

POVERTY AND DELINQUENCY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON SELECTED JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN YANGON REGION

Myint Myint Thein¹, Nilar Kyu²

Abstract

The major objective of this study was to investigate the effect of poverty on the delinquent character and behavioral development of children in Myanmar. To achieve this objective, the present research looked into the effects of three primary themes that were highly associated with poverty and were known to increase crime: miserable family conditions, school failure, and affiliation with deviant peers. From the Thanlyin Juvenile Training School in the Yangon region, 17 juvenile offenders between the ages of 13 and 17 were chosen using the purposive maximum variation sampling technique. We used a variety of qualitative data collection methods, including in-depth case interviews, observation, and document analysis. The data collected were interpreted using a thematic content analysis. Results showed a high correlation between children's delinquent character and behavioral development and three primary themes that poverty enhances crime. It has been discovered that poverty can cause serious financial difficulties, family stress and suffering, strained parent-child relationships, family conflict, parental divorce, school failure, and association with undesirable people, all of which can be harmful to children. The findings from this study will help understand the real-life experiences of juvenile offenders, particularly those who are suffering from extreme deprivation. The insight gained from this study is anticipated to help implement prevention and intervention programs for juvenile delinquent behavior in Myanmar.

Keywords: *Poverty, Juvenile Delinquency, Qualitative study, Myanmar*

Introduction

Numerous societies view juvenile delinquency as a social problem (Arthur, 1996; Junger-Tas *et al.*, 2010). Juvenile delinquency is one of the major societal problems faced by all populations, and through numerous interventions, not only has their occurrence not decreased, but it has also increased and grown (Nourollah, Fatemeh & Farhad, 2015). In the United States of America, 400000 cases were conducted by courts with juvenile jurisdiction in 1960. An estimated 818,900 delinquent cases were handled in 2017 by juvenile courts. Therefore, it can be seen that the 2017 juvenile court delinquency caseload was almost double the 1960 caseload (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2019).

According to the available data in Myanmar, over 1000 cases were conducted for each year from 2001 to 2006 respectively. In 2015, however, a total of 2459 cases were conducted by the Township Courts and Juvenile courts (Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement [MSWRR], 2006). These statistics showed, in Myanmar, almost double the increase in a decade. Currently, 489 juveniles are detained in Thanlyin Juvenile Training School. To deter future delinquency, the prevention and provision of formal and effective treatment for offenders is essential. Successful preventive strategies cannot be established without knowing the factors behind the participation of young people in criminal activity.

Poverty is an increasingly pervasive issue in today's society. As stated by Haughton and Khandker (2009), the World Bank defines poverty as a severe deprivation of well-being. According to the World Bank's definition of poverty, people are considered poor if their income is below what is required to maintain the average standard of life in the society, they live in. The

¹ Department of Psychology, Dagon University

² Patheingyi University

national poverty line in 2017 was 1590 kyats per adult equivalent per day, or roughly USD 1.18, according to the Myanmar Living Conditions Survey Poverty Report (2019). A household in Myanmar is considered to be poor if its per adult equivalent consumption level in kyats is below the threshold required to meet the country's minimal standard of living. Poor people are those whose daily consumption is at or below 1590 kyats. According to estimates from the 2017 Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (MLCS), 11.8 million people, or 24.8% of the total population, are considered to be poor, down from 48.2% in 2015. About 1 in 4 people are nonetheless beneath the poverty line in Myanmar (CSO, UNDP & World Bank, 2019).

Due to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), juvenile refers to a person below the age of 18 years. When a person commits offenses before the age of 18, it is called juvenile delinquency and the offender is called juvenile delinquent. Consistent with the UNCRC, Myanmar's reformed Child Rights Law (2019) defines a juvenile or a young offender as a child who has not attained the age of eighteen at the time of committing the offense. The age of criminal responsibility is 12 years. Juvenile delinquent activities can vary from less extreme actions such as violation of school laws, absenteeism, school truancy, cigarette smoking, and vandalism to more serious crimes such as theft, burglary, misuse of drugs, rape, and possession of guns (Choon *et al.*, 2013).

Juvenile delinquency not only originates from people's motivations internally and individually but also takes effect from social and environmental factors. An enormous collection of research has been amassed over the previous decades about associates and indicators of juvenile delinquency (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Over the different areas, the most examined factors are individual characteristics and family factors (Derzon, 2010; Piquero *et al.*, 2009).

Criminologists have paid a great deal of attention to the socio-economic status-delinquency relationship. According to the Strain Theory, crime is caused by the difficulty faced in achieving socially valued goals with legitimate means by those in poverty (Merton, 1969). Studies have found that children from poor and low-class backgrounds are much more likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Shamim *et al.*, 2009). According to research, childhood poverty, and low socioeconomic position are significant risk factors that have long been linked to substance misuse, criminal activity, and delinquency (Galloway & Skardhamar, 2010). This clearly explains why children from low-income homes are more likely to drop out of school, affiliated with disruptive peers, and engage in antisocial behavior.

Poverty is intimately connected to adolescent delinquency since it can result in a variety of delinquent behaviors (Prochnow & Defronzo, 1997). It results in stressful living situations and creates environments that encourage antisocial behavior. If the causes of delinquency can be determined, action can be taken to correct the causes of delinquency.

The Yangon Region, which is the center of Myanmar's economy, has a substantial disparity in social status and a sizable proportion of its population lives in poverty (World Bank, 2020). As a result, there are more juvenile delinquency cases in the area. However, there is a lack of qualitative research that examines the circumstances and lived experiences that link juvenile criminal activity and poverty in this setting. By conducting an extensive qualitative investigation on a chosen group of juvenile offenders in the Yangon Region, this study aims to fill a research gap. This study aims to investigate the effects of poverty and how it affects children's behavioral and character development in light of its negative effects on children.

Methods

Participants

As participants, 17 young offenders from Thanlyin Juvenile Training School in Yangon region were used in this study. The ages of participants range from 13 to 17 years. Participants were recruited by purposive maximum variation sampling technique. This sampling technique allowed to the selection of participants based on 1) having participants with age differences and 2) selecting offenders who are new arrivals as well as the old ones in the training school. Participants' length of stay ranges from 2 weeks to 2 years. A short description of respondents' profiles can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Short description of respondents' profiles

Name	Sex	Age	Race/ Religion	Crime Committed	Parents' marital status	Edu- cation Level	Work experience
P1	Male	16	Burmese/ Buddhist	Rape	Remarried	KG	Mason
P2	Male	14	Burmese/ Buddhist	Drugs possession	Widowed	Illiterate	Plastic collector
P3	Male	16	Burmese/ Buddhist	Theft	Widowed	Grade 8	Mason
P4	Male	15	Burmese/ Buddhist	Theft	Married	KG	Waiter
P5	Male	17	Burmese/ Buddhist	Drugs dealing	Married	Illiterate	Fruit selling
P6	Male	17	Burmese/ Buddhist	Theft	Remarried	Grade 9	None
P7	Male	15	Burmese/ Buddhist	Drugs dealing	Remarried	Grade 8	Water seller
P8	Male	17	Chin/ Christian	Murder	Married	Grade 8	Welding, Motorcycle taxi
P9	Male	17	Burmese/ Buddhist	Rape	Married	Grade 4	Mason, Welding
P10	Male	13	Burmese/ Buddhist	Theft	Widowed	Grade 4	Waiter
P11	Male	17	Burmese/ Buddhist	Theft	Married	Grade 10	Wiring, Sales stuff
P12	Male	13	Burmese/ Buddhist	Theft	Married	Illiterate	None

Name	Sex	Age	Race/ Religion	Crime Committed	Parents' marital status	Edu- cation Level	Work experience
P13	Male	17	Burmese/ Buddhist	Robbery	Married	Grade 10	Bicycle repair
P14	Male	15	Burmese/ Buddhist	Drugs possession	Married	Grade 8	None
P15	Male	17	Burmese/ Buddhist	Drugs dealing	Divorced	Grade 9	Painter
P16	Male	16	Burmese/ Buddhist	Drugs possession	Married	Grade 5	Factory Work, Car wash
P17	Male	13	Muslim/ Islam	Theft	Married	Grade 5	None

Approach and Method for Conducting Research

In this study, a qualitative research approach was used. With the use of this approach, the researchers were able to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied by drawing on the experiences of young offenders in natural settings. Additionally, it gave a more complete grasp of the issue under inquiry, giving the voices of juvenile offenders a chance to be heard. In this study, the researchers sought to comprehend how poverty affected the character and behavioral development of children from Myanmar who were growing up in challenging family environments, performing poorly in school, and hanging out with deviant peers. This study used a case study method with numerous cases.

Procedure and Instruments

Before the collection of the data, permission was asked from the head of the Department of Social Welfare, Yangon Division. For the purpose of gathering data, this study included observation, document analysis, and face-to-face, in-depth, unstructured case interviews. The participants were recruited using the purposive maximum variation sampling technique. The unstructured interview guide was used to gather information about how poverty impacts children's character and behavioral development. Participants were asked about their demographics before each interview session. Between 30 and 50 minutes were allotted for the interviews.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was complete, all audiotaped interviews were transcribed at full length by listening to the recording, replaying the recording, and rereading the transcript as the audio played. Thematic content analysis was used as a means to analyze the data collected. Relevant codes were used to categorize into themes. Each narrative was analyzed and coded several times to ensure that all the important details were captured in the overall theme selection process. Key themes have emerged after the data was analyzed.

Results and Discussion

The participant's experiences with the three main crime-enhancing factors or themes that were triggered by poverty are summarized and discussed in the section that follows. These themes are miserable family conditions, school failure, and association with deviant peers. This study indicated that, based on the experiences of 17 young people, having a challenging family environment, failing in school, and being surrounded by deviant peers because of their family's poverty were all significant factors in the development of their delinquent behaviors.

Miserable Family Conditions

Economic deprivation is a central feature of children's poverty experiences. Children from poor families tend to use illegal means to get what they want as they are commonly unsatisfied with their financial circumstances, and they do not get sufficient pocket money from their parents. Children from poor homes want things that their parents cannot provide for them, or they want more money so that they can do whatever they want. Today's children have a lot of desires compared to their predecessors. They need money to buy mobile phones, or to play games at game shops and to hang around with their friends. To join in peer society, they have to use unlawful means and take certain significant risks, hence putting themselves in a highly precarious position. In addition to financial problems at home, most of the children have witnessed domestic violence and some have experienced child abuse. As they are not happy at home, they run away and live in the streets which provides them the opportunity to constantly associate with deviant peers. This was demonstrated in the lives of our participants, as they were all dealing with some sort of financial issue and some kind of conflict in their families. An example can be seen in Participant 1(P1).

Despite a daily income of 5000-8000 kyats per day, P1's stepfather consumes alcohol every day for which most of his income is spent and only 2000-3000 kyats of his income is left for the family. His mother usually earns 7000-8000 kyats, but her income is not stable. With four children to support and debt to repay, P1 has to forego many of life's luxuries. P1's mother only gave him 200-300 kyats as pocket money per day and he stole from other people to supplement his pocket money:

Interviewer: Were there times that your pocket money was not enough?

P1: Yes, almost always.

Interviewer: If so, what did you do?

P1: I sneaked out of the houses, stole phones, and sold them.

When asked how he spends his money, P1 stated that he needs it for snacks and to play games when he hangs around with his friends.

After being abused and kicked out of his home by his stepfather at the age of 12, P1 was provided with more opportunities to affiliate with deviant peers and participated even more actively in antisocial activities, hence he ended up in a juvenile detention training school. The temptation to steal was too strong to resist, especially when he needed money to survive. Regarding the abuse he has experienced, P1 stated:

“I was often beaten by my stepfather for playing around with my friends. At one time, he pulled my hair and hit me with the flip-flop while I was watching my friends who were playing cane ball. He often hit and kicked me out of the house, so I ran away from home in the morning while my mother was going out to work. My mother came to find me at night”.

His mother's second marriage was not helpful to P1 at all and instead, he was abused by his stepfather. Running away from home was the only option for him to stop that situation. By living away from home and having no money, he had to find other means of survival and crime was his only alternative. Therefore, it can be seen from the narratives of P1 that it was poverty that had brought serious negative consequences for the children.

As for Participant 4 (P4), his situation was even worse than others. He committed theft due to his desire to survive and possess something that his parents could not provide. With a family income of 6000-7000 kyats per day and 5 children to support, there was not enough money even for consumption. P4's family had struggled to make ends meet with the meager income of his father. Because of insufficient financial situation, their family members had to eat only one time instead of 3 meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in a day and P4 had to forego many luxuries in life. He decided to steal because of the desire to supplement his pocket money and to buy a mobile phone that his parents couldn't afford to give him. As a result of his family's inability to provide for him, he turned to crime to meet his needs:

Interviewer: What led you to be detained in this training school?

P4: I went to the factory to steal cable wires with my three friends. We were caught on the way. Two of my friends and I are here. Another one is in Insein Prison.

Interviewer: Why did you steal them?

P4: Because we want money to supplement our pocket money and to buy a mobile phone to play games.

It can be seen from the story of P4 that it is the desire to possess something that they could not afford forced the children to engage in delinquency. As children know that they cannot get what they want from their parents, they try to find alternative ways and take significant risks to get what they want. It is also true for Participant 3 (P3) and Participant 13 (P13) who committed the crime because they wanted to possess something that their family could not support.

Participant 11(P11) is in a similar situation. P11's father usually earns 8000 kyats as average income per day, but part of his income is used for alcohol. P11's mother sells salads in the school's canteen and usually earns 10000 kyats including capital per day, but it is not a regular income as she cannot sell on weekends and holidays. As P11's family struggled to make ends meet mostly on his father's meager income, there were days that they had nothing to eat when his father was sick and could not work. P11 had a poor relationship with his father, and he was often abused by him for no good reason. His father consumes alcohol every day and tends to beat and throw things at his mother whenever he is in a drunken state. He shed tears and seemed to be very sad every time he talked about his family's situation. Regarding the abuse he had experienced from his father, he stated:

“He loses his temper when he becomes angry. He never understood me, and I was often scolded and beaten for no good reason. I was punched for coming home late from work due to overtime, wearing jean pants and boots, and playing games. At those times, living at home was so stressful (crying). I did not want to live at home, especially with my father. When I grow up, I will work hard to earn money and live with my mother.”

After dropping out of school, P11 worked as a salesperson and supported his family however, he later had to quit his job. After leaving his job, he spent most of the time with his friends at the tea shop to avoid his father. In addition to losing his job and having a poor relationship with his father, he argued with his mother one day and this led him to run away from home and to stay with deviant peers.

Our study showed that many parents vent their frustrations at their children without realizing what sort of psychological damage they are inflicting. They not only yell at their children but also indulge in verbal and physical violence. When a parent is constantly angry at a child and scolds him/her even for small things, a child can feel worthless and depressed. If parents mistreat their children, some of them may become combative, rebellious, and persistently misbehave. Participant 8 (P8), for instance, has been abused by his father harshly. Whenever P8 gets into fights, his father ties him with a rope and beats him with a belt. His father's punishment has, in turn, converted his aggression to getting into fights more frequently and ending up in a police station. Finally, he was detained in this training school and was charged with committing murder.

The cited instances show what horrible living situations our participants had to deal with as a result of their poverty. As mentioned in the above narratives of the participants, it was found that all the participants in this study came from a low socioeconomic background, and none of the respondents' parents had completed high school. The parents of the interviewees had poor occupations and occasionally were unemployed due to their lack of education and skills. All seventeen of the participants in the study stated that they had engaged in theft because they were unable to meet their needs when they were children or students.

The results of our investigation agreed with those of earlier ones. Children from impoverished broken, or single-mother families are expected to suffer poorly in life if poverty can have such significant consequences on poor children from intact families (Burrell & Roosa, 2008). According to a few studies, losing a mother's employment can have a significant impact on how children behave (Hill *et al.*, 2011; Kalil & Wightman, 2011), especially in families with single mothers. In this study, it is found that 17.6% (3 out of 17) were stepchildren and 23.5% (4 out of 17) were children of single parents. According to Jeynes (2006), children raised in stepfamilies experience equivalent or worse stress than children reared in single-mother families.

Moreover, economically disadvantaged parents are usually unable to pay attention to the importance of parental care and cannot devote time to monitoring their children as they struggle to meet the basic needs of their families. Parental monitoring can influence delinquency by restricting teenagers' access to unsupervised activities while also indirectly influencing delinquency by reducing association with deviant peers (Patterson & Dishion, 1985; Patterson *et al.*, 2000). Adolescents from low-income households, on the other hand, appear to have the opposite experience.

Furthermore, this study indicates that most of the participants have been abused by their parents and/or witnessed domestic violence, prompting them to flee their homes and take shelter on the streets, making them vulnerable to deviant peers for companionship. Poverty is frequently regarded as the single strongest predictor of child maltreatment, particularly child neglect, and it is associated with a wide range of detrimental outcomes. It was observed that 76.5% of the participants (13 out of 17) had been exposed to maltreatment (physical abuse and neglect) at home. In this study, it was also found that 58.8 percent of the participants' fathers are alcoholics (10 out of 17).

In addition, this study revealed that 47.1 percent of respondents (8 out of 17) have witnessed domestic violence (physical) by their parents. The evidence supports this finding, demonstrating that poverty can be considered a factor in the escalation of domestic violence and that low-income families are substantially more likely to experience domestic turbulence and the stress that goes along with it (Purvin, 2007). This is in line with the findings of a large-scale quantitative study (Zinzow *et al.*, 2009), which indicated that children who observed parental violence had a 77 percent higher chance of engaging in delinquency than those who had not. This confirms the findings of Maas *et al.* (2008), who discovered that physical abuse is the form of familial violence that consistently predicts juvenile crime.

Poverty has negative consequences not only on a child but also on the whole family. It can be seen that parents' failure to monitor their children's behavior and incompetent way of handling them has led their children to run away from home, providing more opportunities to associate with deviant peers. Even an upright individual may be tempted to make a mistake in a life that is severely lacking in everything, not to mention innocent children.

School Failure

Poverty tends to be associated with lack of access to education or lower test scores and higher dropout rates. It was found that 9 out of 17 participants have dropped out of school and 3 out of 17 participants were expelled from school. It was found that many adolescents disliked attending school and preferred to spend their time with their peers. Among all participants, three of them (P12, P2, P5) had an absolute lack of access to education because of poor parenting and the economic situations of their families. For instance, Participant 2 (P2) didn't even get a chance to go to school. Being nurtured by his single mother who is illiterate and has a daily income of 3000 kyats, his mother did not afford to send P2 to school due to their family's difficult financial situation.

Interviewer: What is your highest education level?

P2: I've never attended school.

Interviewer: Why didn't you go to school?

P2: My mother didn't send me to school since I was young.

Interviewer: Have you ever asked your mother if you want to go to school?

P2: Yes, I did. But she only sends my younger sister to school.

Interviewer: Do you know why she doesn't send you to school?

P2: Yes, she just told me that because she doesn't have money.

Most of the participants have attended school but they also dropped out or were expelled from school. For instance, Participant 8 (P8) always failed the exams and got low grades at school:

Interviewer: Can you study on par with other students at school?

P8: No, I'm not intelligent.

Interviewer: Did you perform well in the exams?

P8: I always fail the exams.

Interviewer: Which subjects did you fail?

P8: English and Mathematics

Interviewer: Did your class teacher pay attention to your results? I mean, discuss with you or your parents about your low grades and then move you to another class or send you to an extra class?

P8: No, they don't. Because the teachers are afraid that I will fight with other students in other classrooms. They know that I am not on good terms with students from other classrooms and I have problems in controlling my anger.

P8 was often in trouble at school. He got himself into a lot of trouble because he couldn't control his temper. P8 would frequently go into full-blown temper tantrums and become violent. An example of this can be seen in an incident that occurred when he was in the 5th grade. As a result of this incident, he was suspended from school for three months with his three friends. He completely lost interest in his academics due to the low family income and the lack of parental supervision, and he started skipping school to hang out with his bad friends. He began smoking and started abusing alcohol in Grade 5 by imitating his girlfriend who abused alcohol and became addicted to it. When his parents found out that he abused alcohol, he was tied with a rope and beaten harshly with a belt until the rope was untied. As the pocket money he gets from his parents is only 100 kyats, he does not have enough money. He joined a gang and became fully immersed in the gang lifestyle and participated in criminal activities with other gang members. He charged a line fee from the shops and restaurants. Fighting was not an uncommon occurrence for P8. He had a bad temper and was eager to blow out at anyone who offended him. When he was in Grade 8, he was expelled from school as a result of fighting which led him to be charged, and ended up in this training school for the first time. This is the second time of being arrested and currently, he is charged with committing murder.

Participant 3(P3) also attended school however, he dropped out of it after Grade (8). P3's mother passed away when he was in Grade 7 and his father lived away from him. P3 lived with his sister and uncle's family. Their family has become indebted since his mother was hospitalized. He got 300 kyats as pocket money, but he has a habit of stealing money from his sister to supplement his pocket money. At school, like P8, he could not perform well in English and Mathematics and mostly got Grade C. He was frequently punished by his uncle for not studying. He used to be truant with his friends and secretly smoked. He was punished and had to sign a behavior contract for getting into a fight with other students at school. Losing interest in

his studies and knowing that he could not perform well at school, he dropped out of school and started fishing with his brother-in-law. After dropping out of school, he hung out with deviant peers from the neighborhood which led him to commit theft and to be detained in this training school. The school experiences of Participant 13 (P13) and Participant 16 (P16) were also similar to P3 as both of them had little interest in education and dropped out of school without completing high school.

Therefore, the fate of participants in this study indicates that poverty and lack of access to education or failure at school were directly interrelated as it seemed that many children followed the path of least resistance instead of trying too hard in school, and many poor Myanmar parents could not keep their children at school due to their life's demands. As parents themselves are illiterate or have a low level of education, their perceptions and attitudes toward education are less positive. Instead of sending their children to school, they expect their children to help their family in some way.

This study also found that children's school failure or lack of access to education was associated with their parent's poverty. It was discovered that the majority of the respondents 82.4% have poor test scores (14 out of 17), 52.9% (9 out of 17) of the participants dropped out of school, 17.6% (3 out of 17) were expelled from school, and that 17.6% (3 out of 17) did not have access to education. It was revealed that 64.28 percent of respondents attending school (9 out of 14) have a truancy problem. The dropout children sought employment to support their parents and meet their own needs. Because many poor parents did not spend enough time monitoring their children's academic performance and could not afford to pay for their tuition and necessary books, children's scholastic progress was jeopardized by the stress of poverty. Some of these poor parents were only too glad that their children had stopped attending school and were helping to support the family. Thus, socioeconomic circumstances indirectly influence children's academic success by way of parents' beliefs and behaviors (Davis-Kean, 2005). Studies have demonstrated that frequent parental supervision and homework help significantly improve children's academic achievement (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013; Patall *et al.*, 2008; Voorhis, 2011), while the converse appears to be true for children who lack any academic guidance.

Association with Deviant Peers

One of the circumstances that explain some participants' involvement in juvenile delinquency has emerged as deviant peer association. Most of the participants stated that the peers with whom they came into contact were the ones who got them engaged in criminal activity. Their relationship with these deviant peers persuaded them to use illegal means to get out of trouble, which led to their detention. When children from poor families tend to have a lack of access to education or fail at school, they tend to turn to their peers as a source of behavioral guidance. Children from lower socioeconomic classes do not interact with those from higher socioeconomic classes since friendships are restricted by class. When struggling students from low-income families band together, there is a good chance that they will commit delinquent acts like robbery, theft, or break-ins to raise money for the items that their parents cannot afford.

For instance, P1 started stealing after being threatened by an older guy who was into stealing. He broke into homes and stole phones because he had mastered the art of stealing through regular interaction with deviant friends. He also used to get into fights with his friends in

groups. P10 was no different from P1 as he also committed a theft due to the suggestion of his deviant friend who has a habit of stealing and abusing drugs. P13 committed robbery as his cousin suggested to do so.

Similarly, P11 stole a bicycle as the older guy he lived together with suggested he steal. In the same way, P4 stole wires with his friends as they wanted to buy a mobile phone. It can be observed that as young individuals interact with their delinquent companions, their perspectives on life change to meet their needs and objectives, leading to more sophisticated antisocial behavior.

Finally, this study found that poverty encourages children to hang out with their delinquent friends. This is because poorer children's peer interactions were limited to children from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. The results of this study demonstrated that to meet their particular requirements, youngsters engaged in criminal activity such as theft, robbery, drug sales, murder, or trafficking. However, since young people who engaged in criminal activity were not acting alone but rather belonged to a variety of peer groups, bad group association was considered a significant contributor to youth criminality. McGloin and Shermer's (2009) findings captured in the literature review, suggest that youth become delinquents as a result of their interactions with peers who support delinquency rather than those who oppose it.

When poor children who have to struggle in school band together, there is a good chance that they will commit crimes including theft, burglary, drug abuse, drug sales, or even murder to gain the goods their parents can't afford for them or to fulfill their desires. Parental monitoring can have a direct impact on delinquency by preventing children from engaging in unsupervised activities. It can also have an indirect impact by preventing contact with friends who engage in criminal activity (Patterson & Dishion, 1985; Patterson *et al.*, 2000). The opposite appears to be true for children of low-income parents.

Conclusion

This study presented insight into the experiences of young offenders and poverty-related factors that exacerbated children's delinquent behavior. The results of this study could help policymakers in Myanmar reevaluate the existing economic circumstances of families living in poverty and develop strategies to address the problem. Parents should be sent to parenting skill courses to enhance their methods of parenting because poor parenting can have negative effects on children. To keep children busy with worthwhile activities at school and shielded from the damaging effects of outside influences, schools should also play a role in the prevention of crime and delinquency through intervention programs like extracurricular activities. Additionally, interventions that address parental drinking should be undertaken to promote family functioning reduce family conflict, and thereby protect children. Evidence-based services and support should also be used to enhance protective factors that reduce the impacts of maltreatment and to equip families and communities with the tools to prevent maltreatment from occurring.

Some limitations can be found in this study. First, as this study used juvenile offenders who are still on trial, this could have affected participants' responses as the data collected were dependent on the participants' willingness to disclose accurate and honest information. In addition, as this study used juvenile delinquents who are still on trial, the important focus of future research should be replication of the current study using young juvenile offenders who

have already been sentenced. The second limitation is the sample of participants. As this study used young offenders from only one juvenile training school, this limited the range of participants' experiences. Hence, future research should utilize samples from diverse juvenile training schools. The last limitation is the researcher's biases. Because data collection, transcription, coding, analysis, and reporting are all dependent on the researcher's understanding and interpretation, they are likely to be influenced by the researcher's preconceptions and biases. This limitation can be minimized by employing a quantitative or mixed-method research design in future research.

Acknowledgements

We would like to convey our gratitude to Dr. Yi Yi Myint, professor and head of the Psychology Department, Dagon University, for approving the study.

References

- Arthur, A. (1996). Rehabilitation of juvenile offenders in Ghana: Focus on the social context of delinquency. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 24, 23–37.
- Choon, L. K., Hooi, L. Y., Murthi, L., Yi, T. S., Shven, T. Y. (2013). *The determinants influencing liquidity of Malaysia commercial banks, and its implication for relevant bodies*.
- Choon, L.J., M. Hasbullah and W.S. Ling (2013). 'Parental Attachment, Peer Attachment, and Delinquency among Adolescents in Selangor, Malaysia'. *Asian Social Science* 9(15): 214–9.
- Davis-Kean, P. (2005). The Influence of Parental Education and Family Income on Child Achievement: The Indirect Role of Parental Expectations and the Home Environment, *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19(2): 294–304
- Derzon, J.H. (2010). The Correspondence of Family Features with Problem, Aggressive, Criminal, and Violent Behavior: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 6(3):263–92.
- Farrington, D. P., & Welsh, B. C. (2007). *Saving children from a life of crime: Early risk factors and effective interventions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- Galloway, T.A. and T. Skardhamar (2010). 'Does Parental Income Matter for Onset of Offending?'. *European Journal of Criminology* 7(6): 424–41.
- Haughton, Jonathan, and Shahidur Khandker. (2009). *Handbook on poverty and inequality*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Hill, H.D., Morris, P.A., Castells, N., Walker, J.T. (2011). 'Getting a Job Is Only Half the Battle: Maternal Job Loss and Child Classroom Behavior in Low-Income Families'. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 30(2): 310–33.
- Hockenberry, S. and Puzzanchera, C. (2019) (June). [*Juvenile Court Statistics 2017*](#). Report. Pittsburgh, Pa: National Center for Juvenile Justice.
- Jeynes, W.H. (2006). The impact of parental marriage on children: A meta-analysis. *Marriage & Family Review*, 40, 75–98.
- Junger-Tas, J. & Marshall, I. H., Enzmann, D., Killias, M., Steketee, M., Gruszczynska, B. (2010). *Juvenile Delinquency in Europe and Beyond – Results of the Second International Self-Report Study*. New York: Springer.
- Kalil, A., Wightman, P. (2011). 'Parental Job Loss and Children's Educational Attainment in Black and White Middle-Class Families', *Social Science Quarterly* 92(1): 57–78.

- Lowe, K., Dotterer, A.M. (2013). 'Parental Monitoring, Parental Warmth, and Minority Youth's Academic Outcomes: Exploring the Integrative Model of Parenting'. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 42(9): 786–99.
- Mass, C., Herrenkohl, T.I. and Sousa, C. (2008). Review of research on child maltreatment and violence in youth. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 9(1), pp.56-67.
- McGloin, J. M. & Shermer, L. O. (2009). Self-Control and Deviant Peer Network Structure. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 46(1):35-72.
- Merton, R.K. (1969). 'Anomie and Social Structure', in D.R. Cressey and D.A. Ward (eds) *Delinquency, Crime and Social Process*, 185–214. New York: Harper & Row.
- Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR), (2006). *The Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2001-2006)*. Third and fourth national report.
- Nourollah M, Fatemeh M, Farhad J. (2015). "A Study of Factors Affecting Juvenile Delinquency". *Biomed Pharmacol J*;8(March Spl Edition).
- Patall, E.A., Cooper, H., Robinson, J.C. (2008). 'Parent Involvement in Homework: A Research Synthesis', *Review of Educational Research* 78(4): 1039–101.
- Patterson, G. R., Dishion, T.J., & Yoerger, K. (2000). Adolescent growth in new forms of problem behavior: Macro- and micro-peer dynamics. *Prevention Science*, 1(1), 3-13
- Patterson, G. R., & Dishion, T. J. (1985). Contributions of families and peers to delinquency. *Criminology*, 23(1), 63-79
- Piquero, A. R., Farrington, D. P., Welsh, B. C., Tremblay, R., & Jennings, W. G. (2009). Effects of early family parenting training programs on antisocial behavior and delinquency. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 5, 83-120
- Prochnow, J.E. and J.V. Defronzo (1997). 'The Impact of Economic and Parental Characteristics on Juvenile Misconduct'. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 5: 119–25.
- Purvin, D. M. (2007). At the crossroads and in the crosschairs: Social welfare policy and low-income women's vulnerability to domestic violence. *Social Problems*, 54, 188–210.
- Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No.22(2019). Child Rights Law.
- Shamim, A., Batool, Z., Zafar, M.I. & Hashmi N. (2009). *The Journal of Animal & Plant Sciences* 19(2)101-103.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989
- Van Voorhis, F.L. (2011). Costs and Benefits of Family Involvement in Homework. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22(2): 220–49.
- World Bank (2020). Myanmar Economic Monitor Dec 2020: Coping with COVID-19. The World Bank.
- Zinzow, H.M., Ruggiero, K.J., Resnick, H., Hanson, R., Smith, D., Saunders B., & Kilpatrick, D. (2009). Prevalence and mental health correlates of witnessed parental and community violence in a national sample of adolescents. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 50(4):441–450.