

# Literature review on psy 3311- research method

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



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## **Can Parental Involvement Reduce Teenage Gang Involvement?**

### **Literature Review**

Determining the whether parental involvement can reduce teenage gang involvement begins with the exploration of the related researches. Knowing the extent of the problem is detrimental in identifying the role of parental involvement to the issues of teenage involvement to gangs from which preventive measures can be formulated. According to Howell (2010) gang violence became a widespread problem among community and to several countries in the world. In addition, the demographics of the people joining are constantly becoming younger. In South American region, the age of gang members go as young as eight years old. In other part of world, teenagers make up the majority of the gang population. This problem became the focus of U. S Department of Justice research on gang prevention, showing statistical data of the problem that ravages urban communities with crimes ranging from theft, burglary to murder.

In the United States alone, the percentage of youth joining gang groups vary in each state. For example, Milwaukee, WI has 15. 4% of its teenagers

associated to a gang (Howell, 2010). On the other hand, Will County, IL poses a marginal 3.8% of its youth to be members or in association with a gang group. Although the percentage is not as significant as compared to other organized groups, three percent for instance still translates to Will County's 9,882 out of 197,658 youth population under the age of 18 (census-statistics.findthedata.org, 2010). The gang phenomena occur more likely among teenagers due to its encompassing social culture. The study conducted by Howell (2010) reveals that adolescents form groups or associated them to one to introduce themselves to distinctive attitudes that lead to an apparent engagement to delinquent behaviors. Apart from social belonging, gang appeals to most teenagers because of the protection, money, fun, excitement, sense of adventure and friendship that gangs provide to its members (Esbensen, Winfree and Deschenes, 1999; Howell, 2010).

However, the beneficial aspects of gang association are also attributed to the development of negative behaviors such as antisocial, drug and alcohol use, victimization and mental health problems (Davis and Flannery, 2001). These developments caused by gang membership constitute an effect identified as family risk factors wherein the family's structure is weakened. For this reason, the parental involvement is a detrimental factor to reducing instances of gang involvement. Since family risk factors emerge amidst the gang involvement issue, the family members are the one's that are first to experience the negative implications of association to gangs. There are threats in the family, domestic violence are likely to occur due to the encompassing effects of exposure to alcohol and drugs and family

relationship breakups. Among the family members, the one that is most affected as the parents. Therefore, in order to avoid the constituting problems of teenagers joining gang groups, the parents were also considered as an important figure in the prevention process.

The general risk indicators that parental intervention hopes to address are defined by the stressful household life wherein factors such as low parental education, expectations, neglect ineffective parenting, permissive truancy attitude and domestic violence. The occurrences of such problems at home leads to the teenagers seeking for a comfort zones among the company of his fellow gang mates. However, despite the domestic problems that are attributed to teenage gang membership, parental involvement through positive intervention is still considered as a potential mitigating strategy. Hill et al. (1999) revealed in a longitudinal study those favorable parental and siblings attitudes toward antisocial behavior is a key element in the intervention process. On the other hand, Hill et al. (1999) also concluded that close parental attachment or supervision might not be enough to deliver significant results. This indicates a limitation in parental involvement to prevent teenage gang involvement.

Logistic regression was used in the study to identify the risk factors between the ages of 10 through 12. The results suggests that parental factor in the family domain poses a weaker advantage towards prevention among the aforementioned age group (Hill et al., 1999). This is because the environments in and out of the household influence the developmental stage of adolescents. If the youth is exposed to dysfunctions in the family, there is a greater possibility for youth to join gang groups. Meaning, the

effectiveness of parental involvement depends on the environment perceived by the teenager inside the house. If there were instances of negative factors prevailing within the family, parental intervention would not be very reliant as a preventive factor, otherwise insinuating parental intervention should begin with positive reinforcement of the family unit (Adler, Ovando and Hocevar, 1984).

The finding of the study attributed to parental factors was also mentioned in Esbensen (2000) study on adolescent gang prevention, which stipulates that family characteristics of gang members such as parental education and family structure are associated to urban minorities. Therefore, the first step in the parental involvement strategy to make it effective is to ensure that the family structure is at its optimal condition. However, it was established from the findings of Esbensen (2000) study that behaviorism and common attitudes of teenage gang members are largely influenced by outside factors given a positive environment inside the household. Therefore, the possibilities of parental involvement can be successfully achieved through positive reinforcement. Once consistency found in several findings in gang behavior research is that delinquency, which is a major component of juvenile issues is a result of peer influence (Battin-Pearson et al., 1997). Given that peer influences are an apparent cause of teenage gang membership, therefore, parents can be an effective contribution to gang prevention among teenagers.

The positive perception over the potential impact of parental involvement in teenage gang prevention was conceptualized through factors derived from family values and natural parental relationship. The American Academy of

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2011) released a fact sheet of the findings from its study of children and gangs, which stipulates the connection between parental involvement and gang prevention. In the publication provided by AACAP, it was mentioned that parents can help decrease the risk of adolescents becoming involved in gangs by closely monitoring where the child is going and the kind of company he has when going out, meeting with the child's friends and their parents, engaging the youth in productive extra curricular activities, educating the youth about the negative implications of joining gang groups and insinuating positive atmosphere inside the house (AACAP, 2011). In order for successful parental intervention AACAP also indicated a number of signs that might indicate the youth's association to any gangs.

When a child appears to have suspicious amount of money, expensive items or clothing is a warning sign that parents need to take notice. Having a one particular style of clothing (rapper, hip-hop or the likes) might only indicate a sort of fashion preference, but it would be best to ask the teenager about casually. Hand signs, name calling, adopting aliases fashioned from foul words, disobeying rules, worsening attitudes and possessions of illicit drugs and regular alcohol drinking are also considered as warning signs to possible membership of teenagers to a gang (AACAP, 2011). Scott and Steinberg (2008) conducted a study focusing on the adolescent development and youth crime regulation. According to the study, youth gang prevention programs are much more effective and successful when integrated with parental involvement. Programs that seek to provide rehabilitation programs for youth offenders are now including parent-focused groups to educate the

parents in the prevention objectives.

Since teenage gang involvement encompasses a relation to juvenile crimes and disturbing behaviors, youth rehabilitation programs incorporate parent intervention segments, which were measured to have reduced 20 to 30% of juvenile crimes (Greenwood, 1999). In addition, developmental psychology programs provide gang associated teenagers with substantial support to attain behavioral and psychosocial maturity, which was also being introduced to parent involvement programs (Scott and Steinberg, 2008). Due to the perceived effectiveness of programs involving parents, Multisystemic Therapy, which focuses on empowering parents and providing them with skills and resources that will enable them to mitigate the problem with teenage gang involvements. Dahlberg (1998) also conducted related research regarding the effectiveness of integrating parental involvement in preventing teenage gang involvement such as the suppression of aggressive behavior of children in its onset. The data from Dahlberg (1998) study suggests that with proper mitigating approach to early onset of aggressiveness and other warning signs of gang association greatly reduces the possibilities of the teenager being affiliated in any gang groups or activities.

At least 20% of juvenile arrests were recorded between 1965 and 1994 due to the early prevention of aggressive behavioral problems among children. This findings from the quantitative research suggests a positive outcome in any attempts to include parental intervention efforts in preventing teenage gang involvement. Since it was mentioned that early prevention of aggressive behavior poses a significant impact to the reduction of teenagers

ending in a gang group, it becomes apparent that such approach can be most effective when initiated by the parents within their own home.

Therefore, previous studies pertaining to teenage gang prevention have a high attribution to parental involvement, which also suggests that parental intervention can significantly prevent teenage gang involvement.

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