

Examination of Juveniles' views about the Socioeconomic Factors Causing Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan: A Case Study of District Jail Mardan

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the views of the delinquent juveniles about the socioeconomic factors causing juvenile delinquency. The study participants for this research were recruited through purposive sampling from the district jail Mardan. Data were elicited through a structured interview schedule from n=150 out of N=250 juvenile offenders. The data were quantitatively analyzed using the Chi-square test. The results show a strong association of juvenile delinquency with poverty and impoverished status of the family (p=.001); the low living standard of the family (p=.005); unemployment and the lack of resources to sustain life (p=.018); unlimited lust of youth for gaining the material wealth (p=.000), adopting illegitimate ways of fulfilling basic needs (p=.006); lack of recreational facilities and quality education (p=.001), lack of proper care, supervision, protection and abandonment from the family (p=.019); violent community environments, belligerent cultural values, frequent domestic violence, and land disputes (p=.003); forced and bonded child labor (p=.006). Furthermore, this study identifies the lack of social and financial support system for destitute parents, which pushes their children to indulge in delinquent acts. Therefore, this study recommends the need for social inclusion programs, counseling, and skilled-based education for delinquents and the children of broken families. Similarly, awareness campaigns, provision of recreational facilities, and implementation of anti-child labor and child protection laws could help weed out juvenile delinquency's menace and mitigate the potential criminals of the future.

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Introduction

A juvenile delinquent, according to UNICEF (2008), is "children who come in contact with the law," and demonstrates individuals who are under the age of eighteen (18) and have formal contacts with the justice department for the accusation of committing a crime. According to Ukris (2004), "Juvenile delinquency refers to the behavior of non-adults which violates the rules and regulations set by the government or society." The delicate intersection between childhood and criminality creates a complex dilemma of redressal (Brown, 2005). Social scientists, activists, and legislators debate the reasons and possible resolutions to this problem (UNICEF, 2010). However, as a concept, juvenile delinquency is still blurring and requires tactful methods for measuring, examining, and ordering adolescent guilty parties and even the treatment of juvenile misconduct (Ali, 2013).

Juvenile delinquency is an omnipresent phenomenon. However, in Pakistan, it is reaching epic proportions (Nadeem, 2002). A report of the Justice Project Pakistan (JPP) on young prisoners in Pakistan revealed staggering facts that raised the alarm among the human rights activists and civil society organizations (Tarar, 2018). Reports show that nearly 10 percent of death-row prisoners in Pakistan committed crimes under 18 years of age (Farrukh, 2018). However, the current statistics are just the tip of the iceberg. Due to the lack of record maintenance by the population registration agencies, law enforcement agencies, the young offenders registered as adults, and the social stigma attached to the topic makes it difficult to access accurate stats about juvenile crimes in Pakistan (Tarar, 2018). However, Tarar (2018) mentioned that the available province-wide record shows 599 young inmates in Punjab, of which 529 are under trial, 70 convicted. In Sindh, 181 juvenile prisoners were reported in four jails, of which 168 are under trial, and 13 convicted. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 338 juvenile offenders were recorded, of which 311 are under trial and 27 are convicted. Similarly, in Baluchistan province, 70 juvenile prisoners were reported with no record of how many are convicted and how many are under trial. Amusingly, all the reported detainees are males, and no data about female detainees are shared by the authorities (Tarar, 2018).

However, due to its tribal structure and entrenched poverty, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province reflects an aggravated position concerning juvenile crimes. For example, Farrukh (2018) reported 2906 males and 13 female convicts are in jail while 10560 boys and 141 girls are under trial. These juvenile offenders are charged with various crimes such as murder, attempted murder, theft, robbery, and drug-related offenses (Farrukh, 2018). Panezai *et al.* (2019) document that the highly committed delinquencies in Pakistan include smoking cigarettes, using drugs, damaging property, stealing money from family, practicing gambling, and running from homes. Further, skipping classes, gang fights, stolen money from people, buying stolen goods, and cheating on examinations were also significant delinquencies committed by juveniles. Among these, the lowest-ranked were drug selling and sexual relations, respectively (Panezai *et al.* 2019).

Areas with high juvenile delinquency are characterized by social disorganization, poverty, economic dependency, and an absence of stable neighborhood standards of behavior (Bandura & Walters, 1959). Specifically, in Pakistan, the disintegration of families and socio-cultural dynamics and traditions has played a significant role in promoting juvenile crimes (Fatima, 2009). Deplorably, neither the law nor the public is willing to understand the severe and continual dangers rendered to these youngsters and society's health, social, economic, and moral evolution (Fatima, 2009). We agree with Brown's (2005) statement that understanding juvenile delinquency has been a complex problem because of its varied relationship with families, social institutions, law enforcement agencies, media, and the judiciary. However, regarding the causative factors of juvenile delinquency in the district Mardan and other regions of Pakistan, we, in this study, posit the lower socioeconomic conditions—being the mother cause of several social problems, including juvenile delinquency.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives were set forth for this study:

- To explore the opinions of the juveniles regarding the social factors instigating juvenile delinquency in the Mardan district of Pakistan.
- To examine the juveniles' views regarding the economic factors instigating juvenile delinquency in the Mardan district of Pakistan.

- To understand the specific cultural reasons perpetuating juveniles' indulgence in delinquent acts in the Mardan region.

Research Questions of the Study

This study focused on addressing the following research questions.

- What are the social factors that drive juveniles' indulgence in delinquent behaviors in the district Mardan?
- What are the economic factors driving juveniles' indulgence in delinquent behaviors in the district Mardan?
- What are the specific cultural contexts driving juveniles' indulgence in delinquent behaviors in the district Mardan?

The findings of this research study will be of great interest and use to policymakers, academicians, civil society activists, law and policy-making bodies, and contemporary researchers. We argue that youths, who constitute almost 60 percent of the population, are the backbone of Pakistan. Therefore, effective policies and plans, chalked out in the light of locally conducted research studies, can mitigate the magnitude of juvenile delinquency and help them integrate into society.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Different theories provide diverse explanations for juvenile delinquency. For example, in the view of Eker (2010), social disorganization theory ignores or minimizes individual differences such as psychological and biological traits while focuses more on the macro-level variables such as groups, communities, and community structures. Further, this approach considers the cause of a crime as external as it suggests that the social forces affect a person's engagement in crime (Farrington, 1991, 1998). Contrary to it, some assert that traits of neighborhoods are essential for the understanding of crimes (Cullen & Agnew, 2003). Shaw & McKay (1942) argue that space and geography traits determine the nature and level of criminal incidents. Sutherland (1939) opines that the intensity and frequency of a juvenile's contact with others, peers in specific, can influence his/her indulgence in crimes. Likewise, Du (2019) suggests that delinquent traits are learned in interaction with others, particularly intimate interaction. However, the control theory of Hirschi (1969) argues that delinquent behavior is the product when the bond of the individual with society becomes weak or is broken. Further, control theory asserts that people

tend to commit crimes because of the prevailing temptations and weak controls for restraining their behavior. In other words, delinquency happens because of inadequate socialization of the agencies, family, and schooling in specific. For example, children do not violate the rules because parents teach them to abide by the authorities. Thus, they learn and adhere to the regulations to believe that rules are correct and obeyed.

However, besides the aforementioned theoretical discourse, the strain theoretical approach seems more plausible in the context of the present study. Robert K. Merton's (1938) theory called "Strain Theory" outlined relationship "*cultural goals*" and "*socially approved means*" to achieve it. Merton opines that those who adopt socially approved means to achieve their goals are called *conformists*, and those who use other than socially approved means to achieve their goals are called *deviants*. Thus, according to Mertonian explanation, individuals who experience stress and pressure resort to deviant acts and indulge in criminal activities. In other words, deviants pursue cultural goals, livelihood, or fulfilling basic needs through illegitimate actions. The strain may be structural or individual. Structural stress refers to the processes at the societal level that filter down and affect how the individual perceives his or her needs. However, personal or individual strain relates to the fractions and pains experienced by an individual as he or she looks for ways to fulfill his or her needs. Such cases of anxiety can insinuate social structures within society that then pressure citizens to become outlaws. For example, they may become violent to stop irritation from others. They may get involved in stealing to decrease money-related issues or go away from staying home to escape harsh guardians. They may also participate in criminal acts to look for requital against the individuals who have wronged them. Likewise, they may start taking illegal drugs to make themselves feel better. While stress may come about due to the failure to carry out a change of completions, the powerlessness to achieve some related targets such as money, status or respect, and for the juveniles autonomy of elders, which may lead to criminal conduct among children (Crossman, 2019). Strain theories encompass the influence of societal and cultural structures that drive people to commit crimes (Lee, 2001; Voldet al., 2002).

Literature Review

Juvenile delinquency is a complex and contested issue. The varied relationship of juvenile delinquency with the family, social institutions, law enforcement agencies, and media makes it complicated to understand (Brown, 2005). It is in this sense that research studies document different causal factors of juvenile

delinquency. However, low socioeconomic conditions are the most significant of these causing factors. For example, Farrington (1991) shows a strong connection between poverty and juvenile delinquency. He opines that children raised in economically impoverished families are more prone to delinquency acts. Duckworth (2002) found that children of financially deprived families are two and a half times more likely to descend into criminal acts than children from economically stable families. Children who show antisocial behavior often reside in financially vulnerable communities (Hawkins *et al.* 1992). Children born to destitute parents face many detrimental and unfavorable situations throughout their lives (Shanks, 2011). For example, poor and depressed parents who usually undergo drug misuse and social segregation are strongly associated with child mistreatment and negligence, turning a child into criminal (Goldman *et al.* 2003). Substance misuse and parental reports of aggressive behaviors are strongly associated with several economic problems (Agnew *et al.* 2008). Studies show a significant association between poverty, school dropout, drug abuse, and delinquency (Hawkins *et al.* 1992). The investigation of Kilpatrick (2010) exhibits that children suspended or generally prohibited from school are eight times more prone to be imprisoned than those who move on from secondary schools. That is why vast numbers of youth are in danger due to school and courts (Kilpatrick, 2010). A study by Goldman *et al.* (2003) suggests that underemployment generates substantial strain inside the families, which ultimately prompts a higher rate of child ill-treatment in such family units. Consequently, parents' maltreatment makes the children vulnerable to fall prey to delinquent acts (Goldman *et al.*, 2003).

Studies report that low income and low educational levels of the family can lead to a hostile home environment, which can cause bad school performance, weak affection, and bitter school experiences in the children (Mahmood & Cheema, 2004; Silpasuwan *et al.* 2011). Thus, being raised in destitution has been found to add to a greater possibility of getting involved in violence and criminal activities (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). Self-announced wrongdoing, ambush, and burglary have been observed to be twice as common among youth living in destitution as among children of middle-class families (Elliot *et al.* 1989).

Research documents that family negligence and lack of proper care on the part of parents can potentially cause delinquency in children (Blackburn, 1993; Demuth & Brown, 2004). Similarly, domestic violence, parental conflicts, or abusive attitude of parents towards each other (Mahmood & Cheema, 2004; Malik & Shirazi, 2010); and

criminal history of the parents (Wagner-Rizvi & Anees, 2003) can potentially cause delinquency among children. In the view of Bano *et al.* (2009), a larger family size, gender of the siblings, and intelligence can promote neglect in children. Likewise, broken families, violent family members, family disintegration, the death or divorce of either parent can affect delinquency among juveniles (Aoulakh, 1999; Haider & Mahsud, 2010; Wagner-Rizvi & Anees, 2003). Insufficient provision of recreational facilities to children at home is due to the low income of the family, inadequate housing, slum vicinity, the dominance of gangs, and absence of group association are all composite factors associated with juvenile delinquency (Brickhead, 2012; Burgess, 1952).

Some studies have reported the community factors such as peer group influence (Aoulakh, 1999; Lee, 2001; Panezai *et al.* 2019; Razi, 2015) and hostile community environment (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990) driving delinquency among juveniles. Similarly, studies document that the urban environment affects the children's delinquent behavior more than the nonurban (Panezai *et al.* 2019). Likewise, lack of teachers' attention, nonattendance, low academic performance, and school dropout provide the impetus for youths to get engaged in delinquent behaviors (Lee, 2001; Panezai *et al.* 2019; Razi, 2015).

Some studies throw on a relationship between a single personality trait or a group of characteristics and criminal behavior (Panezai *et al.*, 2019). In the Pakistani context, research reveals the common factors of juvenile delinquency include: abnormal personality traits such as depression, hypochondriasis, schizophrenia, and psychopathic deviate (Kausar *et al.* 2012); agitation, and emotional senselessness (Meier *et al.* 2008); lack of education and drug use (Lee, 2001; Panezai *et al.* 2019; Razi, 2015); low self-esteem and social exclusion or isolation (Panezai *et al.*, 2019). Further, studies document a relationship between delinquent behavior among juveniles and having sexual relationships (Lee, 2001; Panezai *et al.* 2019; Razi, 2015), mood disorders or disruptive behavior, and criminal behavior (Ryan & Redding, 2004). Similarly, some consider it the outcome of mental conflicts rising in the unconscious or subconscious minds (Lee, 2001).

Studies have reported abusive treatment of the law enforcing authorities and prisons with juveniles in Pakistan, turning them into potential criminals when they get out of jail (see, for example, Farrukh, 2018; Tarar, 2018). For example, a lawmaker remarked that 99% of children in jails are exposed to sexual abuse (Tarar, 2018). In

one prison of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a juvenile claimed to be sexually abused and supplied to other prisoners and guards by the jail authorities (Tarar, 2018). Further, that juvenile claimed that other children are also exposed to sexual violence and use as a sexual commodity by the jail authorities (Tarar, 2018). Paradoxically, besides the promulgation of the Juvenile Justice Ordinance (2000) and the Child Protection bill (2017), Pakistan has miserably failed to update the prosecution procedures and implement any of the protection laws concerning human rights and protecting the rights of the children (Tarar, 2018). The Human Rights Watch (2016) report documents that all the juvenile prisoners in Pakistan are from society's most impoverished and vulnerable strata—"the poor street children." The report further asserts that most juvenile criminals are forced to live among senior and professional criminals. This mixing of young prisoners with the old criminals in jails not only perpetuates the sexual abuse of the juvenile children but turns jails into schools of crimes for these children (Farrukh, 2018; Tarar, 2018). However, KPK has a juvenile detention facility but not functional (Farrukh, 2018).

Keeping in view the aforementioned literature, the current study argues that poverty and lower socioeconomic conditions work as an impetus for countless issues and behavioral problems, including delinquency among children.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this study consists of the following steps.

The Study Field

This study was conducted in the district jail Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, due to three reasons. First, no study has been conducted on children's delinquency at district Mardan. Second, there is an increased tendency of children delinquent acts in this region. Third, convenience to the researchers in commuting, freely moving around and navigating the area, acquaintance and rapport with the jail authorities, and ease in the data collection being insiders.

The Study Sampling Method

This research study used a probability sampling procedure for the recruitment of study respondents. For example, sample $n=150$ (40 juvenile delinquents from district jail Mardan and 110 those juvenile delinquents who were arrested on different charges and later on released from prison after having exhausted sentences from other

times) were drawn from a population $N=250$ between 12 to 18 years of age using Sekaran's table (2003). Study subjects were accessed and recruited through the cooperation and permission of the jail authorities.

This study used the purposive sampling technique for the identification of potential respondents. In purposive sampling, also called judgment sampling, the researchers can select and gather the required information by their judgment, knowledge, and experience (Tongco, 2007). It identifies and chooses information-rich cases related to interest phenomena (Palinkaset *al.* 2015). Palinkaset *al.* (2015) suggest using purposive sampling to select subjects with maximum variation to document unique or diverse variations in adapting to different conditions and identify common critical patterns that cut across variations. Since we were looking to examine the views and experiences of the delinquent children about the various socioeconomic factors in this study, purposive sampling seemed more appropriate and convenient.

The Tool of Data Collection

The data was gathered through a structured interview schedule. The technique is also called formal interview or closed-ended/standardized format of questions. According to McLeod (2014) structured interview consists of closed questions to which people provide a fixed set of responses. Further, structured interviews could yield quick data elicitation, which is easy to quantify and test for reliability (McLeod, 2014). As in this study, as we had to conduct data from a good number of juveniles, we needed to use a method that yields quick and reliable data collection. In this sense, the structured interviewing technique seemed more convenient and appropriate.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the whole research process, we firmly followed and adhered to the social research ethical guidelines concerning the protection of human subjects. For example, we got prior oral consent from the jail officials and gatekeepers in accessing and interviewing the juvenile respondents. The interview time and place were decided with mutual consent with each participant. Further, the researchers talked in a polite manner and a friendly environment with the study participants. Also, we protected their confidentiality by not exposing their mail or home address and used pseudo names instead of their original names. We also asked that they could withdraw their opinion at any stage of the interview. Moreover, they orally agreed on the use of their views for research and academic purpose.

Data Analysis

After the data gathering, it was tabulated, organized, and analyzed through chi-square using SPSS version 20 to determine the association between juvenile delinquency and socioeconomic factors. First, we analyzed the basic demographic information such as age, educational, family, socioeconomic and criminal data of the study participants (juvenile offenders). The analysis showed that out of 150, 130 study participants had the age between 14 to 17 years, and 20 had 10 to 14 years of age. Similarly, all the 150 study respondents belonged to low-income families, i.e., the family's monthly income was lower than ten thousand rupees and thus could not sustain the family and fulfill its needs. Further, out of 150, 55 respondents had never been to schools, 62 had only primary education, while 33 had middle school education. In addition, we noticed that they had either dropped out from schools or quitted school for providing support to the family and engaged in child labor.

Furthermore, out of 150, 109 respondents had their parents alive, 41 were orphans (22 respondents had their father dead, 13 had their mother dead, and 6 had both mother and father dead). However, out of 122 (whose fathers were alive), 85 respondents' fathers had no job/unemployed, 26 fathers were daily wagers, and the fathers of 11 had some diseases and could not work. Regarding the nature of crimes committed, out of 150, 109 mentioned the commission of robbery and theft either from houses or shops, 31 caught in pickpocketing, five had murder charges, and five had the allegation of using/selling drugs.

In summary, the above-mentioned analysis of the demographic data of the study participants reveals that the majority of them had come from the impoverished pocket of society. Their family's income had considerably low, i.e., less than ten thousand rupees. In the given circumstances of unemployed or daily wager parents, children are forced to quit schooling for work and sustain the family. Inadequate supervision and education force the children of low-income families to adopt illegitimate and delinquent acts for earning. In the proceeding section, we now turn to the results and discussion of the statistical analysis of the data.

Results and Discussion

This study focused on examining the responses of delinquent juveniles regarding the various socioeconomic factors causing juvenile delinquency. Further, the

analytical association of the respondent's answers to the questions entailing the various causative socioeconomic factors is shown in table no. 1 below.

Questions asked about the socioeconomic conditions of the participants (Independent variable)	Cause juvenile delinquency (dependent variable)			Chi-square	
	Yes	No	Don't Know	P Value	
	Does the family's poverty (ghurbat) push children to involve in delinquent actions (ghalatkaroon)?	Yes	138	6	0
	No	4	1	1	
	Don't Know	0	0	0	$P= .001$
Do you think that the low living standard motivates the commission of crimes?	Yes	135	5	0	$X^2=18.305^a$
	No	7	2	0	
	Don't Know	0	0	1	$P= .005$
Do unemployment and lack of revenue resources of the family push children to do illegitimate things?	Yes	71	0	0	$X^2=17.696^a$
	No	50	5	1	
	Don't Know	21	2	0	$P= .018$
Do you affirm that the endless lust of young for wealth pushes them to indulge in delinquent behavior?	Yes	139	7	0	$X^2=20.014^a$
	No	3	0	1	
	Don't Know	0	0	0	$P= .000$
Children do illegal and delinquent	Yes	126	5	0	$X^2=19.675^a$
	No	14	1	1	

acts to fulfill their basic needs.	Don't Know	2	1	0	$P= .006$
Do you think that lack of recreational facilities and access to quality education push children towards delinquency?	Yes	138	6	0	$X^2=12.673^a$
	No	4	1	1	
	Don't Know	0	0	0	$P= .001$
The lack of proper care, supervision, and negligence of the family members push children to get involved in delinquent acts?	Yes	116	5	0	$X^2=17.596^a$
	No	24	2	0	
	Don't Know	2	0	1	$P= .019$
	Yes	137	5	0	$X^2=14.542^a$
Violent community environments, frequent domestic violence, and land disputes push children to learn and use violence and delinquency to resolve their issues.	No	5	2	0	
	Don't Know	0	0	1	$P= .003$
	Yes	128	5	0	$X^2=19.201^a$
Child labor exposes children to indulge in illegal acts.	No	14	2	1	
	Don't Know	0	0	0	$P= .006$
	Know				

The Chi-square results in the above table show a highly significant association ($P=.001$) between juvenile delinquency and poor economic conditions of the family. The findings of Shah *et al.* (2019) and Ancheta-Templa *et al.* (2004) agree with our study findings as they have also highlighted a significant association between poverty and juvenile delinquency. According to the SDPI report, "Clustered Deprivation,"

58.7 million people in Pakistan live in multidimensional poverty. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is among the poorest provinces of Pakistan. For example, the percentage of people living below the poverty line is 39% (17%). However, poverty in rural areas is more concentrated than in urban areas. The demographic data analysis of our respondents depicts that all of the participants belonged to low-income families, i.e., less than Rs: 10000 per month's income. Poverty affects children in many ways (Burgess, 1952). For example, children of low-income families may feel deprived when their basic needs are not fulfilled and get less parental care and affection. This can negatively affect the personality of the children (Farrington, 1991). Consequently, such children often strive to meet their needs and satisfy their egos through delinquent ways (Farrington, 1998).

The table data shows a significant association ($P=.023$) between low living standard of life and juvenile delinquency. Our findings support Aoulakh's (1999) study, which also identified a significant association between the low-living standard of life and juvenile delinquency. Children who have a living standard of life are more likely to suffer from inferiority complex by observing children whose living standard is high (Singell, 1968). To raise the standard of their lives and fulfill their basic needs, such children usually get involved in delinquent acts (Aoulakh, 1999).

A significant association ($P=.018$) was found between unemployment and juvenile delinquency. The demographic analysis of the study participants shows that out of 122 (whose fathers were alive), 85 respondents' fathers had no job/unemployed, 26 fathers were daily wagers. The fathers of 11 had some diseases and could not work. KPK has relatively more poverty and an exceptionally high unemployment rate of 8.5%. Thus in the case of a family's lack of revenue generation resources in the Pakhtun regions, may force children to adopt the illegitimate way of earning such as stealing, robbery, drug smuggling, and pickpocket (Shah *et al.* 2019). Unemployment generates substantial strain inside the families, which ultimately prompts a higher rate of child ill-treatment in such family units (Shamim & Batool, 2009). Such maltreatment of children by parents makes them vulnerable to fall prey to delinquent acts (Goldman *et al.* 2003). Since the non-earning parents cannot fulfill their children's desires, they try to meet their needs and wants through illegal ways.

Further, non-earning parents are stressed, and their family environment also remains stressful, affecting the children. A stressful environment is undoubtedly linked with delinquency among children (Razi, 2015; Rose *et al.* 2017). The strain theory of Robert K. Merton (1968) supports the findings of this study. For example,

Robert K. Merton argues that lower-class people face immense strain due to impoverished conditions. Due to excessive class disparity and culturally defined goals, they are unable to get their legitimate means then resort to meet their conventional goals by illegitimate means (Rose *et al.* 2017). Similarly, describing the relationship between crime and economic conditions, Becker (1968) asserts that crimes then become rationalized for the criminals based on their cost and benefit analysis.

Similarly, this study found that the unlimited lust of youth for material wealth is associated ($P=.000$) with juvenile delinquency. Often children coming from deprived and impoverished families want to avail themselves lifestyle of children of wealthy families. Consequently, they resort to adopting such a lavish lifestyle through inappropriate and unapproved ways. The greed for money and material wealth makes them blind and often fall prey to and joins criminal gangs. Sampson & Lauritsen's (1990) findings highlight that the delinquents were found stealing and robbing as the easiest way of making money and profit.

The table data shows a less significant association ($P=.006$) between juvenile delinquency and children getting involved in delinquent acts to fulfill their basic needs. The possible reason for this low-significant association could be the parental check and their role as sustainer, providing amenities and fulfilling their children's basic needs. First, the study of Rhucharoenpornpanichet *et al.* (2010) found that parental monitoring and closeness can help saving children from sexual and delinquent acts. In addition, we believe that many respondents did not correctly get the question or might have perceived their families and parents fulfill the family's basic needs.

The aforementioned tabulated data shows a highly significant association ($P=.001$) between lack of adequate schooling and recreational facilities and juvenile delinquency. Our findings are in agreement with the results of Haider & Mahsud (2010) and Khan *et al.* (2020). They identified that lack of adequate schooling and dropout plays a significant role in the flourishing of delinquent attitudes among children in Pakistan. Likewise, the findings of Cardoso *et al.* (2013) and Munir & Hussain (2019) support our study results that the negative school integration pushes juveniles to indulge in delinquent behavior. Recreation is an essential aspect of human life as it could engage a person in positive and healthy activities, develop competence, and enhance mental diversion and satisfaction (Sweeten *et al.* 2009). The studies of Brickhead (2012) and Burgess (1952) show that insufficient provision of recreational facilities to children at home is due to the low income of the family,

inadequate housing, slum vicinity, the dominance of gangs, and absence of group association are all composite factors associated with juvenile delinquency. Further, recreational activities such as playing games, theater, and co-curricular activities in educational institutions reduce stress and frustration. Thus, lack of recreational activities may lead to anxiety and negativity in human life, leading to socially disapproved activities.

Similarly, the tabulated data shows that lack of proper care, supervision, and family negligence is significantly associated ($P=.019$) with children's involvement in delinquent acts. This result of our study is similar to the study findings of Shaw (2006). For example, Shaw (2006) identified that in 48% of cases, the main factor of delinquent behavior was family decay, loose control of parents, abandonment, and divorce. In addition, unsupervised and unprotected children are at greater risk and more vulnerable to sexual assault and become easy recruits for the criminal gangs in society (Kausaret *al.* 2012; Shaw, 2006). Therefore, the statements of Shwa are very much factual in the case of our study.

Similarly, the tabulated data in table no. 1 shows a significant association ($P=.003$) between violent community environments, frequent domestic violence, and land disputes, and juvenile delinquency. Pashtun culture embodies and demonstrates belligerent masculinities where families' fierce demeanor in male children uphold the cultural ideal of taking revenge (Saeed, 2012). In a family dispute over land, even children, specifically the males, do not hesitate to use violence against the opponents. Besides, parents also socialize their male children to intact honor of the family, often through violent means (Saeed, 2012; Bilal *et al.*, 2020; Bano *et al.* 2009). Our study findings are in agreement with the results of Coleridge & Qadri (2006). They found a significant association between land disputes and keeping the honor of the family and juvenile delinquency. It can be argued here that the cultural construction of violent behavior in the Pashtun society encourages violence in male children at an early age. Thus upholding the prevailing tribal Pashtun traditions, Pashtun men often consider violence the approved way of solving their issues (Saeed, 2012; Bilal *et al.* 2020). The findings of this study are inline with the results of a study conducted by Ahmed & Mutaza (2016) in Punjab, Pakistan, that children who are exposed to hostile and violent environments likely to have delinquent and belligerent personalities in the future.

The data in the above table depicts that forced child labor is a cause of committing crimes and encourages juvenile delinquency as the association between these two variables is ($P=.006$). Pakistan is among the top 20 worst countries in terms of child labor (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Even though article 11 (3) of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan prohibits the service of children below 14 years in hazardous employment. However, approximately 11 million children in Pakistan are engaged in work activities such as making the soccer ball, carpet weaving, surgical instruments, glass bangles, deep-sea fishing, leather tanneries, domestic work, coal miners, rag-picking, auto-workshops, brick making industry (Fatima *et al.* 2018). In rural settings, children are highly engaged in the agriculture sector and earning (Fatima *et al.* 2018). Children working in the factories and workshops are exposed to exploitation, criminal environment, drug addicts, and child sexual abusers (Khan, *et al.* 2020; UNICEF, 2017). Child laborers are more likely to be out-of-school than children who do not work in Pakistan, i.e., 82% vs. 25% (UNICEF, 2017). Children involved in bonded labor fell prey to the wrong company (Haider & Mahsud, 2010; Hawkins *et al.* 1992). Even they are kept with senior offenders in jails, exposing them to further violence and criminality. Juveniles need to be kept away from the hardcore old criminals to bring down the likelihood of becoming criminals (Eadie & Morley, 2003). However, in Pakistan, as discussed in the literature, juveniles in jails are exposed to sexual violence and abuse even from the hands of jail authorities and law enforcement agencies (Khan, *et al.* 2017; Malik & Shirazi, 2010). Fatima *et al.* (2018) argue that child labor in developing countries, including Pakistan, is due to a poor socioeconomic environment. A series of laws exist protecting children's rights; however, the implementation of such laws is still a long way away (Sajid *et al.* 2020; Fatima *et al.* 2018; Fatima, 2009).

Conclusion

This study examined the opinions of the delinquent children about the socioeconomic conditions perpetuating juvenile delinquency in the Mardan region of Pakistan. The study participants include all the young offenders in jail and bailed out from Mardan prison from 2017 to 2019. This study used quantitative methodology for data elicitation and Chi-square for analysis of tabulated data. The data analysis identified that a range of social and economic factors push children to indulge in delinquent acts. The economic factors that predispose children to come in contact with the justice system and to break the established norms of the society, viewed by the

delinquent children include: Poverty and impoverished status of the family ($p=.001$); the low living standard of the family ($p=.005$); unemployment and the lack of resources to sustain life ($p=.018$); unlimited lust of youth for gaining the material wealth ($p=.000$), adopting illegitimate ways of fulfilling basic needs ($p=.006$); lack of recreational facilities and quality education ($p=.001$), lack of proper care, supervision, protection and abandonment from the family ($p=.019$); violent community environments, belligerent cultural values, frequent domestic violence, and land disputes ($p=.003$); forced and bonded child labor ($p=.006$).

Analysis of the demographic data of the study participants revealed that the majority of them had come from the impoverished pocket of society. Their family's income had considerably low, i.e., less than ten thousand rupees. In the given circumstances of unemployed or daily wage parents, children are forced to quit schooling for work and sustain the family. Inadequate supervision and education force the children of low-income families to adopt illegitimate and delinquent acts for earning. The participants' demographic data analysis findings reflect their views regarding the various socioeconomic causes perpetuating juvenile delinquency. The current study argues that poverty and lower socioeconomic conditions work as an impetus for countless issues and behavioral problems, including delinquency among children. Since there are laws in place aiming to protect juveniles, however, Pakistan has miserably failed in implementing such laws and addressing the issues of youngsters.

Suggestions and Recommendations

This study provides the following suggestions and recommendations for curbing juvenile delinquency in Pakistan.

1. The government should make proper financial arrangements for the rearing and caring of children.
2. The government should provide a monthly stipend for unemployed parents to fulfill their basic needs so that their children may not go astray
3. The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's initiative of starting juvenile protection centers called "ZamungKor" (Our Home), for helping the street children by providing education and skill training, should be extended to all districts of Pakistan.
4. Parental care and monitoring play an essential role in juveniles' protection. Therefore, apart from using electronic and social media, the Government Organization (GOs) in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations

(NGOs), should take serious steps for initiating parental awareness campaigns to spread awareness about parental duties in children's development protection and rehabilitation.

5. The laws about the protection of juveniles, separate prisons, and prosecution procedures should be implemented by the government.

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