CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Social ills, which often accompany rapid economic change, have made their presence felt in Malaysia. The mass media had been highlighting incidences of abandoned babies by young unwed mothers, promiscuity among youngsters, drug abuse, assault on teachers by students and violence in the schools. Fingers have been pointed at parents, the school system and even housing developers. Poor parenting skills, parents who are preoccupied with career advancement and success, and latchkey kids are among the factors that have been attributed to contribute to today's social problems. The school system has been criticized for being uncaring, too rigid, orthodox and examination-oriented. Failure of developers to provide playgrounds and sports facilities leads to the shortage of recreational activities which supposedly contribute to loitering at shopping malls and exposing adolescents to deviant activities.

Policy makers are naturally concerned over the extent of the social problems. Several quick-fix solutions have been put forward to remedy the situation. These include seminars on parenting skills and *Rakan Muda* programmes. Most recently, a three-month compulsory national social service was proposed for school leavers. These proposals however may be treating just the symptoms and not the root causes. Although numerous factors have been said to be responsible for social ills, there is a lack of systematic studies carried out to ascertain the causes.

1.1 TRENDS

Analysis of major adolescents' problems reported in newspaper was carried out by the Social Welfare Department for the period 1994-1995. The results are in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Coverage of Social Ills of Adolescents by Media

Problems	1994	1995
Loitering	34	8.5
Delinquency	39.6	31.6
Free sex	13.5	34
Crime	6.3	22.2
Pornography	6.6	3.8

Source: Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of National Unity and Social Development.

The analysis shows that, for two consecutive years, behavioural problems of the adolescents pertaining to delinquency were the most prevalent social ills. Delinquency includes runaways, school absenteeism, *dadah* (drug) addiction, smoking, alcohol consumption and school disciplinary problems.

Table 1.2
Number of Arrests among Juveniles in Kelantan (1996 - 2000)

			1996	1997	1998	1999	Jan-June 2000
CASES	Violent Crimes		27	48	19	29	13
	Property Crimes		134	138	149	120	65
	Total		161	186	168	149	78
AGES	10-12 years		15	27	27	19	15
	13-15 years		115	128	116	101	46
	16-18 years		111	147	155	156	63
RACE	Malay	Male	238	292	287	268	116
		Female		2	2		1
	Chinese	Male		3	7	7	5
		Female	1	1			
	Indian	Male			1		
		Female	1				1
	Others	Male		3	1	2	1
		Female	1	1			
CATEGORY	Schooling		125	160	160	177	82
	Non-schooling		116	142	138	99	42
Total number of Arrests			**241**	**302**	**298**	**276**	**124**

Violent Crimes	1996	1997	1998	1999	Jan-June 2000
Murder		2(4)	2(2)		
Gang Robbery			1(1)		
Robbery	2(2)	1(1)		2(3)	2(2)
Rape	8(11)	12(16)	7(8)	6(9)	3(3)
Assault (Section 324-326)	17(25)	33(42)	9(11)	21(56)	8(13)
Total Violent Crimes	27(38)	48(63)	19(22)	29(68)	13(18)
Property Crimes					
Burglary by day	15(19)	29(61)	29(57)	15(24)	9(24)
Burglary by night	61(90)	32(60)	33(64)	30(58)	10(15)
Car Theft	1(1)	1(1)	1(1)		
Motorcycle Theft	22(36)	34(60)	37(63)	43(80)	30(46)
Bicycle Theft	2(8)	7(10)	6(16)	3(5)	
Other Thefts	33(49)	35(47)	43(75)	29(41)	16(21)
Total Property Crimes	134(203)	138(239)	149(276)	120(208)	65(106)
Overall Total	**161(241)**	**186(302)**	**168(298)**	**149(276)**	**78(124)**
Total of Other Cases	36(63)	19(33)	45(79)	33(53)	23(45)

Note: Number of Cases (Number of individuals arrested)

The media could have exaggerated the extent of social ills among

adolescents because sensational news sells. Statistics of juvenile arrests

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portray a more realistic picture of the actual situation. The number of arrests made in the east coast state of Kelantan for the period 1996 to 2000 is presented in Table 1.2. The statistics given by the Criminal Investigation Department from the Kelantan Police Contingent is very comprehensive. The cases are presented from various perspectives. They are first classified either as violent or property crimes. The juveniles are then put into the different age groups. They are then separated into ethnic groups and gender. The juveniles are also identified as either schooling or non-schooling. For each offence, the number of cases involved is given together with the number of arrests made (in brackets). Offences, other than violent and property crimes were grouped under "Other Cases".

Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 present a worrisome picture of social ills among the juveniles. One should be concerned with the wastage to the individual themselves and to the nation in terms of loss of human resources, expenditure for rehabilitation and welfare for the social dropouts. Juvenile delinquency in Malaysia warrants an in-depth study so as to identify the factors that make adolescents delinquent and the factors relating to delinquency.

1.2   DELINQUENCY THEORIES

Criminal behaviours are often explained using biological, psychological, social and economic factors. While biological and psychological theories assume that criminal behaviour results from underlying physical or mental conditions that distinguish criminals from non-criminals, sociological theories seek to explain criminal behaviour in terms of social

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environment. An etiological study of juvenile delinquency however is only complete if its theoretical foundation includes sociological as well as psychological understanding of the causes of delinquency (Lundman & Scarpiti, 1980).

According to Kornhauser (1978), all the delinquency theories originated from two main delinquency models that are the Strain Model and the Control Model. Strain theorists argue that all members of society subscribe to one set of cultural value, that is, economic success. Since lower-class persons do not have legitimate means to reach this goal, they become frustrated and turn to crime in desperation. In the Control Model, social control theorists assume that the motivation to commit crime is part of human nature. However, not everyone commit crime in the face of frustrations and poor living conditions because of bonding with society, groups and institutions.

Hirshi (1969) claimed there are four elements of social bonds that promote adherence to social norms. They are attachment, commitment, involvement and rationalization. Attachment towards significant others such as parents, school and teachers were strongly related to juvenile delinquency. Youths who expressed the strongest affection for their parents were least likely to be involved in delinquency. Attachment to school is an important insulator against delinquency. In contrast, poor school performance coupled with a dislike for school was a push towards delinquency. Similarly, attachment to teachers was inversely related to delinquent activities. Youths with commitment to education and high occupational aspirations also had the

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lowest rates of delinquency. Involvement in conventional activities protected them against delinquency. Finally, delinquent youths are those who most readily rationalize their belief in norms in order to neutralize their deviance.

Most investigators today however believe that the personal (inner) controls are just as important as the social (outer) controls in keeping people from committing crimes. This belief is in line with the Containment Theory (Reckless, 1991) that proposes that both strong inner and reinforcing outer containment or control systems regulate normative behaviour.

1.3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study intends to incorporate all the three major theories to explain delinquency more effectively. First, the Strain Theory, that suggests felt strain resulting from frustrated needs or wants, acts as motivation for deviant behaviour. Strain is the discrepancy between aspirations and the expectation of attaining them. According to this theory, strain exists in all individuals, regardless of their social class because even the upper class can aspire beyond their means. Strain arises from both material and emotional needs that are unfulfilled. According to Abraham Maslow, every individual has needs. Physiological or maintenance needs include food, clothing and shelter. Safety needs included security, protection, and freedom from fear and anxiety. As for belonging and love need, satisfying the need for love will give the child a sense of belonging. Esteem needs include both self-respect and appreciation from others. Unless these needs are fulfilled, self-actualization cannot take place.

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Interactions between adolescents, and other people and institutions result in differential behavioural outcomes. From the Social Control Theory perspective, social resources resulting from positive bonding with significant others such as parents, conventional peer-groups and teachers in school, act as restraints on deviant behaviour. These individual conformed because they did not want to jeopardize the good relationship they are enjoying with conventional others.

The Containment Theory explains how personal or inner resources moderate behaviour. Personal resources are the strengths that the individual is equipped with. They include concepts of self, coping-styles and moral development. The personal resources possessed by the individual can help to buffer the effects of strain on behaviour because individuals with higher concepts of self are able to weather a crisis better than their counterparts. This ability to cope with stressors effectively in turn will make these individuals more adaptive. Individuals with high moral development would avoid deviant behaviour even under stress due to guilt and conscience.

The model shown in Figure 1.1 hypothesizes that behaviour is not the direct outcome of the strain they felt resulting from unmet needs and stressors. Instead, behavioural outcomes are moderated by the presence of personal and social resources. While personal resources come from within an individual and help them abstain from deviant behaviour, social resources are the support they receive from the family, schoolteachers and peers that restrain and inhibit them from deviant behaviour. The personal resources possessed by the individual will influence the social resources made available to him by others

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because it is only natural that individuals of better disposition are more liked

by others. Similarly, the social resources received by the individual would

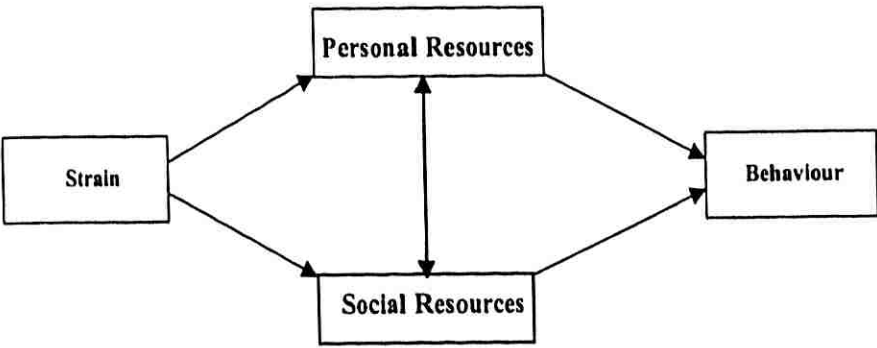help him build up his personal resources within.

Figure 1.1

A Proposed Causal Model of Delinquency

1.3.1   Social Resources

Social Resources made available to adolescents by their families, peer-groups

and schools include parental support, peer-group support and school

experiences.

a.   Parental Support

For self-actualization to occur, parental support should fulfill all

aspects of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Financial or economic support from

parents is required for their food, clothing and shelter. These constitute their

basic needs. To provide for their safety needs, parental support takes the form

of guidance, supervision and surveillance. Parents who give their children

sufficient attention by spending quality time together are able to accommodate

their love needs. Relationships based on acceptance and warmth constitute

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good parenting. Communication within families is vital and supportive parents take time to listen to their children's problems and advice them from time to time.

Parent-child interactions in a family can result in both support and strain. Understanding parents will help create mutually satisfying parent-child interactions that act as sources of support. Relationships characterized by high and unrealistic parental expectations however could be a source of strain. Similarly, bias or favouritism displayed by parents can evoke children's negative feelings towards their parents and siblings. Differential treatment in the family usually depends on the personality of the children.

b.   Peer-group Support

As adolescents gain greater independence from their families, peer influence competes seriously with family influences. Increasing influence of the peers may also be the result of weakening of the family attachment. As the social world of adolescents widens, friendship becomes increasingly important to them. Peer acceptance contributes to their feeling of well-being, sense of belonging and self-esteem. Peer activities fulfill certain needs and equip them with skills such as interpersonal and coping skills important to social development. However, teenagers have a high propensity towards risk activities such as substance abuse, sex and cars. (Mechanic,1992).

Peer influence can either be conventional or deviant in nature, depending on their value systems and the importance given to academic achievement. Conventional peers are likely to pursue educational- and vocational-related goals. Their activities probably involve discussing

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schoolwork, completing school projects or engaging in healthy sports activities. Delinquent peers, on the other hand, engage in activities that defy the authorities and are against set rules or norms. When a person's commitment to his delinquent peers is greater than his commitment to parents, he will succumb to peer-pressure.

c. **School Experiences**

School is an institution where they have their first exposure to formal rules and regulations. School rules and regulations imposed upon students are usually based on middle-class values which lower class students may have difficulties in adjusting to. They include obedience, politeness, cleanliness, academic achievement and non-smoking.

Schooling covers a time-span of about 14 years, starting at or prior to age six years to late adolescence and early adulthood. Apart from the home, adolescents spent most of their waking-up hours in school. School is where their esteem needs are met. Opportunities to gain self-respect and appreciation from others include scholastic achievement, sports excellence, responsible positions held and meaningful participation in other extra-curricular activities. Students, who experience academic success and believe that the future depends on it, conform regardless of the school climate. Similarly, for those who excel in sports or are active in school activities, school is fun. But, for those who perform poorly in their studies, not good at any games and unpopular among their schoolmates, delinquency involving risks and challenges, can be a means of restoring their low self-esteem. Delinquency 'makes sense' because it compensates for their lack of rewarding relationships

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and provides them alternative means of acquiring acceptance and respect of their peers.

1.3.2 Personal Resources

Personal resources are capabilities that the adolescents possess, such as high concepts of self, effective coping behaviour and high moral development.

a. Concepts of Self

Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by rapid physiological and psychological changes. Adolescents can become very conscious of their physical appearance because of their rapid physical and hormonal changes. These changes can, in turn, work on their concepts of self and intensify the need for peer acceptance, thus causing them to yield to peer-pressure, tolerate and even succumb to deviant activities. Adolescents with higher concepts of self are comfortable with what they are and thus less susceptible to peer-pressure. These adolescents are more confident when dealing with others and are more stable emotionally. They do not need to prove their worthiness to others by indulging themselves in reckless acts, nor do they need to seek attention or gain power in order to improve their self-image. In other words, higher concepts of self help to guard against inclinations towards delinquency. Self-concept is often seen as the regulator of delinquency.

On the other hand, psychologists have found that children with low concepts of self are more likely to imitate or accept role-modeled behaviour from the people around them, even criminals. This is because their self-control is not sufficiently strong to reject the temptations of immediate

rewards. Low concepts of self also cause them to dislike themselves for not being able to portray a good image to society. Thus these youths use delinquent behaviour as a vehicle to improve his self-image because engaging in delinquent bahaviour result in their acquiring a particular status.

b. **Coping Behaviours**

During their transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents have to undergo developmental tasks such as developing an identity, gaining independence from the family and fitting into a peer-group. They cope with stressors in the form of daily hassles differently. Some respond well while others react in ways that may be self-defeating. Effective youth approach their lives in a purposeful way, anticipate challenges, consider alternative solutions and seek relevant information to cope with the demands (Santrock, 1996). Adolescents who are apt at problem solving go through this difficult period undaunted while others adopt inappropriate mechanisms to manage stress related to their developmental changes. Delinquency may be an outcome of ineffective coping during adolescence.

c. **Moral Development**

Morally mature adolescents normally avoid any involvement that is against the establishment. These adolescents have respect for others and will not intrude into their rights. Their feelings of guilt and conscience will deter them from doing wrong.

Delinquents, on the other hand, will not commit crime only when the possibility of being caught is high. According to Kohlberg, this is the lowest stage of moral reasoning and is at the pre-conventional level (Duska, 1977).

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Delinquents are also more willing to justify and accept excuses for deviant behaviours. Some adolescents even regard delinquency as normal among them. Although delinquents value certain conventional behaviours such as achieving good grades, they also admire delinquent skills and behaviours that are considered "macho".

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although most adolescents experienced some forms of strain during this difficult period of development, not all resort to deviant behaviour. The personal resources which they are equipped with and the social resources made available to them by their families, peer-groups and schools act as buffers to the effects of strain and help moderate their behaviour. This study intends to identify the personal and social resources that help adolescents to abstain from deviant behaviour.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the types and frequency of offences committed by adolescents?
2. What are their motivation for deviant behaviour?
3. What are the modes of coping behaviours frequently employed by the adolescents?
4. What are the relationships among the different categories of offences committed.
5. What are the relationships between deviant behaviour and aspects of perceived parental support?

6. What is the relationship between peer-group support and deviant behaviour?

7. What are the relationships between school experiences and deviant behaviour?

8. What are the relationships between concepts of self and deviant behaviour?

9. What are the relationships between modes of coping and deviant behaviour?

10. What is the relationship between moral development and deviant behaviour?

11. What are the predictors deviant behaviour?

12. Do delinquent subjects and controls differ significantly in

   (a)   perceived parental support?

   (b)   peer-group support?

   (c)   school experiences?

   (d)   concepts of self?

   (e)   coping behaviour?

   (f)   moral development?

13. What are the social and personal resources that are significantly different between delinquent subjects and their non-delinquent siblings?

1.6   DEFINITION OF TERMS

Juvenile Delinquent

A person who has attained the age of criminal responsibility prescribed in section 82 of the Penal Code and is under the age of eighteen. Under the Juvenile Court Act 1947, a person below the age of eighteen is a juvenile and must be accorded special treatment when charged with a crime.

Juvenile Court Act, 1947

It is an Act that provides for the care and protection of children and young persons and the establishment of Juvenile Courts. A juvenile charged

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with crime is immediately assigned a welfare officer. The officer will have to prepare a report about the child's background for presentation in court. The report will make reference to the child's background, conduct in school, medical records and other factors that have bearings on the case. In addition, two juvenile court advisers will be present during the hearing and make recommendations to the magistrate when disposition is ordered.

Juvenile Court Referral

The offence which the delinquent was accused in the Juvenile Court and consequently sent to the approved school.

Approved School

A school approved by the Minister of National Unity and Social Welfare for education, training and detention of children and young persons sent by the Juvenile Court. Delinquents will only be sent to the approved school if they are reported to be beyond their parents' control.

Deviant Behaviour

On the behaviour continuum, deviant behaviour is seen as the failure to conform to normative or modal expectation. In this study deviant behaviour is defined as behaviour that violates the legal codes as they apply to juveniles, in other words, their offences.

Seriousness of an Offence

The seriousness of an offence depends on its potential harm to others. Status offences are more of endangering the self and are not even considered as crimes when carried out by adults. Crimes against property however

infringed on the welfare of others. Crimes against public order disrupt the public peace while crimes against person threatened the victims' lives.

Perceived Parental Support

It is the support given by parents to meet the needs of the subjects. Four forms of parental support have been identified in this study. They are emotional support, informational support, social support and economic support. Emotional support includes trying to understand them and making them feel wanted. Informational support involves help with personal problems or schoolwork. Social support includes both concern for and involvement in their activities. Both material and financial support constitute economic support.

Peer-group Support

The support given by their peers is seen as time spent together and mutual encouragement for each other. The type of peer-group support depends on the attitude of its members, the number of delinquent peers and the importance they give to academic achievement.

School Experiences

Rewarding experiences in school include academic achievement as well as excellence in sports, participation in extra-curricular activities and holding responsible posts. School experiences are also measured in terms of the extent to which subjects enjoy school and the frequency of them having problems with teachers and playing truant.

Concepts of Self

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Concepts of self refer to how the subjects view themselves with respect to intelligence, physical appearance and peer-acceptance. Their perceptions are the outcomes of their interactions with significant others like parents, teachers and peers.

Coping

Coping is a conscious attempt to deal with stressors. Coping strategy includes both cognitive and behavioural efforts aim at altering sources of stress as well as to regulate negative emotions associated with stressful circumstances. The stressors include hassles as well as traumas, and negative major life events.

Three modes of coping are identified in this study. They are problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is directed at remedying a threatening or harmful external situation by finding possible solutions. Emotion-focused coping is directed at ventilating, managing or palliating an emotional response to the situation. Avoidance-focused coping is an attempt to disengage mentally or even physically from threatening or damaging situations.

Moral Development

Moral development as defined by Kohlberg's Stage Theory is characterized by a progression through a sequence of discrete stages. Kohlberg identified a total of six stages of moral development, two stages occurring at three levels: the pre-conventional, the conventional and the post-conventional.

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The stage of a person's moral development is determined by his/her responses to a moral dilemma. Given a moral dilemma, their responses were categorized on the basis of the type of reasoning that went into the evaluation of the dilemma.

In this study, moral development and moral reasoning carries the same meaning because Kohlberg used the stages of moral reasoning of an individual to determine his level of moral development. The six stages with their descriptions are given in Appendix A.

1.7   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1. This study, unlike media exposure and revealing statistics that can only add onto parents' apprehension, identifies some of the social and personal resources that can help adolescents restrain from delinquency. This revelation can check the upward trend in this country. This is to ensure that adolescents who constitute a large portion of our total population are able to develop their full potentials and become productive adults.

2. The lack of these social and personal resources may place adolescents at risk. The resources identified will help determine what preventive measures needed to be taken. Interventions to prevent or at least reduce juvenile delinquency should be commended because preventive measures are more cost effective than corrective measures. Arresting, prosecuting, incarcerating, and rehabilitating juveniles are costly.

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3. School factors identified can help guide the authorities in designing a variety of learning programmes that are relevant to the young people by catering to their individual needs and multiple intelligences.

4. Results from this study will act as feedback for parents on aspects of guidance and supervision required in meeting the needs of adolescents.