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Community Factors Influencing Youth Involvement in Judicial System

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The youth, referring to the people between ages 15 and 24, according to the United States, have been involved in the judicial system. It is a branch of the government dealing with the interpretation and implementation of the law. Some youths have interacted with this body due to the engagement in criminal acts, also called delinquency. Others are involved in status offenses referring to actions considered illegal due to age, for example, underage drinking and fleeing home. Though not all of these cases are processed in the judicial system, most youths have been involved. Statistics in the United States claim that about 2.1 million young people are involved with the judicial branch every year. Overall, the rates have reduced in the past, which is a positive sign, but the numbers are still high. For instance, the number of cases in juvenile courts is 1.7 million every year. The literature describes community factors influencing youth involvement in the judicial system.

Before discussing the reasons why the young are involved in the judicial system, it is vital to understand the concept. Aalsma et al. (2016) researched intending to analyze the state of the issue in the nation. The study reported that in the United States, one in three youth people are likely to be arrested before reaching 23 years. The study quoted the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, which claimed that the youth involved in the system are expected to die early than the general population. Moreover, the risk intensifies depending on the number of times one commits crimes.

The study was tested at Indiana University in the Medicine department. It was noted that between 1999 and 2011, over 518 young offenders had lost their lives in Marion County. Comparing with the others, the death rate in those involved was 1.5% higher (Aalsma et al., 2016). Other than the number of times one got involved, the complex of cases played a role. Those, whose offenses were complicated and thus took long, were more likely to have premature deaths compared to the other youths in the same age group.

The study also assessed the categories in which the young offenders are put. They are arrested, detained, incarcerated, or moved to the adults' courts. The researcher determined the death rates in the four categories and found most of them died within five years after one of the above actions was considered. Nevertheless, the death rate in the arrested group was the least, as one 90 out of 100, 000 deaths were recorded. In the detained level, the rate was higher than the arrested but lowered than the rest.

Contrarily, the incarcerated and those transferred to the adults' courts were the most likely to die. The data shows that the young people moved to older courts are three times likely to die compared to those arrested in the juvenile systems. Those between 19 and 21 years died more than the others, and the gender determined as the men lost lives more than the females. Some of the leading causes of these were homicides, overdosing, vehicle accidents, and suicide, among others.

The research also assessed the racial differences in the justice system. It was reported that the black youths were more than the whites, where most were reported with homicide cases. The Indian Medicine Department claimed that the figure on how the blacks and whites associated with the judicial system were not detected. Nevertheless, one's race played a role in whether one would be involved in the operations or not. The department concluded that ethnicity determined death rates among young offenders. It was implied that if the number of youths involved in the criminal system is to change, culture must be assessed. For example, the blacks would be mentored, and after school programs developed, so the exposure to deaths related activities are controlled. Despite the differences, the study found it necessary to intervene for the youths in general, other than dwelling on the black teens alone.

Herzog, in 2015 carried out a study⁶ aiming to determine the relationship between financial hardships and the involvement of the youths in the judicial system. The study assessed the Palestine employees that worked in Israel years ago. It was based on the time

when Palestinians went through economic problems as the rate of unemployment in Israel was high. It was noted that the rate of crime in that period was higher than usual, leading to the conclusion that financial hardships cause offenses. Notably, it is a reliable source, as most of the people involved were the youths who had no skills in office works and thus relied on casual labor by the Israelites.

Weak economy motivates young people to take part in crimes, as explained by the strain approach. The theory states that people get into crimes as the lack of money produces negative emotions such as anger and frustration. The people would develop temper to the people responsible for the misfortunes, and in the attempt to revenge, they would engage in crimes. For example, the Palestinians developed anger towards the Israelites for the increased rate of unemployment. The anger made them steal and rob, among other actions leading them to be involved in the judicial system.

The study also illustrates that the mental status of the people with financial hardships is distracted in the struggle to make ends meet. The alternation affects judgment leading to the engagement in deviant behaviors making the youths involved in the judicial systems. Herzog stated that low-income people show illnesses such as stress and depression more than the rich (2015). With these diseases, one's reasoning is altered, making one take part in crime as it gives them a fulfillment attitude replacing the negative emotions caused by the illnesses. On the other hand, every human must eat, dress and have shelter.

Financial hardships make the youths lack these things, forcing them to steal or harm others to afford them. For instance, one would rob the bank to get money to meet their needs. The lack of funds also lowers one's self-esteem leading to anger. In compensation, the people harm others to either boost their self-esteem or project their feelings for others to feel pain like them. The study concluded by saying that the factor describes the high number of blacks being involved in the judicial system compared to the whites. The government should,

therefore, create more jobs for the youth, in lowering their rate of involvement in the legal system.

Esiri (2016) was also interested in understanding the community factors influencing youth involvement in the judicial system. The author assessed peer pressure, one of the common characteristics among young people. The idea was explained through the social learning theory, which states that cultural values, customs, and beliefs are passed from one generation to the other, through socialization in various institutions. Here, mimicking occurs, as kids copy their parents as they believe that the actions are right. As they reach teenage, the kids learn that they would choose right and wrong in shaping their behaviors. They, therefore, begin to weigh the good and the bad and engage in those they find as right. Moreover, identity is sought in this stage as the youths want to feel accepted by a particular group. The identity seeking would drag them to either good or bad behaviors, depending on the kind of friends gotten. The youths will be engaged in the judicial system if the group identified with has teenagers engaging in crime.

Peer pressure occurs in that time of socialization and identity seeking. For example, where the team one joins believes that crime is a good practice, one would join them due to the fear that criticizing would cause abandonment. Instead of telling the group of the consequences of the actions, the individuals support the activities and engage in them to show acceptance. As the social learning theory states, the practices are integrated into society, where moral or illegal. Today social media use has increased, helping peer pressure spread fast. For example, one of the team members would brag to others on money collected due to theft. The videos are shared through digital tools, which create eagerness for the rest, making them try. In the end, the group breaks the law and the social norms leading to the involvement in the judicial system. According to the research, parents have a vital role in

disciplining the kids (Esiri, 2016). They would grow up knowing the effects of taking part in specific actions, which would make them, handle peer pressure at the youth stage.

In 2012, Wittenborn did a study that has contributed to understanding why young people have been involved in the judicial system in large numbers. The author begins by stating that parents are the primary influencers determining their children's afterlife. Most importantly, the type of discipline used shapes them to be either good citizens or criminals. Here, the idea of parental demandingness is described referring to the limit of regulation instilled in the kids. The study discussed four types of parenting styles and later showed the relationship between the technique applied and the involvement of the youths in the judicial systems. Notably, one of the approaches used is authoritarian parenting, where the kids are given strict rules to follow without questioning. In this case, negative and harmful reinforcement methods such as punishment are applied, whereby the kids do not understand why engaging in some activities leads to beating. As a result, kids in these families develop low self-esteem and lack independency even later in life.

The other style described is authoritarian parenting, where rules are provided, but the kids understand the reasons. For example, if the kids are banned from associating with certain friends, they know that friends engage in immoral behaviors that are not accepted in society. Here, the relationship between the parents and kids is close where openness and mutual understanding are noted (Wittenborn, 2012). Thirdly, the scholar describes the permissive parents, who believe that the kids should have their own rules and adjust according to the surrounding. The parents only come in when necessary, meaning that in most times, the teenagers are on their own. Youths in such families develop anger towards the parents, have reduced self-esteem, and isolate themselves from others. Lastly, some uninvolved parents do not have any type of relationship with the kids. They would be away due to mental illnesses, drug abuse, among others.

According to the scholar, all the above styles except the authoritative parents motivate the kids to engage in the crime, thus involving the criminal system. The teenagers develop antisocial personalities as they learn that no one cares about their needs. In turn, the behavior causes anger, which would be projected to other people in the form of crimes. For example, the kids would harm happy friends making them feel similar to them, which is fulfilling. Apart from that, the lack of supervision leads to confusion, where the teenagers do not learn the bad, right, and the consequences of their actions.

When such kids interact with immoral peers, it is easy to influence them due to peer pressure resulting in delinquency (Wittenborn, 2012). The emotional connection between the kids and the parent's lack, causing psychological distress, which leads to crimes. Notably, this is the age where the kids are expected to make personal decisions while handling school, home, and societal pressure. Since the parents are absent, thus no guidance is done, making them distressed. In relieving the negative emotions, the teenagers engage in crimes leading to them being involved in the judicial systems.

Consequently, Sourander et al. (2007) carried out ⁶ a study to determine the ⁹ association between childhood bullying and involvement in the criminal justice system. The methodology used was a longitudinal cohort, with participants of people between 8 and 20 years. Only the boys were assessed, based on the National Police Register, that the boys bullied in the nation were more than the girls. One of the findings of the study was that of the 33% bullying instances, 8.8% were done by youths who had been bullied or were the bullies. The population also showed frequent cases of crime, which made them repeat offenders. The boys bullied were ¹ more likely to engage in criminal acts such as robbery, drunk driving, and traffic offenses, among others. The study concluded that bullying makes victims engage in crime later in life.

It is the case because they develop related psychiatric issues, for example, bipolar disorders. As a result, their judgment is altered, making them engage in crimes as they do not control anger. Victims of bullying also isolated from others due to feelings of shame and guilt. Notably, most of the people bullied originate from low-income families, violent homes, and due to their physical appearances (Sourander et al., 2007). The factors make them have low self-esteem, anger issues, and poor relationships with others. In revenge or projecting the negative emotions, the youth engage in different crimes, making them involved in the judicial system. The scholars say that the issue should be addressed, considering the increased rates of bullying. More youths are in social media, where they post negative messages about others, and a large number of users access them. Thus, childhood bullying leads to involvement in the judicial system as the victims engage in crimes.

Bullying would be controlled by the introduction of several factors in the society. The government should pass stricter rules in ensuring that bullies are punished. Currently, regulations have been put, but they are not implemented as needed. Other than making the laws, the youths should be educated on the effects and consequences of engaging in the practice. For example, they would be told of the distress caused to those bullied, affecting their academic performance and increasing chances of suicide. According to Sourander et al. (2007), most of the bullies do not understand the impacts of their actions. To them, bullying is fun as they get to discriminate against others based on the situations around them. Parents should also be involved in controlling the practice. They should monitor their kids' actions in social media, and whenever bullying signs are identified, proper discipline should be implemented. The strategies would help control bullying, thus lowering the involvement of the youth in the judicial system.

Finally, Sharma, Sharma & Barkataki (2016) carried out a study to assess how drugs and alcohol abuse leads to the youths being ⁷involved in the criminal justice system. The

7 findings were noted after observing a juvenile home for boys located in New Delhi. The trends of criminal behaviors in the boys were compared with drug abuse to make solutions. The researchers created a face to face conversation to collect actual data. The study stated that 86.44% of the 487 juveniles assessed had a history of drugs and substance abuse. Most of them had used tobacco and cannabis, among others, and the drugs one consumed determined the crime they would execute. For example, those who used marijuana had murdered and raped, among other serious crimes. In the end, the researchers concluded that misuse of drugs had increased the youths' involvement in crime and the judicial systems.

8 There is a close relationship between drug abuse and encounter with criminal justice due to the following reasons. When youths abuse drugs, academic performance lowers, as absenteeism and missing exams behaviors are evident. It makes them lose hope in education, as the nation needs people with skills for employment. The frustration causes them to engage in crimes in relieving negative emotions. Drug misuse also interferes with mental status as most of the drugs alter brain functioning. Poor judgment is resulted, making the youths develop conflicts with people, and crimes are done. The study states that people under the influence of drugs are more likely to engage in fights compared to others due to the lack of control of anger.

Apart from that, most of the people using drugs do not get along with their families and society. They are isolated due to the breaking of social norms, and the parents feel frustrated about their kids' behaviors. It makes them lack a social connection with people as they are forced to isolate. The actions make them develop anger, disappointment, and frustration, motivating them to take part in crime to hurt others. They do so to revenge for the peace, and harmony lacked in them. By the end of the study, the researchers demonstrated that a close relationship between drug use and crimes is evident, leading to the youths being involved in the judicial systems.

In conclusion, the increased involvement of the youth in the judicial system has been caused by community factors. The elements discussed are financial hardships, peer pressure, lack of good parenting, bullying, and drugs as well as alcohol abuse. When youths encounter poverty, mental illnesses such as depression and stress are resulted, making them have poor judgment. Also, poverty forces them to engage in crime so they afford basic needs. The paper has also discussed peer pressure, which occurs as the teenagers seek identity in the socialization process. If the groups they interact with have crime-related actions, the youths are influenced and thus involve the criminal system. Literature has also discussed bad parenting, where authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parents make the kids develop antisocial personalities and emotional distress, which makes them engage in crimes. Bullying, which has increased due to the more involvement in social media, leads to crimes as the victims lose self-worth and develop anger. Drugs and alcohol abuse factor has also been discussed where the youths perform poorly in school, developmental illnesses, and they are isolated from families and societies. As a result, they develop anxiety, bitterness, and frustrations leading them to engage in crimes for vengeance. The literature above has been conducted through reliable methods and various theories, making it suitable. It helps solve the problem of youths being engaged in a criminal system, which has not only increased but has led to many premature deaths, as discussed in the paper. If the ideas are implemented, positive results would be attained.

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