

Adolescent boys more prone to delinquency without a father

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Adolescent boys are more prone to delinquency if they do not have a father figure in their lives, a University of Melbourne study has found, while adolescent girls seem unaffected by the presence or absence of fathers in their lives.

The study, undertaken by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the Faculty of Business and Economics, found that the presence of a father figure during adolescence was most likely to have a preventive effect on whether male youths engage in risk-taking and deviant behaviour.

While active involvement and interaction between [fathers](#) and youths was found to be beneficial, it did not explain the positive benefits of children who grow up with fathers in the household.

“The sense of security generated by the presence of a male role model in a [youth](#)’s life has protective effects for a child, regardless of the degree of interaction between the child and father,” Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark, Director of the Melbourne Institute said.

“Fathers provide children with male role models and can influence children’s preferences, values and attitudes, while giving them a sense of security and boosting their self-esteem. They also increase the degree of adult supervision at home, which may lead to a direct reduction of delinquent behaviour.”

Using American data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, three factors were studied in the role of fathers influencing youth [delinquency](#): parental involvement and interaction, contribution to household income and engagement with a father figure by simply being present at home.

Unlike previous studies in the field, "Fathers and Youths" Delinquent Behaviour" which was co-authored by Professor Erdal Tekin from Georgia State University, examines the full range of father figure roles and modern family structures, Professor Cobb-Clark said.

"Our study included residential and non-residential, biological fathers and residential stepfathers and their influence on adolescent behaviours," Professor Cobb-Clark said.

"We find that [adolescent boys](#) engage in more delinquency without a father figure in their lives. [Adolescent girls](#)" behaviours are less closely linked to this, which may be attributed to the inherent levels of risk-taking that vary between males and females."

Additionally, higher family incomes were found to have little effects on solving the problems associated with youth delinquency.

The full study 'Fathers and Youths' Delinquent Behaviour' is available for download at [melbourneinstitute.com/download ... series/wp2011n23.pdf](https://melbourneinstitute.com/download-series/wp2011n23.pdf)

Provided by University of Melbourne

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