

THE INFLUENCE OF MATERNAL DEPRIVATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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A study is reported which tested the effects of maternal deprivation in early years of life on the development of antisocial behavior in relation to John Bowlby's (1951) maternal deprivation hypothesis. Two groups of participants (one composing juvenile delinquents and other group comprising children who were not juvenile delinquents) were presented three questionnaires (which measured three emotional characteristics- empathy, lack of affection towards others, lack of guilt or shame towards their victims) to explore the amount of emotional damage they were experiencing. A semi-structured interview was held with every participant to reveal whether they experienced maternal deprivation in their early years of life and to identify the nature of that separation. In Bowlby's findings, it was predicted that juvenile delinquents would experience separation from their mothers for 6 months or more during the first five years of their lives and, get involved in antisocial behavior as a result of the emotional damage they suffer without mother's love. Analysis of the results of the questionnaires showed that juvenile delinquents got lower marks for all three questionnaires, which measures the amount of their emotional damage, than the non-delinquent group. The interview revealed that most of the juvenile delinquents (73 %) had experienced maternal deprivation in their early years of life. The rate of maternal deprivation was 23 % for the non-maternally deprived group. This suggested that maternal deprivation and the resulting emotional damage of juvenile delinquents were responsible for their antisocial behavior.