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JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: AN INTERPLAY OF INCENTIVES

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Abstract

The study is an attempt to analyze the influence of economic and social incentives to crime on the behavior of Juvenile Probationers. Through the research the investigator tried to throw light on the relevant economic and social incentives that catalyze delinquency and its bearing over the lives of the children. To achieve the objective of the study, the population of the juvenile probationers of Ernakulam District over the time period of one year from April 2015 to April 2016 was selected. The researcher has employed a multiple case study approach to the descriptive qualitative study design where each of the ten juveniles of the population is studied as a unique case. The methods used for data collection are in-depth interviews with the juveniles; focus group interviews and participant observation. The findings of the study have been communicated through case study analysis and descriptive summary statistics. The findings of the study revealed the influence of economic and social incentives to crime on the behavior of the juveniles. Relevant suggestions and policy implications were drawn from the findings.

Keywords: Juvenile, Probationers, Delinquency, Economic Incentives, Social Incentives and Economics of Crime.

JEL classification codes: K14, K42, J18, E22.

1. INTRODUCTION

Economics is a social science that deals with the allocation of the limited resources at one's disposal which has alternate uses, in the most efficient way possible. The limitedness or scarcity of the resources demands for economizing of resources which simply implies making optimum use of the available resources. Therefore, according to the neoclassical school of thought, human beings are considered rational beings who respond to incentives to achieve utility maximization.

It is hence theoretically, not surprising to observe the existence of crime within the society as it is the result of merely an act of utility maximization by an

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individual. Disobedience and crime has been in the world ever since the birth of mankind. From Adam and Eve's act of defiance to the crimes that were reported in your newspaper, points towards the fact that it has been long prevailing. The age neutrality of this theory also has been empirically tested and proved in a range of theoretical and empirical studies. That is, this notion can be extended and holds equally true in the case of children and young adults (Levitt & Lochner, 2001).

The incentives that potential offenders or present offenders respond to could be in the form of either sticks or carrots (Corman & Mocan, 2005). Sticks refer to the punitive action set by the criminal justice system of the state in the form of punishments and penalties whereas carrots refer to the rewards received by virtue of the non-indulgence in criminal activities or active participation in the legal market. In reality, a society dominated only by wants and self-utility maximization would be one in utter chaos and disputes and would require state intervention in the form of rewards and sanctions.

In India, juvenile crime comprises of 1.2% of the total cognizable crime rates and this proportion has been stagnant from 2012 and it has been on a steady rise with alarming consequences (Times News Network, 2015). Juvenile delinquency rate has been increasing by leaps and bounds within the country. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported a 74.3% increase in juvenile crime rates in India between 2004 and 2014 with a relative constant rise in the rate (NCRB, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014). Probation is a scientific and rationalized approach towards dealing with the individuals and his problems. In India, the court by which the child is found guilty has the power to release the offender under the condition of him entering into a bond, with or without sureties, to appear and receive sentence when called upon during this period, not exceeding 3 years, as the court may direct, and in mean time to keep peace and be of good behavior. Before releasing the guilty accused on probation, the court should satisfy itself that it is expedient to release the child on probation. The court should consider the nature of the offence and the character of the offender. The report of the Legal Cum Probation Officer should also be considered into account. The probationer has to make appearances in front of the Legal Cum Probation Officer at the District Child Protection Unit as prearranged and register his attendance every time until the probationary period is completed (Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, 2016).

Escalating crime rates in the Indian state of Kerala, often referred as God's own country, poses a huge contradiction to this celebrated title and has been the context of this study. The state which was known for its rich cultural heritage and history is now known for its crime rates as well. 'Crime' is a term that has become a familiar to Keralites over the years. Juvenile delinquency in the state is simultaneously intensifying. Data collected by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported 1,203 cases recorded against juvenile offenders in the state in 2014, a stark hike from the 773 case in 2013. The number of juveniles taken under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act was just 3 in 2013; it rose to 22 in 2014 - highest in the country. Similarly, 39 minors were booked for rape in 2014, compared to 32 in 2013. In 2014, 180 theft cases involving minors were recorded in the State. Moreover, 11 cases were recorded against minors for

rash and negligent driving causing death and a total of 436 cases were recorded against juveniles for rash driving causing injuries. In Kerala, the number of juveniles arrested and sent to courts, the number of children released on probation and the number of children in Special homes has witnessed an overall increase from 2011 to 2014. Statistics based on the economic conditions of the juveniles charged under various sections of IPC in 2014, it is understood that 6 juveniles involved in criminal activities were illiterate; 368 had primary education; 831 had education below higher secondary and 370 had education above higher secondary (NCRB, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014). Of all juveniles booked for various offences, 508 were from households with annual income of up to 25,000 Rupees; 421 were a part of families with annual income up to 50,000 Rupees; 149 were from households with annual income of up to 1 lakh Rupees; 53 belonged to households with annual income of 2-3 lakh Rupees; and 10 persons were from households with annual income of more than 3 lakh Rupees. During the financial year 2010 to 2011 there were 15 juveniles convicted and released on probation. From the financial year 2011 to 2012 there were 29 juveniles convicted and released on probation. During the financial year 2012 to 2013, 7 juveniles were convicted and released on probation. From the financial year 2013 to 2014, 6 juveniles were convicted and released on probation. From the financial year 2014 to 2015, only 1 juvenile was convicted and released on probation. From April 2015 to May 2016, 15 juveniles were convicted and released on probation. In total from April 2010 to May 2016, a total of 72 juveniles against who cases have been registered and have been convicted and released on probation. This clearly points to the rising trend of the number of juvenile probationers in Ernakulam District from the year 2014.

The city of Kochi within Ernakulam District, labeled as the crime capital of the country has seen an increase in the crime rates over the past few years. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Survey, 2015 Kochi has the most number of criminal activities reported as many as 17,088 cases. These numbers are not just confined to adult population but also reflect the juvenile delinquency prevailing in not just Kochi, but whole of Ernakulam District. This involvement of the juveniles in crimes is a matter of serious social concern and is most recorded in rural areas in Kochi.

While there exist economic literature examining the economic incentives to criminal behavior, there exist very few studies that incorporate both economic and social incentives to criminal behavior under the ambit of an economic theoretical framework to analyze juvenile delinquency. Also, there are very few studies which have tried to analyze the impact of these economic incentives on juvenile delinquency. According to the UNICEF (2011), social conditions like family background, negative family relations, experiences such as divorce, death of a parent might have a negative impact on a child's behavior. A prominent study conducted by Siegel & Welsh (2010) suggests that serious crimes are more prevalent in socially disorganized low class areas. It is the lower class youths who are responsible for the majority of these acts. Hence the importance of the effect of social incentives to criminal behavior of the children cannot be ignored.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study inclines heavily on the Economic Model of Crime by Becker, (1968) and Ehrlich (1973) for its theoretical framework. According to this theoretical model, economic entities choose if or not to participate in crime by running a cost-benefit analysis under uncertainty. This is done by evaluating the expected benefits from participation in the criminal activity (which is netted out by the probability of getting caught) alongside the expected costs (that are represented as the opportunity cost) of this indulgence.

The Becker-Ehrlich model portrays the trade-off faced by individuals between crime and work. If the monetary returns from crime is W_c and the monetary returns from legal work is W_l and the expected utility derived from W_c and W_l is U . Let π be the probability of getting caught in a crime and S the sanction levied from the offender by the judicial system, the individual would go ahead and commit the crime C if the expected benefits from C weigh more than the cost of engaging in the crime. Hence the supply of crime reflected in the criminal participation is formed by incentives (W_c , W_l) and deterrence (π , S). *Ceteris paribus*, growth in returns from crime increase crime ($\partial C / \partial W_c > 0$) and growth in legal wages, the probability of being caught and the size of the sanction if caught lower crime ($\partial C / \partial W_l < 0$; $\partial C / \partial \pi < 0$; $\partial C / \partial S < 0$).

There exist both merits and demerits of discerning individual crime in this utilitarian method. Firstly, the simplicity of the model has not been a limitation in its generalization and applicability to the real life scenarios. Work and crime aren't merely distinct decisions but can be reframed as time allocation problems (Lochner, 2004) (Lochner, 2010). Even this extension produces the same results. Secondly, the Becker-Ehrlich Model considers homogeneous criminals and homogenous crimes. Introducing crime specialization as well as variations in the returns to crime, though complicates the model, obtains the same results (Draca & Machin, 2015). Thirdly, the model is quiet about the type of crime committed. While the economic incentives can be better comprehended through the analysis of property crimes, this model can also be applied to violent crimes. A drawback of this model is that it is stationary. Here the dynamic nature of the career criminals is not taken into consideration. Lochner (2004) and Mocan & Rees (2005) discuss this dynamic by which career criminals develop criminal human capital. Basically, the model is less compatible to higher complex additions in other dimensions.

The Economic model of crime formulated by Becker was a path breaking work in the field of economics of crime (Becker, 1968). It was verified for aggregate data on adult population by Witte (1980) and Cornwell & Trumbull (1994). It was tested using micro data on the adult population by Levitt S. (1997) and Corman & Mocan (2005). By means of state-level data, Levitt S. (1998) established that the juvenile crime rate is inversely proportional to the strictness of punishments, showing that the economic model of crime applies to juveniles as well as adults.

The determinants of unemployment, income and education that affect criminal behavior are of key significance in the Becker-Ehrlich Model.

2.1. CRIME AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The most prominent incentive in this category is a job which brings in fixed and regular wages to the individual worker. Hence, an increase in wages in the formal labor market would lead to a subsequent drop in the crime which reinstates the negative relation between labor market outcomes and criminal tendencies. Fougère et al. (2009) suggest strong influence of youth unemployment on criminal behavior in France whereas Grönqvist (2013) using data from Sweden to show an evident empirical relation between youth unemployment and criminal tendencies. Raphael & Winter-Ember (2001) and Lin (2008) having employed latest methodological advances further assert the positive relation between unemployment and crime by adopting panel data over cross sections and instrumental variable methods. Bound & Freeman (1992) investigated to find a negative relationship between indulgence in criminal activity and labor market attachments wherein the authors state that an increase in population with criminal records sums up to one third of the long run erosion of employment. Freeman & Rodgers (1999) document incidence of higher criminal activities in regions with poor earning and employment levels.

2.2. CRIME AND INCOME

Burgess (1952) in his seminal work pointed out the existence of the relationship between juvenile delinquency and low-income level of the households. He also addressed the question whether an adequate income for the poor income families bring down the criminal behavior among the juveniles. Grogger (1998) analyzed the responsiveness of juvenile criminal behavior to changes in real wages. Entorf & Spengler (2000) unveiled the negative link between criminal activity and income by analyzing data in German regions. Comanor & Phillips (2002) show that there is a strong correlation between family income of the and juvenile crime. The degree of delinquency observed is higher among children of families with lower per capita income.

2.3. CRIME AND EDUCATION

Higher levels of education have reported lower crime rates both among young and adult population. Literature based on crime and education and be bifurcated into two. These are the incapacitation effect that is provided by education and also long term decrease in crime as a result of education, both of which have an incentive effect on crime. The works of Witte & Tauchen (1994) and Hjalmarsson (2008) saw the negative relationship of education on criminal activities because of the higher time and other resources dedicated to education and consequent reduction in the indulgence of crime resulting in incapacitation effect. Lochner & Moretti (2004) focused on the long-term impact that education can have on the reducing crime rates.

2.4. SOCIAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING CRIME

Social learning theory formulated by Bandura in 1977 according to which juveniles learn criminal behavior just as they learn conforming behavior from the

society(Bandura, 1977). Hence family and peer groups play a key role in what the child learns and considers morally and socially right. In their social disorganization theory Shaw and McKay seek to describe the differences in crime levels in different groups(Shaw & McKay, 1969). Communities with greater level of crime act as breeding grounds of more crime to take place as opposed to the communities with lower levels of crime. In his Social Bond Theory, Hirschi says, the probability of a child to commit crime is more if he is detached to his family(Hirschi, 1969). In his opinion children grow to develop certain bonds and attachments with either their family or with the society they live in. It is when they feel detached that they express deviant behavior. According to the Strain Theory proposed by Agnew (1992), individuals participate in crime in order to vent out or escape the strains that they experience. Strain leads to the inability to achieve goals or targets in life which in turn are manifested as acts of delinquency(Agnew, 1992). In empirical work by Wright, Gibson, & Tibbetts (2000), juvenile delinquency is weighed against low socio economic conditions and learned that these conditions propelled delinquent behavior by causing a dip in the educational and financial goals. Boajkye (2012) conducted a qualitative study on the life of the juveniles in Ghana which identified the circumstances in which the children indulged in crime. Rosenbaum (2017) is an empirical literature that analyzes the experience and perceptions of the juveniles who enter into boot camps.

In the given theoretical background, the present study seeks to analyse the influence of social and economic incentives to crime on the delinquent behaviour of the juvenile probationers. The study has been conducted with reference to the juvenile probationers of Ernakulam District of Kerala. Kochi in Ernakulam is referred to as the ‘Queen of the Arabian Sea’ with a landscape crisscrossed by backwaters, which meet the Arabian Sea at various points. Amidst all the breathtaking beauty and valuable culture in the city, the irony lies in the fact that it is the same city that has been also titled ‘the crime capital’ of the country as per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports. It is this district that will be the nerve center of the study and analysis below will be based on the study of the particular district.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data for this exploratory qualitative study was collected by using multiple case study approach. The entire population was taken for the study. Therefore, in this paper 10 juveniles released on probation represent the population set of juvenile probationers of Ernakulam District for a period of one year from April 2015 to April 2016. Each of ten juvenile probationers has been studied as a unique case.

Both primary and secondary techniques of data collection have been used in the analysis of the study. One of the primary data sources has been the Legal Cum Probation Officer of the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) of Ernakulam District with its office located in Aluva. Contact information and residential addresses of the juveniles was provided by the DCPU. Another source of primary data was the juveniles along with the members of their family who were visited by the personally by the researcher in order to seek answers to the research problem.

Secondary data sources such as books, journals, articles, periodicals and other researches carried out in similar contexts have also been used for further guidance in this study. Journals namely The Journal of Political Economy, National Bureau of Economic Research, Chicago Journals, Economics Bulletin have been referred for this study to name a few. Periodicals like Economic and Political Weekly, The Economist, Review of International Political Economy have also been referred to for the conduct of this study.

Primary data has been collected through in-depth interviews with the juveniles who are officially termed as respondents in the study. Gathering of data through participant observation has been undertaken. Focus group interviews with the juveniles in the presence of their family have also been carried out as method of data collection. The instrument for data collection from the Legal Cum Probation Officer in DCPU, Aluva has been an interview guide with loosely fashioned list of questions and topics to be covered regarding juvenile delinquency in the personal interview.

The tool for analysis used is Case Study Analysis where analysis from the case studies has been done in under the two broad heads of ‘Social Incentives’ and ‘Economic Incentives’ in line with the objective of the research which have been substantiated using existing theories related to the issue.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of data analysis has been divided into two broad sections vis-à-vis Descriptive Summary Analysis and Case Study Analysis in order to capture a complete essence of the data collected from the field survey. While the former entails a profile of the juveniles and their households, Case Study Analysis has been divided further into two sections of which the first forms the analysis of the interview with the juveniles and the second is the analysis of the focus group interview conducted with the juveniles and their families. Between April 2015 and April 2016, 10 juveniles were released on probation in the district of Ernakulam. Presented below is a summary statistics which would be an overall depiction of the economic and social conditions of all the juveniles and their families collected using a semi-structured schedule.

4.1. PERSONAL INFORMATION OF THE JUVENILE

Age Distribution. Age distribution of the respondents show that majority of the respondents (70 percent) belong the age group of 18 years. 20 percent were in the age category of 16 years and of the them was in the age group of 15 years.

Gender Distribution and Educational Background. 100% of the juvenile probationers were males and 50 percentage of the total population continue their schooling whereas the other half have dropped out of school and joined the work force.

Distributions of Dropouts. Out of the total dropouts, 20% (constituting 1 out of 5 juveniles dropouts) dropped out after 4th grade, another 20% (constituting 1 out of 5 juveniles dropouts) dropped out after 9th grade, another 20% (constituting

1 out of 5 juveniles dropouts) dropped out after their 10th grade and 40% (constituting 2 out of 5 juveniles dropouts) dropped out after 11th grade.

Types of Offences Committed. 7 out of 10 children, accounting 70% of the population surveyed are charged for theft. 2 out of 10 children, accounting 20% of the population surveyed are charged for drug abuse and recovery of drugs. 1 out of 10 children, accounting 10% of the population surveyed are charged for attempt to homicide. 2 out of 10 children, accounting 20% of the population surveyed are charged for causing hurt by using dangerous weapons. 1 out of 10 children, accounting 10% of the population surveyed are charged for using obscene language in public place.

4.2. INFORMATION ON THE FAMILY

Monthly Income of the family: The income brackets range from Rs 2500 per month to Rs 70,000 per month. But it can be observed that 90% of the households fall under the income category of less than Rs 16,000 per month.

Possession of Below Poverty Line (BPL) Cards: 7 out of 10 responding households have BPL cards whereas the remaining 3 households do not have a BPL card. It can thereby be observed that 70% of the households have BPL cards and 30% households do not have a BPL card, instead an Above Poverty Line (APL) card.

Migration Pattern: 5 out of the 10 households surveyed, which accounts for 50% of the population have migrated from a different place to settle in their present residence. The remaining 5 households have undergone no migration.

Educational Status of the Parent: Educational status of the juveniles' mothers reveals that 30 percentage have not received any formal education, constituting 3 out of the 10 mothers observed. 20percentage dropped out after their lower primary education, constituting 2 out of the 10 mothers observed. 30 percentage have dropped out after their upper primary education, constituting 3 out of the 10 mothers observed. 10 percentage have dropped out after completing SSLC 10th grade, constituting 1 out of the 10 mothers observed and another 10 percentage completed their post matric level of education. Educational status of the juveniles' fathers reveals that 20% have not received any formal education, constituting 2 out of the 10 fathers observed. 40% dropped out of school after their lower primary, constituting 4 out of the 10 fathers observed. 30% dropped out of school after finishing their upper primary, constituting 3 out of the 10 fathers observed. 10% have finished their post metric studies, which accounts for 1 out of the 10 fathers observed.

Job Profile of the Parent: The occupational status of the juveniles' mothers establishes that 20% are unemployed, 10% are engaged in fishing activities, 10% are daily wage laborers in construction sites, 30% work as maids, 10% work in the chit fund-microfinance sector, 10% are engaged in agricultural activities and 10% are deceased. Evaluating the occupational status of the juveniles' fathers, it is found that out that 20% are drivers, constituting 2 out of the 10 fathers observed. 30% are daily wage workers at construction sites, constituting 3 out of the 10 fathers observed. 10% are engaged in agricultural sector, constituting 1 out of the 10 fathers observed. 10% are tailors, constituting 1 out of the 10 fathers observed. 10% are engineers,

constituting 1 out of the 10 fathers observed. 10% are deceased, constituting 1 out of the 10 fathers observed. 10% is unemployed, constituting 1 out of the 10 fathers observed.

Single Parents: 4 out of the 10 juveniles' household surveyed have single parent which accounts for 40% of the population studied. Also, 6 out of the 10 juveniles' household surveyed have both their parents which accounts for 60% of the population studied.

Health Conditions (Number of Ailing Members in the Family): 5 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 50% of the households have exactly one ailing member, 1 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 10% of the households have two ailing members and 4 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 40% of the respondents showed the absence of any ailing member. 6 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 60% of the households have at least one ailing member.

Health Conditions (Availability of Health Care Facilities): 7 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 70% of the households surveyed have proper and convenient accessibility to healthcare facilities. The remaining 3 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 30% denied proper and convenient accessibility to healthcare facilities.

Housing Conditions and Ownership Status of House by the family of juveniles: Housing conditions of the juvenile probationers has been studied under two heads. It is found that 8 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 80% of the respondents live in Kacha houses. 2 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 20% of the respondents live in pakka houses which have all the three amenities of water supply, electricity supply, and proper sanitation facility.

5 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for 50% of the households surveyed own the house they live in. The other 5 out of the total population surveyed which amounts for the remaining 50% of the households surveyed live in a rental house on a temporary basis.

Presence of Criminal History in the Family: All the 10 respondents displayed a 100% disagreement to any kind of criminal history in the family.

5. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

This section shows the results of the case study analysis conducted with the respondents.

5.1. INTERVIEW WITH THE JUVENILES

Given below are the two broad themes that took shape out of the meanings accrued from the descriptive responses of the participants of the study. It will be on the basis of these themes that the researcher would analyze the text obtained from the in-depth interview with the juveniles Verbatim are used to convey the true essence of the interactions.

The juveniles, also termed as respondents in the study were initially interviewed by the researcher in isolation from the family members to acquire a deep and unbiased understanding of their mind set and perceptions.

5.2. ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

From the in-depth interviews conducted with the juveniles, one of the rationales behind majority of the criminal behavior was noted to be the financial backwardness in their family. One of the respondents expressed his opinion as follows: "I never wanted to commit thievery. I needed more money for the house. I had joined my uncle in his local welding and plumbing business after my 9th grade which never paid much. It seemed easier for me to commit this and earn a lot of money rather than working so hard and yet get paid very low. My mother from all her hard work barely earns enough to keep the family running."

Another respondent aged 18, who was convicted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 for the possession and exchange of illegal substances said: "The first time I got drugs from my fellow workers at the construction site was to resell it for more money to some other buyers. Back home in Kolkata, my parents survive off the income from agriculture which adds up to not more than Rs. 1000 per month. I fled my home land to make money. Somewhere between making money and the misery of loneliness, I also became a consumer of these drugs. In the beginning it helped me earn but slowly it took control of my life."

An 18 year old convicted for theft of a bike, shared his perspective as follows: "The only reason I decided to steal the bike was because I was in absolute need of the money for my father's Hepatitis treatment. The meager income of my household does not suffice for our five member family. I dropped out from school after my 11th grade and decided to find work to reduce the burden on my parents. I knew it was wrong to commit a theft but I didn't have much of a choice. At that point of time anything for money appeared right to me."

The above statements are a depiction of how people respond to incentives. There is a tradeoff between work and crime that takes place in accordance with Becker-Ehrlich model of crime. The economic entity after running a cost benefit analysis decides to go ahead and commit the crime if the expected benefits outweighed the expected costs. The costs associated with committing the crime appears comparatively lesser than the benefits that they would accrue from the crime which catalyzes delinquency in individuals.

Majority of the children interviewed were from families which earned less than Rs. 16000 per month with an average income of Rs 7000 per month. According to Comanor & Phillips (2002), income of the family and juvenile crime are highly correlated. Higher amount of juvenile delinquency is observed in families with lower per capita income.

Also, half of the respondents interviewed were children who had dropped out of the education system and later happened to indulge in crime. Several studies in literature point to the significance of education and schooling in the children's cohesiveness and conformity to the societal norms. Studies by West, (1969) and Usher (1997) along with many other studies have argued that education have a positive impact in the reduction of criminal activity.

5.3. SOCIAL INCENTIVES

A 15 year old justified his attempt to steal a gold chain as follows: "It was all in the spur of the moment. I wanted to prove my friends that I too could be daring and adventurous. Hence I went ahead and tried to snatch a lady's chain while my friends stood and watched me."

The 18 year old who was convicted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 for the possession of illegal substances is yet another case where social incentives dominated economic incentives. He stated:

"I was far from home in college with my friends who accepted me for who I was and never expected so much from me the way my parents did. I finally felt free and decided to experiment different things. It was when I went to a beach with my friends that we took drugs and got caught."

Aforementioned act for gaining acceptance from friends and peers can be explained using the Social learning theory formulated by Bandura, (1977) according to which juveniles learn criminal behavior just as they learn conforming behavior from the society. Hence family and peer groups play a key role in what the child learns and considers morally and socially right. Also, there exists a huge impact of a neighborhood with high crime rates on the attitudes of the children. Social disorganization theory by Shaw & McKay (1969) seeks to describe the differences in crime levels in different groups. Communities with greater level of crime act as breeding grounds of more crime to take place as opposed to the communities with lower levels of crime. Another 15 year old confessed that:

"Neither am I attached to my family nor do I feel like sharing anything with them. I live in a house with my mother and my step father who work at construction sites. The only person I was attached to was my own father who passed away few years back. So, I try to make money myself without relying on my stepfather or my mother who married that strange man. I always desired to have a mobile phone like everyone and since I don't like asking my parents for favors, I resorted to stealing it from our neighbor's house."

In his Social Bond Theory, Hirschi (1969) says, the probability of a child to commit crime is more if he is detached to his family. In his opinion children grow to develop certain bonds and attachments with either their family or with the society they live in. It is when they feel detached that they express deviant behavior.

The slightly different point of view but still along the same lines can be observed in yet another case where the child's father abandoned the family to marry another woman. When asked about his father, the 15 year old said:

"My father chose to leave my mother, brother and me when I was 10 years of age. My mother is the sole bread earner in our family. He does not care for us at all, then why should I care?"

According to the Strain Theory proposed by Agnew (1992), individuals participate in crime in order to vent out or escape the strains that they experience. Strain leads to the inability to achieve goals or targets in life which in turn are manifested as acts of delinquency (Agnew, 1992).

6. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

During the focus group interview, juveniles along with the members of their family responded to the issues raised by the researcher and expressed their outlooks. A few stances that stood out are mentioned below:

Several families, in pursuit of employments opportunities and living conditions have migrated from their native places. Many families voiced their views as follows: "I think moving to this neighborhood for a better paying job has been a mistake because this neighborhood is prone to crime and criminal activities. Our children get dragged into such acts especially because of our financial constraints."

Another concern raised was, "There is a social stigma attached to being convicted for an offence. My son was rejected admission in several schools because of this stain in his conduct certificate. It is deeply saddening to see such discrimination happening in educational institutions. Incidents of discrimination like these act as hindrances in proper psychological recovery of the child from such trauma as a conviction, that too at such young age."

There was immense support from certain families which was an intentional step by the families to help the child reconcile well with the family. A grandmother gloomily recalls, "My child was very bright as a student. He would never intentionally hurt anyone. Ever since his father passed away he has been assisting his mother to take care of his two younger sisters. He even sacrificed his schooling for their sake. It was when we were in desperate need of money that he resorted to such an act. We are partially responsible for what happened to him."

One of the mothers during the discussion said "My son was always in disagreement with my decision to remarry after my husband's death. He is not willing to accept his new father and so is always aggressive and cold around him."

Several families blamed peer pressure and bad friendship as a cause for their children's delinquent behavior.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study findings show that the number of juvenile probationers within the district of Ernakulam is on a rising trend since 2010, with the highest number of cases reported in the financial year 2012-13. Majority of the juvenile probationers are 18 years of age. All the juvenile probationers surveyed within the district are males. The survey also reveals that half the population of the juvenile probationers has dropped out of school. Majority of the children dropout after finishing their 11th grade. The most common offence committed by the children is theft, followed by possession and abuse of drugs followed by usage of obscene language; causing hurt by dangerous weapons and; attempt to homicide among the crimes committed by the population.

The family's income brackets range from Rs 2500 per month to Rs 70,000 per month. But it can be observed that 90% of the households fall under the income category of less than Rs 16,000 per month. Most of households also mentioned the imbalance between their income level and expenditure, implying insufficient income levels. A large proportion of the households belongs to the Below Poverty Line

(BPL) category and possesses BPL cards. Half the population has migrated from their native places and the other half hasn't undergone migration. The educational status of a greater part of the juveniles' mothers is either no formal education received or up to upper primary whereas that of a greater part of their fathers is either up to lower or upper primary. A major proportion of the juveniles' mothers are employed as maids in houses and hostels which is the most common occupation and among their fathers is daily wage laborer at construction sites is the most common occupation. Most of the juveniles live with both their mother and father. A minor part of the population comes from broken families or lives with only either of their parents. Majority of the households observed have a minimum of one ailing member in the family. Basic health facilities are recorded available to more than half the households studied. Majority of the households have poor housing conditions and kuccha houses which lack any one, two or all three amenities of water supply, electricity supply, and proper sanitation facility. Half of the population interviewed live on rental basis and the other half own the house they live in. It is revealed that most of the households have a high incidence of crime in their neighborhood. All of the households interviewed were in disagreement to any kind of criminal history in the family. It is observed from the field work that a majority of the households have poor socio economic conditions with insufficient income levels, poor educational background, bleak health conditions, poor housing conditions, high incidence of crime in the neighborhood and so on.

7.1. FINDINGS FROM CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The influence of economic incentives was heavily found from the multiple case study approach and subsequent case study analysis. There is great influence of financial backwardness in the form of low levels of family income on the delinquent behavior of the child. In many cases, the stresses due to low income levels have manifested in the form of deviant tendency. Majority of the children interviewed were from families which earned less than Rs. 16000 per month with an average income of Rs 7000 per month. There has also been a distinguished influence of unemployment on the child's indulgence to criminal activities. From the cases analyzed it was found that unemployment in the family has forced many children to resort to offensive activities for their subsistence. Education was also noted to have a significant impact on the decision making process of committing a delinquent act. Half of the respondents interviewed were children who had dropped out of the education system and later happened to indulge in crime. Poor health status of the family members has influenced the children by incentivizing them to commit delinquency.

The influence of social incentives to commit delinquency was equally prominent from the study. Gaining acceptance from friends and peers has been observed to be a driving force in the displaying delinquent behavior. The composition of the child's neighborhood in terms of the propensity of crimes acts as a major factor that influences a child to indulge in offensive behavior. It has been observed that attachment and bond that children share with their family plays a key role in the child's inclination towards misbehavior. It has been found that divorces

within the family and broken families induce negativity within the child and results in deviance and delinquent behavior. It has also been found that over expectation and constant pressure to excel incentivizes the child to deviate more into wrong doing and delinquency. The influence of migration has been captured from the discussion with the families. In most of the cases, migration was due to unemployment and lack of a steady source of income. It is found that many migrations happened at the cost of having to live in a neighborhood with a criminal background.

It was observed that children of the age group of 18 years were more economically incentivized than the age groups below 18 years who were influenced more by the social incentives to indulge in delinquency.

7.2. FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Ernakulam entrusted with several responsibilities among which one being the responsibility of keeping a record of the addresses of the juveniles released on probation and to ensure that they report to the concerned authority (Legal Cum Probation Officer) on specified time intervals. It was observed that several probationers have not reported at all during the probation period. Personal interview with the Legal Cum Probation Officer (LCPO) of District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Trivandrum revealed that not much action is taken against the children who fail to report and observe the rules and regulations of Probation. It is also found that there is an evident discrepancy when it comes to maintaining records with details of the juvenile probationers in both the newly formed District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) system and the existing old, District Probation Office system. There exist several government programs under the District Child Protection Scheme (DCPS) to help the children cope up with their daily life once they complete the period of probation whose benefits aren't tapped by the children or their families.

To conclude, increase in juvenile probationers within the state and district of Ernakulam does not paint a good picture. It is clear from the study that the living conditions of a large part of juvenile probationers in Ernakulam district are poor, indicating that a majority of them are far behind in the development ladder. This paper has sought to uncover the impact of interplay of the social and economic incentives on the juveniles and thus formulate a theoretical basis through a case study, for undertaking further studies on similar topics.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The rise in the total cases of cognizable crimes including a notable rise in juvenile offences in the country as well as in the state, all points to the fact that there is an imperative need to reshape the policies affecting the issue. Policies that would disincentivize crime which could be manifested as two fold. The policies could either be in terms of stick or in terms of carrot.(Mocan and Rees, 2002). Sticks refer to the sanctions and punitive legislations that are implemented on those convicted for an offence. This would reduce crime by increasing the cost of committing the crime. In

India this course of policy action was taken after the Nirbhaya rape case that took place on December 2012. The Nirbhaya Effect resulted in the amendment of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act in 2014 which allowed juveniles between the age group of 16 to 18 years who commit heinous offences like crime or rape that is punishable with jail of 7 years or more to be tried equally as the adults with an exception of death penalty or life term for the juveniles. This legislative policy received several criticisms throughout its implementation. More such policies that elevate the cost of committing crime can be framed to keep a check on the incidence of crime rates. Again, if such policies can be implemented for agents of petty crimes are a different concern. Moreover, the success of such a policy will also be largely dependent on the mindset of the potential offenders and their social and economic incentives of crime.

Carrots refer to the rewards in the form of economic and social incentives against crime that lead to the betterment of one's economic and social condition in the society. This will increase the benefit from not committing crime. Pre-existing policies that aim for better employment opportunities which brings steady income to the family must be reinforced and its outreach towards the stakeholders must be ensured. This would make the opportunity cost of committing crimes high thereby leading to a reduction in crime.

Formation and timely implementation of mechanisms for accurate and efficient record keeping must be there in place. More coordination should be present among the government offices at various levels of administration regarding the documentation issue. Programs should not just be formulated, its implementation and execution must be taken up seriously by the authorities to guarantee that no child is denied any basic right such as admission to a school or college because of his/her offence in the past. Strict actions should be taken by the concerned authorities to ensure that the juveniles released on probation report to the Legal Cum Probation Officer (LCPO) without fail. Parents must be made aware of their crucial role in the lives of the juvenile probationers who should never be looked at with an eye of neglect or derogation. Public should be made aware of the existing measures that help them to report any criminal or offensive activity in their neighborhood or anywhere in sight. Policies must be framed that address the specific social and economic problems of the families of the juveniles.

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