

# Study on Juvenile Delinquency among Adolescents in Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** *Today, more than ever, the problem of juvenile delinquency pricks at the conscience of many societies, and India is not an exception. In this study, the researcher discusses the experiences and views of teachers of secondary schools regarding juvenile delinquency and the apparent moral decline among their learners. The problem was investigated from the perspective of socio-education, a field of research which, amongst others, studies the role of social factors that feature in the development of children and youth during their growth to adulthood. In Indian schools, the problem of juvenile delinquency is a issue. In his article on discipline in the Free State township schools, Masitsa (2008: 234- 236), cites a number of newspaper reports of juvenile delinquency among school children. This problem is not unique to South Africa, but affects many industrialised countries today (Rossouw, 2003: 416). De Wet's study (2004: 206) on school vandalism, which is an example of antisocial behaviour, reveals that the problem also affects Britain, USA, Canada, France, the Netherlands and Australia, amongst others.*

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** *The research design for this study was a combination of quantitative and mainly qualitative, descriptive and interpretive enquiry, thus a mixed method research (MMR) approach. The study conducted on 91 samples. Data was collected using questionnaire and focus group interview.*

**RESULTS:** *The delinquency rates in selected schools are very high. In addition, it was found that male learners, more than female learners, exhibit the most antisocial behaviour. In general, both genders, at varying rates disrespect authority, have the habit of lying, engage in theft, vandalism, truancy, substance and alcohol abuse, inappropriate sexual behaviour resulting in teenage pregnancy, and gangsterism, amongst others. The variable of location indicates that schools in formerly disadvantaged areas such as townships, squatter and rural areas experience the most antisocial behaviours by learners, as compared to their counterparts in formerly advantaged areas. Most teachers' personal encounters of the problem in city schools seemed to be minimal. Some teachers of schools that are situated in middle class areas in townships shared similar sentiments to those of their city counterparts. Although the rate of learner misconduct is alarming, it can be contained as evidenced by behavioural changes witnessed in those learners who are remorseful. This suggests that intervention strategies do play a positive role in curbing unacceptable behaviour.*

**Conclusion:** *The findings of this study suggested that the majority of teachers in secondary schools are aware of the huge challenge posed by delinquent learners with regard to teaching and learning. The major perceptions the study gathered were that the dawn of a democratic dispensation in 1994 worsened adolescent delinquency and rendered many previously disadvantaged schools dysfunctional..*

**Keywords:** Juvenile, Delinquency, Adolescents, School children

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept "juvenile" refers to children or young people. However, when they display conduct that is discordant with social norms or the law, they are described as juvenile delinquents. The concept "delinquency" thus refers to the delinquent behaviour. The fear of youth crime is central to major socio-educational and criminological discourses in addition to other concerns. Various studies have made reference to the perpetual fear of and anxiety over juvenile misconduct, which escalated since the 1890s and 1900s due to changing social contexts (Hoge, 2001: 115). Shoemaker

(2009: 2-16) provides an overview of the history of the problem. According to him, juvenile delinquency is purported to have begun in Europe in the 7th Century. Puritanism was one of the major ideologies of the time. This ideology advocated strict and acceptable individual and collective behaviour, especially in matters related to religion.

The family environment is overwhelmingly positively correlated with juvenile delinquency, both as a precursor of and buffer against youth misconduct (Sanni et al (2010: 21- 27). Some scholars posit that this social institution is probably the single most important cause of delinquency (Gottfredson&Hirschi, 1990: 97; Loeber, Farrington &Petechuk, 2003: 8; Ernest, 2003: 2). Only a few salient characteristics of dysfunctional families will be discussed next to highlight the role of the home in perpetuating adolescent antisocial behaviour.

**II. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

Describe the opinions and experiences of teachers on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools.

Describe the nature, extent and causes of the problem in secondary schools.

Describe the extent to which parents, teachers, wider society and policies have caused, prevented and dealt with the problem in secondary schools.

**III. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research design for this study was a combination of quantitative and mainly qualitative, descriptive and interpretive enquiry, thus a mixed method research (MMR) approach. The study conducted on 91 samples. Data was collected using questionnaire and focus group interview. Data was collected with following structured tool –

**Section A: Questionnaire**

A questionnaire consisting of 24 questions was administered. Eight closed questions asked for a biography of each participant and sixteen questions were open-ended.

**Section B: Focus Group Interview**

Based on the responses from the questionnaire, participants for the focus group were selected for unstructured, in-depth, interviews. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews.

**Interview schedule and aspects of youth delinquency**

Main research questions	Aspect of youth delinquency	Interview schedule/Question
The status of delinquency in schools	Its nature and extent	1. Does juvenile delinquency amongst adolescents in secondary schools warrant the attention it is getting currently? Why?
The causes of delinquency	Factors not commonly linked to delinquency.	2. What factors not commonly cited, are linked to juvenile delinquency amongst adolescents in secondary schools?
	Personal experiences of delinquency	3. Is there an instance or instances of antisocial behaviour amongst learners in your school that nearly caused you to quit your teaching profession? Why?
	Internal school factors	4. Is there any chance that factors within your school are to blame for instances of antisocial behavior amongst your learners? Why?
Current measures used to deal with delinquency	Intervention strategies	5. What role, if any, do external institutions such as the district, the GDE or non-governmental bodies, amongst others, play in supporting your school’s efforts to address juvenile delinquency? Are you satisfied?
		6. What kind of support do you need to better deal with juvenile delinquency amongst your learners? Why?

The content validity of questionnaire was established by experts. The experts were selected on the basis of their expertise, experience and interest in the problem being studied. They were from different specialties. They were

requested to give their opinions on the appropriateness and relevance of the items in the tool. Necessary modifications were made as per the expert's advice. In this study the reliability was established by consulting others to validate the results (member validation), and the normality or otherwise of the venue was checked to ascertain whether it would not in any way influence the results. Hence the tool was considered to be reliable.

Final study was conducted on 91 samples. The sample for the study comprised of secondary school teachers, who met the designated criteria were selected through purposive sampling technique. Objectives of study was discussed and obtained consent for participation in study. Base line data was assessed by questionnaire and focus group interview.

**IV. RESULTS**

**Section I: Questionnaire**

**Table No. 1, N=91**

S. No	Socio Demographic variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1.</b>	<b>Age (in Yrs.)</b>		
	21-35 yrs.	14	15.38%
	32-45 yrs.	36	39.56%
	46 – 65 yrs.	41	45.05%
<b>2.</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	33	36.26 %
	Female	58	63.74%
<b>3.</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>		
	Certificate	2	2.22 %
	Diploma	24	26.67 %
	Degree	35	38.89 %
	Certificate & Degree	5	5.56 %
	Diploma & Degree	18	20.00 %
	Certificate, Diploma & Degree	6	6.67 %
<b>4.</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>		
	1-10 yrs.	34	37.36 %
	11-20 yrs.	23	25.27 %
	21-30 yrs.	28	30.77 %
	31-40 yrs.	6	6.59 %
<b>5.</b>	<b>Subjects taught</b>		
	Language	45	49.45 %
	Maths	10	10.98 %
	Natural Sciences	20	21.97 %
	Social Sciences	12	13.18 %
	Economics	04	4.39 %
<b>6.</b>	<b>Extra-curricular activities (Multiple choice)</b>		
	Admissions	12	6.74 %
	Discipline	27	15.17 %
	Sport	42	23.60 %
	Culture	27	15.17 %
	Safety	18	10.11 %
	L Support	42	23.60 %
	Other	10	5.61 %
<b>7.</b>	<b>Locations of schools</b>		
	Rural	32	35.16 %

	Township	42	46.16 %
	City	17	18.68 %
<b>8.</b>	<b>Philosophical orientation</b>		
	Christian	89	97.80 %
	Traditional	02	2.19 %

Table 1 depicts the age of respondents, there were 14 junior participants aged 21 to 35, 36 senior teachers aged 32 to 45 and 41 most senior teachers aged 46 to 65. The table shows that approximately two female respondents completed the questionnaire for every 1 male respondent that participated (63.74 and 36.26%), respectively. The majority of participating teachers were in possession of teaching diplomas (26.67%), degrees (38.89%), in addition to degrees (20.00%). The latter data points to a well-educated teacher component of 58.89% of the participating teachers that have a minimum qualification of a degree. The findings of the empirical study revealed that 62% of the respondents have more than 10 years teaching experience while 37.36% have accumulated the most experience. Mathematics and social science subjects (followed by natural sciences with a percentage of 12.88%) were indicated by only a limited number of teachers as the subject(s) which they teach at school (indicated as 7.58% and 9.09%, respectively). The tabulates the extra-curricular activities of respondents in their schools. A substantial proportion of respondents in the table indicated that they partake in learner support (23.60) and sport (23.60) as extra-curricular activities. Those who were interested in discipline issues were second at 15.17% - the latter activity being crucial in managing learner behaviour. Table depicts three school locations. The majority of teachers came from rural or township schools (35.16% + 46.16% = 81.32%). The distribution of the philosophical orientation of respondents. The majority of respondents (97/.85%) had a Christian philosophical orientation.

**Open-ended items in the Aspects of youth delinquency**

S. No.	Aspects of youth delinquency	Response
1.	Current status of delinquency in schools	1. Generally, antisocial behaviour is a problematic phenomenon in schools. 2. Always. Students are rude, arrogant and violent. 3. About 90% of them in my class have Substance abuse, truancy, bullying, disrespect of authority, theft, lying, inappropriate sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy. 4. Not necessarily out of control, but contained with great difficulty. 5. It is like graduating from bad to worse.
2.	Causes of delinquency	1. Antisocial behaviour is unrelated to past political activities 2. It is debatable. There are lots of other key factors to consider 3. It compromises discipline and therefore, teaching and learning 4. The behaviour will be carried over to adulthood and as a result might make their future bleak 5. There is no effective teaching. The school experiences the following delinquent behaviours: teenage pregnancy, substance abuse. 6. The society is the fountain of learner misbehaviour.
3.	Intervention strategies currently in use by schools	1. Responses varied from very satisfied, satisfied, very dissatisfied and unsure. 2. Never! The self-same is dysfunctional, hence problems remain unsolved 3. High priority. Meaningful teaching and learning go hand in hand with good behaviour 4. We receive updates in this regard from the Department of Education 5. 90% of parents are not involved in their children's education.

**Section II**

**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

**Nature of juvenile delinquency**

Broad category	Sub-category
Nature of juvenile delinquency	Commonality of antisocial behavior Location, Social profile of delinquents, School safety, Dealing with delinquency
The extent of juvenile delinquency	Population control Location School safety, Intervention strategies

**The extent of juvenile delinquency –**

Category	Response
Population control	The smallest in size, attracted an influx of people from inside and outside the country, due to it being commonly regarded as the economic hub of note.
Location	The majority of participants regarded the variable as very key in understanding learner behaviour
School safety	Participants demonstrated the same consensus regarding the general lack of personal safety for teachers and learners alike.
Interventional strategy	Participants agreed that teaching activities were adversely affected by improper learner behaviour and that intervention strategies dealing with the problem were time-consuming and thus a source of much concern for them.

**Causes of juvenile delinquency**

Broad category	Sub-category
Declining societal values	Society's philosophical orientation Poor parental involvement Demographic features of parents, Psychological factors, Current education policies, Teachers' modelling antisocial behavior
Media influence	Sensationalism Media effects

**Intervention strategies**

Three categories were identified and each with its subcategories

Broad category	Sub-category
Professional support	Internal and external support. Inadequate human and other resources.
Support needed	Deterrents against antisocial behaviour. Return of teachers' authority over learners. Communication.
Benefits of the study	Creation of awareness Reviewing of stakeholders' philosophical orientation. De-politicizing education.

**V. DISCUSSION**

**Section I:**

**Closed Ended Questionnaire**

Data revealed that the age there were 14 junior participants aged 21 to 35, 36 senior teachers aged 32 to 45 and 41 most senior teachers aged 46 to 65. The majority of participating teachers were in possession of teaching diplomas (34.06%), degrees (45.85%) and diplomas, in addition to degrees (23.09%). The findings of the empirical study revealed that 62.64% of the respondents have more than 10 years teaching experience while 37.36% have accumulated the most experience. Mathematics and social science subjects (followed by natural sciences with a percentage of 12.88%) were indicated by only a limited number of teachers as the subject(s). Findings of extra-curricular activities of respondents in their schools. A substantial proportion of respondents in the table indicated that they partake in learner support (42.87) and sport (45.05) as extra-curricular activities. Those who were interested in discipline issues were second at 12.08% - the latter activity being crucial in managing learner behaviour. Table depicts three school locations. The majority of

teachers came from rural or township schools (86.81%). The distribution of the philosophical orientation of respondents. The majority of respondents (97/.80%) had a Christian philosophical orientation.

Variable	Freq.	%
Age		
21 – 35 years	14	15.38
32 – 45 years	36	39.56
46-65 years	41	45.06
Qualification of teachers		
Diploma	31	34.06
Degree	39	42.85
Both degree and diploma	21	23.09
Teaching Experience		
>10 years	57	62.64
<10 years	34	37.36
Extra-curricular activities		
Learner support	39	42.87
Sport	41	45.05
Discipline issues	11	12.08
Location of school		
Rural or township schools	79	86.81
Urban	12	13.19
Philosophical orientation		
Christian	89	97.80
Others	02	02.20

## Section II

### Focus Group Interview

#### Current Status of Juvenile Delinquency

In broad category included nature of juvenile delinquency and extent of juvenile delinquency. Subcategory commonality of antisocial behaviour, location, social profile of delinquents, school safety, dealing with delinquency, Population control and intervention strategies.

#### Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

In Broad category declining societal values and media influence. Subcategories are Society's philosophical orientation, poor parental involvement, demographic features of parents, psychological factors, current education policies, teachers' modelling antisocial behaviour and sensationalism media effect.

#### Intervention Strategies

In broad category are professional support, support needed and benefits of the study. Subcategory are Internal and external support, inadequate human and other resources, deterrents against antisocial behaviour, return of teachers' authority over learners, communication, creation of awareness Reviewing of stakeholders' philosophical orientation, de-politicizing education

## VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggested that the majority of teachers in secondary schools in are aware of the huge challenge posed by delinquent learners with regard to teaching and learning. The major perceptions the study gathered were that the dawn of a democratic dispensation in 1994 worsened adolescent delinquency and rendered many previously disadvantaged schools dysfunctional. The findings of the study led to two main conclusions, namely: the

acquisition of knowledge about juvenile delinquency as both a global and local challenge, as well as the necessary intervention strategies which stakeholders, especially teachers, could use to deal with it. The conclusion is based on the assumption that the problem cannot be adequately addressed without the requisite knowledge of its existence.

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