

Exploring the Juvenile Delinquency Involvements of Former Young Male Juvenile Delinquents

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Abstract

In recent years, the incidence of juvenile delinquency has been increasing, posing a threat to the well-being of families and society. This urges the understanding of the involvement in delinquent behaviours among young male juvenile delinquents. The main objective of this study was to explore juvenile delinquent involvement among former young male juvenile delinquents. A phenomenology qualitative research design was utilised to explore the participants' lived experiences and their involvement in juvenile delinquency. Eight (8) former young male juvenile delinquents aged 26 years old and below participated in this research. The non-probability sampling technique of snowball sampling was utilised to select the participants. An intake form was administered to obtain the participants' socio-demographic information. A semi-structured interview questions were used to explore the participants' involvement in juvenile delinquency. The analysis of the data collected from former young male juvenile delinquents using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) revealed several themes that led to such delinquent behaviours; namely, lucrative business, recidivism, and peer pressure. The results indicate that the participants' initial involvement was influenced by their social circle or peer group, the challenges of relapse, and the advantages they gained from their unlawful conduct. The analysis of the results helps us determine the need for early intervention in order to prevent the increasing percentage of juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Malaysia.

Keywords: *delinquency involvement, delinquent behaviours, male juvenile delinquents, adolescents, phenomenological study*

INTRODUCTION

There has been an upsurge in the incidences of juvenile delinquency publicised by the media (New Straits Times, December 2022). The reported examples involve a variety of committed offences, as well as authorities and punishments. Delinquency is a socially inadequate adjustment on the part of the individual to difficult situations. The causes of delinquency are the elements that create tough situations and the mental and physical conditions that influence an individual's ability to adjust (Bridges, 1927). Each juvenile offence is the result of a variety of factors, some of whose origins date back years before the committal of the offence and others whose origins are more obviously and immediately connected with the act of delinquency (Bridges, 1927). The juvenile label 'delinquent' is applied to an adolescent who breaks laws or engages in behaviour that is considered illegal or the moral standards of society. Like other categories of disorders, juvenile delinquency is a broad concept; legal infractions range from littering to murder (Santrock, 2018). Juvenile delinquency is described as a minor's habitual participation in illegal activities (Jenasamanta, 2022). According to the law in Malaysia, the term 'juvenile delinquent' refers to a young person who has committed a criminal offence and has been given a court order (Maznah, 2007). Meanwhile, the Malaysian Ministry of Education states that delinquency in school includes violations of both the Penal Code and the school norms (Tai et al., 2018).

The Prevalence of Juvenile Delinquency

As reported by the Social Welfare Department in 2016, the involvement of male adolescents is more compared to female adolescents. In addition, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Malaysia registered an increased number of 5305 juvenile delinquency cases within one year, from 3399 cases in 2012 to 8704 cases in 2013 (Mallow, 2015). These statistics show that juvenile delinquency in Malaysia is becoming more serious and will continue to increase if appropriate action is not taken (Choon et al., 2013). Jalal (2005) mentions that family factors, low-income family management practices, family history of problem behaviour, family conflicts, family low socioeconomic status, and single-parent families are contributory reasons. Mallow (2015) adds that the problem of adolescent delinquency in Malaysia is mostly an urban phenomenon caused by the process of national development, triggered by the rapid speed of industrialisation and urbanisation in particular. However, juvenile delinquency does not appear to be an urban phenomenon entirely because the concept of juvenile delinquency and adolescence are social constructs that vary by time and place (Neissl & Singer, 2020). Thus, it is important to explore and understand this delinquency issue in further detail.

Criminal offences among adolescents, especially students in the country, are at an alarming rate; thus, the need to intensify preventive efforts. According to the Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation (2019), student arrest statistics in the index crime in 2017 recorded 1722 students arrested, and in 2018, 1286 students were arrested. Recently, BERNAMA (2019) reported that a male student, who obtained 7As in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), was imprisoned for addiction to *ketum* due to peer influences after finishing the SPM examination in 2017. On a similar note, in 2016, the Social Welfare Department stated that the involvement of male adolescents in crime is higher compared to female adolescents. Thus, an exploration to understand this issue in further detail is needed.

According to the Malaysian Prison Department statistics, as of 15 July 2019, the total number of inmates imprisoned and detained throughout Malaysian prison institutions was 63,946 people. Of the total population in prison, 59,801 were male, while 4,145 were female. According to the figures provided by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021), the number of adolescents involved in criminal activity in 2020 has grown by 10.5 per cent to 5,342 cases as compared to the previous year (4,833 cases). The number of instances involving their first offence rose by 15.7 per cent, reaching 4,916. Adolescents under the age of 21 were identified as the most numbered inmates at rehabilitation centres and prisons for minor crimes (Parliament, December 2019). As of 11 March 2019, a total of 3,734 juveniles under the age of 21 were sentenced. About 2,268 young prisoners were in prison, while 1,466 students were sentenced to *Sekolah Henry Gurney* (SHG). And of the 3,734 inmates, 1,400 inmates were attending academic studies at the *Sekolah Integriti* (SI) and SHG, while the rest attended skills and recovery programs (Melaka Kini, March 2019). Based on the data, the issue of juvenile delinquency as a kind of criminal conduct is both serious and worrying. So much has been done to support the recovery of juveniles in Malaysia, such as providing them with the opportunity to continue their studies while imprisoned.

The current study attempted to understand the former young male juvenile delinquents' involvement in delinquent behaviours. The researcher looked for the complexity of their lived experiences from their varied backgrounds and relied on their views, and perspectives as former juvenile delinquents. This study aimed to explore the juvenile delinquent involvement among former young male prisoners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Juvenile Delinquency

According to Steinberg (2017), juvenile delinquency, also known as juvenile offending, is categorised as an externalising problem. It includes delinquency (crimes committed by minors that are dealt with in the juvenile justice system) and criminal behaviour (crimes that are dealt with in the criminal justice system, regardless of the offender's age). On the other hand, status offences are a category of delinquent acts that are not against the law for adults but violate established codes of conduct for juveniles, like truancy or running away from home (Woolard & Scott, 2009).

A large proportion of juvenile offenders have conduct disorders, and most are aggressive (Kauten & Barry, 2020). Still, not all adolescents who have conduct disorder or are aggressive are likely to be juvenile offenders because that depends entirely on whether they have broken any law (Steinberg, 2017). Both violent crimes such as assault, rape, robbery, and murder, as well as property crimes such as burglary, theft, and arson, increase in frequency between the pre-adolescent and adolescent years, peak during the late high school years, and decline during young adulthood (Sweeten et al., 2014), with disciplinary issues that predict school failure and drop out, are plenty more common and can be discovered in boys and girls. Suspensions are also exceptionally predictive of future crook activity. For instance, adolescents suspended are ten instances greater in the likelihood of being involved in criminal activities (Aizer & Currie, 2018).

Youngsters whose problems with the law begin before adolescence are often psychologically troubled. Most of these delinquents are male, many are poor, and a disproportionate number come from homes where the divorce occurred (Farrington, 2000). Studies show that many adolescents who become persistent offenders have problems with self-regulation (Monahan, et al., 2013). They are more impulsive and less able to control their anger. Also, chronically delinquent adolescents are more likely than their peers to score low on a standardised test of intelligence and neuropsychological functioning and to perform poorly in school (Cauffman et al., 2005).

Juvenile Delinquency Risk Factors Among Adolescents

Involvement in criminal activities and delinquency is connected to a wide range of risk factors. Risk factors, such as family history and early school dropout, can have direct or indirect effects, and a study demonstrated the high prevalence of family and neighbourhood influences on early crime or juvenile delinquency (Pekala et al., 2021). Two suppressants against juvenile delinquency are adolescents' social attachments to conventional social institutions (i.e., family and school) and parental regulation of adolescents' leisure time (Liu & Miller, 2020). Yet, if adolescents encounter weak social relationships and poor parental supervision, their social lives could be negatively impacted and make them susceptible to juvenile delinquency. Moreover, their engagement in juvenile delinquency could damage their future, as delinquency is substantially connected with the risk of unemployment (Carter, 2019). Comparable results are also observed among high-risk adolescents and individuals with a criminal record (Chan, 2019). Although many juvenile delinquents do not maintain this behaviour into adulthood, when their circumstances change, for instance, getting a job, marrying, or simply growing out of their turbulent adolescence, their behaviour typically conforms to societal norms. Hence, most juvenile delinquents adjust to a noncriminal lifestyle, but the proportion of juvenile delinquents who become criminals is greater than that of non-delinquents (Britannica, 2023).

In studies based on small numbers of cases, Duncan and Duncan (1971) and Lander and Schulman (1963) expand on destructive and non-nurturing parent-child relationships as the causes of delinquency. They hypothesised that the relationships lead to acting out of intense hostility and homicidal behaviour. Furthermore, parental monitoring inhibits non-aggressive delinquency and has a gendered effect on aggressive delinquency. Males have higher delinquency involvement and receive less effectiveness of parental monitoring (Liu & Miller, 2019). Hoeve et al. (2008) find that neglectful parenting is more frequent among serious delinquents than among minor or non-delinquents, suggesting that parenting styles differentiate non- or minor delinquents from serious delinquents. This is because parental attachment inhibits non-aggressive delinquency. Attachment to parents is promoted through supportive communications and relationships between youth and their parents (Liu & Miller, 2019). Traumatic loss exposure also, separation from the caregiver(s), and bereavement are potential sources of persistent distress into adolescence and adulthood (Grasso et al., 2015). In addition, a study conducted by Simmons et al. (2018) shows that adolescents with harsh fathers committed more offences than those with absent fathers because adolescents with harsh fathers are exposed to a greater range of substances besides those hostile fathers posing a greater risk to adolescents.

Adolescents who have stronger relationships with their parents are less likely to participate in antisocial behaviours (Jacobsen & Zaatut, 2022). Limited family support and the lack of management strategies by parents are factors that contribute to the incidence of delinquency. Whereas well-nurtured relationships between parents from birth onward encourage attachment or bonding (Sari & Nurhayati, 2019). Sari and Nurhayati (2019) claim that parent-child relationships in normal households are characterised by warm affection between parents as well as hostility towards parents. According to Onsando et al. (2021), parenting style plays a significant effect in the development or prevention of juvenile delinquency. Thus, the parenting style chosen by parents establishes the foundation for the child's psychological and social development, which typically results in the formation of the child's moods and temperaments (Sarno, 2020). This demonstrates the relationship between dysfunctional parenting and the development of juvenile delinquent inclinations.

Former Young Male Juvenile Delinquents

From the legal point of view, there are various definitions of juveniles depending on groups and ages. According to the Laws of Malaysia under Act 537, Prison Act 1995, a juvenile or a young offender is defined as a prisoner under 21 years. The Prison Department of Malaysia detains juveniles, aged between 14 and 21 years, in prison as young prisoners at SI or in SHG. The Child Act 2001 defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years and below and the age of criminal responsibility at the age of ten. The Children and Young Persons Employment Act 1996 defines a child as a person aged between 10 and 14 years and a young person as one aged between 14 and 16 years. From the legal point of view, juveniles can be defined as a group of adolescents under the age of 21 years who have criminal responsibility at the age of 10 years. In this study context, the recruitment of participants involved former young male juvenile delinquents who had been released. Being former young male juvenile delinquents, they had lived juvenile delinquency experiences. They were also minors and belonged to the age-specific group of prisoners between the ages of 14 and 21.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher adopted the phenomenological research approach to this qualitative research. According to Husserl (1970), the 'life world' is defined as what we encounter pre-reflectively, without recourse to categorisation or conceptualisation. It frequently includes what is taken for granted or common sense. The emphasis of phenomenological study design is on the world as lived by a person rather than the world or reality as something separate from the person (Valle et al., 1989). It describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants and Selection Technique

The researcher employed purposive sampling technique that aimed to identify the possible sample to be in this field study. The sampling technique employed was snowballing or chain technique. In the snowballing technique, the researcher first identified cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the researcher

contacted prison counsellors and received relevant information and contact numbers of potential participants, former young male juvenile delinquents. Snowball sampling was employed based on referrals. This method was employed since individuals with incarceration records may be unwilling to discuss their psychological and juvenile pasts. As a result, four participants were recruited, who then recruited subsequent respondents. The researcher reached out to a total of seventeen respondents, of whom eight of them agreed to participate. The participants were eight (8) young male adults aged between 21 and 26 who were former young male juvenile delinquents. They were selected to participate in the study via purposive sampling and snowballing. The researcher contacted them via WhatsApp to introduce herself and clarify how she obtained their contact information. The researcher then explained the purpose of the study via follow-up calls. After receiving verbal consent from the participants, the researcher emails the participants relevant documents, including informed consent and demographic form. The researcher scheduled online interviews with each participant. The participants were then interviewed based on their scheduled appointments.

Instrument

For the present study, the researcher developed and employed a set of semi-structured interview questions to obtain a detailed description and accumulate the required data to delve deep beneath the surface of the phenomenon. The semi-structured interview questions included a set of topical interview protocols based on the research questions that guided the researcher during the interview session. They were validated by selected experts in counselling and qualitative research. This method aimed to encourage open-ended responses from the participants. There were three sections; Section one consisted of open-ended questions revolving around involvement with delinquent behaviours. Section two consisted of their history of conflict with the law. Section three was about the influence that contributed to their involvement in juvenile delinquency. The questions were designed to see the pattern of juvenile delinquent behaviours. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the participants were provided with a concise overview of the research and an interview protocol to facilitate their comprehension of the interview process.

Data Collection

The utilisation of semi-structured interview questions alongside a predetermined set of topical interview protocols has effectively guided the interview sessions and, at the same time, encouraged open-ended responses by the participants. Hence, this methodology was found helpful in achieving the research objectives and answering the research questions of this research. Ethical clearance and human subjects' approvals were acquired from the authors' respective institutions and the Prison Department prior to the commencement of data collection for this study. To assess participants' experiences related to their involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours, one-to-one video call through Google Meet with the participants who volunteered to share their lived experiences to understand the specific issues and events related to their juvenile delinquent behaviours were conducted. A link to the online meeting platform was sent to participants through WhatsApp. During the interview sessions, participants were asked about their involvement in juvenile delinquency and lived experiences. To explore the major concerns of participants, among the questions posted as the interview protocols include their involvement in delinquent behaviours and who influenced them.

Data Analysis and Credibility

The study was interested in learning the participants' psychological world through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Rather than measuring their frequency, the goal was to grasp the depth and complexities of such meanings. This process entailed the interaction with the transcript in an interpretative capacity (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). While seeking to capture and do justice to the participants' meanings in order to learn about their involvements in juvenile delinquent behaviours, those meanings were attained through persistent interaction with the text and a process of interpretation. According to Smith and Shinebourne (2012), the process of IPA involves four stages, which are: (i) looking for the themes in the first case, (ii) connecting the themes, (iii) continuing the analysis with other cases, and (iv) writing up. For the first stage, the transcripts were reviewed several times, with the left-hand margin utilized for comments. The text was separated into meaning units, each unit was commented on, and the emergent themes were listed on paper. Second, the researcher identified the links and connections between them. The emergent themes were ordered or arranged chronologically based on the sequence they came up with in the transcript. For the third stage, a table of themes for the first participant was developed, analysed, and incorporated into the transcript for the second and other participants. The researcher used the themes from the first case to help orient the subsequent analysis. The themes were not chosen solely based on their prevalence within the data. The fourth stage involves transitioning from the final themes to a write-up of final statements summarizing the meanings inherent in the participants' experiences, which are presented in the subsequent discussion. The analysis involving all four stages was reviewed by the experts who validated the interview protocol. The experts' reviews and the good number of participants have helped to ensure that data collected were rich, thick, credible and auditable.

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the interview data with all eight participants, three (3) broad themes emerged and presented following a brief description of the participants' profile.

Participants' Profile

Participants involved in the study consisted of eight (8) young Muslim male adolescents with their age ranging from 21 to 26 years, where six of them were single, while two were married. As for the offence, all of them were caught due to drug trafficking. In compliance with research ethics, the participants' names were changed to codes to ensure their anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality.

Participant AD1

AD1, aged 22 is a single, Muslim male offender who was involved in various juvenile offences such as gambling and drug addiction. He was imprisoned at least five times and is currently on bail. He also had a family history of substance abuse.

Participant FA2

FA2, a single Muslim male offender aged 22 was caught at the age of 19 for drug trafficking. He was sentenced for two years and has a sibling who was charged with drug addiction.

Participant AJ3

AJ3, aged 21, is a single Muslim male offender who was charged with drug trafficking. He began using drugs since he was thirteen and was first arrested when he was sixteen for drug possession. A repeated offender, he was finally sentenced for two years for dangerous drug possession.

Participant ED4

ED4, aged 22, is a married Muslim male offender who was charged with drug trafficking. ED4 had a long arrest history of selling and acquiring illegal substances. He had been arrested six to seven times before he was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison under the Dangerous Drugs (Special Preventive Measures) Act 1985.

Participant EI5

EI5, aged 26, is a married Muslim male offender who was charged with drug trafficking. He got involved in drug trafficking offences during his college years and served a two-year prison sentence for violating the Dangerous Drugs (Special Preventive Measures) Act 1985. The first year of EI5's incarceration was spent as a juvenile prisoner, while in the second year, due to his age of over twenty-one, he was transferred to the adult prisoner section.

Participant IA6

IA6, aged 21, is a single Muslim male offender who was charged with drug trafficking. At thirteen, IA6 began engaging in behavioural offences, such as drug use and drug trafficking. He was involved in selling heroin and methamphetamine and was arrested twice before he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment. IA6 was sentenced to an additional prison term of two years for fighting in prison. Fortunately, the additional term was shortened to one year due to his good conduct, thus making him served three years of imprisonment in total.

Participant AM7

AM7, aged 23, is a single Muslim male offender who was charged with drug trafficking. At the age of eighteen, AM7 began selling drugs as his income. He was involved in illegal activities for a year before he was arrested and finally received his two-year prison sentence. During his two years in prison, AM7 committed various offences, including being involved in a fight and smuggling of tobacco. Due to his numerous repeated offences, he was known as the juvenile prisoner to have been incarcerated the longest.

Participant DA8

DA8, aged 24, is a single Muslim male offender who was charged with drug trafficking. He had a history of conflict with the law and began using drugs when he was sixteen years old. To meet his ongoing supply of drugs, he started selling them at the age of seventeen. He dealt with drugs for two years before he was caught and served a two-year prison sentence from 2019 to 2021. He had a family history of substance abuse and addiction.

Involvement In Juvenile Delinquent Behaviours

Three main themes were identified for the reasons of their involvement in juvenile delinquency, which are, (i) peer pressure, (ii) lucrative business, and (iii) recidivism and repeat offence.

i) Peer Pressure

The first theme demonstrates that their participation was influenced by peer pressure. Seven of the participants stated that their participation in juvenile delinquency resulted from peer pressure. For example, FA2 explained that his friends were among those who took and sold drugs. He learned how to use the drugs from his peers and mingled with them for the sake of the drugs. Meanwhile, AJ3 related that he was influenced by his peers since. He admitted that he began using drugs which were supplied by his friends when he was thirteen years old. Besides AJ3, DA8 also stated that his involvement in drugs was due to his friends' influence. His friends encouraged him to try drugs, and he eventually became addicted. He said,

“...the root is entirely from me as a result of influence from my friends, they told me to taste it, and everything is normal, well... we were too young, then.” (DA8)

Other than taking drugs, they also learnt about drug dealing and trafficking from their peers. IA6 indicated that he was affected by his peers. He learned to distribute drugs from his friends,

“...I was influenced by my friends, the procedure for drug distribution, so I learnt. From there, I started the drug-dealing.” (IA6)

Furthermore, AM7 elaborated that the involvement started with friendship. Initially, he simply observed his friends, peddling drugs. When he realized that distributing drugs was profitable, he began to engage in the drug business. He said,

“It started as I was a friend to them. I followed them, and initially, I did not get involved. But I kept following them. I observed them. And I finally felt that I wanted to join them, so since then, I came along to do the business.” (AM7)

In addition to these testimonies, their peers' lifestyles also played a role in influencing their involvement in drug trafficking. Observing their peers' lifestyles of getting easy money and high income from selling drugs, made them interested to be involved in drug trafficking. ED4 indicated that he was influenced by the extravagant lifestyles of his drug-dealing friends. He likewise desired a luxurious lifestyle and began engaging in the same activities. He attested,

“When with those friends, I saw that they could have this, and have that, buy this, buy that. So, I made a quick decision to join them too.” (ED4)

Similar involvement in drug trafficking was also shared by another participant, EI5 who admitted that selling illegal substances was an easy way to generate money. This shows that the participants' involvement in juvenile delinquency was highly influenced by their peers as they were vulnerable to yield to peer pressure during their adolescent years.

ii) Lucrative Business

According to the findings of the study, the second theme for their involvement in drug trafficking was motivated by the lucrative profits from drug sales. Seven of them reported selling various types and quantities of drugs. In relation to this, their income varies depending on the type and quantity of drug sold. A case in point was AD1 who admitted that a significant amount of profit and a substantial income may be generated from drug sales. He elaborated,

“The profits from the stuff itself is no less than RM5000. For example, the stuff when we purchased was about RM5000 but when we sell, the profit is easily more than RM5000.” (AD1)

Meanwhile, AJ3 started as a drug courier before venturing into drug dealing after finding out that the business was profitable. He said,

“...First, they asked me to despatch that stuff, just as a despatch rider. But for me, I realized it is not enough to act as a rider. I wanted more profit and income.” (AJ3)

Apart from this, the participants also expressed their experience of selling drugs in terms of the different quantity. Most of the participants were actively involved in large-scale sale of drugs and reaped good profits from the activities. ED4 shared that they could earn more than a thousand ringgit for selling a single unit of *pil kuda*,

"...for the pil kuda, a single unit is RM1600 or RM1500 each." (ED4)

Meanwhile, EI5 explained that the price of the drugs may increase from time to time. This also indicates the lucrative aspect of drug businesses which promises a good income.

"In the past, we purchased it at RM3500 for 50 grams. But this was a long time ago; maybe now it is a different story and it can be more expensive today..." (EI5)

A similar experience was also shared by IA6 about the good price of selling drugs. Different locations also contribute to the different prices. He said,

"For one kilo, the price is about RM35000 in my place, Johor. But I sold it once, where the price increased to RM45000. Hence, I gained about RM10,000 of profit!" (IA6)

Meanwhile, the lucrative business of drug selling is also on a daily basis as DA8 explained that he could earn a profit of up to RM500 per day for selling a carton of drugs.

"...I gained a lot of profits at that time. I sold a carton and I was able to collect about RM2000. After deducting RM1500, I managed to earn a nett profit of RM500." (DA8)

Hence, it appears that their involvement in the illegal activities of drug trafficking, specifically in relation to juvenile delinquency, was primarily motivated by the prospect of generating substantial income.

iii) Recidivism and Repeated Offences

Despite the potential for lucrative financial gain, engaging in illegal activities carries significant consequences. The next theme generated in the study is recidivism and repeated offences. All participants reported that they were arrested, locked up several times and released on bail before being sentenced for imprisonment. For instance, AD1 reported that he was arrested at his father's friend's house with three other family members for drug possession. For AD1, almost all his family members were involved in drug abuse and dealing and were caught multiple times for the same offence. Other participants shared similar experiences as AD1, where they were caught multiple times before finally being sent to prison. This was due to a lack of evidence when they were arrested. However, due to the repeated offences, they were finally detained and sentenced to imprisonment. As an illustration, AJ3 said,

"At first, when I was caught, I was released on bail. After that, I stopped everything. But then, I had to go to court, and the police arrested me again. And this time, I was detained under LLPK for selling the drugs." (AJ3)

ED4 also stated that he had been arrested between six and seven times before he was finally convicted. It was in 2018, at the age of nineteen, when he was convicted, found guilty and imprisoned for two years. Meanwhile, EI5 was initially arrested and then freed owing to a lack of evidence. He was subsequently re-arrested and convicted guilty. He was then admitted to prison.

“For the first time in my detention, there was no charge against me because the test on my urine was negative. But for the second time, my luck ran out.” (EI5)

Another participant, IA6, also indicated that he was arrested for the first time at the age of sixteen under Section 12(2) of the Drug Act where his family helped to ensure his release. But he was promptly admitted to prison when he was arrested for the second time.

“...at 16, I was detained under Dangerous Drug Act 12(2) ... I got detained for the second time, there was no second chance for me. The stuff is a lot.” (IA6)

Additionally, AM7 was arrested for the first time and released on bond. Then, after the second arrest, he was transferred to a prison under Act 39(A)1.

“The first time of my detention, I managed to get released. But after my second detention, at my house that noon, the cops arrived, and I was caught and charged under 39(A).” (AM7)

A similar experience of recidivism and repeat offence was shared by another participant DA8, who was arrested three times, and on two separate occasions, was released on bail. However, following his third arrest, he was taken to prison. Thus, recidivism and repeat offence indicate their active involvement in juvenile delinquency. Recidivism denotes the relapse of a participant's engagement in criminal activities and the imposition of penalties or imprisonment for a previous offence.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that peer influence significantly affects an individual's life. According to Steinberg (1987), peer influence and acceptance of delinquent behaviours are significant, and this relationship is exacerbated when adolescents have little interaction with their parents. In addition, the influence of peer pressure is a significant factor in the development of juvenile delinquency (Reeta, 2020). Findings of the study also indicate that their high income and benefits caused them to continuously engage in juvenile delinquency, which is drug dealing. According to Saladino et al. (2021), when drug dealing is viewed as a kind of job and survival for individuals who do not perceive alternatives or when an organised crime group hire teenagers to engage in drug dealing, they are more likely to become professional drug dealers and maintain this illegal activity when they become adults. Moreover, recidivism and repeated offence rates are viewed as one of the most crucial problems to solve. Due to recidivism, juvenile delinquents continue to commit crimes without fear.

Based on the findings, the perspectives of the former young male juvenile delinquents after being released from prison were thoroughly analysed to reveal their juvenile delinquency involvement. It is also assumed that their juvenile delinquency involvement may be subjected to the unique experiences of the individuals, their characteristics, perspectives about life, unique environmental setups, and family background.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study has provided a picture of the early delinquency experience and involvement that aggravates adolescents' delinquent behaviours. This discovery provides an essential framework for comprehending the process and experiences those former juvenile delinquents have undergone. The exploration of former young male juvenile delinquents demonstrates the significant impact of social factors on their engagement in juvenile delinquency. In addition, the influence of material possessions, such as monetary resources, played a significant role in their engagement in illegal activities. Furthermore, recidivism was seen as an important issue that needed to be addressed. This study provides counsellors with good findings that are useful in preparing for cases involving adolescents and behavioural offences specifically related to the potential risks among teenage clients. Due to the covid crisis, the interview with the young male juvenile delinquents in person were conducted via phone, video call, or Google Meet. Thus, it has limited the data collection in capturing the non-verbal aspects. This is because a face-to-face interview allows the researcher to observe and see the participant's gestures and facial expressions more clearly and record more accurate reflective field notes. It is also recommended that future studies will involve young juvenile delinquents who are still serving their sentences so that their experiences while undergoing detention can be explored and examined.

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ETHICS APPROVAL

The study received the approval of IIUM Research Ethics Committee with ID no. IREC 2020-048.

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