

The exponential increase of Juvenile crime during COVID-19: A study based on facts and figures

Background Study

COVID-19 resulted in a long-term closure of educational institutions, which has paved the way for the destruction of the education system and students.

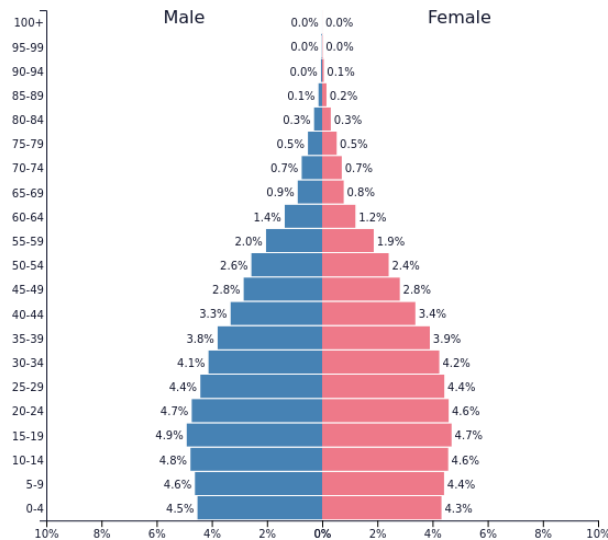


Figure -1: The population Pyramid of Bangladesh showing the number of juveniles in the country with respect to the whole population of Bangladesh¹

Adolescent gangs are forming among students in different areas, which has become a cause of boundless concern for the parents, society, and the state. (“Shikkha protistan kholar dabi,” 2021). As the population pyramid of the country shows it is carrying the most number of juveniles in its whole history, it is important to look into the issue with utmost seriousness. A recent report by DW Bangla earlier this year in January confirms that there are almost more than 40 active juvenile gangs in Dhaka only where each group carries almost about 15 to 20 members in each group. The report also confirms by collecting data from *Kishor Unnoyon Kendro*, 20 percent of the adolescents in those centers are accused of murder and 24 percent of cases of abuse of women and children. (Kishor ganger day kar?, 2021) Adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 are more likely to be involved in crime

¹ Source: populationpyramid.net

| Country | Age limits of juvenile delinquents |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Myanmar | 7-16 |
| India | 7-16 |
| Philippines | 9-16 |
| Thailand | 7-18 |
| Japan | 14-20 |

Table -1: Age limit of juvenile delinquents in some Asian countries²

| Country | Age limits of juvenile delinquents |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| England | 8-17 |
| France | 13-16 |
| Austria | 14-18 |
| Poland | 13-17 |
| Germany | 14-18 |

Table – 2: Age limit of juvenile delinquents in some European countries

Adolescents are also involved in crimes such as theft and robbery, according to the center. Be it for social, economic, or cultural reasons, juvenile delinquency has been on the rise in Bangladesh for a long time. This paper intends to explore and analyze such reasons behind the involvement of youth in crime and misdemeanors. Data on juvenile cases were collected and studied from various newspapers, online news portals, online news streaming platforms, and relevant scholarly articles were reviewed as well. All of these sources account for the outrageous crimes carried out by the youth of Bangladesh - the future generation of the country. Teenagers are going astray because of a lack of social morale and primary education from their families and society; the school curriculum does not teach students courtesy, etiquette, tolerance, and ethics. (Rahman, 2021) Social institutions and education systems are not adapting to the fast societal changes that result from rapid industrialization, hence these systems are failing to cater to the changing society. (Huda, 2021) The unavailability of facilities for physical, mental and cognitive growth such as playing fields, public parks, and libraries also plays a huge contribution to this rise in juvenile delinquency. A lack of sources of healthy entertainment diverts them towards detrimental interests. (Hossain, 2021) Adolescent gang members have made their presence felt in an area by playing loud songs, roaming around in groups, recklessly riding motorcycles, harassing

² Source: www.lawyersnjudrsts.com

pedestrians, and attacking and even killing ordinary people over petty issues. To maintain their dominance, they also engage in clashes with other groups in the same area. (“Tongi te kishore gang birodhi Sharashi Obhijan,” 2021) Countless cases of larceny, mugging, kidnapping, torture and extortion, drug dealings, eve-teasing, and rapes committed by adolescents are reported by police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) all over the country. Juvenile delinquents are at the forefront of extortion, looting, hill grabbing and land grabbing. These teenagers take refuge in the shadow of local influential leaders for the sake of money or small influence. They start off with committing petty crimes including snatching and extortion and finally move on to crimes as heinous as murders. When caught by the police, the so-called influential leaders use the identities of various political organizations to save themselves; out of reach for lack of sufficient evidence to be directly involved in the crime. (“Bayezide kishore gang er leader jara,” 2020) Victims who file cases against juvenile gangs are threatened by crime lords/powerful people who protect these juvenile gangs. Sometimes they abuse their power to divert the cases in order to accuse the victims. (Wadud, 2021) Social media such as TikTok and Likee act as ancillaries for teenage gangs. (“Shamajik jogajog maddhome sosta jonopriyotar bipothe torunera,” 2020) Crimes such as robberies and even murders are organized through online group chats. Teen gang members use Facebook and other social networking platforms to interact and converse with young women, only to lure them into meetups and eventually raping them. (“The Teens Develop Friendship with Girls to Rape,” 2020).

Policy and Implementation

Parent and Family

Families should focus on the circle in which their children are socializing. Parents should highly discourage them from getting involved in any sorts of politics-related activities. High emphasis should also be given on whether the circle the children are socializing on is involved in any sort of drugs, eve-teasing or any sort of anti-social activities or not. As we have observed their effect on turning children into juvenile gangs in recent reports (Channel 24, 2019) (Chung & Steinberg, 2006) (SOMOY TV, 2019). A good circle to socialize in plays a vital role in building up proper mental and physical health conditions for the children. As a result, though, the children should not be detached from any social circle as the solution and rather focus on the quality of the circle and the peer group the children are spending time with. It would be also important for the parents to ensure a good chance for socializing for the children as being indoor may also affect them negatively. (Levitt, 1998)

There should be a mutual emotional understanding between children and their parents. Parents should become the best friend to their children; by which children could share all their necessities with their parents with no hesitancy (Sakib et. al, 2020). In most cases of the juvenile gang, we see the children get involved in gangs in the primary stages solely because of some monetary necessities or by solving minor problems and personal clashes (Jamuna TV Plus, 2021). And, once they get involved in these sorts of activities, they fall into a rabbit hole and get badly engaged in these activities more and more.

And finally, children should be treated with utmost care and sensitivity. Neither the children should be given total independence nor kept in total hardcore surveillance by the parents. Rather, there should be a mutual understanding between parents and children that how much the parents and children can trust each other.

Parenting is an art and in the eastern and Asian culture, this art was passed on from generation to generation. But due to globalization and modernization, though the families have broken into pieces and all the benefits of this joint family system have been substituted with the proper institutional system, parenting has not yet been institutionalized. Some parenting courses and parenting books for the new age parents written for the context of Bangladesh might be something useful to sort of issue.

Education

There should be an increase of activity-based engagements more and more like sports, group works and other similar activities which give children a chance to socialize. Teachers should be careful if any sort of juvenile gang culture is growing in their institution and creating anarchy or not. If gang culture is found where it can be easily channelized into something good, like team activities. Which would cater their natural tendency of competitiveness and group work into a good sector. Encouraging co-curricular, extracurricular and voluntary activities can play a good role in this sector. (Kamau et. al, 2020)

We should also give emphasis on building up a community based on any sort of healthy habit in the area of residence of the children. The community may form based on religious activity, library activity or sports activity. Which will prevent them from gathering for a wrong cause and help them also by giving them a chance to socialize properly. In some cases, the teacher

or school authority may cause certain issues of bullying or harassment; this sort of mental issue should be dealt with using enough importance by forming a monitoring committee.

Government and legislative authorities

The child gang crime incident is mainly done based on outer instruction from various seniors and groups. So, there should be an emphasis given to finding the primary culprit behind the activities. The legislative authority should also prohibit the political institutions from involving non-adult persons in their activities. After arresting them, the main concern should be not to punish them rather to give them a chance to come back to normal life again. Media trials and interference from third parties should be monitored strictly as these issues can prevent these children from coming back to the right track.

We should highly encourage the practice of moral and ethical values and should be highly encouraged about the right practices from the early ages of their life. The religious institutions and the local senior members can play a vital role in planning these sorts of activities and implementing them in the field.

Proper research and case studies should be done by the experts like sociologists, Child psychologists, criminologists and law experts should opine and assess the past cases and the root causes should be chalked out and addressed thoroughly.

When the students are changing their area or education, they should be given enough guidance to cope with the fresh stream. An example can be, focusing on students who are changing from the madrasah stream to the normal stream. Special programs can also be arranged on various occasions like that of “Shishu Dibosh” where the government can make a video or portfolio on effective parenting and management of child issues, these videos can then be telecast in various government and private-owned television channels alongside can be displayed in the schools, thus a uniform and institutionalized system of parenting can be started in our country with minimum cost.

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