



Juvenile Delinquency in Bangladesh: The Impact of Familial and Economic Factors in Dhaka City

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of familial and economic factors on juvenile delinquency in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. This study employed a quantitative research design. A survey was executed in designated regions of Dhaka, including Mohammadpur, Mirpur, and Azimpur, including 100 teenagers aged 10 to 18. Data were obtained from this survey. The findings revealed that 80% of teenagers claimed inadequate parental supervision, while 96% had financial difficulties throughout their early childhood. These elements are substantial contributors to criminal activity. Behavior was seen as substantially affected by peer influence (64%) and limited educational access (52%). The results demonstrate that the following types of juvenile delinquency are widespread: Seventy-two (72%) percent of individuals confessed to theft, while fifty-six percent (56%) recognized their participation in vandalism or unlawful alcohol use. The findings indicated that comprehensive policy interventions and focused community actions mitigate the primary contributing factors to juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh. Improving mental health services, enhancing family support networks, and increasing access to excellent education are essential to alleviate the effects of economic hardship and dysfunctional family dynamics.

Keywords: Juvenile Delinquency, Contributing factors, Quantitative research design, Criminal activities, Confessed in theft, Dhaka City

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent involvement in illegitimate activities is referred to as juvenile delinquency, juvenile offending, or child criminality (Islam, 2021). A significant portion of the legal systems establish distinct protocols for the treatment of adolescents, including juvenile detention facilities and courts. A juvenile delinquent is typically under the age of 18 years and engages in conduct that would be considered illicit if committed by an adult (Riaduzzaman, 2017). From 1992 to 2000, the projected number of children in complicated situations rose from 80 million to 150 million, according to The World Youth Report (2003), an extensive compendium on global juvenile delinquency. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that over 200,000 killings involving individuals aged 10 to 19 occur, committed mainly by the young (Gogineni et al., 2023). Bangladesh hosts around 40 million adolescents aged five (5) to seventeen (17). Approximately 1.3 million adolescents are working in hazardous jobs, with 70% participating in unlawful activities as a result of poverty (Dewan, 2024).

Peer pressure, trauma from abuse, genetic predispositions, inadequate family communication, non-traditional family arrangements, economic inequality, poverty, limited access to education, substance abuse, exposure to violence, and social prejudice experienced by minority groups are all factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency (Singh, 2023; Dewan, 2024; Riaduzzaman, 2017; Khuda, 2019; Sarker, 2023; Abhishek & Balamurugan, 2024)). Consequently, a significant number of street children engage in criminal activities to survive.



Moreover, the problem is exacerbated by a lack of recreational amenities, insufficient support networks, and exposure to detrimental internet content (Dewan, 2024).

Juvenile delinquency has significant negative consequences for various stakeholders, such as offenders, families, and society as a whole. These consequences include the loss of liberty, interrupted education, increased likelihood of recidivism, familial distress, financial strain from legal expenses and counseling, community safety issues, and increased government expenditure on law enforcement and safety initiatives (Singh, 2023). Juvenile delinquency may establish a cyclical pattern of criminal behavior that impacts subsequent generations, leading to legal repercussions, psychological challenges, and deterioration of community trust. This problem places economic strain on society by reallocating resources from developmental activities aimed at fostering teenage potential.

Chowdhury and Fahim (2019) found that parental violence and maltreatment substantially contribute to juvenile delinquency, with children exposed to such settings exhibiting a heightened propensity to participate in criminal behavior. Children reared in environments in which parents display antisocial behaviors or contend with mental illness have a heightened risk of delinquency (Chowdhury & Uddin, 2016). Parental neglect and insufficient emotional support drive children to participate in illegal activities, often as a method of articulating dissatisfaction or rage (Chowdhury & Fahim, 2019). The increasing economic gaps in Bangladesh, especially in metropolitan regions, foster discontent and a sense of marginalization among the young, thereby encouraging their participation in criminal activities (Islam & Khatun, 2013). Young perpetrators often experience depression, anxiety, and despair, usually because of their difficulty in upbringing. The interplay between mental health challenges and the stigma associated with poverty and marginalization compels adolescents to seek recognition and validation through illicit activities (Chowdhury & Uddin, 2016).

Although extensive research has been conducted on juvenile delinquency worldwide, the amount of research in Bangladesh remains minimal. There have been previous studies on juvenile delinquency in some regions of the country, but there has been no significant research in Dhaka. While most studies have mainly dealt with the causes and consequences of juvenile delinquency, our study focused on exploring the aspects of family and economic impact on juvenile delinquency. Therefore, the following questions explored the relationship between familial and economic factors and juvenile delinquency, reflecting the key elements highlighted in the findings.

RQ1: What familial factors contribute to juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Bangladesh, focusing mainly on parental marital status, supervision, and economic instability?

RQ2: How do economic factors such as household income and employment status influence the likelihood of adolescents engaging in various forms of delinquency in Bangladesh?

RQ3: What are the most common forms of delinquent behavior among juveniles in Bangladesh, and how do social and familial dynamics affect the prevalence of these behaviors?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach to investigating the impact of familial and economic factors on juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh. According to Ghanad (2023),



quantitative research is defined by measuring variables and framing queries, such as “how long,” “how many,” and “to what extent.” It aims to quantify the data and generalize the findings from various perspectives from a study sample.

The study was conducted in three selected areas in Dhaka: Mohammadpur, Mirpur, and Azimpur. The rationale for choosing these three locations in the research was to facilitate the data-gathering procedure. These locations were advantageous regarding time and expense in data collection, which has been crucial for the seamless execution of the study. A survey was used as the primary method for data collection, ensuring systematic coverage of the subjects under investigation. Domede and Dinkelman (2022) stated that survey research is a commonly used method for assessing people’s viewpoints on specific subjects. This strategy is often used to delineate, measure, and contextualize the significance of the present conditions.

Participants

The survey targeted 100 respondents aged 10 –18 years, who were selected using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a data-gathering technique in which a researcher identifies a readily accessible target group (Rahi, 2017). This sample size was chosen to ensure a manageable and representative group that would provide insights into familial and economic factors affecting juvenile delinquency.

Data Collection Method

Local research assistants fluent in Bengali were trained to administer the surveys to ensure clarity and consistency in data collection. Data were collected through an offline survey using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions focusing on sociodemographic characteristics, familial dynamics, economic status, and delinquency-related behaviors. The questions were designed to capture the main factors that might contribute to juvenile delinquency, such as parental supervision, family income, and economic hardships.

Tools and Materials

The primary tools used in this research were structured questionnaires with ordinal scales and SPSS software. When the elements of a sample are classified into distinct categories, and these categories can be compared and arranged in a complete order (where each pair of categories is comparable), the classification scale is known as an ordinal scale (Comparison of Two Procedures, 2003). A structured questionnaire consists of a set of standardized questions with a fixed scheme that specifies the exact wording and order of the questions for gathering information from respondents (Cheung, 2021). The questionnaire was carefully designed to align with the study’s objectives and ensure reliability and validity. It was also pretested in a different area of Dhaka to identify and rectify any ambiguities in questions.

Data Analysis

The collected data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. Simultaneously, cross-tabulations were conducted to explore relationships between familial and economic factors and delinquent behavior. The findings are presented in a tabular format to facilitate an understanding of the key variables and their interconnections.



Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were given high priority in this study. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants or their guardians before conducting the survey. The purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time were clearly explained to the respondents. All collected data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality and personal identifiers were removed. The research followed ethical guidelines to protect the welfare of juvenile participants, ensuring that no harm (physical, emotional, or psychological) was inflicted during the data collection process. The data were securely stored, and access was limited to authorized researchers.

RESULTS

Table 1. Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile of Respondents

Category	Sub-Category	Percentage (%)	Description
Gender	Male	74	Males are more likely to be involved in juvenile crime.
	Female	26	
Age	15-18 years	60	Most juvenile delinquents fall within this age range.
	10-14 years	32	
	Under nine years	8	
Employment Status	Unemployed	56	High unemployment rate among juveniles.
	Students	24	
	Employed	20	
Educational Achievement	Primary school	52	Most juvenile delinquents have completed only primary school.
	High school	40	
	College	8	
Household Income	Less than BDT 8,000	20	The majority of respondents fall in lower income brackets.
	BDT 9,000 - 12,000	52	
	BDT 13,000 - 15,000	16	
	More than BDT 16,000	12	
Parental Marital Status	Both parents married	60	The majority of respondents have married parents.
	Parents divorced	24	A significant proportion faced parental separation.
Father's Occupation	Single-parent households	16	The majority are involved in agricultural work.
	Farm laborers	28	
	Farmers	24	
	Factory personnel	16	
	Security officers	8	
	Drivers	4	
	Other	20	
Mother's Occupation	Domestic duties	40	Most mothers engaged in household work.
	Cleaners	24	
	Housekeepers/Factory workers	16	
	Other (e.g., begging)	4	



Number of Siblings	No siblings	8	Few respondents are without siblings.
	1-2 siblings	32	
	3-4 siblings	40	The most significant proportion have 3-4 siblings.
	More than five siblings	20	
Co-habitants	Both parents	56	Most respondents live with both parents.
	Mother only	28	
	Father only	12	Rare family structure.
	Grandfather's family	4	

Table 2. Prevalence of Various Forms of Juvenile Delinquency Among Respondents

Category	Percentage (%)	Description
Most Common Forms of Delinquency		
Stealing	72%	The most widespread form of delinquency reported by respondents.
Vandalism	56%	One of the most common offenses is underage drinking.
Underage Drinking	56%	Common among the reported incidents of delinquency.
Drug-Related Offences	52%	A significant concern indicates involvement in drug-related crimes.
Substance Usage	24%	Reflects a lower but concerning rate of substance use among juveniles.
Other Offenses (Violence, etc.)	28%	Varies, highlighting various other delinquent behaviors.

Table 2. presents the most common forms of delinquent behavior reported by respondents, with their respective prevalence percentages. Stealing was reported by 72% of respondents, making it the most widespread form of delinquency. Vandalism and underage drinking were reported by 56%, indicating that these are also highly prevalent offenses. Drug-related offenses were reported by 52% of respondents, highlighting a significant concern. Substance usage was reported to be 24%, reflecting a lower but notable use rate among juveniles. Other offenses, such as violence, are reported to be between 16% and 28%, indicating various other delinquent behaviors with varying prevalence.

Table 3. Perceived Factors Influencing Juvenile Delinquency and Their Relative Impact

Factors Influencing Delinquency	Percentage (%)	Description
Limited Supervision	80%	The primary factor cited by respondents for juvenile delinquency.
Lack of Discipline	68%	A significant contributor to delinquent behavior, as perceived by respondents.
Communication Breakdown	60%	Another key factor identified in contributing to delinquency.
Neglect	52%	Perceived as an essential factor in influencing juvenile delinquency.
Role Modelling	24%	Considered to have the most minor influence among the factors discussed.



Table 3. presents various factors influencing juvenile delinquency, as reported by the respondents, along with the percentage of respondents citing each factor. Limited supervision was identified as the most significant factor, cited by 80% of the respondents. This was followed by a lack of discipline (68%), communication breakdown (60%), and neglect (52%). Role modeling was considered the least influential factor, with only 24% of respondents citing it as a contributing factor.

Table 4. Summary of Perceptions of Parental Relationships Among Respondents

Category	Percentage (%)	Description
Perceptions of Parental Relationships		
Conflicting Relationships	24%	The majority report experiencing conflicts within their family dynamics.
Positive Relationships	20%	A smaller proportion reported having positive relationships with their parents.
Negative Relationships	12%	Indicated a negative perception of their parents' relationship.
Enmity	8%	A small percentage reported experiencing enmity within their family.
Other Relationships	12%	Suggested a broad spectrum of experiences regarding family dynamics.

Perceptions of parental relationships varied significantly among respondents. 24% of respondents reported experiencing conflicting relationships within their family dynamics, suggesting that familial conflicts are relatively common. Meanwhile, positive relationships were indicated by 20% of respondents, reflecting that only a tiny segment perceives their relationship with parents in a favorable light, which may point towards a gap in supportive family interactions. Negative relationships were described by 12% of the respondents, indicating challenges in parent-child interactions for this group. Furthermore, 8% of the respondents reported experiencing enmity within their family, implying a strained relationship, although this group is relatively small. Additionally, 12% of the respondents fell into the other relationships category, highlighting a broad range of family dynamics that did not fit neatly into the different categories. This diversity underscores the complexity of family relationships, which can vary widely across households (see Table 4).

Table 5. Parental Support for Education

Parental Support for Education	Percentage (%)	Description
Parents Advocating Education	56%	The majority of parents actively encourage their children's education.
Parents Not Involved	44%	Nearly half of the parents are not involved in their children's education, indicating a potential area of concern.

Table 5. revealed that 56% of parents actively advocate for their children's education, indicating that most parents recognize the value of educational support. However, 44% of the parents were not involved in their children's education, which points to a significant concern regarding overall parental involvement in their children's educational development.



Table 6. Perceived Impact of Economic Factors on Juvenile Delinquency

Economic Factors	Percentage (%)	Description
Significant Impact	56%	Respondents perceive a significant impact of economic factors on juvenile delinquency.
Moderate Impact	28%	A smaller group acknowledges a moderate contribution of economic factors.
Minor Impact	16%	Indicates a perception of the minimal impact of economic factors on delinquency.

In terms of economic factors affecting juvenile delinquency, 56% of the respondents perceived a significant impact, suggesting that more than half saw economic conditions as a primary driver of delinquent behavior among juveniles. 28% of the respondents acknowledged a moderate impact, indicating varied perceptions regarding the influence of financial challenges. Meanwhile, 16% of respondents believed that the effect was minor, implying that some view other factors as more critical in contributing to juvenile delinquency (**Table 6**).

Table 7. Childhood Financial Hardships Among Respondents

Childhood Financial Hardships	Percentage (%)	Description
Experienced Financial Hardships	96%	A vast majority of respondents encountered financial hardships during childhood.
No Financial Hardships	4%	A tiny percentage reported not facing financial hardships.

According to **Table 7**, Most respondents (96%) reported experiencing financial hardship during childhood, indicating that financial instability is a common challenge for most individuals in the study. This suggests that economic difficulties were widespread in their early years, potentially impacting access to resources and opportunities. However, only a small fraction (4%) reported no financial hardships, highlighting a minority group that may have had comparatively more stable childhood conditions. The disparity in these figures underscores the pervasive financial struggles in the sample population's early life experiences.

Table 8. Impact of Delinquency on Interpersonal Relationships Among Respondents"

Effects of Delinquency on Relationships	Percentage (%)	Description
Intermittent Disputes	40%	Many respondents experience conflicts in relationships due to delinquent behavior.
Social Isolation	36%	Respondents endure feelings of isolation as a result of delinquent behavior.
Regular Debates	16%	Some respondents engage in regular arguments due to delinquency.
Minor Disagreements	8%	A small percentage report only minor issues in relationships.

Table 8. summarizes the effects of delinquency on interpersonal relationships among respondents. The most frequently reported impact was intermittent disputes, experienced by 40% of respondents, indicating that delinquent behavior often leads to recurring conflicts within relationships. Social isolation was another significant consequence, affecting 36% of respondents, which suggests that delinquency contributes to a sense of disconnection from others. Regular debates, which are more recurring, are reported by 16% of the respondents. Lastly, 8% of the



respondents reported minor disagreements, suggesting that some individuals face less severe relationship issues due to delinquent behavior. The data indicate that delinquency substantially affects social dynamics, with a notable proportion of respondents experiencing significant social challenges.

Table 9. Legal Ramifications of Delinquent Behavior Among Respondents

Legal Ramifications	Percentage (%)	Description
Warnings or Minimal Repercussions	56%	Most respondents faced little to no legal consequences for delinquent behavior.
Community Service or Probation	20%	Some respondents were subjected to community service or probation.
Juvenile Imprisonment	16%	Indicates that a portion of respondents faced juvenile imprisonment.
Legal Proceedings and Convictions	8%	A smaller fraction encountered legal proceedings leading to convictions.

Table 9. presents the legal consequences faced by respondents due to their delinquent behavior. Most (56%) patients experienced warnings or minimal repercussions, suggesting that over half of the cases were informally resolved without severe legal action. Approximately 20% of respondents were subjected to community service or probation, indicating a moderate level of legal intervention aimed at rehabilitation rather than punishment. Juvenile imprisonment was faced by 16% of the respondents, showing that a significant minority experienced more stringent legal consequences. Finally, 8% of the respondents went through formal legal proceedings and were convicted, reflecting this group's most severe legal ramifications. This distribution highlights that while the majority faced minimal consequences, a substantial proportion experienced varying levels of legal intervention.

Table 11. Community Perceptions of Juvenile Delinquency's Impact on Safety

Community Safety Impact	Percentage (%)	Description
Causing Fear	72%	Many believe juvenile delinquency contributes to heightened fear within the community.
Increasing Crime	64%	Indicating a perceived correlation between juvenile delinquency and rising crime rates.
Harming Community Safety	56%	Highlights concerns regarding the safety of the community.
Draining Resources	36%	Reflects worries about the economic impact of delinquency on community resources.

Table 11. presents community perceptions of the impact of juvenile delinquency on safety with quantitative data highlighting specific concerns. A significant 72% of the respondents believed that juvenile delinquency caused fear within the community, indicating a broad sense of insecurity. Moreover, 64% perceived that juvenile delinquency was linked to an increase in crime rates, suggesting a correlation between youth behavior and crime trends. 56% of respondents shared concerns about community safety, emphasizing the potential threat posed by delinquency. Additionally, 36% of the community members expressed concern about the economic implications of juvenile delinquency, believing that it drains community resources. These findings underscore the multifaceted impact of juvenile delinquency, affecting not only safety perceptions but also economic well-being.



Table 12. Impact of Delinquency on Family Dynamics

Delinquency and Family Dynamics	Percentage (%)	
Increased Family Tension	60%	Most respondents report that delinquency has led to increased conflict within their families.
Withdrawal and Isolation	36%	Many feel distanced or isolated from family members due to delinquent behavior.
No Change	4%	A minimal percentage report no changes in family dynamics.

Table 12. presents the effects of delinquent behavior on family relationships, highlighting the various changes reported by respondents. The most notable impact is an increase in family tension, with 60% of the respondents indicating that delinquency has led to heightened conflict and stress within their households. This suggests that delinquent behavior significantly disrupts family cohesion, leading to a strained environment. Additionally, 36% of the respondents reported experiencing withdrawal and isolation from family members, indicating that delinquent activities contribute to emotional distance and a lack of connection within families. This could imply that affected individuals or families may struggle with communication and mutual support, further complicating the family dynamics. Only 4% of respondents stated that there was no change in family dynamics, which suggests that the majority of families were indeed impacted, with very few escaping the negative consequences of delinquency.

DISCUSSIONS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the familial and economic factors that affect juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh. The findings revealed that The primary manifestations of teenage delinquency were theft (72%), vandalism (56%), and underage alcohol use (56%). Insufficient parental supervision (80%) was the predominant factor influencing crime trends, followed by inadequate discipline (68%). Most parents (56%) supported their children's education, whereas 44% showed less interest.

The results showed that fifty-six (56%) percent of the participants said that economic conditions significantly affected juvenile delinquency. Criminal conduct negatively affects interpersonal relationships, resulting in social isolation (36%) and frequent disagreement (40%). The majority of respondents (56%) received the minimum allowable penalty, while others were sent to community service, probation, or juvenile imprisonment.

The findings suggested that the community asserts that concerns over juvenile delinquency (72%) and an increase in delinquency rates (64%) led to a greater prevalence of family delinquency (60%) and feelings of withdrawal and isolation among members (36%). Poverty and inadequate educational or retirement opportunities were correlated with teenage crime rates. Studies demonstrate that children from disadvantaged households are more prone to criminal behavior due to a lack of supportive resources that may alleviate such tendencies (Ghosh, 2021; Mahzabin, 2020). Financial distress exacerbates this risk because adolescents from low-income families have higher crime rates due to less parental involvement in schooling (Lavrentieva et al., 2020). Economic hardship creates financial constraints and exacerbates psychological distress, prompting adolescents to seek social acceptance by unlawful means (Garg & Sharma, 2020).

The use of drugs and peer pressure significantly impact crime patterns since adolescent drug use is strongly associated with criminal behavior. Substance misuse often stems from peer



pressure, especially among individuals with weak family connections or in settings in which drug use is daily (Hirschi, 2017). This aligns with research indicating an inclination for drug-related crimes among juvenile delinquents since friendships give not only social support but also avenues for illegal activities (Burfeind & Bartusch, 2015).

Legal measures for juvenile crime, such as community services or juvenile detention, affect future criminal conduct. Research shows that community-based interventions may significantly decrease recidivism; nevertheless, austere legal sanctions do not rehabilitate juveniles and may exacerbate recidivism, particularly in the absence of sufficient aftercare (Sharmin, 2021).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the data indicate a complex interaction of socioeconomic, family, and community variables that lead to juvenile delinquency. Increasing unemployment rates restrict educational achievement, and financial hardship significantly affects delinquent behavior, whereas inadequate oversight and parental engagement intensify these inclinations. Delinquency affects relationships, creating stress and alienation within families while increasing anxiety and safety concerns in communities. The results highlight the need for specialized interventions that tackle economic difficulties and family dynamics to reduce juvenile delinquency and its broader social effects.

This study has significant limitations. The data collection was restricted to three places, resulting in limitations in the overall depiction of the picture. Secondly, the research used just quantitative methodologies, which insufficiently elucidated the underlying causes and profound psychological repercussions of juvenile delinquency. The sample size was minimized owing to temporal and resource limitations, hence limiting the accuracy of the study's conclusions.

Based on the findings of this research, we present several recommendations. To reduce juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh, integrated measures by both governmental and non-governmental sectors are essential. Compulsory primary and secondary education should be ensured. Additionally, necessary legal measures should be taken to rehabilitate those currently involved in juvenile delinquency.

Our research can serve as an important document for government, non-government, and legal organizations, highlighting its practical value. Future research may focus on the psychological issues and underlying causes of juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, if future studies are conducted using qualitative methods, it will yield more in-depth and enriched information.

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