INFLUENCE OF SIBLINGS AND BIRTH ORDER IN DEVELOPMENT OF CRIMINALITY IN JUVENILES: A STUDY FROM ODISHA

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Abstract
No one is a born criminal. One becomes a deviant because of the environment in which one grows. The environment basically refers to family and the situation one lives in. In the family along with parents siblings too play a crucial role in a child’s learning process. If in a family one child gets involved in criminal risk taking behavior other children may also follow the same risk taking path. Therefore, the present study addresses the following: the effect of the deviant behavior of a child on his/her siblings, the effect of deviant sibling on other siblings in the family and the effect of birth order of a child in developing deviant behavior. A total of 116 delinquents (boys and girls) were interviewed using semi structured questionnaire, from the four Government run Observation and Special homes of Odisha state. Thematic analysis of the interviews was then conducted. The study has found that having a deviant sibling in a family has a negative effect on other siblings. The study has also found more middle born children are involved in crime. It is further revealed that the influence of family, peers and desire for instant economic gain are other factors along with sibling influence.

Keywords: Child, Crime, Criminality, Deviant, Order of birth, Siblings

1. INTRODUCTION

Number of studies have shown and validated that crime concentrates in families (Beaver 2013, Healey & Ellis 2007). Family environment plays a pivotal role in the development of the non-cognitive skills and subsequent delinquency in a child (Briening et.al. 2017). A family having an antisocial or criminal child is more likely to have another child involved in the same or different antisocial or criminal behavior or activities (Beaver, 2013). It can therefore be said that in a family along with the parents, siblings also play an important role in the development of a child. Siblings share the same genetic
traits, parents, socialization, and common influences from peers and neighbors among various other things. Studies indicate that siblings influence one another on a day to day basis. They act as each other’s confidants, companions and social partners (McHale et.al. 2012). Siblings usually have a great deal of influence on each other. They learn from one another as they are exposed to similar kind of environment/situations (Biejer et.al 2017). They learn not only socially accepted behavior but also socially refuted behavior from each other. Siblings who are born very close to each other have a greater influence on each other. Therefore, birth order of a child can act as one of the determining factors in the development of criminality in a child. The position one holds among his/her siblings is known as birth order. Birth order can act as a determining factor for siblings to influence each other. Studies conducted on understanding the relation between birth order and development of criminal behavior found that middle born children are often prone to crime than first and last born children (Bègue and Roché, 2005, Cundiff, 2013).

1.1 Sibling influence

Many researchers have studied the role of sibling on the development of criminal behavior based on several contexts: different countries, different kinds of sibling pairs, self-reporting versus official data, several kinds of crime, and diverse ways to measure criminality. One such study was conducted by Ferguson in the year 1952. In this cross sectional comparison study between delinquent and non-delinquent, he took 1349 Glasgow boys who dropped out of school under the age of fourteen years. It stated that the probability of being convicted was high in case of boys who had a convicted elder brother is 33% or a convicted younger brother is 38% or a convicted father is 24% (as cited in Farrington et.al, 2001, p. 579-580). The relation that exists between elder and younger siblings’ delinquency may be connected to various factors. First, elder siblings who have committed certain delinquent activity may act as a role model during early adolescence (10 – 14 years of age) of their younger siblings and the later will begin to experiment with delinquent behavior (Patterson, 1984). Secondly, some younger siblings may conclude that participating in delinquent activities will increase their value and popularity among their peers, particularly if their elder sibling is apparently popular.
for such conduct. Social learning theory and Patterson (1984) suggests that younger siblings will be likely to follow the behaviour of their older siblings due to the process of social learning. Social learning theory explains that people learn certain behaviour and attitude from others by observing them and in due course of time they modify their behaviour to the extent of the observed behaviour (Bandura, 1978). Similarly it can be said in case of siblings, a child may observe criminal behaviour of his or her sibling(s), learn from it, and eventually show criminal behaviour himself or herself. They follow their siblings when they see their sibling’s behaviour as a successful way of attaining a goal, for example, to gain popularity among friends. Genetic traits too can play an important role in explaining the similarity in offending behaviour by siblings than between unrelated persons (Beaver, 2013 and Farrington et.al, 2001). Siblings are usually under the same kind of risk factors for offending (Farrington et.al, 2001) as they share similar kind of situations and environment. This phenomenon need not be unidirectional in nature.

Not only family, siblings sometimes may share similar kind of peer group too. So when siblings share similar delinquent peers they develop the risk of being influenced by them and get involved in similar kind of offense.

### 1.2 Birth order and delinquency

Social scientists have long explained the effects of birth order and family size on the intelligence and educational achievement of a child. But very few studies have been conducted to understand and explain the effects of birth order and family size on development of deviance and delinquency in a child (Cundiff, 2013). Several studies conducted to study the relationship between the order of birth and development of deviant behaviour in a child explain that middle born children are more prone to committing crime and acting out than those of first and last born children (Rahav, 1980, Argy et.al, 2006, Bègue and Roché, 2005, Cundiff, 2013). The first work done on explaining the role of birth order is done by Adler (1928) in his work “Characteristics of the First, Second, Third Child” where he explains the reason for birth order theory and reason why middle born child is more prone to committing deviant activity. He explains that first born child is usually a perfectionist and such children adhere to societal values and rules. They are often intelligent and laborious in their attitude.
Whereas children who are of middle order of birth face maximum sibling competition. This can lead to development of maximum stress and strain for the middle order. Adding to it divided parental attention can lead to increase in problems like adjustment and identification of role (Baskett, 1984), thus leading to development of troubled behaviour in them. Tygart (1991) explains that there exists a curvilinear relationship between birth order and delinquency. This curvilinear relationship may be the reason why middle order children lack parental supervision and love. Thus, in order to compensate for the lack of care and attention from parents, the middle born child usually gets associated with peers, thereby, using delinquency as a way to get approval and appreciation from the peers (Cundiff, 2013).

Another theorist named Sulloway in the year 1996 in his book named Born to Rebel explains the major role of birth order on the tendency to rebel in a child. He explains that later born were more likely to rebel than first born (as cited in Solomon, 1998). The theory assumes that siblings who are raised together have different personalities of their own. Sulloway explains that these differences in personality of the siblings are due to rivalry over family resources, such as parental affection and parental resources (as cited in Cundiff, 2013, p. 3-4). Sulloway’s born to rebel hypothesis suggests that rebelliousness is a possible mechanism behind the effects of birth order. His emphasis on rebellion leads to the development of risk-taking and drastic changes in behavioral pattern.

Studies have been conducted to understand the influence of birth order for a long time in social psychology and economics (for example Adler (1928), Sulloway (1996)) (Breining et.al, 2017). Though some studies have emphasized the influence of family variables, viz parental income, parental care, parental relation, and sibling influence etc. on development of criminality in a child, till date no concrete evidence has been found on the exact nature of influence of the birth order on the development of criminality. Therefore the present paper tries to find relation between birth order and sibling in development of criminal behaviour in a child as well as the influence of a deviant siblings on his/her sibling’s development of criminality.

2. PRESENT STUDY
The present study is conducted based on the information collected from the respondents’ personal experiences and
their opinions on why they got involved in the criminal act. The purpose of this study is to show how sibling relationship works in the development of criminality and to understand whether birth order plays a role in getting a child involved in crime. Based on the following two aspects, the following two research questions were formulated:

RQ1. To find whether having a delinquent sibling leads to development of delinquent behaviour in other siblings?
RQ2. To find whether there is any relationship between individual offending and their birth order among the siblings?

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants
Data was used from a population of 116 children (100 boys and 16 girls) between the ages of 12 and 18 years of age who are present in three Observation and Special Homes for boys and one Observation and Special Home for girls present in Odisha state. The juvenile convicts from all over the state are kept in these four Observation and Special Homes. All the juveniles present in these four Observation and Special Homes under various crime during the time of research are taken into consideration.

3.2 Data collection
The demographic information about the delinquents are taken from the official records. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on the participant to learn the reasons behind their commission of crime and with whom they have committed the crime.

3.3 Procedure
Approval for the study was taken from Department of WCD (Women and Child Development), Government of Odisha. Consent to contact the delinquents and to collect the necessary information was taken from both the department of WCD and the superintendent of the Observation and Special Homes. The delinquents were fully informed verbally regarding the details of the study to be conducted by the researcher under complete confidentiality and anonymity regarding their identity and their response. Though data have been collected from all 116 delinquents, narratives applicable only to the present study have been used.

4. DATA ANALYSIS
Thematic analysis technique was used to examine and record the patterns within the interviews. This method of analysis is used as it recognizes implicit and explicit themes from a data set. The researcher has therefore used the information collected
from the delinquents who have their siblings involved in the criminal act too to get an understanding of the themes that motivated them to commit crime. Inductive (bottom up) method is used to identify the themes within the study (Frith and Gleeson, 2004). Patton (1990) states that this method uses theme within the data which are strongly related to each other. This method is used to understand the personal opinion of the delinquents and the influence of various factors that have led them to commit crime. Based on the findings from the thematic analysis of the data descriptive statistics is used to show how birth order and criminality are related in fig 1. This clearly shows that middle born children (boys and girls) have committed more crime than first and last born.

5. RESULTS

The outcome of the thematic analysis of the interviews collected from the delinquents brings out some interesting results leading to development of criminality in non-delinquent siblings on account of the influence of delinquent siblings. Apart from role of siblings, the study also found that the family’s role, peer pressure and expectation of instant economic gain contribute to the development of criminality in a child.

5.1 Sibling’s role

This theme explains the role played by the siblings of a delinquent child in order to influence him/her to commit crime. Siblings influence each other in direct or indirect ways. Therefore, it can be said that when among siblings, one turns into a delinquent, the delinquent sibling can influence the others too based on the kind of positive outcome he/she has achieved from the criminal act. For example: a female child delinquent stated that

“While committing pick pocketing in the railway station I was caught red handed. My elder brother too commits pick pocketing in the train. But my brother has never forced me to commit the act with him. I have committed the crime on my own without any pressure from my brother. I have committed the act because of the positive outcomes (instant money) my brother received from the act”.

It is clear from the above narrative that even though her brother didn’t involve her in his crime, the girl learned to commit the crime from her deviant brother.

Another such example, a boy clearly explained that

"I was caught while stealing a bike. My younger brother had once stolen a bike and had got a good sum of money by selling the parts of the bike. I too wanted..."
money to fulfil my own needs. So I too tried to steal a bike and sell the parts of the bike and get a good sum of money. But alas, I was caught by the owner and was handed over to the police”.

It is, therefore, clear that even though a delinquent child may not directly include their other siblings in their criminal act, the siblings still learn from their delinquent sibling. Siblings influence each other directly. A delinquent sibling inspires and guides his/her non-delinquent siblings to join him/her in the criminal activity. For example a boy stated that “I have committed robbery in a house along with my brother and my brother’s friend. My brother had promised me and his friend a fair share in the money and goods stolen”.

Another example of the sibling influence as stated by the delinquent “I along with my brother committed the crime. My elder brother had planned the entire act along with his friends and have involved me in the act. I joined my brother because my brother convinced me that his heist will help me in making some quick money”.

There are many such cases from the data that have clearly shown that siblings influence one another directly or indirectly. The siblings learn and follow each other, when there is a positive outcome. Basically, if one of the sibling is a delinquent and had got positive outcome from the wrong doing, the other siblings learn and follow suit with the expectation of getting the same results.

Economic wellbeing of the family is another aspect which has led to children committing crime alone or with their family members. Only two such cases are found where a child commits crime along with the family members for the economic well-being of the family. For example: one delinquent states, “I committed the crime along with my father, elder brother and uncle to feed my family. We are very poor and cannot afford to eat, full stomach every day. So in order to provide a stomach full meal to my family members, I committed the crime along with them”.

In another example a delinquent explained “I along with my elder brother and father looted a vegetable store. We had no food in the house nor any money to buy food for ourselves. So my father along with my elder brother planned to loot the shop and I joined willingly”.

Sibling’s role combined with the role of family, peer pressure and desire for instant
economic gain plays a crucial role in the development of criminality in children as are discussed above. Another factor that is discussed in the study is the influence of birth order in the development of criminality in a child.

5.2 Effect of Birth Order

Birth order refers to the order in which a child is born in the family. The birth order can be divided into three categories first born, middle born (children born after first born and before the last born) and last born. It is found from the study (refer Fig. 1) that middle born children (74.2 percent) have committed more crime in comparison to first born (32.5 percent) and last born (27.8 percent). Even when divided based on gender it is found that 56 percentage of boys involved in crime are middle born and 56.5 percentage of girl’s involvement in crime are middle born (refer Table 1). However, from the thorough analysis of the available data, no cases explaining the exact reason behind the rising rate of crime committed by middle born is found. Nonetheless, in criminal act the involvement of middle born girl child (n=16) is found to be 25 percent and of middle male child (n=100) is found to be 5 percent (refer Table 2) due to deviant siblings.

6. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to find out the role played by a delinquent sibling/s in the development of anti-social behaviour in other siblings and the effect of birth order. In the study the influence of delinquent siblings on their other siblings is found. Apart from the influence of sibling, three other influences leading to the development of criminality in a child are found: role of family, peer pressure and expectation of instant economic gain. These influences conform to the previous research, which have acknowledged the involvement of siblings in the development of criminality as well as the influence of family and peer on the children.

The study has found no explanation regarding the influence of birth order on child’s commission of crime While some studies conducted on birth order (Capra and Dittes, 1962; Edwards and Klemmack, 1973; Ernst and Angst, 2012; Freese et al., 1999; Hauser and Sewell, 1985; Kammeyer, 1967; Schooler, 1972; Seff et al., 1993; Steelman & Powell, 1985; Townsend, 2000) show that the relation between birth order and development of criminality is very little, other studies have been conducted to understand the effect of birth order on aspects like substance abuse and sexual
activity but found little or no relationship between birth order and these antisocial behaviour (Cundiff, 2013; Argys et al. 2006; Averett et al. 2011). Some researchers (Hirschi and Slevin, 1967; Lees and Newson, 1954; Merrill, 1947; Glueck and Glueck, 1950) in their studies conclude that large family size is a reason why delinquency is more in the middle born (Rahav, 1980). The present study finds no information from the data collected from the delinquents to explain why crime rate is high in the middle born child nor found any substantial evidence to explain the role of birth order in developing criminal behaviour. Thus the ground is still open for further research on the subject to find reasons so as to explain the influence of birth order on developing criminality in a child.

The current study has found that the influence of one sibling on another sibling is greater in a family setup. Elder siblings act as role model for younger siblings in many cases, especially, in case of developing criminal behaviour. The study has found a lot of evidences where younger siblings follow the path of their elder siblings. It is also evident from the study that if one sibling gets a positive reward for committing crime then in order to gain the same positive reward other sibling/s follow suit. Stating the same finding on the influence of elder sibling on their younger sibling Virginia Commonwealth University (2014) conducted a study and found that elder siblings transfer the risk of violent behaviour to their younger siblings. So it is evident that siblings influence each other and the elder siblings exercise greater influence on their younger siblings. Apart from understanding the influence of siblings on one another, other environmental factors (family, peer and desire for economic gain) also have their influence.

The study does have its limitations. In the study only the statements given by the juvenile delinquents present in Observation and Special Homes are taken into consideration. No further explanation from any other source validating the information given by the children has been collected. The study is conducted in a limited time frame. Despite the limitations, the study does not negate the understanding of the existing literatures regarding birth order and role of siblings in the development of criminality. Rather it adds some facts to the literature regarding ideas which are to be looked into in future research for further understanding the reasons. The study tries
to provide a broader understanding to the policy makers and professionals working with the juveniles regarding the influence of sibling and other factors. The role of sibling along with the above environmental factors may help the professionals to better understand the kind of situation and the influence a child had which had led him/her in to the path of criminality.

CONCLUSION

Previous studies conducted on the influence of sibling and the role birth order in development of criminality in children have provided evidence that there exist is a positive relationship between the influence of deviant sibling on other siblings and no or less effect of birth order on the children.

The present study does not negate any previous existing literature on sibling’s influence and the role of birth order in the development of criminality in children. Rather, it adds to the literature. The study found that having a deviant sibling in the family affects other siblings. When the outcome of the crime is positive for the deviant of the crime is greater. Not only siblings but also various family factors (bad parenting skill, poverty of the family, social status of the family) also play a significant role in the development of criminality in children.

Bad peers when coupled with poverty also play a crucial role in the development of criminality in siblings as they share same social setup (neighborhood, social group). Need of money is found to have lead many siblings to commit crime together and with their family members as well.

In the study no evidence explaining the role of birth order in the development of criminality in children is found. Rather, the result of the study has found that middle born children have committed more crime than first and latter born which is similar to the findings of the previous literature. Thereby leaving a scope for future research in this area.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Certain recommendations can be provided for further researches in the area of sibling delinquency and the role of birth order and their relationships to future offending. First, longitudinal study needs to be conducted to clearly understand of the role of siblings and birth order. Second, further research is needed to elaborate the reasons why siblings follow in the foot prints of their siblings. While some factors are highlighted in the study (family social status, poverty of the family, common
friendship network), but there may be other existing factors like (sibling competition and bond) which can lead a child to be influenced by his/her deviant sibling. Third, though not much evidence is found on the role of peers and siblings together in development of criminality in a child, yet further studies on the combined effect of peers and siblings should be conducted as more researches have been conducted on the influence of peers than siblings influence (Deutsch et.al, 2012; Lahey et.al, 2008). These information will guide in further research in the area of siblings influence on the development of criminality. Four, further research on the role of birth order leading to development of criminality in children needs to be conducted. Though studies have found the middle born children commit more crime yet no concrete evidence on why middle born commit more crime is found. Thus leaving an open ground for further research on the role of sibling and birth order on development of criminality in children.

REFERENCES


List of Figure

**FIG 1: CRIME COMMITTED BY CHILDREN BASED ON BIRTH ORDER (IN PERCENTAGE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First born</th>
<th>Middle born</th>
<th>Last born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Table 1: Birth order of the juveniles based gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth order of the juveniles</th>
<th>Girls (n=16) in %</th>
<th>Boys (m=100) in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First born</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle born</td>
<td>56.25</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last born</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Influence of siblings on committing crime by juveniles based on their birth order**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth order of the juveniles</th>
<th>Girls (n=16) in %</th>
<th>Boys (m=100) in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First born</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle born</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last born</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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