

Child Criminals And Functionality of Their Families

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Abstract

Objective: This research was conducted with the aim of determining the family functionality of the children who are within the scope of investigation and under continuing judicial process due to committing a crime in Sivas Province Court.

Methods: 99 children created the sample of this descriptive research. The data of the study were collected by the Family Assessment Device (FAD) and the information form developed by the researcher. Analysis was made in the SPSS 16.0 program.

Results: 25.3% of the children participated in this research are 17 years old, 86.9% are males, 76.8% are secondary school graduates, 45.5% continue to study, 7.1% continue to study and also work in paid employment, 19.2% does not work. 77.8% of the children stated that they did not see any negative behavior from their family, 22.2% reported verbal and physical violence. It was found that 72.7% of the children used an addictive substance such as cigarettes, alcohol, 37.4% had a criminal individual among the first and second degree relatives, 64.6% committed a crime for one time and 35.4% for 2 times and more. It was determined that 29.3% of children got involved in crime because of conflict and 30.3% acted crime of sabotage. 42.4% said that they committed the crime on their own, and 36% said that they committed crime together with their friends. 9.1% of the children stated that their family members were responsible for this crime and 31.3% said that their friends were responsible for the process.

Conclusion: When the average scores of the Family Assessment Device of the children in this study are examined, problem solving is 2.13 ± 0.85 , communication is 2.20 ± 0.54 , roles are 2.24 ± 0.57 , emotional responsiveness is 2.32 ± 0.56 , giving required attention is 2.40 ± 0.59 , behavioral control is 2.09 ± 0.44 , and general function subscale is 2.05 ± 0.50 . As it is seen, in all subscales family functionality is above 2. A scale score of above 2 indicates a non-functional family.

Keywords: Child criminals, Family Functionality, Nursing

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I. Introduction

A child criminal refers to a child who has not completed the age of 18 who has been investigated or prosecuted with the allegation of committing an act defined as a crime in law and who has been ordered to take security measures for the action he or she has committed (<http://mevzuat.basbakanlik.gov.tr>). The issue of juvenile delinquency is more than just legal, it has psycho-pedagogical and social aspects. The child criminal tends to be a serious, chronic violent practitioner for the future and this increases the importance of juvenile delinquency (Espiritu et al., 2000).

The risk factors for child criminals are gathered around the areas of individual, family, school, friend environment and living areas. The study by Leober and Stouthamer-Lober (1986) showed that the most important factors in juvenile delinquency are related to family functioning, including parental indifference, inadequate supervision over the child, and weakness of the relationship between the parent and the child. The socialization of the child depends on the family. It is important for the family to contribute to the child, to set the awareness that the child is an individual and a member of the family, to prepare the child for acceptance in the society, to create a role model for the society's cultural values, to help the child solve the problems of adaptation, to help the child adopt socially acceptable behaviors and to provide healthy development and education (Uluğtekin, 1991; Onur 1997; Ünal, 1999). Yavuzer, 1993, Çoban, S, 2012).

Families who have healthy family communication, who have few conflicts, who are compatible with developmental changes and who are able to deal well with stressful events are called "healthy", "functional", "strong" families. These families succeed in adapting to life crises. There are very few problems in the family system and they perform well in normal conditions (Frude 1991). In functional families, parents are compassionate, sympathetic, warm and responsible. They are creative, productive realists. As an autonomous and mature individual, they are realistic about themselves and their children. They take responsible of

everything in their lives. For this reason, they can solve their problems without disturbing their children. Psychologically healthy family members have an autonomous self-development capacity (Nazli, 2000). Family functionality appears to be the determinant factor of juvenile delinquency. The inability to be functional in family relationships plays a major role in turning the child to criminal behavior (Polat, 2004). In other words, the family is the number one factor in turning into crime (Tezcan, 2003). Negative relations among family members and negative attitudes towards each other can cause the child to turn into crime by negatively affecting the child's development (Akyüz, 2000). According to the researches, a significant proportion of the child criminals spent the very first years of their lives around the non-functional families which are dominated by social, moral and economic irregularities (Ereş F, 2009).

Parents have great duties in healthy growth and development of their children. The quality of the child's family environment influences the child's development areas either positively or negatively. Unconditional love, a reassuring environment and a rich stimulating environment that are presented to the child in early childhood form the basis for the child's emotional and cognitive development. Parents need support to be functional to support their children, to be effective parents, to communicate well with their children, to develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards their children, to create stimulating environments for their children and to increase their confidence. Nurses should use their professional roles against family feedback to discern families that can not perform these functions and to prevent family interactions from becoming irreversible (<http://www.sociumas.lt/Eng/Nr16/nepilnameciai.asp>). Parents should be trained systematically to increase their sensitivity to the importance of early childhood.

II. Materials And Methods

This research was conducted descriptively with the aim of evaluating the family functionality of the children who are within the scope of investigation and under continuing judicial process due to committing a crime. 99 children who were caught red-handed by the police or investigated on the complaints of the victims, who came to the court on tuesdays and thursdays during the four month period between November 2010 and February 2011 and who voluntarily participated in the study created the sample of this research. The data of the study were collected through the Family Assessment Device and personal information form. In the personal information form developed by the researcher, there are 28 questions about socio-demographic data of the children and the family and the data about the crime characteristics of the child. The FAD was created to make a general assessment of whether the family fulfilled their functions and to identify problem areas. The results of Wesley and Epstein's studies, beginning in 1969, show that family functions depend on the family system as a whole, rather than the behaviors of individual family members. The device is defined in such a way that the interaction between family members can be distinguished as "healthy" and "unhealthy" (Bulut, 1990). The FAD consists of 60 items and seven subscales which are Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Emotional Responsiveness, Giving Required Attention, Behavior Control, and General Functions. Some of the items describe healthy functions and others describe unhealthy functions. The answer options for each item are collected in four classes. In all items, score 1 refers to a healthy answer and score 4 refers to an unhealthy answer. The scores obtained in this way are averaged for each subscale (Bulut 1990). As the average score above 2.00 is indicative of a trend towards unhealthiness in family functioning, theoretically 2.00 is regarded as a distinctive number (Bulut 1990).

The necessary written and verbal permission was obtained from the Public Prosecutor of Sivas before the collection of the research data. The purpose of the research was explained to children and families and their permission was obtained. Questionnaire and scales of this research were completed in company with the researcher. The "One Whitney U" test and the "The Significance of the Difference Between Two Means" test were used when evaluating the data of the study and comparing the FAD subscale scores for two independent groups. The Kruskal Wallis test and the "Tukey" test were used when the FAD subscale scores were compared in independent groups more than two. Our data are given in the tables as the average, standard deviation, number of individuals and percentage. The level of significance was taken as 0.005. The Tukey test was used to find the group or groups that differ when significant decision was determined as a result of Kruskal Wallis test.

III. Findings

Table 1. Some Descriptive Characteristics of Children(n=99)

Factors	Number	Percentage (%)
Age group	13	13.1
12-14 ages	45	45.5
15-16 ages	41	41.4
17-18 ages		
Average Age: 15.9		
Gender		
Female	13	13.1
Male	86	86.9

Level of Education	6	6.1
Literate	14	14.1
Primary school graduate	76	76.8
Secondary school graduate	3	3.0
High school graduate		
Current Situation		
Going on a school	45	45.5
Not doing anything	19	19.2
Working with the father	5	5.0
Working	23	23.2
Other*	7	7.1
Number of Siblings		
0-3	52	52.5
4-7	39	39.4
7 and more	8	8.1
Duration of Living in Sivas		
1-6 years	11	11.1
7-12 years	14	14.1
13 and over	74	74.7

13.1% of the children included in the study are 12-14, 45.5% are 15-16 and 41.4% are in the 17-18 age group. 86.9% are male. 76.8% are secondary school graduates. 45.5% of them are going on a school while 19.2% are not working at any kind of jobs and 23.2% are working. 52.5% of the children included in the study have 3 or less siblings. 74.7% live in Sivas for 13 years and more.

Table2. Some Characteristics of Families (n=99)

Factors	Number	Percentage
Parental State (n=99)		
Parents Alive and Live Together	81	81,8
Father Died	7	7,1
Parents Died	4	4,0
Parents Divorced	3	3,0
Stepmother	3	3,0
Stepfather	1	1,0
Mother's Education Level (n=94)		
Illiterate	17	17,2
Literate	14	14,1
Primary school graduate	39	39,4
Secondary school graduate	16	16,2
High school graduate	5	5,1
University graduate	3	3,0
Father's Education Level (n=91)		
Illiterate	9	9,1
Literate	5	5,1
Primary school graduate	39	39,4
Secondary school graduate	20	20,2
High school graduate	16	16,2
University graduate	2	2,0
Mother's Working Status (n=94)		
Working	3	3,1
Housewife	91	91,9
Father's Profession (n=90)		
Laborer	29	29,3
Self-employment	45	45,5
Officer	7	7,1
Unemployed	3	3,0
Retired	6	6,1
Financial Status of the Family (n=99)		
Income not meet expense	23	23,2
Income more than expense	9	9,1
Income meets expense	31	31,3
I do not know	36	36,4
Health Insurance (n=99)		
No health insurance	6	6,1
Retirement fund	2	2,0
Bağkur (social security organization for artisans and the self-employed)	9	9,1
Yeşil Kart (health card for uninsured people in turkey)	31	31,3
SSK (social insurance institution)	51	51,5

81% of the children who committed crime have living parents and they live with them. 41.5% of the children have primary school graduate mothers and 42.9% of them have primary school graduate fathers. While 96.8% of their mothers are not working, 50% of their fathers are self-employed. 23.2% of them have income less than expense and 51.5% of them have SSK as health insurance.

Table3.Characteristics of Crimes Committed by Children(n=99)

How many times crime committed (n=99)		
First-time offenders	64	64,6
2-4 times	16	16,2
5 and over	19	19,2
Type of crime (n=99)		
Damage to property	7	7,1
Fight	29	29,3
Robbery	7	7,1
Stabbing	17	17,2
Sabotage	30	30,3
Other	9	9,1
Accomplice (n=99)		
No accomplice	42	42,4
Friend	36	36,3
One of family members	5	5,0
Blaming someone else for the crime	16	16,2
Factor Causing Crime (n=99)		
Family	10	10,1
Friend	31	31,3
Honor	5	5,1
Economic	3	3,0
I did not commit the crime	30	30,3
Other	20	20,2

*other: those who do not want to tell

** other: those who do not want to tell

64.6% of the children included in the study were children who committed a crime for the first time. 29.3% of children were guilty of fight, 30.3% of them committed sabotage crime. 42.4% of them committed the crime alone, 36% of their accomplices were their friends. 9.1% stated that they had committed this crime for familial reasons, while 31.3% blamed their friends for committing the crime.

Table4. Family Assessment Device (FAD) Average Scores of Children(n=99)

Subscales	Lower and Upper Value Obtained from the Scale	Average Scores of the Scale
Problem Solving	1.00 - 4.00	2.13 ± 0.85
Communication	1.00 -3.44	2.20 ± 0.54
Roles	1,09 -3.88	2.24 ± 0.57
Emotional Responsiveness	1.00 - 4.00	2.32 ± 0.56
Giving Required Attention	1.28 - 4.00	2.40 ± 0.59
Behavior Control	1.11 - 3.22	2.09 ± 0.44
General Functions	1.25 - 3.58	2.05 ± 0.50

Although the average subscale scores of FAD were all high (above 2), Giving Required Attention average score (2.40 ± 0.59) and General Functions average score (2.05 ± 0.50) were higher than the others.

Table5. Family Assessment Device (FAD) Average Scores According to Gender of Children (n=99)

Subscales	Gender				Test p
	Female	X±SD	Male	X±sd	
Problem Solving		2,84±0,94		2,03±0,79	0,004*
Communication		2,68±0,46		2,13±0,52	0,001*
Roles		2,60±0,68		2,18±0,54	0,021
Emotional Responsiveness		2,79±0,62		2,25±0,52	0,005*
Giving Required Attention		2,73±0,56		2,35±0,58	0,039
Behavior Control		2,31±0,42		2,06±0,44	0,062
General Functions		2,52±0,50		1,97±0,46	0,001*

It was determined that there was a statistically significant difference in gender of Problem Solving, Communication, Emotional Responsiveness and General Functions

Table 6. Family Assessment Device (FAD) Average Scores According to Age of Children(n=99)

Alt Ölçekler	Yaş					Test	
	14 yaş n = 99 X±SD	15 yaş n = 99 X±SD	16 yaş n = 99 X±SD	17 yaş n = 99 X±SD	18 yaş n = 99 X±SD	KW	P
	Problem çözme	1,69 ± 0,53	1,79±0,63	2,25±0,80	2,40±1,03		
İletişim	2,11±0,45	2,11±0,61	2,30±0,51	2,28±0,46	2,15±0,70	2,58	0,629
Roller	2,27±0,40	2,27±0,64	2,23±0,65	2,20±0,54	2,24±0,60	0,28	0,991
Duygusal Tepki Verebilme	2,29±0,43	2,17±0,50	2,31±0,56	2,46±0,69	2,34±0,52	2,90	0,575
Gereken İlgiiyi Gösterme	2,68±0,49	2,44±0,56	2,18±0,54	2,41±0,70	2,43±0,54	6,74	0,151
Davranış Kontrolü	2,01±0,50	2,09±0,42	2,14±0,54	2,10±0,35	2,09±0,43	0,082	0,935
Genel İşlevler	1,94±0,46	1,88±0,38	2,15±0,49	2,12±0,50	2,10±0,65	5,74	0,219

It was determined that there was a statistically significant difference in gender of Problem Solving.

Table7. Family Assessment Device (FAD) Average Scores According to Children’s Residence Place and With Whom They Live

Subscales	Living Where and With Whom		Test
	At Home,With Family X±SD	Other** X±SD	
			P*
Problem solving	2,00 ± 0,79	3,10±0,65	0,001*
Communication	2,13±0,53	2,71±0,32	0,001*
Roles	2,17±0,54	2,70±0,58	0,002*
Emotional Responsiveness	2,27±0,53	2,67±0,63	0,042*
Giving Required Attention	2,37±0,60	2,65±0,50	0,101
Behavior Control	2,07±0,44	2,24±0,47	0,228
General Functions	1,97±0,49	2,55±0,25	0,001*

* P<0,05 important

**staying at orphanage, living with any relatives, living alone,

FAD subscale average scores of children who stay at orphanage, live with any relatives and live alonewere higher than children who live with their parents at home. It was also determined that there was a statistically significant difference in terms of Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Emotional Responsiveness and General Functions except for the Giving Required Attention and Behavior Control subscales.

Table8. Family Assessment Device Average Scores According to Mistreatment of Parents

Subscales	Mistreatment		No Mistreatment		Test
	N = 99	X±Sd	N = 99	X±Sd	
					P
Problem solving		2,59±0,80		2,00±0,82	0,004*
Communication		2,49±0,50		2,12±0,54	0,007*
Roles		2,48±0,60		2,17±0,55	0,024*
Emotional Responsiveness		2,70±0,66		2,22±0,49	0,001*
Giving Required Attention		2,52±0,51		2,38±0,60	0,346
Behavior Control		2,27±0,46		2,06±0,42	0,089
General Functions		2,31±0,54		1,97±0,46	0,006*

When mistreatment of parents and FAD is compared, it was found that all subscale average scores were high. Besides there was a statistically significant difference between Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Emotional Responsiveness and General Functions. Children who are exposed to the family's mistreatment do not perceive their families functional.

IV. CONCLUSION

Committing crime age is especially between 14 and 16-18 in children (Yavuzer, 2001). In Elibol's study of children who committed crimes against property (1998), it is stated that children are at most 14 years old. In a study of Gönültaş carried out with 470 crime inclined children in 2009, it was determined that children were generally 16 and 17 years old. Of the children participating in this study, 86.9% were male. When it comes to gender distribution of crimes, males are always seen to be more numerous. This result is compatible with other studies conducted in our country and with the data of the Ministry of Justice and the Security Directorate. In Gönültaş's 2009 study, 96.4% of the children who committed crime were males and 3.6% were females. It was determined that 91.7% of the children who were judged as defendants in Edirne were males and 8.3% were females (Çoğan 2006). All the children participating in this study got education to be at least literate. 76.8 of the children stated that they were secondary school graduates. In Aksoy and Ögel's study (2005), it was reported that nearly half of the child criminals (45.3%) were primary school graduates, 26.5% did not completed primary education or never attended school, and 12.5% left secondary school. Another study found that 59.4% of the child criminals were in their primary school years (Özen et al., 2005).

81.8% of children in this study live with their parents and their parents are alive. Parents of the rest of the children are separated for any reasons. Some of the children in this study live in orphanage, with relatives or with friends. High average scores of Problem Solving ($3,10\pm 0,65$), Communication ($2,71\pm 0,32$), Roles ($2,70\pm 0,58$) Emotional Responsiveness ($2,67\pm 0,63$), Giving Required Attention ($2,65\pm 0,50$), Behavior Control ($2,24\pm 0,47$), General Functions ($2,55\pm 0,25$) of children who do not live with their parents and statistical significance level between FAD and Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Emotional Responsiveness, General Functions clearly indicate that the family is not functional. There were illiterate ones among parents of children (17.2% mother, 9.2% father), the majority of whom were primary school graduates (44.3% father, 39.2% mother). While 96.8% of the parents were not working, 50% of their fathers had non-qualified self-employments. 23.2% of the families had less income than their expense. There is not a statistically significant difference between the factors such as parents' education, profession, income level of the parents, which are thought to increase the functionality of the family, and the average scores of FAD, but all of the scores taken from the scale are above 2.00. It is possible to say that the family functionality of children is low. It was found that 22.2% of the children exposed to verbal-physical violent behavior from their parents and 20.2% of them tried to escape from home. In Gönültaş's study in Adana (2009), 48.5% of children's mothers did not attend school at all, only 15.5% were literate, 22.5% were primary school graduates and 1.2% were graduated from higher education. In the study of Öter (2005), children's mothers have a lower educational level than their fathers. Akduman et al.'s 2007 study showed that the adolescents got involved in less number of crimes as the education level of their parents increased. According to Yavuzer's (2003) study, that 76.6% of mothers of child criminals and 40.7% of their fathers were uneducated indicated that child criminals' families had low educational level. In the interview with 377 children in Ankara, İzmir, Elazığ Reformatory Schools and in Sinop Juvenile Prison, it was revealed that 47.7% of children's mothers and 8.7% of their fathers were illiterate.

When the average scores of the Family Assessment Device of the children in this study are examined, problem solving is 2.13 ± 0.85 , communication is 2.20 ± 0.54 , roles are 2.24 ± 0.57 , emotional responsiveness is 2.32 ± 0.56 , giving required attention is 2.40 ± 0.59 , behavioral control is 2.09 ± 0.44 , and general function subscale is 2.05 ± 0.50 . As it is seen, in all subscales family functionality is above 2. A scale score of above 2 indicates a non-functional family.

When FAD average scores were compared according to parent togetherness, children were found to perceive their families unhealthy in terms of problem solving, communication and general functions. The continuity of family integrity and strong family relationships are crucial for the prevention of child criminals. The inability to continue family integrity for such reasons as separation, abandonment, divorce, death, or any other reason leads to a faulty and incomplete socialization because of interrupting the child's process of socialization. One of the consequences of faulty and incomplete socialization is crime (Polat, 2000). In a study on child abuse and working mothers, the change in the deteriorating families due to the death or separation of parents is seen as the number one factor of child criminals issue (Trojanowicz, Morash, 1987). It has been observed that children who are raised in divorced families have a higher risk of being involved in groups using substance and have limited levels of stress coping and social skills (Yavuzer, 1993).

Interactions and family relationships are complex in non-functional families. In non-functional families, parents are inadequate in fulfilling their universally accepted functions, in their communication and responsibilities, in other words in meeting the physical, emotional and social needs of their children. These families may be fragmented or reunited, crowded and prone to violent. Parent's control over the child is incomplete, the parent-child relationship is often disordered. The child may be neglected, exposed to violence or ill-treated. There may be an antisocial role model in the family. There is disorganization and high social mobility in the family. Income and education level of the family is low. Unemployment and poverty are seen in the family.

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