

Juvenile Delinquency in Iraq : A Psychosocial Profile

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ABSTRACT:

BACKGROUND:

Juvenile delinquency is a sort of crimes that is committed by young persons under the age of 18 years.

OBJECTIVE:

Is to determine the psychosocial profile of juvenile offenders in Iraq.

METHODS:

This phenomenon was studied in Iraq from 2003 -2005, to acquire a better understanding of it, 400 accused were assessed in the personality assessment bureau [P.A.B] using ICD -10 clinical based interview sorted down with descriptive data.

RESULTS:

The highest age for the accused was 17 years, predominantly males with a socioeconomic history of deprivation, premature labor, illiteracy, and limited primary education. Their families were living in rather more or less similar conditions. Theft as a crime was on the top of the list.

CONCLUSION:

According to the [P.A.B], the majorities of the accused were not mentally ill, and before the juvenile court were fully responsible. Half of the sample was recommended to juvenile rehabilitation centers, and about one fifth of the accused were able to be released on legal bailing.

KEYWORDS: juvenile delinquency, psychosocial profile.

INTRODUCTION:

Delinquency is a legal term referring to a young person, who has committed a criminal offence, as far as it is not a medical term, therefore it is not an equivalent to conduct disorder ⁽¹⁾. Children and adolescents are capable of extraordinary antisocial, violent acts. Such antisociality marks one extreme end of a spectrum of behavior. But during adolescence, behavior may become more serious and may even lead to involvement of the law enforcement system that is why one-fourth of youth being apprehended by police and convicted of crimes. Still, most forms of juvenile antisocial behavior do not progress to criminality ⁽²⁾. According to the psychiatric literature, the present work might be regarded as a pilot study in Iraq. A former study on theft in Arbil was written in Kurdistan autonomy in 1994, but did not cover the rest of Iraq ⁽³⁾.

PATIENT AND METHODS:

The study was accomplished in the juvenile prison in Baghdad city and by using the facilities of the personality assessment bureau, in which a team of social workers is lead by a consultant psychiatrist. The Iraqi law for adolescent welfare ⁽⁴⁾ demands

that all cases of law violation by individuals aged 9-18 years who are arrested by the police force, to be referred to the juvenile court, in which the executive judge will send them to the (P.A.B) for psychiatric and social evaluation. In this article we have studied 400 cases of juvenile arrests in the aforementioned bureau from the year 2003 to 2005, through a clinical interviews based on ICD-10 ⁽⁵⁾ and socio-demographic data collected by social workers from the court records, the accused, and their families if possible. Descriptive statistics were used to draw the psychosocial profile of the accused, and then the results were compared with that of other studies available in the literature.

RESULTS:

The total number of individuals arrested from 2003 to 2005 was 400 juvenile convicts, gender distribution was 95.25 % (381) for males, and 4.75 % (19) for females. The age of the accused is shown in table 1. the religion of the accused was 98.5 % (394) for Muslims and 1.5 % (6) for Christians. The jobs of the accused are to be found in table 2, while the level of education is in table 3. The ethnic variation is looked for table 4. The geographical distribution is to be found in table 5. past psychiatric, past criminal, and forensic history is listed in table 6. Schooling and negative attitude is shown in table 7. Marital status is in table 8. The rank of the accused as sib in the family is shown in table 9. Nature of the crime is shown in table 10,

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while its location is in table 11. Socio-demographic profile of their families would be as follow; The age of the parents in table 12, their jobs in table 13, level of education table 14, the present and previous location and history of immigration in table 15, forensic and psychiatric history in table 16, marital status in table 17, number of siblings in

table 18, social and economic status in table 19, housing status in table 20, and member in charge in the family in table 21. Psychiatric disorders in the accused are shown in table 22, while criminal responsibility in table 23, the need for juvenile rehabilitation centers in table 24, and the need for legal bailing in table 25.

Table1: Age distribution of the accused

Age in years	No.	Percent of total
18	37	9.25
17	143	35.75
16	95	23.75
15	65	16.25
14	32	8.0
13	21	5.25
12	5	1.25
11	2	0.5
Total	400	100

Table2: Occupational state of the accuse

Job	No.	Percent of total
Unskilled laborer	288	72
Student	77	19.25
Unemployed	12	3
Housewife	11	2.75
Not known	10	2.5
Employee	2	0.5
Total	400	100

Table3: Educational level of the accuse

level	No.	percent of total
primary	223	55.75
Intermediate	115	28.75
Illiterate	30	7.5
High school	22	5.5
College; Institute	5	1.25
Not known	5	1.25
Total	400	100

Table4: Ethnic variation of the accused

Ethnicity	No.	Percent of total
Arabic	393	98.25
Kurdish	4	1
Turkman	1	0.25
Not known	2	0.5
Total	400	100

Table5: Geographical distribution of the accused

Location	Baghdad city	Other provinces	Not known
Present abode	325 (81.25%)	75 (18.75%)	-----
Previous abode	217 (54.25%)	77 (19.25%)	106 (26.5%)

Table6: Past psychiatric, forensic and criminal record of the accused

Type	Present	Absent	Not known
Past psychiatric	77 (19.25%)	43 (10.75%)	280 (70%)
Past forensic	6 (1.5%)	209 (52.25%)	185 (46.25%)
Past criminal	11 (2.75%)	248 (62%)	141 (35.25%)

Table 7: Schooling and negative attitude (*) of the accused

Type	No.	Percent of total
Quitters	289	72.25
Students	77	19.25
Illiterate	30	7.5
Not known	4	1
Total	400	100

(*) 32 (8%) of the accused had negative attitudes (smoking, alcohol, drugs, vagrancy and prostitution).

Table 8: Marital status of the accused

Status	No.	Percent of total
Not married	385	96.25
Married	14	3.5
Not known	1	0.25
Total	400	100

Table9: Subject's rank in their families

Rank	No.	Percent of total
First	89	22.25
Second	84	21
Third	72	18
Forth	53	13.25
Fifth	35	8.75
Sixth	25	6.25
Seventh	15	3.75
Eighth	10	2.5
Ninth	3	0.75
Tenth	3	0.75
Eleventh	5	1.25
Twelfth	1	0.25
Not known	5	1.25
Total	400	100

Table10: Crime's nature of the accused

Type	No.	Percent of total
Theft	148	37
Homicide	96	24
Armed robbery	42	10.5
Abduction	21	5.25
Firearms possession	16	4
Traffic crimes	13	3.25
Rape	10	2.5
Terrorism	10	2.5
Forgery	7	1.75
Prostitution	7	1.75
Vagrancy	6	1.5
Stolen money possession	6	1.5
Brawl	4	1
Resisting arrest	3	0.75
Arrest for suspicion	2	0.5
Threat	2	0.5
Drugs	2	0.5
Fraud	2	0.5
Sexual harassment	2	0.5
Embezzlement	1	0.25
Total	400	100

Table11: Location of the crime

Location	No.	Percent of total
Baghdad	201	50.25
Other provinces	43	10.75
Not known	156	39
Total	400	100

Table12: Parent's age

Father			Mother		
Years	No.	Percent	Years	No.	Percent
30-39	14	3.5	20-29	1	0.25
40-49	116	29	30-39	96	24
50-59	119	29.75	40-49	151	37.75
60-69	41	10.25	50-59	53	13.25
70-79	6	1.5	60-69	7	1.75
80-89	1	0.25	Dead	32	8
Dead	69	17.25	Not known	60	15
Not known	34	8.5	Total	400	100
Total	400	100			

Table13: Parent's job

Father	No.	percent	Mother	No.	percent
Laborer	220	55	Housewife	329	82.25
Employee	44	11	Employee	١٦	4
Unemployed	27	6.75	Laborer	١١	2.75
Retired	21	5.25	Not known	٤٤	١١
Disabled	8	2	Total	٤٠٠	١٠٠
Not known	80	20			
Total	400	100			

Table 14: Parent's level of education

Father	No.	Percent	Mother	No.	Percent
Reads & writes	٨٣	20.75	Illiterate	١٣٤	33.5
Illiterate	٦٨	١٧	Reads&writes	88	٢٢
Secondary school	٥٤	13.5	Primary school	٥٧	14.25
Primary school	٥١	12.75	Secondary school	٤٨	١٢
High school	٤٢	10.5	High school	٢٣	5.75
College	٢٧	6.75	College	١٣	3.25
Academy	١٥	3.75	Academy	٦	1.5
Not known	٦٠	15	Not known	٣١	7.75
Total	٤٠٠	١٠٠	Total	٤٠٠	١٠٠

Table15: Present and previous location and history of immigration

Father						
Baghdad		Provinces		Not known		
255	63.75%	٧٦	19%	٦٩	17.25%	Present
١٧٩	44.75%	٥٠	12.5%	١٧١	42.75%	Past
55(known)	13.75%			٣٤٥	86.25%	Immigration
Mother						
Baghdad		Provinces		Not known		
٢٨٣	70.75%	٧٣	18.25%	٤٤	11%	Present
١٩٤	48.5%	٥٢	13%	١٥٤	38.5%	Past
55(known)	13.75%			٣٤٥	86.25%	Immigration

Table16: Psychiatric and forensic history for the family

	Positive	Negative
Family history	59(14.75%)	341(85.25%)
Forensic history*	59(14.75%)	341(85.25%)

*46(11.5%) of the crimes are related to the accused ones.

Table 17: Marital status of the parents

Married	٢٤١	60.25%
Widowed	٩٣	23.25%
Divorced	٢٨	7%
Polygamy	٢٢	5.5%
Separation	٢	0.5%
Desertion	١	0.25%
Not known	١٣	3.25%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table18: Number of siblings

1-3	٨٠	20%
> 3	٣٠٧	76.75%
Not known	١٣	3.25%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table 19: Socio-economic status of the family

	High	Intermediate	Low	Not known
Economic	13(3.25%)	280(70%)	98(24.5%)	9(2.25%)
Social	-----	321(80.25%)	70(17.5%)	9(2.25%)

Table 20: Housing status

Private property	٢٤٠	60%
Rent	٨٦	21.5%
With relatives	٣٤	8.5%
Public house	٢٠	5%
Slum house	١١	2.75%
Not known	٩	2.25%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table 21: Member in charge of the family

Parents only	١٠٣	25.75%
Parents and accused	٢٤٤	61%
Accused only	٢٨	7%
Relatives	١٦	4%
Not known	٩	2.25%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table 22:Psychiatric disorders in the accused

Conduct disorder	٢٠	5%
Mental retardation	٧	1.75%
No mental disorder	٣٧٣	93.25%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table 23: Criminal responsibility of the accused

Partial	٥	1.25%
Full	٣٩٥	98.75%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table 24: The accused in need for juvenile rehabilitation centre

In need	١٩٢	48%
Not in need	٢٠٠	50%
Not known	٨	2%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

Table 25: The need for legal bailing for the accused

In need	٧٤	18.5%
Not in need	٣٢٠	80%
Not known	٦	1.5%
Total	٤٠٠	100%

DISCUSSION:

All the available convicts were examined in the personality assessment bureau (P.A.B) within the juvenile court at Baghdad city, from the year 2003 to 2005. A total number of 400 juvenile convicts .

Regarding gender, it was found that 95.25 % (381) were males, while only 4.75 % (19) were females, this is in accord with the result of a local study that had a figure of 97.5% of males as convicts ⁽³⁾.

At all ages, the convictions were overwhelmingly of males⁽⁶⁾, more so boys are two to three times more likely than girls to engage in antisocial acts⁽²⁾. For table 1, the highest number of convicts were at the age of 17(35.75%) followed by convicts at ages of 16 and 15 years, a comparable results (30%) are shown in ⁽³⁾ and ⁽⁶⁾. Adolescents, more than other age groups, are especially likely to engage in antisocial behavior ⁽²⁾. The majority of the convicts were Muslims 98.5 % (394), this might reflects the fact that Iraq is a predominantly Islamic country. In table 2, 288(72%) accused were unskilled laborers, it was much higher than the result of ⁽³⁾ that gave us a figure of 38%, this may be due to the strict categorization used in our study in which most jobs that were not based on formal training were labeled unskilled ones. Those people are prone to criminal activities, due to the lack of proper education, family protection, and deprivation nature of their jobs. A close relationship was found between offences rates lower occupational status ⁽⁶⁾. In table 3, 223(55.75%) of the accused were of primary school level, followed by intermediate level and illiteracy, a similar results 48.4% is found in ⁽³⁾ were the higher the educational levels, the less the delinquent behavior. Low intelligence, learning disabilities, and poor schooling may add more impact on the children and adolescents to leave school ⁽¹⁾. In table4, we found that the majority of the accused were of Arabic ethnicity 393(98.25%), this is due to the fact that the majority of the accused were arrested in a predominantly Arabic regions. In table 5, it was found that there was a clear accumulation of convicts in Baghdad city 325(81.25%), this could be due to living in slum areas of Baghdad that is overpopulated and deprived, a similar result is to be found (76.7%) at Arbil in ⁽³⁾. Many delinquents live in areas of urban deprivation ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾. In table 6, a relatively small numbers of past(psychiatric 19.25%, forensic 1.5%, and criminal 2.75%) records were found, this could be due to the lack in police and court data for a quarter to two thirds of the accused. Though multiple neuropsychological deficits, including learning disabilities, prefrontal and frontal lobe dysfunction, left hemisphere dysfunction, and

reduced lateralization for linguistic functions, have been found in juveniles committing antisocial acts ⁽²⁾

In table 7, only 77 (19.25%) of the accused were at school, the rest were either dropouts or illiterates. A similar result was found (27.3%) in ⁽³⁾. Poor schooling is known to be an etiological factor in juvenile delinquency ⁽¹⁾. In table 8, 385 (96.25%) of the accused were unmarried, that goes with the social trend in Iraq of not consenting marriage before the age of 18 years. In table 9, shows that the older the juvenile in the family, the more the risk of delinquent behavior, this could be due to the premature responsibility laid upon their shoulders in order to support their families. In table 10, theft was on top of the crime chart 148 (37%), the result was comparable 34% to ⁽³⁾. It was stated that stealing is a major type in juvenile delinquency ⁽²⁾. Homicide and other violent crimes seem to be evident in our study that could be a part of the general picture of anarchy in Iraq beyond 2003. In table 11, half of the crimes took place in Baghdad 201(50.25%), this goes with the fact that the present location of most of the accused was in the capital(Table 5), a similar result was found in ⁽³⁾, were most crimes occurred in Arbil centre rather than other places. Many children with conduct disorder live in areas of urban deprivation ⁽¹⁾. In table 12 , regarding father's age, the top figure was for age group 50-59 years (29.75%) followed by 40-49 years(29%), while for the mothers it seem a decade less 40-49 years(37.75%) and 30-39 years(24%). Middle aged parents are more likely to have delinquent children, no comparable data could be found in the literature. Fatherless families were 17.75%, this may reflect the fact that the absence of the role model in the family leads to more delinquency ⁽²⁾. In table 13, regarding parent's job, laborer fathers and housewives mothers were 220(55%) and 329(82.25%) respectively, as the commonest types. Similar results 46.1% and 94.5% were found in ⁽³⁾. A close relationship was found between offence rates, and lower occupational status of the fathers ⁽⁶⁾. In table 14, illiteracy (17% for fathers and 33.5% for mothers) and primary educational level plus reading and writing skills (33.5% for fathers and 36.25% for mothers) were obvious in the sample, this was partly in accord (71.8% and 93%)(20.5% and 6.6%) with ⁽³⁾, while a more sophisticated educational levels were much less associated with delinquent behavior. In table 15, it seems that parents are living in Baghdad presently, 63.75% for father's and 70.75% for mothers, with fewer figures in the past. This might be due to the immigration to Baghdad after 2003,

though this might not be conclusive for the lack in some data in the court records. In table 16, there was a family and forensic history in 59(14.75%) for each, and 46(11.5%) of the latter was related to the same crime of the accused. This goes with the notion that parental criminality is a strong predictor of juvenile antisocial acts ⁽²⁾. In table 17, stable marital relationships were found only in 241(60.25%) cases, a similar result (52.8%) was found in ⁽⁶⁾ where marital instability in parents are relatively commonly associated with offences before the age of 15 years. In table 18, the majority of the accused had siblings of more than three brothers and sisters 307(76.75%), the result was in accord with ⁽⁶⁾ in which offenders tended to come from larger sib ships. Larger families might aggravate the problems of supervision and care 91). In table 19, regarding socioeconomic status, it was found that the intermediate level was on top of the list (70% and 80.25%), followed by the low level (17.5% and 24.5%), while high economic level was only 3.25%. this was to the contrary of the fact that juvenile delinquents do come from social classes IV and V rather than higher ones (1 and 6), the controversy could be interpreted in the way that social classes do not exist in Iraqi society, more so, economic status in Iraq do not match its counterpart in the occident world. Both intermediate and low levels in Iraq might be labeled as low, say in U.K or U.S.A based on the annual income which is incomparable in our case. In table 20, 240(60%) of the families lives in private properties, while 86(21.5%) in rented houses. This gives us an idea that 18.5% of the sample were living in overcrowding or unsuitable housing conditions. All the same, private properties were located in deprived sectors of Baghdad and other cities, similar results 18% were found in (1, 2, and 6). In table 21, 103(25.75%) parents were responsible for the sustenance of their families, while both parents and the accused 244(61%), and the accused alone 28(7%). It was stated that poor occupational grading and ineffective fathers was correlated with delinquent behavior (6). In table 22, conduct disorder was found in 20(5%) of the accused, mental retardation in 7(1.75%), while 373(93.25%) had no mental disorder. The results of our study is different from that of ⁽³⁾, and that might be due to the reliance on clinical judgment only in that study, without depending on a more sophisticated diagnostic tools as the ICD-10 or DSM-IV, that require a more specific criteria and labeling. In table 23, the majority of the accused

were fully responsible regarding their crime 395(98.75%), as was stated in the report addressed to the court. In table 24, half of the accused were in no need for juvenile rehabilitation centre; this was in accord with ⁽⁷⁾ in which 54% of the young offenders needed custodial care.

In table 25, 74(18.5%) of the accused needed legal bailing as stated in the psychiatric report, while 320(80%) did not.

CONCLUSION:

The majority of the accused who have been examined in the (P.A.B) were males, 17 years of age, with a history of premature work record in the form of unskilled laborers. More than a half with had only a primary school education, and the majority were living with their families in Baghdad slum areas. Only a small fraction of the accused had past forensic or criminal history, the majority were school dropouts and illiterates, it was found that the older the juvenile in years, the more risky of becoming delinquent, this is due to premature holding of family responsibilities. Theft was on top of list in this study, and half of the crimes took place in Baghdad. Parent's age were between 30-50, and part of the accused were fatherless, fathers were mostly laborers while mothers were housewives, with obvious illiteracy or primary school levels only, and part of them had forensic or criminal histories. 40% of them had unstable marital relationships. A majority of the accused came from big sib ships of more than 3 brothers and sisters, most of families were of intermediate level regarding socioeconomic conditions, and 60% of them lived in private properties but of poor quality in slum areas. It was found that parents were responsible in about a quarter of cases for the sustenance of their families, while the accused had their share in about two thirds of the sample. The majority of the accused had no mental disorders, so they were held fully responsible for their acts according to the (P.A.B), half of them were recommended to juvenile rehabilitation centers, and about one fifth of the accused were able to be released on legal bailing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1-a follow up study of cases and their legal fate in the court records, in order to match the psychiatric the psychiatric opinion with that of the judge, as psychiatric reports are not mandatory to the judge by Iraqi law.
- 2-studying the accused needs in custody and the means of rehabilitating them.

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