CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0   **INTRODUCTION**

Studies had established the importance of social and personal resources in restraining deviant behaviour that often results from experiencing strain. Hurrelmann (1990), in his overview of research on problem behaviour in adolescents, concluded that problem behaviours are signals of stress resulting from developmental tasks during adolescence. Stressful situations lead to problem behaviour if the adolescents were unable to cope with the stress. These stressors include unfulfilled expectations of parents, scholastic demands, school failure, difficulties encountered with peer-group acceptance and lack of finances. The studies he reviewed showed that problem behaviour correlated with the presence of models for deviant behaviour, tolerance for delinquency, and desire for independence. Delinquents with problem behaviours associated with substance use had poorer academic performance, engaged in more antisocial behaviours and were less likely to participate in extra-curricular activities.

In the studies reviewed the interventions suggested were aimed at encouraging and strengthening both individual and social resources. Individual resources need to be increased to promote competence. Suggested training for individual competency included health education, scholastic training, counseling services and systematic behaviour modification. To

increase social resources, living conditions need to be improved and support networks constructed through tutor programmes and leisure activities.

In this study, etiologies of adolescents at risks are reviewed under three main sections, namely social resources made available to them, personal resources that they are equipped with, and the relationship between the two resources.

2.1   SOCIAL RESOURCES

Studies had indicated that the lack of social resources such as perceived parental support, peer-group support and school success, among adolescents contributed towards delinquency.

2.1.1   Perceived Parental Support

Families play a major role in the socialization of children. During adolescence, extra-familial influences increase but the family remains the major agent of socialization. Parental support and control are central to the socialization of children.

Foxcroft and Lowe (1995) studied adolescents' perceived family environment and self-reported substance use. In this study, both control and support were used to describe parenting pattern. Supportive behaviours of parents are those that foster a sense of belonging in an individual. These parents are warm, loving and responsive. Control behaviours are those that are concerned with guidance and discipline. They include rules, punishment and authority. In this study, four types of parenting patterns were measured. Parenting style that involved high parental support and high parental control

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was described authoritative. When both parental support and parental control were low, the parenting pattern was viewed as neglecting. When parental support was low but parental control high, the parents were described as authoritarian. However, when parental support was high but parental control low, the parents were said to be indulgent. The Adolescent Drinking and Family Life Questionnaire (ADFLQ), was used to assess perceptions of family life along the dimensions of support and control. The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) was used to obtain information about teenagers' health-related behaviours. With a sample of 1045 secondary school pupils of ages 12-16 years, they found a significant relationship between perceived family environment and substance use. Males who formed 53 % of the sample reported more substance use when they perceived low parental support as in both authoritarian and neglecting parents.

Lempers and Lempers (1990) investigated the effects of family economic stress on parental support and adolescent maladjustment of 622 from ninth to twelfth graders. Family economic stress was assessed by their 12-item Economic Hardship Questionnaire that focused on changes in the family's style of living. Furman and Buhrmester's Network of Relationship Inventory was used to measure both maternal and paternal support. Maladjustment among adolescents was measured in terms of depressive symptoms, loneliness, delinquency and drug-use. At the time of data collection, the town and the county were in the midst of an economic downturn. Besides the relationships among economic stress, parental support

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and adolescent maladjustment, this study also investigated gender differences and the different functions of maternal and paternal support. Economic stress was found to account for the increase in male delinquency and drug use. Increased stress was associated with lower paternal support for female, but not male adolescents.

De Paul and Arruabarrena (1995) investigated behaviour problems in school-aged, physically abused and neglected children in Spain. The sample consisted of 66 children divided into three groups: physically abused (n=17), physically neglected (n=24) and low-risk comparison children (n=25). Instruments used were Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAP) and Teacher's Report Form of the Child Behaviour Profile (TRF). The Spanish version of CAP was a self-report questionnaire designed to evaluate the risk for physical abuse. The TRF included 118 questions to assess behaviour problems. One-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in Delinquent Behaviour, a sub-scale of behaviour problems, between the three groups. Both the abused and the neglected children had higher scores.

2.1.2 **School Experiences**

Data collected by Elliot and Voss (1974) supported the hypothesis that delinquency is primarily a response to school failure. The most powerful predictors of male delinquency were poor academic achievement, school normlessness, association with delinquent classmates, and commitment to delinquent peers. Parental rejection was the predictor of female delinquency.

In this study, the school was used as the basic sampling unit. Eight

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schools located in two metropolitan areas were selected. Within each school, the ninth grade students were chosen. The students covered a wide range of social, economic and racial characteristics. The total sample consisted of 2,617 respondents. In this longitudinal design, questionnaires were administered at four points: early ninth grade, mid-tenth grade, mid-eleventh grade, and twelfth grade prior to graduation. Throughout the study, school records were examined regularly, teachers' evaluation data was obtained, and the mother of each respondent was interviewed. Each dropout was interviewed after it was determined that he or she had left school. Delinquent behaviour that was the dependent variable was obtained from self-reported delinquent behaviour and official police contacts.

Tatar (1995) identified factors that parents perceived as affecting their adolescent's popularity and level of stress. Data collected from 742 parents singled out academic performance as a major factor affecting adolescents' stress and popularity. Academic performance was ranked first as the factor affecting popularity, and third as the factor affecting stress.

His study also indicated that low socio-economic status parents attributed popularity to good looks and family background while high socio-economic status parents attributed it to a strong personality and athletic achievement. Low socio-economic status parents placed more emphasis on pressure at home and adherence to school rules as stress factors while high socio-economic status parents emphasized personal problems. Only 11 % of the parents attributed conflict in parent-adolescent relationship as a source of

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adolescents' stress. Parents of adolescent females placed more emphasis on good looks as a source of popularity than parents of adolescent males.

Farrington (1985), in his review on contemporary delinquent prevention strategies, noticed the shift from trying to change individuals to changing the schooling processes. School authorities avoided labeling of students. Instead, more students were given the opportunity to demonstrate competence in schools through varied activities. Evaluation procedures were modified to increase rewards for performance. All efforts were aimed at increasing students' commitment and attachment to schooling and conventional behaviours.

2.1.3 Peer-group Support

Adolescence is a developmental phase that encompasses a reorganization of the self and one's relationship to the social world. Pombeni, Kirchler and Palmonari (1990) explored critical events during adolescence, relationships with peers and the type of peer-groups they have. Six peer-groups were studied; two were formal groups while the other four were informal groups. The subjects consisting of 75 young people were given the questionnaire and were asked to describe their groups using 12 adjectives. Their identification with their peers and demographic characteristics of the groups they associate with were also measured. Subjects reported 33 different problematic situations in their lives. Emotional reactions to these critical events however, did not differ between adolescents of formal and informal groups. In most cases, the subjects did not ask anybody for support during

critical situations. In cases where they approached others for support, the people approached most often were good friends while their parents came next. Those who went to their peer-groups often for support did not discard their families as sources of support. The relationship adolescents established with peers was crucial for the development of social identity because peers formed a sub-culture that exerted influence on the adolescents and provided them with support in coping successfully with their developmental tasks. Adolescents who identified highly with their peer group were more inclined to ask other people for support and accept their offers of support, thus enabling them to resolve their problems better, compared to low identifiers.

The study by Elliot, Huizinga and Ageton (1985) however, highlighted the critical role that deviant peers played in the production of delinquent behaviour. While adolescents who were involved with pro-social friends had low risks for delinquency, those involved with delinquent friends had high risks. Although strong bonds to family and/or school served to diminish the pro-delinquent influences of delinquent companions, they could not totally insulate adolescents from these influences.

This study is part of the National Youth Survey (NYS) which was aimed at testing an integrated theoretical model of delinquent behaviour comprising Strain, Control and Learning Theories. The NYS involved a longitudinal, sequential design with multiple birth cohorts. The sample, selected in 1976, was a national probability sample of youth aged 11 to 17. The final sample consisted of 1,725 youths.

Testing involved the use of a structural equation model that incorporated the concepts specified by the theory. Predictor measures consisted of 25 specific measures of strain, conventional bonding and deviant bonding with family, school and peers. Based upon a sequence of correlation analyses and stepwise regression analyses, a smaller set of predictor measures was selected for the revised model. In the revised model, five specific measures of delinquency and drug use were used as criterion variables. The revised integrated model of delinquent behaviour is shown in Figure 2.1.
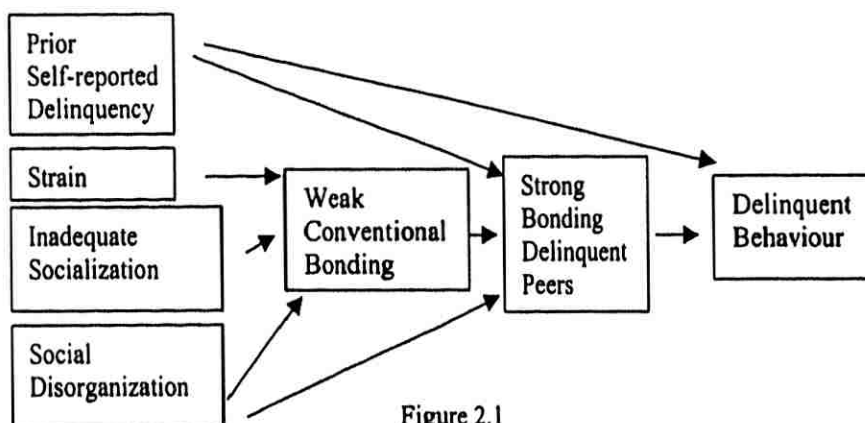

Figure 2.1

Revised Integrated Model

2.2 PERSONAL RESOURCES

Research had shown that stressful events were related to adolescents' emotional and behavioural problems. Individual differences however existed in the level of stress associated with problematic experiences. Adolescents with inadequate personal resources such as low concepts of self, ineffective coping skills and low morals were more likely to perceive problematic events as being more stressful.

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2.2.1 Concepts of Self

Garton and Pratt (1995) found a significant relationship between self-concept and stress that could lead to deviant behaviour. Their investigation involved three phases. In the first phase, a checklist of stressful events was developed based on focus-group discussions that lasted 40 minutes each. The second phase involved a pilot study where a questionnaire based on the checklist was tested. In the main study, the questionnaire was refined and administered to 1482 ten- to fifteen- year-olds. For each stressful event, subjects were asked to indicate the frequency of its occurrence and its perceived effect. The Piers-Harris Self -Concept Scale was used to measure self-concept. Higher concepts of the self were able to protect against feelings of stress, whether they were minor hassles of daily living or major life events like parental divorce, illness or death.

Levy (1997) hypothesized that higher self-concept among adolescents would be related to lower delinquency. This study utilized the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale to examine 230 adolescents from Australian high schools and from institutions incarcerating young offenders. They were categorized as non-delinquents, non-institutionalized delinquents, and institutionalized delinquents. Results show that the mean scores of Total Self-Concept were in the hypothesized direction, with the non-delinquents having scored highest (326.78), followed by the non-institutionalized delinquents (308.44), and then the institutionalized delinquents (294.24). Both male and female scores

followed the same trend, with female scores being lower than those of their male counterparts.

A more detailed analysis was undertaken using t-tests. These indicated that the differences between groups were statistically significant and in the direction anticipated. The t-tests for gender differences, however, were generally non-significant for all three groups.

2.2.2 Coping Behaviours

According to the Transactional Model, a coping behaviour is categorized as either problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping reduces the level of the problem while emotion-focused coping reduces the level of internal emotional distress. In the Approach-Avoidance Model, the distinction is between responses that involved investment of effort in dealing with the problem and responses in which a person disengages from investing effort in trying to cope. Responses such as problem-focused, cognitive coping and social coping are all grouped under the rubric of approach coping because they involve active investment of effort.

In contrast, avoidance coping includes responses such as distraction, withdrawal, wishful thinking, or daydreaming, and a category termed "emotional discharge". This category is characterized by 'emotional discharge' as it involves venting negative emotions on other people. Substance use is included in the category of avoidance coping because intoxication is a form of escapism.

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Rice, Herman and Petersen (1993) presented a model for understanding stress and its effects during early adolescence. The model was derived from a longitudinal programme of research. The study used a cohort-sequential design in which 335 youngsters were sampled randomly from two, middle- to upper-middle class suburban school districts in Midwest. Adolescents completed the questionnaire and individual interviews were carried out from grades 6 to 8. Follow-up assessments were conducted when the participants were in grade 12 and for years after their twelfth-grade assessment. In this model, stressors were viewed as challenges to the coping responses and resources of adolescents. Results obtained, indicated that the association between stressors and behaviours, was moderated by both internal and external resources. Internal resources included intelligence, perceived control over social success and adaptive coping responses. External resources were parental support and peer-group support.

Patterson and Mc Cubbin (1987) developed and tested an adolescent self-report inventory on coping behaviours called Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences, commonly known as A-COPE. Three separate samples of adolescents were employed in its construction. The first sample of 30 subjects was asked to describe their various coping behaviours. A total of 95 coping behaviour items were listed and given to the second sample of 467 high school students. On a five-point Likert Scale, the adolescents were required to indicate how often they used each of the behaviours when faced with difficulties. Their responses were factor analyzed

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for underlying structures. A third sample of 709 adolescents was administered the final questionnaire consisting of 54 coping behaviour items for validation.

Findings showed that, when confronted with problems, different individual behaved differently in tolerating, avoiding or minimizing the effect of stress generated. Some reacted by ventilating their feelings, some responded by developing self-reliance and social support, while others engaged in distracting activities such as by being humorous or seeking out diversions.

Plancherel and Bolognini (1995) evaluated coping strategies and their relationships with mental health of 276 adolescents whose mean age was 13 years 8 months. The A-COPE questionnaire was used to measure their coping behaviours. He found that protecting factors such as social support, self-esteem and adaptive coping had an effect on mental health outcomes. Girls invested more in social relations, expressed more negative feelings, and usually adopt consumption habits such as shopping or eating when they are worried. Boys on the other hand, often use humour or practise a hobby or sport when confronted with a problem.

Krenke (1993) studied coping and adaptation in normal and clinical samples involving over 3000 adolescents whose ages ranged from 12 to 20 years. Three main modes of coping were identified by their responses to problems related to parents, peers or school. They were active coping, internal coping and withdrawal. Normal adolescents coped with difficulties either by seeking out social support as in active coping or thinking out

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possible solutions as in internal coping. Risk populations were more readily threatened by everyday problem situations and usually reacted with withdrawal.

Compas, Orosan and Grant (1993) found gender differences in their review of research on coping processes. Although boys and girls were equally emotional during early adolescence, that is the depressed affect, girls tended to employ coping strategies that were based on emotions or ruminative coping. Such coping strategies impeded problem solving. In contrast, boys preferred strategies that distracted them from their emotional state or distraction coping. This, in turn, facilitated problem solving. The hypothesized model of coping postulated is shown in Figure 2.2.
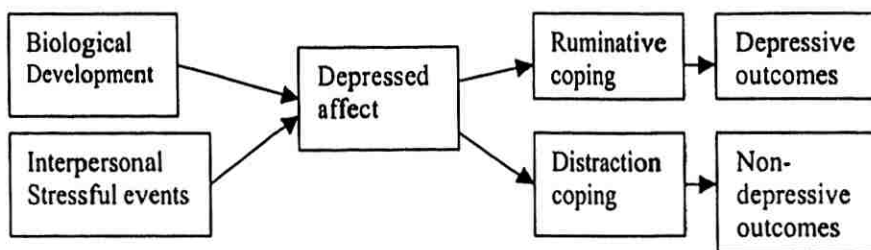
Figure 2.2

Hypothesized Model of Coping

2.2.3 Moral Development

Kohlberg evaluated the intent rather than the consequences of behaviour. According to his theory, moral reasoning should exert a powerful influence on behaviour, thus he believes that educators should focus on the development of moral reasoning among school children and not merely on the acquisition of moral knowledge. The relationship between moral reasoning and behaviour however may not be perfect but curvilinear, with children, having the least problem behaviours reasoning at the lowest or highest moral stages.

The study by Bear and Richards (1981) examined the association between moral reasoning and behaviour in the classroom. The two hypotheses tested were children who used lower stages of moral reasoning would display more conduct problems in the classroom, and they would vary more in their conduct ratings than their higher reasoning counterparts. Moral reasoning was assessed according to Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview, Form A. The three moral dilemmas presented in Form A included conflicts involving six contrasting moral issues: life versus law, punishment versus morality and

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conscience, and contract versus authority. Conduct problems were assessed by teacher ratings on the Behaviour Problem Checklist. The findings supported both the hypotheses and the theory of Kohlberg. Frequent conduct problems were found to be associated with pre-conventional moral reasoning (Stages 1 and 2) with orientations directed towards satisfying own needs and little regards for others. They also followed school regulations less consistently. They behaved pro-socially out of deference to a superior power or in times of personal gain rather than for the social order.

The study by Bartek, Krebs and Taylor (1993) confirmed that delinquents scored lower both on moral maturity and coping. The sample consisted of 20 female juvenile delinquents who admitted engaging in prostitution, 20 juvenile delinquents that denied doing so, and 20 same-age control subjects. They responded to a moral dilemma about prostitution and a test on coping.

2.3   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RESOURCES

Studies showed that social resources made available to an individual could influence his personal resources and vice versa. Connolly, White, Stevens and Burstein (1987) found two sets of correlations. The first set of correlation was between peer social activity and social self-esteem, and the second set of correlation was between social self-efficacy and teachers' ratings of social engagement. All the variables were components of social adjustment in adolescents.

Social activities of adolescents involved their activities with peers. They included both school-day social activities and weekend social activities. The weekend form was administered on the first day of the school week while the school-day form was given three days later. Both were administered twice, one week apart. The average age of the sample comprising 37 males and 37 females was 15.1 years. Psychological well-being included social adjustment, intelligence quotient, perception of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Shulman (1993) investigated attachment to both parents and closest friend, and coping behaviours of 121 adolescents of ages 12-13. Social support provided to individuals by virtue of their close relationships with family and peers buffered stress and enhanced adaptive coping. When children sensed that support was available and their psychological needs were being met, they coped with stress in more active, flexible and positive ways. Correlation matrices (Pearson correlation) between attachment and coping measures revealed gender differences. Adolescent males tended to cope with

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stress independently but when they turned to others for support, they preferred parents to friends. Adolescent females on the other hand relied more on support systems and accepted support from both parents and friends.

Du Bois, Felner, Meares and Krier (1994) investigated the effects of socio-environmental conditions on adjustment during early adolescence. The three indices of socio-economic disadvantage were participation in subsidized lunch programme, parental educational attainment and adult resources available in the home. Stressors included both major life events and daily hassles. Perceived social support received from both family members and teachers were their social resources. Measures of adjustment included self-reports and school records. Self-reports were for levels of psychological distress, drug use and conduct problems, while school records were for academic performance, attendance and suspensions. Results showed that factors associated with socio-economic disadvantage predicted poorer academic performance, and higher levels of absenteeism and disciplinary problems in school. Adolescents who were economically disadvantaged were more vulnerable to stressful events caused by daily hassles. They were also more likely to benefit from the social support received from the teachers in school.

Farrington (1990), in the Cambridge Study of Delinquency Development, followed 411 London males from age eight to age 32. The three main aims of the study were to determine key predictors of offending. Information was obtained from multiple sources: the subjects, their parents,

peers and official records. The information obtained included intelligence, personality, parental child-rearing techniques, peer delinquents, school behaviour, employment history and marital stability. Results showed that the most important childhood predictors of offending were socio-economic deprivation, poor parenting, family deviance, school problems, hyperactivity-impulsiveness-attention deficit and antisocial child behaviour.