

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Crimes and Determinants of Young Criminals: A Study of Interior Sindh, Pakistan

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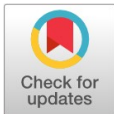
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Abstract— The purpose of the study is to identify the crimes perpetrated by young offenders in the interior districts of Sindh, including Shikarpur, Sukkur, Dadu, and Ghotki, as well as to investigate the underlying causes of criminal behavior. This qualitative study was undertaken by collecting FIRs from four districts using random sampling. The sample consists of 485 FIRs of convicted young male offenders from 2019 to 2020. The study found that youth are involved in various crimes such as murder, rape, larceny, assault, drug/alcohol consumption, and illegal weapon possession. In addition, the study's findings identified the factors that inspire young offenders to commit crimes, including poverty, land conflicts, tribal feuds, provocation, retaliation, sexual passion, and thrill. Consequently, illegal activities, as opposed to more constructive ones, are gaining popularity among the younger generation; therefore, the study suggests establishing a parental care and control program to improve educational and training facilities, increase employment opportunities, decrease the availability of dangerous weapons and drugs and alternative methods of crime prevention should be implemented.

Index Terms— Youth offending, Interior Sindh, Juvenile delinquency, Felony crimes, Substance abuse, Criminal behavior, Tribal Feuds.

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Introduction

The predicament of youth offending and Juvenile delinquency has emerged as one of the most pressing worldwide. This problem transcends economic development categories and geographic boundaries, as youth crime rates are on the rise in practically every corner of the globe (United Nations 2003). The youth phase is the middle step on the ladder of life for individuals because it connects the "childhood" and "adulthood" phases (Webster, 2004). Juvenile delinquency and youth offending are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the criminal behavior of underage individuals who are typically younger than 18 years old. However, precisely, the word "juvenile delinquency" refers to any illegal act performed by a child or adolescent under the age of 18 is called juvenile delinquency (Shoemaker, 2018). Insofar as youth offending is defined as those court-punishable violations of the law committed by individuals typically between the ages of 21 and 22 years, such acts are crimes (Karatcoski & Karatocski, 1996). The term "youth crime" encompasses wrongdoing by all young people, including juveniles (Ajah, 2018). A substantial proportion of a nation's entire population comprises young people. If properly trained, the rural population's vitality could be utilized to advance society. The success of a lively and desirable society is contingent on youth development, and any impediment to this could impede youth education and, consequently, national development. When the youth crime rate rises, a significant issue must be addressed.

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The issue of youth crime in the present day and the failure to identify real answers to it constitute a matter worthy of research. The daily newspapers are loaded with reports of young people committing highly grave crimes. According to several sources, young people in Pakistani society are either collaborators or foremost perpetrators of various criminal acts. The entire society could be in jeopardy if the youth as a component of its "composition" become disruptive. According to Hirschi (2002) and Simatwa (2012), the different offenses perpetrated by youths include murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny, loitering, burglary, murder, abortion, carrying firearms, and sexual harassment, among others. According to studies, unemployment, broken homes, peer influence personality traits, and a poor environment are the root causes of these offences (Hirschi, 2002). The research conducted in the Shikarpur Sindh region identified several factors, including dysfunctional families, low economic conditions, negative media influence, and antisocial gatherings, that contribute to the criminal behavior of young people (Ahmed et al., 2022). Most young male criminals in Pakistan perpetrate rape, murder, property crimes, and other violent and impious offenses. Most young boys in Karachi are frequently arrested alone for crimes such as robbery, theft, and other petty offenses (Kausar et al., 2012). Despite the high probability of imprisonment in Pakistan and worldwide, the number of males engaged in criminal activity has risen steadily over the past two decades, especially among the young and the poorly educated. In Pakistan, particularly in Sindh province, the attention of young people is being drifted away from education and learning; hence illegal activities, rather than more constructive ones, are becoming increasingly popular among them. Youth involvement in criminal activity is an essential societal issue in our country; however, there is a paucity of rigorous studies on this topic. According to the research carried out by (Ahmed et al., 2022) in Shikarpur Youthful correctional facility, the majority of young criminals are from rural areas of Sindh, whereas minorities are from urban areas. Consequently, it may be asserted that the crime rate in Sindh's interior is significantly higher than in its upper regions. In light of this, the current study has three major goals:

- i. To identify the most common offenses committed by young offenders in interior districts of Sindh, including Shikarpur, Sukkur, Dadu, and Ghotki.
- ii. To examine the causes of youth offending in Sindh.
- iii. To recommend policy guidelines and control strategies to prevent offending.

Literature Review

Sindh is one of Pakistan's four provinces, historically romanized as "Sind." It is located in the country's southeast and is the third-largest province by total land and the second-largest by population after Punjab. As one of the first areas of the Indian subcontinent to fall under Islamic rule, Sindh is often addressed as the Bab-ul Islam meaning "Gateway of Islam." It is notable for its Bronze Age history during the Indus Valley civilization and is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Makli Necropolis and Mohen-jo-Daro (Khan, 2010). Sindh's unique geographical and strategic position, cultural values, and aesthetic of folk art, folk tales, and culture make it a land of great wealth.

In Sindh province, there are 29 districts. There are currently 47,886,051 people living in Sindh (Lajwani, 2010). At 0.628, Sindh has the second-highest Human Development Index among Pakistan's provinces. Pakistan has a population of 47.9 million, according to the 2017 Census. The Sindhis are the largest ethnic group in the province, but there is also a considerable presence of other tribes. Sindhis of Baloch ancestry make up over 30% of the total Sindhi population (although they speak Sindhi or Saraiki as their native language). In comparison, Urdu-speaking Muhajirs make up more than 19% of the province's total population, Punjabi make up 10%, and Pashtuns account for 7% (Wikipedia, 2022). Sindh's map is shown below.

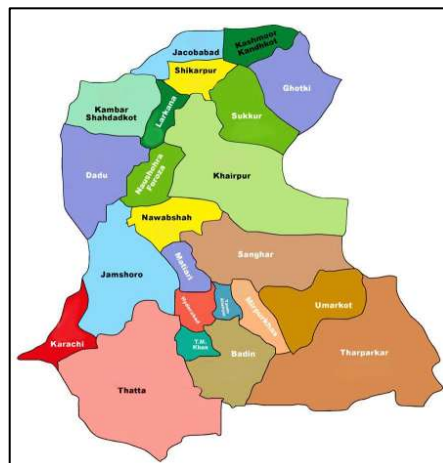


Fig. 1. Map of Sindh Province

According to National Human Development Report: 64 percent of the country's population is under 30, and 29% of this group is between the ages of 15 and 29 (Najam, 2017). The number of juvenile cases in Sindh increased from 181 in 2018 to 385 in 2019, according to statistics published by the juvenile justice system (JJS). However, the JJS said that only 60 cases were convicted in a year, although 325 cases were still outstanding (Ahmed et al., 2022).

During the past month, Sindh has seen an alarming rise in crime rates. A report by the DIG Crime Investigation Police covering the period from June 1 to June 30, 2021, reportedly shows an increase in murder cases by 129%. In addition, the report suggests a 265% increase in attacks on police, a 45% increase in rape cases, and a corresponding 12% increase in kidnapping for ransom cases (The News International, 2021).

Another report by the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) revealed that Sindh capital Karachi significantly increased daily crime rates, with an average of 125 motorcycle thefts and 11 snatching instances per day. Given the reported incidences of snatching, dacoities, thefts, and other crimes, CPLC released crime statistics that showed a substantial rise in daily street crime rates.

According to Numbeo's Crime Index by City 2021 Mid-Year, Karachi was rated 114th out of 427 cities worldwide, down from sixth place in 2014, which gradually declined due to a drop in criminal events.

Several factors influence the prevalence of crime and violence in any culture; these include, but are not limited to, poverty and inequality, unemployment and underemployment, the widening wealth gap between the rich and the poor, lack of parental guidance and supervision, and a reluctance to pursue good possibilities (Roy et al., 2019). Nevertheless, youth engagement in crime and violence has also been connected to other developmental problems, such as limited educational possibilities and a sense of exclusion from the political system (Abdullah, 2018; Amin, 2018). Moreover, low socio-economic situations were identified by the majority of critical research as also the initiating factors for youth offenses. In this context, Farrington (1991) pointed out the close connection between crime and families' poor economic circumstances. He argued that youngsters brought up in impoverished environments are more likely to engage in criminal activity and delinquency.

Within the realm of social sciences, the subject of youth offending is particularly complicated and perplexing in the present era. Many, if not all, of the ideas explaining the causes of criminal behavior, apply to why young people commit crimes. For instance, Shaw and McKay's research in Chicago in 1942 is when the social disorganization theory first appeared. When attempting to predict criminal behavior, this theory contends that a person's social and physical settings significantly impact their behavioral choices more than their physical characteristics. The concept holds that a person's environment has a more significant impact on their criminal behavior than their characteristics; due to the support offered by their cultures, young people living in disadvantaged metropolitan areas turn to crime (Bellair, 2017). The notion that crime and delinquency are influenced by social structures (including families, schools, churches, and other institutions that promote collaboration among community members) shifts over time and between different geographical regions.

Based on classical criminology's basic assumptions, the rational choice theory states that everyone has free will in making choices. These choices are inspired by a desire to escape misery and experience pleasure (Green, 2002). Similarly, a young person chooses to participate in criminal activity since it is rewarding, simple, enjoyable, and entertaining. This theory states that youths choose to act in various ways for personal reasons such as revenge, survival, greed, or ethics. Moreover, a new perspective on choice theory was given by sociologist Jack Katz in his book *Seductions of crime* in 1988. He proposed that the "thrill" motivates youth to perpetrate crimes and violence. His point is that youth do not need to benefit materially from crimes and violence; they only need to obtain a thrill or rush from them (King, 2020).

According to Edwin Sutherland, criminal behavior is acquired through communication with intimate group partners, and learning primarily depends on the frequency and intensity of exposure to criminal patterns. This theory also examines how peer pressure may contribute to juvenile delinquency in groups. It indicates that delinquent peers encourage and train youth in criminal behavior (Khuda, 2019). However, according to Hirschi's (1969) control theory, an individual's antisocial behavior results from weak ties to conventional society. Collectively, these links are known as the social bond. A person's typical behavior is predicated on their strong ties to family, society, conventional norms, and deeply held beliefs. Individuals engage in unorthodox or antisocial conduct when the relationship weakens or is severed.

Research Methodology

The following study employs a qualitative research methodology to identify the most common offenses committed by young offenders in interior parts of Sindh and examine the causes of youth offending in interior Sindh. The primary data was based on documentary data collected by visiting the Police Stations of various districts of interior Sindh, including Shikarpur, Sukkur, Dadu, and Ghotki. The study sample comprises 485 FIRs from 2019 to 2020 of convicted young male offenders. All the FIRs were chosen by using a random sampling method. All the data was in Urdu and Sindhi languages, then translated and transcribed into English. The researchers thoroughly analyzed the entire data, identified young people's crimes, and examined the causes behind committing a crime, which helped to achieve study objectives.

Results and Discussion

Young criminals in Pakistan are involved in various criminal activities, such as; murder, attempted murder, robbery, theft, and drug charges (Farukh, 2018). According to recent figures published by the Youthful Offender Industrial School (YOIS), 85 juvenile offenders were apprehended monthly in 2020, totaling 3592 arrests. Robbery, car theft, pick-pocketing, murder, and sodomy were among the crimes committed by these young offenders. This research study also finds similar data that young offenders in the following study were involved in crimes such as murder, rape and sodomy, substance abuse, street crimes, larceny, and illegal weapon possession.

Table I
District wise data of crimes (2019-2020)

Districts	Murder	Rape/Sodomy	Consuming Drugs /Alcohol	Assault	Larceny	Illegal Weapon Possession
Shikarpur	52	41	63	18	22	07
Ghotki	38	32	28	11	18	Nil
Sukkur	24	20	25	14	12	05
Dadu	08	15	22	Nil	10	Nil
TOTAL	122	108	138	43	62	12

The aforementioned Table I illustrates the number of crimes committed in Sindh's four interior regions. The table demonstrates that there were 122 murder convictions from 2019 to 2020, 108 rape and sodomy convictions, and 138 drug-related offenses. In contrast, there were 43 assault convictions, 62 larceny convictions, and 12 convictions of illegal weapon possession. Furthermore, according to the findings, the majority of young felons mostly perpetrate the crime of murder and drug consumption as contrasted to the rest of the crimes. People who live in rural areas are more exposed to crime. Related research findings were also identified in a study conducted in Punjab, Pakistan, by (Tahir et al., 2011), stating that young individuals from rural areas were primarily involved in felonious activities. The findings of this study are also consistent with the findings of Saleem (2011), which stated that; young boys in Pakistan are generally detained for murder, theft, sexual assault, snatching mobile phones, and many other violent and petty offenses.

Moreover, the data found that most criminals were intoxicated when committing the offense leading to their detention. Further analysis of FIRs revealed that the drugs most commonly used by young people before offending were alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, chars, and answer. According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2013, approximately 6.7 million individuals in Pakistan are drug users. Based on the data, it can be stated that such substances are easily accessible in Pakistani society and are available at low prices, allowing children and young people in society to purchase them easily. The following observation is consistent with similar findings of easy accessibility and availability reported in other studies conducted in Karachi & Lahore, Pakistan (Mansoori et al., 2018 & Rasool et al., 2014). Hence, the majority of substance abusers were discovered to be in their productive age; the future outcome may cause more significant harm to the physical, mental, intellectual, and moral development of the youth in our country, especially in interior Sindh.

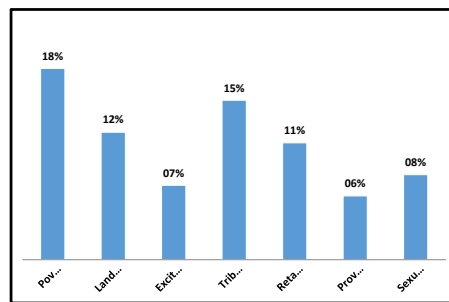


Fig. 2. Determinants of crime of youth offenders in interior Sindh

Poor economic conditions of the under-privilege class living in economically under-develop areas explain most of the crimes of youngsters in our society. Financial variables were discovered to be a key predictor of youth criminal conduct. Poverty, according to Malik and Shirazi (2010), is a significant predictor of rising youth crime. Unemployment lengthens the period during which youth participate in criminal activity (Gronqvist, 2011). Another study found that unemployment has a negative impact on youth performance, which can lead to criminal activity (Anthony, 2013). According to the findings of the following study, 18% of criminals committed various crimes as a result of poverty. Another significant cause behind youth offending in the interior Sindh setting is land disputes and tribal feuds;

12% and 15% of cases were registered. Interior Sindh has been plagued by sanguinary tribal violence pitting one tribe against another; typically, a little altercation escalates into a big-armed conflict. Understandably, the causes of this problem are insignificant, as there has been no official investigation into this menace to comprehend and emphasize the issue effectively. Primarily, cattle rustling, ownership of grazing pastures, matrimonial relations, land conflicts, access to passageways, waterways, honor crimes (Karo-Kari), etc., are the causes of intertribal conflict. The so-called tribal ego and unjustified vindictiveness exacerbate the problem, as young people take part in tribal conflicts by inflicting violence and taking the law into their own hands. In rural areas, children are involved in blood feuds and criminal activity in the majority of cases; they have been indoctrinated to believe that pursuing vengeance is something to be proud of (Shahid, 2013). According to social learning theory, young people gain the attitudes and abilities required to become delinquents through constant contact with others who adhere to criminal standards (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). As a result, as long as young people are exposed to views that are more favorable to breaking the law than following the law, criminality will flourish.

Furthermore, the other causes behind youth offending are sexual lust 08% and excitement 07%, which motivates young people to commit crimes such as rape and sodomy. Similar findings were also identified in the study conducted in Palopo city, stating that youth involvement in such criminal activity was motivated by a mutual desire to act like adults by engaging in sexual activity, as well as coercion to conduct immoral breaches owing to sexual lust (Rahmawati et al., 2020). On the other side, pornography can also serve as a sexual stimulant. Youths have repressed sexual fantasies and conduct covert searches as a result. They will change their focus to exploring sexual potential, especially with young people who lack confidence (Aminah et al., 2021).

Consequently, the larger the exposure to pornography, the higher the possibility of participating in sexually risky behaviors. Other causes are provocation of 06% and retaliation of 11%, in which young people usually commit murder and other felonious crimes. A study conducted in Faisalabad also reported identical findings stating that; youth criminality is connected with low self-esteem, retaliation, and a lack of supportive relationships (Bajwa, 2010).

Recommendations

- Rather than focusing on young people's weaknesses, we should emphasize their strengths; the following factors can positively influence youth development, such as; i). A sense of competency. ii). A sense of utility. iii). Feelings of belonging.
- Instead of sensationalizing an occurrence or subject, the media and press should shed light on the concerns of the young generation.
- A permanent organization serving as a think tank should be established nationally. This should consist of ministers, Professors, Teachers, and Media representatives.
- There is a need to build a parental care and control programs to improve educational and training facilities and create a sense of care and concern for the protection of young people during the challenging age of adolescence.
- Increasing work possibilities will alleviate many of the challenges young people face, resulting in a decrease in the crime rate.
- There is a need to promote a variety of athletic activities as well as programs that teach practical repair and maintenance skills.
- Reduce the availability of dangerous drugs so fewer individuals can access them. It is necessary to target the drug mafia to cure existing drug addicts and prevent others from becoming involved with drugs.
- Alternative methods of crime prevention should be implemented.

Conclusion

The following study focused on four interior districts of Sindh, namely, Shikarpur, Sukkur, Ghotki, and Dadu. The study aimed to identify the most common causes and offenses committed by young offenders in 04 districts. The following study is qualitative in nature, and the data was conducted by visiting the Police Stations of mentioned districts for the purpose of collecting FIRs. A total of 485 FIRs of young offenders were collected from 2019 to 2020. The research study's findings indicated that the common offenses perpetuated by young offenders were murder, rape and sodomy, substance abuse, assault, larceny, and illegal weapon possession. However, the highly committed crime was the crime of substance abuse, with a total of 138 FIRs, and the other crime was murder, with 122 FIRs registered against young offenders. Poverty and tribal rivalries were discovered to be the most prominent causes of youth criminality. However, sexual desire, land disputes, provocation, retaliation, and excitement were also identified as contributing factors behind youth offending. The study urges to establish of a parental care and control program for the improvement of educational and training facilities, as well as the creation of a sense of care and concern for the protection of young people during the challenging age of adolescence so that it can help them to keep them away from unconventional and deviant social norms and values. A considerable proportion of youths can be diverted from delinquency if programs are intended to assist them in resolving family and personal problems and acquiring social skills. The current study was limited to young male offenders in four districts of Sindh. Hence it is recommended for future studies to conduct a study on a larger scale and include more districts, and it is also recommended to focus on both male and female criminals. In the future, it may be beneficial to study how gender plays a role in what influences crime since males and females are inherently different.

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