

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL MONITORING, ASSOCIATION WITH DEVIANT PEERS AND DELINQUENCY

Ivana Vrselja & Anja Wertag
Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Various theories on the development of delinquency underscore the central role of inept parenting (e.g., parental monitoring) in the development of antisocial behavior (e.g., Moffitt, 1993; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). On the other hand, there is evidence that parental influences are small and insignificant after peer influences are taken into account. Most theoretical models point to the increasing impact of deviant peers in early adolescence (e.g., Scaramella, Conger, Spoth, & Simons, 2002). This period in life represents a critical transition phase, in which friends' roles in developmental adjustment become especially salient and deviant peers play a main role in intensifying antisocial and delinquent behavior. Thus, there is substantial empirical evidence that parental monitoring exerts an indirect influence on adolescent problem behavior through association with deviant peers. That is, poorly monitored adolescents seek out like minded peers and thereby increase and expand their problem behaviors. Most studies of this topic have been conducted on male samples. Understanding the sex differences in delinquent behavior is important with respect to the assessment of needs for these youth and the development of policies and programs designed to target these behaviors.

AIM The aim of this study is to explore whether parental monitoring contributes to delinquency directly or indirectly through association with deviant peers, and whether this differs for boys and girls.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Research was conducted on a representative sample of 887 elementary school students (463 boys) of age 12-15. Data was gathered within a broader national survey on experimental implementation of the Croatian National Education Standard (HNOS) , conducted by Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar in 2006.

Measures

Delinquency was measured with a *Self Reported Risk and Antisocial Behavior Scale*, which is an adapted and shortened version of a *Self Reported Social Deviations and Antisocial Behavior Scale* (Šakić, Franc and Mlačić, 2002) that was developed on the basis of Elliot and Huizinga's (1982) *Self-Reported Delinquency Scale*. Respondents are asked whether they have engaged in certain activities over the past year. This scale consists of 28 items scored on a 6-point scale (1- *never*; 2- *once*; 3- *two times*; 4- *3 to 5 times*; 5- *6 to 12 times*; 6- *more than 12 times*). Because of the relatively small share of students who had more than once or twice engaged in certain behaviors, the result on the whole scale was established as the average number of different risk and delinquent acts during the past year reported at least once. Thus, results established in this way can vary in the range from 0 to 28, with higher score indicating a more pronounced expression of risky and delinquent behavior .

Parental monitoring includes 2 items: *Do your parents know where you are when you're not at school or at home?* and *Do your parents know with whom you hang around?* Respondents' task was to answer these two questions on a 4-point scale (1- *they never know*; 2- *they don't know most of the time*; 3- *they know most of the time*; 4- *they know all the time*). These two questions are combined into an index, with higher score indicating a more pronounced parental monitoring.

Association with deviant peers scale was designed for the purpose of this study, and it includes 13 items. Respondents' task was to indicate on a 5-point scale how many of their friends had have committed various forms of deviant behavior (1-*none*; 2- *few of them*; 3- *many of them*; 4- *majority*; 5- *all of them*). The result on the whole scale was established as the average number of deviant friends, with higher score indicating more deviant friends.

RESULTS

Both direct and indirect contribution of parental monitoring to delinquency was assessed with regression analyses, separately for boys and girls. In the analysis one, we examined direct influence of parental monitoring while controlling for parental harmony and frequency of parental alcohol drinking. Indirect contribution of parental monitoring to delinquency through association with deviant peers was assessed with mediation analyses. Apart from establishing that parental monitoring is significantly related to the delinquency, testing for mediating role of association with deviant peers in relationship between parental monitoring and delinquency involves establishing that parental monitoring is significantly related to the association with deviant peers; that the association with deviant peers is significantly related to the delinquency; and that when controlling for the effects of the association with deviant peers on the delinquency, the effect of the parental monitoring on the delinquency is no longer significant. If parental monitoring is no longer significant when association with deviant peers is controlled, the finding supports *full mediation*. If parental monitoring is still significant but smaller in size, the finding supports *partial mediation*. However, this procedure does not indicate the size of the indirect effect, nor whether or not the indirect effect of the parental monitoring through the association with deviant peers is significant. The Sobel test examines whether the indirect effect of the independent variable (i.e. parental monitoring) on the dependent variable (i.e. delinquency) through the mediator variable (i.e. association with deviant peers) is significantly greater than zero.

Table 1. Summary Results of Mediation analyses for Boys and Girls

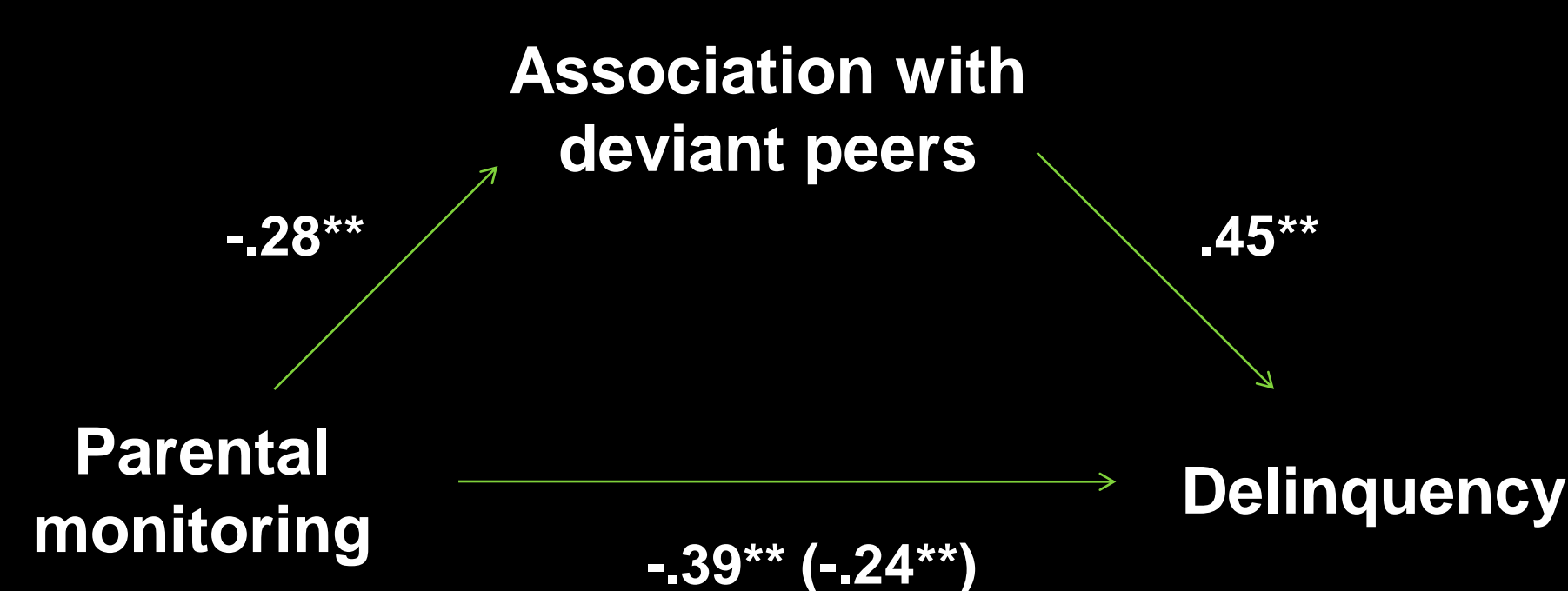
	Boys				Girls			
	R	R ²	ΔR ²	β	R	R ²	ΔR ²	β
Analysis One ^a								
Delinquency on Parental monitoring	.32	.11**		-.19**	.41	.17**		-.39**
Analysis Two ^b								
Association with deviant peers on Parental monitoring	.29	.08**		-.16**	.37	.14**		-.28**
Analysis Three ^c								
Step 1: Delinquency on Parental monitoring	.34	.12 **		-.17**	.41	.17 **		-.24**
Step 2: Delinquency on Association with deviant peers	.38	.14**	.23**	.16**	.58	.34**	.17**	.45**

a, b, c Control variables included parental harmony and frequency of parental alcohol drinking
* p < .05 ** p < .01

Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the association of parental monitoring and deviant peers with delinquency in boys



Figure 2. Diagram illustrating the association of parental monitoring and deviant peers with delinquency in girls



CONCLUSION

This study showed that parental monitoring exerts direct contribution to the delinquency of boys and girls likewise, although it is more pronounced in girls sample. In both samples parental monitoring showed indirect contribution to delinquency through association with deviant peers, however, the Sobel tests showed that these indirect effects were not significant.

REFERENCES

- Elliot, D. S., Huizinga, D. (1982). *Social Class and Delinquent Behaviour in a National Youth Panel: 1976-1980*. Boulder: Behavioral Research Institute.
- Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100, 674-701.
- Patterson, G. R., Reid, J. B., Dishion, T. J. (1992). *Antisocial boys*. Eugene, OR: Castalia.
- Scaramella, L. V., Conger, R. D., Spoth, R., Simons, R. L. (2002). Evaluation of a social contextual model of delinquency: A cross-study replication. *Child Development*, 175-195.
- Šakić, V., Franc, R., Mlačić, B. (2002). Samoiskazana sklonost adolescenata antisocijalnim devijacijama [Self-expresses tendency of adolescents towards social deviations and antisocial behaviour]. *Društvena istraživanja*, 11 (2-3), 265- 289.