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PEER NETWORKS, STRUCTURAL STRAIN, AND INSTITUTIONAL DISENGAGEMENT: A MULTI-THEORETICAL FIELD ANALYSIS OF JUVENILE DRUG ADDICTION AND DELINQUENCY IN URBAN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Although the social impact of juvenile drug addiction and/or delinquency on society is visible, the problem is under-documented, and this is particularly true in the context of Pakistan. The aim of this study is to present the results of a structured field survey of 26 respondents who were juvenile substance users and delinquents in Faisalabad, examining the demographic, familial, peer, educational and behavioral correlates of such behaviors. The study reveals that 96.2% of the respondents reported having used drugs or alcohol, with more than half (57.7%) reporting having engaged in delinquent behavior prior to age 15, and 92.3% embedded in peer networks that engaged in risky or illegal behavior. Disengagement from school was clearly evident, with half of the respondents having withdrawn from school and 65.4% having received punishments and/or suspension. Alongside high levels of nominal supervision, there was also a substantial amount of reported conflict within families, making any simple interpretation of parental supervision as a protective factor difficult. Though these signs are alarming, 69.2% of respondents believed in their ability to change, suggesting that the gap is one of services rather than motivation. Seven complementary criminological and developmental theories (Social Learning Theory, Social Control Theory, Strain Theory, General Strain Theory, Differential Association Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Psychosocial Development Theory) are used to interpret the findings, suggesting that the delinquency found in this sample results from a failure of protective systems rather than a failure of individuals. The study concludes with policy recommendations for prevention and rehabilitation in relation to implementation of the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 in Pakistan, and recommends a larger, stratified replication to obtain nationally representative estimates.

Keywords: *juvenile delinquency; drug addiction; peer influence; social control theory; strain theory; Pakistan.*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

Juvenile drug addiction and delinquency are among the most significant social problems facing Pakistan today. Growing-up conditions for young people, especially adolescent boys from economically marginalised groups, increasingly expose them to patterns of substance use and

related delinquent behaviour at an early age, as a result of rapid urbanisation, rising youth unemployment, the fragility of family structures, and the growth of illicit drug networks.

Within the criminological literature, drug addiction has repeatedly been found to be both a consequence of and a contributor to broader delinquent patterns of behaviour. Early substance use carries additional risks for youth, including school absenteeism, involvement in the criminal justice system, mental health issues, and an increased likelihood of delinquent peer association. Juvenile substance use remains poorly documented and lacks a well-informed response from juvenile justice systems in the major cities of Pakistan (Faisalabad, Lahore, Karachi and others), as evidenced by its visibility in public places. This study aims to provide empirical evidence to inform the understanding of drug addiction and delinquency among juveniles through a structured field survey. Primary data were gathered and analysed with a standardised approach, using statistical analysis, to provide locally informed findings, as well as theoretical insights, that would support evidence-based policy recommendations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite a few steps forward at the legislative level, such as Juvenile Justice System Act 2018, the response to juvenile drug addiction has been disorganized, underfunded and regionally uneven. Substance use is common among young people, there is limited scope for community-based prevention programs and the reasons behind young people's drug use, such as peer influence, family dysfunction, failure in school and poverty, are not being sufficiently tackled. To design effective policies, a systematic empirical understanding of the problem need to be generated from field data, not anecdotal data.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

I. Describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the juvenile respondents who engage in drug use and/or delinquent activity.
II. To assess the family environment and parental supervision conditions of juvenile respondents.
III. To evaluate the impact of peer influence on juvenile drug use and delinquency.
IV. To examine educational engagement and institutional attachment among juvenile respondents.
V. To document substance-use patterns, types of delinquent activity, and age of onset.
VI. To assess rehabilitation prospects and the support needs of juvenile respondents.

1.4 Research Questions

I. What are the demographic and socio-economic profiles of juvenile drug users and delinquents in the study sample?
II. How do family environment and parental supervision relate to juvenile drug use and delinquency?
III. What is the nature and extent of peer influence on juvenile substance use and delinquent behavior?
IV. What patterns of educational disengagement are observed among juvenile respondents?
V. What substances are used, at what age does onset occur, and what types of delinquent activity are most common?
VI. What is the rehabilitation potential of juvenile respondents, and what support do they identify as most needed?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance at multiple levels. Academically, it contributes an empirical study to the BS Criminology program and to the scarce body of research on juvenile delinquent behavior in Pakistan. Its findings are practically relevant to juvenile justice practitioners, social welfare departments, school administrators, and community organizations working with at-risk youth. The SPSS-format frequency tables produced by this study also offer a repeatable method that could be applied in larger-scale future studies.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study is based on a convenience sample of 26 juvenile respondents. The sample is predominantly male (88.5%), which is the group most represented in official juvenile delinquency statistics in Pakistan, but this limits the generalizability of the findings to male juveniles.

therefore, be subject to social desirability bias. The sample size is not large enough to permit in-depth inferential statistical analysis, though it is adequate for an exploratory study of this scope. The results should be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis in this study is situated within seven major criminological theoretical traditions that offer complementary explanations for juvenile drug addiction and delinquency. These frameworks were selected for their specific relevance to the empirical patterns observed in the study data.

2.1 Social Learning Theory (Sutherland; Akers)

Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (1939) proposed that criminal and delinquent behaviour is learned through prolonged exposure to others, a process that occurs within close, intimate personal contacts, particularly within the family and peer groups. If the exposure to attitudes and rationalizations conducive to law breaking is greater than the exposure to attitudes and rationalizations that are not conducive to law breaking, then an individual is subject to delinquency. This was furthered by Ronald Akers' Social Learning Theory (1973) which included mechanisms of behaviour maintenance: delinquent behaviour is learned from role models within the criminal world; is reinforced when it brings pleasure and peer approval; and is reinforced when it is cognitively defined in supportive terms. A theoretical lens that was directly applicable to the present study's findings on peer influence was the findings that 92.3% of respondents reported peers to engage in risky or illegal activities and 76.9% reported peers encouraging them to break rules. The finding that peer influence is the most common reason for substance use is consistent with the findings of the Social Learning Theory that delinquency is a phenomenon socially mediated and learned, and not solely the result of individual pathologies.

2.2 Social Control Theory by Travis Hirschi (1969)

Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory is a reversion of the traditional criminological question: why don't most juveniles break the law? The key elements of social bonding are attachment to significant others (parents, teachers, etc.), commitment to conventional goals (education, work, etc.), involvement in legitimate activities, and a sense of the social rules' moral legitimacy. The weaker or broken bonds, increase the likelihood of delinquency. The present data is very supportive of this theoretical framework. Half of the respondents reported that someone dropped out of school and 42.3% of the respondents said that there is frequent violence or conflict within the family; in addition, 38.5% of the respondents said that they lived without both parents, and another 11.5% lived without their father. The "educational bond" was also broken for 65.4% of respondents, who reported being punished or suspended from school.

2.3 Strain Theory (Robert Merton, 1938)

Robert Merton's Strain Theory says that deviant adaptation is caused by the structural disjunction between the culturally defined goals for success and the legitimate means of attaining them. When opportunities to achieve success are unavailable due to poverty, school nonattendance or low socioeconomic status, people are likely to resort to illegitimate strategies to achieve success, including drug involvement, theft, and other forms of delinquency. The development of Strain Theory by Albert Cohen also points towards the notion that gangs and peer groups provide marginalized youths with a different status hierarchy. The economic characteristics of the present study, with a 50.0% of the respondents from families of 'average' economic status and 7.7% from families of 'poor' economic condition, are congruent with Strain Theory's expectation that pressure to engage in delinquent adaptations rise as legitimate structural opportunities are curtailed.

2.4 General Strain Theory (Robert Agnew, 1992)

The General Strain Theory (GST) is an extension of Merton's theory by Robert Agnew that outlines other sources of criminal motivation due to stressful life experiences. In addition to blocked economic goals, Agnew sees three other strains: failure to gain positively valued goals,

deprivation of positively valued stimuli (loss of exposure to negatively valued stimuli (abuse, conflict, violence). These strains produce negative emotions, mostly anger, frustration, and depression, which result in deviant coping responses. This framework has a tremendous impact in bringing the results of the present study to the fore. Peer pressure combined with anger or revenge was the second most commonly reported combination of reasons, cited in 19.2% of cases, and several responses referenced family trauma, conflict, and stress. Most respondents showing signs of these strains appear to use drugs as an emotional coping strategy, consistent with GST's premise that negative affect arising from strain is a proximate cause of drug use. Frequent domestic conflict or violence at home, a direct General Strain stressor, was reported by 42.3% of respondents.

2.5 Differential Association Theory (Edwin Sutherland, 1939)

Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory holds that criminal behavior is learned through close personal groups. What is learned includes not only techniques of crime but also the rationalizations, attitudes, and motivations that make such acts acceptable or desirable. Delinquency occurs when an individual's exposure to definitions favourable to law violation exceeds exposure to definitions unfavourable to it. The theory holds that associations which are frequent, long-lasting, high in priority (occurring early in life), and intense have the greatest criminogenic impact. Differential Association Theory receives particularly strong empirical support from the present study. Peer pressure was cited in more than 84% of reported reasons for delinquent involvement, and 92.3% of respondents were embedded in peer networks engaged in risky or illegal behavior. Another two respondents also stated that they had been exposed to learning about drug use from their parents, which suggests that the family environment also functions as a peer group. The early ages of delinquency revealed in this sample (57.7% before age 15), as the theory has pointed out to the special importance of associations which are formed early in life.

2.6 Ecological Systems Theory (Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is an approach to understanding human development as it is influenced by a series of interconnected environmental systems. The microsystem are immediate environments (family and peer group), the mesosystem are interactions between these environments (family functioning and school performance), the exosystem are broader community environments (neighbourhood safety, availability of recreational facilities) and the macrosystem consists of wider cultural, economic, and legal environments. Bronfenbrenner believed that these systems are interconnected and that delinquency is a product of the interwoven interaction of the systems. This framework is particularly suited to incorporate findings from the present study that are multifaceted. The microsystems consist of family conflict, poor parental attachment, and delinquent peer networks (42.3% and 92.3%, respectively). The mesosystem can be seen in the correlation between the family dysfunction and school dropout (50%). Limited availability of safe recreational opportunities (30.8% report none) and availability of drugs in the community are features of the exosystem. Economic inequalities, gender norms (a respondent reported gender inequality as a factor) and absence of funded support for juvenile welfare services (69.2% reported no counselling received) were part of the macrosystem. Ecological Systems Theory, therefore, helps to understand why so many of the factors are correlated with each other in the data, like peer pressure and family difficulty, financial need and stress, or stress and loneliness.

2.7 Psychosocial Development Theory (1950) by Erik Erikson.

The psychosocial developmental theory of Erik Erikson outlines eight developmental crises in which there is a central conflict that must be addressed. Stage five, Identity versus Role Confusion (adolescence, ages 12-18), is most relevant to juvenile delinquency. During this stage, the adolescent confronts the developmental question of who they are and where they belong. In conditions of family instability or abuse, and in

the absence of a positive identity structure from mainstream institutions such as school, adolescents are at particular risk of seeking identity and belonging through delinquent peer groups, substance use, and risk-taking behaviors that offer alternative status and group membership.

Erikson's framework is directly applicable to the present study. The strong importance placed on peer approval ('very important', 50.0%) mirrors the adolescent search for identity in the absence of, or in reaction to, rejection by family and institutional affiliation. The adolescent need for sensation seeking and identity experimentation is also reflected in curiosity and fun reported as motivators (15.4% of cases, as part of a primary combination of reasons). In one cluster of responses, loneliness emerged as a cause of role confusion and social isolation, directly linking to Erikson's account of how delinquent group membership can result from maladaptive identity resolution. Where the other theories discussed here are sociological in nature, Psychosocial Development Theory adds a crucial psychological dimension to these findings.

Theoretical Summary: The seven frameworks presented above are complementary rather than competing. Social Learning Theory and Differential Association Theory explain how delinquent behavior is transmitted within peer and family networks. According to Social Control Theory, conditions need to exist for bonding to break down for delinquency to happen. Strain Theory and General Strain Theory help to explain structural and emotional pressures that lead to a deviant response. An ecological systems theory considers them all at multiple levels of the ecology. Psychosocial Development Theory provides an explanation for the developmental and psychological aspect associated with the beginning of adolescence. These were all combined into a comprehensive multi-level theoretical framework in keeping with the complex, multi-factorial conclusions of this study.

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research method used in this study is a quantitative and descriptive research. The goal is to create an organized descriptive profile of descriptive statistics of characteristics, risk factors and rehabilitation potential of juvenile substance users and delinquents using a structured survey instrument with a purposive sample. This is a good design for a research paper, which is written to describe and document empirical patterns, rather than test hypotheses, at the BS level of study.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population involve juvenile individuals (under 18 years of age) and young people (up till 18 years of age) who are known to the target community or who have reported to the community that they have used drugs or engaged in other delinquent behaviours in the context of urban Pakistan. This was a convenience/purposive sampling method and respondents were approached through community contacts, peer groups and accessible community sites. The total number of people who answered the questionnaire was N = 26. Of the 26 responses received, no data were excluded and all were used in the analysis. The majority of the sample (23 males, 2 females and 1 whose gender was not indicated) are in the age range between 14 and 18 years.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The main data collection tool was a structured questionnaire with 30 substantive items in six thematic areas: (1) Demographic and background information; (2) Family environment and parental supervision; (3) Peer influence; (4) Educational engagement; (5) Substance use and delinquent activities; and (6) Attitudes, self-perception and rehabilitation needs. A mix of closed-ended (single choice, multiple choice) and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was administered in Urdu and English as per respondents' level of literacy with verbal assistance as required.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

All data was recorded on a structured spreadsheet and analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques that corresponds to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) conventions. Frequency table was created for each question, using the response category, observed frequencies (n), valid percentages (n/N), and cumulative percentages. If respondents gave a variety of responses to an open-ended question (e.g. substance type), these were

classified into themes. All tables are displayed in a format similar to that used in academic social science research in SPSS. Results The complete results of the data analysis of the survey in SPSS-format tables of frequencies are presented in this section. There are 26 respondents included in the analysis. Frequency counts and valid and cumulative percentages are provided for all response categories in each table.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1.1 — Age Distribution of Respondents

Age (Years)	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
14	2	7.7%	7.7%
15	1	3.8%	11.5%
16	5	19.2%	30.8%
17	7	26.9%	57.7%
18	11	42.3%	100.0%
Below<18	26	100.0%	

Table 4.1.2 — Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Male	23	88.5%	88.5%
Female	2	7.7%	96.2%
Prefer not to say	1	3.8%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.1.3 — Current Education Status

Education Status	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Attending School	9	34.6%	34.6%
Dropped out	13	50.0%	84.6%
Never attended	4	15.4%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.1.4 — Living Arrangement

Living Arrangement	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
With both parents	9	34.6%	34.6%
Single parent	10	38.5%	73.1%
Alone	3	11.5%	84.6%
Hostel / Friends	2	7.7%	92.3%
With relatives	2	7.7%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.1.5 — Family Economic Condition

Economic Condition	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Good	11	42.3%	42.3%
Average	13	50.0%	92.3%
Poor	2	7.7%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

4.2 Family Environment Factors

Table 4.2.1 — Relationship with Parents/Guardians

Relationship Quality	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Very good	3	11.5%	11.5%
Good	11	42.3%	53.8%
Average	9	34.6%	88.5%
Poor	3	11.5%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.2.2 — Level of Parental Supervision

Parental Supervision	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Always	15	57.7%	57.7%
Sometimes	6	23.1%	80.8%
Rarely	1	3.8%	84.6%
Never	4	15.4%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.2.3 — Frequency of Conflict or Violence at Home

Conflict / Violence at Home	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
No	8	30.8%	30.8%
Sometimes	7	26.9%	57.7%
Yes (frequently)	11	42.3%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Interpretation: 57.7% of respondents indicated that they were supervised by their parents 'all the time', while a significant 42.3% reported 'frequent conflict or violence' at home. This apparent paradox, supervision without warmth or attachment, is consistent with Social Control Theory, which holds that supervision alone is not protective against delinquency in the absence of warmth and attachment.

4.3 Peer Influence Factors

Table 4.3.1 — Friends' Engagement in Risky or Illegal Activities

Friends Engage in Risky/Illegal Activities	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	24	92.3%	92.3%
No	2	7.7%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.3.2 — Peer Encouragement to Break Rules or Laws

Friends Encouraged Rule-Breaking	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	20	76.9%	76.9%
No	6	23.1%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.3.3 — Importance of Peer Approval

Importance of Peer Approval	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Very important	13	50.0%	50.0%
Somewhat important	7	26.9%	76.9%
Not important	6	23.1%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.3.4 — Primary Influence on Drug/Alcohol Use

Primary Influence	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Peer Pressure + Anger/Revenge	5	19.2%	19.2%
Peer Pressure + Curiosity/Fun	4	15.38%	34.58%
Curiosity/Fun	2	7.69%	42.27
Peer Pressure + Curiosity/Fun + Anger/Revenge	2	7.69%	49.96
Peer Pressure	1	3.85%	53.81
Peer Pressure + Financial Need + Anger/Revenge	1	3.85%	57.66
Peer Pressure, Family Problems, Curiosity/Fun	1	3.85%	61.51
Peer Pressure + Stress	1	3.85%	65.36
Peer Pressure + Family Problems + Curiosity/Fun + Loneliness	1	3.85%	69.21
Learn from Father	1	3.85%	73.06
Peer Pressure + Family Problems + Family Trauma	1	3.85%	76.91
Peer Pressure + Family Problems	1	3.85%	80.76
Peer Pressure + Financial Need	1	3.85%	84.61
Peer Pressure + Financial Need + Family Problems + Stress + Gender Inequality	1	3.85%	88.46
Adopt from Mother	1	3.85%	92.31
Peer Pressure + Family Problems + Anger/Revenge	1	3.85%	96.16
Peer Pressure + Family Problems + Stress	1	3.85%	100.0
Total	26	100.0%	

Interpretation: This is the most striking finding of the study. More than 92% of respondents were involved in 'risky' or 'illegal' activities with peers, 76.9% reported being explicitly encouraged by peers to break rules, and 50% rated peer approval as 'very important'. These findings strongly support the group-mediated, peer-transmitted nature of delinquency predicted by Social Learning Theory.

4.4 Educational Engagement Factors

Table 4.4.1 — Comfort Level in School

Comfortable in School	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	12	46.2%	46.2%
Sometimes	2	7.7%	53.8%
No	9	34.6%	88.5%
Never attended	3	11.5%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.4.2 — History of Punishment or Suspension from School

Punished / Suspended from School	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	17	65.4%	65.4%
No	6	23.1%	88.5%
Never attended school	3	11.5%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.4.3 — Availability of Safe Recreational Activities

Safe Recreation Available in Area	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	18	69.2%	69.2%
No	8	30.8%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Interpretation: The educational data reveals widespread disengagement. Only 34.6% remain in school, 65.4% report having been punished or suspended, and 34.6% report not feeling comfortable in school, consistent with Hirschi's Social Control Theory and its emphasis on the school bond as a safeguard against delinquency.

4.5 Substance Use and Delinquent Activities

Table 4.5.1 — Self-Reported Drug or Alcohol Use

Ever Used Drugs or Alcohol	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	25	96.2%	96.2%
No	1	3.8%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.5.2 — Types of Substances Used (Grouped Categories)

Substance Category	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Ice (Methamphetamine) — Only	5	19.23%	19.2%
Ice + Alcohol (Sharab) combinations	8	30.77%	50.0%
Ice + Powder (other stimulants)	3	11.54%	61.4%
Charas (Cannabis) combinations	6	23.07%	84.61%

Cigarettes / Sheesha / Vape (tobacco only)	3	11.54%	96.15%
No substance used	1	3.85%	100%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.5.3 — Age at First Engagement in Delinquent Behavior

Age at First Engagement	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Under 12	2	7.7%	7.7%
12	2	7.7%	15.4%
13	7	26.9%	42.3%
14	6	23.1%	65.4%
15	4	15.4%	80.8%
16	5	19.2%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.5.4 — Primary Reasons for Engaging in Delinquent Behavior

Primary Reason(s) Reported	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Peer pressure and Anger/Revenge	5	19.2%	19.2%
Peer pressure and Curiosity/Fun	4	15.4%	34.6%
Peer pressure, Curiosity and Anger	2	7.7%	42.3%
Curiosity / Fun (no peer pressure)	2	7.7%	50.0%
Peer pressure and Family problems	1	3.8%	53.8%
Peer pressure and Stress	1	3.8%	57.7%
Peer pressure and Financial need	1	3.8%	61.5%
Family-related factors only	2	7.7%	69.2%
Multiple combined factors	8	30.8%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

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Table 4.5.5 — Types of Delinquent Activities Reported

Activity Type	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Drug use only	7	26.9%	26.9%
Drug use + Truancy	4	15.4%	42.3%
Fighting/Violence + Drug use	5	19.2%	61.5%
Theft + Fighting + Drug use + Truancy	3	11.5%	73.1%
Drug use + Vandalism	3	11.5%	84.6%
Theft + Drug use + Vandalism	1	3.8%	88.5%
Fighting/Violence only	1	3.8%	92.3%
Fighting + Vandalism	1	3.8%	96.2%
Multiple including Theft	1	3.8%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Interpretation: The substance use and delinquency data are particularly striking. A near-total 96.2% of respondents reported drug or alcohol use, and about 61.5% reported methamphetamine (Ice) among the substances used, consistent with the growing prevalence of Ice in urban Pakistan. Onset is early: 57.7% of respondents first engaged in delinquent behavior before age 15, with two reporting onset before age 12. Peer pressure, alone or combined with other factors, was cited as the primary reason for delinquent involvement in 84.6% of cases.

4.6 Attitudes, Self-Perception, and Rehabilitation Potential

Table 4.6.1 — Perceived Wrongfulness of Own Actions

Do You Think Your Actions Were Wrong?	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	16	61.5%	61.5%
No	8	30.8%	92.3%
Not sure	2	7.7%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.6.2 — Regret Regarding Delinquent Behavior

Do You Regret Your Actions?	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	14	53.8%	53.8%
No	12	46.2%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.6.3 — Belief in Ability to Change Behavior

Do You Believe You Can Change?	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	15	57.7%	57.7%
Maybe	3	11.5%	69.2%
No	8	30.8%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.6.4 — Receipt of Counseling or Rehabilitation Services

Ever Received Counseling/Rehab Services	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Yes	8	30.8%	30.8%
No	18	69.2%	100.0%
Total	26	100.0%	

Table 4.6.5 — Type of Support That Would Help Most (Thematic Groups)

Support Type Identified	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Family support	3	11.5%	11.5%
Job opportunities, Family support	2	7.69%	19.19%
Education, Family support	2	7.69%	26.88%
Education, Counseling, Family Support	1	3.85%	30.73%
Education, Job opportunities, Family support	1	3.85%	34.58%

Counseling, family support	1	3.85%	38.43%
Job opportunities, Family support, Community programs	1	3.85%	42.28%
Education, Family support, Community programs	1	3.85%	46.13%
Counseling	1	3.85%	49.98%
Job opportunities, Community programs	1	3.85%	53.83%
Job opportunities, Community programs, Marriage	1	3.85%	57.68%
Education, Counseling	1	3.85%	61.53%
Job opportunities	1	3.85%	65.38%
Education, Counseling, Community programs	1	3.85%	69.23%
Job opportunities, Counseling	1	3.85%	73.08%
Education, Job opportunities	1	3.85%	76.93%
No desire to change	6	23.07%	100%

Interpretation: The results of the attitudinal data show a complex picture. 61.5% admitted that their behavior was wrong, and 53.8% said they felt guilty about it, but it seems that there is a certain normalization of delinquent behavior in the sample, because 46.2% did not say they felt guilty nor that they did something wrong. Fortunately, 57.7% felt that they could change and an additional 11.5% said that they felt change was possible, coming to a total of 69.2% in some form of willingness to rehabilitate. 69.2% however had never received counselling or rehabilitation services, which was an important gap in services.

5. 2 Discussion of Findings

Who is the best audience? Peer influence is the most consistent, and strongest, conclusion to be drawn from the study data as a whole: in the initiation of delinquency and juvenile drug abuse, peers are in the driver's seat. The data indicate a high level of support for the core tenet of Social Learning Theory that delinquency is learned, sustained and reinforced in intimate peer interaction, and 92.3% of respondents were in a peer network of delinquents, and 76.9% reported receiving direct encouragement from peers to break rules. In 84.6% of cases peer influence was the sole reported factor contributing to delinquent involvement or when combined with other factors was the predominant reported cause. These have significant direct implications on intervention design. One-to-one interventions for individual children are unlikely to have long-term effects if they are not tailored to deal with peer group issues. Individual level therapies should be complemented with peer-based strategies, including peer mentorship, prosocial peer group development and peer disruption of criminogenic peer networks.

5.3 Early Onset and Substance Use Patterns

The fact that 57.7% of respondents initiated delinquent behavior before age 15 is not surprising and consistent with research that flagged the early onset of delinquent behavior as one of the best predictors of continuing delinquent behavior into adulthood. The higher prevalence of methamphetamine (Ice) in the substance use profile of respondents (61.5%) indicates the increasing use of Ice in the younger population in urban centres of Pakistan and its replacement of traditional drugs like heroin. Neurological effects of early onset of methamphetamine use are serious – the prefrontal cortex, a brain region that is important for self-control and decision-making, is especially vulnerable to neurotoxic effects of amphetamine

like stimulants, which can affect the ability to regulate behavior and increase the vicious cycle of drug use and delinquency.

Reaching the age of 21, you are at heightened risk for educational disengagement. At age 21, your risk of educational disengagement is significantly increased. The overall educational information in this study suggest a virtual absence from formal education. About one-third of the sample stayed in school while one-half (50%) dropped out and 15.4% had never been in school before. School punishment or suspension rates are high (65.4%) indicating that for many respondents this is another form of negative labelling and suggesting that formal institutional sanctioning can help to continue rather than to halt delinquent careers, as Labelling Theory predicted. When families are unhappy, the supervision of children becomes more difficult. Negative family environment hinders child supervision. One striking aspect of the family environment data is that 57.7% were always supervised by their parents and 42.3% there was frequent domestic conflict or violence. This implies that quality, rather than just quantity of parental attachment is important for protection from delinquency, as Hirschi suggests when he distinguishes between the amount of attachment and the kind of attachment. In keeping with the tenets of Social Learning Theory, a relationship between violent or conflictual parenting and delinquency can be seen, as exposure to violence or conflict is likely to lead to increased delinquency.

5.4 Rehabilitation Potential

The results of the attitudinal data, however, show good promise for rehabilitation, even though delinquency involvement is severe as revealed in this study. 69.2% of the respondents believed in behavior change and 38.5% of them said that family support was the most important resource they had, indicating a relational rehabilitation pathway that focuses on strengthening family relationships and family counselling. This suggests that this potential is underutilized, not because they are not willing to change but because the services they need are not available to them as 69.2% had not sought any counselling or rehabilitation services.

6.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this study was to collect empirical descriptive data about Juvenile drug addictions and delinquency by using a structured field survey to answer the question based on 26 juvenile respondents. This is a consistent and worrying pattern – near universal use of substances (96.2%), early onset of delinquent behaviour (57.7% before age 15), high level of peer influence (92.3% exposed to a wide range of peers), significant educational disengagement (50% drop out of school) and a high level of unmet need for rehabilitation services (69.2% never received counselling). The results of the present study corroborate and enlighten the Social Learning Theory, Social Control Theory and Strain Theory. This sample's delinquency is indicative of a systemic problem: the failure of peers to socialize prosocial values; failure of educational systems to keep and involve delinquent youth; failure of family environments to provide conflict-free supervision and attachment; failure of juvenile justice and welfare systems to deliver rehabilitative services. The 57.7% who said they could change their behavior is a window of opportunity in which there is a great need for intervention. Such potential can only be realised if multi-sectoral investment is made in prevention, family support, educational re-engagement, peer-based intervention and accessible rehabilitation services are all implemented.

6.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the study findings, it is recommended that the following be put in place: For Prevention: School-based drug resistance preteen programs and life-skills programs at the primary level prior to the typical age of onset (12-13) experienced by this sample. Create community-based, structured recreational programmes (sports and vocational clubs) as one alternative to the 30.8% of the respondents who say that there was no safe recreational opportunities. Invest in school retention and alternative education options for youth who are at risk of dropping out, especially that 50% of the youth in this sample has dropped out of school. For Rehabilitation: Ensure that community-based counselling and drug rehabilitation services are provided for youth in a

community accessible manner as 69.2% of respondents reported that they have never sought drug rehabilitation or counselling services. Focus on family counselling and family reunification programmes since 38.5% of respondents said that family support is the resource that will be the most useful to them. Given the relative prevalence of the use of methamphetamine (Ice) among the substances used in this sample, specialized methamphetamine (Ice) detoxification and cognitive rehabilitation programs should be developed. Vocational training and employment pathway support (30.8% of respondents) is identified as a key support need. For Policy: Increase the awareness and implementation of Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 in all the districts with focus on effective Juvenile Justice Committees, diversion pathways. Expand and invest in Borstal Institution programming that emphasizes educational and vocational training and evidence-based therapeutic activities. Have a national level replication of this field survey conducted with a larger samples size that is stratified to get statistically representative estimates of drug addiction and delinquency among juveniles in urban Pakistan.

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