

SERVICE DELIVERY BEYOND BORDERS – WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

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ABSTRACT: At the end of August 2005 there were 1160 unsentenced young persons under the age of 18 in the care of the South African National Department Correctional Services and at the end of March 2006 1203 unsentenced young persons. In Gauteng, the smallest province in South Africa, 1.3% of the children and youth population are in conflict with the law. Research done in 2003/4 has shown that poverty is the main reason for children and youth coming into conflict with the law, followed by peer pressure and gangsterism.

This phenomenon is of great concern for social workers, child and youth care workers, teachers, psychologists, prosecutors, judges, and politicians. The Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development aims at reducing the number of children and youths awaiting trial in Gauteng in 2014 by 50%. This objective poses a challenge to a number of professionals to reach beyond their professional borders to work together to ensure a better future for our children and youths. Although this is a service delivery strategy for the Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development, services to address this matter need to be rendered beyond the Gauteng border because children and youths enter Gauteng from other provinces searching for a better future and get trapped in a snowballing of poverty and crime in their struggle for survival.

Based on recent research done in South Africa, this article focuses on the ways different professionals address the phenomenon of children and youths in conflict with the law, by considering the needs of these children and youths and by changing their environment through education and prevention services.

Key words: child and youth care, awaiting trial youth, professional services

INTRODUCTION

Despite the development and implementation of a social welfare policy which has a strong developmental approach, through the publication of the White Paper for Social Welfare in Government Gazette No. 18166, 8 August 1997, the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children and Youth at Risk, and a restorative justice approach in dealing with children and youth in conflict with the law (Maepa, 2005), violent behaviour and crime committed by young people under the age of 18 years are on the increase in South Africa and are a serious concern for social workers, child and youth care workers, teach-

ers, psychologists, prosecutors, judges, and politicians. This increase is evident from six newspaper articles published in a time period of 11 days (Beeld, 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2006d; 2006e; News 24, 2006).

Increasing numbers of South African newspaper articles (e.g. Beeld, 2002c: 6; 2002d: 4, 7) about young people coming into conflict with the law as well as a spate of South African televised documentary programmes about the ever-earlier age at which youngsters commit crime led to a qualitative research project conducted in Johannesburg and the West Rand in Gauteng, South Africa by de Kock (2005a; 2005b) during 2003 and 2004. Newspaper articles (Beeld, 2002a: 1; 2002b: 1) about youths of 12 to 13 years raping an eight-year-old in the classroom during school hours, and a 12-year-old who had her grandmother murdered, led the researcher to question whether we as child and youth care practitioners as well as other social service professionals are really addressing the factors causing our youth to come into conflict with the law. This also led the researcher to ask the question: What has happened in a young person's life that he or she ends up committing violent crimes such as these?

The purpose of this research was to gather information from the young people themselves to determine which factors contributed to their coming into conflict with the law by taking into account their own stories and personal interviews. These young people were all between 13 and 18 years old. de Kock (2005) interviewed 28 young people and received life stories from 39 young people who were awaiting trial between March 2003 and May 2004 in five different facilities (Child Care Centres and Places of Safety) in Gauteng. Of these 67 participants 63 were black (including participants from the Black and Coloured population groups) and four were white.

After the data was analysed, the following research findings were reported:

1. Family circumstances:

- 47 (74.6%) of the 63 black children did not experience circumstances at home that contributed to their coming in conflict with the law.
- All 10 of the youths who stayed with other relatives reported ill treatment such as being abused, not having enough to eat, being chased away, or not being able to go to school.
- Only six (6) of the youths who stayed with their own parent(s) reported the same ill treatment as those who stayed with other relatives.
- In contrast with the responses from the black youths, 60%, three of the four white youths (60%) reported abuse by their parents or step-parents and two were removed and placed in children's homes in terms of the Child Care Act, no. 74 of 1983.

2. Factors contributing to criminal behaviour:

- Eleven of the youths denied committing any crimes and therefore did not indicate any factors which could contribute to coming in conflict with the law.
- Although, in most of the cases, peers/friends and drugs and gangsters adults and drugs went together as factors contributing to the young people coming in conflict with the law the majority (21 of the 56 or 37,5%) of the young people viewed the influence of peers and friends as the major factor

contributing to their coming in conflict with the law; the second major factor was poverty (16 of the 56 or 28,6%); then followed the use of drugs (11 of the 56 or 19,4%); only 9 of the 56 (16%) were influenced by gangsters or adults to commit crime and lastly 7 of the 56 (12,5%) gave other factors such as self-defence, being set-up and not viewing the act as a criminal offence as reasons for their detention.

These findings brought a new dimension to working with these young people as they differed from the traditional literature which indicated disrupted or dysfunctional families as the main contributing factor for young people to come into conflict with the law. Included in the category of dysfunctional families were divorce, child abuse, child neglect, and alcohol and substance abuse, but these were not manifest as the main factors in this study (Cronjé et al., 1987; Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1990; Shoemaker, 1990; Hollin, 1992; Regoli & Hewitt, 1997; Hoffman & Summers, 2001). The fact that elder siblings experienced co-responsibility for their younger siblings and then came into conflict with the law while assisting parents in making ends meet has also not been identified as a contributing factor in this study. The research findings that friends and peer group relationships, drug abuse, and gangsters are contributing factors for young people coming into conflict with the law were supported by the literature cited above. In this study the youths identified poverty as the second major factor contributing to their coming into conflict with the law. Recent research done by Bezuidenhout (2004) and Bezuidenhout & Joubert (2003) confirmed poverty related issues play a significant role as a causal factor for youth coming in conflict with the law.

In this study, the concept youth refers to a child between the ages of 12 and 18 years old. Current statistics show that there are 1203 unsentenced young persons (43 more than in 2005) in the care of the National Department of Correctional Services, excluding those who were in the care of institutions registered with the National Department of Social Development. Of these young people 341 committed economic crimes (theft and shoplifting), and 657 committed aggressive crimes such as armed robbery and robbery (South Africa, 2005; South Africa, 2006). Likewise, the research done by Bezuidenhout (2004) and Bezuidenhout & Joubert (2003) also indicated that the motivation for violent and aggressive crimes lies in poverty related factors and not because of anger or the urge to hurt someone. The gains from armed robbery and robbery are much more than petty theft and can provide more resources to the family.

The findings from the qualitative study could not be generalised to the greater population of young people coming into conflict with the law. To attempt such a generalization, the researcher conducted a quantitative study during 2005.

The rest of this article focuses on the research methodology used in obtaining the data, the instrument used in this research, the data collection process, and the analysis of the data. Following that is a discussion about the service delivery of different professionals, and then conclusions regarding the research results.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The research project was conducted during June and July 2005 at all the Secure Care Centres and two of the four Places of Safety in the Gauteng province in South Africa. The aim of this research project was to test if the circumstances and experiences the youths in the qualitative study identified as contributing to their decision to commit a crime could be regarded as true for youth in the general population coming into conflict with the law.

Methodology and method of enquiry

Quantitative research methodology was the most suitable to test if the findings from the qualitative study could be generalised to the greater population of young people coming into conflict with the law. A survey was used as the method of enquiry (Terre, Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006; Alreck & Settle, 1995; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delpont, 2005).

Target population and sampling method

Due to time and budget constraints, a countrywide study was not possible. The target population of this study, therefore, included all young people awaiting trial or sentencing in Child Care Centres and Places of Safety in the Gauteng Province (South Africa), during June and July 2005. This included two of the four Places of Safety and five Child Care Centres in Gauteng. The two Places of Safety not included in this study did not make provision to accommodate young people in conflict with the law.

The distribution of the target population in those facilities accommodating young people during the research period was as follows:

Table 1: Target Population

Institution	Number of Young People	Number of Young People to Court	Number of Young People Available
Child Care Centre L	174	14	160
Child Care Centre M	203	20	183
Child Care Centre W	70	12	58
Child Care Centre P	54	7	47
Child Care Centre J	40	10	30
Place of Safety N	3	0	3
Place of Safety T	3	0	3
Total Population	547	63	484

The lower the target population, the higher the sample is needed for the results to be representative of the target population. Therefore, due to the relative low target population (total of 484 young persons) and to ensure a representative response, the researcher did not use any sampling method (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The target population (484 individuals) consisted of male and female youths who were awaiting trial or sentencing in Secure Care Centres and Places of Safety in Gauteng, South Africa. These youths were between 12 and 18 years old. However, there was also one male who was only 9 years old. These youths also represented all the population groups in South Africa namely, Black, Coloured, Indian, and White.

Data collection instrument

Findings of the qualitative studies were used to compile the questionnaire. The questions were formulated pertaining to the living conditions before their arrest. The alleged crimes as well as the statements in sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire were taken from the findings of the qualitative study. The questionnaire consisted of three sections and 44 questions. The first section covered biographical data of the respondents: gender, population group, age, family composition, family circumstances, and alleged crime(s). Multiple-choice items included single and multiresponses (Alreck & Settle, 1995). To ensure that respondents understood the questions, it was stated clearly that they should indicate where they stayed before their arrest. In other cases it was stipulated when they should indicate one only item or more than one item. In sections 2 and 3 statements were used to determine the degree of influence of certain variables on the respondent’s behaviour. These statements were based on their life experiences and motivational factors that contributed to their coming into conflict with the law as identified in the qualitative study. In the questionnaire the respondents had to indicate the degree in which these played a role in their lives: Always, Most of the time, Sometimes, and Never (De Vos, et al. 2005). The variables addressed in the statements are the influence of poverty, peers and friends, and drugs and gangsters or adults. Table 2 shows the structure of the questionnaires:

Table 2: Structure of the Questionnaires

Focus area	Response Type	Relevance to the Qualitative Research
Section 1:		
Gender	Indicate the correct answer	
Population group	Multiple-choice - single item	Diversity of youth in conflict with the law
Age	Multiple-choice - single item	Age variation of participants in the qualitative study
Sibling information	Multiple-choice - single item	
Family composition (siblings)	Multiple-choice – multi-responses	

Table 2: Structure of the Questionnaires

Focus area	Response Type	Relevance to the Qualitative Research
Family circumstances (living conditions before arrest)	Multiple-choice – single item	Family circumstances
Alleged crime	Multiple-choice – multi-responses	Alleged crimes of young people interviewed
Section 2:		
Personal views on what contributed to young person coming into conflict with the law	Always/Most of the time/ Sometimes/Never	Questions formulated from circumstances given by participants in the qualitative study.
Section 3:		
Personal views on crime	Always/Most of the time/ Sometimes/Never	Questions formulated from views given by participants in the qualitative study.

Because English is a second or third language for most of the young people in the target population and the reality that most of them dropped out of school, linear numeric scales were not used in the questionnaire. The “Always/Most of the time/Sometimes/Never” self-anchored rating scale was used. Ambiguous, leading, and loaded questions were avoided to make sure the questions were stated clearly and could be understood easily. Pilot testing was done to ensure that the questions were clear, the instructions were understandable, the language was comprehensible, and the questions could be completed. The pilot tests also gauged whether the responses were usable and would provide the information needed. Two boys aged 12 and 13 were used to pilot test the questionnaire, although they were not in conflict with the law, they were requested to pretend that they were accused of burglary and answer the questions reflecting that background. Minor changes were made before the duplication and distribution of the questionnaires.

Ethical considerations

The Gauteng Provincial Department of Social and Population Development granted the permission to conduct this research with young people in conflict with the law in all Child Care Centres and Places of Safety in Gauteng. During 2005 the Provincial Department confirmed the approval of the research project with the different institutions. Permission was requested to conduct the quantitative research project at the various institutions via the directors or heads of the centre. After permission was granted, arrangements were made with the relevant staff at the institutions.

None of the young people were forced to complete a questionnaire. The information gathered was treated with confidentiality, and the questionnaires were completed anonymously. Some of the young people requested to include their names on the questionnaires. They were allowed to do so, but for research purposes, that information was ignored.

Data collection method

Liaisons were established with the heads of the facilities, social workers, and child and youth care workers. Appointments were made to visit the different facilities during the school holidays to ensure that the normal school programme was not disrupted. Questionnaires were personally distributed and collected as soon as the young people completed them. The social worker(s) and child and youth care worker(s) assisted in gathering the young people in the dining room or recreation hall of the facility. The purpose of the research was explained to the young people. Because of communication barriers due to the use of English in the questionnaire and the differentiation of the education levels of the young people, a flip chart was used to explain how to complete the questionnaire, especially sections 2 and 3. The respondents had to indicate for each statement Always, Most of the time, Sometimes, or Never true in their circumstances. The social worker(s) and child and youth care worker(s) also assisted the young people in their African language when they were uncertain what to do. The questionnaires were distributed and collected at the seven facilities over a period of four days. The following table reflects the participation of the respondents:

Table 3: Participation of Respondents

Institution	Number of young people available (a)	Number of questionnaires completed (b)	% Of young people who participated (A v B)	Number of spoiled questionnaires	Number of questionnaires used (c)	% of questionnaires analysed (C v A)
Child Care Centre L	160	120	75	10	110	68.8
Child Care Centre M	183	143	78.1	14	129	70.5
Child Care Centre W	58	58	100	8	50	86.2
Child Care Centre P	47	47	100	7	44	93.6
Child Care Centre J	30	30	100	1	29	96.7
Place of Safety N	3	3	100	0	3	100
Place of Safety T	3	3	100	0	3	100
Total Population	484	404	83.5	40	368	76

The response rate (completed questionnaires) from the young people was 83.5%, which was very good. Despite the fact that 40 of the questionnaires could not be analysed, the response rate with the usable questionnaires was still 76.03%, which indicates that the data collected from the respondents could be generalised to the greater population of young people in conflict with the law (Terre Blanche et al, 2006)

Data analysis

The questionnaires were coded as they were received and then computerised using the Moonstats 2 program. Univariate and bivariate statistical analyses were done. The data coding and levels of measurement used in this study are explained in the following table:

Table 4: Data Coding and Levels of Measurement

Variable	Labels	Measurement Level
Refnum	(A reference number for each questionnaire)	None
Section 1:		
Gender	1 = Male; 2 = Female	Nominal
Population group	1 = Black; 2 = Coloured 3 = Indian; 4 = White	Nominal
Age	Age in years	Ratio
Sibling information	All options listed varied from 1 – 4 and coded as such	Nominal
Family composition (siblings)	All options listed varied from 1 – 8 and coded as such, adding 9 = Brothers and sisters younger and older than me 10 = Brothers and sisters older than me 11 = Brothers and sisters younger than me 12 = I am the only child	Nominal
Family circumstances (living conditions before arrest)	All options listed varied from 1 – 15 and coded as such, adding 16 = with a friend 17 = both parents and other family members 18 = both grandparents	Nominal
Alleged crime	All options listed varied from 1 – 22 and coded as such	Nominal
Section 2:		
Personal views on what contributed to young person coming into conflict with the law (Statements 8 – 30)	1 = Always; 2 = Most of the time 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Never	Ordinal
Section 3:		
Personal views on crime and behaviour (Statements 31 – 44)	1 = Always; 2 = Most of the time 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Never	Ordinal

Validity and reliability

Content validity was ensured by including all the themes reported in the qualitative study and which were the focus of this study, namely the childhood experiences of the young people, which in their opinion contributed to their coming into conflict with the law and their moral interpretation of crime (De Vos et al., 2005).

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Test was used to determine statistical significant correlations between statements related to the same factor. This correlation test was used because it could not be assumed that the variables (Always, Most of the time, Sometimes and Never) were approximately normally distributed. The

statements related to poverty as well as the statements related to the use of drugs tested with a statistical significant correlation at the 1% level. Four of the statements referring to the influence of peers and friends tested with a statistical significant correlation at the 1% level and the other one at the 5% level. Two of the three statements referring to the influence of gangsters or adults on the youth coming into conflict with the law tested with a statistical significant correlation at the 5% level and the other one at the 1% level. The same test was also used to determine statistical significant correlations between the statements relating to political factors which may influence an individual's personal views pertaining to crime. These statements all tested with a statistical significant correlation of 1%. The statistical significant correlation between these statements indicates the validity of the questionnaire (See annexure A for the questionnaire).

The pilot testing of the questionnaire assisted in enhancing the reliability of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questions were formulated in an unambiguous way, and the constructs in this study were clearly formulated. Different levels of measurement were used, and multiple indicators of a variable in the questionnaire were used (De Vos et al, 2005).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Biographical information

Gender and population group

The majority of the respondents were male (345 or 93.8%), and the majority of the respondents (84.9%) were from the Black population group. The distribution of the population groups are as follows:

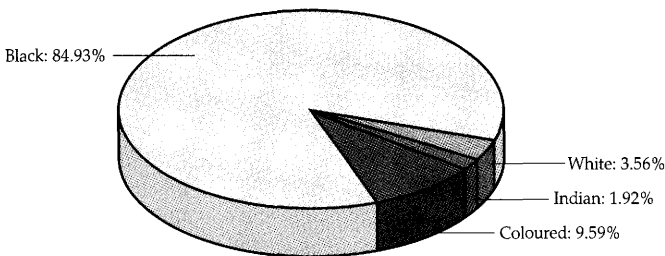


Figure 1: Distribution of Population Groups

Age and family composition

The majority of the respondents were 17 years old (36.9%), one respondent indicated his age as 9 years, and two of the respondents did not indicate their age. Children of this age should generally not be kept in custody. However, the crime the child was accused of robbery. The following bar chart shows the age distribution of the respondents:

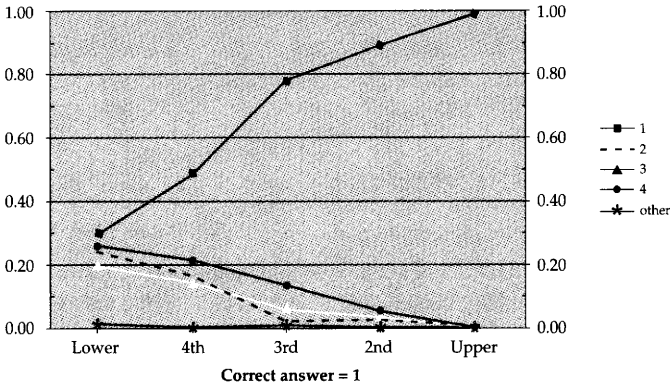


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

In South Africa, it is compulsory to attend school up to the age of 15 years. It is a serious concern that a total of 343 of the respondents (66.4%) were 16 and 17 years old. This might be an indication that many of those leaving school were not able to find employment and then turned to crime for survival.

Pertaining to the siblings in the family, only 28 respondents (7.7%) did not have any brothers or sisters, and five did not give an indication if they had brothers or sisters. The majority of them (51%) had brothers and sisters.

The following table gives an overview of the family composition with reference to the siblings:

Table 4: Family Compositions – Representation of Siblings

Sibling Statement	Number of respondents	%
My brother is older than me.	38	10.70
My brother is younger than me.	29	8.17
I have an elder and younger brother.	16	4.51
My sister is older than me.	26	7.32
My sister is younger than me.	28	7.89
I have an elder and younger sister.	12	3.38
I have an elder brother and younger sister.	42	11.83
My brother is older than me.	38	10.70
My brother is younger than me.	29	8.17
I have an elder and younger brother.	16	4.51
My sister is older than me.	26	7.32
My sister is younger than me.	28	7.89
I have an elder and younger sister.	12	3.38
I have an elder brother and younger sister.	42	11.83

Table 4: Family Compositions – Representation of Siblings

Sibling Statement	Number of respondents	%
I have an elder sister and younger brother.	24	6.76
My brothers and sisters are younger and older than me.	63	17.75
My brother(s) and sister(s) are older than me.	26	7.32
My brother(s) and sister(s) are younger than me.	23	6.48
I am the only child.	28	7.89
Total	355	100

Residence prior to arrest

The majority of the respondents (20.1%) indicated that they stayed with their parents. Another 6.15% stayed with both parents and other family members prior to their arrest. Another 18.4% stayed with their mothers, and 14.5% stayed with their mothers and other family members. In the past (20+ years ago) the disintegration and maladjustment of the family were the major factors that contributed to young people coming into conflict with the law. The fact that the majority of the respondents stayed with both parents is an indication that, in South Africa, the factors for young people coming into conflict with the law are changing. It is not the disintegration and dysfunctioning of the family that contribute to young persons coming into conflict with the law, especially those coming from previous disadvantaged backgrounds. It is the cohesion and quality of life, specifically the financial quality of life that contributes to this phenomenon (Bezuidenhout, 2004; Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003) Special risk factors mentioned by Bezuidenhout and Joubert (2003: 75, 76) are “poverty, poor environment,” and “an economically stressed family.” Even under community factors contributing to the crime risk in South Africa, poverty is the first factor to be listed. The following table shows the residence of the respondents before their arrest.

Table 5: Residences of Respondents Before Arrest

Residence Before Arrest	Number of respondents	%
Both my parents	72	20.11
My mother	66	18.44
My father	12	3.35
My mother and other family members	52	14.53
My father and other family members	12	3.35
My aunt and her family	8	2.23
My uncle and his family	14	3.91
My brothers and sisters	24	6.70
My grandmother	35	9.78
My grandfather	4	1.12

Table 5: Residences of Respondents Before Arrest

Residence Before Arrest	Number of respondents	%
Other family members	4	1.12
At a shelter	10	2.79
On the street	15	4.19
In a children's home	4	1.12
At a special school	1	0.28
With a friend	2	0.56
Both my parents and family	22	6.15
Both my grandparents	1	0.28
Total	358	100

Alleged crimes

In comparison with the findings of the qualitative study, the alleged crimes committed by the respondents were as follows:

Table 6: Alleged Crimes of the Respondents

Alleged Crime	Number of respondents	%
Burglary (home)	85	23.1
Armed robbery	71	19.29
Robbery	69	18.75
Rape	42	11.41
Shoplifting	34	9.24
Assault	28	7.61
Other (Not specified) (5)		
Theft – not specified (9)		
Indecent assault (1)		
Possession of a stolen fire arm (1)		
Possession of an unlicensed fire arm (1)		
Possession of stolen property (3)		
Malicious damage to property (4)		
Assault with aggravating circumstances (1)	25	6.79
Murder	20	5.43
Attempted murder	14	3.80
Possession of drugs	13	3.53
Car theft	12	3.26
Theft of a cell phone	12	3.26
Theft out of a car	11	2.99
Burglary (shop)	11	2.99

Table 6: Alleged Crimes of the Respondents

Alleged Crime	Number of respondents	%
Drug dealing	11	2.99
Theft of a handbag	8	2.17
Attempted rape	7	1.90
Hijacking	6	1.63
Attempted robbery	6	1.63
Fraud	6	1.63
Child abuse	3	0.82
Sodomy	3	0.82

Because 55 respondents (15%) were awaiting trial or sentencing on more than one criminal offence, no totals were given. Burglary (at a home), armed robbery, and robbery are the charges most of the respondents had against them. These are all serious charges, and armed robbery is generally heard in the High Court because of its jurisdiction on sentencing. It is also a serious concern that the number of respondents accused of rape is the fourth highest of all the crimes listed. Due to the seriousness of the crime, rape cases are only heard in the High Court because the minimum sentencing for rape is imprisonment for 15 years.

Circumstances that contributed to crime

The calculation of frequencies, means, standard deviations, and the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Test were used to determine statistical significant correlations between related factors.

Questions 8 – 30 focussed on circumstances which could contribute to young people coming into conflict with the law. The following table indicates how the questions could be grouped according to the circumstances which emerged from the qualitative study as well as the rating (1 = Always and 4 = Never) of the respondents:

Table 7: Mean of Respondents' Ratings of Circumstances Contributing to Their Coming Into Conflict With the Law

Factor Rating	Question Number	Mean
Poverty related circumstances:		
I committed the alleged crime to get food.	9	3.33
I committed the alleged crime to get money to pay my rent.	11	3.55
I committed the alleged crime to get money for food.	12	3.21
I committed the alleged crime to get money for clothes.	14	2.82
I committed the alleged crime to help my parents with money.	15	3.25
I committed the alleged crime because I had no food.	17	3.31

Table 7: Mean of Respondents' Ratings of Circumstances Contributing to Their Coming Into Conflict With the Law

Factor Rating	Question Number	Mean
Poverty related circumstances:		
I committed the alleged crime to sell the goods to get money.	18	2.81
I committed the alleged crime because I get money for/from it.	27	2.83
Circumstances related to the use of drugs:		
I committed the alleged crime to get money for drugs.	10	3.27
I used drugs before I committed the alleged crime.	19	3.20
I have more power when I use drugs.	20	3.18
Circumstances related to the influence of peers and friends:		
I committed the alleged crime to impress my friends.	8	3.42
I committed the alleged crime because my friends told me to do so.	13	3.60
I committed the alleged crime to get money for smart clothes.	21	2.73
I committed the alleged crime to get money to give to my friends.	22	3.74
I committed the alleged crime to get sweets to share with my friends.	23	3.68
Circumstances related to the influence of gangsters or adults:		
I committed the alleged crime because I am part of a gang.	16	3.38
I committed the alleged crime because I was the only one who could get through the window.	24	3.61
I committed the alleged crime because an adult told me to do it.	25	3.64
Other circumstances:		
I committed the alleged crime because I was very angry.	26	3.26
I committed the alleged crime because it was a challenge.	28	3.34
I did not view the alleged crime as a crime because we were playing.	29	3.48
I committed the alleged crime because I like doing crime.	30	3.66

Standard deviations varied from .78 to 1.26. In all instances approximately 68% of cases lay between one standard deviation below and one standard deviation above the mean. Code 1 was "Always", code 2 was "Most of the time", code 3 was "Sometimes", and code 4 was "Never". There was a mean of 3.66 with a standard deviation of .78, which indicated that most of the respondents selected "Sometimes" and "Never" to this factor contributing to their coming into conflict with the law. A mean of 2.81, with a standard deviation of 1.22, indicated that the majority of the respondents selected "Always," "Most of the time," and "Sometimes" contributing to their coming into conflict with the law. Based on the means, the circumstances contributing to young people coming into conflict with the law are in order of importance as follows:

- Poverty related circumstances (mean: 3.14)
- Circumstances related to the use of drugs (mean: 3.22)

- Circumstances related to the influence of peers and friends (mean: 3.43)
- Other circumstances (mean: 3.44)
- Circumstances related to the influence of gangsters or adults (mean: 3.54)

The responses of the respondents confirmed the strong influence of poverty as a contributing factor to young people coming into conflict with the law in South Africa. The interrelatedness between factors such as poverty, peer pressure, gangsters, and the use of drugs was also confirmed (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2004; Bezuidenhout, 2004; Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003).

Personal views pertaining to crime

Young people's perceptions of crime were tested against the perceptions identified in the qualitative study, such as viewing the commitment of crime as being acceptable if you did it to meet your basic needs, if you were instructed by an adult to do so, if you did it with friends and for revenge. The background of being disadvantaged could also be regarded as a political issue in South Africa. The latter did not play any role in the qualitative study. From the qualitative study some of the young people did not regard their actions as a crime because they took food because they were hungry (shoplifting) or because they were playing (rape). Others were of the opinion that it was acceptable to harm others if they were harmed (assault), or they rationalised about their actions because they wanted to replace something they lost (theft). Table 9 shows the mean of the ratings of the respondents' views pertaining to crime:

Table 9: Mean of the Ratings of Respondents' Views Pertaining to Crime

Factor rating	Question Number	Mean	Mode
Political factors (being disadvantaged):			
It is okay to take a pencil from a classmate if he has two and I have none.	31	3.17	4
It is okay to take money from others who have more money than I do.	33	3.30	4
It is okay to do crime and take from the rich because I have nothing.	37	3.14	4
It is okay to do crime because I am disadvantaged.	43	3.42	4
Average:		3.26	
Other:			
It is okay to steal stuff to sell to get money for clothes.	32	3.40	4
If I lost something (such as a cell phone) it is okay to steal a TV to get money to replace my cell phone.	34	3.53	4
It is okay to steal food if I am very hungry.	36	3.28	4
It is okay to do crime if I need money for food, but not to get money for drugs.	41	2.87	3
It is okay to do crime if an adult tells you to do so.	35	3.76	4
It is okay to do crime.	38	3.62	4

Table 9: Mean of the Ratings of Respondents' Views Pertaining to Crime

Factor rating	Question Number	Mean	Mode
It is okay to do crime to hurt someone if they did hurt me.	39	3.51	4
I may have sex if I want to because it is not a crime to have sex.	40	2.98	3
It is okay to do crime together with your friends.	42	3.41	4

The mode is higher as the mean, which indicates that the majority of the respondents indicated a "Never" coded as 4 in responding to these statements. This shows that the respondents knew that there is no justification for the crimes they committed. It was only with reference to having sex and doing crime to get money for food and not drugs that the majority of the respondents indicated "Sometimes" coded as 3. This shows that they are of the opinion that when compared to each other, one could rather justify committing crime to meet hunger needs that to meet addiction needs. The fact that the mode is 3 still shows that they know that morally crime is wrong and not justifiable.

SERVICE DELIVERY BEYOND BORDERS

In South Africa the service delivery to our young people in conflict with the law is not only the responsibility of different government departments, such as the Department of Social Development and the Department of Justice, but it also goes beyond professional and institutional borders.

Within the Justice system and the care for these young people in Child Care Centres and Places of Safety, different professionals come in contact with these young people. These professionals include social workers, probation officers, psychologists, child and youth care workers, psychiatrists, educationists, nurses, magistrates, prosecutors, and medical doctors. To render an effective service to our young people in conflict with the law, it is important to acknowledge that none of these professions can address these problems on their own. It is important to acknowledge that only by reaching beyond individual professional borders and joining efforts through a multidisciplinary team they can make a difference in the lives of these young people.

The research results indicated that the majority of the youth in conflict with the law reside with their parents and extended families. Furthermore, the moral development of these young people is at a level where they know that their behaviour is wrong and unacceptable. However, the results also showed that poverty related circumstances are the main reason for these youths to be in conflict with the law. Peer pressure and the influence of friends were rated third regarding factors that played a role in their criminal behaviour. Although these factors are interrelated, it is necessary to consider the different results of the qualitative and quantitative study.

In practice this mean that crime prevention and treatment programmes should focus on the development of personal skills to address poverty issues as well as

factors such as the use of drugs and peer pressure. Within our child care facilities, social workers, child and youth care workers, psychologists, and teachers should all be involved in the development plans for these youths to optimise the service delivery while they are in these facilities. It is necessary for these professionals to reach beyond their own professional borders and recognise that together they can render a much more effective and efficient service to the young people in conflict with the law. When the young person is sentenced and moved away from the child care facility, measures should be in place to ensure the continuation of service delivery to the young person and his or her family.

Currently, child care facilities are seen and utilised as residential facilities only. In communities where residential facilities are expensive and resources in terms of structures and professionals are limited, it is necessary to move beyond this "residential facility only" border and utilise our child care facilities as resources too. Child and youth care work is a newly recognised profession in South Africa, and these are limited numbers of professional child and youth care workers. Social work is a scarce profession with limited human resources in South Africa too. By reaching beyond borders and using the life skills and other programmes offered in the child care facilities as resources for the community, the use of limited resources can be optimised and can be increased for service delivery to these young people. Although research had shown that aggressive offences are often committed to achieve economic gains, programmes should be developed to equip young people with skills to address the poverty related factors rather than to turn to crime to meet their basic needs. Being part of the community, child and youth care workers, social workers, and educators within the child care facilities should be able to move beyond the borders of the facility and present programmes in the community to enable communities to address crime and build a better future for them through a restorative approach in the reintegration into the community of young people in conflict with the law.

CONCLUSION

It is no longer dysfunctional factors such as divorce, alcohol abuse, and the maltreatment of our children and youth that contribute to their coming into conflict with the law. From their own experience they voiced to us that, apart from other factors, it is the plaque of poverty and unemployment that cause them to come into conflict with the law. One of the respondents, while answering the questions, wrote next to all the statements from question 8 – 30: "I need money!"

It is time for the professionals who deal with our young people in conflict with the law to reach beyond their professional borders to work together and to rethink and reformulate their service delivery to address the real needs of the youth and to enhance the capacity of communities to effectively address these factors.

Lastly, it is necessary to review our thinking about child care facilities and reach across the border of being a residential institution only and to use programmes these facilities offer as community resources too.

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