

The Effects of Youth Based Urban Crimes and Violence on the Community in Garowe, Puntland, Somalia

High-quality Research Support programme (HQRS)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Youth based crimes and violence is not just a particular problem in Garowe and generally in Somalia; it is a common problem across nations on this planet. It affects the life of the societies, interrupts security and safety; it also hinders economic development and social transformation.

Youth gangs and gang problems have been reported in most countries in Europe, the former Soviet Union, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China (Oschlies 1979; Specht 1988). Youth gangs are present in both socialist and free-market societies and in both developing and developed countries.

Different governments, institutions and individuals have researched the causes and consequences of youth gang activities in the world. According to the findings of this research different factors contribute to the rise and growth of youth gangs in different countries and cultures in the world.

However, this research is one of the first academic surveys conducted in Garowe, Puntland, Somalia to investigate and find out the basic causes and effects of these anti- social behaviors caused by youth.

1.2. Background

The Puntland state of Somalia is a region in northeastern Somalia, with Garowe as its capital city in the Nugal province (Puntland Facts and Figures, 2009). Its leaders declared the territory an autonomous state in 1998.

According to estimations made by Puntland's ministry of planning and international cooperation, the population of Puntland is over 3 million of which about 70% are under 30 years. The residents in Garowe are estimated to number in the range of 70,000 to 120,000 by local authorities and UN habitat. The rural population around the district is also estimated at about 260,000 making the total population of Garowe over 380,000 of which 70% are under 30 years.

As discussed above, estimations indicate that the number of youth in Garowe district is very high. This means an influx of more youth into the streets, since there are no fully implemented youth programs assigned by the state and other stakeholders.

Therefore, urban crimes and violence caused by the youth has been a common issue in Garowe. Thus, this study investigates effects of youth-caused urban crimes on the community and proposes possible solutions.

1.3. Overall Aims and Objectives of the study

The overall aim of the research is to identify ways and means to overcome youth-caused crimes in Garowe through youth and community participation methods and implementing sustainable youth programs and projects.

The objectives of the research are;

- To find out the main underlying causes of youth-caused crimes in Garowe.
- To identify the main effects of the youth based crimes on the community.
- To identify the measures taken by the authority and other stakeholders to tackle the problems of youth gangs.
- To propose possible solutions to youth based crimes and violence.

1.4. Problem Statement

The effects of Somalia's long running civil unrest and political instability have caused many youngsters to directly or indirectly become involved in crimes and violence in the country. These crimes include youth-caused urban crimes and violence. The study investigates the causal factors and effects of such problems.

1.5. Research Question

What are the effects of youth based urban crimes and violence in Garowe?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Literature Review

Youth gangs might have started in different places at different times, first appearing in Europe (Klein, 1996) or Mexico (Redfield, 1941; Rubel, 1965). In the United States youth gangs may have been in existence as early as 1783 at the end of American Revolution (Sante, 1991; Sheldon, 1898). This however shows that gangs and youth groups have existed from the medieval times to modern history.

According to the following definitions of the word “gang”, the investigation shows that youth groups in Garowe are not gangs because they are loosely organized, they don’t have common identity but they have some gang characteristics meaning they are likely to become gangs in the future.

Webster’s Dictionary - A number of persons associated together for a particular purpose; a company banded together for criminal or sinister designs.

Wikipedia - A group of individuals who share a common identity and, in current usage, engage in illegal activities. Historically the term referred to both criminal groups and ordinary groups of friends, such as ‘Our Gang’. Some anthropologists believe that the gang structure is one of the most ancient forms of human organizations.

Some commentators use "gang" to refer to small, informal, and disorganized "street gangs", while "syndicate" or "organized crime" are used to refer to larger, more powerful organizations, such as the Italian-American Mafia, which may control entire legitimate businesses as "fronts" for their illegal operations. The word "gang" generally appears in a pejorative context, though within "the gang" itself members may adopt the phrase in proud identity or defiance.

Gangout.com - The police's definition of a gang is a group of individuals, juvenile and or adult, who associate on a continuous basis, form an allegiance for a common purpose, and are involved in delinquent or criminal activity.

The Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention (OCVP)¹ has carried out a survey of youth based urban crimes and violence in Puntland with the following outcomes:

In most of the major towns and cities of Puntland where the OCVP has conducted surveys, the 3 most commonly reported causes of insecurity with which youth have been associated are neighborhood violence, street theft and violent criminality (OCVP, 2011b; OCVP, 2012b; OCVP, 2012c; OCVP, 2012a; OCVP, 2013a).

Neighborhood violence ensues when groups of youth have disagreements which escalate into street fights. The weapons involved may be crude (sticks, clubs, stones) but the damage is great and casualties and fatalities may rise quickly if those altercations are not contained in time (OCVP, 2013b). The victims in this type of violence can fall across all demographics of the community because it takes place in public spaces, with most casualties reported amongst the disputing youth. Violent criminality is often perpetrated by loosely organized gangs generally comprised of young men – reported ages fall between 15 and 40 years (OCVP, 2011b).

There is an additional, repeated concern that the proliferation of small arms in Puntland could result in loosely organized gangs evolving into armed militia. Street theft (or petty theft) has been observed to be the most prevalent of the three reported causes of insecurity. It commonly involves one or two perpetrators using either no weapons or crude weapons such as knives (specifically the *tooray* – a double edged knife) (OCVP, 2011a). In urban centers, the most prevalent form of petty theft is believed to be mobile phone snatching and roadside muggings of which the victims are predominantly young women – who are pre-identified as easy targets (OCVP, 2013b).

2.2. Causes and Effects

It would be unwise to attempt to draw direct causal links to youth-based violence because, while there are many similarities in the way youth violence manifests itself, it is not homogenous and is driven by a combination of factors, regularly cited as socioeconomic insecurity, social exclusion, substance abuse and vulnerability. High levels of illiteracy cause low employment rates among the youth (OCVP, 2011a, OCVP, 2013a, OCVP, 2013b) and by connection high levels of poverty (OCVP, 2013b). These are issues that have been observed to contribute to the socio-economic insecurity of the youth. The

¹ Local organization that operates in Somaliland, Puntland and South Somalia

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perceived relation they have to increased tendencies towards crime and violence is demonstrable by the fact that members of some of the communities within which OCVP conducted surveys identified acute unemployment as a security concern (OCVP, 2013a).

The youth also feel that they are excluded from decision-making processes on matters that affect their well-being (OCVP, 2013b), and this has been identified as an underlying factor that contributes to increased deviant behaviour. There seems to be high levels of antagonism between the youth and the older generation in most communities of Puntland, with low levels of interaction and collaboration in regards to peace building and development matters. Drug and substance abuse, particularly addiction to *Khat*, amongst the youth is also alleged to be an underlying cause of the rising levels of crime. It is believed that most of the youth who take part in petty theft are motivated by the desire to obtain cash so as to purchase the drug (OCVP, 2011b; OCVP, 2012c; OCVP, 2012a; OCVP, 2013a; OCVP, 2013b).

All the above factors, usually operating in concert, have been observed in turn to expose youth to the vulnerability of escalation into more serious criminal organizations such as piracy rings or radical militia (such as Al-Shabaab). The temptation of quick riches coupled with the reality of a dire economic situation and a lack of viable livelihood opportunities has led many youth in coastal towns into piracy related activities (OCVP, 2011a) Towards the south of Puntland, youth are vulnerable to recruitment by Al-Shabaab, which capitalizes on the growing feelings of dissatisfaction among them and there is still the feeling that militant elements can pervade into public life/institutions in Galkayo (OCVP, 2011b).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter details the methodology of the study such as data collection methods, data analysis, ethical consideration and the limitations of the study. Each one of these is detailed below:

3.2. Methods of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data was collected through different methods as outlined below:

Primary data – this was collected by using Key Informant interviews, observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

Secondary data – Desk based online searches, reports and books and articles by other authors were reviewed to retrieve information.

3.3. Data Analysis

- This was a participatory study where participants were asked open-ended questions followed by probing question to generate as much information as possible.
- Data was analysed manually and presented as a written report.

3.4. Ethical considerations

The research was carried out with regard to ethical considerations, the participants were not harmed, and their dignity and anonymity were prioritized. Full consent was obtained prior to the respondent's participation in the study. Confidentiality of the research data was ensured, and any exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research was avoided.

3.5. Limitations and Further research

The limitations of the study were the limited resources available in terms of money and material. The topic is sensitive to some extent therefore refusal, fear of hostility and shyness of some of the

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respondents which impacted on their ability to effectively respond to the questions were also some of the most notable problems faced by the researcher.

Other research into the same topic might be carried out in future to investigate measures taken by the stakeholders, as this could not be answered because of time limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This study on youth based urban crimes was conducted in Garowe district of the Puntland State of Somalia and was carried out during the months of June, July and August, 2016. The researcher used Key Informative Interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and observations during collection of the data.

There were three Key Informant Interviews (one police officer, an academic and one mother whose son was involved such youth groups), two Focus Group Discussions (university students and members from current gangs) and observation of several incidents.

The data collected was analyzed in a manual basis and presented as per the research objectives.

4.2. Causes

The main causal factors of youth based crimes that the respondents indicated can be categorized into the following three main sections:

- a) Self driven factors (individual level); b) Family driven factors; c) Socio-economic factors

These causal factors could number more but as per the responses given by participants following table summarizes the responses:

NO	Self	Family	Socio-economic
1	Use of drugs – Khat	Lack of parental care: Punishment, not giving time to the child, not selecting good friends	Peer pressure
2	Adolescence problem	Separation of parents or child boy and father	Poverty – unemployment
3	Interest to show manhood	Pay money to release from the jail after incidents	Lack of nursery schools and untrained Quranic and primary school teachers
4	Idle time		Police – untrained to handle such problems, corrupted
5			Unenforced laws and unimplemented policies.

In terms of causes, most of the respondents have given the same answers but there are some respondents who provided unique and unexpected answers:

A statement of a mother whose son is involved such crimes can loosely be translated as *“My son’s father went abroad several years ago, even before most of my children were born, he rarely returns, may be once every five years, this caused my first born son to be a gang member”* - *“Women cannot control boys when they reach such age groups (12 years and above)”* she added.

Abdulweli Omar, an academic from USA said *“Most of our Quranic and Primary school teachers are untrained. This causes improper mental growth of the children, kids are punished and are not given freedom to think and become productive, this finally produces an odd child who performs anti-social behavior”*

A university student who was once involved in such crimes said *“ Mostly we used to fish² when we don’t have petty cash to buy things we need.” He also added: “ There are some mobile shops that buy stolen mobiles from the youth, they are common, they immediately give money and sell the mobile for more money”*

A youth group member said *“We usually go to sea and fish because we want to get smart phones, or because we want to show manhood” he added “If your friends in the school have smart phones and your parents cannot buy them or don’t want to buy them for you what will you do?”*

A police officer said *“Parents want to pay money and release their child from the prison, even they cannot accept that their boy was involved in any crime; they are saying he was in the Masjid, or selling shop, when you arrested him”*

In summary the causes can also be classified into long-term causes and immediate causes according to the responses given by the respondents:

- Long term causes such as poverty, lack of parental care and guidance, untrained schoolteachers, and limited government involvement.
- Immediate causes include; peer pressure, drug addiction – Khat – and more idle time. Most of these are an internal push factor.

² Common word used by the members which means take mobile and other property by force

4.3. Effects

Effects of youth based crimes and violence in Garowe can be classified into **short term** and **long term** effects in accordance with participants’ views. Short term consequences here mean effects that arise after the incident (outcomes of the anti-social activities) and long term impacts are long lasting effects of youth-caused urban crimes.

The following table indicates a summary of these effects based on the above classification:

NO	Short term effects	Long term effects
1	Killings and injury of the members and victims as well	Members from gangs or community are handicapped
2	Loss of property – mostly low income families and individuals	Youth become role models to others – hence effects future generations
3	Closure of businesses earlier and limited access to the markets because of fear	The role of these youth to society is lost
4	Dropouts of schools - after failing exams	Hindrance to economic development and social transformation
5	Waste of money by either families and government for security operations	Youth may be utilized by terror and pirate groups in the long run
6	Imprisonment and violation of human rights	Cultural erosion
7	Increase of insecurity in the city	Clan based conflicts
8	Rape and gender based violence	Drug addiction
9	Displacement of some targeted youth or individuals	

Different participants raised the categorized effects in the above table; some of the statements were:

Mother of a youth gang: *“My son was involved in a killing of another, he was not the killer but he was a member of a youth group who facilitated the crime, he was arrested and spent two months in jail, we paid large amount of money as a fine to let him out.”* She also added that she used to go to the

prison every day to feed him. The mother also mentioned that she is still worrying what crime her son will commit next.

This mother is different from some parents I observed, since she knows that her son is a criminal gang member. She told me that she cannot control him and he is going to be role model to others that are younger than him. She surprisingly said that a child is raised well when both parents are together regardless of their economic status. She also said ***“He is in form two now but he is in the verge of dropout from school because he spends more time in the market instead in the home reading and revising his lessons”***

In the focus group discussion of the youth gangs, 85% of them agreed that they are not performing well in school. This shows that most of them will dropout during secondary school or will not continue to higher education. Hence dropout is one of the effects of youth based urban crimes and violence.

One of the youth gangs pointed out that he was involved in one incident: ***“One night, we went take some mobiles, we caught a big man, we stop him and he did. We took two mobiles from him, as we tried to run away he took a pistol from his pocket and gunned down one of us, he has taken his mobile phones and two others back and escaped.*** He also added that the man is still unknown and none of them has stopped theft and robbery so far.

This illustrates how these youths sometimes put themselves in danger meaning that the pushing or driving force is stronger than the risk involved.

Rape is one of the crimes committed by the youth; they use tactics to mislead young girls: ***“One of the group promised a girl (and he was noticed by others) that he has a chicken. We reached where they were and beaten both of them. We took the girl to a safe place; he also joined the group later on”***

The raped innocent girls might face psychological and sociological problems. This is one of the biggest long term effects of the youth gangs which need immediate action.

To summarize effects of youth based groups has both long term and short term as categorized in the table above. Some of the former youth either joined terror groups because they were badly treated by the police and parents or migrated to overseas countries in search of better life.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Findings and Recommendations

5.1. Findings

The following are the findings of the study as per the research objectives:

- The major causes of youth based crimes can be categorized into individual, family and social levels. These include:
 - Lack of parental care – Punishment
 - Untrained Quranic and primary school teachers
 - Separation of parents
 - Drug addiction - Khat
 - General poverty at national level – unemployment
 - Encouragement from peers and interest to show manhood and strength
 - Lack of law enforcement and implementation of youth development policies
- The effects of the youth-caused crimes and violence are classified into long term and short term effects as per participants' responses:
 - Killing and injury for both youth and rest of the community
 - Security and safety problems
 - Economic problems – closure of businesses earlier
 - Gender based violence – rape
 - Clan based conflicts
 - Education dropouts
 - Youth become bad role models to future generations

- Youth might be utilized by terror groups like Al-Shabaab and others lost their lives by travelling to Europe.
 - Drug addiction – most of the youth gangs are khat chewers and there is no sign of it stopping.
 - The positive contribution of these youth is missing hence this affects the social transformation and economic growth of the country
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- Over 85% of the youth involved in criminal activities are between 12 up to 25 in age.
 - Over 80% of these youth's parents are separated (one of them died, they are divorced or live in different locations)
 - Some the youth gangs are dropouts while others are on the verge of dropout.
 - The boys involved are not all from poor backgrounds; some of them are sons of big business men and others are boys of the government officers who spend most of their time outside their homes.
 - Most of the young men in the criminal groups are intelligent but missed guidance and counselling

5.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations show the results of the study and suggest possible solutions to the findings:

1. Parental care awareness campaigns and training are needed in the community to avoid the continuation of youth based crimes.
2. Quranic and primary school teachers should be trained to ensure well-raised children who are mentally and spiritually healthy.
3. Adult education to increase literacy rates of the parents hence decrease divorce and child negligence.
4. Trainings of the police and enforcement of laws to ensure sustainable solutions.
5. Rehabilitation of the current criminal groups to ease them to a better future.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Dear respondent,

My name is **Mahad Ahmed Omar**, I am a researcher and conducting an academic research on **the Effects of Youth Based Urban Crimes and Violence on the community in Garowe, Puntland**. You have been selected as a key respondent in this study based on your experience on the study area. Your responses will be treated with confidentiality. Thanks for your time.

SECTION A: Profile of the Respondents

1) Gender

Female

Male

2) Age

15-20 years

20-25 years

25-30years

30 – 35years

35 and above

3) Level of education

Primary Level

Secondary Level

Diploma Level

Bachelor Level

Other

Specify: -----

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SECTION B

1. What are the common crimes committed by youth in Garowe or in your area/village?
2. Which category of the community is mostly affected by youth crimes and violence in this town?
3. Why such groups you mentioned above are mostly targeted?

4. a) Are the youth in this area educated?

Yes

No

b) If yes, what is generally their highest level of education

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

Other

c) How does the level of youth education affects crime rate in this area?

5. a) Are youth in this area employed?

b) If yes what is the nature of employment

Self employment

Employed by organization

c) If NOT employed, how does this affect their behavior in the society?

6. a) Do authorities have development plans for the youth in this area?

Yes

No

b) If not, how does this affect livelihood in this society/ youth?

7. What are short term and long term effects of youth based urban crimes on the community including youth themselves?

Short term effects

Long term effects

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8. What measures do you think can be put in place to mitigate/reduce/ prevent such crimes in Garowe?
9. What challenges do you think are involved to solve such problems?
10. Whose responsibilities are these measures?