



RESEARCH ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.56868/jadhur.v2i3.155>

**Psychosocial Development of Children in Conflict with the Law Under Detention in the
Bicol Region, Philippines**

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Abstract

A child's personality may be impacted by various factors such as the marital status of parents, interpersonal problems within the marriage, a broken household, and solo parenting. Therefore, children with mental illness can experience severe issues leading to illegal troubles. Hence, this study examines the psycho-social factors contributing to children in conflict with the law in the Bicol Region, Philippines. For this purpose, data from 67 respondents was collected on a volunteer basis through interviews from different care institutions that handle children in conflict with the law for welfare and development. Results of the study revealed that lack of quality time with parents, marital status, parents' poor working status, and lack of participation in cultural activities and community services were significant in influencing a child's behaviour to violence. The study also provides possible proactive measures to help parents and authorities rebuild the lives of children in conflict with the law and become valuable members of society.

Keywords: Juvenile delinquency, psychosocial difficulties, intervention, a child in conflict with the law

INTRODUCTION

A child is born with innocence and purity. Every kid's existence depends on sufficient care and attention; if done correctly, the child will develop positively (Clark, 2020). When children's surroundings are helpful and encouraging toward them, youngsters behave well. A child's physical, psychological, moral, and spiritual growth makes them capable of becoming conscious and realizing their potential (Kohl & Cook, 2013). On the other hand, a juvenile may become a juvenile delinquent due to adverse environmental conditions (Vidal et al., 2017), a lack of fundamental requirements (Khurshid & Urooj, 2012), and inadequate parental supervision (Gove & Crutchfield, 1982). Thus, juvenile delinquency can be considered one of the prominent social issues that may impact not only children involved in legal disputes but also families, communities, and society. As a result, the family of the child can suffer due to the child's illegal actions, and society as a whole can be affected.

However, children from single-parent households have a 10 to 15% higher chance of becoming delinquent than children from two-parent families with the same social features (Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017). This shows that healthy self-confidence is enhanced in children by good parenting. In contrast, a child's personality may be impacted by several factors, such as the marital status of the parents, interpersonal problems within the marriage, a broken household, and solo parenting. As a result,



social work implications such as family therapy and counselling might change family interaction patterns to benefit the kid (Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017).

Khan and Singh (2014) highlighted that poverty and unemployment are primary sociological factors in perpetuating violence and crime among youth. At the same time, a literature review shows that 69.9% of male youths in custody had at least one psychiatric disorder, most commonly conduct disorder, substance use disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Collins et al., 2010). This shows that major psychiatric disorders are commonly associated with criminal behaviour (Sariaslan et al., 2020). This increase aligns with the increasing global trend in juvenile delinquency cases (Muna et al., 2020). Studies also highlighted that many children had committed criminal acts as national assets. Such as narcotics (Firdaus et al., 2019), persecution (Nida & Nurhafifah, 2020), theft (Pardjanihadi et al., 2021), beatings (Aprilia & Ambarita, 2019), obscenity (Purwanti, 2019), to terrorism (Fad, 2019).

Keeping this in perspective, children with mental illness can experience severe problems, leading them to be involved in illegal troubles. These children can experience psychological issues, including conduct issues, learning disabilities, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), personality issues, substance abuse, phobias, and depression (Fletcher et al., 2018). They can also be influenced by environmental factors, which include victims of violence and sexual abuse, and also by their psychiatric history (Heller et al., 2022). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the psycho-socio factors affecting juveniles in the Bicol Region, Philippines, why children are coming into conflict with the law, and to know which aspect is most likely influencing children to adopt criminal behaviour. Lastly, the study will also focus on identifying the critical challenges faced by youth in the Bicol Region that promote juvenile delinquency in the region by providing policies and prevention measures or programs that can help parents and authorities rebuild their lives and become valuable members of society. The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section two outlines the literature review, followed by the proposed methodology for the study in section three. Section four contains results and discussion, while the last section concludes the study with policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have highlighted the psycho-social factors contributing to children in conflict with the law. For instance, Aprilia and Ambarita (2019) conducted a qualitative study at the premises of the Institute of Minors Kavaja. The group of minors investigated was of age 14-18 years. The results demonstrate a complex relationship between the coping strategies, adjustment (adaptation) and well-being of minors and that institutional opportunities and changes can be beneficial. In the end, the study also recommends improving some elements that influence well-being across efficient involvement of educational staff, the police and other social agents who cooperate with the institution or create specific programs for this target. The study of Khan and Singh (2014) also



highlights that youth are exposed to a wide range of psychological, sociological, and criminogenic factors predisposing them to be at risk and come into conflict with the law. In their study, poverty and unemployment are primary sociological factors in perpetuating violence and crime among youth. However, they suggested that in the long term, youth in conflict with the law need to be engaged in a variety of positive youth development programs at a localized level through the support of the state and organs of civil society.

Heller et al. (2022) found that youths in conflict with the law are characterized by their internal vulnerabilities, including a high prevalence of psychiatric disorders and comorbidities, lower cognitive functions, externalized problems, and psychopathic traits. Second, are their environmental factors, including victims of violence and sexual abuse, and lastly, their psychiatric history. Besides, the evolution of the most prevalent issues was favourable over time, which puts into question the usual perspective about the deleterious effect of detention. Therefore, a literature review shows that 69.9% of male youths in custody had at least one psychiatric disorder, most commonly conduct disorder, substance use disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Collins et al., 2010). This shows that major psychiatric disorders are commonly associated with criminal behaviour (Sariaslan et al., 2020). Providing youth with mental health treatment can effectively reduce recidivism, although the factors associated with treatment effectiveness are difficult to identify. Indeed, there is a lack of studies that examine the effectiveness of custodial intervention programs (Penner et al., 2011).

Singh and Agarwal (2019) also report that children between the ages of 8 and 18 spend 6.5 hours a day (or 44.5 hours per week) in front of a computer, watching television, or playing video games. When a youngster reaches the age of 18, they will have seen over 200,000 violent actions, including 40,000 murders, on television alone, with an average watching time. Similarly, Rathinabalan and Naaraayan (2017) stated that children from single-parent households have a 10 to 15% higher chance of becoming delinquent than children from two-parent families with the same social features. As a result, social work implications such as family therapy and counselling might change family interaction patterns to benefit the kid. Subekti et al. (2022) suggested that recovery and rehabilitation for children (perpetrators) of criminal acts of sexual violence are significant to prevent children from becoming recidivists or sexual predators as adults. They also stated that psychological and social rehabilitation needs to be provided to children as perpetrators and children as victims in criminal acts of sexual violence to achieve recovery so that they can grow and develop optimally as the next generation of the nation.

METHODS

The study aims to investigate the psycho-social factors that affect juveniles in the Bicol Region, Philippines, and how they are coming into conflict with the law. For this purpose, the researcher

conducted the study to develop consolidated data from different care institutions that handle children in conflict with the law for welfare and development. Special permission was sought from the officials in services on the condition that all information would be kept confidential and respondents' participation in the study should be based on a volunteer basis. Hence, to ensure that respondents volunteered for the study, data from 67 respondents was collected through interviews at the recreational centre after permission was granted by the authorities.

However, the nature and purpose of the study were explained to the respondents before the study, and they were reassured that there was no compulsion for them to participate in the study. At the same time, they could decline to participate at any point for the duration of the study. The respondents were also requested in the interview to provide information about their age, educational level, place of birth and any occupational activity before coming into conflict with the law. It also sought on their family structure at the time of coming into conflict with the law, information on the type of laws violated, the place at which this occurred, history of a previous violation of the law and detention, reasons for such violation and whether such violations were committed individually or with some other person or persons. The study then used the quantitative method using SPSS software to process the collected data, and Microsoft Excel was used for the data arrangement. Thus, data has been descriptively analyzed to address the study's objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following table contains the demographic characteristics of the 67 respondents to explore the psycho-socio factors that affect juveniles in the Bicol Region, Philippines, that how coming into conflict with the law. Among respondents, 40 are male, making up 59% of the total population, while 27 are females, representing 41% of the sample study. Age-wise, respondents between 17-20 years were the most prominent in number, consisting of 33 (49%) respondents, followed by 13-16 years respondents, with 27 (40%) respondents of the total. Lastly, respondents between 8 and 12 years were the smallest in the group, with seven respondents making up 10% of the whole. The respondents are also categorized by a guardian (responsible for supervising children within the family).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Data

Data Division	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	40	59
	Female	27	41
	Total	67	100
Age	8-12	07	10
	13-16	27	40
	17-20	33	49
	Total	67	100
Guardian	Father	13	19

	Mother	25	38
	Brother	10	15
	Sister	09	13
	Grandfather	03	04
	Grandmother	04	06
	Other	03	05
	Total	67	100

Source: Author’s calculation

Table 1 explains that 25 respondents were under the supervision of a mother, making the highest number of sample 38 per cent, followed by 13 respondents under the supervision of a father (19 per cent). Siblings, including brothers and sisters, were the next prominent guardians. Additionally, ten respondents' guardians were brothers, representing 15% of the total, while sisters fulfilled the supervision role for nine respondents, making up 13%. Grandparents, both grandfathers and grandmothers, were also represented in the guardians. Furthermore, grandfathers were guardians for three respondents (4% of the total) and grandmothers for four respondents (6% of the total). Lastly, "other" encompasses three respondents (5%), representing the supervision caretakers such as uncles and aunts.

Similarly, the following Figure 1 represents the educational level of the respondents. The figure shows that 8% of the population (5 respondents) falls within the Grade 1-5 category, indicating a smaller sample size. Similarly, Grade 6 contains only 3% (2 respondents) of the total. Moving further, Grades 7 and 8 represent 4% (3 respondents).

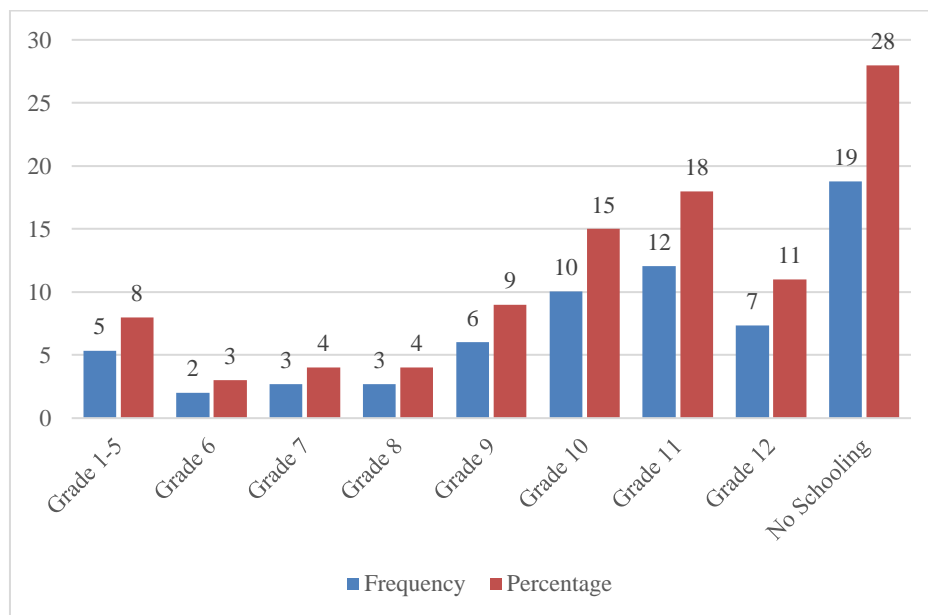


Figure 1. Educational Qualification of Respondents

However, the data highlights that 28% of the total (19 respondents) have had no formal schooling. This significant percentage raises concerns about barriers to education, access issues, or

possibly cultural factors that prevent individuals from entering the formal education system. This finding is in line with Singh and Agarwal (2019) that amongst youth offenders, early school dropout is one of the major disadvantages in finding a positive pathway in life. The same is also evidenced by Aizer and Currie (2019). Children suspended or dropped out have ten times more chances to be involved in criminal activity. Hence, lack of access to education is also an impacting factor of juvenile delinquency (Mwangangi, 2019). As we move towards high school, the data shows that Grade 9 represents 9% (6 respondents), Grade 10 accounts for 15% (10 respondents), and Grade 11 comprises the highest proportion at 18% (12 respondents) of the total sample study. Lastly, Grade 12 comprises 11% (7 respondents) of the population.

Table 2 represented the types of crimes committed by juveniles when we asked for them. Starting with the lowest percentage, assault accounts for 2.95% of the reported crimes in the respondents, which is relatively low in number. However, fraud, quarrelling and housebreaking crimes were committed by 7.93%, 13.10% and 6.87% of the respondents, respectively. Khan and Singh (2014) and Nisar et al. (2015) also reported these crime types in juvenile research studies. The respondents also reported having committed rape, making up 11.91% of the reported crimes, with eight incidents.

Table 2. Types of Crimes Committed by Respondents

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Assault	02	2.95
Fraud	05	7.93
Quarrelling	09	13.10
Housebreaking	05	6.87
Rape	08	11.91
Theft/Robbery	27	40.23
Murderer	03	4.89
Other	08	12.12

Source: Author's calculation

The most prevalent crime that, however, was observed in the respondents was robbery/theft, comprising a significant portion of 40.23% of the total crimes. Respondents also reported that they had committed murder crimes, accounting for 4.89% of the reported crimes, with three incidents. Lastly, the respondents also reported that they had committed more than the mentioned, representing 12.12% of the reported crimes, encompassing lesser-known or less common offences. Table 3 explains the psychosocial aspects of children who conflict with the law when asked for. The percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered "Yes" or "No" to specific questions during the interview related to their interaction with their parents, community, and circumstances. The results show that 38.90% of respondents with sufficient time with their parents were less likely to be involved in illegal acts than 61.10%. It is also revealed by Nisar et al. (2015) and

Mwangangi (2019). However, Gorman-Smith et al. (1998) concluded in their research findings that the consequences of maltreatment could be devastating. This suggests that parental presence can play a vital role in positively shaping a child's behaviour. Similarly, 43.65% of respondents stated that they receive guidance and support from their parents when discussing their problems. Interestingly, only 32.60% of respondents stated that their parents live together, while 67.40% responded that their parents are divorced or separated. This shows that these children may have more chances to be involved in unlawful activities. This finding suggests that family disruption can significantly impact a child's psychological well-being, potentially leading to behavioural issues. When asked whether they receive any pocket money from home, only 44.37% of respondents highlighted that they receive adequate financial support from their homes. In comparison, 55.63% responded with a "No" answer. Hence, this indicates that the ones who receive financial support are less likely to engage in criminal behaviour.

Table 3. Children in Conflict with the Law Because

Family Dynamics & Support	Yes (%)	No (%)
Having time with parents	38.90	61.10
Guidance from parents	43.65	56.35
Parents' divorce/separated	67.40	32.60
Economic Hurdles	Yes (%)	No (%)
Financial support from home	44.37	55.63
Parents' poor working status	63.71	36.29
Participation in Social Events	Yes (%)	No (%)
Cultural activities	41.90	58.10
Participation in community services	44.66	55.34
Refraining from & Previous History	Yes (%)	No (%)
Refraining from doing any illegal acts	42.27	57.73
Imprisonment history	37.13	62.87

Source: Author's calculation

Mwangangi (2019) also found in his research that poverty is an influencing factor in juvenile delinquency. This shows that sufficient financial support from parents can reduce the risk of delinquency in juveniles. As Bagheri et al. (2022) stated, several causes, such as personal, social, economic, cultural, religious, family, and other factors, always go hand in hand with children to conflict with the law. On the same line, 63.71% of respondents answered that their parents experienced poor working status, which showed a higher tendency towards delinquency; this is also evidenced by Nisar et al. (2015) and Bagheri et al. (2022). Thus, economic struggles within the family can create an environment conducive to illegal activities due to a lack of resources and support.

Similarly, 41.90% of respondents stated that they participate in cultural activities such as art, music, other social events, etc., which demonstrated lower engagement in illegal acts. Furthermore, the results show that 44.66% of respondents engaged in community services



compared to 55.35%, which may be less likely to engage in criminal behaviour. In the words of Manuel (2019), active participation in community services and other activities can improve your well-being. Surprisingly, only 42.27% of respondents mentioned refraining from illegal acts such as theft, fraud, robbery, etc., compared to 57.73%. This suggests that a significant portion of children are in conflict with the law, and they adopt criminal behaviour. Manuel (2019) suggested that educational programs can prevent these children from committing crimes if they can either finish their studies or finish at least High School Level, and thus, they can find a more decent job. However, 37.13% of respondents answered that any family members had a history of imprisonment, highlighting the potential impact on the children's behaviour (Jangam et al., 2022), and they can be more likely to engage in illegal activities.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY REMARKS

It is widely believed that supportive parents can enhance the healthy self-confidence of their children. However, the child's personality may be impacted by various factors such as the marital status of the parents, interpersonal problems within the marriage, a broken household, and solo parenting. Therefore, children with mental illness can experience severe issues that can also lead to illegal troubles. They may also struggle to be creative, have low self-esteem, pay attention in class, develop good study habits, or integrate into society. Hence, this study's purpose is to examine the psycho-socio factors contributing to children in conflict with the law in the Bicol Region, Philippines. For this purpose, data from 67 respondents was collected on a volunteer basis through questionnaires from different care institutions that handle children in conflict with the law for welfare and development.

The study's findings revealed that the dataset comprises 67 respondents. Among them, 40 were male, making up 59% of the total, while 27 respondents were, representing 41% of the total. The study noted that the mother emerges as the most common guardian, with 25 individuals under her supervision, making up 38% of the total, followed by the father, with 13 respondents (19%). At the education level, 19 respondents, 28% of the total, stated that they are not receiving any education. This indicates challenges in accessing education, such as socioeconomic factors. Similarly, 43.65% of respondents stated that they receive guidance and support from their parents when discussing their problems. In comparison, only 44.37% of respondents highlighted that they are receiving adequate financial support from their homes.

Interestingly, 67.40% responded that their parents are either divorced or separated. This shows that these children may have more chances to be involved in unlawful activities. However, only 42.27% of respondents mentioned refraining from illegal acts such as theft, fraud, robbery, etc., compared to 57.73% of the respondents.



The study concluded that addressing the psychosocial factors contributing to children's involvement in the conflict with the law requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. The study suggested to the parents and policymakers that to strengthen the family support system, parents should have friendly connections with their children, promote positive community engagement between children, provide rehabilitation and support to needy children, and authorities should provide financial aid to low-income families which can reduce the risk of children turning to illegal activities to meet their basic needs.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has limitations that can serve as an avenue for future researchers and policymakers. First, this study was conducted only in the Bicol Region, Philippines. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalized due to their varying organizational structure. Further, this study cannot be generalized to other parts of the country due to different economic, social, and cultural contexts. Therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting the results. Secondly, direct participating observations and minors feeling observed only sometimes behaved naturally, but sometimes we are limited by manipulating their behaviour, creating difficulties in clearly understanding the situation. Hence, the use of interviews may only sometimes be a thriving collection of data due to receiving proper information because, in some cases, they can refuse to participate in the fulfillment of the targeted interview.

Data availability: The data is available upon reasonable request from the author.

Competing Interest: The author declared no competing interests.

Ethical Statement: The study was undertaken with the utmost consideration for the participants' well-being, rights, and dignity. Informed consent procedures were rigorously followed, ensuring all participants or legal guardians comprehended the study's objectives, methods, and potential implications before involvement. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly upheld, with all collected data stored securely and used solely for research purposes. The research adhered to established ethical guidelines, seeking approval from relevant institutional review boards and regulatory bodies. The study's ethical foundation remains instrumental in upholding the credibility and integrity of its findings while safeguarding the rights and well-being of the individuals who contributed to its realization.

Funding: This study is not supported by any funding agency or organization.

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