

# The Role of Student-Teacher Relationship on Effects of Maltreatment on Juvenile Delinquency

Jinju Back and Yanghee Lee

**Abstract - Objectives:** Society has been experiencing rapid change, in which adolescents have increasingly faced with difficulties with balanced development and social adaptation. Juvenile delinquency caused by such difficulties is the most serious social problem. Most of research has reported that family relationship is largely the cause for juvenile delinquency. To prevent the problems associated with parental maltreatment, efforts to identify variables that primarily affect juvenile delinquency are needed. Student-teacher relationship is considered as important protective factors in the ecosystem. Thus, this study analyzed the relationship among parental maltreatment, juvenile delinquency, student-teacher relationship. In addition, the moderating effects of student-teacher relationship in relation to parental maltreatment, and juvenile delinquency were also verified. **Method:** This study used data from Korean Youth Panel Survey (KYPS) conducted by National Youth Policy Institute. Participants were 2,253(1,136 boys, 1,117 girls) middle school students (9th graders) in 3<sup>rd</sup> wave data. We extracted eight questions relating to maltreatment, fourteen questions relating Juvenile delinquency, and five questions relating to student- teacher relationship. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis were used.

**Results:** First, parental maltreatment was positively related to juvenile delinquency. And student-teacher relationship was also negatively related to juvenile delinquency. Second, the moderating effects of student-teacher relationship on effects of parental maltreatment on juvenile delinquency were evident. **Conclusion:** To prevent juvenile delinquency that experienced parental maltreatment, this study has broad clinical and policy implications. Positive student-teacher relationship is an important protective factor of alleviating the negative consequences of parental maltreatment.

**Keyword:** *maltreatment, juvenile delinquency, student-teacher relationship*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Society has been experiencing rapid change in which adolescents have increasingly faced with difficulties with balanced development and social adjustment. Juvenile delinquency which is a result of these difficulties is becoming a serious social problem. White Paper on Adolescents 2014 reported that juvenile crime has been steadily increasing until 2009 when it decrease momentarily, but continued to increase thereafter. Although the population of adolescents decreased, the rate of juvenile delinquency is reported to be increasing[1]. The concept of juvenile delinquency is defined differently according to age, country, society, scholars, but this is mostly reported to be undesirable activities [2],[3]. That juvenile delinquency goes beyond deviation from societal norms or laws, but to comprehensively include personality problems and social maladjustment is the consensus identified by many researchers [4],[5],[6],[7],[8].

Most of previous research reported that family relationship is the main cause of juvenile delinquency and they focused on especially delinquent behavior caused by maltreatment or domestic violence[9],[10],[11],[12]. Adolescents who have experienced maltreatment or have witnessed domestic violence were the focus of much research because they are more vulnerable to other risks. Hoffman- plotkin and Twentyman(1984)[13], and Agnew(1992)[14] found that adolescents who experienced maltreatment tended to abuse alcohol and substance, exhibit impulsivity, are impatient, and are more aggressive. Moreover, many research reported that these youth tended to be more violent, engage in theft, and sexual assault[15],[16],[17]. Prevention of socially maladaptive behaviors, including delinquency, is of utmost importance. For effective prevention, it is necessary to identify variables that primarily influence delinquency. Stable student- teacher relationship is a highly important factor in the adaptation of juvenile delinquents[18],[19]. Adolescence is a period of establishing and expanding personal relationships outside of the family. Since adolescents spend much of their time spent in school, teachers are in essence important significant others [20].

The higher the student-teacher attachment, the better the student adapts to school[21]. The positive student-teacher relationship influences on the overall behavior of adolescents including cognitive and emotional aspects[22],[23]. Therefore, it is expected that the student-teacher relationship is an important factor influencing juvenile delinquency. Meanwhile, when it comes to juvenile delinquency, the relationship between risk factors and protective factors interact with each other. Corapci(2004)[24] explained that protective factors bring positive effect regardless of the level of risk factors. In other studies, protective factors buffer the negative effects resulting from the interaction of risk factors[25],[26]. Therefore, it can be expected that positive student-teacher relationship can be main factors that moderate the effects of maltreatment on juvenile delinquency.

Most of the previous studies have dealt with the relationships between juvenile delinquency and adolescents who experienced parental maltreatment[27],[28],[29], or identified protective factors of juvenile delinquents with maltreatment[30],[31],[32]. Therefore, this study assumed that student-teacher relationship is the second independent variable influencing juvenile delinquency and the level of maltreatment has an interaction effect. Based on these assumptions, the objective of this study is to explore whether student-teacher relationship has a moderating effect on the negative impact of parental maltreatment.

Following are the questions guiding this study:

(1) Is there a significant relationship among juvenile delinquency, maltreatment and student-teacher relationship?

(2) Is there the moderating effects of student-teacher relationship on effects of maltreatment and juvenile delinquency?

II. METHOD

Participants

This study used data from Korean Youth Panel Survey (KYPS) by National Youth Policy Institute. It was conducted for seven years from 2010 through 2016 with a short-term longitudinal design for first and fourth year in elementary school, and first year in middle school. 2012 (3rdwave) data from third year of middle school students were used in this study. From the third wave data, 2253 data samples from third year of middle school students (1,136 boys, 1,117 girls), were selected from the original 2351 samples.

Procedure

We conducted data analyses of juvenile delinquency, maltreatment and student-teacher relationship in the total data of third year of middle school students from the 3rd wave. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis were used.

Measure

All the measures used in this study are based on a self-reported scale. A detailed description of how each variable was related is provided below.

**Juvenile delinquency.** Items related with juvenile delinquency by National Youth Policy Institute were modified and used. It included smoking, drinking, absence, running away from home, teasing others, bullying, taking away money or goods, stealing money or goods, sexual intercourse and sexual harassment. Response options provided were 0 to 1 (0=commit juvenile delinquency 1=didn't commit juvenile delinquency).

**Maltreatment.** Some items of the Child Maltreatment Scale[33] were used to measure parental maltreatment. This scale consisted of 4 items on 4 point Likert scale (1= very untrue, 4=very true). The questions included "If I was sick, my parents provided me with appropriate treatment", "Parents ask me something related school with attention", "When I make mistakes, parents punish severely", and "When I make mistakes, parents just hit me".

**Student-teacher relationship.** To measure student- teacher relationship, we used some items of School Adjustment Scale[34]. It was measured by 5 items on a 4 point Likert scale (1= very untrue, 4=very true). The questions included "When I meet teachers, I greeted well", "It is easy to talk with teachers", and "Teachers are friendly to me.".

III. RESULT

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for the analytic sample (N=2253) are provided in Table 1. The proportion of male and female youth within the study sample was nearly the same. The Mean of sum

for juvenile delinquency is .30(SD=.87). The mean of maltreatment is 14.73(SD=3.86) and student-teacher relationship is 14.44(SD=3.15).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of main variables

Variables	M	SD	Range	n of items	Cronbach α
Maltreatment	14.73	3.86	1-4	8	.75
Student-teacher relationship	14.44	3.15	1-4	5	.84
Juvenile delinquency	.30	.87	0-1	14	.67
Gender(%)					
Boy	50.4				
Girl	49.6				

Note. maltreatment, student-teacher relationship: 1=very untrue, 4=very true.

Correlations for juvenile delinquency, maltreatment and student-teacher relationship

We examined whether there were significant relationships among three factors, juvenile delinquency, maltreatment and student-teacher relationship. Parental maltreatment was positively related ( $r=.10, p<.01$ ) to juvenile delinquency. Student-teacher relationship was negatively related to maltreatment ( $r=-.15, p<.01$ ). And student-teacher relationship was also negatively related ( $r=-.09, p<.01$ ) to juvenile delinquency.

Table 2. Correlations of main variables

	Maltreatment	Student-Teacher relationship	Juvenile delinquency
Maltreatment	1		
Student-teacher relationship	-.15**	1	
Juvenile delinquency	.10**	-.09**	1
M	14.73	14.44	.30
SD	3.86	3.15	.86

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

Moderating effect of student-teacher relationship on effects of maltreatment and juvenile delinquency

Multiple Moderating Regression Analysis recommended by Aiken and West (1991)[35] was conducted to identify the moderating effects of student-teacher relationship on effects of parental maltreatment on juvenile delinquency. In the first step, student-teacher relationships and maltreatment were inserted. In the second step,

interaction of student-teacher relationship and parental maltreatment was added.

Standardization of variables was conducted before Multiple Moderating Regression Analysis. To identify multicollinearity among variables, VIF(Variance Inflation Factor) was considered and all of VIF did not exceed 10.

Maltreatment ( $b=.08, p<.001$ ) and student-teacher relationship ( $b=-.02, p<.001$ ) significantly influenced juvenile delinquency in the first step. Moderating effects of maltreatment and student-teacher relationship and juvenile delinquency were significant ( $b=-.05, p<.01$ ) in the second step.

**Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis predicting juvenile delinquency (N=2,253)**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	se	$\beta$	b	se	$\beta$
A	.08	.02	.09***	.08	.02	.10***
B	-.02	.01	-.08***	-.02	.01	-.08***
AxB				-.05	.02	-.06**
R <sup>2</sup>			.016***			.020***
F for change in R <sup>2</sup>			18.20***			15.10***

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

Note. A is maltreatment, B is student-teacher relationship

Figure 1 is provided to aid the understanding of the interaction effect between maltreatment and student-teacher relationship. It is evident that levels of maltreatment influenced delinquent behavior in all three student-teacher relationship group - „low“, „medium“, and „high“.

As shown in Figure 1, juvenile delinquency tended to decrease in all groups of student-teacher relationship when parental maltreatment decreased. However, the effect of reduction in delinquency was stronger in the group of 'high' student-teacher relationship group compared to the group of 'medium' and 'low' when maltreatment increased.

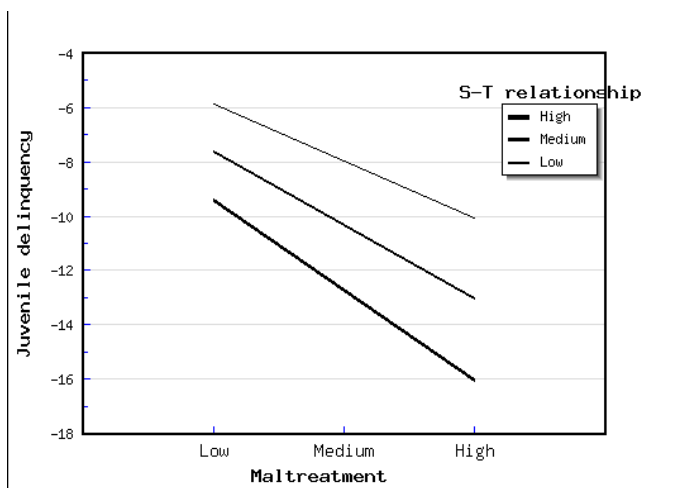


Figure 1. Interaction between maltreatment and student-teacher relationship

#### IV. DISSCUSSION

Juvenile delinquency is caused by behavioral and psychological maladjustment due to various environmental factors including the family, school, and the community. In particular, experience of parental maltreatment significantly influences developmental problems including juvenile delinquency. To protect adolescents from these negative effects, appropriate interventions which may lead to positive development are needed. This study explored whether or not student- teacher relationship plays a role of moderating effect of parental maltreatment on Juvenile delinquency. This study was able to find several pertinent findings.

First, a significant relationship among juvenile delinquency, maltreatment and student-teacher relationship were verified. It is identified that the more serious parental maltreatment, the more frequent occurrences of juvenile delinquency. Meanwhile, highly positive student-teacher relationship helps to deter juvenile delinquency. This result supports the findings that children who experienced maltreatment show more severe aggression, anxiety and juvenile delinquency compared to children who did not experience maltreatment [36],[10],[12]. It is also supported by research findings that physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect influence juvenile delinquency[37],[12]. Moreover, it is worth considering the results of this study to that of O'Connor (2011)[23] which identified that high-quality relationship between student and teacher is effective in preventing behavioral problems in middle childhood. Protective and supportive function of school should be emphasized rather than punishment and control by identifying the relationship among juvenile delinquency, parental maltreatment and positive student-teacher relationship. In addition, this study suggests the necessity of systematic parenting education and clinical implications for protection of parental maltreatment.

Second, the moderating effects of student-teacher relationship on effects of maltreatment on juvenile delinquency were identified. This result corresponds to the finding that behavioral problem like juvenile delinquency decrease when a student has positive relationship with a teacher[38],[39],[40],[19],[41]. This study is also related to other studies which verified that teacher's supports help adolescents to endure stress, and play an important role in externalized problems as a moderator[42]. In other words, if student-teacher relationship is positive and supportive, adolescents who experienced maltreatment is more likely to take a positive view of their lives and be more resilient. These results show that teachers are secure base and supporter of adolescents. To intervene effectively, developing positive student-teacher relationship is crucial. In detail, school officials including teachers, school social workers and school counselors should find various ways to promote student- teacher relationship. Moreover, an existing education system which is centered on entrance examination in South Korea must be changed first to spending a lot of time on nonacademic activities including counseling programs. This study may provide useful guideline for making intervention on adolescent who experience parental maltreatment in practical field. In addition, it could help if this preventive measures are not limited to the family but is extended to the public society.

Despite practical implications of this study, there are some the limitations and the suggestions for future study. First, this study has limitation that measurement of variables was not based on standardized scale because of the properties of the panel data. Although we checked the stability of measurement with reliability test, it is likely to have negative impact on the accuracy of the study. Second, moderating effects of student- teacher relationship on effects of maltreatment on juvenile delinquency were identified. However family and school are not the only variables that influence adolescents. Therefore, it is required to study structural relationship among related factors and investigate the larger ecosystem of adolescents.

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