

# Psycho-Behavioral and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Juvenile Delinquency in Wasit Province at 2016 To 2020

Zena N. Al-Hussari (FABMS (Psych))<sup>1</sup>, Mahdi A.K. Hamood (FIBMS (Psych.))<sup>2</sup>, Issam S. Ismail<sup>(3)</sup>, Khansaa R. Mahmood (Psychologist)<sup>(4)</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Physiotherapy, Cihan University-Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

<sup>2</sup> Consultant Psychiatrist, Al Zahraa Teaching Hospital, Wasit Health Directorate.

<sup>3</sup> Public Health Specialist, Wasit Health Directorate.

<sup>4</sup>(MPH, PhD Student in Epidemiology), Psychologist, Wasit Health Directorate.

## ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** one of the serious behavioral problems that affect youth health mentally, physically and socially is Juvenile delinquency. The act by a juvenile is considered delinquency if it is considered a crime when committed by an adult, as well as illegal acts because of offenders age.

**OBJECTIVE:** Is to determine the psycho-behavioral and socio-economic profile of juvenile offenders in Wasit Province.

**STUDY DESIGN:** A cross-sectional hospital-based study targeted all delinquents (n=510) who referred by criminal courts to psychiatric unit for personality study using ICD-10 clinical based interview during 2016 to 2020. Data collected from files of offenders by a routine interviewing (with highly secured information).

**RESULTS:** The mean age  $\pm$ SD of the indicted was  $17.9 \pm 2.9$  years, male youths consist 96%, with a history of low socioeconomic status, 74% of them lived within family size of  $\geq 7$  members; 50% rank in 1st. to 3rd. in among all siblings in their families; 17% losses their fathers. Of total sample, one-half of offenders presented with school dropout and 44% engaged in premature labor. Most of youth presented with good mental health, sometimes they appear with consistent personality only 19 (4%) of them presented with speech and movement disorder, and unstable and uncooperative personality. Of 290 delinquents; 108 (37%) were tobacco smoker and 43 (15%) presented with tattoo. Dropout offenders presented with fourfold smoking and tattoo than students with an Odds Ratios of 3.8 (95% CI 2.25-6.4), and 4.0 (95% CI 1.9-8.7) respectively. 5% of youths have a history of previous offence. (38%) of offenders accused with theft or robbery crimes followed by homicide (16%) and physical fighting or scrimmage (12%).

**CONCLUSIONS:** According to the psychiatric interview, the majority of the indicted were not mentally ill. Low socioeconomic status, live in large family, losses fathers, school dropout, and premature work all these factors may contribute to increase the burden of juvenile delinquency in Wasit province. The prevalence of healthy risk behavior in school dropout delinquents more than in students. Theft and robbery, homicide and physical fighting as a crimes were on the top of the list. Educational and health programs that encourage

children to enrolled school and increase awareness of negative impact of juvenile delinquency on individual and community should be considered urgently.

**Keywords:** juvenile delinquency, psycho-behavioral, risky behavior, school dropout, Wasit, Iraq.

## I. BACKGROUND

There is a challenge nowadays regarding traditional patterns that guide the relationships and transitions between the family, the school and the work for young people. The social relationships are collapsed so a smooth process of socialization cannot be ensured and the lifestyle became more varied and less predictable.

Reconstruction of labour market, the maturity gap of young adults is extended ( the period that they depend on their families) so more limited opportunities to became independent. These changing factors are influencing relationships with their families and friends, opportunities to education, participation in labour market, leisure activities and lifestyle.

Most people think that juvenile delinquency is worse these days than it was in the past, they remember the past as the "good old days", at that time it was safe to walk on the streets, the juveniles were not known to commit serious crimes such as murder and rape. (1).

Young people nowadays are exposed to individual risks regardless of gender, social origin or country of residence, but they are also presented with new individual opportunities - some beneficial, some harmful. Often, illegal opportunities are exploited as young people commit various crimes, get addicted to drugs and use violence against their peers.

The term delinquency refers to acts committed by a minor that would be considered a crime if committed by an adult, which is also applicable to acts that are only illegal because

of the age of the offender. The problem of juvenile delinquency is becoming more complicated and universal, and crime prevention programs are either unequipped to deal with the present realities or do not exist.

Delinquency is a multicausal social phenomenon, in which socioeconomic and socio-cultural, family and individual factors are all interrelated. Truancy from school can open the way to delinquency, as it provides time and opportunities for antisocial behavior; Poor performance in school can affect levels of self-esteem that can promote the development of antisocial behaviour; It all takes place in a poor, degraded and disorganized socio-cultural context with little oversight.(2)

Juvenile delinquency may result from the negative consequences of social and economic development, especially economic crises, loss of political stability, and deterioration of key institutions (starting from the family through the education to the state). Participation in economic and social instability increases unemployment among young people, which may increase the likelihood that they will be involved in criminal activity. Geographical analysis indicates that countries with more urban populations have higher registered crime rates than those with strong rural lifestyles and communities.

Many developing countries have done little or nothing to deal with these problems, and international programs are clearly insufficient. (3)

Developed countries engage in activities aimed at preventing juvenile crime, but the overall impact of these programs is rather weak because the mechanisms in place are often insufficient to address the current situation. (Juvenile Justice, Cliff Roberson)

The objective of current study is to determine psycho-behavioral and socio-economic profile of juvenile offenders in Wasit Province.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Study design and sampling technique

A cross-sectional hospital-based study targeted all delinquents (n=510) who referred by criminal courts to psychiatric unit in Al-Kut city, Wasit Province for assessment (called personality study) using clinical based interview, during the period from 2016 to 2020.

23 cases from other provinces and countries were excluded.

#### A. Data collection

Data collected from files of offenders by a routine interviewing (with highly secured information). The questions asked by social worker or psychiatrist consist of socio-economic (age, gender, illiteracy, school attending and dropout, working, residency and parent's occupation). Family structure (number of family members and ranking of

youth in his family). Previous convicted history and health risky behaviors (cigarette smoking, alcohol, substance abuse and tattoo).

#### B. Mental health assessment procedure

The mental health status checked and assessed by specialist psychiatrist and record it in the file. Penal codes taken and classified from the formal documents referred by criminal courts.

#### C. Statistical analysis

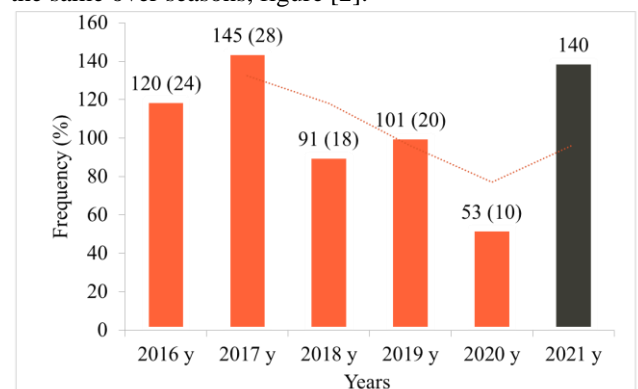
SPSS V. 0.25 was used for Data entering and management. Descriptive (frequency and percentage with tables and figures) and inferential statistics (Chi-Square Test, Odds Ratio (95% CI) and One-Sample t-Test) were used. Less than 0.05 P-value was considered the significant level.

#### D. Ethical Issues

Research was introduced and approved by the committee of research in DOH.

## III. RESULTS

The five years trend of juvenile delinquency in Wasit indicated some different in occurrence of crimes from one year to other, its accounted 120 case in 2016 to 53 case in 2020 and 140 case in 2021 with a dramatic decline in 2020. This decline in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic and public health interventions that aimed to prevent and control the outbreak such as the lockdown, travel restriction and close school and institutions, figure [1]. The trend of occurrence the same over seasons, figure [2].



**Figure 1:** Five years trend of juvenile delinquency by years of attending to psychiatric unit in Wasit Province (n=510).

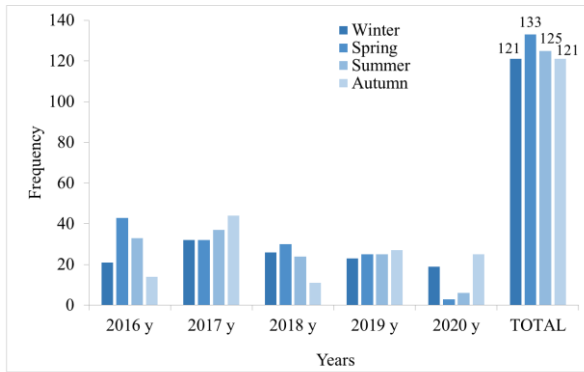


Figure 2: Seasonally trend of juvenile delinquency by years of attending to psychiatric unit (n=500).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the sample according to year of attending to psychiatric unit and demographic characteristics (n=510).

Demographic features	Years of attending					Total No. (%)
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
<b>Age groups</b>						
9-14 yrs.	8	29	13	24	4	78 (15.3)
15-19	94	112	77	75	47	405 (79.4)
20-24	14	2	1	1	2	20 (3.9)
25-29	4	2	0	1	0	7 (1.4)
Mean±SD	17.7±2.8	16±2.18	16.4±1.8	15.7±2.3	16.5±1.7	17.9±2.9
<b>Gender</b>						
male	117	143	87	94	50	491 (96.3)
female	3	2	4	7	3	19 (3.7)
<b>Geographical distribution</b>						
Al-Hay	10	15	9	6	7	47 (9.2)
Al-Kut	51	54	45	37	19	206 (40.4)
Badra	4	6	1	0	0	11 (2.2)
Al-Nuamanyia	21	17	7	9	3	57 (11.2)
Al-Azizia	22	27	12	21	17	99 (19.4)
Al-Swaira	12	26	17	28	7	90 (17.6)
Total	120 (24)	145 (28)	91 (18)	101 (20)	53 (10)	510 (100)

The majority of youth (91%) presented with an intermediate educational level and low. In addition 50% of them dropout from schools, table [2]. School dropout occurred in 75% and 34% of offenders within primary and secondary educational level respectively, figure [3]. The overall estimation of dropout is 50%, figure [4]. The demographic findings indicated that 95% of youth within age group of 9-24 years with mean±SD of 17.9±2.9 years, and 96% of them were males. They distributed differently in regions of Wasit, 40% resident in Al-Kut city (The Province Center) and its suburban followed by 19%, 17.6% and 11% in northern districts of AL-Azizia, Al-Swaira and Al-Nuamanyia respectively, table [1].

Table 2: Frequency distribution of youth educational achievement (n=507).

Educational achievement	Years of attending					Total No. (%)
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Students	33	72	35	48	30	218 (43)
Illiterate	11	7	5	7	2	32 (6)
Dropout	74	66	51	45	21	257 (50.5)
Teacher	2	0	0	0	0	2 (0.5)
<b>Education level</b>						
Illiterate	11	7	5	7	2	32 (6)
Primary	68	66	48	55	22	259 (51)
Intermediate	31	62	35	34	17	179 (35)
Secondary	8	9	3	3	11	34 (7)
University	2	1	0	0	0	3 (1)
Total	120 (24)	145 (29)	91 (18)	99 (20)	52 (10)	507 (100)

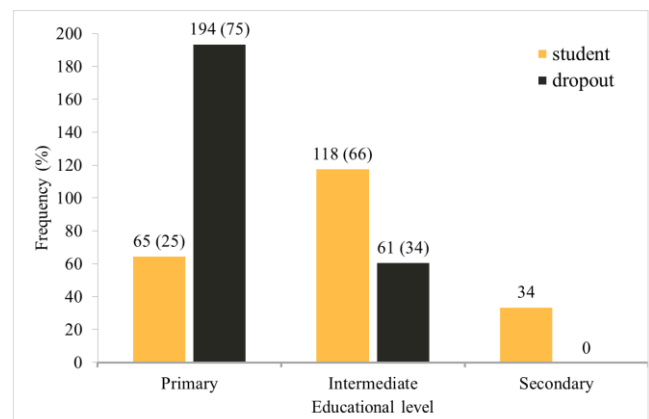


Figure 3: Frequency (%) distribution of educational level according to education state (n=472).

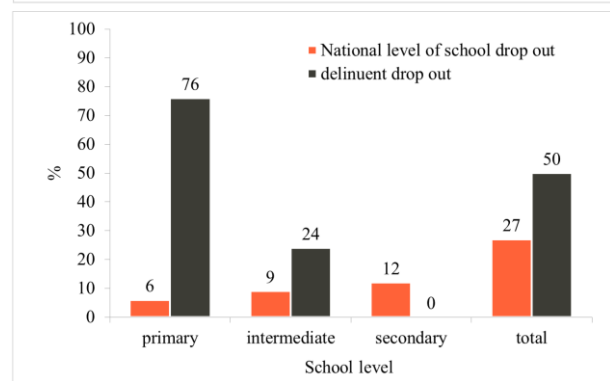


Figure 4: Comparison between dropout percentage of offenders with the national level (n=257)

Concerning the premature labour, 44% of youth in current study are engaged in work, figure [5].

The family demographic and socio-economic characteristics that told by offenders themselves revealed that 17% of them

loss their fathers, the main work of fathers were earner, military/ police, employee and farmer with a proportions of 52%, 13%, 12% and 8% respectively, figure [6-7]. The main work or occupation of youth's mothers was housewives, its consisted 93%, figure [8]. Three quarter of offenders lived in large families with  $\geq 7$  members, figure [9]. In addition, 73% of youths ranked 1st. to 3rd. among siblings in their families, figure [10].

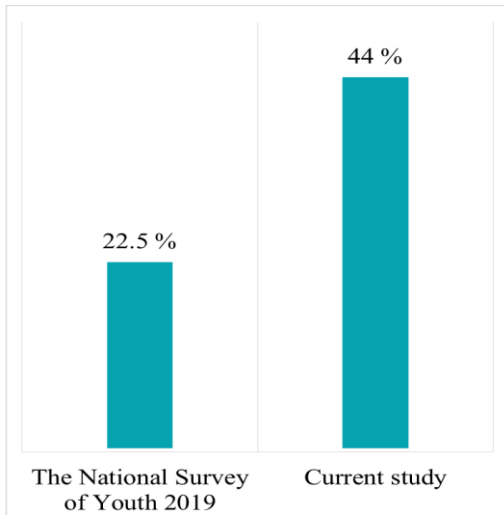


Figure 5: Comparison between premature labour of offenders with the national level (n=434)

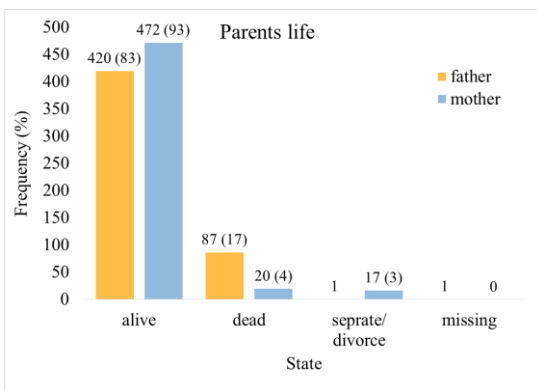


Figure 6: Frequency (%) distribution of parent's life

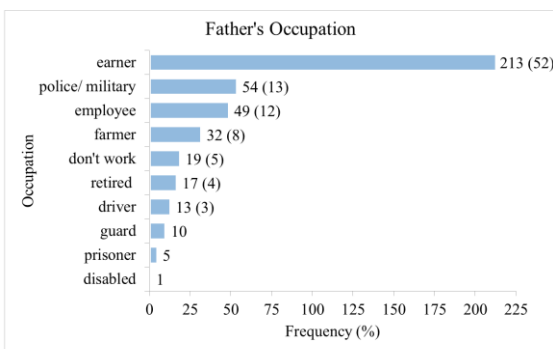


Figure 7: Frequency (%) distribution of father's occupation (n=413).

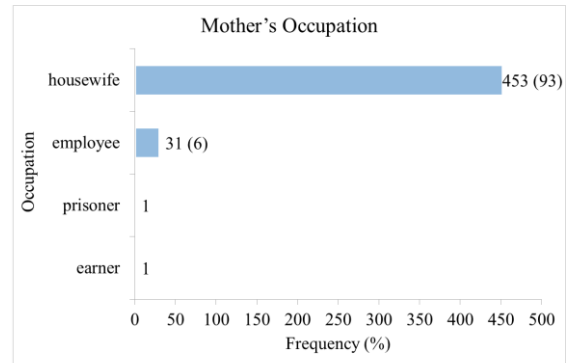


Figure 8: Frequency (%) distribution of mother's occupation (n=486).

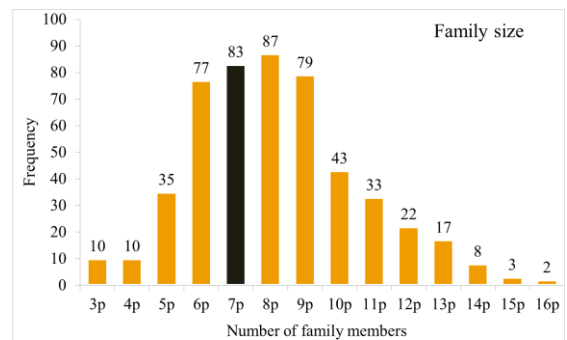


Figure 9: Frequency distribution of youth's family size (n= 509)

Regarding their mental health assessment, 96% of interviewed presented with good mental health, sometimes they appear with consistent personality movement disorder, and unstable and uncooperative personality, figure [10]. Only 19 (4%) of offenders present with: speech and The prevalence of tobacco smoking and tattoo in males was 37% and 15% respectively. Dropout male offenders presented with tobacco smoking more than students do with an OR 3.8, (95% CI 2.25-6.4), also they have tattoo more than in students with an OR 4.0, (95%CI 1.9-8.7). Most of youth presented with no history of previous offence, and 5% have a history of previous offence. The main offences committed were theft and robbery, homicide, scrimmage and sexual assaults. The top 10 offences reported by the criminal court showed in table [4].

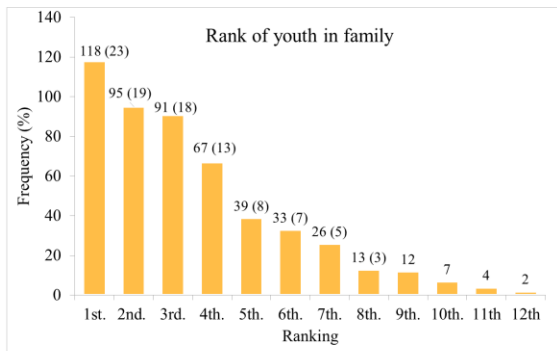


Figure 10: Frequency (%) distribution of youth ranking among brothers and sisters (n= 507)

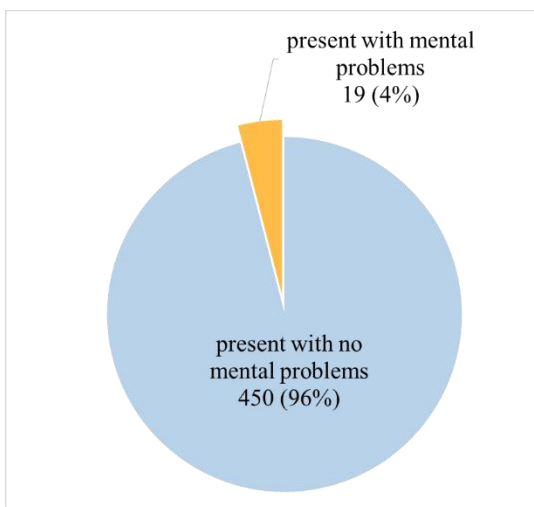


Figure 11: Frequency (%) distribution of delinquents according to mental health assessment (n= 469)

Table 4: Distribution of panel codes (n=495)

Rank	Category	No. (%)
1	Theft, robbery	189 (38)
2	Homicide	78 (16)
3	Scrimmage	57 (12)
4	Sexual assault	32 (6)
5	Driving without license	28 (6)
6	Arson	14 (3)
7	Terrorism	11 (2.2)
7	Kidnap	11 (2.2)
8	Custom	10 (2)
9	Threat	8 (1.6)
9	Underage marriage	8 (1.6)
10	Possession of a weapon	7 (1.4)
	Others*	42 (8)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>495</b>

\* Others:

- False testimony and fake news
- Substance abuse
- Fraud
- Dishonesty
- Cheating and deceit
- Slander
- Oil smuggling
- Harassment

IV. DISCUSSION

Behavioral Patterns, including violence, change over a person's lifetime. The adolescent period and early adulthood is a time when violence and other types of behaviors often heightened (4).

A Young people in current study who fit into this age category 14-25 years committed serious violent acts in Wasit Province, these findings in accordance with previous national and global studies (4-6). Age is one of the strongest correlates of crime, with a common empirical finding of an increase and spike in adolescent delinquency. Moffett's developmental classification produces a specific hypothesis for the relationship between crime and age, focusing on a specific classification of offenders, and limited adolescents, who found guilty for specific reasons during adolescence (9).

No single risk factor can predict which is likely (or not) to engage in delinquent behavior (7), but the effect is cumulative : the more risk factors present in young people's lives, the more likely young people are to engage in delinquent behavior (8). Findings of this work revealed that there is a number of mutually interrelated risk factors, which act as facilitators for delinquency; these factors include low socio-economic status, family disruption, poor school performance and dropout. However, Juvenile delinquency is a social phenomenon that has several causes, where social, cultural, economic, family and individual factors are intertwined (4-9).

Interpersonal violence such bullying and corporal punishment may play role in dropout, it was found that there is 50% dropout rate in the high aggression/ low study students group, compared to the students in a low aggression/ high study students group (10). Offenders who dropout from school engaged in healthy risk behaviors mainly tobacco smoking and tattoo. The majority of youth committed crime once, they expressed in reference as "adolescence-limited offenders".

At the individual level, factors influencing the likelihood of violent behavior include biological, psychological, and behavioral characteristics. These factors may appear already in childhood or adolescence, and may be influenced to varying degrees by a person's family, peers, and other social and cultural factors. Young people at risk of delinquency often live in difficult conditions such as poverty, and are vulnerable to a variety of problems, such as malnutrition, inadequate housing, substandard medical care, lack of proper supervision, and physical or emotional abuse, and thus may become part of the low-income cycle or unemployment (11).

However, causation of juvenile delinquency is to be considered in terms of the community more than for the individual.(12)

Variables that predict the delinquency of boys may differ from those that predict girls' delinquency. Parental marriage characteristics play a prominent role for boys, while girls'

misconduct is more clearly predicted by variables that measure parental interaction with the child and parental control (13).

#### CONCLUSIONS:

According to the psychiatric interview, the majority of the indicted were not mentally ill. Low socioeconomic status, live in large family, losses fathers, school dropout, and premature work all these factors may contribute to increase the burden of juvenile delinquency in Wasit province. The prevalence of healthy risk behavior in school dropout delinquents more than in students. Theft and robbery, homicide and physical fighting as a crimes were on the top of the list. Educational and health programs that encourage children to enrolled school and increase awareness of negative impact of juvenile delinquency on individual and community should be considered urgently.

#### REFERENCES

1. Robert Agnew and Timothy Brezina, juvenile delinquency causes and control,6th edition
2. Molinedo-Quílez MP, Psychosocial risk factors in young offenders. Court-Mandated Detention and Education Centre. Zaragoza.
3. United Nations, Juvenile Delinquency World YOUTH Report, 2003
4. Cliff Roberson, Juvenile Justice, CRC Press, Aug 30, 2010
5. Krug EG et al., eds. World report on violence and health. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002.
6. Abdul Rasoul Alyasiri, Raghad Sarsa. Juvenile Delinquency in Iraq: A Psychosocial Profile. THE IRAQI POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL JOURNAL. VOL.7, NO. 2, 2008.
7. Mmari, Kristin N., Robert Wm. Blum, and Nicolette Teufel-Shone. 2010. "What Increases Risk and Protection for Delinquent Behaviors among American Indian Youth? Findings from Three Tribal Communities." *Youth & Society* 41(3):383–413.
8. Reingle, Jennifer M., Wesley G. Jennings, and Mildred M. Maldonado-Molina. 2012. "Risk and Protective Factors for Trajectories of Violent Delinquency Among a Nationally Representative Sample of Early Adolescents." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 10(3):261–77.
9. Molinedo-Quílez MP. Psychosocial risk factors in young offenders. *Rev Esp Sanid Penit.* 2020;22(3):104-111.
10. United Nations Children's Fund, The State of the World's Children 2021: On My Mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health, UNICEF, New York, October 2021.
11. P. C. Kratcoski et al., Juvenile Delinquency, Theory, Research, and the Juvenile Justice Process. Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020.
12. Shaw, C. R., & McKay, H. D. (1942). Juvenile delinquency and urban areas. University of Chicago Press.
13. Walter R. Gove & Robert D. Crutchfield (1982) The Family and Juvenile Delinquency, The Sociological Quarterly, 2016