



## **COMPARISON OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIETAL AND FAMILIAL FACTORS IN THEIR INFLUENCE ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HOMA BAY COUNTY, KENYA**

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### **Abstract**

Globally, Juvenile delinquency is a major issue. Juvenile delinquents engage in antisocial behaviours such as theft, sexual assault, fights, school riots, and alcohol and drug abuse among others. This study compared students' perceptions of societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Homa Bay County. Mixed research approach was used in this study. Survey and correlational research designs were used. The target population comprised 64763 students and 1801 teachers in 295 secondary schools. Three hundred and eighty one students were randomly sampled while 15 teachers were purposively sampled from 15 sampled secondary schools in Homa Bay County schools. There was a questionnaire and an interview schedule to collect data from students and teachers respectively. Pilot study was conducted and the instruments were found to be valid and reliable. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (means) and paired t test. The findings of this study were presented in tables and a chart. It was hoped that the findings of this study would help policy makers to minimize juvenile delinquency. The results showed that there was significant difference between societal factors (mean, 40.97) and familial factors (mean, 39.21) in their influence on juvenile delinquency as paired t test revealed calculated  $t = 4.484$ ,  $p = .000$  (significance -2 tailed), critical  $t$  was 1.96. Since calculated  $t$  was greater than critical  $t$ , it was concluded that societal factors contribute more to juvenile delinquency among secondary school students in Homa Bay County than familial factors. It was recommended that sensitization be done to members of the society to make them be aware of how their behaviour influences juvenile delinquency so that they may change their behaviours. This study may as well be replicated in other parts of Kenya.

**Key words:** delinquency, juvenile, juvenile delinquency, society, and parent.

### **Introduction**

Juvenile delinquency has been identified as a serious social problem in virtually every society in the world (Guan, 2012; Ugwuoke & Onyekachi, 2015). Juvenile crime had increased in Nigeria (Ekpenyong, Raimi & Ekpenyong, 2011). Kenya was not exempted from juvenile delinquency (Githua, Muraya & Njeru, n.d.).

Wickliffe (2016) asserted social changes could create anxiety and disillusionment for adolescents and thus they committed delinquent acts. He noted that all juvenile delinquent behaviours were influenced not only by what went on in the environment in which juveniles lived, but also by



what they observed in adults and the society at large. However, the norms of one society might have differed from another society. What could be considered delinquency in Africa or Asia might not be delinquent behaviour in the United States of America because norms varied from place to place. In given societies, there were factors in families influencing juvenile delinquency.

Living in a broken home (Alboukordi, Nazari, Nouri, & Sangdeh, 2012) made adolescents to be involved in delinquency. Krohn, Hall, and Lizotte (2009) asserted that delinquents lived in families which experienced divorces, low levels of parental supervision and less consistent discipline. Poduthase (2012) noted that in India juvenile delinquents were living in families where there was poverty. However, Petrosino, Derzon, Lavenberg (2009) found out that family socio-economic status and child sexual abuse predicted delinquency. Moreover, parental or siblings' criminality and physical abuse were risk factors for delinquency (Savignac, 2009). The family settings reported might have been similar to those in Kenya but there might have been variations in economic and cultural patterns in different geographical regions.

Between January and May 2013, Nyanza region recorded 3061 crimes, while Western region recorded 2923 crimes (Ombati, 2013). Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2011) noted that in 2008, 2009 and 2010 there were 11435, 11972 and 11986 reported cases of stealing in Kenya respectively. Nyanza region was highest with 4927 adult and juvenile offenders serving community service order. There was increase in theft in Nyanza in 2010 and 2011 with 1057 and 1273 victims respectively.

Oduor (2013) reported that an orphaned student was caught red-handed at Ojode Pala Secondary School when he stole money from the principal's office. The school's disciplinary committee suspended the student. A research done by United Nations Habitat (2002) noted delinquency formed a continuum from minor to more serious risk taking. Factors contributing to juvenile delinquency in other parts of Kenya might have differed from those in Homa Bay County due to differences in geographical locations, economic activities and cultural patterns. Limited documented information on juvenile delinquency in Homa Bay County existed.

This study compared students' perceptions of societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Homa Bay County. Secondary school students were the participants in this study. Non-juvenile delinquent students were the respondents since it would be unethical to identify and label students in the schools as rapists, arsonists, murderers and thieves among other labels. The perceptions of the non-juvenile delinquent students on determinants of juvenile delinquency were sought.

### **Literature Review**

Some children were prone to crimes because of absence of proper environment both within the family as well as in the community level (Kavita, 2013). Kavita did not specify which of the two environments contributed more to juvenile delinquency than the other.

Hawkins et al. (2000) noted that risk factors for violent juvenile offending included individual, family, school, peer related, community/ neighbourhood and situational factors. According to them, family factors included parental criminality, child maltreatment, poor family management practices, low level and parental involvement, poor parental bonding and family conflict.



Community and neighbourhood factors included poverty, community disorganization availability of drugs and firearms, neighbourhood adults involved in crimes and exposure to violence and racial prejudice. Hawkins and his colleagues did not show which risk factor contributed most to juvenile delinquency. They did not compare the communal and familial factors in their contribution to juvenile delinquency.

According to Chung and Steinberg (2006), parents were mediators of community characteristics on juvenile offending. Excluding one of these micro-systems might result in simplified models of risk and intervention strategies because it was through the integrated study of multiple systems that researchers were likely to understand how neighbourhood factors transmitted both pro- and anti-social influences to youth living in disadvantaged community. They however had difficulties in identifying which one of the factors contributed most to juvenile delinquency.

Chingtham (2015) compared the responses of his respondents on the causes of juvenile delinquency and found out that 75.83% of the students agreed that social factor contributed to juvenile delinquency while 65.83% of the students agreed that family factor contributed to juvenile delinquency. According to Chingtham, moral degradation, social deviance, immoral practices, and other negative values and norms prevalent in the society were considered to lead to the development of juvenile delinquency. On the other hand, broken families, poverty, disabled parents, prevalence of immorality and absence of ethical norms, good values and proper discipline, and anti-social behaviour were negative aspects in families hence contributed to juvenile delinquency. Chingtham did not use any statistical test to compare or verify his findings.

Strategic Policy Brief (2009) emphasized that family environment and parental behaviour were important risk factors for involvement in crime because of their influence on child's development. Community and peers also primarily appeared to affect antisocial behaviour. However, community and neighbourhood effects on criminality were hard to measure but they appeared to exert an influence on antisocial behaviour and crime. The author however did not make a comparison of the influence of the communal and familial factors on the juvenile delinquency. This study therefore compared societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Homa Bay County. This study was guided by Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura (1977) asserts that people learn from one another via observation, imitation and modeling. Change in environment leads to change in behaviour.

### **Methodology**

Mixed method approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, was used in this study. Survey research design was used. The target population comprised 64763 students from Form I to IV and 1801 teachers in 295 secondary schools. Three hundred and eighty one students were randomly sampled while 15 teachers in charge of guidance and counselling were purposively sampled from the 15 sampled secondary schools. There was a questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data from students and teachers respectively. Pilot study was conducted, the instruments were found to be valid and reliable when test-retest was done. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (means) and inferential statistics – paired sample t - test.



### Theoretical analyses

The main objective of this study was to compare students' perceptions of societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Homa Bay County. To achieve this objective, the following research question was posed: Do students' perceptions of societal and familial factors differ in their influence on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Homa Bay County? To answer this question, the responses of the participants to the first set of twelve items (items 1-12) –Table 1, and the second set of twelve items (items 13-24) – Table 2, in the questionnaire were analysed.

**Table 1**  
**Societal factors contributing to juvenile delinquency**

Item No.	Societal Factors	N	$\bar{x}$	Rank
5	High rate of unemployment in the neighbourhood/ society	379	4.04	1
1	Availability and use of drugs in the neighbourhood/ society	381	3.96	2
10	High level of poverty in the neighbourhood/ society	381	3.91	3
12	Availability of cheap alcohol in the neighbourhood/ society	380	3.51	4
6	Presence of gangs in the neighbourhood/ society	380	3.50	5
9	Lack of role models in the neighbourhood/ society	378	3.38	6
11	Child labour in the neighbourhood/ society	380	3.30	7
2	Buying and selling of stolen goods in the neighbourhood/ society	379	3.18	8
7	Inadequate recreational facilities in the neighbourhood/ society	380	3.16	9
3	Frequent fights in the neighbourhood/ society	381	3.12	10
4	Homelessness among people in the neighbourhood/ society	380	3.03	11
8	Presence of commercial sex workers in the neighbourhood/ society	377	3.03	12
Valid N (listwise)		369		

**Table 2****Familial factors contributing to juvenile delinquency**

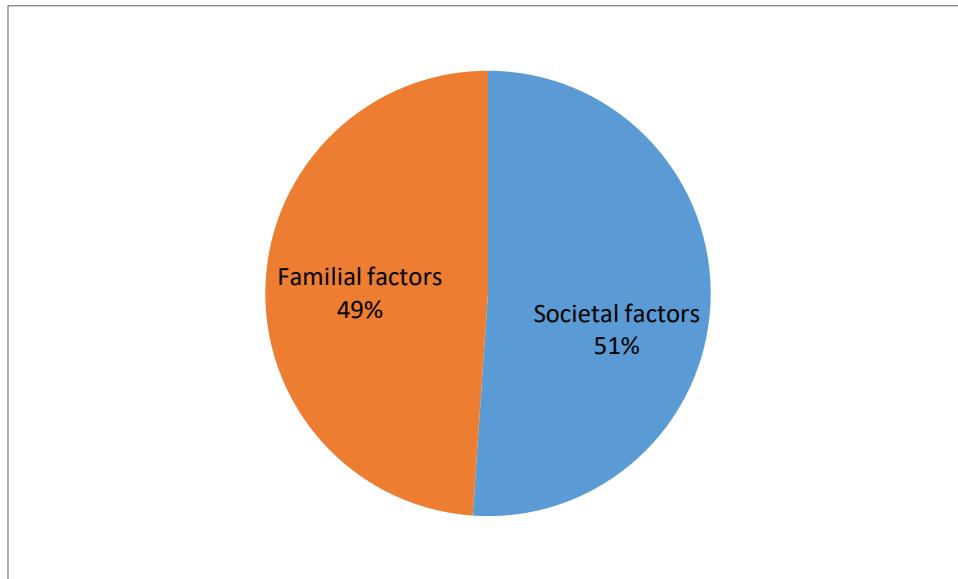
Item No.	Familial Factors	N	$\bar{x}$	Rank
18	Poverty of parents	378	3.61	1
17	Lack of parental supervision	381	3.51	2
14	Parental use of alcohol	379	3.46	3
13	Parental use of drugs	381	3.44	4
23	Use of abusive language by family members	381	3.39	5
21	Mistreatment of children at home	381	3.29	6
24	Rejection of children by parents in the family	381	3.28	7
20	Lack of rules and regulations in the family	379	3.17	8
22	Frequent fights in the family	380	3.16	9
19	Inconsistent discipline by parents	378	3.14	10
15	Parental criminality	381	3.02	11
16	Sibling criminality	380	2.84	12
Valid N (listwise)		370		

The questionnaire used in data collection was a 5-point likert scale. The instrument yielded a total score for each respondent, which then measured the respondent's favourableness towards the given statement. The respondents also rank ordered 20 juvenile delinquent acts from the most common to the least common in their schools. Using SPSS programme, descriptive statistics was first used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of societal factors, familial factors and delinquency level. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

<b>Descriptive Statistics for societal factors, familial factors and delinquency level</b>			
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Delinquency	10.04	.90	381
Societal factors	40.97	9.38	381
Familial factors	39.21	10.35	381

The mean for delinquency was 10.04, the mean for societal factors was 40.97 and the mean for familial factors was 39.21. The mean scores for societal and familial factors show that societal factors contribute to delinquency more than familial factors. Figure 1 shows the differences in percentages between societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency.

**Figure 1****Comparison of societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency**

Societal factors contribute to juvenile delinquency by 51% while familial factors contribute to juvenile delinquency by 49%. This means that societal factors contribute more to juvenile delinquency than familial factors.

However, to confirm statistically whether there is significant difference between societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency as has been shown on figure 1, paired sample t - test, sometimes called the dependent sample t - test, was used. The paired t - test was used in this study because the dependent variable, delinquency, was continuous, the observations such as societal and familial factors were independent of one another.

The Paired Samples Statistics gave univariate descriptive statistics which include mean, sample size, standard deviation, and standard error mean, for each of the variables that was entered in the equation. Societal factors had a standard error mean of .480, while familial factors had a standard error mean of .530 (see Table 4).

**Table 4****Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Societal factor	40.97	381	9.377	.480
	Familial factor	39.21	381	10.353	.530



The paired samples statistics shows that societal factors have a mean score of 40.97 while familial factors have a mean score of 39.21. It shows that societal factors influence juvenile delinquency more than familial factors.

Paired Samples Correlations shows the bivariate Pearson correlation coefficient. For each pair of variables entered in the equation, there was a two-tailed test of significance in the output. The paired samples correlation makes us know the strength of the association between the two variables – societal factors and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency. The output on Paired Samples Correlations between societal factors and familial factors shows that Pearson correlation coefficient of .701 was obtained (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

<b>Paired Samples Correlations</b>			
	N	Correlation	Sig.
Societal factor &	381	.701	.000
Familial factor			

The Paired Samples Correlation table gives the information that societal factors and familial factors have a correlation of ( $r = .701$ ) with juvenile delinquency. This means that there is strong positive correlation between societal factors and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency. A significance of .000 was realized. It could be observed from the results that societal factors and familial factors are strongly and positively correlated ( $r = .701$ ,  $p = .000$ ). This means that societal and familial factors tend to increase together - as societal factors increase, familial factors also increase hence juvenile delinquency is influenced and increases.

There was Paired Samples Test. The Paired Samples Test was to test whether there was significant difference between societal and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

<b>Paired Samples Test</b>							
Mean	Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower				
	on	Mean	Upper				
SF- FF	1.76	7.68	.393	.99	2.537	4.484	380
							.000

SF – Societal Factors

FF – Familial Factors

The pair of variables that was tested was societal factors – familial factors. The order in which the subtraction was carried out was societal factors – familial factors. There was a mean of 1.76



which shows the average difference between the societal factors (40.97) and familial factors (39.21). The standard deviation of the different scores was 7.68. Standard error mean, .393, shows the standard error, which is obtained by dividing standard deviation by the square root of the sample size, or the variation between sample means obtained from multiple samples from the same population. The standard error mean is used in computing both the test statistic and the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval. Ninety five percent confidence interval of the difference was used. From the table on paired samples test, on average, societal factors scores were 1.76 higher than familial factors score. (95% CI [0.99, 2.537]). The lower limit is .99 while the upper limit is 2.537. The degrees of freedom (df) for this test is 380. Significance (2-tailed) of .000 shows the p-value which corresponds to the given test statistic t. The calculated t is 4.484 while the tabulated or critical t is 1.96, ( $t = 4.484$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Since the calculated t is greater than the tabulated or critical t, it is concluded that there is significant average difference between societal factors and familial factors in their influence on juvenile delinquency. The students' perception is that societal factors contribute more to juvenile delinquency than familial factors. The guidance and counseling masters who were interviewed could not tell whether societal factors contribute to juvenile delinquency more than familial factors.

### **Application**

Generally, assistant chiefs and chiefs, are aware of drug dealings and illegal brewing of alcohol in their areas of jurisdiction but they rarely take an active part in eradicating them, including eradication of the growing of marijuana, hence the practices continue. At times police officers are tipped by people who are against such activities. However, the police officers do arrest the law breakers but later release them shortly after the same people who were arrested or their relatives give the police officers 'kitu kidogo' (something little) or 'chai' (tea) in the form of money. The officers are therefore corrupt and therefore they do influence the children. That is because those who have been arrested come back and tell the story of how they have been released. The children in Homa Bay County therefore lack good role models and as the practice continues, the children will continue to behave like the provincial administrators who are not strict as they carry out their duties, like police officers who take bribes or like their parents or relatives who break the law.

There are some politicians who physically fight with their competitors and/ or use abusive language in public. Such politicians influence students in similar ways. Such incidences have been observed in the stadium when politicians including area members of parliament gather at one of the stadiums to address members of the public. It becomes the talk of the day when children fight others as they say they would do it better than what the politicians have done.

In some churches, sometimes religious leaders quarrel one another, fight, use abusive language and cause division in churches leading to closure of some churches. Since students sometimes attend such churches, what they observe the church leaders do is what they also do when they come out of their churches. Some religious leaders who teach students religious values are the same individuals who go against the values that they teach. This behaviour influences students negatively as the children may engage in fights or use of abusive language.

In some places, school going children are allowed in discos and bars. The bar operators therefore offer them the opportunity to observe the behaviour of bar maids caressing and kissing their



customers. What the students observe the adults do may then be emulated by the children and may later become their habit. The students may end up becoming bar maids or commercial sex workers at a very tender age. Some parents also take alcohol to their homes. They drink the alcohol in their children's presence. Under the influence of alcohol, some parents abuse people around them in the hearing of their children. The children may emulate the people they see around them. The students may use abusive language as their parents or relatives do. The children may believe that it is normal to behave in that manner. The students may practice the bad behaviours that they have observed in the society with their fellow students in schools.

Lack of recreational facilities in the region may make the youth to use their energies in destructive and unproductive activities. If there can be organized and well funded clubs for the youth, they may be kept busy hence use their energies productively. Parents should allow their children to participate in any recreational facilities that may be provided in the environment. If clubs are not organized, since human beings are social beings, the youth may join gangs.

The finding of this study that the mean for societal factors that influence juvenile delinquency was higher than the mean for familial factors that influence juvenile delinquency was similar to the finding of Chingtham (2015) where students's responses on causes of juvenile delinquency showed that societal factor was 75.83% while familial factor was 65.83%, hence it could be seen at the superficial level that societal factors contributed more to juvenile delinquency than familial factors. However, Chingtham did not statistically test whether there was significant difference between societal and familial factors in their influence on junenile delinquency.

The finding of this study concurs with that of Kavita (2013) and Hawkins et al. (2000) that some children were prone to juvenile delinquency because of absence of proper environment both within the family as well as in the community level. However, Kavita and Hawkins et al. did not specify which of the two environments contributed more to juvenile delinquency than the other. This study has identified societal factors to be contributing more to juvenile delinquency than familial factors.

The finding of this study differs from that of Chung and Steinbherg (2006) who said that parents were mediators of community characteristics on juvenile offending. According to the finding of this study, parents are contributing directly to offending among their own children. This is because children may emulate the antisocial behaviours that are practiced by their parents since their parents are their first teachers.

## Conclusion

Societal factors contribute more to juvenile delinquency than familial factors. It was recommended that sensitization be done to members of the society to make them be aware of how their behaviours influence juvenile delinquency so that they may change their behaviours. Religious leaders and organizations should sensitize members of the community on the need to have members of the society who are morally upright, and to be good role models to children. This study may as well be replicated in other parts of Kenya.



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