

CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR: IS THERE ENOUGH THEORIZING?

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the literature explaining the causes of criminal behaviour with the aim of establishing a set of propositions that researchers can investigate on the relationship between punishment and intensity of crime, as well as unearth the causes of youth crime. It starts with the presentation of various juvenile delinquency models, which provide the basis for an understanding of delinquent acts and criminal conduct. Becker was one of the first economists to branch into what was traditionally considered topics integral to sociology, including crime and drug addiction, to provide an economic explanation of criminal behaviour by considering humans as rational. He argued that many different types of human behaviour can be seen as rational and utility maximizing. Becker's model is related by empirical analysis of crime from an economic angle. Since crime is also caused by other factors, the review also broaches on non-economic theories of criminal behaviour with a strong focus on the culture of poverty.

Keywords: *crime, juvenile delinquency, economics of crime, culture of poverty*

1. INTRODUCTION

This article reviews a wide range of theories with the aim of formulating a set of hypotheses that will form the basis for examining the relationship between punishment and intensity of crime, as well as for conjecturing on the causes of youth crime. Owing to the broad and extensive scope of factors that cause crime and overlapping nature of the extant literature on crime, this paper goes beyond juvenile and youth crimes to establish the theoretic guide for the paper.

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The sociological and economics literature on crime (Ludwig et al. 2001; Ching-Chi Hsieh and Pugh, 1993; Kawachiaet al., 1999) posits poverty as the overarching factor that causes a wide range of social vices, out of which criminal activities stand out as a major consequence. Indeed, it is common to see residences of the rich heavily secured with proper fencing and armed guards, particularly when they are situated amidst the hardcore poor, which contrasts with areas solely occupied by the rich where security is not a priority. However, areas solely occupied by the poor are usually characterized by intense competition for scarce basic resources and the absence or inadequacy of social structures like schools and recreational centres, which serve as breeding grounds for blue collar crime (Lee & Rasiah, 2015).

In search of the right research questions to examine crime, we take a leaf out of Cooter and Ulen's (2004) who aptly noted that theories of crime must answer two questions, which are: "What acts should be punished?" and "What extent of punishment would befit each of the crimes committed?" The first question delves into distinguishing the criteria of a crime, and the second question seeks to calibrate punishment with crime. As such, this article aims to investigate and review the literature on criminal justice to offer a profound understanding of the relationship between crime and punishment.

This paper will assist in unveiling different factors that engender crime so as to fortify the analytical base for problematic crimes. The rest of the article is divided into six sections. Section 2 provides an overview of juvenile delinquency models, which are categorized into non-economic crime and economic crime; followed by Section 3 which shows an extensive recap of studies aimed at comparing the economics of adult crime and youth crime. Section 4 analyses documented juvenile crime cases so as to extract its basic causes in an inductive way. Section 5 examines empirical studies on juvenile delinquencies in Malaysia and Section 6 concludes the findings of the study.

2. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY MODELS

Crime has never been defined adequately due to its ambiguous and multifaceted nature. Hence, besides poverty, the tracing of other causal factors have remained difficult. In order to understand and explain the overall anatomy of what causes crime, several perspectives must be taken into consideration. Traditional theories by sociologists, psychologists, criminologists and the relatively new applied microeconomics theory have offered a variety of explanations that has given rise

to a plethora of theories and models that relay the logic behind the occurrence of crime. Owing to the wide range of factors that underpin juvenile delinquent acts, different postulations have presented varying dimensions towards approaching the case, all of which have been categorized in this study into non-economic and economic crime models.

Non-economic crime models shed light on crimes that emanate from non-economic causes e.g. psychological and genetics. These models serve as guides to the different types of decisions that are made on behalf of or against specific juveniles or youth offenders. Economic crime models apply microeconomic theory to study the causes and consequences of criminal behaviour.

2.1 Non-Economic Crime Models

Non-economic crimes are crimes that are completely devoid of monetary linkages, which are motivated by social and psychological reasons. Such crimes are comprised of alcohol abuse, rape, drug abuse, child abuse and so on (see Zimmerman, 2003; Boyum and Kleiman, 1995). Different models have been developed to serve as instruments to understand the forces behind crime committed in this category. Four models will be examined, which include crime control and due process models developed by Packer (1968) and other contemporary models, notably the rehabilitation model and the nurturing model (see Siegel, 2008; Marsal, Bass and Jackson, 2007).

2.1.1 Crime Control Model

The crime control model theorizes that juvenile delinquency can be reduced through incapacitating juvenile offenders, either through secure incarceration or through intensive supervision programmes. The model strongly upholds the assumption that repression of criminal conduct is by far the most important function of the criminal control process (Packer, 1964). However, the execution of this theory not only harshly removes rehabilitation options, it also relies on the delivery of rational trial procedures. The model also hinges on the presumption of guilt, implying that the delinquent is guilty until proven innocent; its effectiveness determined by the efficiency of law enforcement agents and the judiciary in the course of ensuring strict obedience to the rule and maintenance of law and order, which is attainable through rigorous arrests, recommended punishments and zero tolerance on criminal behaviour.

There are several problems with this model. Among them include the assumption that the agents involved in the arrest of the 'criminal' and the subsequent legal process are rational with adequate information accessed by all the agents. Also, the execution of this theory depends on the presiding political climate, especially the government's responsiveness to promote a proactive crime control. What this denotes is that the model cannot thrive under a government plagued by corruption, rent seeking and other administrative vices. Frequent checks, monitoring and discipline is highly required to be carried out by superiors on subordinates. Any lapse in this oversight function degenerates to misconduct on the part of law enforcement agents and officers of the judiciary due to the discretionary powers they possess, which can be abused.

2.1.2 Due Process Model

The due process model is an integral feature of the criminal justice system, which has the primary goal of ensuring that juveniles are subjected to a free and fair process of indictment. The due process model is not concerned by causality, and is instead solely concerned with upholding and ensuring that due process is adhered to as contained in the justice system. The model is based on the principle that an individual cannot be deprived of life, liberty, or property without appropriate legal procedures and safeguards (Schmallegger, 1999). Any person that is charged with a crime is required to have their rights protected by the criminal justice system under the due process model.

Due process encompasses the following: the right to fair trial; freedom and opportunity to be heard; access to sufficient information on matters pending; presumed innocent until proven guilty; make an informed choice whether to acquiesce or contest, and to provide the reasons for such a choice before a judicial official. An important aspect of the due process model requires that police officers must have probable cause to justify the arrest. What this means is that, a suspect's constitutional rights are given considerable weight in comparison with any incriminating evidence obtained by the police.

Intake officers³ who are aware of the principles underlying the due process model are cautious in the course of discharging their duties

³ Intake refers to the procedure by which staffs of the juvenile court decide whether to further process the case in court, handle the case informally, or dismiss the case.

owing to the fact that juveniles' rights are fully protected at every stage of juvenile justice process. These officers pay particular attention to how evidence is gathered by police against certain juveniles, whether the juvenile's constitutional rights are protected, and whether police officers have advised juveniles of their rights to counsel at the time of arrest and/or subsequent interrogations.

The due process model requires decision making in the juvenile justice system to be free from any sort of influence that could disrupt the proceedings. This model works well only when society is well informed and juvenile delinquents, as well as their families are aware of their rights, which could be properly guarded through a counsel.

The obvious difference between the due process model and crime control model is that the former stresses that an individual is innocent until proven guilty whereas the latter presumes an individual as guilty until proven innocent. The due process model is more democratic and widely practiced because it permits the exercise of individual rights and ensures that justice prevails, thus prevents abuses, malpractices and circumvention of the basic principles of the legal process.

2.1.3 Rehabilitation Model

This model assumes that juvenile delinquency or delinquent conduct is the result of bad influences from peer groups, poor social adjustments, wrong educational priorities, and/or a general failure by individuals to envision realistic life goals and inculcate appropriate moral values (Whyte, 1981). This model specifically aims at correcting or rehabilitating delinquents through programmes designed to change offenders' attitudes, personalities or character through therapeutic, educational or vocational programmes.

As the name implies, the model focuses on rehabilitation or treatment rather than the prevention of future delinquent acts. In other words, this model is not a holistic approach geared towards tackling the ongoing and rising trend of juvenile delinquencies, but to correct and reform. As such, the model is more or less a last resort to address the problem of juvenile delinquency due to its correctional values rather than its preventive values.

2.1.4 Nurturing Model

The contemporary nurturing model has emerged through partnerships between police officers, probation officers, parents, community residents, teachers and social service workers. It is unique in that it takes into account issues of diversity such as race, gender, religion and sexual preference. The presumption behind this model is that in order for youths to desist from delinquent behaviour, a holistic approach must be adopted that will include the child and all other significant persons in the child's life.

This model provides the avenue for both the child and his or her custodians to accept responsibility for any sort of repercussion that arises from the child's delinquent behaviour. The main shortcoming associated with this model rests with the fact that it involves a large number of people, which makes it unfeasible in reality.

Overall, in spite of the fact that these models seek social order clean of crime, they have not been effective in curbing delinquent problems or significantly reducing crime among youths (Jackson and Knepper, 2003). For these models to be fruitful and effective, extensive follow up of the principles that heralded their formation is essential and participatory methodologies must be identified and used to examine their effects on curbing juvenile crime.

2.2 Economic Crime Model

Some economists believe that specific economic theories can be used to explain why people commit crime. Arguably the most sourced economic explanation was provided by Becker (1968) who developed an economic theory for explaining criminal conduct in response to sociological, criminological and psychological theories, all of which is based on skull type theories encompassing biological inheritance, differential association, anomie and family upbringing (Hirshi, 1969; Merton, 1938, 1957). Becker's economic theory according to Pyle (1982) set a new paradigm to understand crime occurrence by subjecting its occurrence to utility, risks and rewards.

Consistent with the neoclassical theory of rational choice (Friedman and Savage, 1948), a consumer will respond to an increase in the price (cost) of a good or service by purchasing less quantity of that good or service and vice versa, so will the criminal or potential criminal react to sanctions or punishment (cost) by

putting up attitudes of caution and as such will be discouraged from committing a crime as the punishment involved increases in relation to the benefits that can be appropriated.

2.2.1 Criminal Behaviour Model

The criminal behaviour model had its roots in Becker's (1993) framework, which provided the genesis of the Beckerian Criminal Behaviour Model. Gary S. Becker⁴ had driven in the 1960s to Columbia University for an oral examination involving a student in economic theory. He was late, and hence, was deciding whether to park his car in a parking lot or risk getting a ticket for parking illegally on the street. He then calculated the likelihood of getting a ticket, the size of the penalty, and the cost of putting the car in a lot. On the basis of his calculations, he decided to take the risk and park his car on the street.

As he walked a few blocks to the examination room, it occurred to him that the city authorities had probably gone through a similar analysis as him. The frequency of their inspection of parked vehicles and the size of the penalty imposed on violators should depend on their estimation of the type of calculation potential violators like him would make. From there, he started to work out the optimal behaviour of both offenders and the police.

Becker (1993) contended that criminals behaved basically like all other individuals owing to the fact that they consistently attempt to maximize utility subject to budget constraints. The most important and distinguishing characteristic of criminal activities have always been the inherent uncertainty of the rewards associated with it. The possibility of detection and subsequent punishment made the returns from criminal activities uncertain compared with returns from engaging in legitimate economic activity.

2.2.2 Becker's Criminal Behaviour Model

The economic literature on crime and punishment that was initiated by Becker (1968) provides a scientific theory, albeit its use of mechanistic assumptions that humans are rational, and that markets

⁴ Gary Stanley Becker (2 December 1930- 3 May 2014) was an American economist and professor of economics and sociology at the University of Chicago, United States. He was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1992.

will always clear in the absence of interventions, for predicting the effects of legal sanctions on behaviour. Taking it from the perspective of mainstream economics, sanctions can be viewed as prices, and presumably, people respond to these sanctions much as they respond to prices. People respond to higher prices by consuming less of expensive goods; meaning, people respond to heavier legal sanctions by doing less of the sanctioned activity. From the works of Cooter and Allen (2004), it can be discerned that Becker considered that economics can benefit from mathematically precise modelling (price theory and game theory) and empirically sound methods (statistics and econometrics) for analysing the effects of prices on behaviour.

Furthermore, Becker's (1968) work suggests that an individual's decision to commit a crime could be analysed by exactly the same kind of tools for other individual decisions through the use of the utility theory. His basic contention was that all individuals were rational utility-maximisers, which subsequently underpin their decisions to commit or not to commit a particular crime. This is done by comparing and weighing the utility likely to be derived from acting illegally, as well as the likely benefits that will be obtained through the constructive use of time and other resources in the pursuit of legal and licit endeavours.

To Becker (1968, 1993), it is pertinent that the decision depends on expected rewards from the alternative activities, and since crime is an inherently risky activity, the individual concerned exhibit attitudes that are sanctioned by the risk involved in the illicit act. An individual is inclined to commit criminal acts not because his motivation differs from that of other individuals, but because his conception of the costs and benefits associated with criminal acts is different or that his perception of the probability of being caught is different or simply because his attitude to risk is different.

Becker's (1993) model is a relatively straightforward application of choice theory in situations of risk. He chose to formulate the problem in terms of the subjective expected utility hypothesis. The individual is assumed to obey the Von Neumann-Morgenstern axioms for behaviour under risk. This means he or she compares and weighs the expected utility to be gained from the risky alternative (engaging in crime) with the gains likely to be obtained from activities devoid of risk (legitimate employment). In doing so, Becker (1993) implicitly assumed that the returns from legitimate work to be riskless.

2.2.3 Becker's Utility Equation for Committing a Crime

Just as it is done in mainstream economics, Becker (1968) applied similar formula to logically explain the behavioural considerations that underpin an individual's decision to commit a crime. Starting with the 'gain' in expected utility from committing an offence, Becker's notation is given by:

$$EU = pU(Y - f) + (1 - p) U(Y) \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Where,

- EU is the expected utility for the individual,
- p is the subjective probability of being caught and convicted,
- f is the monetary equivalent of the punishment if convicted of the offence,
- Y is the gain from committing the offence, and
- $U ()$ is the individual's von Neumann-Morgenstern utility index.

Decision to commit an offence or otherwise,

- (i) If EU is positive, then the individual will commit the offence, but
- (ii) If EU is negative, then the individual will not commit the offence

On this basis, Becker postulated a supply of offensive functions for the i th individual, which takes the form,

$$O_i = O_i(L_i, p_i, u_i)$$

Where,

O_i is the number of offences committed per period of time by the i th individual U_i is a portmanteau variable representing all other influences

Becker then suggested a 'market' supply of offences function, which had the same general form,

$O = O(L, p, u)$ where L , p and u are average value of L_i , p_i , and u_i respectively. From the theoretical perspective, Becker's predictions about the response of offences to changes in p and L were < 0 .

Becker's (1968) predictions on deterrent effects of punishment were unambiguous, a view not always shared by others (see Pyle, 1983; Lee and Rasiah, 2015). The economics model of crime, as postulated by Becker, lends support to the deterrence theory of crime, which postulates that increases in the certainty and severity of punishment strongly deters crime (Cooter and Allen, 2004). However, Becker's theory has relatively little to offer with regards to the magnitude of these deterrence effects, particularly, the selection of the most effective methods owing to his unanimous conviction that both punishment (p) or severity of punishment (L) are effective deterrence models that hinges on attitudes of individuals on risk.

Reordering Becker's (1968) model for empirical investigation to link the determinants of crime with sanctions (penalty), we obtain the following model:

$$O = O(p, f, X)$$

Where,

O is the number of offences committed per period of time,

p is the probability of detection/conviction,

f is a measure of severity of punishment (in monetary form), and

X is a vector of socioeconomic variables.

While the basic Becker's (1968) model rests on the utility of the crime against the penalty, it is useful in the economic sense to examine earlier if punishment meted is commensurate with the crime committed. Indeed, this is the basic premise by the author's colleagues and advisors in the police force have often called for.

The relationship to be examined here will be as follows:-

$$f = IC$$

Where,

f – is the severity of punishment, and

IC – is the intensity of crime

3. TESTING BECKER'S MODEL

The Becker model provides a framework for examining crime from an economic angle. Despite the dodgy assumption that humans are rational agents whose conduct is shaped by the pursuit of optimization, Becker's theory gave rise a plethora of studies. This section examines different studies on adult and youth crime based on Becker's economic crime model.

3.1 Economics of Adult Crime

Starting with Ehrlich's (1973) empirical analysis of crime rates at the state-level and enforcement-related expenditures, the survey findings show that increased enforcement-related expenditures did reduce crime rates. Similarly, through the use of city-level crime data, Mathur validated Becker's theory from his findings on how an improvement in policing and a rise in the severity of punishment offers immense potential to reduce the likelihood for crimes to be committed. Both results suggest that an improvement in crime surveillance and rising penalties will reduce crime rates.

Putting it coherently, Holtmann and Yap (1978) used Becker's theory to examine whether crimes are substitutes or complements to one another through a close study on three types of crimes, namely; burglary, robbery and larceny using U.S. state-level data. They constructed a simultaneous model with each offence rate and the probability of imprisonment for each offence as endogenous variables and arrived at interesting results. Starting with the equation on burglary offences, the results show that whilst increased probability of imprisonment for burglary did deter burglaries, increases in the probability of imprisonment for both robbery and larceny tend to increase burglary offences. This suggests that burglary is regarded by robbers and thieves as a substitute activity. For larceny, the only significant deterrent variable was the probability of imprisonment for burglary, which had a negative coefficient, thus suggesting a complementary link between robbery and larceny.

Meanwhile, Heineke (1978c) offered a rigorous treatment of the relationship between crimes and legitimate activity. Through a similar study of offences like burglary, larceny and robbery as employed by Holtmann and Yap (1978), Heineke uncovered that one expected return seem to play a fairly larger role in the determination of both legitimate and illegitimate activity levels than the returns from any competing or complementary activities. The cross-effects between robbery and larceny were highly significant and supported the view that they are complementary activities. On the other hand, wealth effects from illegal activities were all negative and large.

Tauchen et al. (1994) found robust evidence of a general deterrence effect from increased policing or police resources. They analysed criminal behaviour of a cohort sample of young men over an eight-year period using random effects by deploying Probit and Tobit techniques. Accordingly, the results regarding general deterrence are open to fewer questions than previous findings. These findings show that working and going to school significantly decreases the probability of committing criminal acts, and by virtually identical amounts. This similarity of effect when coupled with other findings suggests that crime does not serve mainly as a direct source of income and that incentive effects emanating from higher wages are not very strong. In the same vein, Cloninger (1994) provided evidence to show that police presence deters the commission of violent crimes by increasing the risk of being punished for committing crimes. However, these studies have relied on macro-level data with the use of aggregate statistics in relation to cities, provinces and nations.

In contrast, using micro-level data, Manski (1978) considered the advantages of testing the economic/deterrence hypothesis. He argued that it is difficult to make inferences from macro-level studies because of the problems caused by measurement errors and simultaneity issues.

In tandem with Manski (1978), Witte (1980) attempted to study the economic model of crime using individual-level data. Using a sample of 641 released prisoners from the North Carolina prison, her findings shows that certainty of punishment produced a stronger deterrent effect than severity of punishment. In addition, certainty of punishment seemed to exert a greater rather than less effect on serious offenders. However, Witte's (1980) sample does not satisfy the criteria set out by Manski (1978). It is biased owing to the fact that only convicted criminals were considered. Nevertheless, Pyle (1983) argued that the economic model seems to work despite the fact that the model suggests a meagre deterrence effect and significance amongst convicted criminals than the population as a whole (Pyle, 1983).

In general, the results obtained from most of the studies examined have been quite mixed, however the overall evidence seem to pull considerable weight in support of the economics of the crime model. A good example is in Finland where Viren (1994) used two sets of data, namely; Finnish annual crime data and international cross-country data to test the economics of crime model. The results obtained from the two sets lend credence to Becker's economics of crime model, and in comparison, the results from the Finnish data are much more accurate than the results from international cross-country data. Viren concluded that both apprehension and imprisonment could reduce crimes, i.e. a 30% decrease in

crime in Finland could be achieved by increasing the apprehension rate by 10% and by increasing punishments by the equivalent of one month imprisonment. The difference in results on both studies lies in the data. A good data set from another country for instance, Malaysia could be a good case to experiment the empirical testing of the economics of crime model.

Similarly, Withers (1984) used Australian data to test Becker's model. Relevant data were obtained from Australian States and Territories over the period 1964-76. In addition to court committals and imprisonments operating as major deterrent factors in explaining variations in recorded crime rates, ethnicity and race also had significant effects on crime rates.

In addition, Lee (1997) used a sample of 92 convicted criminals drawn from various prisons in Malaysia to test the Becker thesis (1993). Though the sample seemed small, the findings concur and lend credence to Becker's Model of adult criminal behaviour. The results showed that regressive punishment system imposed on adult criminals has stimulated them to further indulge in serious commercial crimes, which is accrued to the weakness or absence of an effective deterrence system. A further finding reveals that criminal perception towards probability of arrest was the same for committing either a serious or less serious crime.

3.2 Economics of Youth Crime

Can the Becker model be applied to juveniles? So far most studies deploying Becker's (1993) theory are on adult criminal cases. Levitt (1998) was among the earliest to examine the impact of deterrent sentences from incapacitation effects involving juveniles; using a comparative study of juvenile and adult punishment rates for crimes committed within the period of 1978-1993. His findings show that changes in the relative incarceration rates of juveniles and adults accounted for approximately 60% of the differences in crime rates. This evidence allows us to conclude that juvenile offenders are as responsive as adults to criminal sanctions. Punishment has a deterrent effect on juvenile offenders when viewed from the context of Becker's model of criminal behaviour.

Meanwhile, Mocan and Rees (2005) conducted a survey in 1995 using U.S. high school male and female students to investigate the determinants of criminal activity among juveniles, and discovered a negative relationship between punishment and juvenile criminal activity. Specifically, higher violent crime arrest rates reduced the probability of selling drugs and assaulting someone for male juveniles, and reduced the probability of selling drugs and stealing for females.

Correspondingly, the results provided some evidence that juveniles respond to incentive and sanctions; recommending increased employment opportunities and policies designed to increase the probability of arrest as effective tools for reducing juvenile crime.

Levitt (1998) used three different data sets to analyse the determinants of juvenile crime in the United States with a focus on socio economic factors. The individual-level analysis using National Longitudinal Survey Youth (NLSY) showed factors, such as gender, family, environment and cognitive ability to be important in predicting criminal involvement among the juveniles. Secondly, the census-tract level panel data from Chicago points to the negative effect of unstable homes, high concentrations of children in poverty and income inequality. Thirdly, the state-level panel data demonstrates the importance of the criminal justice system in restraining criminality. The results also show that the incidence of crime drops sharply in those states where adults are punished severely.

Rashid (2004) investigated whether variation in punishment levels has any impact on violent juvenile crimes in the United States. His analysis reveals that juvenile violent crime rates are negatively affected by increase in juvenile punishment, which confirms that violent juvenile crime rates respond negatively to increases in punishment, and that differences in the punitiveness of juvenile and adult justice system translates into differences in crime rates for these groups respectively. Rashid (2004) was sceptical about Levitt's (1998) assertion that immediate changes in crime rates when a juvenile becomes an adult reflect deterrence as opposed to punitiveness. In other words, he is of the view that it is difficult to distinguish deterrence from incapacitation effects.

Overall, it can be seen that a number of variables affect the intensity and incidence of crime. While these relationships are largely found to occur in adults, studies on juveniles will be important to distinguish if these results are the same among youngsters. Consequently, we turn to studies examining non-economic factors that influence youth crime in the next section.

4. NON-ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE JUVENILE AND YOUTH CRIME

In tandem with adult crime, the causes of juvenile and youth crime are diverse and multifaceted, and hence, has heralded many to study into specific aspects of possible factors that influence its rising and continuous trend. The most common factors instrumental to juvenile and youth crime as highlighted by many

studies include; individual behavioural problems, gender, socio-economic status and poverty, deviant parental behaviours, education, socialization process and so on.

4.1 Behavioural Problems

A number of studies conducted across different countries have found that childhood behavioural problems in the form of aggressive and temperamental behaviour to be some of the best predictors of adolescent and adult criminality (Haapasalo and Tremblay, 1994; Huesmann et al., 1984). There are also accounts that argue how poverty creates its own culture, particularly among communities entrenched in a vicious circle of poverty; where powerlessness and hopelessness translates into families that are denied access to nutrition, education and other basic necessities of life (Lewis, 1966).

4.2 Gender

There is no denial that the single best predictor of crime is gender, though, it helps little in understanding the causes of poverty. In virtually every country with crime records, the likelihood of males committing crime in general, and serious crimes in particular is much higher than females (see Wilson and Hernstein, 1985; Lee and Rasiah, 2015). A possible explanation for this fact rests on the assumption that males right from childhood are predisposed to occupying lead roles, which simultaneously gives them the effrontery to trigger new events and activities as well as, tread on dangerous grounds from where criminal intentions and activities emanate.

4.3 Social Status and Poverty

Some etiological factors instrumental that cause juvenile delinquency are tagged as trigger factors, all of which are amplified when families constitute poor neighbourhoods. Squalor communities are often associated with crime – for both adults and youths. It is common to observe the following characteristics in poor communities. Families with large numbers of children lack sufficient resources to cater for the children, which is often associated with child abuse, uneducated parents, single parenthood and other family vices that are instrumental to juvenile and youth crime. Also, low socio-economic status, unemployment, poor parental supervision, lack of capacity to nurture the children due to migration and adaptation problems, weak regulatory role of the family due to the weakness of the public regulatory system and the traditional structure of families are significant factors that underpins juvenile delinquency (Lynam et al., 2000; Slomkowski et al., 2001).

4.4 Deviant Parental Behaviour

Several research findings have also shown that deviant parental behaviour contributes to juvenile and youth delinquencies, these studies (Hawkins et.al., 1987; Huesmann et al., 1984) have demonstrated that parental criminal activity particularly, father criminality predicted recidivism which translates into susceptibility of the juvenile or youth to commit crime.

More evidence show that siblings imbibe delinquency patterns from others in the family. Glueck and Glueck (1950) argue that a much higher proportion of delinquents than non-delinquents had delinquent sibling and/or criminal mothers and fathers. Robins, West, and Herjanic (1975) results corroborate this as 57% of the delinquent boys in their research sample had fathers with criminal records.

4.5 Education

There have been mixed findings on education by itself (in the absence of its link with poverty) as an index of juvenile or youth delinquencies. Factors, such as poor academic achievement or school failure and school attendance are significant indicators of juvenile and youth delinquency. Consistent with Loeber and Dishion (1983), poor academic achievement has been associated with adolescents' offending or recidivism.

4.6 Socialization

The behaviour of the child or youth is often conditioned by the socialization process. In this process, the community's values, norms, behavioural patterns, social relations and public institutions such as families, schools, the media and peers are assimilated or adopted by youths (Paetsch and Bertrant, 1997; Romero et.al., 2001; Vitaro, Brendgen, and Tremblay, 2000). Andrews and Bonta (1998) reported that individuals who come from families with criminal background are at high risk of trailing on the criminal path, particularly due to absence of moral values that could dissuade such individuals from criminal acts. Other studies also suggest that a family member with prior criminal record often exerts great influence on the development of criminality in the offspring (Wilson, 1987), which concurs with the findings of Farrington (1997), whose evidence show that the influence of a delinquent sibling is a predictor of delinquency.

To capture the social influences as a separate factor, some deploy oral history methodology to identify if socio-cultural and psychological factors are important in explaining the occurrence of youth crime (Lee and Rasiah, 2015). Such a framework will help in the course of testing sociological notion that youth

criminals are likely to come from families that are associated with particular socio-cultural characteristics such as poverty, broken families, single parenthood and low levels of education.

Hence, what is in contention is not whether poor households are associated with crime, but whether a broader range of social attributes that relate to the poor broken families, single parenthood, low or no schooling experience and exposure to peer members associated with underground activities such as theft, smuggling and drugs – are equally important in explaining youth crime. The policy implications of the latter are far broader than income levels as it would require breaking down of the vicious circle of poverty.

5. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN MALAYSIA

Realizing the seriousness of the problem and its potential negative impact on the well-being of the nation, some studies have been carried out by local researchers on juvenile delinquencies and juvenile crimes. The work of Ishak (1978) stands out as a pioneering study to have delved into the causes of juvenile crime in Malaysia. In his monograph, he explained the causes of crime among juveniles and the mechanism to solve the menace. Outlining several causes of juvenile delinquencies which will be discussed subsequently in this section, Ishak (1978) though devoid of any empirical analysis, recommended the adoption of an integrated approach which involves many parties, namely: family institution, school authority, welfare department, court and police.

Approaching it from the shortfall inherent in the police force, Chua's (1978) dissertation on the 'effectiveness of the police in combating juvenile crime in Malaysia' employed a sample of 30 respondents from the district of Kuching Police Station, which is his research location. The finding shows that the police in Kuching have not effectively solved the rising problem of juvenile crime due to factors like lack of experienced police officers, shortage of police personnel and logistical problems. Though the sample size used can be considered too small to generalize the problems faced by the police in combating crime among juveniles in Kuching, however, it provides a direction to a deficit on the part of officials tasked with responsibilities of checking, arresting and abating juvenile criminal offences.

The work by Kasmini et.al., (2002) on juvenile delinquencies in Malaysia stands out as one of the most comprehensive studies carried out so far. They used 241 observations by comparing two groups of respondents, namely juvenile delinquents and non-delinquents for both gender. The empirical evidence showed that three

factors, namely individual, family and environment remain strong contributory factors to the probability of juveniles committing criminal offences. The study ignites a good start for more and larger scale research on juvenile crime; simply to examine the problem nationwide.

In the same vein, Hamdani (2003) specifically set his theoretical search on the behaviour of male delinquents. Using a sample size of 100 male juveniles undergoing rehabilitation at Telok Mas Henry Gurney School in Malacca, Hamdani replicated findings by Kasmini et.al., (2002), which show that individual, family and environment were the main causes of juveniles indulging in crime.

Subsequently, Jalaludin (2005) examined the causes of juvenile delinquency using inmates from Tunas Bakti School and Henry Gurney School. His findings revealed five main factors that underpin criminal motivation among the respondents. These factors are: parental guidance, poverty, religion, peer pressure and environment. Jalaludin's work reinforced and concurred with most of the findings discovered by Kasmini et.al., (2002) and Hamdani (2003). Nevertheless, the former discovered an additional factor that is reasonable belief in religion; which could discourage an individual from indulging in delinquent acts and misconducts. The influence of religion as a deterrent to crime is relatively new in criminal research. As such, more research should be carried out to ascertain if religion plays a significant role in preventing misconduct among youths, though one might argue that religion has taken on such a complex set of directions that it is difficult to establish a clear hypothesis between religion and crime. A case in point are the acts of violent extremism and terrorism that have increasingly become a serious threat to humankind.

6. CONCLUSION

The literature review offered a number of propositions for examination. First, it is useful to examine if the general perception towards crime can be contained by imposing increasing penalties according to the increasing intensities of crime. The question here is whether increasing penalties with the severity of crime is sufficient to discourage crime. While the judicial system on crime tends to impose penalties on the basis of its severity, the answers are not obvious as the causes are very wide ranging.

By and large, Becker's model has been the most persuasive theoretical anchor in studies of crime, including youth crime but it largely explains the likelihood of crime occurring in relative terms on the basis of utility, risks and rewards.

Hence, it is important that Becker's model – which posits that the probability of committing crime rises when the utility of that crime is high, and against the gap between the risk of getting caught and the potential benefit that can be gained from committing it – is examined. It is also useful to examine the relationship between poverty and intensity of crime, which is expected to be inversely correlated as its utility of small monetary rewards will be high among the poor.

However, Becker's (1993) model does not capture the social orientation of humans. Hence, this paper reviewed other influences to examine the causes of, as well as a number of non-economic theories on crime. In so doing, we focused on the question of whether the poor are characterised specifically that drove them to commit crime as argued by the sociological and cultural experts (Lewis, 1966). Are poor youths characterized by broken families whose value of life is either low, or simply driven by the circumstances to commit crime? Culture of poverty is often characterized by humans having little pocket money, early exit from schooling, exposure to household and influence by peer members with crime records and little space for recreation.

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