

ABSTRACT

This case control study set out to examine factors contributing to the problem of juvenile delinquency among girls in Jamaica.

It was carried out partly at the Eshere Remand Center - an institution administered by the Correctional Services Division of the Ministry of National Security and Justice. Also featuring in the study was a corresponding number of young females attending the Kingston Secondary School.

The study was undertaken between May 31 and July 7, 1995.

Thirty-three juveniles out of a total population of 35 from the institution were interviewed as well as the same number from the secondary school. Two juveniles were unavailable for interview. All the girls were between 13 and 18 years.

The comparison group from the Kingston Secondary School were selected from a potential sample of 121 who were enrolled in grades 9 to 11.

The study indicated that the main risk factors associated with juvenile delinquency among girls were:

Absences of father, violence in the home, drug use and abuse associated with gangs and separation from mother.

The crimes most frequently committed were wounding, uncontrollable behaviour, and fighting all involving a high level of aggression. The reasons given are dominated by: influence of friends, for money, for self defence and revenge. The mean age of offenders was 15.7 years.

The desirability of minimizing the phenomenon of delinquency challenges all sectors of the society to coordinate efforts in a multi-sectoral drive.

Energies need to be focussed on inter-alia, conflict resolution, training programmes for youth and the promotion of family values.