

CAUSES LEADING TO JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A CASE STUDY CONDUCTED AT PUNJAB, PAKISTAN



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ABSTRACT

Juvenile Delinquency is unlawful act committed by the individual below the age of 18 years. The study was aimed to find out the causes of juvenile delinquency in Punjab, Pakistan. The study was also aimed to find out the demographic and socioeconomic information of the respondents as well as to investigate the possible risk factors of delinquency. The nature of the study was qualitative and case study method was applied. The population of the study was juvenile delinquents from prisons of the Punjab, Pakistan. The multistage sampling technique was used for the selection of Districts, Jails & respondents. The tool for data collection was interview guide and sample size was comprised of eight in-depth case studies. It is concluded that there are several socioeconomic causes leading to juvenile delinquency. The respondents claimed that family dysfunctions including restrictive behavior, parental negligence, improper supervision, and parental unlawful behavior are linked with juvenile delinquency. Some respondents reported that the motivation by peers and friends for indulgence in deviancy and peer rejection also become the leading causes of delinquency. The study also concluded that deteriorated neighborhood, direct exposure to violence and fighting movies on media also considered as the risk factors toward delinquency among juveniles. Moreover, the poverty, illiteracy, poor educational performance at school and lack of moral education may turn juveniles into delinquents.

KEYWORDS

Juvenile Delinquency, Negligence, Juvenile Prisons, Punjab, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

According to Al-Quran “*And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect.*” (Al-Jathiya, verse 13, Ch 45). This verse shows that the human always run for conquer the universe. The first crime on the earth did by youthful offender. In Qur’anic words the crime is a sin and killing a person is one of the indefensible sins. In Surat Al-Maidah verse (1-120, ch5) find the first case of juvenile delinquency. *Habil* and *Qabil* the sons of Adam commit the crime. The *Habil* was the elder brother of *Qabil*; *Qabil* killed his brother because of jealousy. The common opinion about this problem is that delinquent act is impacted on both individual and state level as it is harmful for the society and the juveniles as well (Khalid, 2001).

Juvenile delinquency is a universal problem today, which is growing day by day and influencing the whole society. Every society declared certain ways of behaviors to be unacceptable or unlawful in nature and define punishments in order to bring betterment in society. Juvenile delinquency is basically disapproved behavior of children below the age of eighteen, which is declared as unlawful and delinquent by society and certain rules are defined for punishments and corrective measures (Paranjape, 1998). The term juvenile delinquency refers to any unlawful act committed by those people who are below the age of eighteen. They are deviants from the societal norms and socially approved behaviors.

A report showed that 49% of the total population consists of under the age of 18 years and 22% are from the age of 10- to 18-year-olds in Pakistan but it is the most neglected segment of the society. It is reported by the Juvenile Justice System ordinance of Pakistan in year 2004 that 10,000 juveniles were under trial and 2500 children were found in the different prisons of Pakistan. Most of them were minor criminals but they have to pay the heavy price of it. There are worst conditions in the Pakistan prisons, as mostly there is no facility for rehabilitation and their punishments and remands are sometime very severe. Most of the juveniles were under trial and these juveniles are failed to get the discharge from jails on bail due to poor economic conditions (Report by Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity, 2005; Malik and Sherazi, 2010).

The present study is concerned to investigate the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency in Punjab, Pakistan. The children of any nation are considered as coming future of that nation. The progress of any nation is at greater risk due to extreme level of exploitation and discrimination created by poverty among its people. There are many socioeconomic and psychological factors affecting juvenile delinquency in Pakistan as almost half of its population is below the age of eighteen (Report by Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2013). Unfortunately, our family institution which is the primary source of socialization, is not working properly due to its own lacks i.e., negative support of mothers, illiteracy of mothers, exposure to violence at homes, lack of proper parental supervision due to large family size, poor economic conditions and physical or sexual violence at homes turned the immature mind toward delinquency. Later due to facing improper environment at jails and lack of proper functioning of our Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, these children and adolescents turned toward professional criminality. So, there is strong need to find out all the possible factors contributing to this problem and their consequences in our society to acknowledge where actually the spoil began. The result of the present study will suggest some policy measures to overcome this problem.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was

- To find out the background and socioeconomic information of the respondents.

- To find out the socialcauses of Juvenile delinquency.
- To investigate the risk factors of Juvenile delinquency in Punjab, Pakistan.
- To suggest some policy measures to overcome the problem.

2. Review of Literature

Talpur et al, (2011) narrated that juvenile delinquency is an act committed by the adults, would consider as crime. It includes serious unlawful action. Delinquency would be considered as a crime if committed by children below than 18 years. It specified the age at the time of omission of any offence. Those children who are in between seven years to eighteen years would be considered as responsible for their deviant behavior.

Kurdrat-e- Khuda (2019) concluded that juvenile delinquency normally belongs to the illiterate and sometimes with low-income families in Bangladesh. Mahmood & Cheema (2004) reported that exposure to parental conflicts and exposure to violent programs at media leads toward the juvenile delinquency as they concluded from their research conducted at Faisalabad jail, that seventy percent juveniles were caught for the charges of homicide in the consequences of tough domestic life based on daily bases socioeconomic conflicts between them.

Weatherburn (2001) explained the two different reasons of committing crime i.e., proximate reasons and distal reasons. The proximate reasons are those reasons by which directly criminal behavior has been adopted and distal reasons are those reasons which are not immediately adopted and which are more distant. He concluded that due to poor parent child bonding, other family factors such as poor parenting ways, parental negligence especially by both working parents lead their children toward deviancy.

Krohn (2005) described the relationship between inequality, unemployment opportunities and crime. He analyzed that the unemployment creates income inequality which has strong relation with the crime rate of the country.

Robert (2002) narrated that there are many determinants of the negative and destructive behavior i.e., conduct disorders, improper functioning of family, lack of school willingness and violent behavior with peers, disobedience of adults, lead to problems like peer and teachers' rejection, absenteeism from school, poor class performance, use of drugs and alcohol at early age. The factors become the reasons of failure in school, school dropout, and negative attitude like law violation, criminality and violence during their adolescence. Ubah (2007) analyzed that the issue of social isolation and marginalization appear through the practice of immigration. He hinted the Hirshi's analysis of social containment theory that isolation can deteriorate the social tie. This condition may turn the immigrant to take up the criminality in order to conquer their social isolation.

3. Research Methodology

The present study was qualitative and case study method was used for gathering detailed information about the current issue as juvenile delinquency is considered as a complex phenomenon in which multiple causes are needed to highlight. The population of the study was juvenile delinquents from the prisons of Punjab. The multistage sampling technique was adopted for the selection of Districts, Jails and respondents. At first and second stage, two districts (Faisalabad & Bahawalpur) and jails (B.I. & J. J. Faisalabad, B.I. & J.J Bahawalpur) were selected randomly and at third stage, the respondents were selected by using convenient sampling technique. The sample size is comprised of eight in-depth interviews and pseudonyms

were used in order to hide the identities of the respondents. The interview guide was developed for data collection, in which open ended questions were used to explore the life histories, socio-economic status and all the hidden causes of delinquency. The collected data was analyzed by using thematic analysis.

3.1 Research Limitations

The present study is limited due to;

- The nature of the study was qualitative so the sample size was relatively small and only few areas were selected as a sample to fulfill of research objectives.
- Pakistan is in the state political instability and the population of present study was juveniles from the prisons of Punjab and access inside the jails was not easy. The law enforcement agencies were reluctant to provide the relevant data.
- Generally, the behaviour of the respondents was cooperative and friendly but due to presence of jail superintendent, the participants were feeling hesitation to explain all the inside circumstances.
- The audio & video recordings of the interviews were not allowed and all the information was collected in the written form, so it might be possible that some information was not fully described or not well noted by the researcher.

4. Results and Discussion

It is found that there are several socio-cultural and economic factors that illustrate the different dimensions of juvenile delinquency with critical explanations. In diverse illustration, these factors explain the diverse reasons behind the delinquent acts of the juveniles. The following factors of juvenile delinquency are at the greater concern in the present study gathered by the hidden information behind any deviant history, their delinquent act and its consequences on offender and society as well. The assembled data demonstrate that it could be the large family size, improper supervision by parents, severe punishments by families for maintaining disciplines, parental illiteracy, and negative influence of the peers, poor school performance or illiteracy, exposure to violence, delinquent area and use of drugs etc. leads toward delinquency.

4.1 Family and Juvenile Delinquency

Like all others socializing agents, family play a crucial role in the socialization of children. There are different causes that become the push or pull factor of juvenile delinquency. Large family size is also considered as the risk factor of juvenile delinquency (McCord *et al*, 2001). There is strong relationship between criminal tendency and concentration given by the parents at sibling number. If the children have poor attachment with their parents, there will be the more chances for indulgence in deviancy. As respondents stated as;

“I have three brothers and three sisters and my number among siblings was second last. My father was not very close to me but with my elder brother because they both spent most of their time on work and mother remained busy at home. I started smoking at the age of seven as my friends were also smokers and they started smoking at very early age.”

(Respondent 1 named Faisal, Offence under section, 302)

Another respondent also claimed as;

“I have three brothers and three sisters and my number among sibling was last, my parents loved me a lot & tried to fulfill my all needs but I could not attend school due poor socioeconomic conditions of the family as they can hardly make their both ends meet.”

(Respondent 2 named Khan, offence under section 376, 496A)

It is also reported that parents pay less attention to their children where there is large family size having a greater number of children. In the consequences of this, the children have more chances to commit crime. Research also claimed that in large families, children especially, male are at the more chances to indulge in delinquency (Jones *et al*, 1980). The gathered information by the respondents of present research also shows that it is a significant determinant of deviant act by juveniles. As Mahmood & Cheema (2004) also argued that class background is an important aspect of the delinquency as delinquency is very common among the children of middle-class families. The main determinations of delinquency are large family size, low income, and motivation by peers for indulgence in unlawful activities, property clash and honor killing.

Due to large family size, parents are unable to pay their proper attention to all children. So, improper parental supervision, family dispute and lack of moral education of the children is considered as the risk factor for delinquency in the future (Videon, 2002). If children come from such sort of environment, then they are at the greater risk to commit crime but on the other hand children having supportive and loving background, have fewer chances to indulge in deviancy as the supportive and loving home as protective factors because it gives the barriers against criminal indulgence. So, it could be said that family has strong link with delinquency (Derzon, 2005). As respondents claimed as;

“My parents usually remained in the state of clashes with each other due to my father’s extra martial affair and later his second marriage”.

(Respondent 3 named Adil, Offence under section, 394/412, 13/20/65)

My family environment was not good as I was abused sexually five times during childhood & multiple times physically by my father. Even my mother also never supported me because father was used to beat her up harshly. My parents did not send me to school for the sake of earning.

(Respondent 4 named Sahil, offense under section 377)

As Marte, (2008) also reported that criminal behavior is highly impacted by the family behavior as well as by the family environment. They are considered as the strong socializing agents. Moreover, lack of proper supervision especially in single parental families, lack of sharing and friendship among parents and children and extreme strictness for maintaining discipline leads to the improper mental development and aggression among juveniles.

4.2 Peers Influence and Drug addiction

Peers also play a significant role in socialization process. Albert and Albert, (1991) claimed that negative influence of the peers’ leads children toward criminality and they indulged in

unlawful acts in their daily routine lives. Many respondents also claimed that they indulged in unlawful act due to the negative influence of the peers. As respondents also stated;

“I was used to spend my most of the leisure time with my friends despite of my family as I was the last child of my family and do not have friendly relation with siblings due to their authoritative behavior towards me. Some of my friends were involved in unlawful activities as well.”

(Respondent six named Ali, Offence under section, 395)

“My friends insisted me many times to take drugs and I became a drug addicted. I remained involve in drug carrying from three years with my friends”.

(Respondent seven named Abuzar, Offence under section, 302/34, 302/393)

It showed that peer influence is also a strong predictor toward delinquency among juveniles. Sutherland (1974) theorized that antisocial and deviant behaviors come through the process of learning. He explained that criminal behavior is not hereditary, nor comes through transformation of genes. A criminal behavior always needs proper learning and training to commit crime just like a person who cannot make machine without proper training. As a study by James(1987) argued that interaction with the delinquent peers creates the delinquency among juveniles. It may vary with the different frequency, duration, priority and intensity of the interaction pattern. If higher the frequency, duration, priority and intensity of interaction with deviant peers, there will be the more chances to adopt the deviancy.

4.3 Poor school Performance

Poor school performance is also considered as the strong predictor of juvenile delinquency. The factors become the reasons of failure in school, school dropout, and negative attitude like law violation, criminality and violence during their adolescence. Education made the people able to differentiate between the right and wrong act. The respondent of the present research also claimed that;

“I left school, as I was not good in studies and I did not want to go to school any more. My teacher had beaten me harshly due to my poor school performance”.

(Ali, Offence under section, 395)

“I left the school in class two as I did not want to study. I was not good in studies nor got any motivation from family to study hard as father do not have time for us and mother remain busy at home.”

(Faisal, Offence under section, 302)

Robert (2002) also reported that there are many determinants of the negative and destructive behavior i.e., lack of school willingness and absenteeism from school, and poor class performance. The factors become the reasons of failure in school, school dropout, and negative attitude like law violation, criminality and violence during their adolescence. It is found from the gathered stories that children whose school performance is poor are at greater chances to indulge in deviant acts.

4.4 Exposure to Violence at Homes and Media

According to social learning theory media also play a crucial role toward delinquency among juveniles. Media presents models for an enormous array of people in many different environmental settings and people learn from these setting which contribute a lot in developing their personalities. The social learning theory asserts that exposure to media violence would produce the aggressive behavior to its viewers (Bandura and Walters, 2002).

As a respondent claimed as;

“I spent my most of the time in front of television and liked bollywood action movies very much. I wish to become like hero.”

He further stated as;

“I mostly curled with my peers and siblings like hero and most of time I punished by teachers and elders”

(Khan, offence under section, 376, 496A)

Sutherland (1974) also argued that crime is a learning process come by proper socialization or association. All the skills and motives of criminals are learned by the interaction with pro criminal values, and other patterns of violating the laws. There are different principles by the Sutherland in the explanation of the criminal behavior. Firstly, it is assumed as a learned behavior from the surroundings, by interacting with criminals or by close peer group. Secondly, learned behavior contained the required skill of offense, such as reason, drives, rationalizations, and mind-set by perceiving more favorable consequences of the rules breaking. Thirdly, this association and learning also based on frequency, duration, priority and intensity. So, those children who have the direct exposure to violence are at the greater risk to commit crime as it is also a strong predictor of juvenile delinquency.

4.5 Poverty and Inequality

Poor economic conditions of the family also play an important role as a push or pull factor in delinquency. Social inequality is also a main factor behind criminality which is also reported to the present research. Those people who have low income felt themselves deprived and wanted to attain the living standard of rich people whose income level is higher than lower. It is not possible to attain all the facilities of life with low family income legally, then people of low-income families adopt illegal ways to attain a standard life (Gumus, 2004). One of the respondents of the present research also claimed as;

“I belonged to a poor family, and the earning of my mother only sustains our livelihood as father did not support us financially”.

(Respondent eight named Sohail, Offence under section, 302/ 34, 392/411)

According to rational choice theory, Becker, G. (1960) argued that the cause of crime as the personal cost and benefit analysis. He argued that mostly criminals rationally decide before committing the offense. During the complete analysis about the gains and outlays, they weigh the risks and hurdles in the way of crime with the predicted gains. The gain could be the money, adventure, revenge, or entertainment. The evaluation is based on offense specific and offender

specific characteristics including offender's personal skills to commit crime, other needs and the accessibility of target place etc.

5. Conclusion

There are several factors contributing to juvenile delinquency such as family that plays a crucial role in the socialization of children. Mostly, the respondents claimed that they have more than eight or nine siblings and the large family size could be considered as a main factor contributing toward juvenile delinquency because due to large family size, parents are unable to pay proper attention on all children. There is strong relationship between chances of deviancy and concentration given by the parents to siblings. An existing study also concluded that families those are having large family size or lack of positive reinforcement, their children involve in deviancy due to improper family control (Boret *al*, 1997). Most of the respondents fall in the category of middle birth order, whereas their parents could not pay proper attention on them in the comparison of 1st or last child. In the consequences of this, the children have more chances to commit crime. Some respondents claimed that lack of parental supervision especially in single parent families, parental and family disputes, severe punishments and domestic violence as well as parental criminality became the cause of their delinquent acts. The role of mother is also very significant as usually mothers support the children but the negative support (Hiding their unlawful acts) is also a strong factor of juvenile delinquency. As Breivik *et al*, (2009) also reported that the single parent family is considered as a significant foreteller of deviancy. Some of the respondents claimed that their parents remain in the state of conflicts; fathers verbally & physically abuse their mothers. Loeber & Stouthammer (1986) also claimed that family is considered as critical factor behind the children's indulgence in the deviancy. Many researches explained the relationship between family factors and criminality. The factors which are studied could be having criminal parents, too much strictness for the sake of discipline, negligence from parents, abuse from parents, lack of appropriate parental supervision, violence at the early age, parental early age marriages, parental behavior, use of drugs by parents, any sort of mental disorder by parents, birth order, family size, family structure, family education, and the economic status of the family. Violence and exposure to the violence is a stronger predictor of juvenile delinquency. Most of the respondents of the present research claimed that they started smoking at very early age (below 10). It is reported that most of the respondents became delinquent, started smoking, became drug addicted due to the bad company of their friends. So, it could be said as Peers also play a significant role in socialization process. If peers are indulged in unlawful acts, then there are strong chances for the children to indulge in delinquency. As exiting research also found that adolescence having strong association with criminal peers is condemn and detained earlier than those who do not have such sort of involvement (Coie *et al*, 1995). Education is a major tool that made the people able to differentiate between right and wrong. Most of the respondents claimed as they were not good in studies and left school in the primary section (before Grade 5th). Many respondents could not continue their studies due to different reasons i.e., poor school performance and absenteeism from school and left the schools in early classes. Some claimed that they left their schools due to poor economic conditions of their families. Hawkin *et al*, (1998) also reported as education can also play a vital role in conduct and personality formulation. It is perceived that low educational performance, low commitment with studies and school can become cause of the delinquency. Additionally, poor economic conditions of the family also play an important role as a push or pull factor in delinquency. Some of the respondents belonged to the poor families and hardly sustained their livelihood. As Chester (1976) also claimed that crime and poverty have strong link with each other as poor people have more criminal tendency. They usually remained involved in street, property and nonviolent crimes.

6. Suggestions

- The researcher has suggested some measures to overcome this problem in our society.
- Families need to be very conscious about their children's socialization, and family environment should be safe, protective and cooperative with proper supervision. Mothers needed to be well educated to guide and protect their children in a positive way. There is strong need to work over the large family size especially in those families who are poor because due to large family size, children are at the greater risk to indulge in delinquent acts.
- Quality education and poverty eradication should be the focal points of policy makers and politicians and educational institutions should have to provide the moral education to the children and adolescents.
- The role of media should be constructive and positive instead of gaining their own benefits and earning money.
- The environment inside the jail should be good and jail administration and focal persons should be acknowledged well ethically and morally to deal with such persons.

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