



# **The Qualitative Analysis of Psychosocial Profile of Juvenile Offenders and Exploration of Their Perception towards Delinquent Behaviors**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Juvenile delinquency or juvenile offending generally means the failure of children to meet certain obligations expected of them by the society. The study aimed for qualitative analysis of psychosocial factors which played a crucial role in exhibiting the delinquent behavior of juveniles and also explored the perception towards their offences. Cross sectional research design was used and thirty juveniles within the age range of 10-17 years involved in delinquent activities were selected by the use of purposive sampling method. Out of 30 juveniles, fifteen of them had committed heinous crimes like rape and murder and the remaining fifteen juveniles had committed non-heinous offenses like burglary, theft, kidnapping, physical assault and cybercrime. The qualitative analysis found many factors like poor tolerance level, anger management and school performance, media influence, low socio-economic status, presence of illness in the family and crime in neighborhood as risks for juvenile delinquency. It was also noticed that juvenile offenders had poor sense of responsibility, understanding or comprehension and awareness related to the delinquent act. Majority of them attributed their delinquent act to the external factors and denied having any positive

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feelings towards the victim. The exploration of risk factors and offenders understanding and perception toward crime would help in prevention and intervention programs. Implication and limitations of the study were discussed.

*Keywords: Adolescent offenders; juvenile delinquency; perception towards crime; psychosocial factors; risk factors; qualitative analysis.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a society, it was often assumed that juveniles were not capable of engaging in serious criminal activity. From this perception we neither expected children to be criminals nor anticipated crimes to be committed by young offenders [1]. The general definition for a juvenile offender, also referred to as a juvenile delinquent, is a child who "has violated any local, state, or federal law" [2]. Spiking in the 1980's, juveniles have been engaging in a large amount of serious and violent crimes and many factors were emerged as the reasons for offences.

The reasons for the juvenile offences were found to be primarily a combination of various individual and environmental variables such as individual risk factors of the delinquents, negligence and ignorance of the parents, peer influence, poor socio-economic status, family pressure and lack of proper socialization. Adolescents with delinquent behavior were reported to be lived in a family with frequent parental fights, abusive and alcoholic parents, and they also experienced severe parental punishment from their childhood. The studies also reported lack of parenting skills among the parents of adolescents with delinquent behavior [3,4]. Peer pressure was found to be a significant contributing factor for offences by adolescence and their social adjustment [5]. Resilience factors like emotional insight, empathy, and availability of the family, connectedness with family, negative cognition and social skills were found to have correlation with delinquent behaviour and temperamental characteristics like activation control, attention, inhibitory control and perceptual sensitivity were found to be negatively correlated [6].

There is a lot of debate and people's opinions over various topics of juvenile offenders and sentencing. Studies reported that offenders were ready to desist from crime based on several negative conditions of incarceration, suggesting the possibility of specific deterrence and inhibitors to deterrence included family norms of criminal behavior, age and immaturity, impulsive behaviors, perceived needs, and indifference to the consequences [7].

Researchers [8] reported that most participants in the study were very angry that they had not been informed of their choices regarding sentencing. The study emphasized that juveniles should be informed of such choices through community centers, schools, and departments of youth services.

While there are many psychosocial factors associated with delinquent behavior, identifying these factors would help in prevention and intervention programs. Perception of the juvenile offenders regarding their offenses would provide a deep understanding about offenders. Hence the present study attempted to identify the various risk factors and explore the perception of the juveniles on their offenses qualitatively.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

**Aim:** The study aimed for the qualitative analysis of psychosocial factors which play a crucial role in exhibiting the delinquent behavior of juveniles.

### Objectives:

1. To identify the risk factors associated with the delinquent behavior of juveniles.
2. To explore the perception of the juvenile offenders related to their delinquent behavior

**Research design:** Cross sectional research design.

**Sample:** Thirty adolescents who involved in delinquent activities were selected by the use of purposive sampling method from observation home in Ahmedabad and Surat, India. The age ranged from 10-17 years. There were thirty juvenile offenders and fifteen juveniles who had committed heinous crimes like rape and murder and rest of the 15 juveniles had committed non heinous offenses like burglary, theft, kidnapping, physical assault and cybercrime. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) Age range is between 10 to 17 years, (b) Minimum of 4th standard education.

Two interview schedules were prepared to identify the risk factors related to delinquent behavior and to explore the perception of the juveniles based on their offenses. Open ended questions were formed after reviewing many studies and its appropriateness to cultural and social factors were also considered and modified accordingly.

**Procedure:** The study was conducted as part of M.Phil thesis in Clinical Psychology and the study was sanctioned by the ethical committee of the University and permission was received from the higher Government authorities of observation home. The study was briefly explained to each of the participant and after signing the consent form, socio demographic details were filled up. Rapport was formed with each of the participant so that they felt comfortable to share their opinions and views related to the offenses and their circumstances and open-ended questions of both the interview schedules were asked and encouraged them to respond honestly. Data collected was analyzed by using qualitatively method.

**Statistical analysis:** In qualitative analysis, thematic analysis was done for the responses of the juvenile offenders and based on their responses, important themes were conceptualized.

Part of the study with other variables was published entitled "Psychosocial Profile of Juvenile Delinquents" and the current paper focused on the qualitative analysis of the data.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was intended to explore the risk factors and the perception of the juvenile offenders regarding their offenses by using qualitative method and the results were presented in two sections I & II.

#### I. Identification of the risk factors related to the delinquent behaviors of the juvenile offenders:

It is very important to identify the risk factors for delinquent behavior as managing these factors will help in curbing the delinquency acts. In order to identify these factors, an interview schedule was prepared. Based on the thematic analysis of the responses, the central themes were made. The themes were:

**Tolerance level:** This theme encapsulated feeling of juvenile offenders when things were not according to their way and when other people did not agree and accept their opinions but still were able to hold fair and permissive attitude and acceptance towards them. It focused on the level of tolerance of the juvenile offenders.

Majority of the juvenile offenders (70%) in the sample had expressed sadness, disappointment and anger when they did not get things according to their way. They reported that if they needed something which should get it immediately and they would try to get it anyhow by fighting, stealing or by any other means if any obstacles raised such as people or situations. Their responses were like "I feel very angry and sad when things don't go accordingly. I feel restless and try to know the reason. Sometimes I fight with my parents if they are not letting things happen according to my way or I try to find other ways to get it." This finding also goes along with previous studies where they found that juvenile offenders have low tolerance level [9] and tolerance level have direct effect on delinquency behavior [10].

However, it was observed that thirty percent of the juvenile offenders (30%) had high tolerance level and they reported that even if they felt disappointed and angry, they tried to pacify their mind and learn to adjust with it. They reported such as "I feel sad but also try to understand that I won't get everything what I want. I will just wait for it to happen later and try to adjust with what I have."

**Anger management:** This theme captured participants' actions and reactions when they felt angry and the techniques applied to control their anger. It focused on the skills that helped them in taking appropriate actions when they felt angry, whether they were able to perceive the situation in a positive way, and able to reduce emotional and physiological arousal caused by anger.

Majority of the juvenile offenders reported that they tried to suppress their anger but they were unable to do so. They expressed it directly on the other persons bluntly, tried to break things and beat others many times and reported poor control over anger. However, some of the juvenile offenders (40%) said that they could suppress their anger to some extent. When they felt angry, they isolated themselves till they calm down. Though they outburst at times but they never beat or hurt others.

**Table 1. Showing the frequency and percentiles of the responses based on the common themes**

Themes		Frequency	Percentages
Tolerance level	Low	21	70
	High	9	30
Anger management	Low	18	60
	High	12	40
Media and book influence	Present	16	53.3
	Not present	14	46.7
Socio economic status	Low	16	53.3
	Middle	13	43.3
	Upper	1	3.3
Domestic violence	Present	11	36.7
	Not present	19	63.3
Presence of physical health and mental health within family	Good	5	16.7
	Not good	25	83.3
School performance	Above average	5	16.7
	Average	13	43.3
	Below average	12	40
Crime in neighborhood	Yes	19	63.3
	No	11	36.7

Goldstein et al. [11] revealed in his study that juvenile offenders exhibited high levels of anger, relational aggression, physical aggression and severity of aggressive behavior was related to delinquent behavior. Daley and Onwuegbuzie [12] interpreted anger in terms of social cognition and a tendency to attribute or impute to others motives of hostility or threat.

**Media and book influence:** This theme captured the influence of mass media and books on the behavior of the juvenile offenders. It explored how these sources influenced the behavior and also analyzed whether the influence was in positive or negative way.

More than half of the juvenile offenders in the sample reported that they got inspiration from media and books. Many of the participants responded that they enacted action sequences of their favorite movie heroes. They loved the way how heroes tried to save and protect others and also wished to be like them. Some of the juvenile offenders, who were convicted for burglary and murder, reported that they got few ideas from many television series which they customized according to the situation and incorporated it in their acts. Some of the rape offenders also reported that they learned about physical intimacy and pleasure through internet. Few of them said that books specially suspense and thriller genre, gave them many ideas.

Rest of the participants denied the influence of media and books, as they didn't get chance to

watch television and read books due to their poor financial condition and socioeconomic status. On the other hand, very few of them revealed that even though they knew about fictional characters of television series, movies and books but their actions never influenced in real lives.

**Socio economic status:** This theme portrayed the participants' and his families' total measure of social and economic position in relation to others based on income and occupation.

More than half of the juvenile offenders (53.3%) were found to be belonged to low socioeconomic status. Most of their father worked as a laborer or as a helping hand of a shopkeeper and mechanics. Their siblings also did the same job along with the juvenile offender himself. They reported that sometimes their families had to skip a meal or two due their poor financial condition. Some of their parents were separated and the children lived with either with their mother or their father who was always drunk and unemployed.

Many studies have been reported the link between poor socioeconomic status and crime and it could be due to the economic constraints the children were forced to work and faced harassment at work place which made them to involve in undesirable activities thus lead to delinquent behaviours [13].

On the other hand, some of the juvenile offenders (43.3%) belong to middle socio-economic status whose parents worked as tailor,

shopkeeper, insurance policy seller, farmer and driver. Their siblings were also worked for living. Few of the juvenile offenders reported that even though their father was not with them, their mother earned enough for the family.

**Domestic violence:** This topic dwelled upon the presence of violent or aggressive behavior within the home of the juvenile offenders and their feelings and reactions towards it.

Sixty three percent of the participants had reported that there was no incidence of domestic violence in their home. Some of the juvenile offenders' parents were separated, but it was not due to domestic violence. They expressed that arguments and fights did occur in their home, but nobody had physically abused anyone.

However, rest of the participants revealed the presence of incidents of domestic violence in the family. They told that their father and mother were violent towards each other. Most of their father returned home drunken in the evening and abused their mother due to which their mother also retaliated the same. Juvenile offenders expressed that they felt very confused at that time and very hurt and helpless as they couldn't intervene much. Some of the them revealed that they had beaten up their father as they couldn't control their anger. Domestic violence played a crucial role in acquiring delinquent behavior as revealed in previous studies [14].

**Physical and mental health in the family:** This theme captured the details of physical and mental health in the family of the juvenile offenders. Its aim was to explore the participants' feelings and perceptions towards the physical and mental health, and the ways of coping and reactions surrounding the incidence of illness if any.

Most of the juvenile offenders reported incidence of physical and mental illness in the family. Many of them reported about the poor health of mother which ranged from asthma, piles, thyroid complaints, tuberculosis and cancer and the treatment was going on from government hospitals. The juvenile offenders felt very bad for their mother and some of them cried while expressing their feelings. They reported that they wanted to help them but did not know the ways of helping their mothers and some did household works for them. At times they felt very restless, angry and irritable while seeing their mothers' suffering.

They revealed that most of their fathers had drinking issues and some of them had heart and respiratory ailments. Even though their fathers were suffering from these illnesses, they did works to earn money. The juvenile offenders reported that they felt bad for them but felt angry when they consume alcohol.

Some of the juvenile offenders informed that few of their grandparents, uncles and aunts who lived with had mental health issues and elders advised them to stay from them as they behaved weird at times. Parental health exerts effect on children's wellbeing and [15] found that parents' mental or physical health impacted on their parenting, exemplified by less affectionate, less communicative, more punitive and more inconsistent disciplinary interactions with their children. Such sub optimal behaviors, in turn, have adverse consequences for children's wellbeing.

**School performance:** This theme encapsulated the participant's attitude and feelings toward their school. It focused on the behavior of the juvenile offenders in the school, whether they liked their school and studies and explored about their academic performance.

Many of the juvenile offenders' academic performance in their school ranged from below average to average. They reported that they had poor interest in studies, and found it boring and monotonous. Though they were not interested to go to school, they had to study for few years due to parental insistence and dropped out later. Their behaviours were problematic in the school and some complaints reached home too, though it didn't bring any change in their attitude and behavior. Hawkins and his colleagues (1998) concluded that serious and violent delinquents had more school-related problems (e.g., low grades, truancy, suspension, and dropping out) than nonviolent children. [16] found that poor school performance was related to the frequency of delinquent offending, the seriousness of offenses, and persistence in delinquency offending. Findings from this study highlighted the importance of examining the effect of poor educational performance on delinquency over time to think of a child's development on a trajectory with multiple transition points (e.g., childhood to adolescence) along which key events occur.

Some of them eventually developed interest in studies but their financial conditions disrupted the

continuation of their studies. Few of the juveniles (16.7%) liked going to school and loved studies. Their academic performance was above average and wanted to continue their studies.

**Crime in neighborhood:** This theme focused on the environment of the neighborhood of the participants' home. It also focused on the crimes in the neighborhood of juvenile offenders and their reactions and feelings towards these incidents.

Large number of participants (63.3%) had revealed about many incidents of crime committed by neighbors which ranged from heinous to non-heinous. They reported that their friends were also from the neighborhood and many of them were engaged in theft, pickpockets and murder. Some of them informed that their neighbors always had fight with each other almost every day and they were disturbed at times because of this but tried to ignore it as they had to continue to stay there. Others said that they were habituated with these incidents and did not disturb them much.

The rest of the participants in the sample reported that their neighborhood was calm and peaceful. They were also very friendly and frequently visited their home. Even though their

families were quite connected to them, they were not much involved with them.

Similarly, the previous studies revealed that community social ties may confer both pro- and antisocial influences to youth, and they advocate for a broad conceptualization of neighborhood social processes as these relate to developmental risk for youth living in disadvantaged communities [17]. Adolescents' perceptions of their neighborhood and school environments are clearly linked to their mental health and delinquent behavior [18].

**II. Exploration of the perception of the juvenile offenders related to their delinquent behaviors:**

This section focused on the perception of juvenile offenders on their delinquent behaviours. Common themes were prepared based on their responses to open ended questions.

**Self-realization:** This theme encapsulated the participants' feelings about the act due to which they were in juvenile home. It explored each of the juveniles' sense of responsibility for the act and whether they considered it as wrong. It also looked at the understanding or comprehension and awareness related to the delinquent act.

**Table 2. Frequency and percentiles of the major themes**

Themes		Frequency	Percentages
Self-realization	Yes	12	40
	No	18	60
External attribution	Yes	21	70
	No	9	30
Internal attribution	Yes	9	30
	No	21	70
Feelings associated with the victim	Present	11	36.7
	Not present	19	63.3
Plan formulation	Yes	5	16.7
	No	25	83.3
Support for the act	Present	14	46.7
	Not present	16	53.3
Appropriateness of the punishment	Yes	14	46.7
	No	16	53.3
Belief in the present justice system	Yes	18	60
	No	12	40
Wish for a change	Yes	16	53.3
	No	14	46.7

Most of the juvenile offenders (60%) revealed that they did it during the moment of weakness. They were very angry or aroused during the act and it was difficult for them to control it. Participants convicted for rape expressed that they wanted to explore the process and experience the feeling which they had only heard or seen as very pleasurable. While few of them had assaulted children, who resides in their neighborhood, but most of them had assaulted girls with whom they claimed to be in relationship. They felt that the females were also enjoying equally with them and protesting and shouting were their way of expression of enjoyment or pleasure. They did not accept the responsibility of the act and said that the girls were also equally responsible for it. One of the participants popped the question, "why did she come to my room if she didn't want me?" The offenders who victimized the children expressed that they were just exploring their body parts and it was an accident which they didn't intend to do so.

Many of the juveniles convicted of murder expressed that they had committed this act at the moment of tremendous anger during the fight and injured victim badly. They said that they did not intend to kill them and they were not responsible for it as they both were fighting; the victim also had beaten them. They reported that they were stronger than the victim due to which the other died. Some of the convicted juveniles said that they killed the victim with a knife as they were threatening and cursing them and their family. One of the juvenile offenders expressed that "he took my money so I went to his home along with my brother with the intention to kill him which we did and I am not guilty of it as he deserved that."

Other juveniles convicted of burglary and other delinquent acts like theft, kidnapping, physical assault and cyber-crime revealed that they did the act due to the greed for money to fulfill their wishes for travelling and buying new phone and also due to peer pressure.

On the other hand, some of the juveniles (40%) had accepted that what they did not correct and hurt other people in the process. They took responsibility of what they did and intend not to repeat in their life. Two of the juvenile offenders convicted of rape who victimized the children didn't took responsibility of the act, but they accepted that they had hurt the girls and had no idea that it would have hurt them at the time of rape and did not want to repeat.

Previous studies have also supported that present finding that low self-realization can increase the probability of delinquency behavior [19].

**External attribution:** This theme captured each of the participants' explanation and reasons for the act that led to conviction.

Large number of juvenile offenders (70%) attributed their delinquent act to the external factors and they inferred that their behavior was due to the situational factors. Those who had convicted of rape revealed that they did the act as they were feeling aroused and curious about sex and wanted explore what they have seen and heard earlier. Some of them said that they regularly watched porn in internet, and WWE between the female wrestlers in television while others said that their friend group regularly discussed about the process of sex. Moreover, the victims, as an opportunity for them, were alone with them at that period. They accused combination of these situations led them do the act. The offenders convicted of murder, on the other hand, expressed that the victims were more responsible for the execution of the act. They said that if victims wouldn't have done anything which angered the offenders, they need not to kill them and could have been alive today.

Juvenile offenders who had convicted of other offenses like theft, burglary and kidnapping expressed that their parents didn't provide what they wanted so they did the crimes. Moreover, they could not say no to their peers otherwise they feel bad and reject them as friend.

**Internal attribution:** This theme looked into each of the participant's explanation of the causes of their delinquent act, mainly focused on internal factors. Internal factors mean personal factors such as traits, abilities or feelings.

Only handful of the participants (30%) had attributed their behavior to internal factors. Most of the juvenile offenders attributed their act to the situation or the behavior of the victim but only few of them had attributed it to personal factors. These juvenile offenders expressed that they had executed their act due to poor anger control. They said that "what is the use of so much anger that can kill or hurt someone?". The juveniles who were convicted of rape repented their act by saying that they didn't want to harm or hurt anyone and they had no clue that their curiosity might hurt someone. The rest of the offenders said that greed and stubbornness had led them

to juvenile home. If they could have controlled their needs and desires, they would be comfortably sitting in their home.

**Feelings towards the victim:** This theme summarized each of the participants' feelings associated with the victims of their actions. It focused on whether the participant knew the victim and how they were related. It also explored the juvenile offenders' feelings towards the victim after they have committed the offense on them.

More than half of the participants (63.3%) denied having any positive feelings towards the victim. Most of the juvenile offenders already knew the victims through their peers, some were neighbors and others were known to them by their siblings or parents. Heinous offenders convicted for rape revealed that they all knew their victims and some of them were in romantic relationships with victims. According to them, they truly loved the victims. Juvenile offenders committed rape on them were very hurt and angry on them and did not want to see their face again as they complained to the police. On the other hand, juveniles who victimized the children expressed that they felt remorse that the victims were hurt by them and felt ashamed face to the neighbors as these children stayed in their same locality. The offenders, who found guilty for murdering, revealed that they were very irritated and upset because of the victims and felt that victims got what they deserve.

The non-heinous offenders felt that they had taken money from those people who were very rich hence they did not feel bad for them. According to offenders, victims could earn again the lost amount soon and it would not matter to them as they were rich. Some of the offenders knew them through their peers but for others, victims were strangers and randomly chose to rob them.

The remaining participants said that whatever had been done, their intention was just to fulfill their needs. Offenders hurt others felt sorry and upset that their single act harmed others and affected their loved ones.

**Plan formulation:** This theme captured each of the participants' plans for implementation of their act. It focused on how they formulated the plan before the act, what are the factors they looked into while planning the crime and how they implemented it.

Majority of the juvenile offenders (83.3%) reported that they did not plan anything for such delinquent acts. Most of them revealed that they just acted according to their instincts. They wanted to gratify their needs and wishes but they didn't think of a way of fulfilling it and never targeted a specific person to rob or assault. The juveniles convicted for rape expressed that the curiosity and urge to experience the pleasure of the process was present from a longer period of time but they never thought that it would land them in judicial custody. It coincidentally happened that they were feeling aroused and got an opportunity (like victim was alone) which urged them to do the act without thinking of the consequences. The offenders convicted of murder said that they were irritated and upset with the victim from few days and even thought of harming them in some way in the fit of their anger but they never thought of taking their lives. The situation was like that they were unable to control their anger and unable to stop themselves from exhibiting grudges against the victim and it took the life from the victim.

The non-heinous offenders said that they did the delinquent act as they got the chance. They saw the house or shop and they executed the act when they found that situation was in their favour.

An offender convicted for murder revealed that he and his brother planned to kill the victim as he took money from them and cheated. They observed him for few days and noted his daily routine and when they learned that victim would be alone in his home for a day, they went to his home in the middle of the night, used pillow to stop his shouting and killed him by strangling. Another victim convicted of kidnapping revealed that he loved the girl very much that he wanted her desperately. He followed her for few days, collected money and then kidnapped her when she was coming back from her school and took her to another city thinking that she would be impressed.

The other three convicted for burglary revealed that once they zeroed down the target house or shop, they stayed prepared and alerted and they executed the act on an appropriate time.

**Support for the act:** This theme conceptualized the source of support that the participants got for the execution of the delinquent act. It explored the kind and source of support that each of the juvenile offender got and who supported whom,



that is, whether the juvenile offender supported the other person or vice versa.

Nearly half of the juveniles (53.3%) in the sample denied that they never got any support for the execution of the delinquent act. Most of the participants reported that many of their peers, siblings or family members were unaware of the fact that they harmed others as they didn't plan the act earlier. The juveniles who were offenders for burglary said that they did the act with one or two friends. Rest of the juvenile offenders reported that it was an instinctual and impulsive act that nobody knew about it nor they needed any support from anybody.

On the other hand, the remaining juvenile offenders (46.7%) in the sample revealed that they got support from their peers and siblings. In terms of heinous offenders, only one juvenile convicted for murder said that he got support from his brother for intentionally killing someone who cheated them. His brother made the plan and motivated him to do the act and he had no remorse or regret and was proud of his brother. The other juvenile offenders availed support from others were convicted for burglary, theft and kidnapping. They reported that they were very close friends and always planned things together and supported each other and helped to fulfill their wishes by any means. Some of their peers had already done many robberies and burglaries and used to share their experiences and provided new ideas if they were planning for crimes. When the friends got arrested, they did peers ran away and escaped peers told and convinced their parents that they were together at the time of arrest and they were innocent and wrongly convicted.

**Appropriateness of the punishment:** This theme captured the viewpoint of each of the participants regarding the sentence they were penalized due to their offenses. It explored the feelings of the juveniles related to the punishment that they were serving.

According to half of the juvenile offenders (53.3%) the sentence they were serving was not accurate and they were suffering more than what they deserved. The heinous offenders expressed that whatever had happened due to the heat of the moment and happened accidentally. They didn't hurt anybody intentionally and would never do that. They expressed that keeping them away from their family was not right, whatever had happened was not just their mistake but the

victims were also equally responsible and punishment they were receiving was not deserving.

The non-heinous offenders said that they had taken a very small sum from their large properties of the rich people which was not a big offense and complained that others were committing severe punitive actions but still they were moving freely. According to them, it was unfair for them suffer like that and almost nobody knew that how long they would have to stay there which was more frustrating for them.

Rest of the sample (46.7%) accepted that their sentence was appropriate. Most of the juvenile offenders revealed that they actually loved spending time in juvenile homes. As the financial condition of their home was not good, they never had any facilities for enjoyment or recreation but all facilities were available in juvenile home. According to them, they got facilities like watching television, getting food on time and time for play, hence it was alright for them even if the sentence would be longer. Some of them reported that as they had hurt others, they deserved to get punishment and wanted rectify their behavior.

**Belief in the present justice system:** This theme focused on faith and trust of each of the participants in the present justice system of India. It discussed about the juvenile offender's perception towards the justice system.

Most of the juvenile offenders (60%) had reported that they believed in the justice system and had faith that the system would identify and differentiate between the innocents and the offenders and would punish accordingly. They believed that even though it takes time but eventually, the system would come to know that they were not the only one to blame at and hence will be freed soon.

The rest of the participants did not believe in the justice system citing the reason that they were inside the juvenile home without committing any serious offense and told that they would have been free now if they had money to meet the legal battle and they would continue to suffer as the system was unfair and discriminates between people.

**Wish for a change:** This theme encapsulated the feelings of each of the participants related to their activities and whether they wanted to

change anything regarding their behavior. It also explored that if given a chance whether they wanted to change anything about the past incident due to which were convicted.

Half of the participants wished for a change. The offenders admitted that sometimes it was difficult to control their urge and impulses. They wanted to improve it so that they won't return to juvenile home in future. Those convicted for rape said that if given a chance, they wanted to change the incident by changing the mindset of the girls with whom they claimed to be in relationship. They wanted to know whether girls also loved the them truly and if not, they would have never continued to meet and would come physically close with the girls. The offenders who victimized the children said that if given a chance, they would really like to control their arousal and curiosity level and not to hurt the children and wished to erase the incident altogether from their life. The convicts of murder said that the fights were inevitable with the victims as they were irritating them. But given a chance, they wanted to change the incident in way that not beat them so harshly that they would lose their life. Some of the non-heinous offenders said that they wanted to control their greed and be grounded about what they were and be realistic in dreams. Given a chance, they wished to undo the actions as they now know the consequences of it.

The remaining juvenile offenders (46.7%) did not want to change anything. They said that what done is done and it can't be undone nor they had any regret regarding their behavior. According to them, they were not lunatics that they would just show such extreme behavior and somebody (here they were referring the victims) might had instigated and forced them to act like that. People might think that they did wrong but the juvenile offenders posed the question back "So is the victim innocent? They didn't do anything and have a clean slate?" They were very clear that whatever they had done is inevitable and did not care how the people judged them on the basis of the incident.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The study found that Juvenile offenders had poor tolerance level, anger management and school performance, had influence of media in crime, belonged to low socio-economic status, presence of physical and mental illness in the family and crime in neighborhood. The results were in line with the previous researches that childhood

adverse conditions would lead to criminal activities in adolescents and adulthood and these conditions could be a combination of individual, familial, social/community factors. It was also noticed that juvenile offenders had poor sense of responsibility, understanding or comprehension and awareness related to the delinquent act. Majority of them attributed their delinquent act to the external factors, and denied having any positive feelings for the victim. Most of them did not plan anything for such delinquent acts and did not get any support for the execution of the delinquent act. Half of the juvenile offenders revealed that according to them, the sentence they were serving was not accurate and they were asked to suffer more than what they deserved. Most of them reported that they do have belief in the justice system but sentencing was not accurate or they did not deserve it and half of the participants wished for a change in their behavior. Perception towards the crime, sentencing and justice system are important indicators for future offences and benefits from prevention and intervention programs. Guilt feeling and motivation to change would facilitate the positive outcomes of treatment program which would further reduces the risk of future offenses. These aspects need to be taken care while tailoring the rehabilitation programs.

#### **5. IMPLICATION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Historically, delinquency studies have focused on later adolescence, the time when delinquency usually peaks. This was particularly true in the 1990s, when most researchers studied chronic juvenile offenders because they committed a disproportionately large amount of crime. Many studies identified several important risk factors that, when combined, may be related to the onset of early offending [20].

Professionals, who were responsible for the decision making in the juvenile justice system, based their decisions on the risk and protective factors that a youth presents. Youth in the criminal justice possessed more risk factors than protective factors and protective factors could reduce the risk that a child becomes delinquent. However, at-risk youth lacked the support, motivation, and know how to increase the protective factors in their lives. There was a lack of community resources and community initiatives to support youth. This concern should be voiced to government agencies, community agencies, and the residents of the county. It is

more important than ever for our communities to become aware of these social issues and improve public safety, redirect public funds to more positive youth development programs, and assist the families in need [21].

The current study is one of the few studies reported detailed exploration of the offender's perception towards their crime in addition to identifying risk factors, though the small sample size and single source of information are the limitations. In a similar study on thematically exploring the self-reported life experiences and offending pathways of detained adolescent females was also identified multiple themes including disconnection from education, early care-giver disruption/family separation, personal and family mental health problems, poly-substance abuse, anti-social peers, victimization and anger problems. The study identified that early family disruption is an important factor that may contribute to later offending behaviour and other negative life events. Prevention efforts should begin with the family when it comes to high-risk young females [22]. The information would help in tailoring the prevention and intervention programs for the juvenile offenders.

One of the limitations of this study is that sample consisted of adolescent offenders from two observation homes and future studies can be focused on large sample size, a multi-setting and multi-informant approach with an emphasis on both risk and protective factors and cross sectional as well as longitudinal studies to be conducted.

## DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study was sanctioned by the ethical committee of the University and permission was received from the higher Government authorities of observation home. The study was briefly explained to each of the participant and after

signing the consent form, socio demographic details were filled up

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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