

Impact of Mother's Education Level on Juvenile Delinquency

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Research Questions

- How does the level of mothers' education affect children's delinquent behaviors?
- Is there a difference between genders in this association?

Significance

- Delinquent juveniles are at risk for other long-term effects, such as substance abuse and depressive episodes in adulthood (Tucker et al., 2011).

Background

- Poor parenting, especially low supervision, is linked to both boys' and girls' delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009).
- Number of adults in the home contributes to levels of delinquency due to greater supervision (Cao et al., 2004).
- Mothers who have received higher education spend more time with their children, which leads to more supervision of children's behaviors (Kalil et al., 2012).
- Parents with higher education are more likely to be married (Kalil et al., 2012).

Hypotheses

- Children whose mothers have more education will have lower levels of delinquent behaviors.
- Boys are more likely than girls to have higher levels in delinquency.
- Those with mothers with higher education will be less likely to participate in delinquency regardless of gender.

Data and Sample

- Monitoring the Future Survey (2018) Nationally representative sample of 8th and 10th graders (N = 29,080)
- University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research

Dependent Variable

- **Delinquency scale:** A sum of 9 deviant acts in the past 12 months (0 – 36): (a) Ran away from home, (b) got into a serious fight, (c) took part in a group fight, (d) hurt someone, (e) took something under \$50, (f) took something over \$50, (g) got into house or building, (h) damaged school property, (i) sold an illegal drug. (Each item: 0 =none, 1 = once, 2 = twice, 3 = 3-4 times, 4 = 5+ times.)
 - None: 57.6%
 - 1 – 3 : 25.0 %
 - 4 – 8 : 11.9%
 - 9 – 36: 5.5%

Independent Variable

Mothers' Education Level

- No college degree: 49.1%
- College Degree: 50.9%

Control Variable

Gender

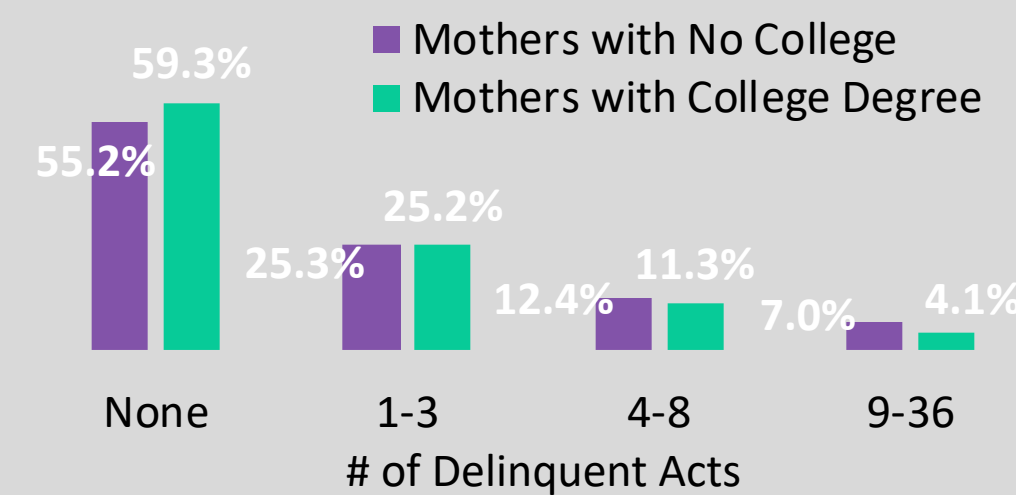
- Male : 50.3%
- Female: 49.7%

Analysis

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

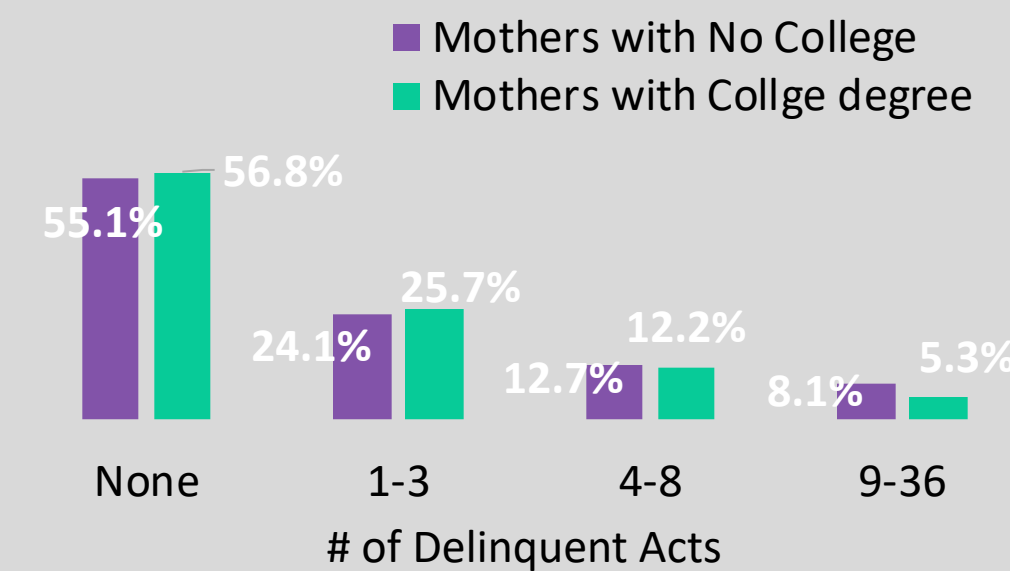
Results

Figure 1. Number of Delinquent Acts by Mothers' Education: Total Sample



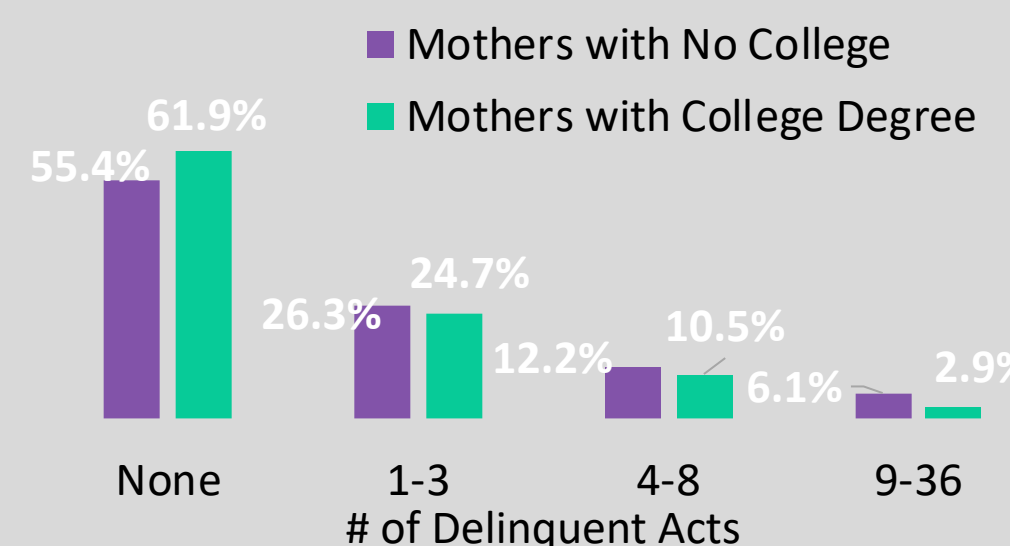
*Chi-square test for differences by maternal education is significant at $p < .001$.

Figure 2. Number of Delinquent Acts by Mothers' Education: Boys



*Chi-square test for differences by maternal education is significant at $p < .05$.

Figure 3. Number of Delinquent Acts by Mothers' Education: Girls



Chi-square test for differences by maternal education is significant at $p < .001$.

Summary and Findings

- Boys and girls whose mothers received a college degree were less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors.
- Between the two genders, mother's level of education has a greater effect for girls compared to boys.

Discussion

- Future research could investigate family structure and behavior qualities that would influence children's decision-making skills.
- Social programs could work on a plan to have children be involved in afterschool activities so that there is supervision provided for children.

References

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