

Discipline With Love: Ethnic Differences in the Prevalence of Corporal Punishment, Parental Love and Their Effect on Juvenile Delinquency

Esmah Lahlah*¹ and Mohammadi Laghzaoui²

¹International Victimology Institute Tilburg, Tilburg Law School, Tilburg, the Netherlands

²Department of Culture Studies, Tilburg School of Humanities, the Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Theorists have proposed a causal link between corporal punishment and child aggression. Unfortunately most of this research does not include control variables for parental connectedness, which may exacerbate or buffer the effects of corporal punishment. Further, a recent debate in the literature on the role of corporal punishment in different cultural contexts and its effects on the outcome of children's development raises the question of whether these findings are appropriate for populations other than western and middle-class. Methodological limitations of most previous research narrow down the scope in understanding how the experience of corporal punishment relates to adjustment and whether the effects of corporal punishment differ across ethnic groups. Data analysed was from a sample of 477 Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys. The results of this study show that corporal punishment is associated positively with violent delinquency for both Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys. For Moroccan-Dutch boys, parental connectedness when added to the analysis contributed significantly to the variance on violent delinquency, with maternal connectedness being moderately significant for violent delinquency. However, the addition of emotional warmth for both father and mother for Dutch boys was non-significant. The results suggest that it is important to explore the link between corporal punishment and delinquency within the context of the parent-son relationship. In addition, this study identifies the need to further look at the cultural contexts in which corporal punishment occurs.

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E-mail address:

A.Lahlah@tilburguniversity.edu (Esmah Lahlah)

* Corresponding author

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INTRODUCTION

Parenting risk factors have consistently been highlighted by previous research as significant childhood predictors of juvenile delinquency (for a review see Hoeve *et al.*, 2008; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; O'Brien & Scott, 2007; Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, & Lengua, 2000). One of the most important child-rearing variables often linked to delinquent behaviour is parents' use of corporal punishment (CP) (Gershoff, 2002). In this study, parental use of CP is differentiated from physical abuse, and CP is defined as the "*use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury, for purposes of correction or control of the child's behavior*" (Straus & Donnelly, 2001, p4). Although researchers generally agree on the adverse effects of physical abuse on the outcome of children's development, there is controversy over the risk status of CP with respect to juvenile delinquency in children (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003; Topcuoglu, 2011). Some have found that children subjected to CP tend to be more aggressive than children whose parents use alternative disciplinary strategies (Ateah, Secco, & Woodgate, 2003; MacMillan *et al.*, 1999; Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992; Straus, 1991; Turner & Muller, 2004) and often commit violent crimes as adults (Swanson *et al.*, 2003; Widom, 1989), while others suggest that CP and violent delinquency are not related, after taking into account that parental connectedness influences emotional warmth and involvement (Afifi, Brownridge, Cox, Sareen, 2006; Larzelere,

2000; Porter, 2008). Unfortunately most of this research does not use controls for the afore-mentioned dimensions of parental behaviour (Afifi *et al.*, 2006). This omission is surprising because parental connectedness in childhood and adolescence is usually associated with juvenile offences (Bowlby, 1969; Veen *et al.*, 2011; Wampler & Downs, 2010). In addition, harsh parental disciplinary strategies during childhood have often been linked to disruptions in the parent-child relationship; therefore, it is possible that such disruptions may contribute to violent offences, above and beyond the experience that CP inflicts (Porter, 2008). For example, DeVet (1997) found that for girls, parental relationship partially mediated the association between CP and poor psychological well-being. For boys however, CP was not related to negative adjustment outcomes, although CP by fathers was negatively associated with the father-son relationship. Lansford *et al.* (2004) and Rosemond (2005) found some evidence that physical spanking by a loving parent had no negative consequences for children. In another study, only in the context of low maternal support, CP is predicted to increase over time in aggressive and violent behaviour in children (McLoyd & Smith, 2002).

Recent debates in the literature on the role of CP in different cultural contexts and its effects on children's developmental outcomes raise the question of whether these findings are appropriate for populations other than western and middle-class (Lansford *et al.*, 2004; McLoyd & Smith,

2002). Evaluating ethnic differences on the effect of CP on juvenile delinquent behaviour is important. Understanding of whether the experience of CP relates to violent delinquency and whether the effects of CP differ between ethnic groups is up to now limited due to methodological limitations of a lot of previous research. For example, contextual factors such as low socioeconomic status, family stressors and large family size, all correlated with ethnic minority status, may make parents less flexible, thereby increasing the likelihood that they would resort to CP to gain child compliance (Ateah *et al.*, 2003).

This study seeks to expand understanding of the relationship between CP, parental connectedness and violent delinquency. Furthermore, this study explores if parental connectedness contributes significantly to the development of violent delinquency above and beyond CP; this study also examines the influence of ethnic differences on the effect of parental connectedness on the relationship of CP and violent offences.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the Netherlands, Moroccan-Dutch boys contribute to the highest crime rates compared to other ethnic groups (De Jong, 2007; Jennissen, Blom, & Oosterwaal, 2009); they are about four times more often charged with violent offences as would be expected from their estimated proportion of the population (Broekhuizen & Driessen, 2006). To our knowledge only a few empirical studies on CP have examined the effect of CP in relation to parental connectedness

among different ethnic minority groups in general, or among Moroccan-Dutch youth in particular. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the relationship between CP and violent delinquency in a sample of nearly 500 Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys. The mechanisms previously described suggest two possibilities: (1) parental connectedness has a direct influence on the development of violent delinquency; or (2) parental connectedness has an indirect influence on the development of violent delinquency. In addition, it is possible that ethnic differences have an influence on the effect of parental connectedness on the relationship of physical disciplining and subsequent violent offences.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Data on 477 Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch adolescent boys in the Netherlands form the basis of this analysis. In the Netherlands, the authorities categorise the population as native and non-native or autochthonous and allochthonous. These definitions come from the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS, Statistics Netherlands], and are widely used in the media and everyday language. Non-native inhabitants are further categorised into non-Western and Western and further stretched per generation. Allochthonous are initial first-generation migrants. A second-generation allochthonous is born in the Netherlands, but at least one parent was born abroad. Children from this generation are often referred to as third-generation allochthonous. However, the

aforementioned definitions are not neutral. Stretching this definition to second and third generations makes it a discursive impossibility for descendants of Moroccans to ever become Dutch. Therefore, in this study, adolescents were classified into ethnic categories according to their responses on a single item in the questionnaire: "What is your ethnicity?" Those who responded as Dutch were placed in the Dutch group. Those who designated themselves as Moroccan or Moroccan-Dutch were placed in the Moroccan-Dutch group.

Sample was recruited in two ways. First, respondents were selected from a school sample (N=379) from five high schools from different cities in the Netherlands. Second, with the goal of oversampling delinquent boys (cf. Loeber *et al.*, 2005) participants among boys were recruited and subjected to supervision order, either at the time of the study or in the period preceding the study (N=113), in two (regionally operating) youth probation offices located in the same part of the Netherlands and serving in the same cities as the participating schools. The boys recruited were all suspected or convicted of a criminal offence, but were not in custody nor sentenced to prison. They were school-going youth who all lived with one or both of their parents.

An information letter describing the study was sent to parents who could indicate if they did not wish that their son should participate. Participants were informed that the information provided in the questionnaire would remain confidential and that they were free not to participate

in the research. Inclusion criteria were (a) sufficient reading ability to complete self-report measures (b) age between 15 and 18 years old. As no background information of the non-participants was available, possible non-response bias could not be estimated.

Measures based on the adolescent self-reports provided the indicators for constructs entailing child and perceived parent characteristics. An ongoing debate concerning the relative merits of self-reported delinquency and official statistics in testing the relationship between family factors and delinquency exists (Juby & Farrington, 2001). However, self-report measures provide a widely preferred method of measuring juvenile delinquency in research on family dynamics (Wells & Rankin, 1991). While reliance on official reports might introduce layers of potential bias between actual behaviour and the data (e.g. a substantial amount of crime is not reported; many crimes reported or brought to the notice of law enforcement agents are not officially recorded), self-reports of delinquency are considered as the data source nearest to the actual behaviour (Thornberry & Krohn, 2000).

A member of the research staff was present while the participants completed the questionnaire but did not look at the participants' responses unless the subject asked for help. The participants' anonymity was maintained by ascribing identification numbers to the questionnaires rather than names. At the project site, surveys were judiciously inspected for validity (e.g. incomplete sections or identical responses to

every item). Fifteen boys were subsequently disqualified because they failed the initial validity check. Five boys did not complete the questionnaire; the remainder either filled in identical responses to every item (2) or filled in 'abnormal' high scores on all juvenile delinquency items (8) (for example, stating that he committed each offence a thousand times). All the boys came from the school-sample: 12 of them were Dutch; the mean age was 16.01 (SD=0.91); their socio economic status ranged from medium to high, and nine reported living with parents.

Measures

Demographics

Participants had to indicate their age on a single item: "What is your age?" A measure of social class was captured through the participant's rating of his family's wealth. Responses given ranged as: very rich, quite rich, medium rich, not so rich, not rich. Finally, participants were also asked to indicate their family structure by answering the following question: "Which of the following 'home situations' applies best to you?" 'I live with...' Responses to this item were given as (1) both parents, (b) my father, (c) my mother, (d) both parents at different addresses, (e) other.

Ethnicity

Adolescents were classified into ethnic categories according to their responses on a single item in the questionnaire: "What ethnical group best describes you?" (see also Dekovic, Wissink, & Meijer, 2004).

The present analysis only included those adolescents who designated themselves as Dutch or Moroccan-Dutch. Dutch boys served as the reference category in all regression models in this research.

History of corporal punishment

Assessment of the history of CP was via 5 items of the "Unpleasant and Nasty Incidents Questionnaire" (Dutch: Vragenlijst Vervelende en Nare Gebeurtenissen, VVNG). This questionnaire is based on the *Dating Violence Questionnaire* (Douglas & Straus, 2006) and the *Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales* (CTSPC; Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore & Runyan, 1998). The boys were also asked how often during the past year their parents had used CP, including pinching, slapping, or hitting with their hand. This study also considered the CP incidence committed in the past year. The alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.78, indicating good reliability (Kline, 1999; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1998).

Parental Connectedness

Parental relationship was measured by the "EMBU". The EMBU consists of two parallel questionnaires concerning relationships with fathers and mothers, each with 56 items, and using a 4-point Likert scale. The EMBU provides four factorially-derived subscale measures: Rejection, Emotional Warmth, (Over) Protection and Favouring Subject (cf. Arrindell *et al.*, 1983b; Arrindell & Van der Ende, 1984). The present study only

used the scale of Emotional Warmth (19 items for father and mother respectively), to measure connectedness. The scale of emotional warmth assessed the degree of warmth and closeness in the parent-adolescent relationship and the extent to which parents were seen as giving warm and loving attention, helping the child with projects that were important to him/her without being intrusive, aiding the child through problems in a way best for him/her, having a high regard for the child's point of view, and where the child felt able to confide in his/her parents and to ask for help, and was intellectually stimulated. Alpha coefficients ranged from $\alpha=0.80$ for maternal connectedness to $\alpha=0.87$ for paternal connectedness, both indicating good reliability (Kline, 1999; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1998).

Violent delinquency

Violent delinquency was assessed using the Youth Delinquency Survey done by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice (2005), a self-report measure of delinquent behaviour by the youngsters, comprising six categories of specific criminal acts: Internet offences (six-item index), drug offences (three-item index), discrimination (four-item index), vandalism (seven-item index), property offences (ten-item index of moderate to serious property offences) and violent offences (nine-item index of moderate to serious violent acts). Questions related to minor and frequently occurring offences e.g. "fare dodging in public

transport", "vandalism" or "shoplifting" and also to serious and less frequent ones e.g. "burglary", "robbery" or "hurting someone with a weapon". For each offence, the youngster was asked whether he had 'ever' committed it (lifetime prevalence) and, if so, 'how often in the previous 12 months' (number of incidences in the previous year). For the present analysis only the number of violent incidents committed in the previous year was considered. The alpha coefficient for the scale violent delinquency was 0.81, indicating good reliability (Kline, 1999; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1998).

Social desirability

Since it is possible that there will be a cultural variance in the willingness to self-disclose socially undesirable behaviour (e.g. Junger-Tas, 1996), the social desirability scale from the "Dating Violence Questionnaire" (Douglas & Straus, 2006) was used as a control. The scale consists of 13 items using a 4-point Likert-type scale (i.e. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree and 4=strongly agree) on behaviours and emotions that are slightly undesirable but true for almost everyone such as 'There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone' and 'I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget'. The more a respondent denied these items, the more likely the respondent was trying to avoid admitting the undesirable criminal behaviours that were the focus of this study. Scale reliability of the social desirability measure in this study was fair as the alpha coefficient was 0.63. In general, an

alpha coefficient of 0.60 or higher is the minimum level considered acceptable in the case of short instruments used (Murphy & Davidshofer, 1998), although some methodologists apply a stronger standard of at least 0.70 (Kline, 1999).

RESULTS

Initial Analyses¹

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study participants. More than three quarters of the sample identified themselves as Dutch (76.5%) and the remainder as Moroccan-Dutch (23.5%). Participants of this study ranged in age from 15 to 18, with a mean age of 15.77 years ($SD=0.86$). Almost 12% of the sample indicated their family's socio-economic status as low, rating their family's wealth as not (so) rich. By far, most boys reported that they lived with both parents (84.7%). Significant differences between the groups were found on the variables age ($t=-4.07$, $p=0.000$) and socio-economic status ($\chi^2(4) = 63.67$, $p = 0.000$). To identify any potential confounders a control was necessary for the analysis; the variables described were checked to see if any were significantly related to the dependent variable, violent delinquency. Socio-economic status was found to significantly correlate with violent

delinquency ($r=0.11$, $p<0.05$). However, since the size of this correlation was small, following the guidelines of Cohen (1988), it was not further analysed.

Next, the frequency of having committed a violent act in the past year was examined by ethnic group. On average, Moroccan-Dutch boys (1.82, $SD=2.58$) reported committing significantly more violent acts in the past year than their Dutch peers (0.79, $SD=1.37$) ($t=4.08$, $p=0.000$). Given the possibility of cultural variance in willingness to self-disclose socially undesirable behaviour (e.g. Junger-Tas, 1996), a social desirability scale served as a control. The overall mean score on social desirability was 32.56 ($SD=4.74$). No significant differences in mean scores were found between the two groups ($t=-0.83$, $p=0.41$).

Independent t-tests

Furthermore, we examined the descriptive statistics of the independent variables. Subjects' mean sum score on CP was 7.7 ($SD=4.27$, range 5-33) indicating that on average, the boys in the sample experienced CP by a variety of severe disciplining behaviours (e.g. pinching, slapping, hitting with the hand). On average, Moroccan-Dutch boys reported a higher frequency of CP than their Dutch peers (9.6, $SD=4.88$ compared to 7.2, $SD=3.90$ respectively, $t=0.47$, $p=0.000$). As for parental connectedness, Dutch boys reported significantly higher levels of emotional warmth for their father and mother respectively, than did Moroccan-Dutch boys ($t=7.34$, $p=0.000$ and $t=6.81$, $p=0.000$ respectively) (see Table 2).

¹All analyses were performed on the total sample as well as the school and offender sample separately. Similar patterns in results (although effect sizes differed) in the separate samples were found as in the total sample, indicating that the results from the total sample did not suffer from sample selection bias. The report on the results of the separate samples have been omitted to save space. They are available upon request.

TABLE 1
Sample Characteristics

	Dutch (<i>N</i> = 365)		Moroccan-Dutch (<i>N</i> = 112)		<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>D</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Age	15.67	0.77	16.10	1.04	-4.07	0.00	-0.47
Social desirability	32.46	4.75	32.88	4.71	-0.83	0.41	-0.09
Violent delinquency	0.79	1.37	1.82	2.58	-4.08	0.00	-0.50
	% (<i>N</i>)		% (<i>N</i>)		χ^2	<i>P</i>	<i>V</i>
Socio-economic Status					63.67	0.00	0.37
Very rich	4.4% (16)		1.8% (2)				
Quite rich	34.8% (127)		7.1% (8)				
Medium rich	54.5% (199)		62.5% (70)				
Not so rich	5.2% (19)		20.5% (23)				
Not rich	1.1% (4)		8.0% (9)				
Family structure					9.88	0.13	0.14
Both parents	81.9% (299)		93.8% (105)				
My father	1.4% (5)		0.9% (1)				
My mother	5.5% (20)		2.7% (3)				
Parents at different addresses	10.1% (37)		2.7% (3)				
Other	1.1% (4)		0.0% (0)				

Note. Discrepancies between totals when summed up reflect rounding errors.

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations (SD) of Independent Variables (*N* = 477)

	Dutch boys		Moroccan-Dutch boys	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Corporal punishment***	7.2	3.90	9.6	4.88
<i>Parental connectedness</i>				
Emotional warmth -- Father***	59.7	13.82	45.7	18.49
Emotional warmth -- Mother***	61.0	11.86	49.5	16.62

Significant differences between Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys, using *t* tests

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001

Hierarchical Regression Analyses

A positive and significant correlation was found between the scores on frequency of CP and violent delinquency ($r=0.37, p<0.01$). A negative and significant correlation was found between the scores on emotional warmth -- father and violent delinquency ($r=0.34, p<0.01$) and on emotional warmth -- mother and violent delinquency ($r=0.35,$

$p<0.01$), respectively. These correlations were all medium-sized (Cohen, 1988).

Next, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed with violent delinquency as the dependent variable. Given the number of conceptually related independent variables under consideration in this model, a correlation matrix of all predictor variables was scanned. Field (2009) identifies multi-

colinearity if correlates are above 0.90. There were no correlates higher than 0.90 (the largest value was 0.75). The next variance inflation factors (VIF) calculated to check for multi-collinearity (Field, 2009). Meyers (1990) noted that VIF values that are greater than ten suggest harmful collinearity. There were no VIF's greater than two (the largest value was equal to 2.30) for the predictor variables on the dependent variable, violent delinquency, suggesting that multi-collinearity between the independent variables did not affect the model's stability.

Results at step 1 of the regression model show that frequency of CP significantly and positively predicts violent delinquency, $\beta=0.37$, $p<0.001$ (Table 3). When placed on the same regression step with parental connectedness (step 2), physical disciplining still accounts for a significant portion of variance in violent delinquency, although this association is less powerful compared with step 1 ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.001$ on step 2 versus $\beta=0.37$, $p<0.001$ on step 1, Table 3). In addition, both emotional warmth for father and mother contribute negatively and significantly in predicting violent delinquency, $\beta=-0.14$, $p<0.05$ and $\beta=-0.15$, $p<0.05$ respectively, when controlled for frequency of CP. They significantly explain an extra 6.6% of the variance in violent delinquency ($\Delta R^2=20.5\%$, $\Delta F(1,476)=76.97$, $p=0.000$).

TABLE 3
Violent Delinquency Regressed on CP and Parental Connectedness ($N = 477$)

	B	SE	B
<i>Step 1</i>			
Corporal punishment***	.15	.02	.37
<i>Step 2</i>			
Corporal punishment***	.12	.02	.28
Emotional warmth -- Father*	-.02	.01	-.14
Emotional warmth -- Mother*	-.02	.01	-.15

Step 1: $R^2=14.0\%$, Step 2: $\Delta R^2=6.6\%$, $\Delta F(1,474)=19.54$, $p=.000$

* $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.001$

To determine whether it was necessary to analyse separately by ethnicity, regression analyses were conducted utilising both ethnicity as a main effect and sets of interaction terms (Ethnicity \times CP and Ethnicity \times Parental Connectedness), to test whether ethnicity added any explanatory power beyond the independent variables CP and parental connectedness already included in the model. Hierarchical regressions were run for self-reported violent delinquency. The independent variables were entered at the first step, ethnicity as a main effect at the second step, and then the set of interaction term(s) which applied to that particular analysis entered at the third step. The test of both main effect and interaction terms was necessary to thoroughly exhaust the possibility that ethnicity may add explanatory power which will need further investigation through separate analyses. In the analysis involving CP as the independent variable, the main effect of ethnicity accounted for 2.6% of variance of violent delinquency ($\Delta R^2=0.03$, $p=0.000$). In addition, ethnicity added another 1.4% of

the variance ($\Delta R^2=0.01$, $p=0.005$) through the subsequent entry of the Ethnicity x CP interaction terms (entered at the third step of the regression after the independent variable as well as ethnicity had been partialled out). For the analysis involving parental connectedness as the independent variables, the main effect of ethnicity accounted only for 1.3% of variance of violent delinquency ($\Delta R^2=0.01$, $p=0.008$). In addition, ethnicity added another 3.8% of variance ($\Delta R^2=0.04$, $p=0.000$) through the subsequent entry of the Ethnicity x parental interaction terms. These findings indicate that ethnicity plays an important role in the relationship between self-reported delinquency, CP and parental connectedness. The fact that these tests revealed a significant amount of variance explained by both ethnicity and the interaction term sets is an indication that it is necessary to complete subsequent regression analyses separately by ethnicity. Table 4 and 5 present the results of separate hierarchical regression analyses.

Stepwise, hierarchical regression analyses for Dutch boys revealed that CP accounted for 9% of the variance in violent delinquency. Adding both emotional warmth for father ($\beta=-0.08$, $p=0.18$) and mother ($\beta=-0.02$, $p=0.71$) to the analyses resulted in non-significant variances ($\Delta F(1,362)=1.83$, $p=0.16$). However, for Moroccan-Dutch boys CP accounted for 16.2% of the variance in violent delinquency. Parental connectedness when added contributed an additional 13.7% of variance, with emotional warmth for mother being moderately significant as predictive of violent delinquency ($\beta=-0.35$,

$p=0.07$) when controlled for CP. Finally, a test of the comparability of the regression coefficients for the independent measures for both groups was conducted. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the effect of CP on violent delinquency was moderately significantly stronger for Moroccan-Dutch boys than for Dutch boys ($z=|1.86|$, $p=0.06$). In addition, it could be concluded that the effect of the level of emotional warmth for mother on violent delinquency was moderately conditioned by ethnicity of the sample; for Moroccan-Dutch boys the emotional warmth they felt for their mothers had a negative and significant effect on violent delinquency in comparison with their Dutch peers, where no significant effects were found ($z=|1.90|$, $p=0.06$). No significant differences between both groups were found for emotional warmth for father ($z=|0|$, $p=1$).

TABLE 4
Violent Delinquency Regressed on CP and Parental Connectedness for Dutch Boys ($N = 365$)

	B	SE B	B
<i>Step 1</i>			
Corporal punishment ***	.11	.02	.30
<i>Step 2</i>			
Corporal punishment ***	.10	.02	.27
Emotional warmth -- Father	-.01	.01	-.08
Emotional warmth -- Mother	-.00	.01	-.02

Step 1: $R^2=9\%$, Step 2: $\Delta R^2=1\%$, $\Delta F(1,362)=1.83$, $p=.16$
* $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.001$

TABLE 5
Violent Delinquency Regressed on CP and Parental Connectedness for Moroccan-Dutch boys ($N = 112$)

	B	SE B	B
<i>Step 1</i>			
Corporal punishment ***	.21	.05	.40
<i>Step 2</i>			
Corporal punishment ***	.14	.05	.27
Emotional warmth --	-.01	.03	-.05
Father	-.06	.03	-.35
Emotional warmth --			
Mother †			

Step 1: $R^2=16.2\%$, Step 2: $\Delta R^2=13.7\%$, $\Delta F(1,110)=10.56$, $p=.000$

† $<.10$ * $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.001$

DISCUSSION

This study examined three issues. The effect of CP on violent delinquency is the first issue. Overall, the results demonstrate a strong relationship between CP and violent delinquency. This is in line with previous studies (Afifi *et al.*, 2006; Ateah *et al.*, 2003; Gershoff, 2002, Lansford *et al.*, 2004; Porter, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that we found negative responses to what could be defined as harsh or punitive parenting style. These findings lend support the idea that CP plays a significant role in the development of violent delinquency, and adds to the growing body of knowledge regarding the cycle of violence, which states that violence begets violence (Widom, 1989).

Second, this study explored the relationship between violent delinquency and parental connectedness. As hypothesised, the results show that parental connectedness makes an additional, independent contribution to violent delinquency development, which underlines the relevance of assessing parental connectedness in

identifying children's vulnerability to CP in violent delinquency development. Parental connectedness is thus able to account for a significant part of the variance above and beyond the variance that frequency of CP is able to explain.

Third, this study assessed the influence of ethnic differences on the effect of parental connectedness on the relationship of CP and violent offences. Like many prior studies (e.g. Decovic *et al.*, 2004; Bowlby, 1969; Veen *et al.* 2011; Wampler & Downs, 2010), the results obtained demonstrated a significantly higher score on CP for the Moroccan-Dutch boys in comparison with their Dutch peers. In addition, the Moroccan-Dutch boys showed significant lower scores for emotional warmth for father and mother respectively, in comparison with the Dutch group (Stevens *et al.*, 2007). Stevens (2004) reported that Moroccan-Dutch adolescent boys grew up with far less affection, responsiveness, induction, discipline and monitoring, and with more autonomy than their Dutch peers. This is in line with our findings. In addition, ethnic differences were found on the effect of parental connectedness on the relationship of CP and violent offences. To confirm whether boys with low levels of parental connectedness were more likely to commit violent acts, the findings revealed that both emotional warmth for father and mother were negative and significantly correlated to violent delinquency for Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys, suggesting that boys who experienced low parental warmth were more likely to engage in

violent delinquency. However, both CP and parental connectedness were differentially predictive of violent delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch and Dutch boys, showing a larger effect on the outcome measure for Moroccan-Dutch boys. Specifically, the effect of CP on violent delinquency was significantly larger for Moroccan-Dutch boys in comparison with their Dutch peers. In addition, parental connectedness made an additional independent contribution to violent delinquency, with emotional warmth for mother being moderately significant as predictive of violent delinquency for Moroccan-Dutch. Research on ethnic families suggests differences in family socialisation practices and cultural values taught at home between Moroccans and Dutch (Pels & De Haan, 2007; Pels, 2000). For example, Moroccan parents tend to instil collectivism in their children rather than the individualism of mainstream Dutch culture. The different effects of maternal and paternal warmth on violent delinquency for Moroccan-Dutch boys could be explained by the differential child-raising roles between men and women which still exist in Moroccan culture. Traditionally for Moroccans, gender is an important marker of social space relevant for child raising (Laghzaoui, 2011; Pels & De Haan, 2007). The worlds of men and women are relatively separate, and are mainly found in the public domain and the privacy of the home, respectively. The role of the father is that of the patriarch and therefore, the father's authority is paramount and undisputed. He is not directly involved

with his children's upbringing, but is responsible for their behaviour. Moroccan mothers are the primary caretakers and often function as an intermediary between father and child(ren). Although this strict gender division has changed over the past few decades due to education and, as more women enter the labour market), the ideology of motherhood and the central role of women in the upbringing of children are still strongly adhered to (Pels & De Haan, 2007).

There are several limitations in this research that should be noted. First, the reliance on adolescent self-reports as sole indicator for violent delinquency, CP and parental connectedness. With respect to assessing violent offences and parental connectedness, rather than relying on youth self-reports, official crime reports and parental reports respectively could provide additional information as a method of validating and extending adolescent self-reports. Second, the sample used was relatively small and with no female participants. A larger sample size which includes female subjects would have potentially allowed for additional measures and/or variable measures at multiple levels included, allowing for a different analysis to further explore the determinants of violent delinquency development. As a result, this study can serve as a starting point for future research with a larger sample of boys and girls of both native as well as different ethnic descents. Finally, the data are cross-sectional and thus causal inferences regarding CP, parental connectedness and

criminal involvement cannot be made. Use of longitudinal designs would help to address this shortcoming.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of this study raise several implications on the efforts to prevent violent delinquency. Given that both Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys reported committing violent delinquent acts with some frequency and that CP experiences were significantly related to violent delinquency for both groups, it is important that both groups and their parents receive prevention services that reduce risk, enhance protection and lessen the likelihood of violent delinquency. In addition, the results of this study raise awareness on the need to consider differences in how Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch boys may cope under similarly harsh parenting styles. Further, this study identifies a need to further look at the cultural context in which CP occurs, the feeling of connectedness between parents and adolescents and other parenting practices such as a range of non-physical disciplinary strategies, communication, and family rules; hence, there is a need for further research regarding ethnic differences in parental connectedness.

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