

## CRIMINALITY AMONG YOUTH AND RECIDIVISM

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**Abstract:** *Criminality as a form of human behaviour is a phenomenon deserving continued study and research to enhance common weal, or at least to ensure trouble free society. The question of 'nature' and 'nurture', or role of biological factors and environmental factors in influencing human behaviour is relevant in the discussion of criminality as well. The rising trend of 'youth in crime' calls for proper diagnosis of this social illness and search for viable remedies. It is against this background that the tendency of 'young offenders' in the process of correction or having completed correctional treatment to fall back into crime is being studied. Is this on account of biological factors or has it more to do with the environment? Or is the correctional procedure itself the unwitting culprit criminalizing a 'First Time Young Offender'? What are the ways and means by which the correctional procedure can be made meaningful, re-forming and re-integrative?*

*Focusing on these research questions, primary data on "Criminality among Youth and Recidivism" was gathered from the Young Offenders residing in Ernakulam District (Kochi Corporation area) of Kerala state, who have served a term in the prison in the age group of 18 to 35 years, police officials and prison staff and secondary sources of data were books, journals, newspaper articles, records and websites. In an attempt to identify the factors that generate and perpetuate youth criminality, the study focused on four major areas – (a) Socio-economic background in the criminal behaviour of youth (b) Nature and recurrence of crime among youth (c) The influence of Alcohol/ Drugs in inducing criminal behaviour (d) The response of the police personnel regarding the first time offenders and their correction. The study is descriptive in nature and the tools administered were Interview schedule for the youth and interview Guides for the correction staff.*

*The study revealed the major factors that contributed to the criminality of individuals. Evidences of negligence in the protection of human rights and failure in giving psychological support services have detrimentally affected the reformative behaviour of the offenders. The findings highlight the need for discussing the How's and Why's of recidivism and is really an eye-opener on how our correctional institutions becomes a breeding ground for intense criminalities. Article attempts to point out the implications for professional social work practice in criminal justice and reformation.*

**Key Terms:** *Youth | Criminality | Recidivism | Social Work Intervention*

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**Introduction:** Criminality is something the modern world, characterized by increasing stressors and conflicting interests, is forced to cope with in every realm of its existence. As the world is said to be advancing scientifically and technologically, we find newer (and at times ingenious) expressions of crime and aggression. There is more destruction of both private and public property, and a greater increase in the crimes of violence against the individual human person.

**Concepts:** *Crime* is anti-social behaviour, unacceptable to the society, and to which it attaches penalties. Darrow (1934) describes "Crime" as "an act forbidden by the law of the land and for which penalty is prescribed". From a legal viewpoint, violation of the law constitutes crime. In the words of Barnes and Teeters (1959:70), "the term 'crime' technically means a form of antisocial

behaviour that has violated public sentiment to such an extent as to be forbidden by statute". Crime would include activities forbidden by law and those anti-social behaviours, which creates terror and fear in the community.

Garofalo (1914:59) developed a concept of natural crime and defined it as a violation of the prevalent sentiments of pity and probity. W. I. Thomas (1927) defined crime from the point of view of social psychology as an action, which is antagonistic to the solidarity of that group which the individual considers as his own.

**Young Offender** in the study is operationally defined as 'a young person in the age group of 18-35 years who has committed any offence punishable by law'. Perhaps, this term needs to be distinguished from the term

'criminal'. In general, a person who violates law for some personal end is called a criminal. Implication is that an offender is not necessarily a criminal.

**Factors Inducing Criminality:** We don't have with us a fixed or definite concept of crime. This fluidity in the concept of crime prevents us from laying down the characteristics of crime in an order. But still a search through the various causal factors leading to crime is possible.

Crime might be individualistic, forced by social, economic or psychological factors. It might be professional/organized in nature when one has to show off power or solutions for easy money have to be worked out. Crime may be situational, consciously or unconsciously committed as the situation demands. Or it might be induced by an insensitive correction mechanism in a very unresponsive society (Palakkappillil, 2004).

Crime can be induced unwittingly by social change; it can be increased by legal change. It is essential that we look at crime from different vantage points as is possible from the point of view of the law, the victim, the offender, the moralist, the economist and the sociologist because we cannot talk of crime as if it were one single entity (Vaikunath, 2001).

There is a saying, "Societies have the criminals they deserve". A competitive society with its materialistic standards of success, its lack of security for the masses, its violent swings of the economic pendulum and violent economic struggles between classes, its tremendous urban populations and great contrasts between wealth and poverty, its corrupt law enforcement officials and its lack of a determined public opinion against crime produces certain pressure which tend toward criminality. These pressures acting upon certain personalities give rise to crime (Tyler, 1967).

Sigmund Freud in his Psychoanalytic theory states that all humans have criminal tendencies, which are curbed by the process of socialization. An improperly socialized child may develop a personality disturbance that causes him or her to direct antisocial impulses outward and thus become a criminal (Freud, 1961). Learning theory talks of induced criminal tendencies based on material concerns like money, or non-material concerns like social status or imitation of the behaviour of others (i.e., consider them as their model and imitate) (Eysenck, 1964). Sociological theories explain how change in social structure or organization induces criminal behaviour. Social process theories speak of the process by which individuals become criminals. Influence of social institutions like families and that of peer groups are taken into consideration in these. Labelling theory explains how a person is stigmatized by the label of

criminality, the result of which is further acts of deviance. It says labelling a primary deviant as a criminal may lead to secondary deviance (Arrigo, 1996).

Environment, (which refers to one's surroundings – including all those factors that constitute the various types of an individual's relationships - physical, socio-cultural and human) forms a crucial factor with reference to criminal behaviour. It is true that the psychological aspects that lead someone to criminal acts or behaviour are very often inextricably linked to the social and environmental factors of one's existence. Dormant tendencies towards crime and deviance are activated when exposed to precipitating external factors like the desperation of eking out a living, the lure of a better standard of living (Yochelson & Samenow, 1977).

**Youth in Criminal Pursuit:** Youth as a specific category of the society, is a product of post-industrial society. Just as "adolescence" was created by industrialism and the urbanization of industrial society, "youth is a product of the current scientific and technological revolution and its byproducts of automation and cybernation" (Gunter and Moore 1975:200). The creation of economic surpluses that allowed teenagers to remain outside of the labour force and the decay of the primary group relationships associated with rapidly developing cities have brought some of the problem of youth to the attention of both developing and developed countries (Siddiqi, 1982:18). Delinquency, drug abuse, sexual experimentation and rejection of established values all seem to be concomitant aspects of this new stage of life.

One of the most serious problems facing both governments and social scientist today is determining which of the sociological and psychological aspects of the youthful deviant behaviour are most consequential for adult life. As in many other countries, crime by youngsters in India has been rising over the years. The largest percentage relates to thefts, burglary and riots, accounting more than 60% of the total crime committed by youth.

The National Youth Policy, 2003 recognizes "Civics and Good Citizenship" as one of the key sectors of concern for youth. It refers to anti-social behaviour as a manifestation of the absence of well-accepted values, attitudes and norms in the individual and in society which can reflect itself in crime, violent action, breakdown of parental authority in family life, corruption in public life, obscenity in the media, indiscipline in schools and in sporting activities and low productivity at the workplace.

Kochi has, for the past few years been growing into a haven for pranksters, mischief mongers and anti-social elements out, to make a fast buck. Having a large

floating population as compared to other cities in the state, people with a criminal background who manage to give the police the slip after a crime, have been increasingly making Kochi their refuge. Apart from gang attacks, burglaries, vehicle thefts and pickpockets too are on the rise in the city. Sale of single digit lottery<sup>1</sup> which has been banned, goes on unabated. The police have been citing a variety of reasons, from lack of adequate manpower to the short supply of vehicles and inadequate infrastructure as the causes for their inability to crackdown on criminals and their gangs (The Hindu, May 11 2002).

Singh, a consultant psychiatrist in Ernakulam district in a newspaper feature, 'Increasing criminality among Youth' (John L. Paul, 2002) said that the spurt in crimes by youth can be attributed to increased use of drugs in a covert way, leading to aggression and crimes. He points out that this is due to the lack of attention given to mental health, and stresses the need for the police, the judiciary, the voluntary sector of NGOs and mental health professionals to coordinate among themselves to check this problem from a mental health angle.

In 1998, the Government of India adopted a national youth policy. This policy defines youth as individuals in the age - group of 15 to 35 years. Youth empowerment is a central theme of the national youth policy. There are eight key sectors of youth work in India: education, training and employment, health, environment, recreation and sports, participation and citizenship, and science and technology. The national youth policy also focuses attention on the disadvantaged sub-groups of youth. The Standing Committee on Youth of the Indian National Parliament is to follow-up those matters by specific and appropriate legislation. In spite of the policy framework for youth development and legislative measures to ensure youth empowerment, youth criminality is on the rise.

The criminality studies become more relevant when we realize from experience and statistics that majority of those who get involved in crime are the young people in our society. Statistics on youth criminality reveals that the young youth offenders form a large proportion of the criminal group. Crime by youth in India is serious in as much as the youth commit about 40% of the total crime (41.3% in 1993) in the country. This comes to about 6125 crimes a day or about 255 crimes per hour (Ahuja, 1995). The increased involvement of young people in crime is surely a developmental issue and needs special consideration of the authorities and the society.

**Preventive and corrective mechanisms of crime:** There are different approaches to the control of crime. The two most commonly adopted ones are prevention and enforcement. Because it is so difficult and full of uncertainties, the preventive approach dismays all but

the most determined. Far simpler on the other hand is the approach through enforcement, since all that this entails is to wait the commission of crime, pursue its detection and punish the offender. Measurement of crime control in terms of prevention is even less exact than in those of enforcement; save under very strictly controlled research the prospects of reliable assessment are small (Vaikunath, 2001).

In India, these mechanisms are taken care of by the criminal justice system, which revolves around laws passed by the union parliament and state legislatures. The basic criminal law is made up of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Evidence Act. The Criminal Justice System covers the entire scenario from the occurrence of crime, investigation into the facts by the enforcement agency adjudication in the court, performance of the correctional service, re-socializing the criminal apart from deterring from repeating the crime.

The re-socialization part is often neglected with the offenders often treated as worthless citizens, which only helps in turning them into rebels. Prisons are so crowded with such a great variety of offenders that reform efforts seem secondary to the more mundane requirements of housing, feeding, and controlling the large number of people (Goldstein, 1986). The responses of police and prison officials towards treatment of offenders and recidivism incorporated in the study conducted substantiate the above said factors.

There exists contradictory opinion among the offenders and the correction officials in terms of facilities provided in the jail, treatment of first time offenders and inflicting physical torture to the first time offenders. Though custodial violence has been described by Supreme Court as a naked violence of human dignity, the cases of lock-up torture and murder are on the rise. The present model of prisonization which very often has an inbuilt unwritten component of custodial violence helps only in deepening the anti-social tendencies since it enforces absolute control over the life of the prisoners, and leaves them with very limited scope for personal choices regarding life style change. Overcrowded cells and the lack of basic minimum facilities create only frustration and tension. Coupled with these issues is the treatment of young or first time offenders along with the habitual offenders.

**Prisonization and Recidivism:** The term 'recidivism' is derived from Latin *recidivus* means "falling back". The infinitive *recidere* means "to fall back" (re -"back" + cadere - "to fall"). Thus, recidivism is the tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behaviour; especially: relapse into criminal behaviour (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). One who relapses; especially, one who habitually relapses into crime is a

recidivist. To operationalize, someone who is repeatedly arrested for criminal behaviour (especially for the same criminal behaviour) is said to be a recidivist.

Prisonization increases the likelihood of future criminal activity if interventions are not made at the right time. Clemmer (1976) viewed prisonization as an attempt to form a functional social identity within the depriving environment of prison. He believed that the degree of prisonization adopted by an individual was determined by the type of pre-prison social relationships experienced.

Two general theoretical models of prisonization emerged from the descriptive work of Clemmer (1976). The “deprivation model” has been supported by research on the impact of loss of personal control, loss of self-esteem in total institutions, loss of personal relationships, loss of access to conventional adult roles and restriction of activities and loss of personal identity, privacy and meaningful work. The “importation model” proposes that through prisonization the set of attitudes and behaviours developed in individuals through their interactions with larger society are “imported” into prison when these individuals are incarcerated. This model has been supported by research indicating that men who have been extensively involved in criminal lifestyles prior to incarceration are less disturbed by prison culture than are those who have been less involved in criminal life styles (Hofer, 1988). Hence, inversely, it can also be argued that those who are fresh in prison situation can be negatively influenced by the hardened elements already in prison. The negative influence on the attitudes of a young offender could be either by way of ‘deprivation’ or by way of ‘importation’.

Other issues to be addressed are: ‘Are the same number of people involved repeatedly in crime or are new ones entering the world of crime (specific to a particular time span)? Studies reveal that 50% or more of the offenders is found to have 2 or more prior sentences. Does offence become a habit once an individual get involved? What makes a person return to the world of crime? Recidivism – the habit of relapsing into crime – are the youth more susceptible to it? Several questions are yet to be answered. Recidivism rates, which approach 50% for offenders with two or more prior sentences, have been correlated with age at first arrest and type of offense and age at release from confinement (Hofer, 1988).

**Why Recidivism?:** There is no single answer to the question posed. Various factors lay interconnected in causing recidivism as is seen from the details above. Coupled with these are factors like immediate poverty after release from jail, tendency for easy money solutions, poor educational status and low wage earning

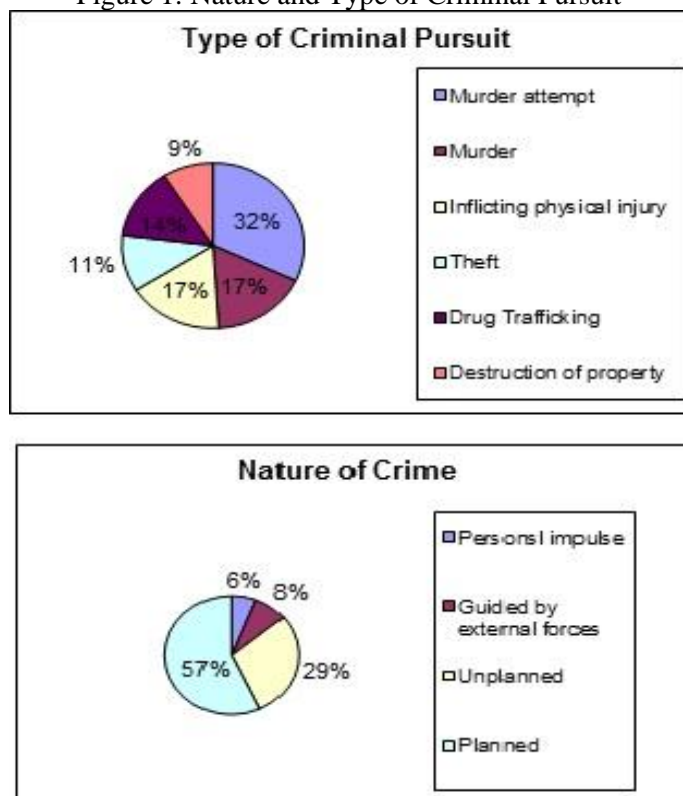
capacity of the individual, unstable work history resulting in poor employability, stigmatizing or labelling off as a criminal, grudge towards the corruptive legal system.

**Social and psychological factors causing recidivist tendencies:**

*Maturity of the Offender:* Age factor is critical in youth criminality. The transition period from childhood to adulthood is a very delicate one and the young are easily susceptible to the environmental influences forced on them. The youth at their age are highly malleable under external influences. Once labelled as criminals, it is difficult for them to get out of the stigma. Though an adult in the eyes of law, the youth might not have achieved the social and psychological maturity to assess the situation they are in.

*Immediate Environment of the Offender:* The immediate environment of the offender refers to the family background, the neighbourhood they are in and the peer group in which they are part of. Peer group influence can be noted as a major factor inducing crime. The nuclear family system with its disadvantages (e.g., without elders to take care of the growing up children) results in lack of satisfactory upbringing of the youth which will easily feed on financial constraints and neighbourhood problems inducing crime. All these, in varying degrees, are found to influence a person in entering into a criminal activity.

Figure 1: Nature and Type of Criminal Pursuit



Studies on the relation of unemployment to crime have shown that the volume of property crimes increases during periods of unemployment. Unemployment is revealed as an important causative factor in vagrancy and in crimes against property. Growth in crime is found to be directly linked to economic change. The conclusion seems inescapable that the assurance of economic security might be expected to bring with it an appreciable reduction in the volume of crime.

*Habits developed by the offender:* Youth is that stage in an individual's development where peer bonding has greatest influence on one's character and behaviour. Alcoholism/drug addictions are very often the effect of peer group influence. Such habits play a considerable role in committing criminal acts. Once addicted to drug/alcohol use, it is difficult to be free of its influences.

*Situations induced upon the young Offender:* Often it is the bitter experiences in custody/jail and negative attitude of the correction officials that make the young offenders rebellious and remorseless. The lack of concern by prison officials towards the individuality of the prisoners, over-crowded cells, cohabitation with habitual offenders etc., are found to have an adverse effect on the behaviour of the young offenders. There is significant influence of the habitual offenders on the young offenders to enter into the world of crime. More than often, the correctional process itself becomes the culprit. The New York Times reported the closure of a correctional school in the US citing the reason that the correctional school "intended to give young men the tools that they needed to succeed when they returned home...wasn't simply working" ... (with its) "too much prison like atmosphere and far too much recidivism" (Yardley, 2005). As early as 1930s Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck pointed to the likelihood of juvenile justice system being more harmful than helpful both to the offender and the society in their publication *One Thousand Delinquents: Their Treatment by Court and Clinic*. This was, in spite of the efforts as from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards to remove youthful offenders from harsh surroundings and from association with adult criminals, 'from an educational and constructive rather than a punitive point of view' (Trattner, 1999).

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

**Factors Inducing Criminality:** The study showed that majority (48 %) of the respondents belongs to the age group of 18-23 yrs, urban area of residence (83 %), and nuclear family (97 %). A good number of the respondents belonged to urban areas and out of this a good number specifically to slums. The respondents from the slums had exposure from the childhood itself to the world of crime since each of them had their parents, relatives, neighbours or friends involved in crime. Cases

were also noted in which they got involved in crime as a result of the labelling off as criminals since they belonged to a slum area notorious for criminals. The slums also provided an atmosphere for indulging in drug and alcohol abuse from childhood itself for some of the respondents. With regard to care provided at the formative years of development, 86% of the respondents were cared for by the parents, 6% by relatives and 8% by the institutions.

**Education and Income of the respondents:** 51% have discontinued studies due to financial problems and due to the existence of problems in school and families, i.e., 17% of them had financial problems, 20% problems in school, 6% family problems and another 6% due to case related problems. Majority of the respondents have low educational qualification and the fact that none had completed their studies is a significant point. 46% of the respondents were dissatisfied with their school/college life owing to problems related to quarrelling in school, unhealthy relationship with their peers and teachers. These can be noted as the factors affecting the effective upbringing of an individual.

**Marital status and dissatisfaction level of the respondents:** With regard to the problems in the marital life among the married respondents, 50% have problem in their married life like differences on various matters of life – world vision, ego problems and abuse of wives. 60% of the respondents have dissatisfaction in the family and 46% in the school and college life. A few respondents have stated that dissatisfaction in family life and problems related to it have reduced the feeling of responsibility towards the family.

**Youth in Criminal pursuit:** Figure 1 illustrates the type of criminal pursuit and the nature of crime. The types of crime, the respondents involved ranged from murder to destruction of property. In majority of the cases, the crime seemed to be a planned one (57%). This is out of the 63% who have responded that they were determined in committing the crime. Out of the 57% who have done the crime planned, 32% indulged in murder attempt and 17% in inflicting physical injury. Most of the murder attempts and inflicting physical injury cases were done as part of the quotation work (paid jobs), which is a sure indicator that the crimes were planned in advance. Drug trafficking also is a planned activity. This indicates systemic deficiencies in the society, which has helped in the growth of crime as a parallel system of getting things done, a serious issue to be addressed.

**Prisonization and Recidivism:** *Prisonization - Experience by the first time offenders:* It was found that the first time offenders had bitter experiences in their period of confinement for correction. Majority of the respondents had experienced bad treatment by the prison staff (69%), lack of special attention and freedom to

share their problems (69%), torture within the jail and in the public before the people, and overcrowding in the jail.

Table 1: Opinions by Offenders

Sl. No.	Opinions	Respondents (in %)
1.	Bad treatment and approach by prison staff	69%
2.	Lack of freedom to share their problems	69%
3.	No special attention to first time offenders	69%
4.	Need cooperation of correction officials in reformatory process of the 1 <sup>st</sup> time offenders	60%
5.	Experienced torture in lockup (25%- Physical torture/ 13% mental torture/ 62% - both)	69%
6.	Experienced torture by the police in public (20%- Physical torture/ 11% mental torture/ 32% - both)	63%
7.	Jail is overcrowded	89%

The torture of criminals by the police is taken for granted nowadays. But any favourable statement cannot cover up the violation of human rights even if the person involved is a criminal. The problem becomes severe when those involved are young and first time offenders. From the experience sharing by the respondents, it is clear that the abuse before the public and the ill treatment during the first time offence have negatively affected them. Further, any sort of custodial violence is a violation of human rights and law. It is said in the articles 320 and 321 of the Indian Constitution that the law keeping body has no right to inflict torture on the arrested at any cause.

It was gathered from informal conversation that for their primary requirement like food in the lockup, the respondents had to use money. Those without money are often starved for days. Further the inaccessibility to medical services and legal help is adding up to the misery of the respondents. Treatment of this sort is sure to make a deep impact on the first time offenders and breed in them contempt for law and officials rather than make them remorseful of their conduct.

Furthering the torture is the retention in the lockup, in some cases even for more than five days without producing them before the magistrate. This is a clear violation of law and human rights since it is put forth by law that whatever be the nature of crime the offender should be brought before the magistrate within 24hours before taking into custodial questioning. But most often this is violated when the offenders are left without power or influence.

Overcrowding is a major problem in many of the jails. The cells are often packed with more inmates than they should ideally contain. Lack of space and hygiene in the cells is a major issue of concern, and a clear violation of human rights. Also, the place often becomes a breeding ground of more crime and homosexual abuse. More than half the respondents (52%) were forced to homosexual

relationships with the habitual offenders through force and torture.

The first time experience in jail can always influence the young offenders in their future life. Absence of psychological support and other bitter experiences in the jail increases the susceptibility of the young offenders in repeating the crime.

**Views of the police personnel on prisonization and treatment of first time offenders:** 10 personnel of correctional staff were interviewed using an Interview Guide for obtaining their perception on these issues.

**About Special consideration:** They admitted that they were unable to give special consideration to all first time offenders and that there was lack of special services for the first time offenders in lock-up. Even when initial interaction is established, they were unable to ensure continuous interaction with the offenders due to lack of staff in correctional setting and lack of time.

**Towards Punishment:** The correctional personnel were of the view that inflicting physical torture will generate a kind of fear and will help to control the inmates in jail. They were not very optimistic about chances of reformation, and thought that those who could be thus reformed would only be a very small percentage.

**About habitual offender:** The police personnel accepted that there existed ill treatment of the first time offenders by the habitual offenders like physical torture, sexual abuse that goes unnoticed. Even when noticed, it leads at the most to a warning, to avoid further complications in legal action.

**Provision of separate correctional homes:** The correctional personnel are positive about having provision for separate correctional homes for the 1<sup>st</sup> time offenders.

**Recidivism:** 63% of the respondents have shown recidivism i.e., they have undergone imprisonment more than once. Out of this 34% have undergone imprisonment more than three times. Another 63% of the respondents revealed that they were determined in committing the crime, which clearly points out their involvement in it. All these are in addition to the crimes that have gone unnoticed by law. More than three fourth (77%) of the respondents reported that they have committed offences that haven't come before law.

The crime repeated by the respondents includes murder attempt, theft, destruction of property, drug trafficking, and inflicting physical injuries. The fact that most of the young offenders in the study (Chitra KP, 2002) are recidivists, point to the flaws in the correctional administration.



The findings highlight the need for discussing the *How's* and *Why's* of Recidivism. The factors inducing crime and recidivism are multifarious. Peer group influence, ill treatment by the correction officials in custody and in jail, influence of habitual offenders in jail are all factors contributing to the recidivist tendencies of a young offender as per the study results. 43% of the respondents were forced to commit crime together with the habitual offenders and another 20% encouraged to join the criminal gangs working outside the jail. This clearly specifies how an institution that is meant to be reformatory becomes a breeding place of further criminality.

**CASE – JOHN -** *The case study of John included illustrates the recidivist tendencies and its related factors. It sheds light on the recidivist tendencies exhibited by a young offender.*

John belongs to a slum area in the city. He has a broken family background and was reared by his father. He discontinued his studies while he was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> standard. Later he engaged himself working as a newspaper boy, hotel boy etc. His father was engaged in drug trafficking in which John and his brother's son became a part. As he grew, he got friends and neighbors who were engaged in the same business and the network got enlarged. Meanwhile he had started using drugs and is now strongly addicted to it. He had even attempted self-torture and suicide when he did not get the drugs in time.

The police arrested John at first for an open place theft case when he was 16 years old. But in spite of the age, he was brought to trial in an adult court and was sent to jail for two months by manipulating the records to show that he was 18 years old (This was done for the convenience of the police officials since sending him to a Juvenile home involves many formalities). While he was in jail, he got acquainted with habitual offenders and was influenced by one of them to join drug trafficking and one digit lottery business.

Now John is part of one digit lottery business and earns a considerable amount of money through it. Drug trafficking also continues to be one of his businesses. Now at 19 years of age, he is married and is the father of a baby. At the end of the teenage, he earns a lot of easy money, is quite established with drug trafficking and is a potential victim of drug abuse.

We can see that factors like age, family background, neighbourhood scenario, peer group influence, addiction to drug/liquor, attitude of the concerned officials, influence of habitual offenders, attraction for easy money can have been at play here, whereas a right intervention at the right time by the correctional system

would have rescued another one from entering the world of crime.

**Social and Psychological Factors:** Table 2 shows the social and psychological factors inducing crime. 23% have responded that the finance problem and another 20% as neighbourhood problems as the reason behind crime. 94% of the respondents use alcohol, 86% of them reported that crime influenced by alcohol, which depicts the picture that crime influenced by alcohol being the result of behaviour and social circumstances. 66% of the respondents are influenced by the peer pressure for alcohol and drug use and 54% reported that crime influenced by friends and 60% has committed crime with the companion of friends, which shows the impact of peer group in influencing the criminality to a greater extent. 60% of the respondents have committed crime during childhood, which involves theft, drug trafficking, destruction of property, inflicting physical injury.

It is to be noted that 34% of the respondents are jobless as per the study. To read along with this is the new trend among the youngsters who seek easy money solutions. For example, it was found during the study that two of the respondents in the daily wage category were engaged in one digit lottery business which is prohibited by law and that they earn a considerable amount of money through it. Drug trafficking is also adopted by the youngsters as a means for easy money.

Table 2: Social and Psychotically Factors affecting Crimes

Factors	Details	Respondents (%)
<b>Alcohol/ Drug usage</b>	Use of alcohol	94
	Regular users of alcohol	75
	Influenced by peer pressure	66
	Use of alcohol at the time of crime	48
	Crime Influenced by alcohol	86
	Use of drug at the time of crime	80
<b>Reasons for crime</b>	Crime Influenced by drug	87
	Financial problem	23
	Problem in Marriage	3
	Problem in Job placement	11
	Neighbourhood problem	20
<b>Influenced by another person</b>	Problem with friends	17
	By friends	54
	Family members	8
	Influenced by all	3
	Friends and relatives	3
<b>Influenced by external forces</b>	No one influenced	26
	Liquor shops	23
	Relation with habitual offenders	20
	By both the above	11
	Liquor shops & Blue films	3
	By all the above	3
<b>Companion in crime</b>	No one influenced	40
	With their friends	60
	With gang	11
	Alone	29

**Acquaintance in jail:** Table 3 portrays the percentage of various acquaintances the respondents have in jail, with the majority of being friends. Only 6% of the respondents did not have anyone from among family members or friends in jail. 74% of the respondents had friends who had been in jail shows the peer group influence which leads to a vicious cycle of crime – prison term and entrenchment in a life of crime. The crimes committed by the acquaintances includes murder, theft, murder attempt, drug trafficking, destruction of property and inflicting physical injury.

Table 3: Acquaintance Profile of youth in Prison

	Respondents (%)
Have friends who have been to jail	74
Have neighbours	8
Have family members	3
Have relatives	3
All the above	6
None of the above	6

**Lessons drawn from the study:** A striking majority of the respondents (83%) belong to urban areas and nuclear families and distinctively 97% lacked proper care and attention from families during childhood and later. Less than half (34%) fall in the low income group (Rs. 2000-4000) and 34% do not have any source of income. More than 50% of the respondents are drop outs. The study clearly points to the influence of peer group, intake of drugs/alcohol for committing crime. For the majority (60%) of the young offenders a friend(s) served as the companion for crime. 63% of the respondents exhibited recidivist tendency. Among the social and psychological factors that contributed to the criminality and recidivism, 60% of the respondents had a criminal past during their childhood and 74% of the respondents had friends who have been to jail as their acquaintance in jail. Conspicuously, the offences committed by the youth fell under the category of murder attempt (32%) and 57% of the cases were of a planned nature.

**Inspiration for social work practice:** The civil society has to rise up to the responsibility, protect itself from crimes and rehabilitate its members who have become dysfunctional on account of their criminal past. Isolation does not solve the problem, except in the cases of severe character disorders, which calls for total separation from the society for its own safety. New and participatory forms of correctional procedures need to be evolved.

**Recommendations:**

1. *Introduction of individualized plan for behavioural change destined for youth offenders:* The developments in the fields of psychology and insights in the realm of human

relations should be put to proper use. Detailed psycho-social assessments of the individual undergoing correction is to be made, and correctional goals and plan of action have to be charted out involving the major stakeholders in each case – the person undergoing correction, family, and neighbours. There should be a system of periodical review of the progress and systematic documentation of the same.

2. *Multi-disciplinary Team of Experts:* For this, attached to each correctional home, there must be a provision for an expert multi-disciplinary team of psychologists, social workers, human relations experts, whose services are available for the correctional home.
3. *Supportive Group Processes:* Formation of Support Groups – Victim support groups and ex offender support groups will augment a better understanding of the situation since they have undergone the same experiences. This in turn builds respect, commitment, self-esteem and better positive understanding. Even after the term is over, or during the parole, there should be provisions for the young offenders in the correctional processes to get together for structured sessions leading to self-exploration, emotional ventilation and group support. These could serve as facilitative forums to exchange, share ideas and to voice their rights and preferences for future betterment. A second level of group process could be that of structured interactions at regular intervals with groups of volunteers from the civil society willing to spend time and energy for common good.
4. *Ensuring a source of earning for the young offender:* Part of administrative support should be directed towards efforts for rehabilitation, aimed at ensuring educational facilities and developing vocational skills through a regular programme facilitating self-employment. While training for self-employment, and financial support for self-employment schemes are to be sought, possibilities of job placement in institutions and organizations, especially those in the voluntary sector should be explored. Tata Institute of Social Sciences had set a replicable model by absorbing a number of young offenders who completed their period of correctional training at David Sassoon Industrial School (special home). Those thus employed, in due course, had a well-settled family life.
5. *Human Resource Mobilization for Ensuring community and family acceptance:* All these



measures go with the corrective and reformative aspect of the criminal justice system, which is often given a go-by. Generally the focus is on the vindictive aspect, with efforts to 'teach them a lesson' through punishment. The study points to the fact that this approach is counter-productive and leads to the entrenchment of the offenders in the life of crime. This calls for additional human resources. One such potential resource is the schools of social work, spread across the length of the state of Kerala. The students in the senior level of Graduate and under-graduate programmes could be trained, that a section of them are posted with the prisons and after care centres for individualized work with young offenders, and promoting group processes. Their tasks could also include liaising with the family of the young offenders and preparing grounds with the local community for the return of the member after the correctional period. The potential of the neighbourhood groups, self help groups, religious associations and the local community leaders should be explored in this matter.

6. *Religio-spiritual Resources for Correction:*

Religious programmes for the inmates, as the experiments of Prison Ministry India and those of Kiran Bedi in Tihar Jail have shown, tend to touch a vital area in the offender's psyche leading to transformation in life. The caution must be in ensuring that such programmes do not become exclusive to any particular sect or religion, and in making the provision a matter of choice of the individual. It is also to be borne in mind that such provisions do not become opportunities for religious propagation rather than the welfare and transformation of the offenders.

7. *Incorporation of course on correctional social work in Social Work Curriculum:*

Professional Social Work from the early stages of its spread in India had focused attention on criminal and correctional field of service. However this has not been taken up adequately, either by the Social Work institutions or voluntary organizations, with the exception of a few like Prison Ministry India (a Jesus Fraternity initiative), Prayas, Mumbai (a TISS initiative). Again, not all involved are rendering a professional service either. It would be ideal to look afresh into the Social Work curriculum and include the elements of correctional social work both as an optional course and as one of the optional areas for field practicum in the second year of the MSW programme. The field practicum could have its focus on one-time and

young offenders, in order to prevent criminalization of an offender and to ensure his/her re-integration into normal life.

8. *Role for Voluntary Organizations:*

Collaboration of Voluntary Organizations could be sought to support this programme. The Model project established in a collaborative venture with Don Bosco - Snehabhavan and the Corporation of Kochi (between NGO and the Government), for the training and rehabilitation of neglected children in conflict with law could be taken as a model to start with.

9. *Separate correctional homes for first time offenders:*

Separate Correctional homes for the first time offenders in every district should be made a reality. This could go a long way in reforming the lives of the first time offenders and protecting them from the negative influences of people with established criminal history. The needs and requirements of a young or first time offender in the re-socialization process are entirely different when compared to that of the habitual offenders.

Trattner (1999:123) cites an experiment in this direction in the State of New York in 1876. State Reformatory was opened under the leadership of a noted corrections reformer, Zebulon R. Brockway. Here free from association with hardened criminals, the inmates helped to determine the length of stay (up to an imposed maximum) through their performance and progress as determined by a professional authority.

10. *Research and Documentation:*

There needs to be continuous research and documentation regarding the correctional processes and results. The ideal thing to happen would be the establishment of a research department that continually involve in identifying the risk factors i.e., the opportunities, which provide for commission of crimes at various levels-juvenile, youth etc and evolve strategies to direct them away from crime as well as in assessing the problems, policies and programmes.

However, academic institutions, especially those offering master's programmes in Social Work, Psychology and Sociology could contribute a great deal by taking up studies on various aspects of correctional systems, even at the level of student dissertations. If the concerned ministry could take initiative to invite academic institutions to collaborate in this manner, it would open up an area of valuable service without much additional costs for the state ex-chequer.

**CONCLUSION:** The vitality and energy of youth when not channelized in meaningful and productive directions can easily be the cause for criminal behaviour. Very often, the correctional process itself, by the environment in which a one-time young offender is placed during the period of correction, becomes the cause of criminal behaviour and entrenchment in a life of crime of the young offender. The study is indicative of this fact.

Hence it is a must that the re-formation of young offenders is taken up in earnest by focusing on the efforts at prevention of entrenchment of first-time young offenders in a life of crime. Efforts should be in the direction of individualized planning for correction at the very start of being in a correctional centre. It goes without saying that the beginning of the strategy for the control of crime should begin with the diminution of abject poverty, discrimination, injustice and urban

decay. The problem of increasing criminality among youth should be regarded as a developmental problem affecting the community as a whole and should be adequately addressed within the policy framework, and also in the designing of programmes for youth development

<sup>1</sup> One digit lottery belongs to the group of illegal lotteries, now prohibited by law. It involves multiple draws in a single day from morning to evening. There is a coating over the number in the ticket, the scratching of which shows a single digit, which determines the prize money. The system is not standardized like the lottery mechanisms as that of the government i.e. there is no foolproof method to check the number of tickets used in a draw or the mode of selection of the winners. Also there is every possibility that the numbers displayed as that of the winners for higher amounts are nonexistent. Only prizes worth smaller amounts are given away. The ticket prize is only Rs 2/-, which is an attraction that lures many to one digit lottery and thus they get cheated very easily. Law has banned these roadside lotteries, which show no sign of credibility. But many youngsters seeking easy money solutions are still involved with the business. The business is also spread in the name of two-digit lottery, which is again old wine in a new bottle.

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