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**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG
CONVICTS AT KABETE APPROVED SCHOOL IN KENYA**

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Abstract:

Purpose of Study: This study examined the factors responsible for juvenile delinquency among juveniles at Kabete Approved School in Nairobi County, Kenya. It also investigated the relationship between reformation strategies and juveniles' readiness for community reintegration, focusing on how family, social, and economic circumstances influence delinquent behaviour and the rehabilitation process.

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive survey design using a mixed-methods approach. A sample of 148 respondents was selected from a target population of 190 using stratified random, simple random, and purposive sampling

techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions and analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and thematic analysis.

Findings: The findings revealed that family neglect and poor parental supervision were the leading factors responsible for juvenile delinquency, reported by 61.3% of respondents. Peer pressure and gang involvement followed at 58.5%, while poverty and lack of basic needs accounted for 53.8%. Other contributing factors included substance use, exposure to criminal role models, school dropout, and idleness. Chi-square analysis established significant associations between readiness for community reintegration and formal education ($p = .016$), counselling ($p = .007$), vocational training ($p = .011$), and life-skills training ($p = .015$). Sports and recreation showed no statistically significant association with reintegration readiness.

Conclusion: The study concluded that juvenile delinquency at Kabete Approved School results from interacting family, social, and economic factors rather than a single cause. Effective rehabilitation requires stronger family involvement, accessible education, counselling, vocational and life-skills training, adequate institutional resources, and structured post-release support to promote successful community reintegration.

Keywords: *juvenile delinquency; reformation strategies; reintegration; Kabete Approved School; Kenya*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Every boy admitted to Kabete Approved School arrives with a story that began long before he reached the gate. Somewhere in that story there is usually an absent parent, a group of older friends, an empty stomach, or a bottle, and the court order that brought him to Lower Kabete is often only the last chapter of a longer account. Understanding that longer account is the starting point for any serious attempt to reform children in conflict with the law.

Juvenile delinquency is a worldwide concern. The World Health Organization (2024) describes youth violence as a problem affecting people aged 10 to 29 years, with consequences that include injury, disability and lasting mental health problems, and it notes a strong link between youth violence and economic inequality. Responses differ between countries. In the United States, a recent review of 28 studies found that family- and community-based interventions were among the most effective ways of reducing reoffending (Aazami et al., 2023). Restorative justice has also gained ground in many systems, because it is often proposed as a suitable approach to youth justice and can operate alongside or instead of formal court processes (Gaffney et al., 2024). In Eastern and Southern Africa, a UNICEF study of ten countries, including Kenya and Somalia, found that governments are increasingly writing diversion into their child justice laws and frameworks (UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office [ESARO], 2022).

Kenya has moved in the same direction. The Children Act, 2022 places the committal of a child to an approved rehabilitation school under the supervision of the Children's Court (Republic of Kenya, 2022). Yet the system still struggles to meet children's needs. A national study of children in conflict with the law, which interviewed 359 children in institutions that included Kabete Rehabilitation Centre, concluded that the programmes and services available were inadequate for rehabilitation needs. It recommended that institutionalisation should be a last resort, that more children be diverted from the formal system, and that dilapidated infrastructure and the capacity of probation and aftercare officers receive urgent attention (National Crime Research Centre [NCRC], 2023).

Against this background, a question remains unanswered at institutional level: what exactly brings boys to Kabete Approved School, and which parts of the rehabilitation programme appear to prepare them for life afterwards? Studies that describe risk factors in the general population are plentiful, but evidence from inside a Kenyan approved school is scarce. This study therefore had two linked aims. It sought first to identify the factors responsible for delinquency among juveniles at Kabete Approved School and, second, to examine whether participation in different reformation strategies was associated with readiness for community reintegration. The sections that follow review the literature, set out the theoretical framework and methods, present and discuss the findings, and draw conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Review

2.1.1 Delinquency as a multi-level problem

Recent syntheses agree that delinquency cannot be traced to a single cause. A systematic review of meta-analyses found that family and parental dimensions were the strongest predictors of general offending. Delinquent peers, school and employment problems, family problems, certain mental health problems and alcohol or substance abuse were the most important predictors of persistence in crime, which led the authors to describe persistent antisocial behaviour as multisystemic (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022). The World Health Organization (2024) reaches a similar conclusion from a public health angle. It groups risk factors by level, from individual factors such as exposure to violence in the family, to close relationships, where low family income, unemployment in the family and association with delinquent peers or gangs are listed, and on to wider community and social conditions.

2.1.2 Family

Family conditions stand out in almost every review. In a systematic review of 28 studies, Aazami et al. (2023) found that family conflict and dysfunction, and neglect and maltreatment, were the two primary predictors of juvenile delinquency, while strong parental relationships and higher academic achievement protected at-risk youth. These studies were conducted in the United States, so their transfer to Kenya needs checking. Kenyan evidence points in the same direction. Lumadede et al. (2024), working within Social Learning Theory, found a statistically significant predictive relationship between parental characteristics, such as parental criminality and attitudes, and juvenile delinquency in Nairobi and Mombasa counties. Taken together, the international and Kenyan studies suggest that what happens at home is not just one risk factor among many but the setting in which the others take root.

2.1.3 Economic conditions

Economic hardship operates mainly through the family. The World Health Organization (2024) lists low family income and unemployment in the family among the risk factors for youth violence and stresses the link between violence and economic inequality. Poverty rarely acts alone. It can limit supervision when parents work long hours away from home, restrict schooling, and expose children to neighbourhoods where crime is common. For that reason, studies that measure poverty in isolation may understate its influence.

2.1.4 Peers

Adolescence is a period of heightened sensitivity to peers. A meta-analysis of 79 experimental reports involving more than 9,500 participants found a significant overall effect of peer influence on adolescents' behaviour ($g = 0.47$), and the effect was strongest when adolescents saw what their peers did, as opposed to merely being in their company or receiving their feedback (Meehan & Hubbard, 2025). The same review noted that few experiments examined antisocial behaviour, so evidence about delinquent peers in custody remains thin. This matters in an approved school, where boys with different offending histories live together.

2.1.5 School and employment

School engagement protects against delinquency. Aazami et al. (2023) identified higher academic achievement as a protective factor, and Basto-Pereira and Farrington (2022) listed school and employment problems among the predictors of persistence in crime. A recent meta-analysis of juvenile delinquency programmes found that school engagement and attachment to school were effective “change levers”, meaning intermediate outcomes that, when improved, are associated with less delinquency (Wilson & Lipsey, 2024). A systematic review of interventions for young people who are not in employment, education or training also examined how such young people can be helped to return to school or work (Stea et al., 2024). For boys who leave school early, these findings point toward education and skills as routes back to conventional life.

2.1.6 Substance use

Substance use is both a cause and a consequence of other risks. The 2023 national survey by Kenya's National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse reported that alcohol is the most commonly used substance in the country, followed by tobacco, miraa and bhang. It also found that some children first use tobacco as early as age six and alcohol as early as age seven (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse [NACADA], 2023). Internationally, alcohol and substance abuse are among the predictors of persistence in crime (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022), and reducing substance use was an effective change lever in juvenile delinquency programmes (Wilson & Lipsey, 2024).

2.1.7 Rehabilitation, diversion and aftercare

Evidence on what works is growing. Wilson and Lipsey (2024) found that programmes improving family functioning, school engagement and substance use were justified by the change-lever evidence, whereas programmes focusing on vocational skills, academic achievement or peer relations alone were less likely to be beneficial for reducing delinquency. Aftercare also matters. A three-level meta-analysis of 26 studies found that post-detention aftercare had a small but positive overall effect on recidivism and related risk factors ($g = 0.26$), and that positive changes

in skills, substance use and family functioning were linked to larger effects (Selimi et al., 2025). In Kenya, however, the national review found that services remained inadequate and that probation and aftercare capacity needed strengthening (NCRC, 2023).

2.2. Gap in the literature

The literature shows that delinquency has family, peer, economic, educational and substance-related roots, and that rehabilitation works best when it targets several of these at once. Two gaps remain. Most studies examine risk factors one at a time or in community samples, and few look at them together among boys who are already in an approved school. In addition, little Kenyan evidence links the reformation strategies offered inside an approved school to juveniles' own sense of readiness to return to the community. This study addressed both gaps at Kabete Approved School.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Four theories guided the interpretation of the findings. *Social Learning Theory* holds that behaviour is learned partly by observing and imitating others in one's social environment (Bandura, 1977). It predicts that boys who grow up with little supervision, delinquent friends and criminal role models are more likely to learn delinquent behaviour. *General Strain Theory* explains delinquency as a response to stressors, such as failure to achieve valued goals or the experience of negative treatment, which generate anger and other negative emotions (Agnew, 1992). It predicts that poverty, blocked opportunities and harsh home conditions raise the risk of offending. *Social Control Theory* links delinquency to weak bonds with family, peers and school (Aazami et al., 2023). It predicts that neglect, school dropout and weak attachment to conventional institutions free young people to offend. Finally, *Rehabilitation Theory* holds that offending can be reduced when the needs that drive it are addressed through education, treatment and skills training. Contemporary evidence on change levers and aftercare gives this theory empirical support (Selimi et al., 2025; Wilson & Lipsey, 2024). Bandura (1977) and Agnew (1992) are classic sources that established these theories, and no later work replaces them as the original statements. Recent studies of their application, such as Lumadede et al. (2024), are used in the discussion to show how the theories apply in Kenya today.

3.0 STUDY AREA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The study used a descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach, which allowed quantitative and qualitative information to be collected and compared (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design supported the examination of reformation strategies, their effectiveness and the

challenges affecting the rehabilitation and reintegration of economically deprived juveniles at Kabete Approved School.

3.2 Study area and participants

The study was conducted at Kabete Approved School in Lower Kabete, Nairobi City County. The institution is managed by the State Department for Children Services and provides education, vocational training, counselling, life-skills education, discipline and moral guidance to male juveniles in conflict with the law. Participants included juvenile residents who had stayed at the institution for at least three months, as well as teachers, instructors, counsellors, social workers, administrators and Department of Children Services officers. Individuals with less than three months' institutional experience, temporary staff, visitors, and those unwilling or unable to give consent were excluded.

3.3 Sampling

The target population was 190 participants, from whom a sample of 148 respondents was selected. Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size at a 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling was applied to juvenile residents to ensure that relevant subgroups were represented, and simple random sampling was used for teachers and instructors. Purposive sampling was used to select counsellors, social workers, administrators and Children Services officers because of their direct knowledge of the rehabilitation programmes.

3.4 Data collection instruments

Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The questionnaires obtained information on participants' characteristics, participation in reformation programmes, behavioural change, educational progress and readiness for reintegration. Key informant interviews explored programme implementation, institutional challenges, behavioural change and reintegration outcomes. Focus group discussions with selected juveniles provided additional perspectives and supported triangulation.

3.5 Validity and reliability

The research instruments were pre-tested among respondents from a similar institution to identify ambiguous questions and improve clarity. Validity was established through expert review, and construct validity was strengthened by aligning questions with the study variables. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable.

3.6 Data analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using SPSS version 26. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise the data. Chi-square tests and correlation analysis were applied to examine relationships among delinquency-related factors, offences and reformation outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically. Quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated to strengthen interpretation.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The study obtained the relevant institutional and research approvals, including authorisation from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Adult participants gave informed consent, while juveniles gave assent alongside the required institutional or guardian authorisation. Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, secure data storage and protection from harm were maintained throughout.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Factors responsible for delinquency

The first objective sought to determine the factors responsible for delinquency among juveniles at Kabete Approved School. Respondents could select more than one factor, so the percentages show the proportion who identified each factor and do not sum to 100%. The percentages reported below correspond to 106 responses to this item. Table 1 summarises the findings and Figure 1 displays them.

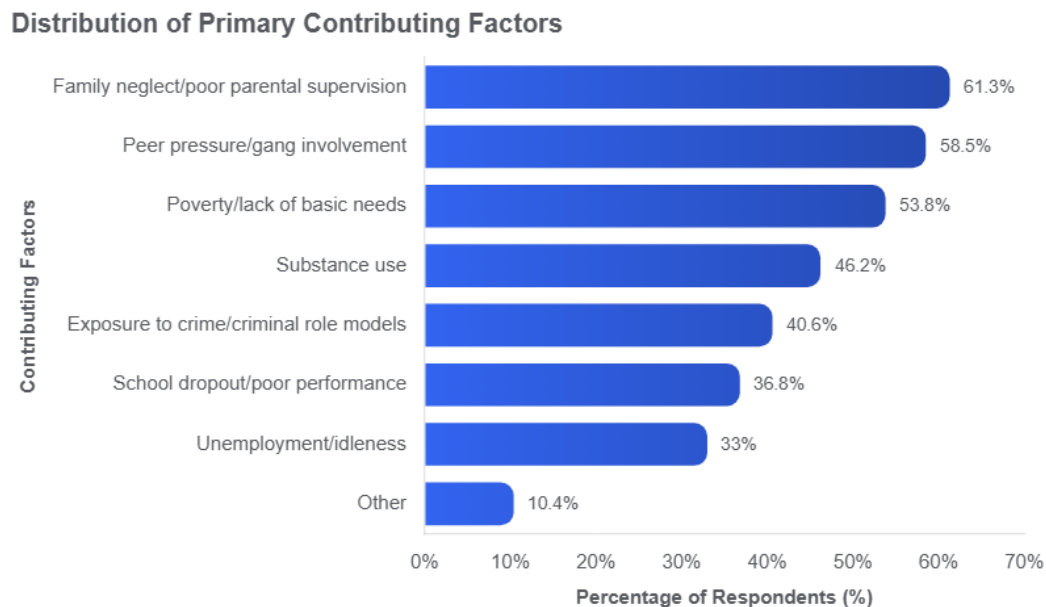
Table 1

Factors Responsible for Delinquency

Rank	Factor	Frequency	Percentage
1	Family neglect and poor parental supervision	65	61.3
2	Peer pressure and gang involvement	62	58.5
3	Poverty and lack of basic needs	57	53.8
4	Substance use	49	46.2
5	Exposure to crime and criminal role models	43	40.6
6	School dropout and poor academic performance	39	36.8
7	Unemployment and idleness	35	33.0
8	Other factors	11	10.4

Figure 1

Factors Responsible for Delinquency



A clear pattern emerges from Table 1 and Figure 1. The three most frequently cited factors, namely family neglect, peer influence and poverty, all describe the social world the boys came from. When respondents ranked the single most important factor, the same three led: family neglect and poor parental supervision was ranked first by 34 respondents (32.1%), peer pressure and gang involvement by 28 (26.4%), and poverty and lack of basic needs by 19 (17.9%). Together these three accounted for 76.4% of first-ranked responses. The discussion below takes each factor in turn and then draws the threads together.

4.1.1 Family neglect and poor parental supervision

Family neglect and lack of parental supervision was the leading factor, reported by 65 respondents (61.3%). This result suggests that missing supervision, guidance and emotional support left many boys without the adult presence that normally steers adolescents away from trouble. The finding is consistent with international evidence that family conflict, neglect and maltreatment are primary predictors of delinquency (Aazami et al., 2023) and that family and parental dimensions are the strongest predictors of general offending (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022). It is also consistent

with Kenyan evidence, since Lumadede et al.(2024) found that parental characteristics significantly predicted delinquency in Nairobi and Mombasa.

Social Learning Theory helps to explain why. When supervision is weak, boys have more opportunity to mix with delinquent peers and to learn antisocial behaviour that no adult corrects (Bandura, 1977). One implication follows directly: reforming the boy alone, without involving his family, is likely to produce gains that fade once he returns to the same home.

4.1.2 Peer pressure and gang involvement

Peer pressure and gang involvement was cited by 62 respondents (58.5%), which shows how strongly peer relationships shaped the boys' behaviour before admission. This agrees with a meta-analysis of peer influence in adolescence, which found a significant overall effect ($g = 0.47$) and showed that adolescents are most influenced when they observe what peers do (Meehan & Hubbard, 2025). The World Health Organization (2024) likewise lists association with delinquent peers or gangs as a risk factor for youth violence. Social Learning Theory again offers the explanation: delinquent peers act as models, and they reward and encourage offending (Bandura, 1977).

The finding also carries a caution for rehabilitation. Wilson and Lipsey (2024) found that programmes focusing on peer relations alone were less likely to reduce delinquency than programmes that improved family functioning, school engagement and substance use. Peers are clearly a risk, but changing a boy's peer group may not be enough unless the conditions that pushed him towards those peers are also addressed. The high proportion citing peers at Kabete therefore points to a need for programmes that work on several fronts, and not only on friendship patterns.

4.1.3 Poverty and lack of basic needs

Poverty and lack of basic needs was reported by 57 respondents (53.8%). Many boys therefore came from households that could not meet basic needs. The World Health Organization (2024) lists low family income and family unemployment among the risk factors for youth violence, and it stresses the connection between violence and economic inequality. General Strain Theory explains the mechanism: when legitimate routes to valued goals are blocked, the resulting frustration and anger can push young people towards offending (Agnew, 1992). The Kabete data show that poverty seldom acted alone. It coincided with neglect at home, peer pressure, poor school performance and contact with crime, and this overlap means that rehabilitation must consider the economic setting to which the boy will return.

4.1.4 Substance use

Substance use was reported by 49 respondents (46.2%). Alcohol and drugs affect judgement and self-control, and they often connect boys to older peers who supply and encourage use. The finding

fits national evidence that alcohol is the most used substance in Kenya and that initiation can happen in early childhood (NACADA, 2023). It also fits international evidence that substance abuse is one of the predictors of persistence in crime (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022) and that reducing substance use was an effective change lever in delinquency programmes (Wilson & Lipsey, 2024). Social Learning Theory suggests that substance use can be learned from peers and relatives, while General Strain Theory views it as an unhealthy way to cope with stress. For Kabete, the practical conclusion is that counselling, substance-use education, relapse prevention and positive mentoring should be built into the rehabilitation programme.

4.1.5 Exposure to crime and criminal role models

Exposure to crime and criminal role models was identified by 43 respondents (40.6%). This shows that the environments in which many boys lived before admission exposed them to criminal behaviour as ordinary life. One key informant (KII 5, quoted in Section 5.3) described boys who had grown up seeing crime as normal. The result is a strong illustration of Social Learning Theory, since criminal behaviour can be learned through contact with people who practise it (Bandura, 1977). The World Health Organization (2024) also identifies exposure to violence in the family, and gang membership, as risk factors, which suggests that the home and the neighbourhood can reinforce each other.

4.1.6 School dropout and poor academic performance

School dropout and poor academic performance was reported by 39 respondents (36.8%). Leaving school weakens a boy's link to conventional institutions, removes adult supervision during the day and leaves time for unstructured contact with delinquent peers. This interpretation fits Social Control Theory, which links delinquency to weak bonds with school and family (Aazami et al., 2023). It also matches evidence that school engagement is an effective change lever (Wilson & Lipsey, 2024) and that higher academic achievement protects at-risk youth (Aazami et al., 2023). The finding is directly relevant to Rehabilitation Theory, because education offered inside the school can address both missing knowledge and lost opportunity. A systematic review of interventions for young people outside education and employment likewise examined pathways back into school or work (Stea et al., 2024).

4.1.7 Idleness and unemployment

Idleness and unemployment was reported by 35 respondents (33.0%). Although it was cited less often than the other factors, it still matters. Idle time exposes boys to delinquent friends, and the lack of legitimate work blocks the routes to valued goals that General Strain Theory identifies as a source of pressure (Agnew, 1992). From a rehabilitation point of view, vocational training, life-skills training and productive recreation can help to keep juveniles engaged. The World Health Organization (2024) also names unemployment in the family as a risk factor.

4.1.8 Other factors

Only 11 respondents (10.4%) named other factors, which suggests that the listed factors captured most of the influences the boys recognised. The existence of this residual category, however, is a reminder that delinquency cannot be reduced to the listed factors. Individual psychological and personal experiences also matter, and mental health problems are among the predictors of persistence in crime (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022). The questionnaire did not measure these individual factors, so they remain an area for further study.

Bringing the factors together

Taken together, the results show interaction among family, peer, economic, educational and substance-related influences. Each theory explains part of the picture. Social Learning Theory accounts for the influence of family, peers and role models. General Strain Theory accounts for the effect of poverty and blocked opportunity. Social Control Theory accounts for the weak bonds with family and school. Rehabilitation Theory provides the response, which is to counter these risks through education, counselling, vocational and life-skills training, mentoring and reintegration. Recent evidence supports comprehensive, multi-component responses (Aazami et al., 2023; Selimi et al., 2025; Wilson & Lipsey, 2024). No single theory explains delinquency at Kabete Approved School, and reforming the boys requires attention to both their behaviour and their environment.

4.2 Reformation strategies and readiness for reintegration

The study also examined whether participation in reformation strategies was associated with juveniles' readiness for community reintegration. Chi-square tests were used, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2:

Association between Reformation Strategies and Reintegration Readiness

Reformation strategy	χ^2	df	p-value	Result
Formal education	5.84	1	.016	Significant
Counselling	7.21	1	.007	Significant
Vocational training	6.43	1	.011	Significant
Life-skills training	5.96	1	.015	Significant
Sports and recreation	2.41	1	.121	Not significant

Formal education had a statistically significant association with readiness for community reintegration ($\chi^2 = 5.84$, $df = 1$, $p = .016$). Counselling had the largest test statistic ($\chi^2 = 7.21$, $df = 1$, $p = .007$), followed by vocational training ($\chi^2 = 6.43$, $df = 1$, $p = .011$) and life-skills training ($\chi^2 = 5.96$, $df = 1$, $p = .015$).

= 5.96, $df = 1$, $p = .015$). Because each p -value was below .05, the null hypothesis of no association was rejected for these four strategies. Sports and recreation did not show a significant association ($\chi^2 = 2.41$, $df = 1$, $p = .121$), so the null hypothesis was not rejected for this strategy.

The pattern is easy to state. Strategies that build knowledge, emotional support and practical skills were linked to a stronger sense of readiness, while sports and recreation were not. This is consistent with evidence that positive changes in skills, substance use and family functioning are associated with larger aftercare effects (Selimi et al., 2025), and with the view that education-related change is an important lever of reform (Wilson & Lipsey, 2024). The result also supports the Rehabilitation Theory emphasis on meeting the needs that drive offending.

Two cautions are necessary. First, Wilson and Lipsey (2024) found that programmes focusing on vocational skills were less likely to reduce delinquency itself. That finding does not contradict the Kabete result, because this study measured juveniles' perceived readiness to return to the community and not reoffending, and the two outcomes may respond differently to vocational training. Second, chi-square tests show association and not cause. Boys who already felt more prepared may simply have taken part more actively. Longitudinal follow-up after release would be needed to confirm that the strategies themselves produce successful reintegration.

4.3 Qualitative findings from key informants

The key informant interviews produced four themes corresponding to the study objectives: factors responsible for delinquency, types of delinquency, reformation strategies, and challenges hindering reformation. This paper reports the first theme, which supports and deepens the survey results.

4.3.1 Family neglect and poor supervision

Informants placed the family first. One explained:

“Some of the boys come from families where there has been very little supervision. Parents may be absent for long periods, and the child is left to make decisions without proper guidance.” (KII 1)

This account describes how neglect actually works. The problem is not only that parents are absent but that the child is left to make adult decisions without guidance. It matches the survey finding of 61.3% and the evidence that parental characteristics predict delinquency in Kenya (Lumadede et al., 2024).

4.3.2 Peer influence

Another informant stressed the pull of peers:

“Peer pressure is a major issue. Some of them started associating with groups that were already involved in crime, and eventually they became part of those activities.”
(KII 2)

The words “eventually they became part” describe a gradual process in which association turns into participation. This reflects Social Learning Theory and the finding that adolescents are strongly influenced by what they see peers do (Meehan & Hubbard, 2025).

4.3.3 Poverty and unmet needs

Poverty was described as a driver of the search for alternatives:

“Economic hardship can contribute to delinquency because some children grow up without basic necessities and may look for alternative ways of getting what they need.” (KII 3)

The informant links hardship to the pursuit of needs through other means, which is the core logic of General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992).

4.3.4 Substance use

Informants also noted that substance use opens the door to further offending:

“Substance use is present in some of the cases. Once a young person starts using drugs or alcohol, their judgement can be affected and they may become involved in other forms of offending.” (KII 4)

This explanation, in which impaired judgement leads to other offences, fits the evidence that substance abuse predicts persistence in crime (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022).

4.3.5 Exposure to criminal environments

Finally, one informant described the normalisation of crime:

“Some juveniles have grown up seeing crime as a normal way of life. They may have relatives, friends or people around them who are involved in criminal activities.”
(KII 5)

Here the speaker names relatives as well as friends, which shows that exposure can come from within the household. The excerpt illustrates how criminal role models teach behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

4.3.6 Integrating the survey and interview findings

The qualitative and quantitative results point the same way. Family neglect and poor parental supervision, peer pressure and poverty were prominent in both. The interviews add the mechanisms behind the numbers: absent parents leave children to decide alone, association with offending groups gradually becomes participation, and hardship pushes children to look for other ways of meeting needs. They also show that informants did not treat the factors separately. Delinquency was explained as the result of interacting family, social and economic circumstances and not of any single cause, which agrees with the multisystemic picture in the international literature (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022).

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of findings

The first objective was to determine the factors responsible for delinquency among juveniles at Kabete Approved School. Family neglect and poor parental supervision was the most common factor, reported by 65 respondents (61.3%). It was followed by peer pressure and gang involvement (62; 58.5%), poverty and lack of basic needs (57; 53.8%), substance use (49; 46.2%), exposure to crime and criminal role models (43; 40.6%), school dropout or poor academic performance (39; 36.8%), and unemployment or idleness (35; 33.0%). When respondents ranked the most important factor, family neglect and poor parental supervision came first (34; 32.1%), peer pressure and gang involvement second (28; 26.4%) and poverty third (19; 17.9%). These three accounted for 76.4% of first-ranked responses, which shows how important family and social background were in the boys' experiences.

Chi-square analysis showed that formal education, counselling, vocational training and life-skills training were significantly associated with readiness for community reintegration, while sports and recreation were not. Interviews with key informants confirmed the survey findings. They indicated that many boys had experienced poor parental supervision, negative peer influence, financial hardship and criminal environments before admission. The agreement between the two kinds of evidence implies that delinquency at Kabete Approved School arose from several overlapping social and family circumstances, which is consistent with recent international evidence on family and social determinants (Aazami et al., 2023; Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022).

5.2 Conclusions

The study concludes that the main factors responsible for delinquency among juveniles at Kabete Approved School were family neglect and lack of parental guidance, peer influence and gang membership, and poverty. Delinquency was caused by several factors working together and not by a single cause. The study further concludes that education, counselling, vocational training and

life-skills training are linked to juveniles' readiness to return to the community, so these programmes deserve continued support.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. The Department of Children Services should strengthen family involvement and parental guidance programmes to address family neglect, poor parental supervision and negative peer influence, which were among the leading factors associated with delinquency. This recommendation is consistent with evidence that family-based and community-based interventions are among the most effective responses (Aazami et al., 2023).
2. Kabete Approved School should strengthen formal education, counselling, life-skills and vocational training programmes, because these strategies were significantly associated with juveniles' readiness for community reintegration.
3. The Department of Children Services should provide adequate resources, training materials and additional qualified staff to address the institutional challenges of limited resources, overcrowding and inadequate personnel. The national review of services for children in conflict with the law likewise called for better infrastructure and stronger probation and aftercare capacity (NCRC, 2023).
4. A structured post-release follow-up programme should be established to provide continued counselling, family support and community reintegration assistance, particularly for juveniles who may not feel adequately prepared for life after release. International evidence shows that aftercare can reduce reoffending, with larger effects where skills, substance use and family functioning improve (Selimi et al., 2025).

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Three limitations should be noted. The study was conducted at a single institution for boys, so the findings may not apply to girls' institutions or to approved schools elsewhere in Kenya. The chi-square analysis shows association and not cause, and readiness for reintegration was self-reported. The questionnaire also did not measure individual psychological factors, which international reviews identify as predictors of persistent offending (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2022). Future research should follow released juveniles over time to compare their reoffending and reintegration outcomes, include girls' rehabilitation institutions, and examine how mental health, family support after release and community acceptance shape long-term outcomes.

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