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Juvenile Delinquency as A Non-Traditional Security Threat: A Growing Concern for Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT: Juvenile delinquency is a growing issue of public safety in Bangladesh, so far addressed as a criminal justice, or child-welfare issue. Much less is known about its influence on the security of people and their communities in their daily lives. This study is an attempt to highlight the factors which are responsible for Juvenile delinquency and the impact of Juvenile delinquency in wider frame of non-traditional security. The study focuses on a qualitative exploratory approach with two part groups of 100 in-depth interviews with parents, guardians and rehabilitated juvenile offenders and 20 key informant interviews with professional from the juvenile justice, law enforcement, child protection and social welfare sectors in Dhaka and Gazipur. The findings show that factors that contribute to delinquency do not exist independently, but are interrelated, such as the family, economic difficulties, school involvement, peer and gang pressure, and exposure to drugs and negative digital content. The vulnerabilities are a source of fear, restricted mobility, social isolation and a strain on public institutions, which creates a loss of community trust. They refer to the need for a comprehensive prevention, rehabilitation, reintegration and child-sensitive justice response to the study.

KEYWORDS: Juvenile Delinquency; Youth Crime; Non-Traditional Security; Community Safety; Juvenile Justice

1. INTRODUCTION

Some children and young people in many countries get caught up in crime such as stealing, online crime, fighting, gang involvement, drugs and robbery. This is not a good thing for them or for society. The impact of offending of the adolescent can have long-term negativity on education, family relationships, young people's ability to engage in violence and substance abuse and the chances of ongoing criminal-justice system contact, all of which are important aspects of adolescence that are at risk (Assink et al., 2015). It is not only a problem of moral decay that can be traced back to a child or youth's experience of the internet outside the home, but rather a multifaceted problem that has been built up over time from family problems, poverty, education related issues, peer pressure, substance abuse, neighborhood problems, and the recent phenomenon of accelerated urbanization. Not all kids from disadvantaged backgrounds turn out to be delinquents and most kids who don't offend. It is when a number of these combine that risk occurs (Savolainen et al., 2018).

Juvenile crime is a growing problem in the crowded cities of Bangladesh. Others have been caught stealing, extortion, drug dealing, fighting and even committing crimes online which involves some children and young people. Adolescent gangs, or *kishor* gangs, have been a public concern due to the numerous violent incidents and territorial clashes they have been engaged in, their access to drugs and extortion, and their engagement in financial transactions that give adolescents financial benefits, a sense of belonging or friendship (Sarker, 2023). The recruitment of young people into the service of adult criminals and organized criminals is nothing new and can be done because young people are not as visible to the police. This increase in juvenile delinquency should be viewed in the overall socio-economic context of Bangladesh, rapid urbanization, migration to urban areas, overcrowding, inequalities, high rate of unemployment, high number of school dropouts, child labor, and poor provision of recreational and socio psychosocial support from parents makes children vulnerable to criminality and disorder (Al Jamal Mustafa Shindaini, 2021).

Bangladesh has taken a lot of efforts in legal and institutional initiatives for protecting the children associated with conflict. The Children Act 2013 provides for child sensitive justice, diversion or rehabilitation processes and the Act recognizes that children should not be treated the same as adults (Ferdousi, 2015). The child should be protected by juvenile courts and probation services, development centers and social-welfare agencies should support the development of the child, and the child should be held accountable to the law. However, these services often operate independently and, for the most part, respond to problems after they have occurred (Simee, 2020). They are also limited in their efficacy because of a lack of skilled staff, limited institutional capacity, poor coordination between the police, courts, welfare agencies, schools, health services, counseling programs and rehabilitation services (Ferdousi, 2020).

The wider impacts of delinquency bring a new idea of non-traditional security (NTS) into the concept of security, moving beyond military or state threats to the security of people and communities in terms of their safety, dignity and well-being. Delinquency can be a serious concern for people and communities. Crimes can spark fears and insecurities in the community as they can involve violence, threats, harassment and intimidation. This can make it too difficult for people to leave their houses, go out for a walk or attend normal social occasions, and can lead to a general sense of fear. It may also have a negative impact on an individual's well-being. Some might become involved with drugs or alcohol use, resulting in addiction, stress, anxiety or other health issues. Delinquency can also impact on school and work performance. Citing fear of working or moving, young people can be prevented from going to school or holding a job, or they may find they have financial problems (*Non-Traditional Security Threats*, 2025). A highly interdependent relationship exists between the impact of the preexisting insecurity (poverty, family instability, unsafe neighborhoods) on the risk for an adolescent to become an offender and the impact of offending on the insecurity of the offender, victim, families and institutions. It can't be contained by policies and practices which are geared towards policing and punishment.

There are broader issues, but most of the research on child delinquency in Bangladesh has been criminological, sociological, child-welfare or legal in nature, and the security dimensions have been largely ignored. There are 3 interrelated gaps which may be identified. The gap between theory and practice is that the links between juvenile offending and human insecurity and institutional capacity have not been adequately conceptualized in a few studies and the links between juvenile offending and non-traditional security frameworks have not been explored. Second, methodological problem is that many of the already existing researches are based on quantitative survey while in fact, the study should be based on qualitative research technique and narrations of the people that are directly involved in the process of juvenile justice, rehabilitation and the supervision of the family. Third, a policy gap exists because there are currently gaps in the responses to juvenile delinquency. Coordinated responses for justice and welfare are not well established and there is limited coordination between families, schools, communities, law enforcement agencies and court system.

This study fills the gaps in two ways, first analyzing Juvenile delinquencies in Bangladesh in an innovative way and secondly considering it as a non-traditional security issue. It raises the following question: 1. what are the factors that are responsible for juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh? 2. What is the effect of youthful delinquency on community safety? 3. How it can be extended as a non-conventional security problem in the light of Bangladesh? 4. What policy and institutional measures are there in place in Bangladesh for effective action for this? Exploratory research design with qualitative approach is adopted in the study for the answers of these questions through conducting Key Informant Interviews and In-Depth Interviews with the law-enforcement, juvenile-justice and child-protection professionals, parents/guardians and rehabilitated juvenile offenders in Dhaka and Gazipur. The study brings these perspectives together to develop an understanding of the context of child offending, its effects on community and human security, the current institutional responses to offenses by children, and what is required for child offenses to be prevented, rehabilitated and reintegrated. The rest of the article reviews the literature related to juvenile delinquency, criminological theory and non-traditional security, specifies the method for this study, presents the findings, and concludes with a discussion of the findings as compared to the previous scholarship and non-traditional security framework, with a few policy recommendations that may be considered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is behavior and violation of the law by individuals who are not yet legally adults (typically under age 18 as in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) (*UNICEF*, 1989). Juvenile delinquency is thought of as a phenomenon that is ongoing, developing, and in a developmental context, recognizes that childhood and adolescence are times of constant physical, emotional and social growth influenced by family, school, peer and community contexts (Ivlita Gogua, 2020). It has been customary to differentiate some crimes from others, describing those that would be crimes even if they were carried out by a child or youth as index crimes and those that are committed by a child or youth as a result of their age as status crimes (Bartollas & D, 2013).

The Bangladesh Government provided for a separate child justice system under the Children Act 2013 to safeguard the best interests of children in the event of them being accused of an offense. In accordance to this law everyone who is under 18 is considered a child. The Act provides for the creation of Children's Court, probation officers and other mechanisms that can be used to divert children from prosecution and/or detention if appropriate (Ferdousi, 2015).

There has also been a progression over time in the definition of juvenile delinquency. It is no longer viewed as a kid who's broken the law. Rather it is seen as the outcome of a series of interrelated factors in the lives of children such as personal factors, family, school, peer groups and community. In this study, it examines how the presence of family issues, poverty, dropping out of school, peer pressure, drug abuse, and exposure to negative Web content can combine in a way that pushes youth toward delinquent acts (Shader, 2025).

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Juvenile Delinquency

The four theories are significant to this study because they help answer the question of why these young people might engage in delinquent behavior and the impact that delinquent behavior might have on the community. The literature backs the social control theory of Hirschi (1969) that the main reason for not becoming delinquents is the attachment to conventional society, which suggests that the risk of delinquency increases if a youth is unable to form strong bonds with conventional society.

Merton's (1938) strain theory was further elaborated by Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory that posits delinquency can occur when people are unable to access culturally defined goals, especially economic opportunity, through the legitimate pathway, but can access them illegitimately through theft or drug distribution, a perspective relevant to explaining the connection between poverty and unemployment to offending.

According to Sutherland's (1939) Differential Association Theory, delinquency or criminal behavior can be learned through socialization process with others. Friends or gang members may engage in illegal activities and influence them to think that that's "normal.

Cohen and Felson's (1979) Routine Activity Theory states that youth could engage in misbehaviors when parents and other adults are not present to serve as a protective influence. For instance, if you have to spend time outside or in the internet without an adult's supervision, you may have a higher risk for doing bad things.

2.3 Non-Traditional Security

Non-traditional security (NTS) arose from an attempt to expand the security agenda from the state centric, militaristic approach that prevailed in the Cold War era in security studies. The Copenhagen School proposed to view security as a set of processes of securitization which take place in four domains: political, economic, societal, environmental and military, and in which the referent objects are not just the state, but communities and individuals (Caballero-Anthony, 2016).

The idea of human security was also introduced in a concurrent way, with the idea of freedom from want and freedom from fear, by the UNDP's Human Development Report (1994), which incorporated the concepts of economic, health, personal, community and political security. Community security: informal relationships of trust within communities (Program, 1994); social stability: the functioning of public institutions (government, police and welfare agencies) and citizens' trust in them (Jarić, 2024); public safety: the ability of the state and public institutions to keep people safe from crime and violence. These theories explain why youth engage in delinquent acts and how they may impact the safety and security of society.

2.4 Juvenile Delinquency as a Non-Traditional Security Threat

The scholarship has been broadened to youth-related violence, organized crime and gangs, especially in the context of urban insecurity in the Global South, in the name of NTS. Research on youth gangs in Latin America and West Africa shows that youth's involvement in criminal networks can have a governance and human security impact on the legitimacy of the state, the sense of community solidarity, and the efforts of law enforcement, rather than a criminal one (Rodgers, 1999). The notions of human-security and community-security form the basis of the article on youth recruitment by armed and criminal groups, to understand why adolescent are the ones who are most vulnerable to exploitation by armed and criminal groups, in the sense that they are the most marginalized in the economic and social field. Numerous studies have focused on the problem of juvenile delinquency, with only a few studies examining delinquency as a Non-Traditional Security (NTS) issue. Most of the studies have centered on the law, youth behaviors and the well-being of youth. They tend to focus less on the impact that youth delinquency can have on family, community and societal safety and security (Rahman & Arefin, 2025).

2.5 Juvenile Delinquency in Bangladesh, and the Research Gap

Juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh has been growing while in the past two decades there have been increasing number of studies on Juvenile delinquency. The study suggested that poverty is a determinant factor in delinquency among juveniles as well as their family environment, living in urban areas and their performance at school, since they interact with each other to make some of them more prone to delinquency, specifically in the impoverished urban areas (Riya Das & Md Sajidul Huq, 2025).

It can also be observed from the study of *kishor* gangs that some of the gangs are involving young people in a number of issues like fight, violence and theft of money. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh introduced the Child Act 2013, and established Juvenile Development Centers, one of which is going to be established in Tongi, Gazipur to serve children that falls in conflict with the law. However, there are still challenges for instance: lack of facilities, lack of cooperation among stakeholders and lack of support to enable these children to lead a stable life (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2016).

The studies and literature relevant to a juvenile delinquency problem are largely carried out in the form of surveys and government records and documents. There are only a few studies that focus directly with the parents, policemen, social workers, and youth engaged with delinquent activities. Moreover, there is a dearth of literature that addresses concerns of protection of families and communities with juvenile delinquents.

This study aims to fill this gap. It focuses on a first-hand perspective of people's real experiences. It also discusses the issue of youth delinquency as a public safety and security concern, and suggests recommendations on steps that should be taken to prevent youth delinquency and to help youth better.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach and Design

This research is qualitative, exploratory and attempts to explore the problem of juvenile delinquency as an unconventional security threat in Bangladesh. Lack of scholarly research about youth delinquency from a security point of view and the fact that the experiences, perceptions and interpretations of the participants could not be fully gathered without using this method, make it justified to use this method in the study. The exploratory design allowed for the study of causality and consequences of juvenile delinquency and the design of policy and institutional measures to tackle delinquency.

3.2 Study Area and Population

The study was carried out in the slums of Korail, Karwan Bazar, Kamrangirchar in Dhaka, Mohammadpur, Mirpur and Pallabi Police stations of Dhaka Metropolitan and Juvenile Development Center (JDC), Tongi, Gazipur. The sites were chosen due to the complementary perspectives of the community, law-enforcement and rehabilitation. The study subjects were people who had professional knowledge or firsthand experience of the delinquency of youth. The KII was done with the involvement of the police, juvenile-justice practitioners, legal experts, psychologists, child-rights specialists and social workers and representatives from NGOs, whereas IDI was conducted with parents or guardians of juveniles from targeted communities, youth with rehabilitated juvenile offenders from Tongi juvenile center.

3.3 Data Collection Approach

Qualitative data collection techniques followed a non-probability approach. Professionals with involvement in juvenile justice and child protection and involved in the KIIs were selected by purposive sampling and participants in the IDIs were also purposively selected, in a limited number of cases by snowball sampling. IDIs and KIIs were carried out until data saturation (100 IDIs and 20 KIIs) to ensure that there was sufficient data for analysis. Semi-structured, audio-recorded, face-to-face interviews conducted with separate interview instruments for KIIs and IDIs supplemented with field notes were used to collect primary data.

3.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data manually. All transcripts of the interviews were closely examined for key points in the four research questions. Dialogues were grouped together in themes, sub-themes and ideas were purposely repeated were summarized into broadly derived themes.

The study has clearly described the research context, participants and processes to ensure the findings are valid and reliable. The analysis process and important decisions were documented for the sake of reliability and transparency in the study. The analysis was done largely on the basis of the perceptions and experiences of the participants to minimize researcher bias.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented based on the four research questions and discussed with relevant literature on criminology and non-traditional security. The themes that emerged from the IDI and KII data were (1) factors that contribute to youth delinquency, (2) reaction of youth, families and communities to youth delinquency, (3) relationship of youth delinquency with non-traditional security, (4) policies and institutional measures to counter youth delinquency.

The findings indicate that juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh cannot be attributed to a single factor. Association of offending with dysfunctional family environments, economic insecurity, and school disengagement, delinquent peer and gang influence, substance misuse, and unsupervised access to harmful digital environments were linked to offending. The vulnerabilities were at individual, family, educational, community and institutional levels and often compounded. The results consequently argue for an ecological and cumulative-risk interpretation of juvenile delinquency, as opposed to a single linear or single cause interpretation.

4.1 Interconnected Factors Associated with Juvenile Delinquency

Six main factors related to juvenile delinquency were identified based upon the thematic analysis. While they were analytically separable, they were very intertwined. Delinquent behavior was most commonly reported to be a result of when more than one vulnerability occurred in a young person's life.

4.1.1 Family Dysfunction and Inadequate Parental Supervision

Juvenile delinquency was often linked to family conflict, marital instability, lacking in emotional support, prolonged separation from parents, and not being supervised by parents. They felt that youth who were suffering from these situations were more likely to be affected by delinquent peer groups, drug and alcohol abuse, gang involvement and criminal activity as a result of an absence of consistent emotional support, monitoring, and guidance at home.

In many instances, adolescents were reported to have reacted to conflict or emotional neglect in their homes by 'hanging out' outside the home and seeking recognition and belonging and protection from peer groups. One parent from Korail said that her son got into harmful activities due to “bad company”, conflict between parents and the need for both the parents to be working outside the home (IDI1). Another key informant noted that parents' lack of knowledge on their children's location might put adolescents at risk of engaging in delinquent peer groups, substance abuse, gang involvement, and other criminal behaviors (KII2).

The results are in line with Hirschi's (1969) social control theory which proposes that weak attachment, commitment, involvement and belief will lessen an adolescent's bond with conventional society and make them more susceptible to delinquency. Weak family attachment and lack of supervision were found to have a negative impact on informal social control in this study. But economic insecurity, neighborhood disorder, school disengagement and adolescents' reliance on peer-based identities and support were also factors that exacerbated family dysfunction.

4.1.2 Economic Strain and Household Insecurity

As background vulnerabilities, participants from the study sites in Karwan Bazar and other study sites mentioned a lack of economic resources and unstable income in households. Some families faced financial strain, which impacted the provision of adequate housing, food, health care, education and supervision. Economic difficulties were a factor in school dropouts, drug distribution and theft, among other behaviors, in several narratives.

A guardian said her son started spending more time outside the home and, eventually, got involved in stealing due to a need to provide for himself and his family, but a lack of job opportunities (IDI26). This can be explained by General strain theory of Agnew (1992). Failing to attain socially valued goals in legitimate means may lead adolescents to attempting to do so through illegitimate means to respond to the frustration and deprivation of not being able to do so (Agnew, 1992).

However, the participants spoke about that poverty being no excuse for the delinquency of youth. Many children in crumbling families aren't caught up in the criminal mentality that occurs.Many children are brought up by poor parents who are incapable of teaching them the cramming side. Situations are made worse when poverty is coupled by the presence of intra-family conflict, existing inadequate surveillance from family, school, non-attendance, peer influence, unsafe neighborhood, and involvement with criminal gangs. This shows that poverty is one area of as yet unresolved problem that would further compound the risk factors for delinquent behaviors in youth.

4.1.3 School Disengagement and Educational Exclusion

Participants shared experiences on how school drop-offs, absenteeism and lack of attention to school attendance and temptations related to education system impact one of the most potent ways for attention, structure and protection of children. Educational disengagement issues such as financial constraints of the family, children's performance at school, and difficulties in the family, which resulted in the children's skipping school, often came up in the discussions.

Adolescents who have withdrawn from school were reported to spend more time in low quality supervised public spaces (such as street and markets). Participants thought this led to exposure to delinquent peers and less chance to engage in organized activities, positive social activities, and develop skills for future jobs. School exclusion thus is a reflection of disadvantage and a potential aggravator of the social and economic disadvantage of adolescents in the future.

The results also suggest an interaction between educational disengagement and poverty and a lack of family supervision. Young people with lack of adequate skills and qualifications are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing the labor market. In such situations, other economic opportunities may be more attractive, and are available in a gang or drug-distribution network. The school thus not only serves its educational mission, but also plays a key role as a socialization and supervisory process, as a process of early identification and as a crime preventative process.

4.1.4 Peer Influence and Gang Involvement

The most common factors reported to be associated with juvenile offending were peer influence and gang involvement. The participants stated that adolescents who were not attached to their family and school were seeking friendship, recognition, protection, identity and social status from the local peer circles, which are known as *kisho*r gangs.

It was generally believed that people became involved in gangs as part of a long-term process. They were initially introduced to the group via friendship groups and small-scale crimes which involved petty theft, to pressure them into committing extortion, drug distribution, violent confrontation, etc. and other serious crimes. One participant described how youth were recruited into gangs which made them strong and influential in the local community, and then urged to do more serious crime (IDI76). This was also echoed by Police respondents, who indicated that recruitment by invitation from friends and involvement in relatively mild crimes which then led to violence, extortion and drug-related activities (KII8) was observed.

The pattern is much like Sutherland's (1939) differential association theory which postulates that prolonged association with others is responsible for the learning of criminal behavior (Vinney, 2024). In delinquent groups, the adolescent can learn techniques of delinquency as well as attitudes, justifications, group affiliations and concepts that are consistent with lawbreaking behavior. Being part of a group may also diminish the individual responsibility and if someone resists it may be ridiculed, ostracized, intimidated or retaliated against. Peer influence, then, is a means of socialization and a pressure to conform to and sustain deviant behavior.

4.1.5 Substance Misuse as Both a Driver and Consequence of Offending

The use of drugs and alcohol was cited as a cause of and a consequence of juvenile delinquency. Drug use was linked to emotional distress, curiosity, peer pressure and gang involvement for the participants. This sometimes led to dependency which added to the financial pressures and reinforced the links between adolescents and delinquent groups and criminal networks.

An increased dependency on drugs necessitated greater amounts of money, leading to increased opportunity for more theft, extortion, drug distribution and other acquisitive crimes. Meanwhile, involvement in delinquent groups provided opportunities for obtaining illegal drugs, and normalized their use. This was a two-way relationship between substance misuse and offending.

The impact of substance misuse and offending was wider than the impacts on the individual adolescent. The participants shared their experiences of economic, social, and emotional impacts on families, and greater visibility and normalization of drug use in affected communities. Local drug networks may also give adolescents money, protection, recognition and social status and thus make criminal activity seem beneficial and help perpetuate vulnerability in younger cohorts.

4.1.6 Unregulated Internet and Social-Media Exposure

The issue of unsupervised Internet and social media exposure became a relatively new topic of concern. Adolescents' exposure to cyber bullying, violent content, gang-related imagery, online threats, and criminal networks were reported by the participants. Parents' limited digital literacy was also found to be a barrier to the recognition, monitoring and effective response to online risks.

Peer conflict also appeared to be in the digital realm as well, with social media. Online conflicts can easily escalate to actual confrontations, while online gang-related content can be employed to recruit, improve the reputation of the gang, threaten and mobilize supporters.

The increase in opportunities for offending when motivated offenders, suitable targets, and capable guardianship overlap, as described by routine activity theory (1979), is also a possible explanation for these findings (Cohen & Felson, 1979). In these modern urban contexts, this synergy could be seen not just on streets or in public areas but also via digital platforms. Lack of parental supervision, poor digital literacy and poor supervision outside the home may therefore limit guardianship both within and outside of the home.

The six factors outlined indicate that juvenile delinquency is an effect of cumulative disadvantage. There was no one determinant that was believed to account for offending. Instead, the outcomes of family instability and poverty, of being excluded from education, of being in association with peers, of misusing drugs and alcohol, and of being exposed to digital content combined to increase the vulnerability of adolescents and to decrease their access to protective relationships and to legitimate opportunities.

4.2 Effects of Juvenile Delinquency on an Individual, Family & Community

The results showed that the impacts of juvenile delinquency went beyond the immediate victims and offenders. The participants found that the excessive rate of youth delinquency caused fear, limited social movement, undermined trust in the community, undermined education, increased family problems, and decreased communities' ability to keep up informal social control.

4.2.1 Fear, Insecurity, and the Restriction of Public Space

The presence and activity of juvenile groups was found to be responsible for the fear experienced by the residents of the study area, even among the ones who were not directly victimized. Some residents are said to have not frequented certain streets, markets or gathering spots in Karwan Bazar after dark. Parents were also hesitant to let children go away without them as they feared children being bullied, assaulted, intimidated or retaliated against by juvenile gangs.

One parent reported that children were not allowed to go outside alone as they could be harmed by gang members if they returned (IDI31). A key informant also indicated that residents were not using some of the roads as they feared that the groups would return and be violent, particularly at night (KII3).

The accounts show that there are other factors to juvenile delinquency than the amount of juvenile delinquent crime activity. Fear of victimisation can impact on how people behave in everyday life, their ability to move about, their use of the community and participation in community and public activities, even in the absence of an actual offense. Insecurity, therefore, is socially produced, in the experience of violence and in a sense of insecurity among the population.

A lack of reporting may also be due to fear. Victimization may not be reported to formal institutions if the residents think that offenders are likely to retaliate or they cannot get protection from the formal institutions. Institutional visibility can become even smaller due to this under-reporting, and the impunity of local groups may be reinforced.

4.2.2 Gang Violence, Drug Markets, and Public-Safety Risks

Gang-related violence was cited as a significant problem in the public-safety arena. The territorial issues, drug trade, social media fighting, and personal arguments participants mentioned could all easily get out of hand, spiraling into violence. These

confrontations involved not only rival groups, but also the shop owners, pedestrians, families and others on the sidelines. During these incidents, markets could be disrupted, property could be damaged, and residents could be injured, who are not involved.

Social-media platforms increasingly helped in the threats, public humiliation, spread of violent content and the mobilization of supporters. Digital communication thus did not exist outside of live violence but rather speeded up and intensified a set of ongoing conflicts.

Further harm of the juvenile offenders in connection with drugs involved with financial losses, family conflict, psychological distress and the visibility of drugs. In drug networks, younger kids who look upon older adolescents are gaining income, protection and status, and this could be seen by them as a legitimate or desirable means of gaining recognition. This process contributes to the diffusion and normalization of deviant subcultures amongst the vulnerable groups.

4.2.3 Stigma, Exclusion, and the Reproduction of Delinquency

A significant long-term impact was on the stigma and exclusion children experienced when they became involved in the justice system. Schools, employers and community members were often unwilling to accept the adolescent upon release from rehabilitation or correctional institutions, said the participants.

One key informant stated that many in the community still considered children after institutional rehabilitation programs as offenders, even after they finished these rehabilitation programs (KII19). Labeling continued to limit the opportunities for youth to attend school, be employed, to reconnect with their families and build prosocial identities. For some, exclusion was a catalyst to reconnect with the same peers and criminal networks that they had previously belonged to and felt protected by.

The results thus indicate that the insecurity that is the goal of community responses can itself be generated or reproduced. Residents might feel safe in the short term from protective avoidance, public shaming and social exclusion, but in the long term it has a negative effect on reintegration and can actually make them more likely to commit another offense. A non-traditional security view would regard the breakdown of social relations and lack of trust as a security issue.

4.3 Juvenile Delinquency as a Non-Traditional Security Threat

Participants repeatedly identified juvenile delinquency as having a multi-dimensional aspect in terms of individual, family, and community, institutional and developmental level. This understanding fits into the human-security paradigm that broadens the definition of security from the defense of the state and the preservation of territorial integrity to protection from threats to everyday life security, dignity, health, education, livelihood and personal safety (*Non-Traditional Security Threats*, 2025).

4.3.1 Implications for Human Security

Juvenile delinquency had a complex impact on multiple aspects of human security. Violence, intimidation, assault and coercion were a threat to personal security. The effects on health security were caused by substance dependence, physical injuries, psychological trauma, and delayed and inadequate health care. Children's education suffered when they left school, were expelled from school or did not return to school after involvement with the justice system. The emphasis on economic security was made more precarious because of limited employment opportunities, financial losses at the household level, and the impacts of stigma over time.

A participant who is now rehabilitated explained the cumulative effect this had, with their involvement in offending leading to dropping out of school, arrest, social labeling and then struggling to continue their education or to live their life normally (IDI85). It is important to note that this account depicts the interdependency of insecurity and delinquency. Insecurities of children may raise their likelihood of being delinquent and the delinquency may raise their chances of being exposed to educational, economic, health or social insecurity.

The results thus call into question the exclusive policing and punishment perspective on juvenile delinquency. Human-security approach to children should include: Factors that may lead to child's involvement in crime/violence prior to justice system; Institutional and social factors after entering justice system.

4.3.2 Community Security and Social Cohesion

Participants identified that youth delinquency undermined community social control and collective efficacy of the affected communities. Lack of confidence in the ability of the local community to intervene, report crime, use public space and work with neighbors and institutions was found to be lower where gangs and drug networks were felt to have influence in the area. Social fragmentation was caused by less involvement in public life, the fear of retaliation and the distrust of formal institutions. This reduced communities' ability to detect vulnerable adolescents, assist families and to stop the cycle of violence.

4.3.3 Institutional Capacity and Governance

Other significant strains on the police, courts, rehabilitation institutions, schools and social-welfare systems were due to juvenile delinquency. Shortage of trained counselors, vocational instructors, social workers and case managers were cited by participants. They also noted poor information sharing and poor coordination among police, courts, educational institutions, rehabilitation and welfare institutions (KII16).

The continuity of prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration services was interrupted by these institutional gaps. Children may be denied support during the transition from an arrest, to court, to placement in a facility, to being released, to coming back to school, to their first job. As far as non-traditional security is concerned, this means that it is a weak example of security governance as the lack of coordination between the responsible institutions limits their ability to effectively secure children and communities (Caballero-Anthony, 2016).

In a military-security sense juvenile delinquency is not a threat to the territorial integrity of Bangladesh. When it is pervasive and chronic, it undermines citizens' trust in community governance, strains law-enforcement and justice systems, and diminishes citizens' trust in the state's capacity to deliver safety and justice. These impacts can over time lead to wider issues of governance, social stability and institutional legitimacy.

4.3.4 Sustainable-Development Implications

Implications of juvenile delinquency on education, employability, health, social inclusion and family welfare have direct implications for sustainable development. The absence of access to education and decent job opportunities restricts youth's ability to engage with economic and social development, and affects their long-term human-capital development.

In Bangladesh, the importance of the issue is even more prominent given that poverty alleviation, inclusive development, urban governance and investment in the country's youth are key priorities. The impact of leaving vulnerable youth behind in education, work, and society is not only criminality, but it also has implications for poverty, social cohesion, and productive capacity of society on the intergenerational level.

4.4 Policy and Institutional Measures

All participants agreed that retributive policies were not sufficient to tackle the family, school, socioeconomic, psychological and institutional contexts of youth offending. The results suggest transitioning from a mainly reactive and punishment-oriented approach to a coordinated, proactive, rehabilitative, and developmentally appropriate approach.

4.4.1 Family- and School-Based Prevention

The family level, the participants suggested parenting education, family counseling, financial and social support for vulnerable families and programs to enhance communication and supervision. These measures are especially relevant in families where the parents work long hours and do not have a lot of time available for monitoring their children.

One parent said that financially disadvantaged families needed financial support and counseling as the work commitments often prevented parents from being able to stay at home (IDI10). Family economics and lack of supervision were seen by the participants as factors contributing to children being more vulnerable to spending long hours outside the home and associating with delinquent peer groups.

Participants at the school level recommended systematic tracing, proactive intervention to reduce absenteeism, school-based counseling, drug-awareness programs, innovative methods of engaging families, vocational guidance, and identifying pupils who may be at permanent risk of leaving school. A child protection worker highlighted the importance of tackling the issue of absenteeism, as this could lead to permanent drop out (KII4).

The result is that schools are identified as key prevention venues. The schools can detect behavioral and attendance changes, offer psychosocial support to the children, inform families and link vulnerable children with welfare services. To achieve effective prevention, school, social-service agencies, community organizations and local authorities need to work together with families.

4.4.2 Rehabilitation and Sustainable Reintegration

The importance of rehabilitation as a process, not just a service to be delivered at the end of institutional placement was stressed. Psychological counseling, substance-use disorder treatment, ongoing education, vocational training, family involvement and a planned post-release support are needed for effective rehabilitation.

Families need to be engaged prior to, during and after a child's rehabilitation placement. Progress in institutions can easily be set back by changes in family or community setting from which children return. Some participants indicated that, if adolescents were returned to their previous environments, such as to their families or communities where their behaviors would be accepted as normal, they might resume their old behaviors (IDI92).

Reintegration programs should not be limited to discharge from institutions. Supportive counseling or mentoring, school re-entry support, employment placement, family mediation and community monitoring are essential for maintaining behavioral change. Public stigma should also be addressed in reintegration, as those adolescents who are not given the right role in society may re-enter the gangs and criminal networks for identity, living and acceptance.

4.4.3 Juvenile-Justice Reform and Coordinated Case Management

The recommendations participants made for reforming the juvenile-justice system to be more children sensitive and effective were varied. These encompassed targeted training for police and justice officials, diversion of first-time and minor offenses, restorative-justice measures, prompt case closure and confidential information-sharing protocols, as well as tailored plans for individual interventions.

The development of a coordinated system of case management was considered to be a special priority. The introduction of a case manager may help minimize fragmentation and continuity within the chain of events, from police to court to rehabilitation and education to welfare support to post-release reintegration. Individual intervention plans would allow the institutions to meet the needs and risks of each child instead of a blanket punishment.

For minor and/or first offense crimes, diversion and restorative justice might be particularly suited, as it minimizes the need to involve a formal criminal-justice system, fosters accountability, involves victims, engages family and/or community, and restores the community. To ensure the rights and welfare of the child, however, such systems must be staffed by trained individuals, have established procedures and be monitored effectively.

4.4.4 Community Policing and Trust-Based Prevention

Community policing was considered to be a tool for the early identification, building of trust and collaborative problem solving. Participants suggested that community awareness programs be held regularly, that there be confidential avenues for young people and residents to make reports without fear of repercussions and that the police be more involved in school and community-based juvenile-prevention committees, which include members from schools, families, local leaders and non-governmental organizations.

The results corroborate the need to have a preventive and not only enforcement-based community policing model. Police engagement should be geared towards identifying emerging risks; referring vulnerable teenagers to the right services; handling local conflicts and building on the cooperation between citizens and institutions.

Public labeling and humiliation were strongly condemned by participants. Attention to adolescent offenses should be given in a manner that will avoid unnecessary stigma as this could exacerbate social exclusion and the likelihood of re-offenses. Community-policing practices should thus respect the confidentiality of children, should not be discriminatory in their surveillance of children at risk, and should not be early indications of criminalizing children.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Improve family-based prevention programs by offering parenting education, family counseling, psychosocial support, and targeted financial assistance to vulnerable households to enhance parental supervision and child well-being.
2. Minimize dropping out from the school and school exclusion through early warning systems, school counseling services, attendance monitoring, scholarship programs, provision of vocational education and enhanced linkage of schools and social welfare agencies.
3. Increase community youth development programs and create safe recreation facilities, sports programs, mentoring, life skills training and leadership development programs that offer a positive alternative to getting involved in gangs.
4. Enhance substance abuse prevention and mental health services by increasing awareness in schools and the community, providing easy access to counseling, addiction treatment and psychological support for at-risk adolescents.
5. Advocate for digital safety and responsible Internet use by enhancing digital literacy for parents, teachers, and adolescents, and by increasing the quality of Internet safety education and engagement in responsible social media.
6. Improve rehabilitation and reintegration programs to provide consistent (long-term) psychological counseling, education, vocational training, family involvement, employment assistance and rehabilitation program post-release follow-up for rehabilitated juveniles.
7. Improve juvenile justice, through increased diversion programs, restorative justice, and specialist training for police and judicial staff and child-sensitive case management practices, in line with the Children Act 2013.
8. Enhance inter-agencies working together and formal cooperation between police, courts, schools, social welfare agencies, rehabilitation centers, local government institutions and civil society organizations through integrated referral and case-management systems.
9. Encourage trust-based community policing, with a focus on early identification of vulnerable children, confidentiality in reporting, community engagement and avoiding unnecessary labeling and discrimination.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that juvenile delinquency is not only a criminal justice issue, it is multi-dimensional, non-traditional security issue that has a far-reaching human security, community security and institutional governance and sustainable development implications. The results reveal that the chronic exposure of a child to family dysfunction, school drop-out, peer and gang pressure, drug and alcohol abuse and uncontrolled digital content have an impact on juvenile offending. These factors combine and contribute to making adolescents more vulnerable to crime.

The study also shows the impact of youth delinquencies is not limited to the offender and the victim, but can also spill over to the wider community. These all add to a less resilient and effective community infrastructure and services including the use of public space, disruption of education, family stress, strain on law enforcement, rehabilitation centers, the courts, schools, and welfare

institutions. The results support the concept that juvenile delinquency may be viewed as a part of a new definition of security where threats to everyday security, social cohesion and human development are considered equivalent to traditional security threats.

Some of the important gaps in the current policy response are also noted in qualitative data. There is legal provision (The Children Act 2013) and juvenile justice institutions in Bangladesh but challenges are being faced in their implementation due to limited institutional capacity, lack of coordination between institutions, lack of rehabilitation support and poor reintegration support. Therefore, juvenile crime prevention alone is not enough to address social and structural issues that contribute to juvenile crime.

Ethical Consideration and Consent to Participate

Ethical principles have been adhered throughout the study according to the Bangladesh Children Act (2013). An informed consent was obtained prior to every interview, and every one of the classes was voluntary. The participants were made aware about the objectives of the study, confidentiality, they can exclude themselves from any question, and they can terminate the interview at any time. Individual names were not used and a code system was used instead for personal information. Interviews were held in safe, private environments, guaranteeing the protection and privacy of participants, safeguarding their gender needs.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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