

Parental and Peer Influences on Juvenile Delinquency: Case Studies in Malaysia

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Abstract : The family is always seen as the most important agent of socialization, therefore, abusive parents and broken family have often been highlighted as two main factors contributing to juvenile delinquency. However, several studies have indicated that the peer group is one of the most powerful socialization agents in adolescent development, the influences of family are insignificant after peer influences are taken. This study aimed to investigate the relative influence of parents and peers on juvenile delinquency in Malaysia. Malaysia is a multicultural society, so different types of traditional values and religions permeate all aspects of Malaysian society, and the influences of family and parents are always seen as the most important agents of socialization. 80 juveniles from a reform school in Malaysia have been selected to participate in this study. Based on the experiences of juveniles in this study, it found that peer groups play an important role when the adolescents try to create their own identities. Adolescents merely make friends with those who have similar life experiences, so adolescents are easily influenced by their friends and the juvenile delinquency is mostly group behavior. This research found that there is no significant relationship between family factors and delinquency. The data shows that a significant percentage of juveniles come from middle-class family and most of them are not from broken family. However, most of them have strained family relationship. This research suggests that we should take a look into other causes, like peer influence, of juvenile delinquency in Malaysia.

Keywords : juvenile delinquency, peer influence, group behaviour, family relationship

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