



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ijlcrj](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ijlcrj)

|               |
|---------------|
| INTERNATIONAL |
| JOURNAL OF    |
| LAW           |
| CRIME         |
| AND           |
| JUSTICE       |

# Pubertal development, social factors, and delinquent involvement among South Korean male adolescents<sup>☆</sup>

Hae Soo Kweon<sup>a</sup>, Ilhong Yun<sup>b,\*</sup>, Jong Park<sup>c</sup>, Seung Gon Kim<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Counseling Psychology, Chosun University, 309 Pilmun-daero Dong-gu, Gwangju 501-759, South Korea

<sup>b</sup> Department of Police Administration, Chosun University, 309 Pilmun-daero Dong-gu, Gwangju 501-759, South Korea

<sup>c</sup> Department of Preventive Medicine, Chosun University, 309 Pilmun-daero Dong-gu, Gwangju 501-759, South Korea

<sup>d</sup> Department of Psychiatry, Chosun University, 309 Pilmun-daero Dong-gu, Gwangju 501-759, South Korea

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 21 February 2017

Received in revised form 21 February 2017

Accepted 21 February 2017

Available online xxx

### Keywords:

Pubertal development

Delinquency

South Korea

Biosocial criminology

## ABSTRACT

Despite the growing attention paid by Western criminologists to the effects of pubertal timing on youthful misdeeds, criminology in the Asian context has been slow to incorporate both pubertal timing and its interplay with other social risk factors into its research agenda. To bridge this gap, the present study examines the mechanisms underlying the association between pubertal development and delinquency among a sample of South Korean male adolescents. The results indicate, as with Western findings, that early pubertal development does increase delinquent behaviors. The relationship is linear and partially mediated by parental attachment and risk-taking. Parental attachment also moderates the effects of early pubertal development on delinquency. Based on the results, implications for policy and research are discussed.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Age has received a great deal of attention from criminologists, as the age–crime relation is considered to be essential for understanding crime and delinquency (Blumstein et al., 1988; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1993). Scholars' attention on age has, however, largely been limited to its chronological meaning. Yet, it appears that other age-graded factors, aside from chronological age, also affect youth's involvement in delinquent acts.

Petersen (1986) identified four age-graded factors that can influence youthful misbehaviors: chronological age, cognitive age, grade in school, and biological age. Among these, chronological age has been employed as a key predictor in numerous research projects and it also serves as a control variable in most criminology research. Cognitive age (i.e., intelligence) and grade in school are also often used to explain delinquent behaviors, albeit less frequently than chronological age (Lynam et al., 1993; McGloin and Pratt, 2003). Biological age, as represented by pubertal development (PD), has, however, long eluded criminologists' attention (Beaver and Wright, 2005; Felson and Haynie, 2002; Haynie, 2003), although researchers in the fields of developmental psychology and public health had delved into this issue much earlier. To typical criminologists' surprise, this line of research has consistently shown that pubertal timing exerts statistically meaningful effects on delinquency: male and female adolescents who reach puberty earlier are more likely than on-time or late developers to engage

<sup>☆</sup> This study was supported by research fund from Chosun University, 2016.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [hskwon@chosun.ac.kr](mailto:hskwon@chosun.ac.kr) (H.S. Kweon), [yun.ihong@gmail.com](mailto:yun.ihong@gmail.com) (I. Yun), [jpark@chosun.ac.kr](mailto:jpark@chosun.ac.kr) (J. Park), [sgkim@chosun.ac.kr](mailto:sgkim@chosun.ac.kr) (S.G. Kim).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2017.02.005>

1756-0616/© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article in press as: Kweon, H.S., et al., Pubertal development, social factors, and delinquent involvement among South Korean male adolescents, International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2017.02.005>

in delinquent acts (Beaver and Wright, 2005). The findings are robust in that they maintain statistical significance despite the inclusion of a list of competing theoretical variables and demographic controls (Beaver and Wright, 2005; Haynie, 2003). For example, after examining the PD–delinquency association by using a sample of 5700 male adolescents from the United States, Felson and Haynie (2002) concluded that PD's effects are “comparable in strength to the effects of peer delinquency” and are “stronger than the effects of socioeconomic status, race, and family structure” (p. 982). It is a criminological truism that exposure to peer delinquency is one of the strongest predictors of one's own delinquent involvement. SES, race, and family structure are also mainstay control variables in criminological research. If PD's effects are indeed as strong as or stronger than these variables, then the common practice of omitting PD in earlier years may have been amounting to committing a misspecification error.

The reluctance of typical criminologists to include the biological sense of age into their research may have been rooted in its adherence to the sociological paradigm, which was the dominant framework of criminology for the better part of the 20th century (Walsh, 2010). Nevertheless, a new paradigm called biosocial criminology has captured a secure place in the pantheon of criminology in recent years. The biosocial paradigm is grounded on the idea and research findings that most human phenotypes are the product of the complex and multifarious arrangement of *both* environmental and biological factors acting together (Barnes et al., 2014; Plomin et al., 1977; Walsh, 2010). Indeed, mounting evidence from more advanced disciplines (e.g., behavioral genetics) has converged to show that both biological and sociological factors are implicated in the etiology of most human traits and behaviors including crime and delinquency (for a meta-analysis, see Ferguson, 2010). Biosocial criminologists aver that research embracing only sociological variables may account for only half the variance of the dependent variable. A fuller understanding can thus be achieved by unraveling the complex etiology involving both social and biological factors.

It is against this backdrop that the goal of the current study is germinated. Pursuant to the biosocial paradigm, this study attempts to ascertain the mechanisms through which PD, an eminently biological factor, interplays with sociological factors to produce delinquent behaviors. In addition, this study is borne out of an obvious, but rarely addressed, hole in the PD–delinquency literature. All the aforementioned criminological research on PD is based on samples derived from the United States. PD research from other disciplines also heavily draws on North American and European samples. On the contrary, criminology research employing samples from Asian, especially East Asian, countries is extremely limited (for exceptions see Chen et al., 2015; Tsai, Hsieh, Strong and Lin, 2015; Tsai, Strong and Lin, 2015). The extreme paucity of Asian studies can be justified only if the findings from Western studies apply equally well to Asian adolescents.

However, existing evidence calls such a supposition into question. Above all, human variation in pubertal timing is under genetic influence (Palmert and Boepple, 2001), and population genetics tells us that genetic composition varies depending on individuals' ethnic/racial background (Kang et al., 1999). Research from cultural anthropology also signifies that not all cultures experience the ill-effects of early puberty to the same degree as the Western world; in some cultures, such as the Kipsigis of Kenya, early puberty is regarded as socially beneficial (Mulder, 1989). The aforementioned Tsai, Strong and Lin's study (2015) examined the association between PD and deviant behaviors among Taiwanese adolescents, but failed to find a statistically meaningful association. In contrast, Chen and colleague's study (2015) of mainland Chinese youths showed that early maturing boys were more likely to engage in delinquency than their on-time developing counterparts. The limited studies and their conflicting results certainly warrant further investigation using East Asian samples.

### 1.1. Mechanisms underlying PD effects

PD studies from the fields of developmental psychology and public health have consistently revealed that pubertal timing is linked to various psychopathological and behavioral problems (Caspi et al., 1993; Graber et al., 1997; Jones, 1965; Petersen, 1986). Even so, the literature does not offer clear-cut answers regarding the mechanisms underlying the link between PD and delinquency. A menagerie of explanations has been offered so far, each receiving a varying degree of support or repudiation from empirical studies.

#### 1.1.1. Pubertal timing and delinquency

It must be pointed out that there still exist conflicting accounts on whether early puberty is linked to delinquency. Jones (1965) argued that, for boys, the risks of psychosocial problems are higher for late-maturing rather than early-maturing boys. She reasoned that late PD boys feel inferior and strained because their peers have already passed through the pubertal process and their own appearance and physical functions seem less mature by comparison. In response to the psychosocial strain, these boys turn to externalizing behaviors such as delinquency. Many more scholars posit the contrary, however. Petersen and Taylor (1980) maintained that early-maturing adolescents are at risk because they are under-prepared for the physical and psychosocial challenges posed by puberty at a time when the majority of their peers seem unfamiliar with such challenges. Still others propose that *both* early and late maturers are at a heightened risk of delinquency (Williams and Dunlop, 1999). The so-called off-time hypothesis posits that off-time maturers are out of sync with their on-time counterparts and that this discrepancy engenders psychosocial challenges and therefore involvement in delinquency.

The empirical evidence is mixed. In line with Jones' (1965) hypothesis, Susman et al. (2003) found that early-maturing boys are better adjusted and experience fewer behavioral problems. In contrast, Andersson and Magnusson (1990) showed, in support of the off-time hypothesis, that *both* early- and late-developing boys engage in misconduct more often than do their on-time developing peers. Yet, the majority of extant studies demonstrate that it is early puberty that confers an

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7532073>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7532073>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)