



Social Sciences Spectrum

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized [Y-category](#) Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-0427](#) P-ISSN: [3006-0419](#)

Volume 04, Issue 01, 2025

Web link: <https://sss.org.pk/index.php/sss>



Check for updates

Gendered Parenting and Juvenile Delinquency: Experiences of Incarcerated Male Youth in Lahore District Jail, Pakistan

Ayesha Khan

M.Phil Scholar, Department of Gender Studies,
University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Email: ayesha400040@gmail.com

Dr. Qaisar Khalid Mahmood

Assistant Professor, Department of Gender Studies,
University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Correspondence: qaisar.dgs@pu.edu.pk

Dr. Aisha Jalil

Associate Professor, School of Health Sciences,
National University of Sciences and Technology
(NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: aisha.jalil@nshs.nust.edu.pk

Article Information [YY-MM-DD]

Received 2025-02-16

Accepted 2025-03-31

Citation (APA):

Khan, A., Mahmood, Q. K & Jalil, A (2025). Gendered parenting and juvenile delinquency: Experiences of incarcerated male youth in Lahore District Jail, Pakistan. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 4(2), 840-855.

<https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.04.01.465>

Abstract

This paper examines how gendered parenting and gender typing shape juvenile delinquency among male adolescents in Pakistan. Using Sandra Bem's Gender Schema Theory, the research explores how boys internalize rigid gender norms that link masculinity with emotional control, toughness and aggression. These norms develop through parenting practices shaped by patriarchal expectations. Fathers often use strict and authoritarian control, while mothers take passive caregiving roles. Boys learn early that showing emotions is unmanly. This results in emotional suppression, low self-esteem and reliance on aggression as a response to stress or conflict. The study used semi-structured interviews with ten male juvenile offenders in District Jail Lahore. Thematic analysis shows that emotional illiteracy, parental neglect in childhood and gendered parenting shapes the emotional and behavioural paths of these boys. These factors limit their coping mechanism and push them toward delinquent behaviour. The findings show the need for gender sensitive parenting, mental health education and supportive family environments. Policy efforts should promote parental awareness, legal literacy, and early emotional guidance to reduce delinquency and prevent recidivism. The study highlights that juvenile delinquency develops not only from individual actions but from broader gendered expectations within the family and society.

Keywords: Gendered Parenting, Juvenile Delinquency, Sandra Bem, Male Youth, District Jail Lahore.



Content from this work may be used under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 International License](#) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide, although global trends differ significantly across regions. In many developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, juvenile crime has declined over recent decades. For example, youth violent crime arrests in the United States dropped by 69% between 1994 and 2019, while youth homicide rates reduced by 56% from 1995 to 2018 (Zipdo Education Report, 2025). These improvements are often linked to effective child welfare policies, early intervention programs and strong parental support systems. In contrast, developing countries such as Pakistan are witnessing a rise in juvenile delinquency, which is associated with growing aggression among children and weak institutional responses (Kurd & Ambreen, 2019).

These regional differences underscore the influence of sociocultural norms, economic pressures, and policy limitations, particularly in shaping the behaviour of young males. Higher aggression among children is strongly correlated with future participation in crime (Islam, Khan, Gul, and Khan, 2022). In Pakistan, approximately 1,400 juveniles are incarcerated as of 2025, and nearly 80% are boys (Prison Data Report, 2025). Historically, juvenile offenders in Pakistan were almost exclusively male, but recent data indicates a gradual increase in female offenders as well (Ullah & Bakhsh, 2024; Muhammad, Fazil, & Iqbal, 2020). Many detained juveniles experience harsh treatment, poor living conditions and limited legal awareness, highlighting deeper failures in Pakistan's juvenile justice system (Khan, 2023). According to the Constitution of Pakistan and the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018, juveniles must be tried in special courts, protected from corporal punishment and provided free state legal support (Pakistan Code, 2018). However, gaps in implementation the law remains widespread.

Previous research in Pakistan has primarily concentrated on post-detention rehabilitation, the reintegration of juveniles into society, and the challenges they encounter within correctional facilities (Khan, 2023). However, limited attention has been given to the underlying childhood factors that may predispose individuals to criminal behavior during their formative years within the context of Pakistan. Scholarly consensus suggests that any form of parental abuse significantly disrupts a child's healthy personality development and increases the likelihood of developing criminal tendencies later in life (Mak et al., 2020). Building on this, research also indicates that children who are involved in more lying and less openly communicate with their parents may be more prone to engaging in deceptive and potentially criminal behaviors (Lewis, 1993).

This study explores juvenile delinquency from the perspective of the offenders themselves, examining how their childhood experiences and perceptions of parenting contributed to their involvement in crime. Delinquency does not arise from a single cause but results from the interaction of individual, familial and social factors. Among these, parenting is one of the most influential. Gendered parenting, defined as parenting based on cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity, plays particularly a significant role. In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, boys are raised to suppress emotions and display dominance, toughness and aggression. These rigid gender expectations, when combined with authoritarian or neglectful parenting, increase the risk of antisocial behavior and delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009).

While earlier studies in Pakistan have highlighted family problems (Rose, Ambreen, and Fayyaz, 2017), peer pressure (Haynie, Doogan, & Soller, 2015), poverty (Mehmood & Cheema, 2004), and lack of education (Gupta, Mohapatra, and Mahanta, 2022) as causes of juvenile delinquency, the role of gendered parenting remains underexplored. This study therefore investigates how

gendered parenting practices and expectations influence male children and contribute to their pathways into delinquency.

Literature Review

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency refers to minors participating in illegal or antisocial activities that disrupt societal norms and challenge law enforcement (Mehmood & Cheema, 2004). A juvenile delinquent is an individual who has not yet reached to legal adulthood, with the age of criminal responsibility varying by country and context (Talpur, Pathan, & Shah, 2020). For example, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in the United States define juveniles as aged 7 to 18, while Pakistan's Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA, 2018) defines juveniles as those between 7 and 18 years. Moreover, describes, Juveniles should be treated differently from adult offenders, with a focus on reformation, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Delinquent acts violate state laws and are socially perceived as neglectful, antisocial or deviant. They range from minor acts, such as stealing from a classmate to serious crimes like theft and homicide.

Juvenile delinquency can be divided into two categories:

- Criminal offenses, which include homicide, arson, theft and drug-related crimes.
- Status offenses, which are not crimes for adults but are considered delinquent when committed by minors including running away from home, curfew violations and smoking.

A single deviant act does not make a child delinquent; the behavior must be persistent and repetitive. In Pakistan, the Juvenile Justice Act sets the age of criminal responsibility between 7 and 12 years, based on maturity and decision-making abilities. However, civil society and policymakers have proposed raising this age to 14, emphasizing additional factors when labeling a child as delinquent (Talpur, Pathan, & Shah, 2020).

Psychological factors, including mental health problems, emotional trauma and feelings of inferiority or jealousy, increase the risk of delinquency. Children facing these challenges may struggle to differentiate right from wrong (Murali, 2022). While not all children with psychological issues engage in delinquency, the higher prevalence among inmates indicates a strong connection between emotional disturbance and criminal behavior. Psychological factors alone, however, cannot fully explain juvenile delinquency (Islam, Khan, Gul, & Khan, 2022). In addition to psychological factors, a child's social environment plays a crucial role. Juveniles living in poor socio-economic conditions, including poverty, limited educational opportunities, exposure to drugs and lack of recreational resources, are more vulnerable to delinquency. Social learning theory suggests that interaction with deviant peers further reinforces delinquent behavior. Socio-economic pressures may push juveniles toward crime as a means of achieving material stability or survival (Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024).

Parenting Styles and Juvenile Delinquency

Parenting plays a key role in shaping how children behave. Baumrind (1967) identified four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. Authoritative parenting shows warmth and clear guidance and is linked with lower delinquency. Authoritarian and neglectful parenting often lead to aggression, rule breaking and antisocial behavior in children (Baumrind, 1967; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Maccoby and Martin (1983) explained parenting through two dimensions. These are responsiveness and demandingness. They argue that high

demands with low responsiveness can create behavioral problems. Yet the impact of these styles is not the same everywhere. It changes with social and cultural context. Studies from collectivist societies show different outcomes. In these contexts, authoritarian parenting may strengthen discipline because children are taught to value group needs. Cultural meaning shapes how parenting is understood. For example, strict control may be seen as care in some cultures but as restriction in others (Keshavarz and Baharudin, 2009). Structural and family conditions also affect delinquency. A parent with a criminal background increases the child's risk of offensive behavior. This risk becomes higher when there is poor supervision, a large family size, harsh or inconsistent discipline or when the family lives in a crime-prone or deprived neighborhood (Goodwin and Davis, 2011).

Social Control Theory and Gendered Parenting

Hirschi's Social Control Theory (1969) helps explain juvenile delinquency through the role of family and social bonds. The theory states that people naturally move toward deviant behavior unless strong bonds hold them back. These bonds are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. They keep individuals connected to society and reduce the chances of deviance (Gentle, Genuity and Carolyn, 2019). This theory connects well with gendered parenting. Boys are often raised with emotional restrictions. They are told to stay strong and hide their feelings. This weakens their bond of attachment and belief. When boys learn that showing emotions is a sign of weakness, they distance themselves from parents and rely less on emotional support. Children who do not receive emotional care struggle to form commitment with schools or community. Lack of validation creates feelings of detachment and frustration. These gaps make them more vulnerable to delinquency. When Social Control Theory is combined with Gender Schema Theory, it becomes clear that gendered parenting creates emotional neglect and weak social ties. This slows healthy socialization and increases the chances of deviant behavior.

Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan

Juvenile delinquency is a growing concern in Pakistan. It develops through a mix of family, social, economic and political factors. Among these, the family environment has a major influence. Children from broken homes or those raised by illiterate, neglectful or abusive parents face a higher risk of deviant behavior (Murtaza et al., 2022). Weak family structures reduce supervision and emotional bonding, pushing children toward crime as a coping response. Poor supervision, emotional neglect, and domestic violence worsen this risk. Neglectful parenting deprives children of guidance and emotional support, which leads to anxiety, aggression and impulsive behavior linked with delinquency (Rose, Ambreen & Fayyaz, 2017; Sharma & Imran, 2023). Psychological and emotional problems also play a central role. Many juveniles experience depression, impulsivity and substance abuse. These issues often stem from childhood trauma or unstable family conditions (Muhammad, Fazil & Iqbal, 2020; Murali, 2022). When left unaddressed, these problems lead to risk-taking and aggressive behavior. The risk is higher among adolescent boys who are socialized to suppress emotions due to rigid gender expectations (Sharma & Imran, 2023). Economic deprivation and limited educational opportunities further increase delinquency. Children from low-income households who lack quality education, school engagement and recreational opportunities often feel frustrated about their future. Some turn to crime as a survival strategy or as an outlet for their anger (Islam, Khan, Gul & Khan, 2023; Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024). Education related factors such as poor teaching, weak connection to school and low parental involvement also contribute to delinquent behavior (Talpur, Pathan & Shah, 2020). Research shows that children engaged in school and extracurricular activities are less likely to become involved in crime (Islam et al., 2023). Religious extremism, violent media and political instability

also push children toward delinquency in Pakistan. The rise of militant narratives and exposure to media that glorifies violence increase aggression and antisocial attitudes among vulnerable youth (Ullah & Bakhsh, 2024). When these structural challenges combine with gendered parenting, emotional neglect and financial stress, the risk of juvenile delinquency becomes even stronger.

Gendered Parenting

Gendered parenting refers to raising children according to societal gender norms. It shapes a child's development in socialization, play, emotional expression and behavior. Mothers often use more authoritative approaches with daughters, while fathers tend to adopt authoritarian styles with sons (Russell, Baker and Sinclair, 1998). These patterns lead to gendered differences in attitudes, personality and behavior. Boys raised under permissive or authoritarian parenting show a higher risk of delinquent tendencies (Hoeve, Stams, Van der Laan, Smeenk and Gerris, 2009).

Boys are encouraged to be assertive, independent and emotionally strong, while girls are guided to be nurturing and empathetic. Parents also shape emotional expression. Girls are encouraged to talk about their feelings, whereas boys are taught to hide them. Additionally, Play, toys, clothing and room décor reinforce these expectations. Boys often receive action figures and sports themes, while girls are given dolls and decorative or nurturing themes. These practices can lead boys to internalize aggression and suppress emotions (Mesman and Groeneveld, 2017).

Overall, gendered parenting involves treating sons and daughters differently based on social norms. These differences appear in communication, play and daily routines. Girls learn openness and care, while boys learn toughness and restraint. These parenting practices shape a child's social role, emotional development, personality and response to stress. They also influence how children interact with others and how they conform to gender expectations in society (Morawska, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Sandra Bem's Gender Schema Theory (1981) sets the theoretical framework of this study. It is offering a lens to understand how gendered parenting plays a huge role in juvenile delinquency among male adolescents. This theory gives the concept of gender schemas which are mental frameworks that children develop to understand and perform gender roles based on cultural expectations. These schemas are shaped through gender typing which is a process in which children learn behaviors and attitudes that seem appropriate for their sex, primarily through observation, reinforcement, and imitation within their social environment.

In gendered parenting, these schemas begin to form early. Parents often unconsciously guide children into traditional gender roles encouraging boys to be assertive, emotionally restrained, dominant, and physically strong, while nurturing emotional expression, empathy, and passivity in girls. These expectations are not only verbal but embedded in giving toys, responses to emotional expression, discipline styles, and even home décor (Russell, Baker, & Sinclair, 1998; Morawska, 2020). This process of gender typing creates rigid ideas of masculinity and femininity that children internalize as part of their identities.

In patriarchal contexts like Pakistan, where gender roles are strongly defined, such parenting practices lead boys to associate emotional repression with strength and aggression with masculinity. Boys are often discouraged from crying or showing vulnerability that shapes their schemas to normalize emotional suppression. By the time these internalized beliefs influence boys how to cope with stress, manage their relationships, and response to social expectations. These schemas combined with lack of emotional support or positive male role models may foster antisocial or delinquent coping strategies such as violence, substance use, or risk-taking behavior

(Mesman & Groeneveld, 2017; Tiwari, 2024). Moreover, parenting styles particularly authoritarian or neglectful with gender schemas intensify these tendencies. Fathers who enforce strict discipline and offer little emotional support may unintentionally teach their sons that dominance and aggression are acceptable expressions of masculinity. These learned behaviors are often mirrored by sons particularly in emotionally barren or abusive households.

This study applies Gender Schema Theory to tell the lived experiences of incarcerated male juveniles delinquent in Lahore. Their stories reveal how rigid ideas of masculinity fostered through gender typing and reinforced by parents have led to emotional illiteracy, suppressed vulnerability and eventually criminal behavior. Thus, this theory offers a valuable insight to explain how gendered parenting shapes behavioral patterns of male child that can ultimately lead to juvenile delinquency.

Statement of the Problem

In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, boys are often raised to embody traits like dominance, aggression, and emotional restraint. As these characteristics are culturally reinforced as ideals of masculinity, they also limit emotional expression and healthy coping mechanisms. When combined with environmental factors such as poverty or family dysfunction, these rigid gender expectations can increase the likelihood of deviant behaviours. This study investigates how incarcerated male juveniles perceive their parents' gendered expectations and examines how these perceptions may have influenced their behavioural choices and coping responses, which in some cases resulted in delinquent actions. The study further examines how gendered parenting contributes to behavioural patterns that may elevate the risk of delinquency.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study to explore how gendered parenting influences delinquency among male juveniles. Due to restricted prison access, a purposive sample of 10 participants, the maximum allowed was recruited. Participants were aged 7–18, reflecting Pakistan's juvenile age range, with seven years as the minimum age of criminal responsibility. Interviews with younger children used simplified language and shorter segments, with a trained psychologist present to ensure emotional safety and facilitate communication. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews covering family background, parental behaviours, gender roles and emotional dynamics. Two pilot interviews refined the guide by adjusting question wording, sequencing and probes for sensitivity.

Access to the facility was granted through official approval from the Jail Superintendent, with clear guidelines on participants, settings, and supervision. Ethical procedures included Superintendent Approval acting as guardian, juvenile assent, strict confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All interviews were conducted privately within the prison to ensure safety and minimize external influence. Saturation was reached after eight interviews, with two additional interviews confirming no new themes.

Despite methodological rigor, the study has limitations. The small sample size and single-facility setting restrict generalizability and diversity of experiences. Findings are therefore context-specific and preliminary, highlighting the need for larger, multi-site studies.

Finding and result

Gendered parenting

The participants' stories showed that gendered parenting affected their emotional development and behavior. Gendered parenting means raising children differently based on societal gender norms and expectations. These practices are shaped by patriarchal beliefs about how boys and girls should behave. Most participants said their fathers used strict authoritarian parenting. Authoritarian parenting is a style where parents are highly controlling, enforce rules strictly, and show little emotional warmth. Fathers were emotionally distant and enforced harsh discipline. On the contrary mothers were often passive and lacked decision-making powers. This division of roles and duties reinforced traditional gender role. Men as providers and protector and women as dependent and emotionally expressive.

Most of the participants shared that they were discouraged from expressing vulnerability or seeking emotional help.

Respondent D said: *"my father used to punish us physically. If I ever cried my mother would say, 'Be a man and stop crying like girls'"*

Respondent I shared: *"I did not cry over little things that what men do."*

The pressure to follow masculine traits led to suppressed emotions and frustration. Participants had no safe space to express anger, sadness or fear. Over time these suppressed emotions often became aggression or antisocial behavior. In the absence of empathetic parental engagement, many turned to peer groups for validation. These groups sometimes engaged in criminal or risky behavior.

The issue was not the provider role itself but how it was enforced through strict parenting, emotional neglect, and rigid gender expectations. These parenting patterns reduced emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Limited emotional literacy and healthy coping strategies contributed to behaviours that escalated into delinquency.

Subtle Gendered Messages

Many respondents shared that during their upbringing, they received subtle gendered messages through observation rather than direct instruction. Gendered messages are signals about how boys and girls should behave based on cultural expectations. These messages were embedded in daily routines, division of labour and family expectations.

Respondent A stated: *"my mother and my sisters did housework all the time..... They did not have any job. Why would they do jobs that's not for women. My father was the sole breadwinner for us."*

Respondent E told: *"in our family no women go outside for earning..... it was my duty to protect my sisters as they couldn't do themselves..... women remains inside the house, they have long hair, shorter hair is for men."*

These remarks show how gender roles were taught not through clear instructions but through everyday routines and unspoken expectations. Women were linked to household responsibilities and were often seen as emotionally weak and submissive. Men were viewed as protectors who had to be strong and authoritative. Even when no one stated these roles directly, they were reinforced through daily life at home.

Gender Schema Theory explains that children develop mental frameworks to understand social roles. When they repeatedly observe gendered expectations, they form ideas about what it means to be masculine or feminine. Boys who grow up seeing such patterns may internalize beliefs like “men must protect women” or “housework is only for women.” With time, these ideas shape their behavior, emotional expression, social relationships and sense of identity.

In this study, these subtle and continuous messages strengthened rigid ideas of masculinity among the boys. Many felt they had to be emotionally strong, financially responsible and the protectors of their families. They viewed showing emotions or doing domestic tasks as feminine and something to avoid. This led to emotional suppression and exaggerated displays of masculinity. For some, it contributed to aggressive or antisocial behavior. These everyday gendered messages played an important role in shaping how the juveniles understood their roles in society and how they responded to different situations.

Authoritarian and Uninvolved Fathers

Many respondents described their fathers as authoritarian and emotionally uninvolved. Authoritarian parenting is a style where parents demand strict obedience, use control and show little warmth or explanation. These fathers gave commands without explanation and expected unquestioned compliance. They relied on fear and control rather than affection or communication. This parenting reinforced rigid masculine norms that discourage emotional connection and open communication.

Respondent A said: *“My father was not someone who ask things about my day. We never played or did homework together. He used to come late most of time I was sleeping. We never talked about my feelings (the child did not even know about emotional support).”*

The absence of emotional connection highlights a lack of paternal involvement and emotional literacy. Paternal involvement refers to a father’s engagement and presence in a child’s life. Emotional literacy is the ability to understand and express emotions in a healthy way. Both are crucial for developing a healthy identity development.

Respondent B responded: *“My father sells pan cigarettes. He never had time to talk to me or any one at home. He does not talk much. He got angry over little issues. He beats us (me, my siblings and my mother) he demands that we should keep silence when he comes home.”*

This account illustrates a home marked by emotional neglect and physical intimidation. Emotional neglect is the lack of attention to a child’s emotional needs. Physical intimidation is using fear or violence to control behavior. Constant exposure to violence and emotional suppression may lead to fear-based compliance in the short term but creates underlying resentment and emotional damage. Over time, this oppressive environment may foster rebellion, emotional detachment or deviant coping strategies such as aggression, substance use or delinquency.

Mothers Lack Authority

Respondents commonly reported that their mothers lacked real authority in the household. Authority here means the ability to make decisions and influence family matters. Although mothers were responsible for managing the home, they had little influence over major decisions, including child rearing. They were somewhat emotionally available but mostly passive to the children’s needs.

Respondent C shared: *“my mother did not say much when my father used to beat us. She mostly remained silent. What else she had to say? She did not know about anything as she was for home same like every woman.....she never beats me.”*

Respondent D stated: *“my mother used to ask about school when I return from school. She was like my father in some ways. Sometimes she used to beat me and my siblings..... We used to ask her things but she used to say ask your father. My father used to get furious. She just wanted to keep the peace.”*

This imbalance, with fathers as strict authority figures and mothers as passive caretakers, pressured boys to obey their fathers unconditionally. The lack of maternal authority and emotional warmth left many youths confused about acceptable behavior. Boys normalized female passivity and struggled to navigate social expectations. This dynamic, combined with authoritarian fathering, often pushed youths toward deviant peer groups and delinquent behavior.

Traditional Old Gender Roles

Most respondents were raised with traditional gender roles shaped by societal norms and family practices. Traditional gender roles refer to expectations about behaviours, duties and responsibilities based on a person's gender. Boys were expected to be future breadwinners and to show strength, while girls were often forced to leave school at young age, manage household duties and marry early.

Respondent E said: *“I am the son and I am the breadwinner for my family. Obviously male are providers of the family. Girls don't have the capacity to earn as men do. It's better for them to stay at home even they can't protect themselves. They create troubles for family, because of them men of the family suffer.”*

Respondent F (who grew up in a violent household where his father regularly abused his mother, and he felt powerless as a child. Over time, he internalized the belief that, as a male, it was his duty to protect his mother, he saw violence as the only way to fulfill that role of protector. This mindset, shaped by gendered parenting and emotional neglect, ultimately led him to commit murder) stated: *“I killed both of them (father and son) because I had to. My mother could not do that. How is that possible for a woman.....? I taught of doing so because I knew I had to protect my mother. That's what anybody would have done that,”*

Gendered parenting reinforced these strict gender roles with fathers as authoritarian and emotionally distant and mothers as passive and weak. The respondents perceived the protection of their family from so called threat as their sole responsibility, which motivated them to act violently to safeguard the female family member. Sons were prioritized in education and expectations, while daughters were seen as weak, needing protection and potential sources of family dishonour. These roles led boys to internalize traditional masculine norms. They believed aggression and dominance were essential to masculinity and that protecting the family by any means was their duty. This mind set contributed to violent behavior and delinquency.

Boys are Encouraged to be Emotionally Tough

Respondents said they were raised to be emotionally strong. Emotional toughness means being expected to hide fear, sadness or vulnerability. Boys were taught to show no signs of weakness. The common belief was that men do not cry. They grew up without emotional support.

Respondent G stated: *"I never saw my father cry or ask for help from my mother. Men are naturally strong. They don't cry over little issues. They are not like women who start crying over little inconvenience. I too, do not cry over anything."*

Respondent H shared, *"I never witnessed my father crying or showing any kind of weak emotions. Most of the time he was angry and furious. Sometimes this anger turns into physical violence."*

This strict teaching of emotional toughness made it hard for these youths to process and express feelings in healthy ways. Emotional regulation is the ability to understand and control feelings. Many were unable to manage their emotions. They often expressed them through aggression and violence.

Masculinity Linked to Dominance

In patriarchal societies masculinity is often seen as control and dominance. Masculinity is the qualities and behaviours culturally associated with being male. Boys are taught that being a man requires constant assertion of authority. Parenting plays a major role in reinforcing this idea. This strict form of masculinity can harm boys because they are expected to show traits that may not reflect their true emotions. Respondents learned that manhood is measured by dominance and control.

Respondent I said: *"to be man is to be tough, strong and protective, man is capable of everything they want to do. They have naturally strong and dominative..... they can do many things which girls can't do."*

Respondent J stated: *"my father was strong and he controlled our home. Only man can control a family and keep them in order. Obviously, my mother could not do that because she did not have the wisdom and knowledge."*

These gendered expectations shaped the boys' ideas about masculinity. To prove themselves as real men they felt they had to show dominance. This often led to aggressive or delinquent acts.

Boys Are Protectors of Honour

In patriarchal societies, it is an unwritten obligation that men are the protectors of the honor of their female family members. This protection can take many forms, from verbal messages to physical violence and in extreme cases, killing in the name of honor is celebrated. This belief equates being a protector and a proper man. It reassures male dominance and female weakness giving men the permission to use violence in the name of honor and protection. Most of the respondents believed that as men, it is their unspoken duty to protect their female family members, even if it means resorting to violence or crime.

Respondent B shared: *"I killed that boy because he was trying to lure my sister. It was my duty to protect the family name. my sister couldn't protect herself. How can she? She is a girl and she cannot stand for herself. I had the duty to protect my sisters as a brother. So that no one can exploit them or take advantage of them."*

This perspective reflects a broader social narrative where females are perceived as vulnerable and incapable of defending themselves or preserving family honor. Instead, they are often viewed as potential threats to the family's reputation. Consequently, male juveniles assume the burden of safeguarding family honor, a responsibility that frequently manifests in aggressive or criminal behavior.

Parents do not have Knowledge About Psychological Issues

In many household's parents lack awareness of psychological and emotional issues. Adolescence is a critical period for emotional development. Without knowledge parents cannot understand or support their children's emotional needs. In male children aggressive behavior is often seen as normal and even masculine. This leads to the normalization of violence.

Respondent H said: *"I don't know about emotions. I don't know how to talk about it and even how I feel. My parents never asked me these questions or asked me about my feelings."*

Respondent G expressed: *"what is the emotional literacy you are talking about? My parents did not know about this or maybe they did not care about it. I never talked to anyone about my feelings. Infact I did not know what was there to talk about."*

This lack of emotional understanding and communication from parents left adolescents to manage their feelings on their own. Without guidance many turned to deviant peer groups or antisocial behavior as coping mechanisms.

Misguided Notions of Bravery, Honor and Being Men

A recurring theme among the respondents was the internalization of narrow and rigid ideas about what it means to be a man. These boys were raised in environments where emotional expression was discouraged. Masculinity was defined through toughness, control and the defence of female family members' honour often through aggression. These notions were not learned in isolation. From an early age boys were exposed to parenting patterns and social norms that associated strength with emotional detachment and bravery with violence. Their understanding of gender roles was shaped by daily experiences at home and in the neighbourhood where men were expected to be protectors and never vulnerable.

Respondent D stated: *"crying and complaining isn't for men. They should be hard. If someone is treating my family badly it is my responsibility to protect them, being a man."*

Respondent B (14year-old boy from a poor neighborhood in Lahore, was the only son in a female-led household. Raised with strict gendered expectations, taught from an early age that protecting the family's honor was his duty as a man. When rumors spread about his sister's relationship with a neighborhood boy, he felt intense pressure from his peers and community to act. Influenced by gendered parenting, peer pressure, and internalized masculine roles shaped by gender schemas he killed that boy to) expressed: *"he was having an affair with my sister. being a man how could I allow that.it was my duty to protect my family's honor. You have to protect your family's honor even if you had to kill."*

These ideas of bravery and honour were further reinforced by peers and community members who discouraged emotional openness and glorified violence as a sign of manhood. As a result, the boys adopted false notions of bravery and honour and resorted to aggression and emotional withdrawal. Emotional withdrawal refers to avoiding emotional expression or social connection. This internalized understanding of gender roles, developed through gendered parenting and social expectations played a critical role in pushing these boys toward delinquency. Their actions were less about individual deviance and more about conforming to deeply ingrained ideas of bravery and honour.

Isolation in Adolescence

Adolescence, the age range of 10 to 19, is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, psychological and cognitive change. In this formative period from childhood to adulthood

adolescents require emotional support, guidance and consistent communication to navigate the complexities of identity formation and emotional regulation. However, many respondents in this study reported experiencing emotional isolation during this vital stage of life.

Respondent A shared: *“my father works in day time and returns home most of times after I fall asleep. He never told me about emotions or the way I feel. My mother as well did not communicate with me about my physical or emotional development.”*

Respondent J answered: *“I work in clothing shop. I go home after a week. There is no concept of emotional health or support. My parents never talked about it.”*

These findings illustrate how emotional neglect in gendered parenting reinforces rigid masculine schemas. These schemas discourage boys from seeking emotional support or expressing vulnerability. As a result, male adolescents internalize the belief that discussing emotions is unmanly, leading to emotional confusion and detachment.

The absence of parental engagement and emotional validation leaves them ill equipped to regulate feelings or manage stress in healthy ways. Consequently, they become susceptible to maladaptive behaviours such as aggression, peer influence and delinquency. These behaviours are manifestations of a socially constructed, narrowly defined masculinity.

Discussion and Finding

This study establishes a strong link between gendered parenting approaches and juvenile delinquency among male inmates in District Jail Lahore. Using Sandra Bem’s Gender Schema Theory, the findings explain how parents expect traditional gender roles from their children from an early age. Fathers are often strict and emotionally distant, while mothers take on passive caregiving roles. Boys tend to follow these gender role patterns which lead to emotional suppression, dominance, and aggression. These traits contribute to delinquent behavior.

Both the juveniles and their parents lacked emotional awareness. They did not understand their feelings or know how to express or channel them in a healthy manner. This emotional void blurs their ability to maintain strong relationships and raise children effectively. Without the emotional ability to handle their son’s adolescent years, parents create an emotional void. The juveniles tried to fill this void with delinquent actions. This shows that emotional neglect and authoritarian parenting, combined with rigid gender expectations, can push male children toward antisocial behavior.

In summary, this study explains how gendered parenting and emotional neglect, combined with an authoritarian parenting approach, push male children into delinquency. To break this cycle, parenting support programs, gender-sensitive parenting practices and emotional health awareness are crucial. Emotional health awareness helps parents and children understand and manage emotions effectively. These interventions can help young people grow into law-abiding adults.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows the critical role of gendered parenting and how it contributes to juvenile delinquency among male children in Pakistan. Parenting practices influenced by patriarchal norms, combined with emotional neglect, gender typing, rigid gender roles and father’s authoritarian control limit male children’s emotional development and reinforce harmful expressions of masculinity. These parental practices foster aggression, antisocial behavior, and increase the risks of delinquency. For many children, delinquency emerges not as a natural inclination but as a

coping mechanism in the absence of emotional support, healthy environments and constructive opportunities.

Addressing male juvenile delinquency requires comprehensive, multi-level interventions. Community-based programs that emphasize positive parenting practices, emotional literacy and gender sensitivity are essential. Equitable access to primary education, particularly for children from low-income families, must be supported through government financial aid. Access to mental health support services and the integration of skill-building recreational activities in educational institutes are also important. Additionally, targeted awareness campaigns in schools, communities and media platforms can play a transformative role in challenging toxic masculinity, redefining concepts of strength and honour and promoting emotional resilience.

While this study is situated in the socio-cultural context of Pakistan, its findings hold broader implications for societies grappling with similar gendered dynamics. By rethinking parenting approaches and fostering emotionally supportive communities, both local and global societies can work toward reducing juvenile delinquency and promoting healthier, more equitable paths for youth development.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample size was small, consisting of only 10 participants, due to official restrictions and prison policies. While the qualitative approach provided in-depth insights into the experiences of these juveniles, the limited number of participants restricts the generalizability of the results to the broader population of male juvenile delinquents in Pakistan.

Second, the study focused specifically on honour-related and gender-related crimes. Although this focus allowed for a detailed examination of the role of gendered parenting in these contexts, it may not fully capture how gendered parenting influences other forms of juvenile delinquency, such as property crimes, substance-related offenses or peer-related violence. Future research with larger and more diverse samples, including different types of offenses, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gendered parenting and juvenile delinquency.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

References

- Agbi, N., Ayodeji, E. O., & Ologun, C. A. (2024). Quality of parenting and juvenile delinquency. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 23(01), 2425–2434. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.1.2226>
- Amran, M. S., & Basri, N. A. (2020). Investigating the relationship between parenting styles and juvenile delinquent behavior. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(11A), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.082104>
- Arman, M., & Basri, M. (2020). Parenting styles and their impact on child development. *Journal of Child Psychology*, 45(3), 234–245.
- Church, W. T., Wharton, T., & Taylor, J. K. (2009). Systems and delinquency: An examination of differential association and social control theory. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 7(1), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204008324910>
- Clevenger, M., & Birkbeck, C. (1996). *The causes of delinquency*. Institute for Social Research, University of New Mexico. Prepared for the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council.
- Farrington, D. (1979). The study of delinquency: Problems and perspectives. *Journal of Criminology*, 17(2), 1–15.
- Gentle-Genitty, C. (2019). Understanding juvenile delinquent behavior through social bonding. *IATDP Journal*.
- Goodwin, V., & Davis, B. (2011). Crime families: Gender and the intergenerational transfer of criminal tendencies. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, (414). Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti271887>
- Gupta, M. K., Mohapatra, S., & Mahanta, P. K. (2022). Juvenile's delinquent behavior, risk factors, and quantitative assessment approach: A systematic review. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, 47(4), 403–409. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijcm.IJCM_209_22
- Gupta, S., Mohapatra, P., & Mahanta, M. (2022). Early risk factors of juvenile delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 12(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCP-05-2021-0023>
- Haynie, D. L., Doogan, N. J., & Soller, B. (2014). Gender, friendship networks, and delinquency: A dynamic network approach. *Criminology*, 52(4), 688–722. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12052>
- Hoeve, M., Dubas, J. S., Eichelsheim, V. I., van der Laan, P. H., Smeenk, W., & Gerris, J. R. M. (2009). The relationship between parenting and delinquency: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37(6), 749–775. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-009-9310-8>
- Islam, S., Khan, S. S. Y., Gul, K., & Khan, Y. (2022). Criminal behavior in the context of various criminal theories. *Review of Education, Administration and Law*, 5(4), 643–655. Abdul Wali Khan University, Pakistan.
- Keshavarz, S., & Baharudin, R. (2009). Parenting style in a collectivist culture of Malaysia. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(1), 66–73.
- Khan, M. (1997). Understanding juvenile delinquency in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 1(1), 45–60.

- Khan, S. (2023). Critical analysis of the juvenile justice system in Pakistan: Challenges & way forward. *Khyber Journal of Public Policy*, 2(3), Autumn.
- Kurd, S., & Ambreen, S. (2019). Gender difference in delinquent tendency among adolescents. *Balochistan Review*, 40(1), 1–15.
- Lewis, M. (1993). The development of deception. In M. Lewis & C. Saarni (Eds.), *Lying and deception in everyday life* (pp. 90–105). Guilford Press.
- Mahmood, K., & Cheema, M. A. (2004). Empirical analysis of juvenile crime in Punjab, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 136–138.
- Majeed, M., Imran, K., & Ali, A. (2024). Understanding juvenile delinquency: Exploring theoretical frameworks and implications for intervention. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 383–389. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024\(5-II\)36](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024(5-II)36)
- Mak, M. C. K., Yin, L., Li, M., Cheung, R. Y. H., & Oon, P. T. (2020). The relation between parenting stress and child behavior problems: Negative parenting styles as mediator. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29, 2993–3003. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-020-01785-3>
- Mesman, J., & Groeneveld, M. G. (2017). Gendered parenting: The role of fathers and mothers in child development. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 31(5), 635–645. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000312>
- Morawska, A. (2020). The effects of gendered parenting on child development outcomes: A systematic review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 23(4), 553–576. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-020-00321-5>
- Muhammad, N., Fazil, H., & Iqbal, M. N. (2020). Exploring the causes of juvenile delinquency: Qualitative perspective. *Vol. 3(4)*, 2020.
- Murtaza, A., Nawaz Manj, D., Hussain Hashmi, D., Zara, M. U., Akhtar, M., & Asfand, A. (2020). Causes leading to juvenile delinquency: A case study conducted at Punjab, Pakistan. *Khaldunia Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 45–55. <https://doi.org/10.36755/khaldunia.v1i1.45>
- Pakistan Code. (2018). *Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018 (ACT No. XXI)*. <https://lpr.adb.org/resource/juvenile-justice-system-act-2018-pakistan>
- Pender, E. I. (2021). The impact of parent and peer socialization on juvenile delinquency (Master's thesis, Old Dominion University). ODU Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/sociology_criminaljustice_etds/
- Prison Data Report. (2025). *Pakistan's prison landscape: Trends, data, and developments in 2024*. National Commission for Human Rights, National Academy for Prisons Administration, & Justice Project Pakistan. https://jppprisonreforms.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/JPP_Prison_Data_Report_2024.pdf
- Rose, S., Ambreen, S., & Fayyaz, W. (2017). Contributing factors of juvenile delinquency among youth of Balochistan. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 9(3), 165–179.
- Russell, S., Baker, J., & Sinclair, J. (1998). Gender and parenting styles: A longitudinal study. *Child Development Research*, 22(3), 45–59.

- Salunkhe, T., & Bagul, M. S. (2024). Juvenile delinquency and factors affecting. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology*, 11(2), 760–763. <https://doi.org/10.32628/IJSRST24112131>
- Sarwar, S. (2016). Influence of parenting style on children's behaviour. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 3(2).
- Saurabh, S., & Pravesh, C. (2022). Parenting styles and juvenile delinquency: Exploring gendered relationships. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(3), 197. <https://doi.org/10.25215/1003.197>
- Sharma, K., & Imran, M. (2023). Influence of parenting style on juvenile delinquency. *IJCRT*, 11(6), 2320–2882.
- Song, F., Li, R., Wang, W., & Zhang, S. (2022). Psychological characteristics and health behavior for juvenile delinquency groups. *Occupational Therapy International*, 3684691. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/3684691>
- Talpur, F., Pathan, P. A., & Shah, P. (2020). Examining the causes of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan. *The Women - Annual Research Journal*, 4, 1–15.
- Tapia, M., Alarid, L. F., & Clare, C. (2018). Parenting styles and juvenile delinquency: Exploring gendered relationships. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 69(2), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfcj.1211>
- Tiwari, R. K. (2024). Gender-schema and social cognitive theory in parenting styles: A comprehensive report. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 6(4), 1. <https://www.ijfmr.com>
- Ullah, H. M. H., & Bakhsh, F. (2024). Socioeconomic and cultural factors and juvenile delinquency in Pakistan: A critical analysis of structural theories. *Current Trends in Law and Society*, 4(1), 101–109. <https://doi.org/10.52131/ctls.2024.0401.0037101>
- Wiatrowski, M. D., Griswold, D. B., & Roberts, M. K. (1981). Social control theory and delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 46(5), 525–541. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2094936>
- Wittenborn, M. (2002). The relations between parenting styles and juvenile delinquency. *Southern Illinois University Carbondale*. https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/honors_theses/
- Young, S., Greer, B., & Church, R. (2017). Juvenile delinquency, welfare, justice, and therapeutic interventions: A global perspective. *BJPsych Bulletin*, 41, 21–29. <https://doi.org/10.1192/pb.bp.115.052274>
- Zai, A., & Wani, M. (2020). Cultural perspectives on juvenile delinquency in Pakistan. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 15(2), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11417-020-09312-3>
- Zipdo Education Report. (2025, May 30). Youth violence statistics. Zipdo. <https://zipdo.co/youth-violence-statistics>.