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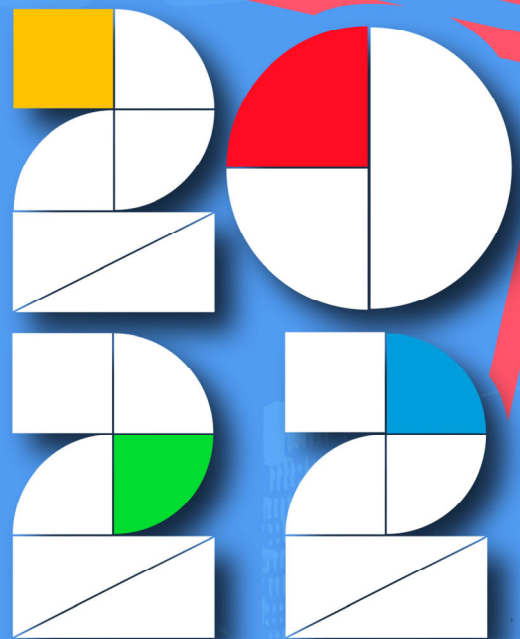
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Reengineering
Knowledge &
Creativity for
Global Excellence

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June



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TeSSH 2022***

**Reengineering Knowledge and Creativity
for Global Excellence**

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Foreword

The papers compiled in these e-proceedings are papers presented online at Technology, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities International Conference 2022 (TeSSH I 2022) held on 30 June 2022 at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah, Kedah, Malaysia. With the theme, ***Reengineering Knowledge and Creativity for Global Excellence***, the conference has brought together presenters of diverse background who shared their conceptual and empirical papers in broad areas that are subsumed under the fields of Technology, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities. These e-proceedings comprise current researches that were undertaken with the rigorous endeavour of knowledge enhancement to ensure that the world of academia will continue to flourish. It is thus hoped that readers will significantly benefit from knowledge contained in these proceedings.

TeSSH I 2022 and these e-proceedings would not have been possible without the great efforts from the presenters, and the generous support from the TeSSH I 2022 committee members and the Rector of UiTM Cawangan Kedah, Prof. Dr. Mohamad Abdullah Hemdi. A heartfelt gratitude is extended to all involved. It is hoped that these e-proceedings will be an impetus to stimulate further studies and research that benefit the society at large.

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Exploring Strategies to Reduce Adolescents' Involvement in Risky Behaviours from The Perspective Of A Probation Officer

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is perceived as a critical stage in human life development. The well-being of adolescents is related to the level of among others, resilience, and criminal behaviour involvement. Adolescents who are involved in the conflict with law can be charged in court and sentenced to a penalty. It is also a concern as to what shall happen to these adolescents when they come out of the system and try to integrate into society. This study explores strategies to curb further involvement in risky behaviour among adolescents who have been sentenced in the juvenile court. This research adopted a basic qualitative study using a semi-structured interview with a probation officer in a district of a central state. Based on his experience as a probation officer, he suggested several strategies that can be used to reduce adolescents' involvement in delinquency. The findings show that family members, peers and the Department of Social Welfare can help to curb the issue of delinquency among adolescents. The findings also suggested that a few initiatives consisting of prevention, developmental and intervention programmes can be conducted to create more awareness about the adolescents' involvement in risky behaviours. This study hopes to contribute towards a better understanding of the strategies that can be developed to reduce risky behaviours involvement among at-risk adolescents in the country.

Key Words: Criminal behaviour, Adolescents at-risk, Strategies curb risky behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a significant transitional period between childhood and adulthood. During this period, adolescents struggle to make choices in life and establish patterns of behaviour that affect lifestyle (Leversen et al., 2012). Difficulties in adolescent adjustment are usually led by the development of risky behaviors affecting adolescent social problems. Adolescent risk behavior refers

to participation in activities that may cause physical harm which led to unintentional injuries and exposure to violence. Thus, a better understanding of the factors in adolescent risk behavior is important for interventions to prevent this pattern of behavior continuing into adult life. In addition, those who engage in any one risk behavior are likely to engage in others, and the behaviors may have common factors that predict their involvement.

Malaysia has 60 percent of young age population below 30 years old. The general perception about adolescents with offences has increased in recent years and that the types of crimes that adolescents are committing have become more serious. Most of the cases reported by the local news and newspaper involved adolescents. The question arises why adolescents are prone to involve in these social problems. It is because the adolescent years is a period that will determine their future whether they will be in good shape or otherwise. According to Articles 37 and 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children in conflict with the law have the right to treatment that promotes their sense of dignity and worth, considering their age and their reintegration into society. Also, placing children in conflict with the law in a closed facility should be a measure of last resort, to be avoided whenever possible. Child offenders often come from broken homes or troubled families or have been abused or neglected. Poverty is also a factor that puts children at risk. Some children come into conflict with the law as they struggle with learning disabilities and mental health problems. Others become involved in gang activity or with drugs and alcohol, at a young age, which eventually paves the way to juvenile crime (Chen et al., 2013; Casey et al., 2013)

Malaysia has made progress in recent years in improving community-based supervision and rehabilitation programmes for child offenders, particularly through the introduction of interactive workshops. However, these programmes remain under-resourced, and the volunteer mechanisms meant to support this process are not functioning effectively or as per their mandate. Programmes tend to be ad hoc and focus primarily on the parent-child relationship, with limited emphasis on interactive, experiential learning programmes for the children themselves. Malaysia currently has a cadre of highly dedicated district-level probation officers and professional counsellors tasked with supporting children in conflict with the law and their families. However, due to a shortage of staff, training and resources, most have limited ability to provide individual guidance and support to children (Kassim, nd; Casey, 2013)

Since adolescents are the future generation of the country and need to be developed into healthy and productive individuals, it is imperative that they are not involved in criminal and illegal activities. Nevertheless, some teenagers are more prone to risky behaviours and are involved in crimes. There is a need to find solutions to managing the issue of such teenagers. Therefore, this study attempted to explore the best strategies to reduce further involvement in risky behaviour (re-offending) among adolescent who have been sentenced in the juvenile court.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a basic qualitative research design. A participant who works as a probation officer in Klang was purposively selected as a participant. Each district in a state has only one or two probation officers. These officers are responsible for interacting with adolescents under investigation, their parents, their teachers, and other important adults in their lives. They will prepare a report to be presented in the court, which is then referred by the judge and advisors before announcing the penalty. Thus, purposive sampling has been used for the selection of participant. Patton (2002) stated that “the purpose of purposive sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the question under study” and “information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p.169). Since this study wanted to explore the issue of juvenile delinquents from the perspective of probation officer, the selection of this participant was justified. The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is one of the methods of data collection that can be modified during the interview session which allowed the researchers to understand more about the case of the study (Robson, 2002). This study used the semi-structured interview to gain the data from the participants following an interview protocol developed by the researchers based

on the context of this study. From data collected from the interviews, the researchers used thematic analysis to analyse interview data. As for ethical considerations, the researchers took note of several things. Firstly, the researchers explained the purpose of the interviews. Secondly, the researcher assured the participants that their names would not be revealed to anyone during the interviews. For example, the names were changed to codes in the interview reports as stated in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic of the respondent

Name (pseudonym)	Ahmad
Age	45
Gender	Male
Experience as probation officer	2018-2021

FINDINGS

The themes that emerged from the analysis are 'family members', 'peers', 'Department of Social Welfare' and 'prevention, developmental and intervention programmes can help to curb the issue of delinquency among adolescents. This finding section will further elaborate on each of the themes.

According to the participant, it is important to have psychological support from the family members. He said that parents need to have more awareness regarding about the adolescent issues. In addition, parenting knowledge also is very essential as guideline to understand more about the adolescent. The probation officer also suggested that parents need to show a positive attitude and example in front of the kids for them to imitate good behaviour. On the other hand, other family members such as siblings and relatives also can play a role in terms of establishing positive relationship and taking good care among each other.

The other theme from the findings regarding the strategies to curb issues of delinquency among students is peers. According to the participant, it is important for the adolescents to choose a good friend because he said that during this period, adolescents are prone to follow what the peers do. Peer influence is very crucial. Either the influence would be a good thing or a negative thing. Therefore, the selection of peers needs to be done appropriately to prevent the adolescents from doing risky behaviour. In addition, the participant also added that the school environment also needs to be supportive and one way of doing it is by focusing more on the students who needs help in terms of psychological and discipline issues.

Next theme is the role of Department of Social Welfare or in Malaysia known as Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM). Ahmad said that JKM should create more awareness programme about adolescents to the society. Other than that, JKM should empower their officers in the aspect of social awareness. Particularly on the knowledge and skills to carry out the duties as officers at JKM.

The last theme obtained from the interview with Ahmad is to have more prevention, developmental and intervention programmes as one of the strategies to reduce at-risk behavior among the adolescents. Firstly, he suggested to have more programmes like awareness among the society about at-risk behaviours and the consequences of being delinquents. On the other hand, the establishment of clubs or organizations in the school and in the community can also be one of the ways to curb juvenile activities. Media also plays an important role in the curbing such misbehaviors by restricting or trimming unnecessary scenes that contain violence or criminal behaviors in films or advertisements. Lastly, everyone in the community including the neighbourhood, friends, and school community need to alert with each other and offering hand to help adolescents in need of advice or monitoring.

DISCUSSION

Jessor and Turbin (2014) stated that delinquency happens because of risk and protective factors such as the confusion of identity, family members, helplessness, risky behavior, controls and support. In adolescence, parental attachment plays a significant role in prevention of psychological issue that can lead to the delinquency. However, parental attachment alone is insufficient to prevent delinquency because there is also a need to have direct parental control (Hoeve et al., 2012; Winarini et al., 2018; Latiffah et al., 2018; Aisyahatul Radhiah, Norlizah & Mohd Azmi, 2020; Cristiano et al., 2020). These findings were consistent with the results of the present study. Meanwhile, Chien et al. (2019) mentioned that a positive sense of belonging at school is important as one of the strategies to curb more numbers of risk behaviours among adolescents. This is because adolescents with positive relationship and environment believe that they are cared for by adults and peers.

There are several limitations in this study. The main restriction was pandemic Covid-19 happening, causing the movement control orders. This has led to the authority not giving permission to the researchers to interview the juvenile delinquents themselves nor visiting any of the institutions. Thus, the only option left is the probation officers but then, they are limited in number. Using basic qualitative research design, this study needs to consider the following limitations: sample size. Since each district of the state have a small number of probation officers, there is no option to find more interviewees for the targeted geographical area. This has led to the purposive sampling which becomes another limitation of the study. Thus, the result of this research cannot be generalized since they are only based on one probation's personal experience and views regarding ways to curb delinquency among the adolescents.

A few suggestions for further studies are needed to get more information on how to come with the strategies to curb at-risk behavior among adolescents. A quantitative study can be conducted among the probation officers in a wider context in Malaysia. Other than that, more probation officers also can be involved in a group interview to grasp another perspective from different probation officers. Another suggestion can be considered is by having a variety of respondents consisting of parents and juvenile delinquents themselves.

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