

The Effect of Parental Monitoring and Moral Identity on Youth Delinquency

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the effect of parental monitoring and moral identity on youth delinquency among adolescents in Bangladesh.

Methods and Materials: A correlational descriptive design was employed using a sample of 403 adolescents aged 14 to 18 years, selected through stratified random sampling based on the Morgan and Krejcie table. Participants were recruited from secondary schools across urban and semi-urban areas in Bangladesh. Data were collected using three standard self-report instruments: the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) by Elliott et al. (1985), the Parental Monitoring Scale by Stattin and Kerr (2000), and the Moral Identity Questionnaire by Aquino and Reed (2002). All instruments demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability in prior research. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, involving descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation to assess bivariate relationships, and linear regression to evaluate the combined predictive value of parental monitoring and moral identity on youth delinquency.

Findings: The results revealed significant negative correlations between youth delinquency and both parental monitoring ($r = -.52, p < .001$) and moral identity ($r = -.47, p < .001$). Linear regression analysis indicated that parental monitoring and moral identity together significantly predicted youth delinquency ($R^2 = .38, F(2, 400) = 122.61, p < .001$). Parental monitoring ($\beta = -.41, p < .001$) emerged as a slightly stronger predictor than moral identity ($\beta = -.35, p < .001$), suggesting that both external supervision and internal value systems independently contribute to the reduction of delinquent behavior.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the critical role of both parental monitoring and moral identity in deterring youth delinquency. Intervention programs targeting adolescent behavior should integrate family-based strategies that promote effective monitoring and support the development of moral identity to enhance protective factors against deviance.

Keywords: Youth delinquency, parental monitoring, moral identity, adolescent behavior, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Adolescent delinquency continues to be a major concern across psychological, educational, and sociological disciplines due to its long-term consequences on individuals and society. Delinquency refers to a wide spectrum of antisocial and rule-breaking behaviors, including aggression, truancy, theft, substance use, and violence. These behaviors often signal broader maladjustment in youth and are linked to academic failure, future criminal involvement, and impaired social functioning. Understanding the contributing factors to delinquency is crucial for designing effective interventions. Among the various influences, parental monitoring and moral identity have gained increasing attention as protective variables that shape adolescent behavioral outcomes (Ahmad & Amidi, 2019; Cicerali & Cicerali, 2017; Freeman et al., 2022).

Parental monitoring, defined as the degree to which parents are aware of their children's whereabouts, activities, and peer associations, has consistently been associated with reduced rates of delinquency (Ahmad & Amidi, 2019; Robinson et al., 2015). Effective monitoring fosters accountability, reduces exposure to high-risk peers, and encourages positive decision-making. Research shows that adolescents who perceive their parents as involved and vigilant are less likely to engage in deviant behavior (Cicerali & Cicerali, 2017; Freeman et al., 2022; Zakaria et al., 2022). Robinson et al. emphasized that family-based interventions that increase parental involvement have shown success in modifying adolescent conduct problems (Robinson et al., 2015). Moreover, studies from diverse contexts indicate that monitoring is effective across cultures, though it may operate differently depending on parenting style and cultural expectations (Ahmad & Amidi, 2019; Tapia et al., 2018).

Parental style and emotional tone also affect the effectiveness of monitoring. Harsh, inconsistent, or neglectful parenting may foster resentment or rebellion, undermining the regulatory function of supervision (Huffman et al., 2020a, 2020b). For instance, Oh et al. found that negative parenting attitudes were significantly associated with cyber delinquency, mediated by aggression and low perseverance (Oh et al., 2024). This implies that supervision alone is insufficient without emotional support and consistency. Similarly, Zakaria et al. concluded that Malaysian adolescents exposed to punitive and authoritarian parenting styles were more likely to be influenced by deviant

peers despite parental oversight (Zakaria et al., 2022). These findings underline the importance of not just monitoring behavior, but also fostering trust and warmth within parent-child relationships.

In addition to external controls such as monitoring, internal controls rooted in moral identity play a key role in behavioral regulation. Moral identity refers to the extent to which being a moral person is central to one's self-concept. Adolescents who develop strong moral values are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior and resist delinquent influences (Sabatine et al., 2017; Walters, 2021). Walters demonstrated that youth attitudes toward deviance mediate the effects of parental and peer reactions on self-reported delinquency, highlighting the internalization of moral standards as a regulatory force (Walters, 2021). Sabatine et al. found that strong bonds with parents and schools—which reinforce moral development—were associated with lower rates of delinquency (Sabatine et al., 2017). Similarly, Ray et al. observed that moral identity buffered the influence of delinquent peers in youth with callous-unemotional traits (Ray et al., 2017).

Cultural and contextual factors also shape the development of moral identity and the expression of delinquency. Lassi's work on Confucian cultures suggests that filial piety and collective identity serve as strong internal deterrents to deviance (Lassi, 2023). In the Korean context, Yun reported that multicultural adolescents were at higher risk for status delinquency when moral and cultural identity development was disrupted (Yun, 2023). Lee also found that perceived parenting styles influenced delinquent behavior differently for boys and girls, reflecting the importance of gendered socialization in moral development (Lee, 2023). These findings show that while moral identity is a personal trait, it is deeply shaped by family values, peer norms, and societal expectations.

Peer influence remains a major factor driving adolescent delinquency, often interacting with parenting and moral variables. Reynolds and Crea emphasized that peer processes can override parental influence, especially when adolescents lack strong internal controls (Reynolds & Crea, 2015). Ray et al. similarly showed that delinquent peers mediated the effects of parenting on deviance (Ray et al., 2017). The role of peers has been further explored in digital contexts, where Lee reported that out-of-school youth were vulnerable to cyber violence due to the influence of online peer groups (Lee & Cochran, 2023). These studies collectively suggest that adolescents require both internal

(moral identity) and external (monitoring) safeguards to resist harmful peer pressure.

Environmental and structural variables also intersect with familial and personal factors. According to Lei and Beach, youth living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more prone to deviance, but resilient families can mitigate this risk (Lei & Beach, 2020). Gearhart found that collective efficacy in the community, as perceived by both parents and children, significantly predicted lower rates of delinquency (Gearhart, 2019). Mambende et al., in a study on incarcerated youth in Zimbabwe, identified family dysfunction and lack of supervision as major contributors to delinquent behavior (Mambende et al., 2016). These findings reinforce the idea that both individual and contextual factors must be considered when addressing youth misconduct.

Trauma and adversity in childhood also impact the pathways to delinquency. NeMoyer et al. found that parental incarceration predicted later delinquent outcomes in Puerto Rican youth, highlighting the impact of disrupted caregiving on behavioral outcomes (NeMoyer et al., 2020). Kim and Lo showed that victimization experiences had both immediate and mid-term effects on youth delinquency, further supporting the connection between early trauma and antisocial behavior (Kim & Lo, 2016). These experiences may weaken both the external structures of support and the internalization of moral codes, making adolescents more vulnerable to behavioral problems.

Additionally, parenting styles interact with demographic and cultural variables to influence delinquency. Tapia et al. found that the relationship between parenting and delinquency varied across gender, with authoritarian parenting more detrimental for boys than girls (Tapia et al., 2018). Mowen and Schroeder demonstrated that maternal parenting styles had different effects depending on race and structural disadvantage, pointing to the role of intersectionality in family dynamics (Mowen & Schroeder, 2015). Jeon and Chun emphasized that protective family factors such as warmth, structure, and communication can buffer the effects of stress and reduce delinquency among Korean adolescents (Jeon & Chun, 2017). These findings support a multidimensional understanding of parenting, in which monitoring must be embedded within broader parenting frameworks.

In the Bangladeshi context, these dynamics warrant closer attention due to rapid urbanization, shifting family roles, and limited youth support services. Despite cultural emphasis on family and moral values, Bangladeshi adolescents increasingly face exposure to delinquent

influences through media, peer networks, and socioeconomic stressors. However, empirical research exploring the predictive role of parental monitoring and moral identity in this population remains scarce. This study aims to address that gap by examining how these two factors relate to youth delinquency in a large sample of Bangladeshi adolescents.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a correlational descriptive design to examine the relationship between parental monitoring, moral identity, and youth delinquency. The research sample consisted of 403 adolescent participants from Bangladesh, selected using a stratified random sampling method. The sample size was determined based on the Morgan and Krejcie table (1970), ensuring adequate statistical power and generalizability of the findings. Participants were students aged between 14 and 18 years, recruited from various secondary schools and colleges across urban and semi-urban regions of Bangladesh. Informed consent was obtained from both the participants and their guardians, and the study protocol adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving minors.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Youth Delinquency

To measure youth delinquency, the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) developed by Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton in 1985 was used. This standard instrument is widely utilized in criminological and psychological research to assess the frequency and types of delinquent behavior in adolescents. The scale includes 36 items divided into subscales such as status offenses (e.g., truancy, running away), property offenses (e.g., theft, vandalism), and person offenses (e.g., fighting, assault). Respondents indicate how often they have engaged in each behavior over a specified time frame, typically using a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (five or more times). Higher scores indicate greater involvement in delinquent activities. The SRDS has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with confirmed construct validity and high internal consistency reliability in multiple studies across diverse adolescent populations (Folorunsho et al., 2024; Ji, 2023; Zakaria et al., 2022).

2.2.2. Parental Monitoring

Parental monitoring was assessed using the Parental Monitoring Scale developed by Stattin and Kerr in 2000. This widely accepted instrument evaluates the extent to which parents are aware of their children's whereabouts, activities, and companions. The scale consists of 9 items and includes subscales such as parental knowledge, child disclosure, and parental solicitation. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores indicating more effective parental monitoring. This tool has been extensively validated and is known for its robust psychometric properties. Studies have supported the scale's convergent validity and internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically exceeding 0.80 (Aziz et al., 2023; Dittus et al., 2023; Haruyama et al., 2023).

2.2.3. Moral Identity

To assess moral identity, the Moral Identity Questionnaire developed by Aquino and Reed in 2002 was used. This standard tool measures the degree to which moral traits are central to an individual's self-concept. The instrument includes 10 items divided into two subscales: internalization (reflecting the private importance of moral identity) and symbolization (reflecting the public expression of moral identity). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a stronger moral identity. The tool has been validated in numerous studies and has demonstrated solid construct validity and reliability, with reported

Cronbach's alpha values above 0.75 for both subscales (Azimi et al., 2023; Shadjoo et al., 2022).

2.3. Data Analysis

For data analysis, SPSS version 27 was used to conduct statistical procedures. Initially, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics and variable distributions. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the bivariate relationships between the dependent variable (youth delinquency) and each of the independent variables (parental monitoring and moral identity). Following this, a linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the predictive power of parental monitoring and moral identity on youth delinquency. The regression model included one dependent variable and two independent variables. Statistical significance was determined at the $p < 0.05$ level.

3. Findings and Results

The sample consisted of 403 adolescents from Bangladesh, including 213 females (52.85%) and 190 males (47.15%). Participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years, with the highest representation in the 16-year-old group ($n = 112$, 27.79%), followed by 17-year-olds ($n = 98$, 24.32%), 15-year-olds ($n = 92$, 22.83%), 14-year-olds ($n = 61$, 15.14%), and 18-year-olds ($n = 40$, 9.93%). Regarding educational level, 173 students (42.93%) were enrolled in Grade 10, 129 students (32.01%) in Grade 11, and 101 students (25.06%) in Grade 12. The majority of participants resided in urban areas ($n = 247$, 61.29%), while 156 students (38.71%) came from semi-urban regions.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Youth Delinquency	42.76	9.24
Parental Monitoring	31.85	5.18
Moral Identity	38.42	6.71

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 show that the mean score for youth delinquency was 42.76 ($SD = 9.24$), suggesting moderate levels of delinquent behaviors among the participants. The mean score for parental monitoring was 31.85 ($SD = 5.18$), indicating a relatively high perception of parental involvement. Moral identity had a mean of 38.42 ($SD = 6.71$), reflecting a strong internalization of moral values among the adolescents.

Before conducting the main analyses, assumptions for Pearson correlation and linear regression were tested and confirmed. Normality of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with results indicating non-significant values for youth delinquency ($D = 0.035$, $p = 0.121$), parental monitoring ($D = 0.028$, $p = 0.144$), and moral identity ($D = 0.031$, $p = 0.096$), suggesting normal distribution. Linearity was confirmed through scatterplots,

which displayed clear linear patterns between the variables. Homoscedasticity was assessed by plotting standardized residuals against predicted values, revealing evenly distributed residuals without funneling. Multicollinearity was evaluated using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF),

which showed acceptable values for parental monitoring (VIF = 1.34) and moral identity (VIF = 1.28), indicating no concerns. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.91, supporting the assumption of independence of residuals.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Between Youth Delinquency, Parental Monitoring, and Moral Identity

Variable	1	2	3
1. Youth Delinquency	—	—	—
2. Parental Monitoring	-.52** (p < .001)	—	—
3. Moral Identity	-.47** (p < .001)	.44** (p < .001)	—

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients, indicating significant negative relationships between youth delinquency and both parental monitoring ($r = -.52$, $p < .001$) and moral identity ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that adolescents who perceive higher parental monitoring and have a stronger moral identity are less likely

to engage in delinquent behavior. A moderate positive correlation was also observed between parental monitoring and moral identity ($r = .44$, $p < .001$), indicating a potential reinforcing relationship between external and internal behavioral controls.

Table 3

Summary of Regression Model: Predicting Youth Delinquency

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Regression	8752.61	2	4376.30	.62	.38	.38	122.61	< .001
Residual	14279.14	400	35.70					
Total	23031.75	402						

As shown in Table 3, the regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 400) = 122.61$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 value of .38, indicating that approximately 38% of the variance in youth delinquency can be explained by the

combined effects of parental monitoring and moral identity. The adjusted R^2 remained stable at .38, confirming the robustness of the model.

Table 4

Multivariate Regression Analysis: Predicting Youth Delinquency

Predictor	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	67.84	2.76	—	24.58	< .001
Parental Monitoring	-0.84	0.09	-.41	-9.33	< .001
Moral Identity	-0.59	0.08	-.35	-7.38	< .001

Table 4 displays the results of the multivariate regression analysis. Parental monitoring significantly predicted youth delinquency ($\beta = -.41$, $t = -9.33$, $p < .001$), with a one-unit increase in monitoring associated with a 0.84 decrease in delinquency scores. Moral identity was also a significant predictor ($\beta = -.35$, $t = -7.38$, $p < .001$), with each unit increase in moral identity associated with a 0.59 decrease in delinquency. These findings support the hypothesis that both

parental monitoring and moral identity are important predictors of reduced delinquent behaviors in adolescents.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the predictive role of parental monitoring and moral identity on youth delinquency among Bangladeshi adolescents. The findings revealed that both variables were significant negative predictors of

delinquent behavior. Specifically, higher levels of parental monitoring and stronger moral identity were associated with lower levels of self-reported delinquency. These results align with a substantial body of prior research emphasizing the importance of external supervision and internal moral regulation in preventing adolescent misconduct (Ahmad & Amidi, 2019; Cicerali & Cicerali, 2017; Freemon et al., 2022).

The inverse relationship between parental monitoring and delinquency supports the widely acknowledged protective role of involved parenting. Adolescents who perceive that their parents are aware of their activities, whereabouts, and peer associations are less likely to engage in antisocial behavior. These results are consistent with previous findings suggesting that parental supervision not only deters deviance directly but also reduces the influence of negative peer pressure (Freemon et al., 2022; Robinson et al., 2015; Zakaria et al., 2022). Robinson et al. showed that family-based interventions aimed at improving monitoring practices led to substantial improvements in adolescent behavior outcomes (Robinson et al., 2015). Likewise, Ahmad and Amidi highlighted that adolescents reporting consistent parental oversight demonstrated lower frequencies of delinquent acts (Ahmad & Amidi, 2019). The current study further confirms that such monitoring remains effective in the Bangladeshi cultural context.

It is also noteworthy that the effectiveness of monitoring is influenced by the parenting style and emotional tone of the parent-child relationship. While this study focused on the frequency and presence of monitoring, other research has emphasized that harsh or inconsistent parenting can undermine its regulatory impact. Huffman et al. suggested that harsh parenting linked to physiological stress reactivity can increase the risk for both aggression and delinquency (Huffman et al., 2020a, 2020b). Similarly, Oh et al. found that negative parenting attitudes were associated with cyber delinquency, and that internal factors such as aggression and low perseverance mediated this relationship (Oh et al., 2024). These findings suggest that the quality of parental involvement—not just the quantity—plays a critical role in its effectiveness.

The results also demonstrated that moral identity significantly predicted lower delinquency, supporting the idea that adolescents who internalize moral values are less inclined to violate social norms. Sabatine et al. emphasized the protective effect of moral and institutional bonds on adolescent behavior (Sabatine et al., 2017). In a similar vein, Walters found that youth who internalized negative

perceptions of deviance based on parental and peer responses were less likely to engage in delinquent acts (Walters, 2021). The current study confirms these findings by showing that adolescents with stronger moral identity—those who view honesty, compassion, and fairness as central to their self-concept—reported fewer delinquent behaviors.

Ray et al. further clarified that moral traits can moderate the influence of delinquent peers, especially among adolescents with callous-unemotional traits (Ray et al., 2017). This suggests that moral identity can serve as a buffer even in high-risk individuals. Additionally, moral development appears to be closely linked to family dynamics and cultural expectations. Lassi highlighted how Confucian values such as filial piety and obedience to elders contribute to stronger moral identity and reduced deviance among Asian youth (Lassi, 2023). Yun found that disruptions in cultural and moral identity among multicultural Korean adolescents increased their vulnerability to status delinquency (Yun, 2023). These results are highly relevant in Bangladesh, where cultural expectations around morality and family respect are deeply ingrained.

Another significant finding was that parental monitoring emerged as a slightly stronger predictor of delinquency compared to moral identity in the regression model. This may be explained by the adolescent developmental stage, in which external regulation continues to play a dominant role while internal values are still being consolidated. Freemon et al. reported that parental supervision moderated the influence of peer associations in English-speaking Caribbean youth (Freemon et al., 2022). Zakaria et al. found a similar pattern in Malaysian adolescents, noting that family structure and parental involvement significantly buffered peer pressure (Zakaria et al., 2022). These findings are echoed in our results, suggesting that external oversight remains a dominant protective factor in adolescence, particularly in collectivist societies like Bangladesh.

Although peer influence was not directly measured in this study, it remains an important contextual factor. Reynolds and Crea highlighted that peer pressure can often override the influence of family when internal controls are weak (Reynolds & Crea, 2015). Ray et al. confirmed that the impact of parenting on delinquency is often mediated through the adolescent's choice of peer groups (Ray et al., 2017). In line with this, Lee found that youth disconnected from school and family supervision were especially vulnerable to cyber violence due to peer dynamics in virtual spaces (Lee & Cochran, 2023). The interaction between

peers, parents, and moral identity warrants further exploration in future studies.

Environmental and community-level influences also shape adolescent behavior. Lei and Beach demonstrated that neighborhood disadvantage increases the risk for delinquency, but resilient family structures can reduce this risk (Lei & Beach, 2020). Gearhart emphasized the importance of collective efficacy—shared beliefs about social cohesion and informal control—in reducing youth crime (Gearhart, 2019). Likewise, Mambende et al. identified family dysfunction, neglect, and structural deprivation as dominant contributors to youth incarceration in Zimbabwe (Mambende et al., 2016). Although the current study focused on intrapersonal and family-level variables, it is essential to consider how broader ecological factors interact with parenting and personal identity.

Parental styles, influenced by gender, race, and socioeconomic status, also play a crucial role. Tapia et al. noted that the impact of parenting style varies by gender, with authoritarian parenting more negatively associated with delinquency in boys (Tapia et al., 2018). Mowen and Schroeder found that maternal parenting styles interact with racial and structural variables to produce different delinquency outcomes (Mowen & Schroeder, 2015). In a Korean sample, Jeon and Chun showed that protective family factors—such as emotional support and structure—buffered the effects of stress on delinquency (Jeon & Chun, 2017). These findings suggest that while parental monitoring and moral identity are important, their influence is embedded in a broader constellation of cultural, demographic, and environmental factors.

Finally, trauma and adversity have been shown to influence both the development of moral identity and susceptibility to deviance. NeMoyer et al. found that adolescents who experienced parental incarceration had significantly higher rates of delinquent behavior later in life (NeMoyer et al., 2020). Kim and Lo reported that violent victimization had both short- and mid-term effects on delinquency, particularly when supportive family structures were absent (Kim & Lo, 2016). These findings underscore the importance of addressing both protective and risk factors in tandem when examining adolescent development.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional design precludes any conclusions about causality. Although

significant associations were found, longitudinal research is needed to establish temporal relationships. Second, the study relied on self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or underreporting, especially regarding delinquent behavior. Third, the sample was drawn from school-attending adolescents, possibly excluding more at-risk youth who have dropped out of school. Additionally, this study did not account for moderating variables such as gender, peer influence, or socioeconomic status, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the findings.

Future studies should utilize longitudinal designs to explore the developmental pathways between parental monitoring, moral identity, and delinquency over time. Researchers are encouraged to include moderating variables such as parenting style, gender, and peer group affiliation to identify differential effects. Incorporating qualitative methods could also deepen the understanding of how adolescents interpret parental supervision and moral values in their own words. Furthermore, expanding the sample to include out-of-school youth, rural populations, and adolescents with trauma histories would increase the generalizability of findings. Including structural and community-level variables, such as neighborhood disadvantage or collective efficacy, would provide a more comprehensive ecological framework.

Practitioners working with adolescents should prioritize family-centered interventions that enhance parental involvement and communication. Programs aimed at training parents in supportive and consistent monitoring strategies can reduce adolescent risk behaviors. Schools and community organizations should promote moral education and character development to strengthen adolescents' internal value systems. Collaborative approaches involving families, educators, and mental health professionals can help address both behavioral and emotional dimensions of youth development. These practices can foster resilience, reduce delinquency, and support healthy adolescent adjustment in diverse cultural settings.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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