



Parental Supervision and Control as a Predictive Factor of Juvenile Delinquency

Boro Merdović¹ , Počuča Milan² , Joko Dragojlović² 

¹Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, e-mail: boro.merdovic@gmail.com

²University Business Academy, Faculty of Law for Commerce and Judiciary, Republic of Serbia,
e-mail: pocuca@pravni-fakultet.info, e-mail: jdragojlovic@pravni-fakultet.info

Abstract: Parental control and supervision is considered one of the key factors in raising children. There are numerous studies and researches in the literature that have tried to prove the correlation between parental control and juvenile delinquency. The results of these studies have varied, sometimes confirming and sometimes denying a direct link between parental control and certain forms of juvenile delinquent behavior. However, the modern child and family go through a new socialization process that brings challenges for both children and parents. The goal of our paper is to clarify the terminological confusions present in this area and highlight the actuality of the issue of parental control over the behavior of minors. Through a review of existing domestic and foreign scientific literature, using quantitative and qualitative content analysis, comparative analysis and comparative and historical methods, we want to point out the importance of parental control and supervision in shaping the behavior of minors, with special reference to the manifestation of delinquent patterns. The results of our research indicate a significant correlation between different forms of parental control and supervision with the behavior of minors, with noticeable changes compared to traditional methods of control. The obtained results emphasize the need for educating and advising parents about modern achievements in this area, as well as providing support in adapting to new trends and security challenges, including the impact of information technology, social media and other factors that are now part of everyday life and were not present in the past. The practical importance of our research implies that the theoretical conclusions can be used as a basis for further research in the field of parental control and supervision, as well as juvenile delinquency, with the aim of developing measures for its prevention.

Keywords: *parental supervision, parental control, juvenile delinquency, prevention.*

Introduction

Parental supervision and control are terms used in different scientific disciplines, and the very definition of these terms is difficult to unify and give a generally acceptable definition that would satisfy all theoreticians and practitioners. Children are the focus of parental control, and this control intensifies during adolescence. The association of this term with the delinquent and antisocial behavior of young people gives it a new dimension that is attracting a lot of attention in criminological and criminal justice disciplines. Numerous theoretical viewpoints tried to determine the reasons for juvenile delinquency through the prism of explaining criminal behavior. Most of these explanations focus on trying to understand the period of adolescence as a very sensitive period in the development of each individual. Adolescence is a period of human development between childhood and adulthood dominated by certain characteristics that affect both the individual and the family. In the period of high school, young people face great challenges in adaptation, many changes that impose the need to harmonize new qualities of roles (biological, social, educational) (Gutvajn and Kovačević Lepojević, 2020, p. 2). It is a period of greater social and peer involvement, as well as an opportunity to show greater independence from their parents (Keijsers et al., 2012). During adolescence, parent-child relationships transform from hierarchical to relatively more egalitarian (Branje, 2018). Raising children is a delicate task that requires serious efforts, knowledge and skills in order to build a child's personality. It represents a situational context in which parents provide

Corresponding author: boro.merdovic@gmail.com



© 2024 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

children with informal support, in contrast to e.g. school system that provides formal support. In general, parental support brings about social learning techniques that enhance prosocial behavior while preventing moral decadence (Fisher et al., 2015).

Through adolescence, young people try to break free from parental control and strive to belong to peer groups. During the periods when they spend time outside the home and school, there is no parent or other adult to control their behavior and activities. The need for safety and care, the feeling of helplessness and dependence, in children, represent a suitable ground for various forms of victimization (Bjelajac and Merdović, 2019, p. 192). On the other hand, an increase in uncontrolled and unstructured free time can provide opportunities for experimentation with antisocial and delinquent forms of behavior (Mahoney and Stattin, 2000). What is it that parents, in addition to all their responsibilities at work, at home, in the community, can do to help the adolescent build socially acceptable patterns of behavior? One of the most frequently emphasized parenting skills and behaviors directed in that direction is the supervision and control of children, as well as the desire and need of parents to have as much information as possible about how and in what way their children spend their time. First of all, this refers to the way in which free time is spent, with whom children spend time outside the home, but also on the Internet and social networks. The latter has become a dominant problem in the last few years. The development of the Internet and IT technology has changed the way children grow up and mature, which, in addition to all the positive things they make possible for children, also carries a number of security risks. On the other hand, the alienation and separation of children from their peers (Bjelajac, 2014) and the increasing amount of time spent on the Internet creates a number of health problems as well as an increased risk of delinquent activities connected to the Internet. To what extent parents can control children in this sphere, whether they have enough knowledge and skills, what control mechanisms and models can exist, are questions that are posed to the scientific public. It is evident that parents who know and are aware of how and with whom their child spends time, with what content it is filled with, can react in a timely manner to the manifestation of certain antisocial forms of behavior, but also act preventively to prevent such manifestations from occurring. Thus, adequate parental monitoring could potentially be key to helping a child navigate safely and successfully through the adolescent years (Keijsers, 2016). The evolution of research on parental supervision and control has not given us convincing results on whether certain parental behavior is an attempt to gain control over the child's psychological world or is an attempt to regulate the child's behavior. Which style and methods of monitoring and control parents will choose depends on many factors. They are not always chosen deliberately and consciously, and the declared principles are not always applied correctly and consistently in everyday communication with the child. They develop mostly spontaneously, under the influence of many multidirectional and multilevel factors. Such factors include individual characteristics of parents and children, family traditions of upbringing, family lifestyle, family structure, the nature of intra-family relations, cultural and religious traditions of upbringing that the family adheres to, historical and epochal trends that determine the understanding of the goals, tasks and ideals of upbringing (Andreyeva and Danilova, 2017).

The goal of this paper is to point out numerous terminological doubts that are evident in this area, which, by clarifying in the first part of the paper, we will try to state more concisely what it is that parents can do without in any way jeopardizing the individuality of the child, which is inevitable and desirable during adolescence. In the second part of the paper, by analyzing the results of various studies related to the supervision and control of children's behavior, we will point out certain disagreements that certain authors point out and refer to the way and mechanisms of the control itself. We will also point out certain scientific disagreements about whether, in general, control and supervision give positive results or whether children should be stimulated to provide their parents with information about their activities and behavior. We believe that it is extremely important to understand the two-way relationship of family ties that will indicate whether the supervision and control of adolescent behavior leads to changes in future delinquent activities or only the manifestation of certain unacceptable forms of behavior causes parental supervision and control.

Terminological confusions and conceptual delimitation

As we mentioned, the period of adolescence is a period in which intense physical, psychological, emotional and personal changes take place. In terms of time, it includes the period of biological, psychological and social maturation between the beginning of puberty and adulthood, which begins at the age of 11-13 and lasts until 18-20 (Počuča et al., 2023, p.117). With entering puberty the adolescent exits the family environment to a wider social environment, while communication patterns in the parent-child relationship change. Each parent-child relationship is unique and depends on numerous variables (parenting skills, individual characteristics, family structure), but it is still subject to change at different stages of the child's development. During adolescence, the parent-child relationship must be realigned and adapted to the child's increasing needs for privacy and autonomy (Collins and Laursen, 2004). In such conditions, the possibility of direct control and supervision of the child decreases and parents are forced to rely more and more on building a relationship of trust with the child who will be ready to voluntarily provide them with information about how, where and with whom he spends time. As a consequence of such changes in the parent-child relationship, as well as changes in society, numerous doubts and terminological differences arose. Two perspectives of parenting are often cited, namely the dimensional (support and control) and categorical approach (different parenting styles (Pinquart, 2017)). In scientific works, monitoring is usually described as monitoring the activities of children, gathering information about the activities of young people, direct monitoring, communicating with children, imposing rules, solving problems, etc. (Pelham et al. 2023). In the literature, we find several terms related to the supervision and control of parents and are aimed at obtaining knowledge and information related to the child's behavior, what are his activities in his free time, with whom he spends time and where he usually stays. Parents can find out about their children's activities in at least three ways. First, children could tell them spontaneously, without any prompting (child disclosure). Second, parents could ask their children and their children's friends for information (parental solicitation). Third, parents could impose rules and restrictions on their children's activities and socializing, thereby controlling the amount of free time children have for free activities (parental control) (Stattin and Kerr, 2000, p.1073). It follows from the above that we most often encounter the following terms: parental monitoring, parental control, solicitation, parental knowledge and child disclosure.

Parental monitoring

Parental monitoring is a term that first began to be used in the literature, and in the earliest studies it often implied both control and supervision. However, in recent studies, a clear boundary between these terms is set. In the literature, one of the most frequently cited definitions of parental monitoring is that it is an active set of behavioral strategies used by parents to monitor their child's whereabouts and activities (Dishion and McMahon, 1998, p.61). How and in what way a parent will monitor their child depends on numerous factors. These factors refer both to the parent and the child as separate individuals, as well as to the characteristics of the social environment, cultural characteristics of the society, expectations of the environment. Supervision constantly changes depending on the age of the child and ranges from direct supervision (characteristic of earlier stages of child development) to remote forms of supervision (adolescence period). Parental supervision should be a two-way process, in which the active role and participation of minors is acknowledged: parents' attempts to learn about their child's behavior must be matched by children's attachment to the parent and willingness to share and disclose information about themselves (Stattin and Kerr 2000, p 1083). This process takes place in several stages that follow one another. The first phase is monitoring pre-free time and gives parents the opportunity to provide clear rules and expectations for adolescent behavior when they are unsupervised. The second phase is the adolescent's unsupervised behavior, while the third phase, labeled free time monitoring, provides the parent with the opportunity to determine how, where, and with whom the adolescent spent his or her free time. The fourth stage, called parental response, provides parents with an opportunity to respond if their adolescent has violated rules or expectations, and the fifth stage, adolescent response, considers the adolescent's response to the parent's behavior (Hayes, Hudson and Matthews, 2003).

Parental supervision has been considered one of the best methods of protecting children from abuse, delinquency and other negative forms of behavior (Turner, Finkelhor and Ormrod, 2007). However,

studies linking parental monitoring to child victimization have been sparse and contradictory, the most common reason for this being that parents tend to increase monitoring efforts in response to initial child victimization (Esbensen, Huizinga and Menard, 1999). Parental monitoring is often defined as establishing such methods of parenting and family relationships that promote autonomy, closeness and connection (Fosco, Stormshak, Dishion and Winter, 2012). It also represents parents' awareness of the adolescent's daily activities (Copeland-Linder, Lambert, Chen and Lalongo, 2011). From all of the above, it can be concluded that parental monitoring represents a set of all parental behaviors with the aim of obtaining information about the activities and lives of young people (where they go, what they do, who they hang out with, how they behave, etc.) and they differ according to style, frequency, shape and context.

Parental control

Parental control of behavior is a form of monitoring in which parents require their children to inform them and ask for permission about their unsupervised free time, without parents having to provide additional guidance or feedback to their children (Vrolijk et al., 2023, p.1180). Control represents such child-rearing measures that are aimed at monitoring and regulating children's behavior by setting and implementing rules, standards and regulations (Barber and Xia, 2013). These rules can be rigid and flexible. The rigidity or strictness of the rules represents the demandingness of parents and the imposition of negative consequences in response to the observed negative behavior of children. It represents a parenting style that is closely related to parental control. Different forms of parental control can have different effects on child development: Behavioral control is conceptualized as a set of active parental strategies that include the communication of clear and consistent expectations for appropriate behavior and efforts to monitor the child's behavior in relation to these expectations (Akcinar and Bajdar, 2014). While behavioral control was often associated with positive outcomes for the child, harsh control (physical or verbal punishment and intrusiveness) was often associated with negative developmental outcomes (Janssens, et al., 2015).

When we talk about parental control in the literature, we often encounter a certain dichotomy related to behavioral control and psychological control. It is necessary to distinguish between these two forms of control. According to Barber, Olsen and Shagle (1994, p. 1120), these differences stem from the developmental characteristics of each child, which are reflected in the fact that:

- all developing children require an adequate degree of psychological autonomy, i.e. to learn through their social interactions that they are effective, competent persons with a clear sense of personal identity and
- sufficient regulation of behavior to enable them to learn that social interaction is governed by rules and structures that must be recognized and respected in order to be competent members of society.

Psychological control is a parenting style that tries to manipulate children's thoughts, emotions and behavior by suppressing their autonomy. This is accomplished through the use of tactics such as withholding love, imposing guilt, attacking the child's personality, ignoring their thoughts and feelings. This dysfunctional parenting strategy is believed to impair children's psychological development, and is therefore subject to numerous criticisms that consider it a form of child abuse. On the other hand, although parental control sets certain limits on children's independence, it also provides important parental supervision and guidance. This form of supervision allows parents to better understand the daily routine of their children, know where they are and enables them to communicate with the children in a timely manner in case of unacceptable behavior. This type of parental control helps prevent future behavioral problems and delinquency because children internalize basic principles and social norms through this interaction. Although children's autonomy and independence from parental influence is considered a desirable stage in development, in the literature we encounter the term "premature autonomy" which can be problematic. It occurs during puberty (13-14 years), when parents tend to give up support and monitoring, and adolescents tend to move away from parental support and supervision. Often, adolescents begin to become more involved in social activities with their peers (Stewart et al., 2019). The problem arises when an adolescent spends his free time with a society that is prone to antisocial forms of behavior and delinquency. The time of independence and autonomy of a child is different for each individual and depends on numerous factors of the child's personality, family capacity and parenting skills.

What is the connection between parental control and the manifestation of delinquent forms of behavior? The results of the research carried out so far show a certain degree of contradiction. [Hoeve et al. \(2009\)](#) meta-analysis found that parental control produced only a small to moderate effect on reducing delinquency while [Melotti et al. \(2018\)](#) prove that parental strictness, by itself, was ineffective in reducing delinquency. The method of obtaining information about parental control and delinquent behavior of children was also a problem in some researches. Information provided by parents themselves about their parenting and their children's problem behavior is often biased because parents tend to give socially desirable responses and avoid reporting problem behavior to others ([Morsbach and Prinz, 2006](#)).

Parental knowledge

Parental knowledge is a key concept that is often used in research dealing with parenting and parents' relationships with their children. It refers to the ability of parents to be aware of their children's activities and locations when they are outside their direct supervision or adult control ([Stattin and Kerr, 2000](#)). This concept is not the same as active monitoring or surveillance, although these elements are often linked. Research has shown that there is a difference between parental knowledge and active monitoring strategies ([Stewart et al., 2018](#)). While active monitoring involves parents' direct supervision and control over their children's activities, parental knowledge refers to informing parents about how their children spend their time when they are out of their direct control. This means that parental knowledge is not only a result of parenting style, but is more related to parents' awareness of their children's activities and their social circles. This information can contribute to a better understanding of the child's behavior, needs and challenges he faces, which can facilitate communication and support of parents.

Studies investigating the relationship between parental knowledge and adolescent delinquency or behavior problems have provided significant insights into the role of parental supervision and information in the prevention of such problems. Even those studies that measured parental supervision showed that they are based on determining the level of parental knowledge and information about children. Although supervision measures may have previously been believed to be key to reducing adolescent conduct problems, recent research suggests that parental knowledge is actually a result of parental supervision ([Hoeve et al., 2009](#); [Racz and McMahon, 2011](#)). These findings indicate that parents who actively monitor and communicate with their children are more likely to gain information about their children's activities and behavior. This knowledge, in turn, can help parents recognize potential behavioral problems and provide appropriate support and guidance to their children. According to the results of the study, a high level of knowledge and information of parents is highly correlated with a lower level of abuse of psychoactive substances ([Steinberg, 2001](#)) and delinquent behavior ([Rudi and Dworkin, 2018](#)).

Parental solicitation

One of the terms associated in the literature with parental monitoring and control is "parental solicitation". It is often defined as an active form of parental behavior that seeks information from the child and actively participates in gathering information from the child. It represents a form of monitoring in which parents ask or start conversations with their children about their activities ([Stattin and Kerr, 2000](#)) with the aim of gaining knowledge about everyday activities. From the above, we can see the connection with the previous terms parental monitoring and parental knowledge. It should also be noted that parental solicitation is different from the term that we will define in the next part, which refers to "child disclosure". This difference refers to the fact that with this term parents seek and initiate communication with children in order to obtain information, while with "child disclosure" young people decide for themselves what information they will give their parents about their activities.

Studies dealing with parental solicitation provided different data on the connection between this type of parental acquisition of knowledge and delinquency. Some suggested that there is no connection at all ([Tilton-Weaver et al. 2013](#)), while other studies found a significant connection between these two variables ([Crocetti et al., 2016](#)). Other studies have tried to explain why there are such different research results on the same phenomenon, which considered that the relationship between parental solicitation and delinquent behavior of young people is influenced by numerous other factors. The very feeling of children on parental solicitation is different and in some cases it can be perceived as aggressive and excessive, while other children can accept it as help and guidance. At the same time, parental abdication,

i.e. the tendency of parents to separate from their children when their behavior is more deviant, can have an impact on the parent-child relationship and indirectly on parental questioning (Crocetti et al., 2016).

Child disclosure

Child disclosure is an important concept in the research of parental behavior and the relationship between parents and children. It is a passive form of parental behavior in which the adolescent self-initiated and voluntarily shares information with parents about his activities, behavior and way of spending time, as well as his social contacts. In recent literature, child disclosure is considered one of the key predictors of juvenile delinquency and behavioral problems, and is related to parental behavior (Lahey et al., 2008). It is important to emphasize that adolescents will communicate information to their parents to varying degrees, which depends on various factors. One of the key factors is the trust that develops between parents and children. This trust is two-way and implies a feeling of security and openness in communication. The most significant form of open communication between children and their parents is that which is spontaneous and does not require coercion or imposition on the part of the parents. On the other hand, children's secrecy towards their parents is also an important construct that requires the attention of researchers.

Studies investigating the dynamics of child disclosure are particularly important in understanding the problem of delinquency. Research results suggest that certain parental behavior can facilitate child disclosure (Soenens et al. 2006), which confirms the importance of the role of parents in monitoring and preventing delinquency. However, there is a constant need for a better understanding of the dynamics of child disclosure and the identification of other factors that can facilitate this process.

As we can see from the above definitions of terms that are related to parental monitoring and control, it could be said that it is a collection of literature that deals with this field rather than a definition from different aspects. Each theoretical point of view from its own point of view tries to explain this term without clearly set boundaries between the activities of parents that are implied by the above terms.

Discussion

The emergence of delinquent behavior patterns among young people is associated with several factors, among which a low level or complete absence of parental supervision is considered key (Patterson et al. 2005). Two other risk factors responsible for the manifestation of antisocial behavior are adolescent membership in peer groups that are prone to committing criminal acts (Burnette et al., 2012) and exposure of adolescents and youth to violence (Barr et al., 2012). However, juvenile delinquency is a complex phenomenon whose etiology depends on numerous factors that cannot be observed in isolation. Given that a healthy and functional family is the basis of every society, and the patterns of behavior that are acquired in the family are the basis of the upbringing of each individual, while harmonious and functional family relationships are one of the most important conditions for the proper development and growth of children (Matijašević and Dragojlović, 2022 , p. 92). The educational function of the family is one of its basic functions and represents the raising of new generations into acceptable and reliable members of the social community (Stattin and Kerr (2000)). The modern moment of growing up and raising children brings with it certain characteristics that did not even exist in the earlier period. Throughout history, parents have always had the need to know where their children are, how they spend their free time, who they hang out with, and what activities they engage in. As we stated in the previous part of the paper, the way in which parents came to these findings is different. Today, parents burdened with numerous obligations and with little free time, are less and less motivated to deal with their children, but they are also prevented from devoting themselves to children when there is a will and desire for it. How much do today's parents know, how can they know where their child is, do they have enough time to spend with their children and dedicate themselves to their education to the extent necessary? These are all questions that require answers from society, the state, and science. How to define monitoring after a large number of studies, analyzes and research, is a question to which there is no clear answer even today. Terminological vagueness prevents precise and clear evaluations of how and in what way parents should control their children, how to gather information about children, how to control without endangering the autonomy of their children. The maturity limit of adolescents and children has changed and decreased

over time, so that the level of knowledge and maturity of children in the modern moment is above the level of knowledge and maturity of their peers 20 years ago. Individual studies examined certain aspects of youth behavior (sexual behavior, externalizing problems, delinquency) and their connection with parental monitoring and control. The literature examining parental control and juvenile delinquency suggests that rule setting is only marginally effective in improving child or adolescent behavior. [Stattin and Kerr \(2000\)](#) found that parental control was significantly associated with lower rates of juvenile delinquency, but other factors, such as spontaneous disclosure of where the child was and what he was doing, were much more important in predicting delinquency.

What and how much do parents know?

In modern society, the problem of parental control is becoming more and more urgent and topical, especially considering the increasing frequency of teenage suicides, which are in some way connected to the Internet activities of young people. Among the many factors that contribute to these tragedies, the lack of involvement and detachment of parents from their children's lives, both in the real and virtual worlds, plays a significant role. Also, the inability of parents to build open and truly trusting relationships with their children further aggravates the situation.

The modern style of parental behavior reflects the low level of control function in modern families. In a world where technology and digital platforms are ubiquitous, parents face challenges they could not have imagined before. Children spend more and more time on the Internet, exposed to various contents and influences, and parents are often not sufficiently involved in their online activities. One of the special forms of violence that is more pronounced among children is digital violence, which is increasingly attracting the attention of experts ([Merdović and Vujović, 2022, p.68](#)). Parents have the illusion of the fact that the children are at home and in their room and that they are safe there. Lack of control and supervision can lead to problems such as cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content or the development of Internet addiction, all of which together can have serious consequences for the mental health and well-being of young people. Lack of openness and trust in parent-child relationships can contribute to feelings of loneliness, misunderstanding and lack of support among young people. When young people do not have a secure support in their parents, they can feel isolated and insecure, which can lead to depression, anxiety and, in extreme cases, even suicidal thoughts. Due to all of the above, the topic of parental control on the Internet is becoming more and more important.

As a result of the violence suffered by children on the Internet, two suicides of minors took place in Serbia, while several more suicides of young people were recorded. One of the events that shook the whole society was the group murder that happened in May 2023 in the elementary school "Vladislav Ribnikar" in Belgrade, when a child killed 10 and wounded 6 people using a firearm. This event was a turning point in the actions of numerous state bodies and services. The responsibility of the security sector, educational institutions, society as a whole was demanded. It is difficult to explain the causes of this phenomenon, which happened for the first time in Serbia and which is characteristic primarily for the US, where for years there has been a great debate about how and in what way such criminal acts can be predicted ([Bjelajac and Merdović, 2019, p. 567](#)). After media pressure and general panic in society, the responsibility of parents was demanded. Many questions were asked: how did the child come into possession of the weapon, who taught him to use the weapon, what did the child do, how did he spend his time, how come the parents didn't notice anything? It is precisely because of such questions that parental control and monitoring are once again in the focus of interest. The criminal proceedings that were initiated against the child's parents have calmed the public to some extent and they are still in progress with the media bidding on how many fines they will receive. The lack of a system is reflected in the fact that society and the system do not have a clear answer to such situations. There are no legal mechanisms that will be applied to a person who does not have criminal capacity, and who commits such a crime. Criminal responsibility implies that the perpetrator is over 14 years old, which led us to a situation where the perpetrator of this crime of murder under special circumstances could only be placed in an institution for mentally ill persons with constant supervision and control by medical staff and physical security. But what about parental control, could parents have done more, should they have known what their child was doing on the Internet and what content he was using and visiting, how the child came into possession of the weapon? Questions to which we are all looking for an answer and call for vigilance for each of us

to ask where is the limit of control and where is the free assessment of respect for children's autonomy and independence. Parental responsibility is important and must exist. Legal qualifications also exist but are apparently not applied in practice. Our legislation, criminal and misdemeanor, foresees certain incriminations of parents and guardians in cases of educational neglect and neglect of children. Article 193 of the Criminal Code stipulates that "a parent, adoptive parent, guardian or other person who, by grossly neglecting his duty of care and education, abandons a minor whom he is obliged to take care of, shall be punished with imprisonment for up to three years". However, this wording refers more to the protection of the child itself from abandonment and neglect in terms of providing the best conditions for the child's development and takes into account the best interests of the child, and less refers to the responsibility of parents for the behavior of children and minors. It is similar with family law where, in accordance with international conventions, only the protection of children's interests is taken into account. These days in the US, the first judgment was passed against the parents, i.e. the mother of the mass murderer boy who killed 4 students and wounded 7 in the school in 2021. This is one of the first and rare cases in the world where the parents were convicted because they failed to take all measures as parents towards their child, because they did not provide him with adequate health care considering that he exhibited mental disorders and because she provided the child with free access to weapons ("Historic verdict in America...", 2024). Analysts believe that this case represents a turning point in the prosecution of mass murderers in the US, although they cite numerous arguments disputing the responsibility of parents.

This case, as well as numerous others that always cause public concern and sensationalist reporting in the media, initiates a debate among ordinary citizens about what the parents were doing and why they did not worry about where and what their child was doing. This is especially evident in events that are increasingly linked to the Internet and social networks.

It follows from the above that the urgency of the problem of parental control in modern society cannot be ignored. Parents should be actively involved in their children's lives, both offline and online. It is necessary to build open, confidential relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. Also, it is important to establish clear boundaries and rules regarding the use of technology and the Internet, providing children with support and guidance in the safe use of digital media. Only in this way can we reduce the risk of serious problems such as violence, delinquent behavior, self-aggression, etc.

Adapting educational methods to the modern moment is something that is necessary. Following trends and innovations, most parents try to control their child's movements by using digital location tracking devices (Smartphones, tablets) that children use (Burnell, Andrade, Kwiatek and Hoyle, 2023). In this way, parents try to know where the child is physically located, but they cannot know what the child was doing in that place and who he was with if there is no communication and trust in the parent-child relationship. Some parental control through certain applications on the phone can limit the time spent on the Internet, but not completely and control the content that the child uses and visits. There is also the question of how well parents are educated to control and monitor their children on the Internet. There is a very small number of studies that deal with this issue and especially the new ethical, developmental and sociocultural issues arising from the use of digital monitoring of children. There are numerous debates that are primarily related to the issues of consent, privacy, autonomy and independence of young people.

Each child carries with him or her individuality and specificity, so there are no unified methods of monitoring and control that are applicable to all children. The parent must make his own assessment of which educational methods and gathering information about the child will give the best results. Sometimes parents can rely on and give freedom and trust to children by relying on a wrong or unrealistic image of their level of maturity. Parental supervision and control represents forms of behavior aimed at obtaining information about the activities and life of young people. However, which monitoring behaviors are feasible, appropriate, and adaptive vary significantly across developmental and sociocultural contexts (Petersen, Choe and LeBeau, 2020). Many studies have shown that the nature or effectiveness of parental supervision may vary depending on the child, family (structure, family relationships, socio-economic status) and environmental characteristics.

In order to get a clearer picture of parental supervision and control, in addition to the factors mentioned above, it is important to mention some others that are very significant and can influence the outcomes of these forms of parental behavior. One of the important factors that affects the relationship between parental behavior styles and the manifestation of certain forms of behavioral disorders is the age of the child. This influence is most dominant at a younger age, and with the growing age of the child, this

influence weakens. That weakening is a consequence cumulative, reciprocal influences of each member of the parent-child relationship on each other over time (Reid, Patterson and Snyder, 2002). The gender of the child is one of the factors examined in numerous analyses. Lack of control and parental supervision in boys indicates a higher level of delinquent behavior (Kuppens, Laurent, Heyvaert and Onghena, 2013). Who supervises and controls, the father or the mother or both, is also one of the factors that affects the child's behavior differently. Usually, the mother is the one who cares more about the upbringing of the children and is more involved in the children's daily activities. Some studies examined the relationship between motherhood and the manifestation of delinquent behavior and found that this relationship is more significant than that of fathers (Kuppens et al., 2013).

Conclusion

Parental supervision is a key component in the relationship between parents and adolescents, and understanding its complexity is essential for the development of effective strategies for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and other forms of antisocial behavior. The paper analyzes the existing theoretical definitions and operationalization of parental supervision and control, from which the lack of clarity and agreement among researchers is recorded. In this context, the paper proposes new formulations that encompass multiple dimensions of supervision, including not only parental control, but also adolescent disclosure and trust. Through the analysis of deviant and antisocial behavior of adolescents, the paper shows how this multidimensional concept of parental control is reflected in the complex relationship between control and trust. The conclusion is that control alone, without trust and disclosure, can have a limited or even counterproductive effect in preventing deviant behavior in adolescents. These results emphasize the importance of promoting open communication and mutual trust between parents and adolescents as a key factor in the prevention of risky behaviors.

Although parental supervision can be an important factor in the prevention of juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to address the basic social and economic factors that contribute to the behavior of risky adolescents. It therefore calls for a holistic and preventive approach that should focus on correcting criminogenic environmental factors and providing support and resources to parents. We believe that parental supervision and control is a multidimensional construct that takes two-ways place in the parent-child relationship. We pointed out the fact that the occurrence and frequency of deviant and violent behavior in adolescents appears as a complex relationship between control and trust, which overcomes the old assumption that control of children is sufficient to prevent deviance. This seems to be an interesting result, along with the finding that parental control, where not accompanied by adolescent disclosure and/or parental trust, may even "encourage" such deviant actions. Our results could support professionals working with families in the development of educational and training programs where the emphasis is placed not only on control, as the only effective means of preventing adolescents from risk and antisocial forms of behavior, but rather on promoting mutual trust and open communication between parents and adolescents. The conclusion is that the existing legal solutions must be applied and not only exist declaratively. Modern families and parents are faced with numerous challenges in raising children, which they cannot ignore without the help of experts and the state. That is why the reaction of all relevant subjects in the education of parents about parenting techniques and parenting skills that give the most adequate results at a given moment is necessary. It is necessary to take all measures to protect children and young people from the negative influences of the external environment, especially in the online space. On the other hand, it is also necessary to find out how and in what way children spend their time without the direct supervision and control of parents and elders. The balance between control, supervision, entrusting children to their parents and the autonomy and independence of children is an ideal to strive for and a path to guide young people. Leaving and turning in either of these two directions leads to antisocial behavior of minors, which often turns into delinquency. The latest events in our society (mass shootings) call for vigilance and engagement of all segments of society, that minors must not be left to their own devices, but that supervision and control must always be present, with the building of a relationship of trust and respect in the parent-child relationship.

Juvenile crime is undoubtedly a complex social challenge that requires a multifaceted and diverse response, and while adequate parental supervision and control can indeed prove to be an effective

measure to reduce the incidence of criminal behavior among young people, this populist focus on parental responsibility must not distract from the need that society deals with the basic conditions of social and economic deprivation that worsen the difficulties of parenting and therefore cause delinquent behavior of young people who come from such families.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Reference

- Akcinar, B., & Baydar, N. (2014). Parental control is not unconditionally detrimental for externalizing behaviors in early childhood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 38, 118–127. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0165025413513701>
- Barber, B.K., Olsen, J. E., & Shagle, S.C. (1994). Associations between parental psychological and behavioral control and youth internalized and externalized behaviors. *Child Development*, 65, 1120–1136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1994.tb00807.x>
- Barber, B.K., & Xia, M. (2013). The centrality of control to parenting and its effects. In *Authoritative Parenting: Synthesizing Nurturance and Discipline for Optimal Child Development*; Larzelere, R.E., Morris, A.S., Harrist, A.W., Eds.; American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, USA, pp. 61–87. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/13948-004>
- Barr, S. C., Hanson, R., Begle, A. M., Kilpatrick, D. G., Saunders, B., Resnick, H., & Amstadter, A. (2012). Examining the moderating role of family cohesion on the relationship between witnessed community violence and delinquency in a national sample of adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(2), 239-262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511416477>
- Bjelajac, Ž. (2014). Alijenacija čoveka u eri naučnotehnološkog razvoja i globalizacije kao uzrok porasta i raznolikosti organizovanog kriminala [The alienation of man in the era of scientific and technological development and globalization as the cause of the increase and diversity of organized crime], *Kultura polisa*, 11(25), 385-396. Retrieved from <https://kpolisa.com/index.php/kp/article/view/1215>
- Bjelajac, Ž., & Merdović, B. (2019). „Mass shots” – Motive and basic characteristics. *Kultura polisa*, 16(38), 567–576. Retrieved from <https://kpolisa.com/index.php/kp/article/view/311>
- Bjelajac, Ž., & Merdović, B. (2019). Violence against children in family [Nasilje nad decom u porodici]. *Kultura polisa*, 16(39), 191–202. Retrieved from <https://kpolisa.com/index.php/kp/article/view/343>
- Branje, S. J. T. (2018). Development of parent–adolescent relationships: Conflict interactions as a mechanism of change. *Child Development Perspectives*, 12, 171–176. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12278>
- Burnell, K., Andrade, F. C., Kwiatek, S. M., & Hoyle, R. H. (2023). Digital location tracking: A preliminary investigation of parents' use of digital technology to monitor their adolescent's location. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 37(4), 561–567. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0001067>
- Burnette, M. L., Oshri, A., Lax, R., Richards, D., & Ragbeer, S. N. (2012). Pathways from harsh parenting to adolescent antisocial behavior: A multidomain test of gender moderation. *Development and Psychopathology*, 24, 857–870. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579412000417>
- Collins, W. A., & Laursen, B. (2004). Parent-adolescent relationships and influences. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (pp. 331-361). Hoboken, NJ: John, Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780471726746.ch11>
- Copeland-Linder, N., Lambert, S. F., Chen, Y. F., & Ialongo, N. S. (2011). Contextual stress and health risk behaviors among African American adolescents. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 40, 158-173. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9520-y>
- Crocetti, E., Moscatelli, S., Van der Graaff, J., Rubini, M., Meeus, W., & Branje, S. (2016). The interplay of self–certainty and prosocial development in the transition from late adolescence to emerging adulthood. *European Journal of Personality*, 30(6), 594-607. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2084>
- Dishion, T. J., & McMahon, R. J. (1998). Parental monitoring and the prevention of child and adolescent problem behavior: A conceptual and empirical formulation. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1, 61–75. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021800432380>
- Esbensen, F. A., Huizinga, D., & Menard, S. (1999). Family context and criminal victimization in adolescence. *Youth & Society*, 31(2), 168–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X99031002003>
- Fisher, H. E., Island, H. D., Rich, J., Marchalik, D., & Brown, L. L. (2015). Four broad temperament dimensions: description, convergent validation correlations, and comparison with the Big Five. *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 1098. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01098>
- Fosco, G. M., Stormshak, E. A., Dishion, T. J., & Winter, C. E. (2012). Family relationships and parental monitoring during middle school as predictors of early adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 41(2),

- 202-213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2012.651989>
- Frijns, T., Keijsers, L., Branje, S., & Meeus, W. (2010). *What parents don't know and how it may affect their children: Qualifying the disclosure–adjustment link*. *Journal of Adolescence*, 33(2), 261–270. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2009.05.010>
- Graber, J. A., Nichols, T., & Lynne, S. D. (2006). A longitudinal examination of family, friend, and media influences on competent versus problem behaviors among urban minority youth. *Applied Developmental Science*, 10, 75–85. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads1002_3
- Gutvajin, N. M., & Kovačević, L. M. M. (2020). Parental monitoring, behavioural problems, and school achievement of Belgrade high school students. *Inovacije u nastavi-časopis za savremenu nastavu*, 33(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.5937/inovacije2003001G>
- Hayes, L., Hudson, A., & Matthews, J. (2003). Parental monitoring: A process model of parent-adolescent interaction. *Behaviour Change*, 20(1), 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.1375/bech.20.1.13.24844>
- Hoeve, M., Dubas, J. S., Eichelsheim, V. I., Van der Laan, P. H., Smeenk, W., & Gerris, J. R. (2009). The relationship between parenting and delinquency: A meta-analysis. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 37, 749-775. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-009-9310-8>
- Istorijska presuda u Americi: Majka kriva za masovno ubistvo koje je počinio njen sin u školi. (6.02.2024.). [Historic verdict in America: Mother guilty of mass murder committed by her son at school]. B92. https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2024&mm=02&dd=06&nav_category=78&nav_id=2477634
- Janssens, A., Goossens, L., Van Den Noortgate, W., Colpin, H., Verschueren, K., & Van Leeuwen, K. (2015). Parents' and adolescents' perspectives on parenting: Evaluating conceptual structure, measurement invariance, and criterion validity. *Assessment*, 22(4), 473-489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191114550477>
- Keijsers, L. (2016). Parental monitoring and adolescent problem behaviors: How much do we really know? *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 40(3), 271-281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025415592515>
- Keijsers, L., Branje, S., Hawk, S. T., Schwartz, S. J., Frijns, T., Koot, H. M., ... & Meeus, W. (2012). Forbidden friends as forbidden fruit: Parental supervision of friendships, contact with deviant peers, and adolescent delinquency. *Child development*, 83(2), 651-666. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01701.x>
- Krivični zakonik [Criminal Law] ("Sl. Glasnik RS", br. 85/2005, 88/2005 – ispr., 107/2005 – ispr., 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014, 94/2016 i 35/2019)
- Krstinić, D., Počuča, M., & Sančanin, Đ. (2023). Domestic violence—the position of the child in violence suffered by the parent as a victim. *Pravo-teorija i praksa*, 40(2), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.5937/ptp2302001K>
- Kuppens, S., Laurent, L., Heyvaert, M., & Onghena, P. (2013). Associations between parental psychological control and relational aggression in children and adolescents: a multilevel and sequential meta-analysis. *Developmental psychology*, 49(9), 1697-1712. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0030740>
- Lahey, B. B., Van Hulle, C. A., D'Onofrio, B. M., Rodgers, J. L., & Waldman, I. D. (2008). Is parental knowledge of their adolescent offspring's whereabouts and peer associations spuriously associated with offspring delinquency? *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 36, 807-823. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/s10802-008-9214-z>
- Mahoney, J. L., & Stattin, H. (2000). Leisure activities and adolescent antisocial behavior: The role of structure and social context. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23, 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2000.0302>
- Matijašević, J., & Dragojlović, J. (2022). Nasilje u porodici – pojedini kriminološki i krivičnopravni aspekti [Domestic Violence – Certain Criminological and Criminal Law Aspects]. *Kultura polisa*, 19(2), 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.51738/Kpolisa2022.19.2p.89md>
- Melotti, G., Potì, S., Giancesini, G., & Brighi, A. (2018). Adolescents at risk of delinquency. The role of parental control, trust, and disclosure. *Deviant Behavior*, 39(3), 347-362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2017.1286172>
- Merdović, B., & Vujović, R. (2022). Oblici i karakteristike interpersonlanog nasilja [Forms and Characteristics of Interpersonal Violence]. *Kultura polisa*, 19(2), 55–88. <https://doi.org/10.51738/Kpolisa2022.19.2p.55mv>
- Morsbach, S. K., & Prinz, R. J. (2006). Understanding and improving the validity of self-report of parenting. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 9(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-006-0001-5>
- Patterson, G. R., Shaw, D. S., Snyder, J. J., & Yoerger, K. (2005). Changes in maternal ratings of children's overt and covert antisocial behavior. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, 31(5), 473-484. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20095>
- Pelham III, W. E., Patel, H., Somers, J. A., & Racz, S. J. (2023). Theory for how parental monitoring changes adolescent behavior. *PsyArXiv*. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/e63mb>
- Petersen, I. T., Choe, D. E., & LeBeau, B. (2020). Studying a moving target in development: The challenge and opportunity of heterotypic continuity. *Developmental Review*, 58, 100935. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2020.100935>
- Pinquart, M. (2017). *Associations of parenting dimensions and styles with externalizing problems of children and adolescents: An updated meta-analysis*. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(5), 873–932. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dev0000295>
- Počuča, M. B., Krstinić, D. M., & Šarkić, N. (2023). Prohibition of minor marriages. *Kultura polisa*, 20(2), 101–129. <https://doi.org/10.51738/Kpolisa2023.20.2r.101pks>

- Racz, S. J., & McMahon, R. J. (2011). The relationship between parental knowledge and monitoring and child and adolescent conduct problems: A 10-year update. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 14, 377-398. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-011-0099-y>
- Reid, J. B., Patterson, G. R., & Snyder, J. E. (2002). *Antisocial behavior in children and adolescents: A developmental analysis and model for intervention*. American Psychological Association. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/10468-000>
- Rekker, R., Keijsers, L., Branje, S., Koot, H., & Meeus, W. (2017). The interplay of parental monitoring and socioeconomic status in predicting minor delinquency between and within adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 59, 155-165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.06.001>
- Rogers, K. N., Buchanan, C. M., & Winchell, M. E. (2003). Psychological control during early adolescence: Links to adjustment in differing parent/adolescent dyads. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 23(4), 349-383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431603258344>
- Rudi, J. H., & Dworkin, J. (2018). Parents' and youths' solicitation and disclosure of information in today's digital age. *Journal of Youth Development*, 13(4), 5-28. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2018.645>
- Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Luyckx, K. & Goossens, L. (2006). Parenting and Adolescent problem behaviour: an integrated model with adolescent self-disclosure and perceived parental knowledge as intervening variables. *Developmental psychology*, 42(2), 305-318. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0012-1649.42.2.305>
- Stattin, H., & Kerr, M. (2000). Parental monitoring: A reinterpretation. *Child Development*, 71(4), 1072-1085. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00210>
- Steinberg, L. (2001). We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. *Journal of research on adolescence*, 11(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1532-7795.00001>
- Stewart, K. E., Sitney, M. H., Kaufman, K. L., DeStefano, J., & Bui, T. (2019). Preventing juvenile sexual offending through parental monitoring: A comparison study of youth's experiences of supervision. *Journal of sexual aggression*, 25(1), 16-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2018.1528796>
- Tilton-Weaver, L. C., Burk, W. J., Kerr, M., & Stattin, H. (2013). Can parental monitoring and peer management reduce the selection or influence of delinquent peers? Testing the question using a dynamic social network approach. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(11), 2057-2070. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031854>
- Turner, H. A., Finkelhor, D., & Ormrod, R. (2007). Family structure variations in patterns and predictors of child victimization. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(2), 282-295. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.77.2.282>
- Vrolijk, P., Van Lissa, C. J., Branje, S., Meeus, W. H. J., & Keizer, R. (2023). Within-family linkages between parental monitoring and adolescents externalizing problems with autonomy support as a moderator. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 33, 1179-1195. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12868>
- Андреева А.Д., Данилова Е.Е. (2017). Родительский контроль в современном обществе: приоритеты и формы реализации. [Parental Control in Modern Society: Priorities and Forms of Implementation]. *Научный диалог*. (4):220-232. <https://doi.org/10.24224/2227-1295-2017-4-220-232>