross-verification of emerging themes, dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of interview protocols, coding procedures, and theme development, and confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in verbatim participant statements and demonstrating audit trails. Participant demographic information and contextual details were documented to enhance the transferability of the findings, and thematic saturation was reached when no new themes emerged from the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: Fear-Based Discipline Leads to Obedience Without Understanding

Analysis of participants' narratives revealed that fear-based discipline primarily cultivates compliance motivated by fear rather than genuine moral understanding. Adolescents followed rules not because they grasped their significance, but because they feared punishment. Discipline delivered through threats, shouting, or physical punishment created confusion, fear, and emotional detachment, highlighting how external control overrides moral reasoning. Furthermore, participants emphasized the absence of explanation or guidance, which led to strained parent–child relationships and suppressed ethical reflection.

Participants' statements illustrating this theme include:

*"I followed their rules because I was scared of getting shouted at or hit. It didn't help me change—it only made me want to hide things from them." (P1)*

*"They believed in respect, manners, and religion above everything else. They were strict but loving in their own way. I wasn't allowed to question anything... No explanation, just 'because that's how it should be.' I grew up knowing what to do, but not really understanding why." (P5)*

These findings align with Yang, Xie, Zhang, and Ding (2023), who reported that psychological aggression and corporal punishment in childhood predicts higher adolescent aggression, suggesting that fear-based discipline controls behavior externally but does not foster internalized moral reasoning.

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## Theme 2: Excessive Control Causes Rebellion and Emotional Withdrawal

Participants described experiences of strict monitoring, humiliation, and harsh punishment, which triggered anger, emotional disengagement, and covert rebellion such as lying, truancy, or seeking peer validation. Excessive control weakened emotional bonds, suppressed communication, and increased emotional distance, pushing adolescents to disengage behaviorally and psychologically.

Participants' statements illustrating this theme include:

*"Being hit, shouted at, or humiliated never worked. It just made me angrier and more confused... I began skipping school and hanging out with people who did bad things—not because I wanted to be like them, but because they noticed me."* (P6)

*"The only time my mom got strict was when she was mad or stressed. She'd shout or sometimes slap me, but it wasn't about teaching me a lesson—it just felt like she was letting out her anger. After that, we wouldn't talk for days."* (P4)

These accounts align with studies indicating that authoritarian parenting undermines adolescents' autonomy and encourages secrecy or covert defiance (Laird & Marrero, 2022; Wu et al., 2021), while supportive and autonomy-granting parenting fosters resilience, moral reasoning, and positive behavioral outcomes (Chen et al., 2023).

## Theme 3: Lack of Emotional Support Leads to Feelings of Isolation and Disconnection

Participants frequently reported that although parents were physically present, they were emotionally unavailable, resulting in feelings of neglect, loneliness, and invisibility. Emotional distance reduced the sense of belonging, prompting adolescents to seek validation from peers, sometimes exposing them to risky or antisocial influences.

Participants' statements illustrating this theme include:

*"Since my parents weren't really there emotionally, I turned to my friends. They were the ones who listened, who made me feel noticed."* (P9)

*"But the truth is, we were never close emotionally. I couldn't talk to her about things like crushes, my sadness, or my worries. Whenever I tried to open up, she'd just tell me to focus on my studies."* (P11)

These findings are consistent with Kim and Lee (2021), who found that adolescents perceiving low parental emotional responsiveness experience higher loneliness and lower psychological security, highlighting the importance of parental emotional engagement for adolescent well-being.

## Theme 4: Communication and Emotional Presence Build Trust and Positive Behavior

The study found that adolescents responded positively when parents engaged in calm, empathetic communication and acknowledged their feelings. Such interactions fostered trust, internal motivation, and constructive behavior, reducing reliance on fear or punishment.

Participants' statements illustrating this theme include:

*"The best kind of parenting is when parents talk with you, not just at you... When you feel respected, you want to do better."* (P7)

*"When parents take time to talk, listen, and really understand how their child feels, it changes everything. Kids feel safe. They feel seen."* (P11)

Empirical evidence supports these observations: Boullion et al. (2023) reported that parental warmth and emotional communication improve adolescents' emotion regulation and decrease depressive symptoms, while

Cutrín et al. (2021) showed that supportive parent–child communication protects against behavioral and emotional problems.

### **Theme 5: Peer Influence Replaces Family Connection in the Absence of Parental Support**

Participants indicated that when parental emotional support was lacking, peers became the primary source of acceptance and validation. This substitution sometimes provided emotional relief but occasionally exposed adolescents to risky or antisocial behaviors.

Participants' statements illustrating this theme include:

*"I began skipping school and hanging out with people who did bad things—not because I wanted to be like them, but because they noticed me. For once, I felt seen." (P6)*

*"Because I couldn't open up to them, I started turning to my friends instead. They were the ones I talked to when I was confused or hurt." (P8)*

These findings mirror recent research demonstrating that weak family attachment predicts delinquent peer affiliations, which can reinforce risky behavior (Khan, 2023; Zhou et al., 2023). Prosocial peer relationships, conversely, can mitigate negative outcomes associated with low parental warmth (Zhang & Li, 2022).

### **Theme 6: Poverty and Parental Stress Affect Parenting Quality and Emotional Availability**

Participants highlighted that financial strain and parental stress limited opportunities for emotional connection, contributing to feelings of neglect and emotional disconnection. Adolescents emphasized that emotional support was often valued more than material provision in fostering resilience and well-being.

Participants' statements illustrating this theme include:

*"Even though we're poor, I don't think poverty alone causes problems. What really hurts is when parents are too tired to love the way they used to." (P10)*

*"I've also learned that money can't replace presence... what we really want is them." (P5)*

These experiences align with Kim et al. (2023), who reported that financial hardship increases parental stress and reduces emotional responsiveness, and Arshad and Zaidi (2024), who found that parental stress mediates adolescents' psychological distress. Rivera, Chen, and Johnson (2025) further observed that parental empathy and supportive communication can buffer the negative effects of poverty, enhancing adolescents' emotional regulation and self-esteem.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate that fear-based and overly controlling disciplinary approaches promote obedience without fostering genuine moral understanding, often resulting in secrecy, rebellion, and emotional withdrawal. Adolescents respond more positively when parents combine clear guidance with empathetic communication and emotional support, fostering trust, self-regulation, and responsible behavior. Emotional neglect and lack of meaningful parental engagement contribute to feelings of isolation, leading adolescents to seek validation from peers, which may increase exposure to risky behaviors. Furthermore, financial hardship and parental stress reduce emotional availability and patience, diminishing the quality of parent–child interactions. Despite material provision, adolescents' value emotional support and engagement, which are essential for developing resilience, security, and well-being.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Parents are encouraged to adopt disciplinary approaches that emphasize explanation, guidance, and emotional support rather than fear or rigid control, promoting moral understanding and responsible behavior. Consistent

emotional engagement, attentive listening, and nurturing communication should be prioritized to strengthen adolescents' sense of belonging, self-esteem, and constructive decision-making. Even under financial or work-related stress, parents should make deliberate efforts to provide emotional presence and support, balancing material provision with meaningful interactions to enhance adolescents' emotional security, resilience, and overall well-being

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