

Determinants of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan: Family, Peers, and Law

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Abstract

The occurrence of juvenile delinquency is a complicated socio-legal phenomenon that interrelates with the concepts of family, peer, and institutional influences. This study will discuss the partnership of family structure, peer influence, and the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 to determine the causes of juvenile delinquency in District Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. Data was collected on 236 participants, comprising police officers, attorneys, psychologists, sociologists, and community members, through a quantitative cross-sectional survey approach. SPSS was used to perform descriptive statistical analysis to determine patterns in the perceptions and behavioral determinants. Results demonstrate that family environment is a critical determinant of juvenile behavior, strong parental communication and supervision are protective factors, and family disruption and domestic violence are factors that predispose juvenile behavior to delinquency. The peer influence was found to be important yet conditional, with most of the conditional aspects on family bonding and supervision. The research also shows that there is little awareness and ambivalent views of how well the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 works; this finding can undermine the deterrent and rehabilitative effect of the Act. The respondents expressed their great favor for rehabilitative and family-based interventions over punitive measures. The research finding concludes that juvenile delinquency is mainly influenced by micro-level social structure, especially families, and recommends interconnected policy responses that focus on family strengthening, legal awareness, and rehabilitation under the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency; Family Structure; Peer Influence; Juvenile Justice System Act 2018; Rehabilitation; Social Control Theory.

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency can be defined as the engagement of young people in acts that do not comply with statutes and standards of society (Merlo, Benekos, & Champion, 2018). Juveniles are often referred to as having ages between 10 and 18 and being involved in illegal activities. These offenses are legally classified as

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delinquent acts, not as crimes, as an indication of the legal and developmental uniqueness of minors in the justice system. Delinquency is a wide category that entails a wide range of forms of behavior that cannot be described as either lawful or acceptable within society. It comprises offences like petty crimes and school-related crimes, as well as serious crimes like homicide and robbery with a weapon. Juvenile delinquency can be conceptualized as antisocial behavior that not only breaches legal structures but also social outlooks and expectations. To comprehend this phenomenon, it is important to situate it in a larger socio-cultural framework in which structural and environmental factors play a significant role with regard to youth behavior. The juvenile delinquency tendency has demonstrated an alarming upward trend with blistering rates of social transformation and structural inequalities underlying it in Pakistan. Existing vulnerabilities of the youth have been influenced by increasing urbanization, economic disparities, unemployment, and the destabilization of such traditional family systems. The discontinuation of the extended nuclear family structure, less parental supervision, and an augmented exposure to deviant peer groups have further bedeviled delinquent tendencies. Moreover, the emergence of new types of delinquency by the proliferation of digital technologies, such as cyber-related delinquency, and conflicts of online groups. Poverty, illiteracy, land and resource conflict, honor-related conflicts (ghairat), old enmity, and substance abuse are some of the traditional determinants of juvenile delinquency that have continued to play a major role in juvenile delinquency in Pakistan. Meanwhile, new socio-political dynamics such as exposure to extents of extremism and sectarian interests in some situations added complexity to youth offending patterns (Murad, Zawar, & Rehman, 2024). All of these points to the fact that juvenile delinquency is not just a simple behavior issue in society, but rather an indicator of larger disorganization and structural strains in society.

The study takes a socio-ecological approach to the question of the determinants of juvenile delinquency. Factors like family structure, peer group influence, community ecological status, social change, and socioeconomic inequality are critical in the development of delinquent tendencies in juveniles (Shoemaker, 2017). These factors play dynamically and affect the pattern of behavior and increase the chances of youth engaging in criminal activities. Juvenile delinquency has become a burning social problem worldwide that is not limited by any geographical or economic borders. These increasing youth crime rates have drawn the attention of policymakers, researchers, and international bodies like the United Nations, which have highlighted the intricacy of such a solution (United Nations, 2003). This crossroads is a complex issue that should be addressed with a set of elaborate, research-driven policy solutions.

Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency in Pakistan is a complex and multifactorial social issue that can be analyzed in terms of social, economic, psychological, and legal

determinants. These factors are poverty, the breakdown of families, peer pressure, lack of opportunities to obtain education, mental health and systemic shortcomings in the implementation of legal provisions, particularly the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018. Although such legal provisions may exist, there is an increasing trend in juvenile delinquencies which questions whether these provisions are working and being effective in their application. The core issue that this research will address is the continued increase in juvenile delinquency in Pakistan as well as a lack of proper conceptualization of the drivers of such delinquency and the underlying structures driving its attitudes. Existing literature highlights the influence of socioeconomic inequality, rapid urbanization, and weakening social institutions in exacerbating youth crime (Abbas, Chughtai, & Hussain, 2022). Pakistani background, there is limited research, which is empirical research within the Pakistani context, and this is mainly because of the incompatibility in the availability of reliable and comprehensive data on crimes in the Pakistani context. This research seeks to define the underlying factors of juvenile delinquency, discuss the lived experiences of juvenile offenders, and the explanations of their interactions with the institutions of society and the criminal justice system in Pakistan. In addition, it aims at informing the effective preventive strategies to curb the youth involvement in criminal activities and informing policy interventions.

Recent Trends & Statistics of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan (2020–2025)

Empirical studies show that recently, juvenile delinquency in Pakistan has become a complex and emerging issue, yet there are still fragile nationwide statistics. It is estimated that there are around 1,500 to 2,000 juvenile offenders incarcerated in Pakistan prisons, and that nearly 90 percent of the juvenile offenders pursuing prison sentences were those considered as under-trial prisoners (Khan, 2023). Provincial data further illustrates the scale of the issue. In 2022 alone, 645 juvenile offenders were reported in custody in Punjab alone, of whom 81% await their trials and only 19% are convicted, which highlights the systemic procedural delays (Qindeel, n.d.). On the same note, juvenile incarceration is widespread throughout the country in 2021/2022; in Punjab, 540 juveniles were detained; in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 510 were incarcerated; in Sindh, 260 juveniles were imprisoned; and in Balochistan, 55 juveniles were in custody (SPARC, 2022).

More recent estimates (2024) show that approximately 1,475 juveniles were in detention in the country, with a shockingly high gender imbalance, 99% male, highlighting the gendered nature of juvenile offending in Pakistan (Shah, 2024). In Sindh alone, in a single province, there was official data of about 385 underage offenders in prisons in 2023, a significant percentage of whom are fewer than 18 years old, indicating that there are still institutional problems with child protection and rehabilitation (Tahir, 2024). Other than statistics of incarceration, other indicators of child vulnerability further give meaning to the increase in the rate of juvenile delinquency. It has been reported that Pakistan has more than 26 million out-of-school

children, and this has been strongly linked to the increased risk of delinquent behavior and social marginalization (Mirza, 2025). Moreover, child protection statistics provide a cause to panic as over 2,954 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in 2024, with thousands of unreported child sexual abuse incidents annually, which illustrate the structural vulnerabilities that often precede juvenile offending (Aslam, 2024).

Recent research indicates that 66.9 percent of juvenile offenders belong to the 16-18 age group, with a majority of them coming out of low-income, low-education, and conflict-prone family backgrounds, which strengthens the strong correlation between socioeconomic deprivation and delinquent behavior (Panezai, Abro & Panezai, 2025). All these statistics combined make the point that not only is juvenile delinquency in Pakistan, but it is also broadly established along structural lines of inequality, institutional lines of inefficiency, and socio-economic lines of vulnerability.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of family structure, peer group dynamics, and individual behavioral patterns on the increasing trends of juvenile delinquency.
2. To analyze the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018, with a specific focus on its provisions for punishment and its possible association with the rising trend of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan.

Review of the Literature

Juvenile delinquency is well known as a complex and dynamic social phenomenon that involves actions that are criminal under legal and social statutes and include, but are not limited to, both minor and grave offenses such as violence and assault. It mainly concerns teenagers, and the empirical findings indicate that it is more prevalent among men, in contrast to women (Moffitt, 1993; Siegel & Welsh, 2014). Juvenile delinquency is conceptualized in the context of the larger context of deviance and social organization. According to the anomie perspective, which was originally postulated by Merton (1938), the deviation arises when an individual fails to accomplish socially approved goals by legitimate means, forcing him to adapt by deviating. Likewise, modern criminology does not see juvenile offending as just a symptom of individual pathology but as an explanation of an individual response to structural strain and social disorganization (Agnew, 1992).

Global Perspective and Emerging Trends

Juvenile delinquency has emerged as one of the major concerns all over the world since it cuts across both developed and developing societies. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reports show that the trends in juvenile

offending have been on a fluctuating scale, although the issue persists at a steady pace, especially among young people, who are 10-17 years of age (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Youth violence remains a crucial societal health and criminal justice concern throughout the world. Interpersonal violence is one of the top causes of death among adolescents worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2024). Equally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime emphasizes that the youth population's engagement in crime can be directly connected to the socio-economic inequality, urbanization, and exposure to a risky background (UNODC, 2023). Though the percentage of juveniles who commit crimes on a chronic basis is quite low, the contribution of juveniles to the overall crimes is disproportionately high. The longitudinal studies show that a small population of lifetime offenders is the cause of a big portion of serious crimes (Erickson, 1973; Moffitt, 2006). This analogy between adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent offenders is paramount to the delinquency patterns.

Developmental Pathways to Delinquency

Developmental criminology underlines the fact that juvenile delinquency has its own behavioral patterns that are observable in the course of development. Evidence of progressive pathways in which small behavioral problems can develop into serious offending is found in research by Loeber and others (Loeber & Hay, 1997). Such pathways usually have early signs such as defiance and petty acts of rule-breaking that could be reinforced by environmental conditions to become a manifestation of property crimes or violent behavior. This view is like a developmental taxonomy that was developed by Moffitt (1993), distinguishing between a temporary adolescent delinquency and a long-term criminal behavior that continues into adulthood. Such results indicate that early intervention can be vital because delinquency is often cumulative due to exposure to risk environments.

Family Structure and Juvenile Delinquency

It is always established that family structure is one of the most powerful predictors of juvenile delinquency. Empirical studies reveal dysfunctional forms of families where the supervision of the supervisor is weak, inconsistent, or absent, and informal forms of punishment are in place (Farrington, 2019; Hoeve et al., 2009). The major protective factors are parental attachment and monitoring. Teenagers with a positive emotional connection with parents and under consistent supervision are less inclined to commit delinquent behavior (Hoeve et al., 2009). On the other hand, witnessing domestic violence and family conflict predisposes one to aggression and deviance, which in many cases impacts the intergenerational transmission of violent behavior (Lloyd, 2013). The relocation of single-parent families, the increase of single-parent families that lack parental authority, and the consequent institutionalization of marriage and family relationships have also contributed to

identity instability in adolescents. In this context, young people might want to find other modes of identity and belonging other than the family (United Nations, 2003).

Peer Influence and Social Learning

The importance of peer associations has greatly influenced juvenile behavior, especially in adolescents. Differential Association Theory is based on the premise that criminal behavior is acquired when a child interacts with other individuals who engage in or promote deviant conduct (Sutherland, 1947). The Social Learning Theory, which argues that behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement in social contexts, further supports this view (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosevich, 1995). Empirical evidence indicates that teenagers associating themselves with delinquents are far more inclined to follow suit (Warr, 2012).

Socioeconomic Conditions and Structural Risk Factors

One of the dominant structural determinants of juvenile delinquency is socioeconomic disadvantage. Lack of access to education opportunities and employment prospects, poverty, and inequality predispose individuals to criminal activities (United Nations, 2003; World Bank, 2020). The social disorganization school of thought further elucidates how the instability of community institutions, urbanization, and residential instability contribute to increased rates of criminal activities among the young people (Shaw & McKay, 1942). In less-privileged settings, adolescents can be comparatively deprived and frustrated and more vulnerable to joining delinquent peer groups. The longitudinal studies also underscore the cumulative risk of enduring offending due to exposure to poverty and instability at a young age (Sampson & Laub, 1993). The literature makes it clear that juvenile delinquency is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is influenced by the interaction between individual, familial, peer, and structural factors. Family relations are proven to be the most influential factor, followed by peer association and general socioeconomic conditions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in the present study about juvenile delinquency in Pakistan is an integrated theory framework covering Strain Theory, Social Control Theory, and Social Learning Theory. All these views explain the interplay of structural pressures, weakened social bonds, and learned behaviors to produce delinquent tendencies among the juveniles. Strain Theory, which was originally explained by Merton, is used as an explanation of delinquency, which occurs as a result of the mismatch between the culturally defined goals and the means that are allowed to achieve them. Under the circumstances where individuals fail to acquire socially acceptable objectives using legitimate opportunities, the individuals may adapt through deviant or criminal means (Merton, 1938). Structural inequalities

in poverty, unemployment and poor access to quality education create a lot of tension among the adolescents in the context of Pakistan. This relative deprivation augmented frustration and undermined housing to societal standards; thereby leading to juvenile delinquency. This viewpoint is further supported by the general strain theory of Agnew, who focuses more attention on the negative emotional feelings like anger and frustration, as key mediators of delinquency (Agnew, 1992).

The social Control Theory assumes that when the connection of an individual to society is weakened or broken, the possibility of delinquency arises (Hirschi, 2002). These social ties encompass attaching themselves to a family, being committed to education, participating in traditional activities and believing in the societal norms. Weakening family cohesion, inadequate parental supervision and declining institutional support in Pakistan diminish these controlling mechanisms. The juveniles who have limited emotional attachment to both parents and schools are at higher risks of not internalizing social norms hence more susceptible to engaging in deviant behavior. This theoretical perspective is mainly applicable in comprehending how the factors that lead to family disorganization have contributed to the occurrence of juvenile delinquency.

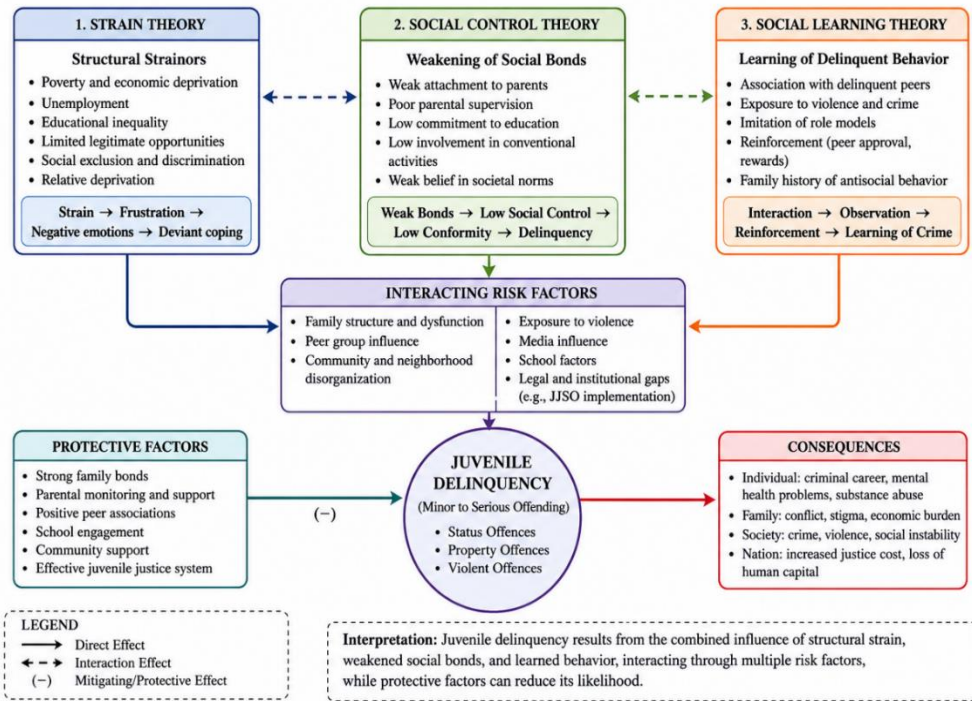
Social Learning Theory describes delinquency as a learned behavior within a social environment through interaction, observation and reinforcement (Akers, 2009; Bandura, 1977). Based on this line of thought, juveniles learn delinquent behavior by being exposed to deviant opportunities presented by peers, family, or the community. Peer group association is determinant in affecting youth behavior in Pakistan. The likelihood of adolescents who communicate with delinquent peers, to imitate and strengthen antisocial behaviors increases. Likewise, the violence in the family or the community environment normalizes the behaviour of violence, which increases the chances of committing crimes.

These three theories, when taken together, give a complete explanation of juvenile delinquency:

- Strain Theory describes structural pressures and socio-economic deprivation.
- Social Control Theory notes the undermining of family and institutional ties.
- Social Learning Theory is a theory of behavioral acquisition that was learned by the peer and environmental influence.

Combined, these two texts demonstrate that juvenile delinquency in Pakistan is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and that it is because of the interaction of structural inequality, weakened social institutions, and the learned deviant behaviour.

The conceptual framework diagram can show that juvenile delinquency is a product of the interaction of structural strain, weakened social bonds, and learned deviant behaviour, mediated by family, peer, and environmental risk factors, as well as being moderated by protective social controls that help to reduce its occurrence.

Figure 01: Conceptual Framework: Integrated Model of Juvenile Delinquency

Source: Researcher's Vision

Research Methodology

The research method adopted in this study was a quantitative research methodology, which is an effective methodology when it comes to exploring the relationships between the quantifiable variables and also testing hypotheses using statistical analysis. Quantitative research uses the positivist tradition and is based on objective measurements, numerical and statistical generalization of findings (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014). The methodology will present an empirical and quantifiable way of studying the determinants of juvenile delinquency. Methodology denotes the systematic employment of the scientific principles, procedures, and techniques applied in the production of valid and reliable claims of knowledge (Nachmias and Nachmias, 2007). The research design adopted a cross-sectional survey research design that has been widely used in social sciences in order to gather data from a population at once. The design can be effectively used to determine patterns, associations, and relationships among variables without controlling the study environment (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The survey design also empowered the researcher to assess the effects of socio-familial, legal, and environmental factors on juvenile delinquency in District Sargodha.

Focus of Research and Population of Interests.

The research was carried out in the District of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. It targeted the stakeholders directly or indirectly related to juvenile justice and youth behavior, such as:

- Police officials (male and female)
- Juvenile guardians
- Legal practitioners and lawyers.
- Sociologists, psychologists, and criminologists.
- Responsible Citizens of Sargodha.

Such a diversified population was used to ensure the representation of institutional, professional, and community views that are pertinent to the issue of juvenile delinquency. The stratified random sampling technique was employed in the research. It is a probability sampling strategy with a stratified sampling method, where the population is stratified into a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive strata and a set of randomly selected respondents is sampled by stratifying the population one stratum at a time (strata) (Kothari, 2004). It is a more representative and less biased sampling technique because it is important to make sure that all key stakeholder categories are included. The overall number of respondents was $N = 236$. The sample used was deemed to be sufficient in carrying out a statistical analysis in qualitative studies in social science, as the results are reliably replicated and do not lose their validity (Israel, 1992).

A unit of analysis included individuals who have been chosen based on various professional and social classes:

- Police officials
- Juvenile guardians
- Legal professionals (lawyers)
- Social scientists (sociologists, psychologists, criminologists)
- Community members

These respondents were chosen to represent different yet quantifiable perceptions towards juvenile delinquency and the determinants of the same. The conceptualization can be described as the process of formulating abstract ideas into empirically measurable constructs (Neuman, 2014). In this research, the conceptualization of juvenile delinquency is the illegal or deviant behavior of minors and the fact that it depends on socio-economic, familial, peer, and legal factors.

Operationalization of variables was done in measurable indicators in order to make statistical analysis and testing of hypotheses easy.

Table 01: Operationalization of Study Variables

Variable Type	Variable Name	Operational Definition / Measurement Indicators
Dependent Variable	Juvenile Delinquency	Measured through frequency of deviant behavior, involvement in criminal activities, and encounters with law enforcement agencies
Independent Variable	Family Structure	Categorized as nuclear, joint, or disrupted family system
Independent Variable	Family Behavior and Parenting Style	Measured through parental supervision, discipline patterns, emotional support, and family cohesion
Independent Variable	Peer Group Influence	Assessed through association with delinquent peers, peer pressure, and group conformity behaviors
Independent Variable	Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSO, 2000) Awareness and Perception	Measured through respondents' awareness, understanding, and perceived effectiveness of the juvenile justice legal framework

Data Collection Instrument

The structured questionnaire, based on a five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree, was used to gather primary data. A Likert scale is a generally agreed-upon instrument in measuring attitudes and perceptions in quantitative research (Likert, 1932). The questionnaire took care of standardization, comparability, and the mathematical measurability of answers.

Data Analysis Techniques

The statistical package, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), was used in the analysis of this data. The research utilized only descriptive statistical methods to summarize and present the data in a meaningful way. The following methods were used:

- Frequency distributions
- Percentage analysis

It is through these methods that respondents' demographic characteristics were described, and the distribution of the responses across any of the study variables was presented clearly and systematically.

Results

1. Family Structure and Parenting

Table 02: *Family Interaction and Environment*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Comfortable talking to parents	51 (21.6%)	76 (32.2%)	60 (25.4%)	24 (10.2%)	25 (10.6%)	236
Experience violence at home	19 (8.1%)	69 (29.2%)	68 (28.8%)	36 (15.3%)	44 (18.6%)	236
Parental conflict causes delinquency	36 (15.3%)	12 (5.1%)	118 (50.0%)	36 (15.3%)	34 (14.4%)	236
Father gives clear direction	76 (32.2%)	91 (38.6%)	38 (16.1%)	31 (13.1%)	—	236

The results revealed that generally, there is good communication among the family members, with most (32.2%) attesting that they are comfortable when discussing issues with their parents. Nonetheless, an impressive number (15.3% strongly agree and 5.1% agree) experienced domestic violence, indicating that family background does not always support a healthy environment. Interestingly, one fifth of the respondents (50% in the Survey) were neutral about parental conflict as a cause of delinquency, indicating doubt or no awareness on its effects. There is evidence of strong parental guidance (30.2 strongly agree and 38.6% agree) that suggests that structured parenting can be a protective factor against delinquency.

2. Family Influence on Behavior

Table 03: *Role of Family in Behavior Formation*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Delinquency linked to aggressive behavior	60 (25.4%)	60 (25.4%)	53 (22.5%)	44 (18.6%)	19 (8.1%)	236
Family plays vital role in adolescent behavior	110 (46.6%)	63 (26.7%)	53 (22.5%)	10 (4.2%)	—	236
Poor economic conditions cause delinquency	40 (16.9%)	71 (30.1%)	85 (36.0%)	32 (13.6%)	8 (3.4%)	236
Criminal family background affects socialization	112 (47.5%)	69 (29.2%)	32 (13.6%)	8 (3.4%)	15 (6.4%)	236
Parents know about friends	72 (30.5%)	92 (39.0%)	45 (19.1%)	27 (11.4%)	—	236
Friendly family environment improves behavior	125 (53.0%)	70 (29.7%)	22 (9.3%)	15 (6.4%)	4 (1.7%)	236
Parents support education	156 (66.1%)	39 (16.5%)	31 (13.1%)	10 (4.2%)	—	236

The findings are an excellent reflection of how the family forms the central role in influencing juvenile conduct. A big majority (46.6%) strongly accepted the fact that the role of family cannot be undervalued in terms of adolescent development. Also, 53% agreed that a positive family climate positively influences learning, and 66.1% strongly confirmed parental support of education, which is a strong indication of involvement by the family. It was also widely found (47.5% strongly agree) as an influencing factor in socialization implying intergenerational passing of deviant

norms. Nevertheless, the responses on the economic conditions were mixed with one third (36%) being neutral, and the remaining were not.

3. Peer Group Influence

Table 04: *Peer Group Dynamics*

Statement		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Spend most time with friends		69 (29.2%)	79 (33.5%)	51 (21.6%)	27 (11.4%)	10 (4.2%)	236
Friends engage in illegal activities		58 (24.6%)	66 (28.0%)	46 (19.5%)	34 (14.4%)	32 (13.6%)	236
Friends are gang members		21 (8.9%)	40 (16.9%)	42 (17.8%)	32 (13.6%)	101 (42.8%)	236
Friends involved in drug use		34 (14.4%)	8 (3.4%)	24 (10.2%)	31 (13.1%)	139 (58.9%)	236
Bad company negatively affects behavior		77 (32.6%)	26 (11.0%)	37 (15.7%)	19 (8.1%)	77 (32.6%)	236
Peer pressure leads to crime		20 (8.5%)	60 (25.4%)	36 (15.3%)	74 (31.4%)	46 (19.5%)	236
Peers provide mental stability		24 (10.2%)	75 (31.8%)	70 (29.7%)	48 (20.3%)	19 (8.1%)	236

Peer influence is an ambiguous and twofold trend. Although a significant proportion (33.5% agree) has spent a lot of time together with friends, the perception of peer delinquency is moderate, and not dominant. It is important to note that 58.9 percent strongly rejected the idea that their friends are involved in drug abuse, and 42.8 percent strongly denied gang membership, which places their exposure to organized delinquent groups comparatively. But opinions on negative peer influence are split, especially on whether negative peer influence causes crime, with an even greater percentage (31.4) disagreeing. This implies that peer influence does exist along with variation in the perception of peer influence as a leading cause of delinquency.

4. Legal Awareness: Juvenile Justice System (JJSA, 2018)

Table 05: *Perception of Juvenile Justice System*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
JJSO provides less punishment	18 (7.6%)	36 (15.3%)	131 (55.5%)	15 (6.4%)	36 (15.3%)	236
JJSO reduces fear of crime	7 (3.0%)	69 (29.2%)	92 (39.0%)	48 (20.3%)	20 (8.5%)	236
JJSO rules are implemented	42 (17.8%)	54 (22.9%)	84 (35.6%)	46 (19.5%)	10 (4.2%)	236
Children should be treated differently	66 (28.0%)	45 (19.1%)	79 (33.5%)	46 (19.5%)	—	236
Poorly treated juveniles become criminals	39 (16.5%)	102 (43.2%)	28 (11.9%)	44 (18.6%)	23 (9.7%)	236

The results show that there is not much clarity on whether the Juvenile Justice System is effective or not. Most of them (55.5% of all respondents) were indifferent (or had mixed views) about whether JJSA 2018 offers mild punishment. Nevertheless, a proportion of it (16.5 strongly and 43.2) responded strongly that bad treatment of juveniles can result in future criminal behavior and therefore, it should have rehabilitative justice. Reactions to questions on the implementation of JJSO laws were also strongly neutral (35.6%), meaning that they were not sure about enforcement mechanisms.

5. Institutional and Policy Perspectives

Table 06: *Rehabilitation and Institutional Measures*

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Juveniles should be returned to guardians	79 (33.5%)	60 (25.4%)	44 (18.6%)	28 (11.9%)	25 (10.6%)	236

Juveniles should be sent to borstal institutions	29 (12.3%)	56 (23.7%)	70 (29.7%)	48 (20.3%)	33 (14.0%)	236
Police lack resources	58 (24.6%)	22 (9.3%)	67 (28.4%)	55 (23.3%)	34 (14.4%)	236
Government should allocate rehabilitation budget	65 (27.5%)	81 (34.3%)	47 (19.9%)	37 (15.7%)	6 (2.5%)	236
Satisfaction with borstal training	7 (3.0%)	72 (30.5%)	89 (37.7%)	62 (26.3%)	6 (2.5%)	236

The findings indicate that there is a great tendency towards rehabilitative methods. Most (33.5% strongly agree and 25.4% agree) participants supported the idea of returning juveniles to guardians, which indicated a belief in the ability of the family to correct juveniles. Equally, 27.5% strongly and 34.3% supported government investment in rehabilitation, which is indicative of policy-level expectations. Nonetheless, there is still low levels of satisfaction with current institutional training, with 37.7% neutral and 26.3% dissatisfied, indicating the gaps in rehabilitation effectiveness. The views on police resources are split, being an institutional limitation on the process of juvenile justice management.

Discussion

The results highlight the importance of family background and parental behavior in determining the behavior of the juveniles. Most of the respondents stated that there was good parental communication, supervision, and educational support, which provided evidence that there were structured family systems. But the fact that domestic violence occurs in a significant percentage of cases indicates that family environments are not conducive to equal measure. These findings are not exclusive and are consistent with social Control Theory (Hirschi, 2002), which points to the strength of family ties as a factor that minimizes delinquency, and the fact that family conflict exists supports General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992), which highlights that stress and adverse experiences can cause deviant coping. Though there is family conflict, the direct relationship with delinquency was not consistently felt, reflecting some difference in the consciousness levels of the respondents.

The analysis also validates the assertion that the family is one of the major agents of socialization. Positive behavior was massively attributed to supportive

surroundings, and criminal family backgrounds were believed to erode positive behaviors among children. This can be attributed to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which proposes that behavior is learned by observation, as well as through interaction in close social situations. Nonetheless, economic issues were differently treated, and this would mean that the respondents have stronger micro-level family factors as opposed to structural causes on the macro level. Peer influence was found to be important yet conditional. Although respondents have spent a large amount of time with peers, there was minimal concurrence regarding involvement in serious delinquent activities. This partially supports the Differential Association theory (Sutherland, 1947) but suggests that the peer influence is not relevant across times and settings and can be influenced by conditions and supervision.

The attitudes towards the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA, 2018) were mostly neutral, indicating little knowledge of the Act and being unsure of its efficacy. This ambiguity can undermine the perceived certainty of punishment and dilute the deterrent effect in line with Deterrence Theory (Beccaria, 1764; Gibbs, 1975). Nevertheless, participants were firm believers in the difference in how juveniles and adults are treated, affirming rehabilitative justice ideals. The results also report that there is a preference for rehabilitative and family-based interventions. The majority of the respondents endorsed the idea of the juveniles returning to their guardians and a greater involvement of the government in the rehabilitation process, although the degree of satisfaction with the current institutional mechanisms was moderate. This justifies the Re-integrative Shaming Theory (Braithwaite, 1989) according to which reintegration should be preferred to punitive measures.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this paper is that juvenile delinquency is a multidimensional phenomenon which is shaped mainly by family relationships, then delegates to peer relationships, and then shifts to institutional relationships inside the framework of the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018. The results indicate that a well-developed parental attachment, supervision, and supportive family environments are protective factors which can be effective in averting deterioration to delinquency. Domestic conflict and weak family structures are some of the risk factors that make individuals vulnerable to committing delinquent behavior. Though present, peer influence is conditional and largely mediated by family control and the social context. It also indicates that there is limited public awareness and ambivalent perceptions whether in effectiveness of juvenile justice system, which diminishes its ability to deter and rehabilitate offenders. Significantly, it is very clear that institutional strengthening and reintegration through community-based interventions is much more preferable than punitive measures. All in all, the research highlights the fact that an integrated strategy of family strengthening, legal awareness, effective implementation of the juvenile justice policies, and socio-economic support mechanisms are necessary

in achieving sustainable reduction of juvenile delinquency sustainability, hence aligning with the current criminology schools of thought and policy agendas.

Policy Recommendations

The results of the present study suggest the need to implement a complex, evidence-based policy framework to curb juvenile delinquency in Pakistan, especially following the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018. Due to the active involvement of family patterns, family strengthening is a key prevention measure that should be prioritized in policy interventions. Institutions of government and social welfare should initiate organizations of parenting programs which dwell on supervision, communication, and the use of non-violent forms of discipline. Moreover, a community and school-based system of providing accessible family counseling services should be developed to help in mitigating domestic conflict as well as exposure to violence, which the findings indicate to be a significant risk factor.

Another mechanism that must be exploited is the education sector as an institutional mechanism that protects. Behavioral guidance, life skills education, and conflict resolution training should be introduced into the school curricula to help instill pro-social attitudes among teenagers in schools. The establishment of school-based counseling units and mentorship programs can further help identify at-risk youth and provide early intervention. Community-based programs should be encouraged to provide positive alternatives to delinquent behavior and lessen the reliance on negative peer networks. Influence corresponding to peer group does not exhibit evenly distributed crimino-genicity, yet it needs specific policy consideration. Positive peer interaction programs, such as peer mentoring programs and leadership development programs, should be adopted. Strategies of community policing can also contribute to influencing the youth groups by preventing the formation of delinquent networks, so that the influence of peers can be inverted into a constructive social force.

The research also indicates that people are unaware and have mixed perceptions about the enforcement of juvenile justice laws, which require reforms under the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018. Cultural sensitization exercises need to be initiated to inform citizens about matters related to juvenile rights, legal sessions, and the rehabilitative nature of the law. At the same time, police officers, probation personnel, and judicial staff (police, probation, and judicial) should also be provided with special training to ensure a child-sensitive approach to juvenile cases and effective implementation of the stipulations of the law. The fact that most respondents expressed a great preference for rehabilitation over punishment further supports the need to fortify rehabilitative and reintegration processes. Higher funding for the building and renovation of rehabilitation centers, including borstal institutions, should be commended by the government to ensure that education, vocational training, and psychological support can be provided. Reintegration policies must focus on the

reentry of juveniles back to receptive family settings, wherever possible, as defined within restorative justice ideals, consisting of the current legal statutes.

Policy attention is also necessary to institutional constraints, especially law enforcement. To improve the efficacy of the system of justice, the improvement of the functioning of resource allocation, as well as the capacity-building initiatives, should be included in the system. Besides, greater coordination between police and other social services and judicial institutions can be used in ensuring a more integrated and efficient response to juvenile delinquency. Lastly, even though the respondents were less particular about the impact of structural factors, socioeconomic inequalities are of critical underlying drivers. Poverty reduction policies, better educational opportunities, and employment opportunities that involve young people should be intensified in a bid to address long-run risk factors that are attributed to delinquency. Overall, a successful policy response based on the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 requires a multi-level and integrated response including family-based interventions, educational support, peer engagement strategies, legal awareness, institutional strengthening, and socioeconomic development. The aforementioned holistic framework would be necessary in achieving sustainable prevention and rehabilitation outcomes in accordance to the current incumbency criminological and policy standards.

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