**A Double Loss Causing Tears to Keep Falling: The Impact of Absent Fathers of Justice-Involved Youth**

Research for the 21st Century

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Professor

Dr. David Ward

LaKeisha, you did a great job with your Assignment #4 for SR 953-12 in building on the previous assignment. I really appreciated your evaluation of your sources. You wrote a good summary of each of your resources. For the books you provided a succinct biography of the author and his or her credentials. I enjoyed your assessment of each book’s (a) readability, (b) presentation of the subject, and (c) relevance to your chosen topic. For the articles, you fulfilled the assignment requirements of providing the title, year, and author(s) of the article and what keywords relate to a literature review supporting your research interests, and for the social research articles, a brief description of the research methods, the population being studied, and the findings/conclusions. Keep up the great work! -- Prof. David Ward

**A Double Loss Causing Tears to Keep Falling: The Impact of Absent Fathers of Justice-Involved Youth**

Having worked with youth for almost twenty years in my church and professionally as the administrator of a juvenile detention center, I am considerably passionate about adolescents, particularly those who are justice-involved. What I find concerning yet interesting, however, is the number of children in the justice system who are made to grow up without the presence of a father in the home. Most of the teens I encounter daily come from single-parent households where the mother is actively present, but when it comes to the father, he is nowhere to be found. When speaking of absent fathers, it includes several conditions, like having a father who is absent during a child’s life and can be a result of death or divorce, or he can be absent due to work commitments, incarceration, or he can physically exist but is considered absent because of neglect (Sabrina, S. A., & Suminar, D. R., 2020, p. 2286). This issue has become so prevalent in the United States, and at the end of the day, the children are directly impacted and are the ones left suffering the most. More precisely, juvenile offenders housed in correctional facilities appear to have the hardest time dealing with absent fathers and the loss of freedom due to incarceration. As a result, they are often left in constant tears as emotions of abandonment and neglect plague their minds. Certainly, at the rate this issue is expanding, Jim, the lead cast from the days of *Father Knows Best* would suggest such a familial position is unthinkable. I often say it is an insult to God, as one of the first jobs given by God to men was fatherhood; thus, the family is very important as it was the first institution created. Because of that, I desire to explore what the Bible says about fatherhood. Secondly, given the costs that such delinquent behaviors levy on society and the youth themselves, I want a better understanding as I look into the forces of adolescent risky behavior connected to the quality of the father-child relationship and delinquency, which is considered a risk that destroys lives and property (‌Peter, P. F., & Nwadukwe, H. T., 2022). Lastly, as one who works hard to find solutions, I am a "hope-dealer,” so I believe the issue of absent fathers among justice-involved youth can be mitigated by maintaining and strengthening the parenting skills of men who are currently active in their children’s lives and increasing the number of men who will help mentor those youth without fathers.

# Key Terms on Absent Fathers and Juvenile Delinquency

Search terms related to the topic of this paper are as follows:

* Absence
* Adolescence
* Attachment
* Causes
* Crime
* Delinquency
* Drug Addiction
* Empirical Study
* Extended Family
* Family Issues
* Father
* Fatherhood
* Father Absence
* Father-Child Relationship
* Father Involvement
* Fatherhood
* Fatherhood Issues
* Imprisoned fathers
* Imprisonment
* Juvenile Delinquency
* Mentoring
* Mentorship
* Nature
* Parental imprisonment
* Pastoral-Theological
* Trust in God
* Youth Ministry

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# Hope, Help and Healing for Children of the State

Working with justice-involved youth, I can honestly say Jeff Hobbs’ 2023 book, *Children of the state*, paints a clear picture of what many youth experience. I have shed countless tears reading this book, one of which is based on true stories of youthful detainees and one that challenges those of us who work with the juvenile justice system to seek to better understand the youth we serve. I feel as though Hobbs wrote as a youth advocate. He writes with passion and sensitivity, providing detailed play-by-plays of what they have encountered walking through the justice system. From the initial contact with the police to then being processed by the booking officer, usually followed by hearings with the judge and probation officer, Hobbs shares stories about racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds that pose challenges to these kids, many of whom battle to make wise decisions. Hobbs further provides hope, encouraging the reader to understand that no kid should ever hold himself a prisoner of his past, and neither should anyone else do the same. After all, everyone deserves opportunities to become better. The themes of the book center on hope and survival, the key elements I will strive to bring in my research for justice-involved youth dealing with absent fathers. Winner of *The Los Angeles Times Book Prize*, Hobbs wrote *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace* which was made into the 2024 film *Rob Peace.*Also, Hobbs, who lives in Los Angeles, California with his family, wife, and two children, is the author of *Show Them You’re Good* and *The Tourists*.

# Father Absence and Juvenile Delinquency

The 2018 article by S. Kim and A.E. Glassgow, The effect of father's absence, parental adverse events, and neighborhood disadvantage on children's aggression and delinquency: A multi-analytic approach. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *28*(5), ironically does not contain a literature review but does include three areas in the introduction: Neighborhood Context and Inequality; Interaction between Household and Neighborhood Characteristics, and Causal Inference and Analytic Limitations. Methods used were dataset and included 424 incoming first-grade Chicago students living in poverty-stricken neighborhoods and were male and female of the African-American and Hispanic cultures. The variables of dependent measured children’s aggression while in the classroom and the independent variables included several time-varying and non-time-varying sociodemographic (factors of race/ethnicity, gender, and the presence of parental adverse events). Parental adversity survey questions were completed by a primary guardian/caregiver. Another method used in this study was Analysis, which included the Conceptual model. It was theorized that living in disadvantaged areas negatively affects the success of children, academically and behaviorally. To characterize the sample, descriptive statistics were used and the findings showed that the level of child aggression was inclined more by household and neighborhood-level steady characteristics. Children living in disadvantaged areas had both direct and indirect effects on their aggression. The fixed effects model presented no substantial relationship between the father presence in the household and aggression. Nevertheless, the hybrid models displayed differences in father absence signifying that the individual differences were significantly related to child aggression. In short, this study showed how inequality affects certain populations and draws us closer to better understanding causal relationships between our neighborhoods and how it may affect opportunities in life.

# Lonely but Loved: Have Faith Like Jacob

The message is made clear in the title of Max Lucado’s book of 2023, *God never gives up on you*. This book makes one re-evaluate himself, especially how he treats others. The author noted times when we want to retaliate against people who have wronged us, we should instead step back and have faith, knowing that God will handle our enemies. This is so profound, especially for those youth who want to wish ill happenings on their fathers for not being present in their lives. God gives us grace and forgives our sins and for that, I am grateful. Lucado writes with encouragement and passion. He uses the story of Jacob to remind readers that it matters not how life begins, but that greater things await us in the end. Lucado has been in ministry since 1978 and has served various churches in the U.S.A. and Brazil. He is a teaching minister of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas and three years ago, was the recipient of the ECPA Pinnacle Award. One of the nation’s bestselling inspirational authors, and he is absolutely one of my favorites.

# Risk Factors of Former Male Juvenile Delinquents

In A.Z. Musa and H. Rais’ research article in 2023 titled, Exploring the juvenile delinquency involvements of former young male juvenile delinquents. *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies*, *11*(1), 119–133, the basic categories were Juvenile Delinquency, Juvenile Delinquency Risk Factors Among Adolescents and Former Young Male Juvenile Delinquents. The phenomenological research approach was used for this qualitative research and studied various male youth who experienced incarceration. Purposive sampling technique was applied which was geared to identify the potential participants and the sampling technique used was snowballing or chain technique. With the snowballing technique, the researcher contacted prison officials to obtain contact information for the target sampling population including former young male juvenile delinquents. Not all participants contacted took part, but there ended up being eight. They ranged in age 21 and 26 and were former juvenile delinquents. They were interviewed by the researcher with questions meriting open-ended responses from the participants. The interview contained three sections regarding their delinquent behaviors, history of conflict with the law, and the influence that aided their involvement in juvenile delinquency. All of them were caught as the result of drug trafficking. The researcher concluded three main themes in this study for their involvement in juvenile delinquency: peer pressure, lucrative business, and recidivism. Based on the findings of this study, the majority said their juvenile delinquency involvement was due to peer pressure while they also enjoyed profiting wealth from dealing drugs and lastly, all participants advised they were repeatedly in and out of jail, thus increasing the recidivism rate. It was concluded that early delinquency experience and involvement highly affect delinquent behaviors.

# Delinquency and Recidivism: Sociodemographic and Clinical Characteristics

According to M. Özturk, Y. Guzel, Z. Demirkiran, Z. Akan, et al. in their article from 2024 called *Sociodemographic and clinical characteristics of delinquent children and factors associated with recidivism.* Dicle Tıp Dergisi, 50(1), 36-45, included a study that examined various sociodemographic characteristics that are connected to delinquency types, serious mental health diagnoses, and recidivism. The sample consisted of children referred by forensic departments for psychiatric outpatient treatment, and the ages was 12-18 for the study conducted between October 15, 2021, and October 15, 2022. Court-related matters by the youth were also included in the files of 97 cases that were referred; however, only 91 cases were included as the others did not meet the final criteria. Participants completed a socio-demographic questionnaire and participants underwent an intelligence test. Statistical Analysis of the data was collected and a chi-square test was used for qualitative data which contained yes and no questions (school attendance, delinquency, and alcohol and drug history) to compare two groups (single crime youths vs. recidivism groups). The researcher also used the Cramér's V test and all data was analyzed using the SPSS program. The results found that below half the participants were attending school and a good number of them had dropped out of school while six of them had never even started formal education. More shocking is that the educational level of the participants’ parents was found to be low as 56 (61.5%) of the mothers never attended school and of the fathers, 24 (26.4%) had never gone to school; however, most of the fathers were employed while only 10 of the mothers worked. The research found a significantly high number of children did not have a chronic disease. Criminally, 69 (75.8%) of the kids were investigated for a single crime and 22 (24.2%) had more than one crime. Almost 70% of the kids had not committed a similar delinquency, while a little over 30% of them had committed a similar offense. Over half the children did the crimes together while others acted alone. It was concluded that schools can play an active role in combating youth delinquency as can proper mental health services and active parenting.

# Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency in Rivers State

The 2022 article by P.F. Peter and H.T. Nwadukwe titled Effects of family structure on juvenile delinquency in Rivers State: A theoretical review. *Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and History*, *3*(10) includes two basic categories in the literature review, family structure and juvenile delinquency. In addition to examining the causes of delinquency, the authors looked at the link between behaviors and kids coming from two-parent homes and single-parent homes in Rivers State. Used in this study, which included populations of family units where (delinquent) youth lived with both parents and single parents and included those youth who float between separated parents, were multiple qualitative, historical, and descriptive designs; however, the study’s argument was pulled from secondary data, including sources from academic publications, the internet, journal articles, newspapers, and personal observation. Several secondary sources were also used to lessen errors with efforts to expand the study’s reliability and validity. To gain a clear understanding of the nature and reasons for Rivers State’s juvenile delinquency, the analysis was decently descriptive and concluded its implication connecting families, victims, communities, and the entire nation, and other collected data was uncovered through content analysis. This study concluded that Rivers State families are compromised by delinquent behaviors of youth as a result of biological, economic, and social challenges within the family structure. Based on the findings, delinquency occurrence with two-parent family units was much lower than that of single-parent units and such factors to be considered included are things like death or divorce of a parent or choosing singleness by choice.

# Father Absence and Juvenile Delinquency

In S.A. Sabrina and D.R. Suminar’s 2020 article Differences in juvenile delinquency caused by father absence. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, the basic categories are adolescent, juvenile delinquency, intention and inclination, and father absence. In this study, the adolescent subjects ranged from ages 12-21 years old and did not reside with their fathers as a result of death, divorce, or out-of-town employed fathers. Using a questionnaire for the subjects was the main data collection tool for the sample group where the independent variable was that of father absence, while the inclination of juvenile delinquency was the dependent variable. The conclusions based on the analysis suggest that there are variances in juvenile delinquency inclination among young people groups where father's death, adolescents dealing with parental divorce, and those whose fathers work away from home. For certain, differences are apparent in the first and the third groups. This study also revealed that the inclination level of delinquency is more common in male adolescents than female adolescents despite the fact both genders experience alike situations: absent fathers.

# Parent-to-Child Relationships and Juvenile Delinquency

In this 2018 article by C. Simmons, L. Steinberg, P.J. Frick, and E. Cauffman, E., The differential influence of absent and harsh fathers on juvenile delinquency. *Journal of Adolescence*, *62*, 9-17, two key purposes were sought. One was associating the influence of absent and harsh fathers on their young sons' delinquent behavior and examining whether there was an effect on the behaviors of sons having absent or harsh fathers by taking into account the quality relationship of the mother-child. Secondly, the study looked into the various effects of absent and present fathers' quality of the father-child relationships by comparing the mother-child relationship. Investigating the effects of juvenile justice system contact on the advancement of 1216 male first-time offenders, the sample came from a longitudinal study and involved ages 13–17 who were interviewed by researchers six months following their initial official juvenile justice system contact. Their arrests were for misdemeanor offenses and were sampled by groups involving absent-father and harsh-father. Kids with harsh fathers were older and the groups varied, racially. Most harsh-father kids were while the blacks represented the majority of absent-father youth. The educational status of the fathers also varied. It was concluded that absent fathers contribute greatly to juvenile delinquency and juveniles in the harsh-father group took part in more criminal activity and misuse of substances than youth in the absent-father group. The mother-child relationship remained steady during this study.

# Patterns of Justice-Involved Youth

‌The 2021 publication of L. Yang’s *Offending patterns among justice-involved youths* categories are Career Criminal, General Theory of Crime, Dual Taxonomy, and Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control. Research questions and hypotheses were conducted on participants, all of whom were justice-involved youths and members of a program during the 2006-2017 timeframe. Participants had to be 10-18, have a history of juvenile justice involvement, and be present while having at least one mental health disorder. Participants were identified by the state and included co-occurring substance abuse judgment, a pattern of unlawful behavior, experience with trauma or domestic violence, and a history of multisystem connection. They began with a sample of 5229, but that number was soon dropped by 214 cases for different reasons, thus, causing the number to be 5015. Measures were broken down into various offense types, most serious to less serious. Preliminary screenings took place using t-tests and chi-square tests and to identify subgroups, latent class analyses were applied for the first question. For question #2, categorical latent variable multinomial logistic regression was applied to look at gender, race, and onset age. There were several challenges with this study to include an understudied female population and lack of full participation as it was not a mandatory project for participants, who had major mental health issues. It was concluded that there is a need to be inclusive of various factors regarding justice-involved prevention, assessment, and intervention. The results supported all three classes: Violent Class, Property Class, and Status Class, in addition, the data displayed that age, race, and gender were analytical of class association.

# Absent Fathers, Children and the Church

The 2019 research from H. Yi on *Father absence and adolescents: A youth ministry approach* did not include a literature review; however, the writer had four overall aims that included understanding the father’s role being a spiritual leader in the Bible; describing the father’s role during child and adolescent development; highlighting the unnatural influence of absent fathers in a child’s life; reviewing findings from the current state of kids living without a biological father, and lastly, probing the implications of the research findings for growing a needs-oriented youth ministry. This study included several research questions and practical theology was used to include human experience and theological reflection. The methods used were inductive (qualitative) and deductive (quantitative) approaches. Interviews and questionaries were used with the random sampling of 21 father-absent youth over the age of 18 from 25 different churches, along with 12 pastors from 13 different churches who served as interviewees. Results of this research showed that father-absent youth are hurting because of their absent fathers and also, the pastors must have a better understanding of father-absent adolescents and how they feel.