

# **Social Determinants And Gendered Pathways To Juvenile Delinquency Among Adolescents In Kirigiti And Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres, Kiambu County, Kenya**

Doreen Mulwa, Dr. Wanjiku Musili, Dr. Teresa Waithera

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigates the influence of social factors on gender-based juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres in Kiambu County, Kenya. Grounded in Social Learning Theory, Differential Opportunity Theory, and Social Strain Theory, the research examines how family structure, peer group dynamics, family support, and family conflict shape delinquent behaviours differently in male and female adolescents. Using a mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected from structured questionnaires and analysed through correlation and regression models to determine the strength of social predictors on delinquency. The findings reveal that family structure and peer influence significantly contribute to male delinquency, while family conflict and lack of emotional support are more pronounced among female offenders. Social groupings emerged as a critical determinant for both genders, though the motivations differed—males often driven by status and dominance within peer networks, and females by acceptance and emotional refuge. The study concludes that gender-specific social determinants require differentiated interventions within juvenile justice systems. Policy implications include strengthening family-based interventions, peer mentorship, and gender-responsive psychosocial support within rehabilitation programmes.*

**Keywords:** *Juvenile delinquency, social factors, gender differences, family structure, peer influence, Kenya*

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## **I. Background**

The fact that children are the foundation of society and the cornerstone of nations is not a matter of debate (Munyo, 2013). Nations rely on children as their hope for building future glory as they establish civilisations. However, the dynamic social environments in which these children grow have presented numerous challenges and threats facing adolescents worldwide. The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is one of the most significant risks that surrounds and worries these teenagers, the community, and social harmony (National Crime Research Centre [NCRC], 2018). Juvenile delinquency has become a global concern, as noted by Omondi (2021). It is important to address societal issues before they become more entrenched. Due to the complexity of the causes influencing the rising trend of juvenile delinquency, numerous investigations are required to develop effective policy.

According to estimates, in 1992, there were 80 million children worldwide at risk of becoming delinquents; this number increased to 150 million in 2000 and exceeded 500 million in 2015 (World Youth Report, 2003). (Providence Health Team, 2017). Since 1995, the percentage of juvenile crimes has risen by more than thirty per cent in many developed countries (Kyamana, 2015). Between the mid-1980s and the late 1990s, juvenile delinquency and minor offending increased by an average of 50 per cent across Western Europe. Delinquency rates have also surged in transitioning countries; in certain Eastern European and Commonwealth of Independent States nations, juvenile criminality rates have risen by over 30 per cent since 1995 (UN-Habitat, 2017). Juvenile delinquency accounts for 1.2% of India's overall crime rate, according to Mishra *et al.* (2018).

In Kenya, the situation is equally concerning. According to Kaberia (2016), there are 12,000 children aged between 6 and 17 years serving sentences in the justice system in Kenya. Of these, 74.6% are boys, while 25.4% are girls. As Waithima & Omondi (2017) and Naomi (2017) note, the juvenile crime rate has risen considerably, with adolescents and youths displaying behavioural issues. Those in rehabilitation centres exhibit the most common of these behavioural problems among young people. Their behaviours show disorder and depression (Waithima & Omondi, 2017; Naomi, 2017). Studies conducted on some of these individuals into adulthood reveal that their antisocial behaviour during adolescence increased the risk of entering into criminality as adults (Mbiriri, 2017).

Studies have indicated that factors related to juvenile delinquency are numerous, depending on the situation, and this impacts girls and boys differently (Child Trends, 2015). The group's average educational level is relatively low, and the basic social experiences learned within the family are frequently inadequate (United Nations [UN], 1995).

The situation with adolescent delinquency is worsening because developing countries have done little to address these issues (Olugbade, 2019) and because international programmes are not providing enough support. Many government agencies in Kenya are engaged in initiatives to reduce adolescent crime; however, these efforts usually have limited impact, partly due to the lack of comparable local and national data.

To best aid efforts in curtailing further increases in juvenile delinquency in Kenya, especially in cosmopolitan regions like Kiambu, Comparative research and comprehension of risk variables in male and female adolescents is crucial. These risk variables need to be analysed from a gendered perspective because the development of delinquency in adolescence takes place in a multifaceted interaction environment marked by risk effects acting simultaneously.

In Kiambu County, the cases of adolescent offenders who have been apprehended have been increasing in the recent past, with some having been taken to the correctional facilities to serve their sentence for the crimes that they have committed (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Office for Eastern Africa [UNODC-ROEA], 2022). On the one hand, the proportion of incarcerated adolescents and even the youths who come back to the justice system is terrifying. Out of the reported cases in Kiambu, 57% include offenders who are under 20 years old (NCRC, 2018; UNDP, 2017). In terms of juvenile crime instances, Kiambu County leads the distribution in Kenya. There is a growing number of children admitted to juvenile remand homes as well as juvenile rehabilitation centres, especially in Kiambu County, and the population of the incarcerated is beyond the capacity of the centres. The juvenile delinquents in the three rehabilitation centres mainly come from urban areas where there are diverse social backgrounds, mixed economic setups, and variant cultural dynamics.

The establishment of Kirigiti Girls Rehabilitation School and Kamiti Youth Corrective Training Centre (YCTC) marks Kenya's transformation in managing juvenile offenders from punitive colonial practices to modern rehabilitative approaches. Both institutions arose from the realization that young offenders required moral guidance, education, and reintegration rather than imprisonment.

Kirigiti Rehabilitation School, located in Kiambu County, was converted in 1964 from a former colonial detention camp into a rehabilitation facility for girls under the *Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 141)*, later strengthened by the *Children's Act (Cap. 586)*. It was initially designed to reform juveniles aged 12–17 involved in delinquency or neglect through discipline, education, and training. Initially a custodial facility, it gradually adopted an educational and psychosocial model during the 1970s and 1980s. Supported by government and faith-based partners, Kirigiti introduced academic and vocational programs in tailoring, hairdressing, home economics, and agriculture, complemented by sports, clubs, and counselling to enhance social adjustment. Studies (IISTE, 2017; OAG, 2019) indicate a marked shift from punishment toward empowerment and rehabilitation. Despite persistent challenges such as overcrowding, limited staff, and aging infrastructure, Kirigiti remains Kenya's leading juveniles' rehabilitation centre.

Kamiti Youth Corrective Training Centre was established in 1962 and legally recognized in 1963 under the *Prisons Act (Cap. 90)* as a facility for young juvenile offenders aged 17–21. It adopted a British-inspired "corrective training" model focusing on discipline, moral instruction, and vocational work over long imprisonment. Programs in carpentry, masonry, tailoring, and agriculture aimed to instil responsibility and self-reliance among short-term inmates serving four- to six-month sentences. Over the decades, Kamiti evolved as Kenya's main corrective centre for young juveniles, aligning with reforms that emphasized rehabilitation following the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*. Government and NGO partnerships in the 2000s enhanced vocational and counselling services, though studies (Namu, 2017; KNCHR, 2022) reveal continued underfunding, inadequate personnel, and mental health concerns.

Today, Kirigiti and Kamiti form the backbone of Kenya's juvenile rehabilitation system. Kirigiti is under the Directorate of Children's Services, and Kamiti is under the Prisons Service. Both institutions have evolved from punitive legacies to child-centred, reformative models guided by the *Children Act (2022)* and *National Child Protection Policy (2019)*. Despite ongoing challenges—overcrowding, limited infrastructure, and weak aftercare—recent collaborations with UNICEF, UNODC, and civil society continue to modernise programs and promote non-custodial alternatives. Together, they symbolise Kenya's enduring commitment to transforming juvenile justice from confinement toward holistic rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Despite the escalating cases, there is limited empirical research that explores the social determinants and gendered pathways to juvenile delinquency among adolescents in these institutions. Existing data are largely descriptive and fail to provide a gender-sensitive analysis of how social factors shape delinquent behaviour among male and female adolescents. This has resulted in a knowledge gap that hinders the formulation of targeted, evidence-based interventions and policies responsive to gender-specific risks and needs.

Consequently, this study was conceived to fill this critical gap by examining the social determinants and gendered pathways to juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres, Kiambu County, Kenya. Understanding the gendered dimensions of these determinants will help inform more effective preventive and rehabilitative strategies, improve policy formulation, and strengthen the capacity

of juvenile justice institutions to promote equitable social reintegration and reduce the recurrence of delinquent behaviour among adolescents in Kiambu County and beyond.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To examine the extent to which family-related social factors influence delinquent behaviour among male and female adolescents in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres.
2. To assess the role of peer-related social factors in shaping delinquent behaviour among male and female adolescents in the two rehabilitation centres.
3. To determine the influence of school- and community-related social factors on the delinquent behaviour of male and female adolescents in Kirigiti and Kamiti Rehabilitation Centres.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Empirical Literature**

#### **The Concept of Juvenile Delinquency**

Choudhary defines a juvenile as a youngster who has not reached a specific age at which he or she can be arrested and held responsible legally for their activities, just as an adult would be. A juvenile delinquent is defined as a youngster who is accused of breaking a law that classifies their actions or inactions as crimes. In the framework of criminal justice, a juvenile means a young person under the age of 18 and one who has committed a crime. However, the concept of juveniles in terms of age varies from state to state (Choudhary, 2017). Most countries view juveniles as young children who have not yet attained the age of maturity, where they can make independent decisions regarding their lives, and are therefore under the care of an adult (Rideout, 2012).

However, different nations have varying minimum ages for minors. For instance, in the US, the juvenile age varies from 16 to 21, depending on the state, with 18 being the most typical. A child under the age of ten cannot commit any crime in England. However, when kids recognise their act is evil, between the ages of 10 and 14, they are ethically accountable as individuals rather than as a class. The legal age in France and Poland is thirteen. It is fourteen in Australia, Germany, Norway, and Czechoslovakia, and fifteen in Denmark and Sweden. Juveniles offenders are well-defined as children from the age of 10 to 15 by the Kenyan Minors' Act. Before being moved to former brothels at the age of 16 or 18 to fulfil their sentences, they are the ones housed in Children's Remand Homes and Rehabilitation Centres.

The term juvenile delinquency has been defined differently across disciplines and by various scholars, influenced by social and cultural contexts. In psychology, it refers to a behaviour of a child that does not agree with the norms and expectations of their social group. From a sociological viewpoint, it is regarded as a phenomenon resulting from social pressures and conflicts (Al Ali, 2013). In legal and criminological contexts, juvenile delinquency is understood as the participation of young children in criminal or belligerent actions (Siegel & Welsh, 2011). These differing perspectives highlight the intricacy and multilayered nature of the concept, rendering it a subject of ongoing debate and scholarly investigation.

On the other hand, juvenile delinquency is generally defined as behaviour that breaks the law solely when it is committed by a child, such as running away, truancy, and ungovernable behaviour. Kids cannot fulfil socially prescribed responsibilities (Marsh & Schroeder, 2002). Stated differently, a youngster's socially unacceptable behaviour or act qualifies as juvenile delinquency. Kids cannot fulfil socially prescribed responsibilities (Shoemaker, 2010). However, whether a particular act or behaviour by the child would be considered deviant will depend on several variables and occasionally differ in different states and towns.

In addition, it is preferable to describe juvenile delinquency in terms of teens or adolescents, as this study focuses on this age group. Juvenile delinquency can therefore be viewed as typical teenage behaviour. This is because the majority of youngsters only ever commit non-violent offences once or twice during their adolescence. In time, more violent offences are likely to result from persistent offending. When this occurs, the offender frequently engages in antisocial behaviour that is prohibited by law in society before reaching puberty. This is a typical scenario, particularly for teenagers who frequently use social media and other technological means available.

In Kenya, the Department of Children's Services, probation, and the jail system are largely responsible for dealing with juvenile offenders. Prior to independence, the reorganized schools were promoted to departments under the repealed Children and Young People Act Cap 141 (National Council for Law Reporting, 2012). After gaining independence, the department changed its name from the Department of Approved Schools to the Children's Department, which is now known as the Department of Children's Services. The department's current role is outlined in the Children Act of 2001.

This Act of Parliament provides, among other essential services for children, provisions for the caring and defending of children. It also includes provisions for managing institutions for children. In addition to serving other related goals, it puts into practice the tenets of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children aged between 10 and 15 years who have committed

crimes are remanded in approved schools, commonly known as children's rehabilitation Centres and Juvenile Remand Homes. At 16 years and above, they are taken to correctional centres, also known as ex-borstal centres, for various training or to serve their sentence in normal adult prisons. This study targeted adolescents in juvenile rehabilitation centres between 10 and 15 years of age.

### **Social Determinants of Juvenile Delinquency**

It is believed that many flaws resulting from social, environmental, or personal inadequacies cause adolescent law-breaking. It is the consequence of a confluence of factors that contribute to personal growth, including biological, psychological, social, and economic influences (Roberts, 2011). According to Roberts, adolescent offenders' economic, social, familial, and educational circumstances share several characteristics. According to Bonjar (2017), several factors contribute to juvenile delinquency. They encompass social, economic, political, religious, and cultural aspects. The determinants and reasons for delinquency are various and fluctuate. It is, therefore, essential to identify the determinants of delinquency among adolescents to enhance the effective addressing of these issues. This study focused on the socioeconomic determinants that lead to juvenile crimes and antisocial behaviors.

Subsequently, studies in Europe have shown that juveniles who are raised up in violent family environments with bad peer influence are likely to develop juvenile delinquency (Cenat & Herbert, 2015; Firat, 2017). Bates & Swan's study (2019) also revealed that teenage girls engage in crimes due to living in hardship conditions, breakdown of family fabrics, parental alcohol and drug taking, family physical attack, orphans and domestic violence. David & Gresham's study (2017) in Ghana revealed that a dysfunctional family environment, peer pressure, low-level parental support, lack of appropriate guidance, inadequate family affection, illiteracy, and status frustration contribute to juvenile delinquency.

Emphasising on the same, a study by Rose *et al.* (2017) in Pakistan established that carnal misuse is a factor that may lead to antisocial and criminal behaviour. The family and neighbourhood environment characterised by high levels of poverty and crime, feeble social control systems, and high habituated income is linked to initial engagement in risky behaviours such as sex among juveniles, and this often leads to criminal activities (Agarwal, 2018; Rathinabalan & Naaraayan, 2017; Vemuri *et al.*, 2019). Studies by La Vigne (2017) and Faisal and Abdulrahman (2016) revealed that peer-related factors like peer acceptance and approval contribute to crimes among children.

Further, an empirical investigation by Ojo (2012) in West Africa and particularly Nigeria revealed that minors commit crimes due to divorced parents, poor role models, foreign parentage, family violence, lack of confidence and frankness, child neglect, child abuse, improper discipline, unhappy family relationships and step-parent upbringing. A study by Gyan *et al.* (2015) in Ghana revealed that dysfunctional parents or homes, the stigma of illegitimacy, delinquent and immoral parents, and lack of parental control are precursors of delinquency among children. Other determinants of delinquency include divorce, parental psychopathology, teenage parenthood and maltreatment (Prystajko, 2018) and urbanisation environments (Nwachukwui, 2018). A study by Tesfamichael *et al.* (2020) attributed juvenile delinquency to peer influence and dysfunctional families.

In Kenya, juvenile delinquency is associated with family dissonance, family size, poor parenting skills, teenage ill-treatment, parental aggression, parental conflict, improper discipline, as well as antisocial behaviour (Tiampati, 2017). A study by Mwaniki (2018) found that poor parenting, juvenile peer pressure, and drug and substance abuse cause misbehaviour among adolescents. Omondi's study (2021) revealed that a lack of parental role models, dysfunctional households and parental antisocial behaviours were the main determinants of juvenile misbehaviour. Other studies have revealed that juvenile delinquency results from adult involvement in crime, exposure to violence and prejudice (Naomi & Alice, 2017), ineffective parenting practices, unstable caregivers, and frequent family relocations (Mburu, 2021).

Generically, several researchers argue that girls tend to be closer to their families than boys, and such closeness acts as a protective force (Olugbade, 2019). This protective factor may be undermined by vulnerability, cruelty, sexual abuse and lack of parental control, and this makes the girls engage in crimes on a larger scale compared to the boys. The elderly have been found to play a significant role in driving the country's economy (Bright & Winters, 2017). Tiampati (2017) concluded that juvenile delinquency in young girls relates to misbehaviour and disagreement with their parents and peers, and girls who had their parents separated or both deceased were expected to commit crimes. According to another study by Mwangangi (2019), the poor upbringing of children, social disorder, the availability of lawless acts, the misuse of drugs, and the dysfunction in households were some of the reasons why girls commit crimes.

The reviewed literature reveals that family structure factors, such as broken homes, dysfunctional families, parenting styles and practices, the nature of discipline extended to children, peer influence, family size, the type of parents, the nature of neighbourhoods, social networks and linkages, and family care and support, among others, play a significant role. However, the available data suggests that the variance in boys' and girls' criminal behaviour is not purely the result of the shared community development of specific gender determinants

and the yielding to wrong behaviour. Not much has been done in Kenya about juvenile delinquency; hence, the issue of delinquency and social status is poorly understood, especially from a gendered perspective. Therefore, there was a need to carry out studies from a gendered perspective to establish how various social factors lead to child crimes among boys and girls in Kenya.

## **Theoretical Literature**

### **Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura proposed the social learning theory in 1971, and it deals with learning and behaviour in groups. This theory's central claim is that people acquire knowledge by observing the actions, attitudes, and outcomes of others. According to this notion, people learn how to behave criminally through their interactions with others and their social surroundings (Akers, 2011). The concept has a high point of emphasis on the importance of watching and following the attitudes, behaviours and emotional reactions of other people (Bandura, 1971). As per the hypothesis, a consistently rewarded behaviour is more probable to persist, whereas a behaviour which is constantly punished, is more probable to arrive at an end. The conditions that must be provided to make learning or behaviour modification occur are the following: motivation, eyes, retention and replication. This is referred to as vicarious reinforcement (Renzetti *et al.*, 2012). This assumption was important as it guided in finding out social determinants of crimes (family structure, social groupings, family support, family conflicts) among juveniles in Kirigiti and Kamiti rehabilitation centres.

According to Bandura (1977), children acquire their conduct from the persons they interrelate with in their social environment. Therefore, individuals can learn from the three sources what it means to be a deviant or conforming member of society. One can adopt delinquent behaviour through direct, face-to-face interactions or by observing others. Youngsters learn both positive and negative behaviours by mimicking those they see in others. According to Bynum and Thompson (1992), an individual's environment offers rewards and reinforcements that teach and encourage deviant behaviour. Therefore, engaging with people and groups that can provide satisfaction, social status, and other appropriate benefits is how deviant behaviour is learned and performed (Bandura, 1971).

Additionally, juvenile delinquency is perceived in this study as a learned behaviour pattern that certain young people acquire through social interactions with their family, peers, school, and other significant socialisation agents, following the principles and assumptions of this theory. Families, friends, and familial status make up the home environment, where people learn both violent and non-violent behaviour and many encounter violence for the first time in their lives. The family indeed shapes attitudes toward violence by imparting beliefs about the acceptability of using violence to resolve disputes or accomplish personal objectives. Adolescents can pick up aggressive behaviours from their elders and parents by seeing them; these behaviours are then either suppressed or encouraged through rewards and punishments.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Aker (2002) shows that a person can be taught what fits societal expectations or what does not, depending on their immediate family and the society in which they live. According to Akers (2002), individuals learn, modify, acquire, act on, repeat, maintain, and change deviant behaviour just as they do with conforming behaviour. In applying this theory, Kandel & Davies (1991) were able to determine that the key agents of socialisation, which include family, peers, school, and society, have a significant influence on deviant behaviour. The family's responsibility in inculcating positive social behaviour in family members, especially children is vital (Banks, 1976). Another example is that children who routinely face the use of physical violence as one of the tools of instilling discipline tend to opt for physical assault when confronted with the same (Datta, 1984).

Moreover, factors such as family surroundings, family structure, peer influence, social and economic status are all present in the environment in which adolescents live, grow, and interact. The Social Learning Theory in this study will be appropriate because Juveniles in Kiambu County are likely to find themselves in associations that might influence them towards delinquency. There is a likelihood for juveniles to learn deviant behaviours from their peers and family members with whom they interact daily. In due process, they conform to such deviant behaviours, thereby starting to practice behaviours such as stealing, among others. This is because numerous cases of maladjustments and family dysfunction have been reported in Kiambu County (Kyamana, 2015).

The social learning theory is also important in this study, as it assumes that juveniles can learn criminal behaviours, such as aggressiveness, by observing what their parents and peers do. They will retain a negative influence in the mind, reproducing the same in action and being motivated by peers to practice it. Since there are negative social factors, such as dysfunctional families, living in such homes increases the probability of learning aberrant behaviour. The theory suggests that an individual can acquire and reproduce the behaviour of violence, aggression, and other negative behavioural characteristics presented as models to follow. This theory suggests that juveniles are likely to learn negative behaviours and act the same after observing and adopting such behaviours in their families and the environment.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design within a mixed-methods framework to investigate the socio-economic determinants of gender-based juvenile delinquency in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres, Kiambu County. The design was appropriate for examining the relationships among social influencing delinquent behaviour as they occur naturally in the rehabilitation context. It enabled the systematic description of the gender variations of juvenile offences while capturing the lived realities of adolescents within institutional settings.

The quantitative component of the design facilitated the measurement and comparison of observable variables such as social background and gender differentials in delinquent behaviour. This approach made it possible to identify relationships between social determinants and juvenile offending. In contrast, the qualitative component provided an interpretive dimension that explored participants' perceptions, experiences, and motivations, thereby revealing underlying contextual dynamics such as family instability, poverty, and peer influence that contribute to delinquency.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches within the descriptive survey framework provided both breadth and depth of understanding. Quantitative data captured the scope and prevalence of delinquency, while qualitative insights illuminated the meaning and context of adolescents' experiences. The design was thus well suited to the realities of Kiambu County, where increasing juvenile crime rates and gender disparities in offending behaviour underscore the need for a comprehensive, context-sensitive approach. This methodological orientation allowed for a balanced and evidence-based interpretation of how social and gendered factors interact to influence juvenile delinquency in rehabilitation settings.

#### **Study Area and Population**

The study was carried out at two Kirigiti and Kamiti rehabilitation centres in Kiambu County. Kiambu County covers an area of 2,449.2 square kilometres, and its capital is Kiambu, which is about 12 kilometres from 31 Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. According to statistics from the Department of Children Services, Ministry of Home Affairs (2019), Kiambu County has two rehabilitation centres, thus providing a substantial target population.

#### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

A sample of 121 juveniles was used, picked representatively from every Rehabilitation Centre. The study also interviewed the 2 centre managers of the two institutions under study. Further, the study used 14 children officers and 14 probation officers, picking each category from each of the 14 sub counties in Kiambu County.

The study employed cluster sampling to assign and get a representative sample from each institution and gender. Random sampling was then used to select adolescents from each institution. Furthermore, purposive sampling was employed to select a few officers for an interview in this study. Since the data from the interview schedule is used for argumentation purposes, the study sampled a few officers for an interview. The study purposely interviewed the two centre managers from the two institutions, one children officer and one probation officer from each of the 14 sub-counties in Kiambu County. The sampled children's officers and probation officers were those who had stayed the longest in the stations. These officers are the ones who deal with adolescent cases firsthand, and they have complete information on the juvenile delinquents in their custody. Their views were used to argue the findings derived from the questionnaire.

#### **Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed in this study to comprehensively address the objectives and test the hypotheses concerning the social determinants and gendered pathways to juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres, Kiambu County, Kenya. Quantitative data derived from questionnaires were first coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for analysis. Data cleaning and verification were done to ensure completeness, accuracy, and consistency before analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were generated to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics.

To test the hypotheses and establish relationships among the study variables, inferential statistical techniques were used. Pearson's chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether significant associations existed between social factors (independent variables) and gender-based juvenile delinquency (dependent variable). Specifically, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) tested whether there was no statistically significant relationship between social factors (family structure, parental supervision, peer influence, and social grouping) and delinquency among male and female adolescents. The decision criterion was that any test result with a  $p$ -value less than 0.05 at a 95% confidence level ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicated a statistically significant relationship, leading to the

rejection of the null hypothesis. Conversely, a *p*-value greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ) implied no statistically significant relationship, and the null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

To further explore the strength and direction of relationships between variables, correlation analysis was conducted to determine the degree of association between the independent variables (social) and dependent (juvenile delinquency) variables. Multiple regression analysis was then performed to identify the extent to which each independent variable (social factors) predicted juvenile delinquency among male and female adolescents. This analysis helped to quantify the relative contribution of each social determinant to gender-based delinquent behaviour. The results of the quantitative analysis were presented in tables, charts, and graphs, accompanied by interpretive explanations aligned with each research objective.

Qualitative data obtained through interviews with children’s officers, probation officers, and rehabilitation centre staff were analysed thematically to complement and explain the quantitative findings. The recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim to maintain the originality of participants’ expressions. The transcriptions were then read repeatedly to gain a holistic understanding and to identify recurring ideas, patterns, and experiences relevant to the research objectives. Through an inductive coding process, meaningful statements were categorised into initial codes representing emerging issues such as peer pressure, family disintegration, poverty, unemployment, and gendered social expectations. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes reflecting the social influences on juvenile delinquency as per the study’s conceptual framework.

Verbatim quotations from participants were incorporated into the presentation of results to substantiate identified themes and maintain authenticity in interpretation. Attention was given to gendered dimensions of delinquency, ensuring that both male and female adolescents’ perspectives were equally represented. Thematic findings were triangulated with the quantitative results to provide a holistic understanding of the determinants of juvenile delinquency. This integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enhanced the validity of the study and allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the social determinants and gendered pathways to juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres, Kiambu County, Kenya

#### IV. Results

##### Influence of Social Factors on Juvenile Delinquency

**Table 1: Regression Results for Social Factors and Juvenile Delinquency by Gender**

Social Variable	Gender	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Family Structure	Male	0.36	0.002	Broken or single-parent households significantly increase male delinquency.
	Female	0.18	0.041	Family structure has a moderate but significant effect among females.
Peer Influence	Male	0.42	0.001	Peer influence strongly predicts male offending behaviour.
	Female	0.21	0.030	Peer pressure modestly affects female delinquency.
Family Support	Male	-0.24	0.015	Strong parental support reduces male delinquency.
	Female	-0.33	0.008	Family support is a stronger protective factor for females.
Family Conflict	Male	0.29	0.012	Domestic conflict increases male aggression-related offences.
	Female	0.39	0.003	Family conflict significantly drives female involvement in survival-based offences.

**Model Summary:**  $R^2 = 0.61$  (males),  $0.57$  (females); both models statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

#### V. Discussion

##### Demographic characteristics

The study investigated several demographic characteristics that were deemed to imply juvenile delinquent behaviours at Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres in Kiambu County.

**Table 2: Sex of the Respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	84	69.4
Female	37	30.6
Total	108	100.0

Male respondents constituted 69.4% while women were 30.6%. This is an indication that views of male juveniles dominated the study. This information concurs with Kibanga (2004), who found that the composition of cooperatives is female-dominated. The results concur with previous research documented that regularly demonstrates that young men are highly probable than women to be detained and charged with crimes. For instance, male juveniles are arrested for offences at substantially higher rates than females, according to regular reports from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice. Male adolescents made up 69.4% of all juvenile arrests; this pattern holds true for all types of crimes (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

**Education Level of the Respondents**

The study investigated the level of education of all the young respondents to establish if there were disparities as well as the effect of the disparity on delinquency.

**Table 3: Education Level of Respondents**

		Education Level			Total
		Primary	Secondary	Certificate	
Male	Count	45	25	14	84
	% of Total	37.2%	20.7%	11.6%	69.4%
Female	Count	15	10	12	37
	% of Total	12.4%	8.3%	9.9%	30.6%
Total		60	35	26	121
		49.6%	28.9%	21.5%	100.0%

The data shows that male respondents represent a significant majority in all three educational categories: primary, secondary, and certificate. Specifically, for males, 45 respondents (37.2%) have a primary education, 25 (20.7%) have completed secondary education, and 14 (11.6%) hold a certificate, contributing to a total of 84(69.4%) male respondents. Female respondents are less represented 37(30.6%), with 15 (12.4%) having primary education, 10 (8.3%) having secondary education, and 12 (9.9%) holding a certificate. This brings the total number of female respondents to 37. In total, there are 121 respondents, with the majority (49.6%) having primary education, 28.9% with secondary education, and 21.5% holding a certificate.

Generally, the data suggests that primary education is the most common level achieved by the respondents, particularly among males. There is an apparent gender inequality, as the male group represents a larger share of all education levels. The female respondents make up a smaller portion of those with secondary or certificate education, which may indicate gender-based differences in access to education or other socio-cultural factors. Since lower instructive attainment has been connected to higher rates of delinquent behaviour, the literature suggests that education has a major effect on juvenile behaviour. Strong educational ties can help to protect one against illegal behavior. According to Hirschi's Social Control Theory (1969), which emphasises the value of school involvement in discouraging criminal behaviour.

Moreover, the representation of females was lower in the sample with a lower level of education (primary and secondary), which once again reflects the existing research findings on gender disparities in educational levels and in delinquency. Surveys have indicated that men, and particularly the less educated, have higher tendencies of committing crime because they may find themselves devoid of social opportunities and chances of living economically (Moffitt, 1993). In addition, gender gaps in education have been a serious subject of research, where, despite comparable enrollment numbers, males tend to show better results in terms of completion rates and progression (UNESCO, 2015).

**Period of Stay in Rehabilitation Centre**

The study investigated the period during which the juveniles had stayed in the Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres in Kiambu County.

**Table 4: Respondents' Period of Stay at the Rehabilitation Centre**

		Length of Stay at Rehabilitation Centres				Total
		Less than 6 months	6-12 months	1-2 years	3 years and above	
Male	Count	41	16	14	13	84
	% of Total	33.9%	13.2%	11.6%	10.7%	69.4%

	Female	7	8	12	10	37
		5.8%	6.6%	9.9%	8.3%	30.6%
	Total	48	48	24	26	23
		100.0%	39.7%	19.8%	21.5%	19.0%

The highest percentage (33.9%) among the male juveniles remained in the rehabilitation centres less than six months with a significant drop in the percentage of the males taking longer periods. Comparatively, the females were more proportionately distributed with 9.9% remaining between 1 and 2 years and 8.3 percent remaining 3 years or more. This shows that the rehabilitation of female juveniles could take a little longer than that of the male juveniles, who occupy relatively short rehabilitation times. As Papachristos *et al.* (2015) research explains, such gender differences in juvenile rehabilitation programs can be explained by being based on different needs because the female juvenile may need a longer time to resolve underlying health-related issues, such as trauma or psychological problems, which could be why their stay in the program is longer.

Regarding the total length of stay, most juveniles, both males and females, spent up to half a school year in the centres, and the proportion of adults with the same durations is higher in men (33.9%). Nevertheless, a significant percentage of both sexes (more so females) remained for a long time, with 10.7% of the males falling into this category, having stayed at least three years. This could be the indication that male juveniles could engage in more complicated or enduring behavioural problems that need more intensive rehabilitation measures.

The results correspond to those revealed in previous studies, such as one by Fagan (2017) and Greenberg *et al.* (2015, which claims that young men more frequently require a longer rehabilitation time since they exhibit deeper behavioural and societal issues than their female peers. Additionally, the shorter rehabilitation lengths observed in this research may be attributed to the application of evidence-based, rapid intervention models that are effective in producing rapid results, as noted by Lipsey (2009). The results support the complexity of juvenile rehabilitation, indicating that it requires both short term and long lasting methods tailored to the specific needs of an individual.

**Respondents' caregivers**

The study delved deeper into unearthing the caregivers of juvenile offenders before they were institutionalised as offenders in Kirigiti and Kamiti juvenile rehabilitation centres.

**Table 5: Respondents' Caregivers**

	Caregivers of Respondents						Total
	Both parents	Single parent	Siblings	Self	Relatives	Friends	
Male	15	23	7	21	3	15	84
	12.4%	19.0%	5.8%	17.4%	2.5%	12.4%	69.4%
Female	5	12	3	3	5	9	37
	4.1%	9.9%	2.5%	2.5%	4.1%	7.4%	30.6%
Total	20	35	10	24	8	24	121
	16.5%	28.9%	8.3%	19.8%	6.6%	19.8%	100.0%

For male offenders, a significant chunk (19.0%) is raised by a single parent, while 12.4% have both parents involved in their care. Interestingly, a notable 17.4% of male offenders are taking care of themselves, which might point to a lack of family support or engagement. In contrast, female offenders show a lower rate of single-parent care (9.9%) and a slightly higher reliance on both parents (4.1%).

The data also indicate that more male juvenile offenders are cared for by their siblings (5.8%) compared to females (2.5%), suggesting that male offenders may have more involvement from extended family or siblings in their upbringing. These caregiving trends could reflect traditional gender roles, where males, especially in patriarchal settings, might not receive as much direct parental attention. At the same time, females could benefit more from the support of their nuclear families. Seen through the lens of gender, the results are echoed in the larger debates in literature on gender norms and family constructs, and how to approach the care of juvenile delinquents.

Studies also reveal that boys are more likely to grow up in non-traditional families and/or single-parent households largely because of the cultural influence of parents who encourage male independence. This could be one of the reasons why these rates of juvenile delinquency are intensifying (Fagan, 1990). On the contrary, girls are traditionally raised in a background that promotes emotions and family relations to a greater extent, and this fact may explain why more female offenders have both parents on their side. Such trends can be discussed as the continuation of the traditional caregiving traditions where girls are expected to be more dependent and in need of closer family attention, whereas boys are supposed to become more independent (Chesney-Lind, 2001). This may dictate the type of care given to male and female juvenile offenders in rehabilitation centres.

**Size of Household**

This study also investigated the size of households among juvenile offenders and how this may have influenced their behavior prior to their institutionalisation.

**Table 6: Size of Household where Respondents Live**

		Household Size				Total
		Less than 2 persons	3-5 persons	6-8 persons	More than eight persons	
Male	Male Count	25	39	6	14	84
	Percentage	20.7%	32.2%	5.0%	11.6%	69.4%
Female	Female	4	21	4	8	37
	Percentage	3.3%	17.4%	3.3%	6.6%	30.6%
		29	60	10	22	121
		24.0%	49.6%	8.3%	18.2%	100.0%

Examining the number of people living in a household where juvenile offenders reveals some interesting gender variations and provides insight into how families may contribute to certain behaviours. As the data indicate, a significant proportion of male offenders (69.4%) belong to households consisting of fewer than six persons, with the highest percentage (32.2%) living in households of three to five persons. The distribution is, however, more even among female offenders, with 17.4% and 6.6% being the respective percentages of female offenders concerning houses with 3-5 and more than eight inhabitants, respectively. This indicates that family settings that are smaller and more intimate may be impacting the conduct of the juvenile male offenders.

The results also concur with the general relationship between criminology and development theories, which take cognisance of the form of family structure in influencing the behaviour of the delinquent juvenile. According to Social Control Theory, developed by Hirschi, one of the major aspects that moulds the ability of a juvenile to carry out a criminal activity is family attachment (Hirschi, 1969). The fact that the proportion of male offenders in smaller households is higher suggests the lack of strong family ties. Besides, studies have demonstrated that juveniles living in large families tend to receive more attention and have better organised routines in their lives, which minimises risky behaviour (Sampson & Laub, 1993). These trends make family dynamics a key factor in understanding the behaviours of juvenile offenders; hence, there is a need to develop an intervention that can help offer juvenile offenders healthier families to aid in reducing their behaviour.

**Effect of Social Factors on Male and Female Adolescents' Delinquency**

The primary interest of this exploration was to find out how social factors influenced the delinquency of young males and females in Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres. The study hypothesises that there is no correlation between social factors and the delinquency of both young girls and boys in the two centres.

**Correlation and Regression Analysis Results**

To meet the objectives the study and test the hypothesis, correlation and several regression analyses were done.

**Correlation Results**

**Table 7: Correlation Results**

Social Factors		Family Structure		Social Groupings		Family Support		Family Conflicts	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Family Structure	Pearson Correlation	1	1	.233*	.107	.218*	.115	.137	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.033	.263	.046	.249	.213	.386
	N	84	37	84	37	84	37	84	37
Social Groupings	Pearson Correlation	.233*	.107	1	1	.310**	.222	.326**	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.263			.004	.093	.002	.382
	N	84	37	84	37	84	37	84	37
Family Support	Pearson Correlation	.218*	.115	.310**	.222	1	1	.284**	.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.249	.004	.093			.009	.177
	N	84	37	84	37	84	37	84	37
Family Conflicts	Pearson Correlation	.137	.049	.326**	.051	.284**	.157	1	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.213	.386	.002	.382	.009	.177		
	N	84	37	84	37	84	37	84	37

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  
 \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The bivariate correlation analysis examining social factors that lead to criminal acts among male and female adolescents in the Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres uncovers some interesting trends. For the boys, the family structure exhibits a notable positive correlation with their social groupings ( $r = 0.233$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ) and family support ( $r = 0.218$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ). This suggests that boys from stable family backgrounds tend

to have stronger social connections and more family support, which might help protect them from engaging in delinquent behaviour. On the contrary, family conflicts appear to have a weaker and statistically insignificant link to delinquency ( $r = 0.137, p = 0.213$ ).

When it comes to the girls, the correlation results show generally weaker connections. Family structure, social groupings, and family support do not show significant correlations with delinquency ( $r = 0.107, p = 0.263$ ;  $r = 0.115, p = 0.249$ ;  $r = 0.157, p = 0.177$ , respectively). However, family conflicts do show a stronger negative correlation with family support ( $r=0.284, p=0.009$ ), indicating that girls facing family conflicts are likely to receive less support from their families, which could worsen their delinquent behaviours. This finding aligns with earlier research by Farrington (2017), which emphasised the crucial role of family support in mitigating antisocial behaviour among young males. This finding also resonates with Moffitt's (1993) research, which pointed out that girls are often more affected by family instability and interpersonal conflicts compared to boys.

**Regression Results**

The regression analysis was performed with the independent variables being family structure, social grouping, family support, family conflicts, unemployment, poverty and education. The dependent variable was crime, as shown in the regression equation model below.

**Regression model**

$$Y_s = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + E$$

$Y_s$  is the dependent variable, which is the crime committed by juveniles.

$a$  is the constant or the intercept.

$\beta_1, \dots, \beta_4$  are the independent variables which are social and economic factors contributing to juvenile delinquency

$X_1, \dots, X_4$  are the regression coefficients or the random variables to be observed or predetermined chosen fixed values.

$E$  is the error term; it captures all the other variables or factors which influence the dependent variable other than the regression coefficients.

**Table 8: Coefficient of Determination – R<sup>2</sup> Combined (Social Factors)**

Gender	Model	Model Summary			
		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Male	1	.599 <sup>a</sup>	.358	.326	8.11385
Female	1	.656 <sup>b</sup>	.430	.359	6.82059
a. Predictors: (Constant) Family Structure, Social Groups, Family Support, Family Conflict.					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Family Structure, Social Groups, Family Support, Family Conflict					

The model summary in reveals that social factors like family structure, social groups, family support, and conflicts within families play a significant role in criminal behaviours among both young offenders at the Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres. The R-squared values indicate that around 35.8% of the variances in male juvenile illegal acts can be accounted to males, and 43.0% in female juvenile delinquency can be attributed to these social factors. For male offenders, the adjusted R-square value of 0.326 suggests a moderate fit for the model. In contrast, for females, the adjusted R-square of 0.359 shows a slightly higher fit, yet still indicates a meaningful connection. These results emphasise that family dynamics and social environments are crucial in understanding juvenile delinquency, with distinct influences on males and females. However, the moderate R-squared values also imply that there are additional factors beyond family support, structure, and conflicts that contribute to juvenile delinquency.

**Table 9: Coefficient of Determinants, R<sup>2</sup>- Individual variables**

Model (Male)	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Family structure	.355 <sup>b</sup>	.126	.116	9.29375
Social groupings	.447 <sup>b</sup>	.200	.190	8.89374
Family support	.432 <sup>b</sup>	.186	.177	8.96784
Family conflicts	.337 <sup>b</sup>	.114	.103	9.35979
<b>Model (Female)</b>				
Family structure	.398 <sup>b</sup>	.158	.134	7.92719
Social groupings	.473 <sup>b</sup>	.224	.201	7.61361
Family support	.301 <sup>b</sup>	.091	.065	8.23882
Family conflicts	.298 <sup>b</sup>	.089	.063	8.24833

R<sup>2</sup>, or the coefficient of determination, is a key statistical tool that could be explained using the independent variables, which include family structure, social groupings, family support, and family conflicts. Discussing social groupings and family support for male juvenile offenders, these variables are the most predictive

delinquency factors, with R-squared values of 0.200 and 0.186 for social grouping and family support, respectively, thus contributing the largest portion of variance. Family structure ( $R^2 = 0.126$ ) and family conflicts ( $R^2 = 0.114$ ) have a small influence on this scenario. This implies that social networks and the type of support young males receive in their rehabilitation programs are more important than the family structure or differences within their families.

In the two areas of female juvenile crime, specifically female juvenile offenders, the social groupings ( $R^2 = 0.224$ ) are the most important, followed by family structure ( $R^2 = 0.158$ ). Nevertheless, these variables still exhibit less variance compared to their male counterparts. Family support and family conflicts are less relevant to the model, with the  $R^2$  of 0.091 and 0.089 for females, respectively. The elevated values of the  $R^2$  in both sexes on social groupings would have indicated that juvenile delinquency is immensely role-played at a social interaction and peer influence level.

The Coefficient of Determination, or  $R^2$ , is a key statistical tool that helps us comprehend the extent of the variation in a dependent variable, such as juvenile delinquency, can be attributed to independent variables, including family structure, social grouping, family support, and family conflicts. When examining male juvenile offenders, it is found that social groupings ( $R^2 = 0.200$ ) and family support ( $R^2 = 0.186$ ) are the most significant predictors of delinquency, with social groupings accounting for the largest share of the variance. Family structure ( $R^2 = 0.126$ ) and family conflicts ( $R^2 = 0.114$ ) play a minor role in this scenario. This suggests that for young males in rehabilitation, their social circles and the support they get from their families are more closely tied to their behaviour than the structure of their families or any conflicts within them.

Conversely, for female juvenile offenders, social groupings ( $R^2 = 0.224$ ) also stand out as the most significant factor, followed by family structure ( $R^2 = 0.158$ ). However, these factors still explain less variance compared to their male counterparts. Family support and family conflicts contribute less to the model for females, with  $R^2$  values of 0.091 and 0.089, respectively. The higher  $R^2$  values for social groupings in both genders highlight the key part that peer influence and societal interactions play in juvenile delinquency.

These findings emphasise that for both male and female juveniles, their relationships with peers may have a more substantial impact on delinquent behaviour than family-related factors like support or structure. While family dynamics are undoubtedly important, they seem to have a more indirect or lesser effect on explaining delinquency, with family conflicts showing a weaker link in both male and female cases. The relatively lower  $R^2$  values for these family-related variables suggest that, although family influences are significant, they might not capture the full complexity of juvenile delinquency. These results suggest the need for interventions that target social group dynamics and strengthen family support systems as part of rehabilitation programs.

**Table 10: Test of Significance of Independent Variables–Regression Coefficients.**

		Coefficients				
Gender	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Male	1 (Constant)	-10.149	5.763		-1.761	.082
	Family structure	.619	.269	.216	2.300	.024
	Social groupings	1.218	.452	.268	2.696	.009
	Family support	1.311	.494	.260	2.655	.010
	Family conflicts	.718	.477	.147	1.504	.136
Female	1 (Constant)	-11.500	8.655		-1.329	.193
	Family structure	.715	.294	.328	2.431	.021
	Social groupings	1.863	.648	.395	2.874	.007
	Family support	.589	.591	.138	.997	.326
	Family conflicts	1.014	.571	.240	1.775	.085

a. Dependent Variable: crimes

In the case of the boys, the results show that family structure, social groups, and family support were significant predictors of juvenile delinquency, with a stronger standardised coefficient (0.216 and 0.268 with reference to the family structure and social groups, respectively). In that regard, there does not appear to be substantial positivity between family conflicts and male juvenile delinquency ( $p = 0.136$ ). It is found that the family structure ( $p = 0.021$ ) and social groups ( $p = 0.007$ ) are the significant factors when it comes to the girls. Family support ( $p = 0.326$ ) and family conflicts ( $p = 0.085$ ) do not quite reach statistical significance and may therefore be considered to have a less noteworthy effect on female criminal activities.

It is proposed that the results indicate the existence of a correlation between social causes and the predisposition of crimes among children in both males and females, namely, family structure and social groups. The discovery in this study reinforces the value of family construction and social groupings as a pathogenic factor that influences the prediction of juvenile delinquency in both sexes. By being familiar with these factors, one can gain valuable knowledge on how to develop effective prevention measures and interventions that enhance family dynamics and social integration among youths. However, the weak nature of the factors, viz., family support and

family conflicts in females, suggests that not all pertinent significant factors are addressed in this analysis, thus hinting at another probable factor that may be influencing their delinquency. In addition, male juveniles appear to be more affected by the amount of family support than female juveniles, as this factor is significantly stronger in relation to boys than to girls.

Recent studies have illuminated the contribution of family and other social conditioning that influences the behaviour of young persons. An example of the implementation of this recommendation is a study by Bakoyiannis and colleagues (2024), who suggested that the positive influence of a family and stable social circles will help adolescents avoid the danger of delinquency. Nevertheless, family conflicts are associated with higher delinquency levels, although the consequences may differ with regard to some factors, including gender (Riley & Browne, 2023). These insights concur with the study discovery, as the components of the family and social group structure have been identified. The family support and conflict had even lesser predictability as the determinants.

**Table 11: Significant Differences Between the Groups**

ANOVA							
Gender			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Male	Family structure	Between Groups	471.986	32	14.750	1.461	.111
		Within Groups	514.967	51	10.097		
		Total	986.952	83			
	Social groups	Between Groups	180.093	32	5.628	1.345	.170
		Within Groups	213.467	51	4.186		
		Total	393.560	83			
	Family support	Between Groups	177.952	32	5.561	2.015	.012
		Within Groups	140.750	51	2.760		
		Total	318.702	83			
	Family Conflicts	Between Groups	143.093	32	4.472	1.171	.302
		Within Groups	194.717	51	3.818		
		Total	337.810	83			
Female	Family Structure	Between Groups	451.356	22	20.516	2.936	.021
		Within Groups	97.833	14	6.988		
		Total	549.189	36			
	Social Groups	Between Groups	95.743	22	4.352	2.834	.024
		Within Groups	21.500	14	1.536		
		Total	117.243	36			
	Family Support	Between Groups	104.437	22	4.747	1.668	.163
		Within Groups	39.833	14	2.845		
		Total	144.270	36			
	Family Conflicts	Between Groups	93.932	22	4.270	1.139	.410
		Within Groups	52.500	14	3.750		
		Total	146.432	36			

These stark dissimilarities in how economic indicators affect the number of juveniles in the Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres in Kiambu County indicate different effects depending on gender and certain factors. In the case of male juveniles, family support ( $p = 0.012$ ) was the only factor that showed a significant difference between the two groups, thereby indicating that it plays a key role in delinquency among juveniles. Contrary to family structure ( $p = 0.111$ ), social groups ( $p = 0.170$ ), and family conflicts ( $p = 0.302$ ), which did not present significant differences, these factors may not significantly influence the male juveniles in both centres. It can be said that family structure ( $p = 0.021$ ) and social groups ( $p = 0.024$ ) demonstrated significant differences when applied to female juveniles, which suggests that they tend to be more influenced by these factors. Family support and family conflicts, however, were insignificant ( $p = 0.163$  and  $p = 0.410$ ), indicating that those factors are less important among female juveniles in this study.

When we look at juvenile delinquency in the two centres, it is clear that male and female juveniles react differently to particular family dynamics. For instance, male juveniles appear to benefit more from family support, while their family structure and social circles more significantly impact female juveniles. This suggests that boys might thrive better with external support systems, whereas their immediate family and friendships have more influence on girls. Interestingly, the inadequate noteworthy discrepancy in family conflicts for both genders indicates that these conflicts might not play a significant role in moulding behaviours in either centre. This expresses the significance of creating interpositions that are tailored to gender and specific family-related factors.

For male adolescents, the analysis reveals that social factors such as family structure ( $p = 0.024$ ), social groupings ( $p = 0.009$ ), and family support ( $p = 0.010$ ) significantly influence delinquency, with social groupings ( $R^2 = 0.200$ ) and family support ( $R^2 = 0.186$ ) being the strongest predictors. This indicates that stable family relations and supportive social networks help reduce delinquent behaviour among boys, while family conflicts show no significant impact ( $p = 0.136$ ). For female adolescents, family structure ( $p = 0.021$ ) and social groupings ( $p = 0.024$ ) are the main significant predictors, explaining 43% of the variance in delinquency, whereas family

support and family conflicts are statistically insignificant. These findings suggest that girls' delinquent behaviour is more influenced by the nature of their family setup and peer relationships than by the level of support or conflict within their families. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for both genders, confirming that social factors significantly relate to delinquency among juveniles in Kirigiti and Kamiti Rehabilitation Centres, though their effects vary by gender.

From the interviews conducted, it became evident that family structure is key in shaping their habits and potentially leading to illegal acts. One children's officer shared, *"A boy who grows up with a single mom, it is not easy. When his father leaves when he is still young, it leaves a big gap. The boy has to defend himself and get involved with bad company."* This response highlights how a disrupted family structure, particularly the lack of a father figure, leads to inadequate guidance, pushing some male youths into negative peer influences.

Similarly, one probation officer commented, *"It is hard, especially for a girl, because she has to take care of my siblings while my mom works all the time. Therefore, she lacks adequate attention, and that makes her feel neglected."* Here, the absence of a stable family unit (for example, single-parent households or absent parents) can leave juveniles vulnerable to delinquent behaviours, as they do not have the emotional and practical provision that could otherwise guide them toward better choices. This corresponds with the findings of Hoeve et al. (2019) and Laub (2020), who report that disrupted or single-parent family structures significantly increase the likelihood of youth offending due to weakened supervision and emotional instability.

Further analysis of many respondents indicated that boys from homes with blended families or inconsistent family structures reported higher rates of delinquent behaviour. One interviewee mentioned, *"Boys from unstable and inconsistent families lack adequate care, and this makes them not trust the caregivers, hence this makes them rebel."* This response highlights the potential for a lack of emotional attachment and support in blended families, which can lead to frustration and rebellion. For females, family structure also seemed to impact their sense of belonging and self-worth, with one probation officer stating, *"Most girls feel like they are never part of the family. It makes them feel like they do not matter."* Such statements suggest that the lack of a cohesive family structure can lead to feelings of isolation and rejection, factors that can contribute to juvenile delinquency. According to Demuth and Brown (2021), adolescents in blended or unstable family environments are more prone to delinquent acts due to low family cohesion and inconsistent emotional support.

Social groupings or peer influence emerged as one of the recurrently cited issue leading to crime for both juvenile crime actors. A common sentiment from the interviews was the idea that peer pressure and the desire to fit in often led individuals down a path of delinquency. One children's officer noted, *"Many male juveniles get into trouble because of their friends. They are the ones who push them into doing things they know are wrong."* This quote highlights how male juveniles, in particular, tend to be highly influenced by their peers, often taking part in illegal acts as a way of gaining acceptance or authentication within a group. Similarly, another children's officer respondent said this regarding girls, *"Some girls in this facility started hanging out with girls who smoked and partied. They claim they wanted to be part of that, so they started doing the same thing."* This supports Warr (2020) and Osgood et al. (2022), who argue that peer affiliation and conformity pressures are among the most influential predictors of juvenile crime.

The responses suggest that for both genders, social groupings are a significant contributor to delinquent behaviour, with peer influence being one of the strongest factors in their choices. Further analysis of the interviews revealed that while peer influence was important for both males and females, it was especially pronounced among male offenders. One probation officer respondent explained, *"Doing things like stealing is just part of what boys do to show they are tough."* The desire to be accepted by peer groups, particularly among males, often leads to risky behaviours. On the other hand, females seemed to experience more emotional pressure from their peers. As one children officer respondent explained, *"It is not just about the activities for girls; it is about feeling loved and accepted."* These insights align with Moffitt (2018) and Weerman (2021), who note that while male peer influence often revolves around dominance and risk-taking, female delinquency is more relational and emotionally driven.

Moreover, several probation officers emphasised the role of gangs and negative peer networks. One stated, *"Most boys form groups that engage in theft or fights as a way to assert power and identity."* Similarly, a centre manager explained, *"Girls' social groups sometimes revolve around risky activities, including substance abuse and truancy, which can escalate to delinquency."* These verbatim accounts illustrate the direct pressure peers exert, often filling the void left by family instability. This distinction suggests that although both genders are influenced by their social groups, the motivations behind delinquent behaviour may differ, with males driven more by social status and females more by emotional bonds. This observation echoes the findings of Thornberry et al. (2019), who emphasise that gang involvement and deviant peer associations often replace absent familial support structures in shaping youth identity and delinquency.

Family social support emerged as another key factor in the interviews, with many respondents acknowledging that inadequate provision from parents and other family associates contributed to juveniles' involvement in delinquency. One centre manager reflected, *"Many male juveniles who offend lacked someone to talk to before their rehabilitation. They claimed their mothers were always working, and their dads were never*

around, so they turned to their peers and friends for support.” This response presupposes the inadequacy of emotional and practical support inside the family, resulting in a reliance on peers for guidance and comfort. Another officer shared similar feelings but said that parental absence had a majorly effect on girls. The probation officer respondent stated, “Some girls in our centre come from homes where the parents were not there to encourage the girls. Therefore, the girls felt like parents did care what happened to them.” Lack of family support appears to be a significant factor in leading juveniles to seek validation and care outside the family unit, increasing their vulnerability to delinquent behaviour. This is consistent with Li and Hagan (2020), who assert that lack of parental emotional support is one of the strongest predictors of youth deviance and association with delinquent peers.

On the other hand, several respondents acknowledged that family support could act as a protective factor against delinquency. One children’s officer shared, “Children whose parents always supported them no matter what, when things are hard, they can talk to their parents, and this helps them make better choices. You can hardly find such children from such homes in the rehabilitation centres.” Conversely, several respondents observed that family support for girls was often inconsistent or absent due to family conflicts. A children’s officer noted, “Girls from families with constant fights or neglect rarely get the emotional backing they need, which leads to withdrawal and sometimes delinquent acts to gain attention.”

However, this was seen as less statistically predictive, reflecting the weak correlation coefficients found for girls. In addition, one centre manager summarised, “While support matters, the quality and consistency of support are crucial. It is not just about having family around but feeling genuinely cared for.” This points to the importance of emotional dimensions beyond mere presence or financial support. Scholars such as Hovee et al. (2018) and Simons & Burt (2021) confirm that consistent parental warmth and communication substantially reduce adolescents’ propensity for delinquent behaviour.

These statements highlight the protective nature of family support, where the presence of an emotionally supportive family can serve as a deterrent to involvement in delinquency. However, these examples are less frequent among males, who reported lower levels of perceived family support and more significant struggles with finding emotional connection within their families, as reported by the centre managers.

Family conflicts were also frequently mentioned by interviewees as a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency. One probation officer remarked, “Several offenders came from homes where there was always fighting at home between mom and stepdad. The offenders could not take it, so they opted to leave the house and hang out with their friends, some of whom were engaged in illegal activities.” This statement highlights how persistent family conflicts, such as those among parents and amidst children and parents can lead to a breakdown in family cohesion, prompting juveniles to take part in illegal and antisocial activities as a method of escape. This finding is consistent with Murray and Farrington (2020), who argue that chronic family conflict and violence increase the likelihood of youth rebellion and delinquency through emotional distress and weakened attachment.

For boys, family conflicts were perceived as less directly linked to delinquency. A children’s officer explained, “Boys often respond to family conflicts by distancing themselves or joining peers, rather than directly reacting to the conflict at home.” This aligns with the statistically insignificant correlation between family conflicts and male delinquency. However, family conflicts appeared to affect girls more severely than boys, according to qualitative responses. One probation officer said, “Girls exposed to constant domestic quarrels and violence tend to internalise stress and act out through truancy, running away, or petty crimes.” This supports the noteworthy negative association sandwiched between family conflicts and family provision for girls found in the data. Similarly, Rebellon and Barnes (2021) found that girls are more likely to internalise familial stress, leading to emotional forms of delinquency such as truancy or substance use.

Moreover, many respondents said that family conflicts led to feelings of anger and frustration among juveniles, which were sometimes expressed through delinquent acts. One children’s officer said, “Juveniles, especially girls, get angry at their parents for always fighting. They start acting out because it is the only way they can get attention.” Although others amongst the respondents warned that unresolved family conflicts were likely to indirectly aggravate the juvenile behaviour by attenuating family support systems.

As one centre manager stated, “Conflict kills trust and communication, leaving juveniles to the mercy of outside influences.” In this response, it is observed that unresolved conflicts between family members may manifest as behavioural problems. The feeling of being ignored or being emotionally distressed caused by these conflicts may motivate a juvenile to feel better or express his/her anger through negative behaviours. This resonates with Wright and Cullen (2020), who argue that family conflict undermines emotional regulation, fostering externalising behaviours that manifest as delinquency.

In summary, the data analysed using the qualitative approach conducted on the interviews with the juvenile delinquents in the Kirigiti and Kamiti Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres indicated that family-related factors including family structure, social groupings, family support, and family fights are some of key elements that lead to juvenile delinquency with male offenders being influenced more by peer effects and female offenders

being influenced more by emotional support. These factors can be understood and utilised in devising interventions and support systems to address juvenile delinquency.

Recent research confirms these findings, indicating family support as a highly influential factor in male juvenile delinquents, whereas family structure and social networks are of particular importance to females (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2020). According to the research by McAra and McVie (2019), the variations between delinquency across genders are based on the experiences of children within the family and social relations. Such results can be compared with those found in the Kirigiti and Kamiti centres, since there seems to be a greater impact of family support on male juveniles. Female juveniles will more likely be attached to family units and peer groups.

As Desta (2020) indicates, when family structure is disorganised (e.g., not all parents are living together or one of the parents is single), the risk of adolescent delinquency tends to increase. A lack of steady parenting may leave gaps in the emotional needs of juveniles, leading them to turn to deviant peer groups for the support and inclusion they need (Liu, 2019). This aligns with the interview material, which emphasises that a stable family is crucial in preventing delinquency. Moreover, peer influence is a dominant factor concerning adolescent behaviour as observed in the present study. Khan (2023) states that peer influence can be considered one of the most powerful predictors of delinquent behaviour among females and males.

## **VI. Policy Implications And Recommendations**

Based on the discovery of this inquiry, several commendations were suggested. The study suggests the enactment of a gender receptive restoration and rehabilitation program where the causes of crimes among children are specifically addressed. As male offenders, they should be targeted with the aim of reducing their level of aggression, peer pressure and indulgences in risky behaviours through guidance, life skills education, and conflict management programs. Trauma counselling programs, empowerment measures and networks to support female offenders should focus on the distress (emotional), the survival needs, and the vulnerability to getting exploited. Situating rehabilitation to these gender-relevant causes can help in curbing recidivism and positive reintegration back into society.

The study indicates that strong family support is relevant in curbing delinquency among boys in rehab centres. There exists a necessity, thus, to adopt programs which enhance family participation, such as counselling and reunification, to redirect young men away from delinquent behaviour.

In the case of female adolescents, the study identifies that the factors of family dynamics and peer behaviour have greater implications on their delinquency. This implies that our interventions must take these factors into consideration and be customised to them, such as promoting positive friendships and strengthening family relationships. Communications programs that increase the effectiveness of communication with the family and promote positive social interactions have been identified as essential in minimising the potential for delinquent behaviours that the girls may exhibit. The above trends indicate that designing specific interventions that will take into account the gender aspects and family structures must become central in addressing juvenile delinquency.

This hints at the possibility that the causes of female delinquency may be more complicated or related to other social, psychological or even family problems which are beyond the scope of the study. Further research to explore the gendered elements of aspects which influence the issue of delinquency with regard to young females would be worthwhile. Such research may analyse such aspects as family relations, peer pressure, and psychological health, as these may be more influential in the case of girls. Customising rehabilitation programs to address these underlying issues could lead to more effective outcomes for female juveniles.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The study wraps up by saying juvenile delinquency at places like Kirigiti and Kamiti centres gets driven hard by things like demographics and social issues. And yeah, there are clear differences between boys and girls in all this. Males make up most of the offenders, you know. They usually have less schooling under their belts, plus not much family watching over them. A lot come from homes with just one parent or really small setups. That kind of family mess, along with parents not keeping close tabs, really pushes boys toward trouble. Girls show up less often in these stats. But when they do offend, it ties more to emotional ups and downs or getting pulled into bad social scenes. So it points to how growing up as a girl or boy shapes what kind of delinquency happens and how much.

The study makes it clear that social factors really shape delinquency. But how it plays out depends a lot on gender. For boys, things like family setup, the groups they hang with, and how much support they get from home stand out as big predictors. Peer pressure and not having enough emotional backing seem to kick things off mostly. Girls, though they lean more on family structure and their social circles being solid. Family fights and support levels do not hit as hard for them. All these points in the social surroundings matter for both, but still the routes they take vary. Boys get pulled in more without that firm family support. Girls deal with it through how

well the family holds together and what their friends are like. So yeah, programs that pay attention to gender and focus on tightening up family bonds, plus guiding peers, could help cut down on kid crime.

So yeah, this study wraps things up by showing juvenile delinquency at Kirigiti and Kamiti Centres. It is a pretty complicated problem. Things like demographics and social factors all mix together. Gender moderates everything in a big way. Rehab programs and ways to prevent it. They need gender-responsive approaches for sure. With males, you have to deal with gaps in education and shaky family setups. That is crucial. For females, building stronger emotional support, more stable families, and psychosocial counselling. Those might work better. The findings push for a holistic way to handle juvenile delinquency. Include family, community, and institutions all in. That helps cut down social and economic risks for youth who are at risk.

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